



**Date:** October 10, 2024

**To:** Teresa Mosqueda, King County Councilmember

**From:** Indigenous Advisory Council

**Re:** Support for Thunderbird Treatment Center

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Dear King County Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda,

Please accept this letter of support from the Indigenous Advisory Council in support of the establishment of Seattle Indian Health Board's Thunderbird Treatment Center on Vashon Island.

Thunderbird Treatment Center is a critical solution to the ongoing opioid crisis.

The Indigenous Advisory Council is a culturally grounded public commission created by the City of Seattle to advise local government on issues impacting American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people. The nine members of the Indigenous Advisory Council represent a diverse range of Tribal and urban Native communities in the region and bring expertise from a variety of sectors impacted by the opioid crisis.

The opioid crisis has reached alarming levels in Washington, and more specifically in King County, with increasing rates of overdose deaths, hospitalizations, and associated social and economic costs. According to the King County Medical Examiner's Office, in 2023, the rate of fatal overdose among American Indian and Alaska Native residents in King County was 281.2 per 100,000 residents. In comparison, the rate of fatal overdose among Non-Hispanic white residents was 50.7 per 100,000 residents in 2023. This disproportionate impact demonstrates the urgent need to develop culturally attuned in-patient treatment options in King County.

Despite various efforts to address this issue, there remains a significant gap in access to comprehensive treatment services for those struggling with addiction. Today, there are currently only 148 inpatient beds in King County. Thunderbird Treatment Center would increase that by 62% to 240 beds.

Thunderbird Treatment Center would provide the intensive inpatient care that many individuals need to achieve and sustain recovery. It would also help meet the priorities King County outlined in the [Five Priorities for Action to Prevent Overdoses in King County in 2024](#), which includes:

1. Treatment and community-based, recovery-focused care for all.
2. Behavioral health beds and facilities.
3. Overdose reversal medication and fentanyl testing.
4. A robust, diverse behavioral health workforce.
5. Reduced disproportionality in overdoses.

Seattle Indian Health Board has more than 50 years of experience working in community health, and the organization operated an inpatient treatment center in South Seattle for more than 30 years without incident. They have shown to be good neighbors and vital to every neighborhood they operate throughout King County, including the International District, Pioneer Square, and Lake City.

Thunderbird Treatment Center will not only save lives but also restore hope and dignity to those affected by addiction. It is a vital step toward building a healthier, safer, and more resilient community.

We urge you and your fellow council members to support this initiative and ensure Thunderbird Treatment Center opens on Vashon Island in 2025. Your leadership and commitment to addressing this crisis can make a profound difference in the lives of countless individuals and families.

Thank you for considering this important matter.

Sincerely,

[Indigenous Advisory Council](#)

bcc:

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