

North Urban Human Services Alliance

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Hot Policy Topics Affecting North King County Spring 2011

King County 2011 Veterans and Human Service Levy

Since the Veterans and Human Services Levy's initial passage in 2005, King County's support to community human services has greatly diminished while the need for these services has risen. The Veterans and Human Services Levy is now the primary source of King County's current expense fund support to human services, and it is increasingly important that these funds assist struggling vets and families throughout the county. While North King County has 7% of the Veterans population and 5.5% of the overall population, just 4% of the overall levy funds currently touch North County residents. While the Levy had broad voter support across King County, voters in North County cities represented 4 of the top 7 cities in terms of rates of voter approval.

NUHSA supports the reauthorization of the Veterans and Human Services Levy and the development of the Service Improvement Plan that identifies how levy proceeds will be used to improve access to services and to address the needs of veterans and families most in need of services in each region of King County.

State Funding for Public Health and Human Services Safety Net

State funding for a range of critical and foundational public health and human services programs, including maternity support; mental health; primary health care; housing and shelters; food assistance; and senior services, is at risk of devastating cuts during the 2011 legislative session. However, many of these services save the state and taxpayers future costs by lowering incarcerations, emergency medical costs, and improving productivity, in addition to providing for our neighbors most basic needs.

While NUHSA understands that in these difficult budget times that reductions are unavoidable, we hope that alternatives can be found and that cuts to public health and the human services safety net can be kept minimal.

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211 as Reliable Link to Resources and Services

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember, free phone service that connects people needing help-or those wanting to help others-with the appropriate resources. 2-1-1 works to get people the information they need and save costs by coordinating services. At this time of declining resources for front line agencies, 211 provides a necessary connection to services clients and customers seek. The number of calls to the 2-1-1 community help line regarding for basic needs requests has steadily increased from 2007 to 2010 while the funding, particularly from the State, has declined.

NUHSA supports the continuation of its member cities funding for 211, support for Washington State's use of Washington Telephone Access Program revenues to fund WIN 211 and inclusion of 211 funding in the Vets and Human Services Levy.

Expanded and Adequate Transit Access in North King County

Based on King County's revenue forecast through 2015, dramatic transit service reductions will be needed beginning in 2012. Changes to transit disproportionately affects low income, disabled, youth, immigrants, older adults and others dependent on public transport.

NUHSA will monitor the implementation of service reductions and advocate for maintaining accessibility to transportation services for these groups and serve as a leader in the North King County Mobility Coalition.

County Funding for Public Health

Seattle King County Public Health provides a range of services that keep residents healthy and safe, including disease control, ensuring that the air is safe to breathe and water and food are safe to consume, preventing disease, averting injuries and directly providing individual health services. With state and county budget deficits and a structural reduction in dedicated funds for Public Health, these basic services are continually threatened with cuts.

NUHSA encourages King County to look for creative opportunities to dedicate funding to Public Health, including extending current expiring taxing authorities, and to prioritize preserving Public Health services in the 2012 budget process.

Human Services Infrastructure

Ready access to human services and affordably priced housing are an integral part of a healthy community. As the cities in North King County plan for redevelopment and growth, they are shaping development choices of their cities for years to come and have an opportunity to support the development of this infrastructure in those plans.

As the City of Shoreline envisions its Town Center along Aurora Avenue from 175th to 185th, Bothell continues its downtown plan, Kenmore begins new projects, and other construction occurs, NUHSA encourages North King cities to incorporate these services by adopting policies that support and encourage the location and development of affordably priced housing and human services facilities.