



Deborah Kafoury

Multnomah County Chair

June 3, 2021

Multnomah County **Adopted Budget Message**

At just over \$2.8 billion, Multnomah County's Fiscal Year 2022 budget is the largest that has ever been adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. Its historic nature, however, isn't simply derived from the dollar figure — this budget is also a product and a reflection of a uniquely historic year that has indelibly shaped the lives of our community members, and has crystallized the vision for what Multnomah County can become.

Since the beginning of last year, Multnomah County has led the public response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. We've worked hard to ensure that our neighbors who are most vulnerable to the virus, whether it's because they are surviving outside or belong to communities that experience steep barriers to care, have the support they need. The County has been challenged and moved to action by resounding calls to dismantle systemic racism and confront racial injustices. And we continued to be the dependable social safety net for people at risk of falling through the cracks, helped the community safely navigate a toxic air event and held multiple elections.

In the face of multiple, and sometimes intersecting, crises, Multnomah County stepped up and into spaces of need through effective and equitable services. And now, with vaccination rates continuing to climb, the County is poised to help lead our community into a chapter of recovery informed by the lessons and values that have allowed us to endure the past year.

This FY 2022 Adopted Budget has been crafted to address Multnomah County's most immediate priorities in the wake of a pandemic that will undoubtedly continue to have considerable impacts on the health, safety and stability of our community. At the same time, this budget looks toward our shared future by including once-in-a-generation investments — mainly through funds raised by three voter-approved ballot measures — that lay the groundwork for community-altering initiatives that can close disparities and improve the lives of thousands of people.

Creating the County budget is an exercise in converting priorities and values into a roadmap for action. However, this process is effective and inclusive only when it is responsive to the needs of the community, as told to us *by* the community. In light of the unparalleled amount of need that the events of this past year created, we were especially diligent about ensuring that all communities — and especially those who have been sidelined in the past — had seats at the table.

We heard from different cultural communities at every vaccine town hall, taking note of the insight people shared about the reasons behind vaccine hesitancy and their expertise about how the County could

better reach their communities through culturally specific methods of access. Thousands of community members shared with us about what they hoped a reimagined public safety system could look like, and the changes they wanted to see in the criminal legal system to help us achieve it. Business owners across the community — from those who have been established for decades to upstart entrepreneurs — told us about the kinds of support they required to make it through this pandemic. And when the County's own clients told us what they needed to begin their recovery from COVID-19, we listened and adjusted our priorities.

I do not take the time and energy they use to share their needs, or the trust they show in Multnomah County, for granted, and I am thankful for the relationships we continue to foster through community engagement.

This budget takes care to respond to the needs in front of us, build capacity to help community members recover from the pandemic and prepare the County for the work to come in the years ahead:

- Understanding that the pandemic is not yet over, we invested more than \$60 million to maintain our COVID-19 public health response. This investment is headlined by more than \$20 million dedicated to ongoing vaccination and testing efforts through the Public Health Division and the County's Community Health Centers that are geared toward culturally specific and other underserved communities. We are also dedicating \$20 million to support isolation, quarantine wraparound services, and the call center, and nearly \$5 million for ongoing surveillance and case investigation.
- To address the spike in community violence, we made more than \$4 million in investments to support the County's ongoing work of violence prevention, intervention and healing, as well as to new efforts. This includes efforts to reduce violence by taking a public health approach, which focuses on identifying root causes, leveraging community strengths, leaning on partnerships with the community and recognizing the role of systemic racism in who community violence impacts most. These investments are allocated to programs and services designed to reduce risk factors, and support individuals, families and neighborhoods who have been impacted by community violence build strength and resilience.
- Having endured a year during which the community experienced collective trauma, loss and destabilization to an unprecedented degree, we strengthened and expanded our core safety net services that intervene, prevent and respond to crises. The County also continued to increase the amount that we allocate to culturally specific community-based organizations, whose knowledge of and established relationships with the specific communities they serve have been invaluable to ensuring that County services and resources reach groups who have historically been overlooked and underserved.
- We made investments that lay the foundation for the success of all three voter-approved ballot measures that, together, have the potential to transform our community. The first year of funds from the Supportive Housing Services measure will be used to quickly connect 1,300 households to permanent housing through rent vouchers and supportive services to help people stay housed, while also making new investments in emergency shelter and culturally specific service providers. The revenue from the Preschool for All measure will be used to help rebuild a preschool workforce that has been devastated by the pandemic, and also build the administrative backbone of the program. And soon we will put money from the Library Building Bond to work, highlighted by the start of construction on a new flagship library in East County, putting capital back into the community by building a diverse, fairly paid construction trades workforce.

