



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2026-119

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Agenda Date:	02/24/2026			Enactment #:	RES 2026-008
Related Files:					

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TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Resolution calling on the State Legislature to recognize public health as essential and to maintain Foundational Public Health Services funding (Council acting as the Health Board)

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

n/a

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
02/24/2026	Council Public Works & Health Committee	RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL	
		Aye: 7	Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremier
		Nay: 0	
02/24/2026	Council	APPROVED	
		Aye: 7	Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremier
		Nay: 0	

Attachments: Proposed Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-008

**CALLING ON THE STATE LEGISLATURE TO RECOGNIZE PUBLIC HEALTH AS
ESSENTIAL AND TO MAINTAIN FOUNDATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES FUNDING**

WHEREAS, a responsive and viable governmental public health system is essential for healthy and economically vital communities across Washington; and

WHEREAS, protecting the public's health is a fundamental responsibility of the state, which is accomplished through the state's governmental public health system comprised of the state department of health, the state board of health, local health jurisdictions, sovereign tribal nations, and Indian health programs; and

WHEREAS, Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) are core services that the governmental public health system is responsible for providing consistently and uniformly in every community in Washington; and

WHEREAS, like public safety, public utilities, and other public infrastructure, there is a foundational level of public health services that must be maintained to ensure public health services and systems are available everywhere; and

WHEREAS, the governmental public health system in Washington provides the foundation for the larger health care framework, working to prevent illness and disease while supporting the work of community partners; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Legislature passed HB 1497, which codified the governmental public health system, the Foundational Public Health Services framework, and financial resources to rebuild and transform public health in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature established the Foundational Public Health Services Account in 2023, and it appropriated \$300 million in the 2026-2027 biennium to the governmental public health system to implement Foundational Public Health Services; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County Health and Community Services receives \$3,618,000 in FPHS funds (current fiscal year) and has used the funds to bolster its work force, improving capacity to meet core public health services in communicable disease surveillance and prevention, environmental health, access to care, substance use prevention throughout Whatcom County, and organizational foundational capabilities; and

WHEREAS, FPHS funding enables Whatcom County Health and Community Services to respond quickly to emerging threats like measles, avian influenza, and respiratory illnesses; stabilizes the immunizations program to provide frequent, accessible vaccine clinics in the community, and provides treatment for active and latent tuberculosis, easing burden on local healthcare systems; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County Health and Community Services has utilized FPHS funding to support school safety, increase water system capacity including the development of the Coordinated Water Systems Plan, and lead the region with a Climate Change summit including local tribal, city, county, and community-based agencies and organizations to discuss climate resilience initiatives; and

WHEREAS, FPHS funding is further utilized to support data, epidemiology, and assessment activities to provide timely, relevant, and accurate data to the community through Whatcom Community Health Insights, decision-makers, and partners; to modernize the county's health data infrastructure; and to conduct a comprehensive Community Health Assessment to inform community-wide efforts to improve the health and health systems in Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County Health and Community Services has utilized FPHS funding to hire communications staff to provide timely information on health risks, healthy behaviors, and disease prevention in culturally appropriate formats including interpretation services and translation of outreach materials, ensuring that all community members can access critical health information and services; and

WHEREAS, FPHS funding enabled Whatcom County Health and Community Services to maintain critical training and resiliency planning to ensure timely and effective response to public health emergencies; and

WHEREAS, without maintaining ongoing, stable, and dedicated funding for core public health services, Whatcom County's capacity to protect and support the health of the community, especially the county's most vulnerable residents, will be severely compromised; and

WHEREAS, supporting core public health services today and into the future is critical to ensuring that communities grow to be and remain healthy, strong, and resilient to threats and emergencies for future generations; and

WHEREAS, FPHS relies in part on vapor tax revenue, and in 2025 lawmakers passed ESSB 5814 which reclassified most vapor products as tobacco products, shifting them to RCW 82.26 taxation and leaving only nicotine-free products under RCW 82.25, resulting in a substantial reduction of FPHS funding for 2026 and beyond.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Whatcom County Board of Health calls on the Washington State Legislature to:

- Recognize that public health is an essential service,
- Maintain Foundational Public Health Services funding,
- Fix the vapor tax errors that support the Foundational Public Health Services Account, and
- Support core services in all Washington communities, by allowing public health to continue to rebuild its statewide system with added efficiency.

APPROVED this 24th day of February, 2026

ATTEST


Cathy Haika
Cathy Haika, Clerk of the Council

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Kaylee Galloway
Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kimberly Thulin (by email 2.13.26/ks)

Civil Deputy Prosecutor