

RESOLUTION NO. _____

REGARDING PERMANENT AFFORDABILITY OF CHILD CARE IN WHATCOM COUNTY

WHEREAS, the impact of COVID-19 on families and early childhood development has been significant, has placed families and children under great stress and providing quality child care is a key component to helping reduce the long-term impacts of our current crisis; and

WHEREAS, on February 4, 2020, Whatcom County Health Board adopted the [Child and Family Action Plan](#), which states, "Whatcom County government has an important role to play in realizing the community's vision, which begins with making a commitment to promote the health and well-being of all children and families in Whatcom County, with a special focus on the critical first years of life, and families that experience disproportionate challenges due to social and economic factors, discrimination, and health issues"; and

WHEREAS, by adopting the Child and Family Action Plan, Whatcom County has committed to adopting "a "children and families first" approach for county policy and funding decisions, build county infrastructure to embed a focus on child and family well-being across county government, and contribute to community efforts to stabilize and expand access to child care and early learning opportunities"; and

WHEREAS, according to the [2019 Child Care Supply, Cost, and Demand in Whatcom County](#), "Child care is the greatest expense many families face" frequently exceeding the cost of housing for a young family of four or more; and

WHEREAS, according to [The Mounting Costs of Child Care](#), in Washington State, 49% of parents found it difficult or very difficult to find, afford, and keep child care, 27% left school or training due to child care issues, and 9% were fired or let go due to child care issues; and

WHEREAS, according to [The Mounting Costs of Child Care](#), in Washington State, as for employers, an estimated loss of \$2.08 billion due to turnover and missed work due to child care issues and an estimate of \$6.5 billion in direct costs due to employee child care issues; and

WHEREAS, while local employers have correctly identified housing affordability as a major constraint to attracting additional workers to the area; and

WHEREAS, child care affordability is actually a greater overall financial burden on low income families which, if reduced, would enable thousands of existing local residents (particularly women) to reenter the workforce, much sooner than it would take to build a substantial number of additional workforce housing units; and

WHEREAS, spending money on local child care facilities will have significant multiplier effect on the local economy and will create local construction jobs, raise family incomes by allowing a second parent to work, and increase the ability to pay the wages necessary to retain qualified childcare workers; and

WHEREAS, most of the increase in incomes will be spent locally which will increase incomes of other local businesses; and

WHEREAS, high quality child care promotes healthy child development, which is proven to reduce rates of incarceration, homelessness, and poverty in later life; and

WHEREAS, providing affordable, high quality childcare will have long-term benefits for children and families, our economy, and society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, on May 18, 2021, the Whatcom County Council tasked the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force to provide recommendations for permanent solutions for child care affordability to the Council by September 30, 2021; and

WHEREAS, on September 28, 2021, the Whatcom County Council extended the deadline to October 15, 2021 to hear recommendations from the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force; and

WHEREAS, on October 12, 2021, the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force provided recommendations for permanent solutions to child care affordability to the Whatcom County Council.-

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that the majority of the funds received through the H.R.1319 - American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 are to be allocated to land, buildings, and capital projects for child care facilities.to permanent solutions for child care affordability as detailed in Exhibit A, Permanent Solutions for Child Care Affordability in Whatcom County, attached; and

~~**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the land, buildings, and capital projects obtained through the funding from H.R.1319 — American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 be purchased, renovated/constructed as high-quality facilities to increase overall community capacity by 5,000 new child care slots, including two facilities that will provide extended hours to accommodate children of shift workers.~~

~~**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that these facilities be permanently owned by the County (or a participating local jurisdiction) and made available for lease to qualified child care providers at no cost (or the lowest possible cost allowed by law) under the following guidelines:~~

- ~~1. Facility numbers and overall capacity shall be sized and located based on the population density of young families throughout the County and located in urbanized areas of the jurisdictions that contribute a proportionate amount of their H.R.1319 funds, and;~~
- ~~2. A minimum of 60% of the child care spots shall be prioritized for families at or below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) threshold, and;~~
- ~~3. The fees the Lessee charges all parents shall be based on the state reimbursement rate, and;~~
- ~~4. To ensure the children are likely to cared for by qualified staff the Lessee must pay employees at or above market wages, and;~~
- ~~5. To ensure the County does not create an ongoing liability to fund operating costs the Lessee shall pay a monthly amount to cover all normal operating costs, taxes, maintenance (including a capital cost allowance to fund major future repairs such as roof replacement), commensurate with what would be normal and customary if they were to lease the facility from a private commercial landlord.~~

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the cities of Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, Sumas and the Nations of Lummi and Nooksack be invited to participate in funding of the land, buildings, and capital projects for child care facilities with H.R.1319 - American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds to allow for affordable child care in Whatcom County in perpetuity.

APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 20__.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

(Barry Buchanan), Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

[Karen Frakes \(by email\) 10/1/2021](#)

Karen Frakes, Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Exhibit A:
Permanent Solutions for Child Care Affordability in Whatcom County