



CITY OF KIRKLAND
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Jim Lopez, Deputy City Manager for External Affairs
Erika Mascorro, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Manager
Daniel Lazo, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator

Date: March 5, 2026

Subject: **2026 Autism Acceptance and Neurodiversity Celebration Month Proclamation**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, proclaims April 2026 as “Autism Acceptance and Neurodiversity Celebration Month” in Kirkland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- In the United States, Neurodiversity Celebration Week is typically celebrated in March; April 2nd is officially recognized by the United Nations as World Autism Day; and Autistic Pride is celebrated in June. This year, the City of Kirkland will proclaim “Autism Acceptance & Neurodiversity Celebration Month” in April to promote understanding, acceptance, appreciation, pride, and support for the entire neurodivergent community.
- This proclamation aligns with Kirkland’s City values and strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).
- This proclamation is part of the City Council’s adopted 2026 proclamation schedule.

BACKGROUND:

In the United States, Neurodiversity Celebration Week is typically celebrated in March; April 2nd is officially recognized by the United Nations as World Autism Day; and Autistic Pride is celebrated in June.

Autism and neurodiversity are quite common in our society, with neurodivergent people making up about 20% of the population of the United States. People with neurodivergent neurotypes may think and process information differently than other neurotypes, including the neurotypical majority, which often leads to misunderstanding, mistreatment, exclusion, and “othering” of neurodivergent individuals.

The concept of neurodiversity, which values the natural and healthy diversity of human brains, is rooted in the social model of disability, which asserts that disabilities mostly stem from the lack of accommodation for individual needs in society. Neurodivergent people have identified firsthand what is important in their own accommodations and therapies, including promoting positive outcomes, preventing harm to people with disabilities, protecting autonomy, advocating for inclusion, being sensitive to past trauma, and supporting cultural competency.

Functioning labels, such as high or low functioning autism, are harmful as autism is not a spectrum of least-to-most autistic but is a spectrum of abilities that vary for each autistic person. Using positive language is important because most neurodivergent people see neurodivergence as a fundamental part of who they are and yet are not defined by it. When referring to an autistic or neurodivergent person or group, people should ask them how they would prefer to be identified, and this preference should take precedence over any recommended language.

Neurodivergent people are capable members of our society and contribute in many meaningful ways. Neurodiversity should be a valued and celebrated aspect of our community's diversity. Autistic and other neurodivergent people should be accepted and included in society, and more work is needed to achieve acceptance and appreciation of the neurodiversity that exists in our communities. Neurodivergent people need to be treated with love, dignity, and respect and to be provided with accommodations that lead to equal opportunities to thrive.

Intersectional factors of sex, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, and other demographic identities contribute to barriers in acceptance and diagnosis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is a difference in identifying neurodiverse Black and Hispanic children relative to White children because the studies have shown that stigma, lack of access to healthcare services due to non-citizenship or low-income, and non-English primary language are potential barriers to identification of neurodiverse children, especially among Hispanic children.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

This year, the City of Kirkland will proclaim "Autism Acceptance and Neurodiversity Celebration Month" in April to promote understanding, acceptance, appreciation, pride, and support for the entire neurodivergent community. Autism and neurodiversity emphasize the importance of celebrating the unique talents, skills, and contributions of neurodivergent people, while recognizing the barriers and lack of sufficient accommodations that exist in society.

This proclamation aligns with Kirkland's City values and strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). Council has adopted legislation supporting these values, including:

- **Resolution R-5240** (2017) declaring Kirkland a safe, inclusive, welcoming community for all people;
- **Resolution R-5434** (2020) expressing commitments to improving the safety and respect of Black people and approving the framework to create a community committed to examining and dismantling interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism in Kirkland;
- **Resolution R-5548** (2022) adopting the City's DEIB 5-Year Roadmap;
- **Resolution R-5686** (2025) declaring Kirkland as a welcoming, inclusive, and safe city for the Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex,

Asexual Plus (2SLGBTQIA+) people and recognizing their human rights and well-being;
and

- **Resolution R-5693** (2025) reaffirming the City's commitment to being a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community where all people belong.

NEXT STEPS:

The person accepting this proclamation will be announced at the Council meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – 2026 Autism Acceptance and Neurodiversity Celebration Month Proclamation



A PROCLAMATION OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND

Autism Acceptance & Neurodiversity Celebration Month April 2026

WHEREAS, Autism Acceptance & Neurodiversity Celebration Month promotes understanding, acceptance, appreciation, pride, and support for the entire neurodivergent community; and

WHEREAS, autism and neurodiversity acceptance emphasizes the importance of celebrating the unique talents, skills, and contributions of neurodivergent people, while also recognizing the barriers and lack of sufficient accommodation that exists in society; and

WHEREAS, autism and neurodiversity are quite common in our society, with neurodivergent people make up about 20% of the U.S. population; and

WHEREAS, neurodiversity should be a valued and celebrated aspect of our community's diversity, and additional work is needed to achieve acceptance and appreciation of the neurodiversity that exists in our communities; and

WHEREAS, using positive language when discussing neurodiversity is especially important because most neurodivergent people see neurodivergence as a fundamental part of who they are and yet they are not defined by it; and

WHEREAS, neurodivergent people need to be treated with love, dignity, and respect and to be provided accommodations that lead to equal opportunities to thrive; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to making Kirkland a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place where people of all abilities belong;

NOW, THEREFORE, Mayor Kelli Curtis, on behalf of the City Council, proclaims April 2026 as "Autism and Other Neurodivergence Acceptance and Appreciation Month" in Kirkland, and encourages all community members to promote acceptance and appreciation of autistic and neurodivergent people making valuable contributions to our community as family members, friends, classmates, co-workers, and neighbors.

Signed this 7th day of April, 2026

Kelli Curtis, Mayor