



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2026-049

File ID:	AB2026-049	Version:	1	Status:	Approved as Amended
File Created:	01/12/2026	Entered by:	KSmith@co.whatcom.wa.us		
Department:	Council Office	File Type:	Resolution		
Assigned to:	Council Committee of the Whole			Final Action:	01/13/2026
Agenda Date:	01/13/2026			Enactment #:	RES 2026-002
Related Files:					

Primary Contact Email: ksmith@co.whatcom.wa.us

TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Resolution affirming the dignity and civil and human rights of all Whatcom County residents, regardless of immigration or citizenship status

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

n/a

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
01/13/2026	Council Committee of the Whole	FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION	
01/13/2026	Council	APPROVED AS AMENDED	
		Aye: 5 Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon	
		Nay: 2 Elenbaas, and Stremler	

Attachments: Proposed Resolution, Substitute Resolution

PROPOSED BY: GALLOWAY, SCANLON
INTRODUCED: JANUARY 13, 2026

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-002

AFFIRMING THE DIGNITY AND CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL WHATCOM COUNTY RESIDENTS, REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION OR CITIZENSHIP STATUS

WHEREAS, recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions across the nation have been a source of anxiety, concern, and harm for many community members and have raised questions about Whatcom County's role and responsibilities relating to immigration enforcement; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community that protects the dignity and human rights of all its residents, regardless of immigration or citizenship status; and

WHEREAS, hatred, violence, and fearmongering have no place in Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, as a border community built by Indigenous Peoples and immigrants, from the Peace Arch to the Arch of Healing and Reconciliation, Whatcom County is a welcoming community to all who visit or call it home; and

WHEREAS, the Arch of Healing and Reconciliation stands in Bellingham to honor and remember the contributions, sacrifices, and bravery of the community's immigrants and acknowledge shameful periods in local history when anti-immigrant sentiments resulted in the expulsion of many; and

WHEREAS, the Peace Arch, which stands on the international boundary between Blaine, Washington and Douglas, British Columbia is a symbol of the common humanity and friendship that exists between communities irrespective of borders; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2023 American Community Survey, approximately 22,000 of Whatcom County's more than 230,000 residents were born outside of the United States; and

WHEREAS, immigrant communities bring tremendous social, economic, and cultural value and enrichment to Whatcom County, Washington State, and the United States as a whole; and

WHEREAS, immigration enforcement activities have a significant disruptive and harmful impact on families, schools, businesses, and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, immigration enforcement activities have targeted communities of color; and

WHEREAS, aggressive federal deportation actions targeting individuals attempting to access county services or attend court proceedings in Whatcom County and across the country erode trust in our legal system and government more broadly; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has exclusive power over immigration enforcement and regulation; and

WHEREAS, Washington State passed the Keep Washington Working Act (KWWA) in 2019, restricting the extent to which local law enforcement agencies may participate in the enforcement of federal immigration laws; and

WHEREAS, KWWA prevents all local law enforcement from:

- Asking about an individual's immigration status,
- Detaining an individual solely to determine their immigration status,
- Detaining an individual solely because of immigration status,
- Entering an agreement under 8 USC 1357 related to immigration enforcement; and

WHEREAS, upholding KWWA ensures that federal law enforcement activities do not interfere with local law enforcement and emergency response and that local governments can uphold their fiduciary responsibility to manage local public resources in the best interest of the local community; and

WHEREAS, Washington State passed the Courts Open to All (COTA) Act in 2020, which protects individuals' access to justice by:

- Prohibiting warrantless civil immigration arrests at courts,
- Prohibiting court staff and prosecutors from using state and local justice resources to report people for federal immigration enforcement, unless required by law, necessary for an active criminal investigation, or done pursuant to valid court order or warrant,
- Requiring courts to collect data on the surveillance by immigration agents of courthouses in Washington; and

WHEREAS, on November 24, 2020, Whatcom County Council, acting as the Health Board, adopted Resolution 2020-054 affirming that racism is a public health crisis; and

WHEREAS, in October 2022, Whatcom County Council adopted Ordinance 2022-065 establishing the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission (WREC) to act as a conduit for ongoing

community collaboration, engagement, and education within the broader context of diversity and inclusion and to gather, review, and evaluate data and make recommendations on eliminating racial inequities, in all its forms, throughout Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, in December 2025, the WREC published an Action Guide outlining action steps in response to the increased presence of ICE in Whatcom County and communities throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, the WREC Action Guide calls on city governments, county government, and the justice system to exhaust all legal recourse to protect the county's population from negative impacts of ICE actions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County affirms the dignity and civil and human rights of all Whatcom County residents, regardless of immigration or citizenship status; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County remains committed to providing all residents with equal access to county services, opportunities, and protections, and affirms that no county resources will be used to support federal immigration enforcement activities, except where legally required by law or court order; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County remains committed to advancing equity and racial justice through implementation of initiatives to improve equity policies and practices, by supporting the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission's work and implementing its recommendations, and by implementing training programs on unconscious bias and other equity topics to improve service to county residents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County condemns the pursuit of arrest and deportation activities on or adjacent to county property by federal law enforcement agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Whatcom County Council urges the Executive branch to prominently post multilingual Immigrant Rights and legal resources posters and make multilingual Know Your Rights and legal resources pamphlets readily available at county public facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County remains committed to ongoing compliance with the Keep Washington Working Act and the Courts Open to All Act and encourages the County Sheriff, Prosecutor, and their staff to refrain from coordinating or assisting Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs

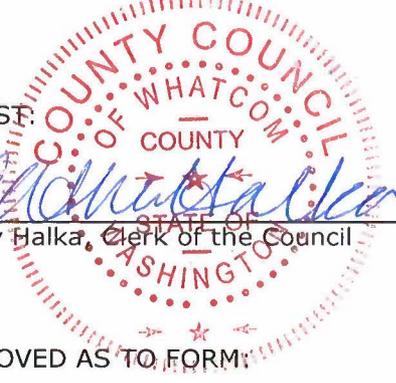
Enforcement, or other relevant federal agencies on immigration or adjacent related law enforcement activities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County condemns violence perpetrated by federal law enforcement officers on members of our community; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County strives to cultivate a community where all individuals are free, have equal protection and are provided due process under the law, and are safe to live their lives and pursue their personal, familial, educational, and economic goals without fear of surveillance, harassment, intimidation, injury, abduction, or death.

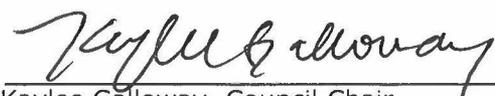
APPROVED this 13th day of January, 2026

ATTEST:




Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kimberly Thulin via email 1/13/2026 (KS)
Civil Deputy Prosecutor