



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Sonja Hallum, Chief Government Affairs Officer  
**COPY:** City Council; City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution— Amendment to 2023 State Legislative Priorities  
**DATE:** January 19, 2023

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A Resolution to amend Tacoma’s 2023 State Legislative Agenda to include the City Council’s position on controlled substance laws, support for Pierce County Council legislative agenda items, and immigration related bills. Exhibit A will provide Government Affairs staff with policy direction to inform legislative strategy and advocacy as the State Legislature considers revisions to possession of controlled substances statutes and related budget appropriations.

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Mayor Victoria Woodards

**BACKGROUND:**

The City Council adopted the Tacoma Citywide 2023 Legislative Agenda on December 6, 2023. At that time the following issues were not yet available for consideration by the Council:

Controlled Substances Legislation

The Washington State Supreme Court invalidated Washington’s strict liability drug possession statute which made simple possession a felony. In response, the State Legislature passed ESB 5746, which made possession of a controlled substance a misdemeanor offense and required two referrals to treatment services before a person could be criminally charged with the offense. The legislature’s new framework for possession of controlled substance offenses expires July 1, 2023. There are legislative proposals introduced this session and City Government Affairs staff need policy direction from the Council in order to advocate on behalf of the City’s public safety needs.

The “War on Drugs” led to harsh sentences for low-level and non-violent drug crimes, including possession of a controlled substance. The impact of the enforcement of these drug laws has resulted in profoundly unequal outcomes for communities of color. The impacts of these convictions extend beyond incarceration and fines. Convictions for these offenses impact many other areas of the person’s life including voting rights, employment, business loans, student aid, public housing and other public assistance, and can impact immigration status.

The City of Tacoma is committed to becoming an anti-racist organization and in ensuring that race is not determinative of outcomes in government systems and services. In alignment with these values, any legislation that permits a person to be charged with a crime for possessing a controlled substance should be limited in seriousness to no greater than a gross misdemeanor and should include the ability to avoid having the offense on the person’s records if they complete substance use disorder treatment.



Pierce County Council Legislative Agenda

At the time the City Council adopted the Tacoma Citywide 2023 Legislative Agenda, the Pierce County Council had not yet adopted their legislative priorities. The Pierce County Council has since adopted their priorities and the amendment before the Council today is to include the shared priorities in the city legislative agenda. This amendment will provide direction to Government Affairs staff to partner with the County to achieve positive legislative outcomes in the 2023 legislative session.

The Pierce County state legislative priorities to be included are:

- 1) **Housing and Homelessness** Support for state funding for the Pierce County Village, a permanent supportive housing development.
- 2) **Infrastructure** Support for state funding for county ferry system operations, maintenance, and preservation, including funding for MC Christine Anderson engine replacement project.

Immigration

There are several bills that may be considered by the legislature related to the Northwest ICE Processing Center. The current state legislative agenda includes support for policies that limit transfers into the detention facility and other proposals to regulate the facility, as well as funding and policies to assist those within the facility. The language does not extend to other bills related to the detention center. This amendment will give direction to the Government Affairs staff to monitor and engage on bills that affect the health, safety, or welfare of the individuals in the detention facilities and other information that may lead to individuals being placed into the facility.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

The public will have opportunities to provide comment during the City Council’s discussion and adoption of a position.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: *(Mandatory)***

As directed by Resolution 40622 as enacted by the City Council, the 2023 State and Federal Legislative Agendas were developed using the theme of anti-racist systems transformation.

**Livability: *Equity Index Score:*** Select Index Score.

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

This amendment will provide direction to Government Affairs staff as to how to advocate for possession of controlled substance policy and budget provisions that will impact public safety in the city.



**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Not adopting amendment.	None	Government Affairs staff will lack policy direction on effective engagement with state legislators on City public safety priorities.

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

Performance on state advocacy is evaluated based on progress in achieving the stated goals at the end of the 2023 legislative session. This includes meaningful progress or passage of policy bills and funding requests fulfilled.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Government Affairs staff recommend Council adoption this amendment to ensure legislative advocacy is effective and strategic.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

N/A

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
<b>TOTAL</b>			

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

Regional and State 5800

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?**

**NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW**

Any work on the policy position relating to this amendment is already provided for in the GRO budget.

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

No

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

No

**Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?**

No