



**CHIEF  
SEATTLE  
CLUB**

7/22/2024

Teresa Mosqueda  
King County Councilmember  
516 Third Ave., Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104  
[teresa.mosqueda@kingcounty.gov](mailto:teresa.mosqueda@kingcounty.gov)

**Re: Support for Seattle Indian Health Board's Thunderbird Treatment Center to Address Opioid Crisis**

Dear King County Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Seattle Indian Health Board to open Thunderbird Treatment Center on Vashon Island in 2025. As Executive Director of Chief Seattle Club, I firmly believe that Thunderbird is essential for the health and wellbeing of Native peoples and is a critical program to address the escalating opioid crisis in King County.

We are all witnessing the devastating impacts of fentanyl and opioid addiction, but it is killing Native peoples at the highest rates in Washington and King County. According to the CDC, Native people in Washington die of opioid overdoses at a rate five times higher than the state average. It has destroyed lives, fractured families, and impacted the overall health of our entire community.

**This is unacceptable. Our people need access to culturally attuned, inpatient treatment and recovery services as soon as possible.**

Thunderbird Treatment Center will fill some of the major gaps that exist in King County to address the opioid crisis.

- **Capacity Increase:** Thunderbird will increase the number of inpatient beds in King County by 62%, from 148 to 240 beds.
- **Comprehensive Services:** Thunderbird will provide access to behavioral health, individual and group counseling, and Traditional Indian Medicine, which is essential to our community.
- **Inclusive Care:** Thunderbird will provide access to community-based treatment and recovery for non-Native people struggling with substance use disorder.

- **Proven Expertise:** Seattle Indian Health Board brings over 50 years of experience to Vashon and over 30 years of experience operating an inpatient treatment program.
- **Focused Mission:** Seattle Indian Health Board specializes in the health and wellbeing of underserved communities, who are disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis.

Urban Indian organizations throughout King County provide unique and vital services. We collaborate closely to ensure that all necessary programs are available to meet our community's needs both now and in the future. Thunderbird Treatment Center is one such essential program, and its timely opening is imperative.

Chief Seattle Club provides a diverse array of essential services tailored to meet the distinctive needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and First Nations communities. Our offerings include safe spaces, meals, hygiene facilities, traditional medicine, housing assistance, and cultural support programs. Our mission is to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness while honoring and safeguarding Indigenous cultural heritage and values. These comprehensive services play a vital role in helping Native communities, Thunderbird would be able to support these services by ensuring access to comprehensive treatment and culturally appropriate care within high acuity populations throughout permanent supportive housing.

We urge you to collaborate with the Seattle Indian Health Board to ensure there are no delays in the Thunderbird Treatment Center's operation on Vashon Island in 2025. Your support is critical to turning the tide against the opioid crisis and saving lives.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to this vital issue.

Sincerely,



[Derrick Belgarde \(Jul 22, 2024 15:22 PDT\)](#)

Derrick Belgarde, Executive Director

**Cc:**

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