



## Whatcom County Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

March 16, 2021

Washington State Legislature  
(recipients TBD)

RE: Budget proviso for Whatcom County Crisis Stabilization Center

Please accept this letter of support for partial operational funding of the Whatcom County Crisis Stabilization Center and dedication as a Pilot Program. The Legislature allocated funding to support the capital construction of this 32-bed behavioral health facility, which was paired with local funds to complete the building. Services provided include substance withdrawal management and mental health stabilization.

Pilot Program: Whatcom County has prioritized the diversion of people from the criminal justice system to treatment when appropriate. Whatcom County intends to utilize a "Triage with Involuntary Placement" model of treatment per RCW 10.31.110. This allows a Peace Officer to place an involuntary hold on a person placed at the Crisis Stabilization Center for up to 12 hours to allow for evaluation and treatment by a Mental Health Professional. Subsequent on-site treatment and connection to ongoing services and supports will promote longer-term stability and well-being for the individuals receiving services.

This model is rarely utilized in Washington State due to low reimbursement rates, yet provides an excellent opportunity to offer the most appropriate and effective responses and care to people who are better served with treatment as opposed to arrest and incarceration. The minimal request for operational funding will help ensure no one is turned away from the program because of an inability to pay for services.

As a Pilot Program, the Crisis Stabilization Center will collect and report data to demonstrate that diverting from arrest, incarceration, as well as the Emergency Department will reduce the frequency of costly encounters with the criminal justice and healthcare systems. Hopefully, the successes of this Center will encourage the addition of these programs in other parts of the state.

Respectfully,

Stephen Gokley  
Task Force Co-Chair

Jack Hovenier  
Task Force Co-Chair

c: Whatcom County Council  
Whatcom County Executive