



Creation of a Public Hospital District

Name of Author(s): Matthew Colston (Member, Vice Chair)

Whereas, Whatcom County has only one hospital, PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center, which is a hospital established by a Roman Catholic non-profit;¹

Whereas, the investigations of the Seattle Times, Public Broadcasting Service, and Washington Post showed that The U.S. Catholic Bishops' Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services restrict such services as abortion, birth control, sterilization and patients' rights regarding end-of-life treatment;^{2,3,4}

Whereas, in 2022, the US Supreme Court decided that reproductive rights can and shall be infringed on a provider by provider basis, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*;⁵

Whereas, healthcare outcomes in Whatcom County reflect broader systemic issues where profit-driven models have led to inadequate care and rising costs, disproportionately affecting working-class residents;

Whereas, access to essential services such as reproductive and gender-affirming care is threatened;

Whereas, RCW Chapter 70.44 Public Health Districts provides for the ability to create a public hospital district which could include a hospital or one or more clinics.⁶

Whereas, Skagit County is served by Skagit Regional Health, which is managed by a public hospital district voted on by the citizens.⁷

Be it therefore resolved, WDSA supports the creation of a public hospital district in Whatcom County that would enable the creation of a public hospital.

¹ [PeaceHealth in Bellingham, Washington: From Frontier Outpost to Regional Medical Center](#)

² [Ostrom, Carol M. \(May 20, 2013\). "UW Medicine, Catholic health system to have 'strategic affiliation'". The Seattle Times. Retrieved 9/13/2024.](#)

³ [Yang, John & Corkery, Andrew. \(Mar 17, 2024\) "Investigation finds policies at Catholic-run hospitals restrict reproductive health care". The Public Broadcasting Service. Retrieved 9/13/2024.](#)

⁴ [Sellers, Frances S. & Venkataramanan, Meena \(October 10, 2022\). "Spread of Catholic hospitals limits reproductive care across the U.S.". The Washington Post. Retrieved 9/13/2024](#)

⁵ [19-1392 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization \(06/24/2022\)](#)

⁶ [Chapter 70.44 RCW Public Hospital Districts](#)

⁷ [Board of Commissioners - Skagit Regional Health](#)