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## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

March 7, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

The Whatcom County Council would like to express its support for the Whatcom County Health and Community Services Department's application to the U.S. Department of Justice for the FY2023 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Site-based Program. This funding opportunity will enhance Whatcom County's community-based Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. Governed by a collective of stakeholders, including representation from Whatcom County Council, Whatcom County LEAD builds a better response to chronic crime and disorder by developing a non-punitive pathway to long-term, community-based care for people whose unlawful or problematic conduct stems from mental illness, substance use, trauma, or poverty.

U.S. Department of Justice funding will continue to support Whatcom County LEAD in meeting its goals, which include:

- Reorient: Collective response to safety, disorder, and health-related problems.
- Improve: Public safety and public health through research-based, health-oriented, and harm-reduction interventions.
- Increase: Access to community-based resources for people with complex behavioral health needs.
- Undo: Racial disparities at the front end of the criminal legal system.
- Sustain: Collaboration of local, state, and federal leaders to grow LEAD's scale over time.
- Strengthen: Relationships among diverse stakeholders.

The success of Whatcom County LEAD depends on the strength of our partnerships. It's thanks to our shared commitment to changing systems and changing lives that Whatcom County LEAD is forging a safer, healthier, and more equitable future for our community.

Whatcom County Council is committed to the LEAD program, which provides essential support to its clients. Continued funding from the U.S. Department of Justice will heighten efforts to expand LEAD resources to meet the needs of our community.

Sincerely,

Barry Buchanan  
Whatcom County Council, Chair

Cc: Correspondence file, 2023