- We continued to invest in programs that advance Multnomah County's commitment to moving our vision of public safety away from incarceration and toward diversion, treatment, repair and rehabilitation. This includes dedicating funding to programs that offer housing and treatment to justice-involved individuals struggling with their behavioral health and culturally specific behavioral health services for people re-entering the community after incarceration. Our investments also support efforts in the District Attorney's office to both review the integrity of past convictions and help people facing barriers to essential resources by obtaining expungements, as well as increased support for survivors of domestic violence. By breaking cycles of harm and incarceration, and addressing racial disparities that plague the criminal legal system, Multnomah County will keep pursuing and supporting approaches that create true public safety.
- While the County supports the organizations that we partner with by funding their services, we also recognize that physical space and infrastructure are often part and parcel of their work to successfully serve and strengthen the communities they work with. One of the final amendments to our budget created a new \$1.5 million community capital fund to help offset capital expenditures for projects designed to build the capacity of community-based organizations that serve culturally specific communities most affected by the pandemic.

Adopting this budget is a significant step toward ensuring Multnomah County continues to be a place where everyone who needs help can find it, where everyone shares equally in opportunity and where the most vulnerable are protected. But urgent needs, like the crisis that thousands of our neighbors surviving outside face, remain, and became even more pressing amid the pandemic. The Joint Office of Homeless Services, supported by the City and County, has worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of people experiencing homelessness throughout our community, creating a pandemic shelter response that combined expanded shelter sites with new outdoor shelters and motel shelter sites. Not only did their work preserve the number of total beds during the pandemic, but the constant diligence demonstrated by staff and our service providers prevented significant outbreaks in our shelters and in encampments.

For years, the County has helped people surviving outside find safe, stable homes and the supportive services they need to stay housed, but our limited resources kept us from sufficiently meeting the scale of the need, which only continues to grow. However, bolstered by the Supportive Housing Services measure that passed just over a year ago, this budget invests more than \$150 million in the work that the Joint Office leads to end people's homelessness. I'm proud of the kinds of solutions we are pursuing — strategies that range from helping people into a permanent home through rent assistance and supportive services, to increased outreach and other investments that address more immediate needs like emergency shelter. But I'm also proud of how we're pursuing this work: through collaboration, partnership and a community-wide commitment to helping our neighbors surviving outside escape the trauma of homelessness for good.

The investments found in this budget place Multnomah County in strong position to respond to the needs of our community through our services and programs, but also through systemic changes and transformation. But our work is only beginning. The County is committed to engaging in continual listening and improvement; learning from and empowering the wisdom that resides within our communities; and always striving to become a local government and organization that our residents deserve.

The FY 2022 budget is my seventh budget as County Chair, and my 12th as a member of the County board. I am so proud that the hundreds of stakeholders who have been a part of this year's process helped shape what I truly believe is the most forward-thinking and ambitious budget Multnomah County has ever passed.

The partnership of my fellow commissioners has been critical to this budget process. Commissioners Sharon Meieran, Susheela Jayapal, Jessica Vega Pederson and Lori Stegmann: thank you for your work to guarantee that this year's budget was a true reflection of the County's values.

I'm also deeply grateful for my Chief of Staff, Kimberly Melton, who helped guide the budget process from beginning to end. I am also thankful for my incredible team: Liz Smith Currie, Adam Renon, Anna Marie Allen, Liam Frost, Nicole Buchanan, Raffaele Timarchi, Paul Park, Allison Conkling and David Kerry.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible work of Budget Director Christian Elkin, Chief Financial Officer Eric Arellano, and their respective teams. I have been thankful every single day of this budget process for their insight and guidance.

And finally, I want to share my gratitude to the employees of Multnomah County. I am humbled and inspired by the ways in which you've continued to support each other and show up for the community through such a trying and unpredictable chapter in our organization's history. Thank you for your resilience, your commitment and your service. It is an honor to work alongside you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair