

03/22/19

PROPOSED BY: Health
INTRODUCED:

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**Health Board Resolution Affirming Commitment to Whatcom County's
Young Children and their Families**

WHEREAS, mounting scientific evidence points to the first years of life as a critical time period for the healthy development of the brain and other body systems; and

WHEREAS, the Center on the Developing Child-Harvard University, a national center of excellence focused on the science of child development, identifies three necessary ingredients for healthy development in the first years of life—stable nurturing relationships; sound nutrition; and safe, supportive environments; and

WHEREAS, family adversity, such as financial hardship, homelessness, parental incarceration, substance use, or mental illness, can interfere with parent and caregiver ability to provide stable nurturing care, sound nutrition, and safe environments for young children; and

WHEREAS, a toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support; and

WHEREAS, toxic stress and emotional trauma in the first years of life impact brain development and contribute to physical and behavioral health concerns, and future social and academic challenges; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous children, children of color, children with disabilities, and children and families living in poverty are more likely to experience adversity due to historical and persistent patterns of discrimination, oppression and lack of equitable opportunities; and

WHEREAS, disproportionate levels of adversity contribute to health and social disparities and inequities; and

WHEREAS, investment in healthy development for young children is a promising cross-cutting strategy to promote lifelong physical and mental health, academic success, and future employment; to reduce criminal justice involvement and other social challenges; and to advance equity; and

WHEREAS, return-on-investment for evidence-based programs focused on young children and families is as high as 9:1; and

WHEREAS, families, community members, and organizational partners from many sectors working together in a coordinated and systematic way can create the environments and opportunities children and families need to thrive; and

WHEREAS, community leaders in Whatcom County have recognized the importance of and have come together as part of the Generations Forward initiative to envision a future where all Whatcom County children thrive; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Health Department and Opportunity Council co-sponsor the Generations Forward initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Generations Forward initiative involves more than 100 families and stakeholders representing diverse sectors throughout Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, the Generations Forward initiative focuses on young children and families, emphasizing the prenatal and early childhood periods to age 8 years; and

WHEREAS, while young children are the primary focus of Generations Forward, participants and community partners acknowledge that trauma and hardship can show up in a family at any stage and will consider that while proposing and creating solutions for young children and their families; and

WHEREAS, Generations Forward is working to achieve the following results in Whatcom County:

- **Children** are safe, healthy, and ready to learn,
- **Families** are strong, stable, and supported from the start,
- **Communities** are supportive and welcoming places for children and families to live, learn, work and play; and

WHEREAS, participants in the Generations Forward initiative have adopted a series of collective commitments focused on:

- **Equity**: honoring all families and the diversity therein
- **Parenting Education and Family Support**: expanding family support, mentoring, and education
- **Family Economic Stability**: removing barriers to upward economic mobility
- **Child Care and Early Learning**: increasing access to quality, affordable child care and early learning opportunities
- **Housing**: increasing access to safe, affordable family housing throughout the county
- **Health and Social Services**: improving access to coordinated family-centered services and integrated health care, including behavioral health services and supports
- **Neighborhoods and Communities**: building community connections and resilience
- **Funding**: developing reliable financing for child and family programs and services; and

WHEREAS, the Health Board adopted an annual focus on early childhood in 2017 and again in 2018; and

WHEREAS, the Health Board adopted a Healthy Planning Resolution in 2015 that affirms the county's commitment to incorporating a health perspective in all county planning processes and calls out consideration of children and families; and

WHEREAS, the Health Board adopted a Compassionate Communities Resolution in 2013 calling for compassionate, trauma-informed approaches to health and human services, recognizing the impacts of childhood adversity on lifelong health and well-being;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Health Board shall affirm the Generations Forward collective commitments and take steps to support policy and funding that align with these commitments; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Health Board shall appoint one member to participate in the Generations Forward initiative to recommend policy options and explore development of a sustainable public financing mechanism for child and family programs and services; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Health Board shall task the Public Health Advisory Board to collaborate with Generations Forward partners and Health Department staff to create a Whatcom County Child and Family Action Plan, building on Generations Forward commitments and using a public health approach; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Child and Family Action Plan shall include an accountability process that outlines desired results and key indicators of success, an approach to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress, and transparent mechanisms for sharing progress with the community; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Child and Family Action Plan shall be presented to the Health Board no later than January 31, 2020; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Health Board shall ensure that the needs of young children and families are included and prioritized in county plans and policies addressing: Housing, Behavioral Health, Incarceration Prevention, Economic Development, and Land Use; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Health Board will review this resolution on an annual basis.

APPROVED this _____ day of _____ 2019.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH BOARD
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Rud Browne, Health Board Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Civil Deputy Prosecutor