



MULTNOMAH COUNTY OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

2023

STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

MULTNOMAH COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Deborah Kafoury, Chair

Sharon Meieran, Commissioner (District 1)

Susheela Jayapal, Commissioner (District 2)

Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair-Elect, Commissioner (District 3)

Lori Stegmann, Commissioner (District 4)

District Attorney Mike Schmidt

Sheriff Mike Reese

Sheriff-Elect Nicole Morrisey O'Donnell

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2023 State Legislative Agenda

The 2023 Legislative Session presents a unique opportunity to support essential programs and services in Multnomah county, the most populous and diverse community in the state with over 800,000 residents. In partnership with state partners, the County will work to develop innovative solutions to budget, service delivery, and racial equity challenges. The following report details the County's 2023 Legislative Agenda and budget and policy priorities for this session. We aim to do the following in this session:

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Protect and Expand Programs that Help Our Most Vulnerable

Multnomah County is committed to supporting the well-being of the children, families, and seniors in our community, making sure that everyone can reach their potential and fully contribute to our region. We see clear connections between physical health, behavioral health, early education, food security, and housing -- and how important all of these are for the safety of the diverse communities we serve. We support maintaining and bolstering an array of safety net services, all of which should prioritize the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- Expand **Oregon Health Plan Benefits** to indigent populations.
- Protect and expand funding for **innovative Behavioral Health projects**.
- Increase investment in **child care and early education for all children**, especially racial and ethnic minorities, dual language learners, and those with special needs.
- Support **Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services** and address workforce challenges to ensure a robust provider network.
- Expand **Older Adults' Supports** that are empowering and culturally responsive.
- Invest in **long-term Housing and Shelter support** to help stabilize funding resources.
- Support increased investments in services for individuals who have experienced or are at risk of sex trafficking.

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Invest in Oregon's Behavioral Health System

Multnomah County manages a recovery-focused, comprehensive system of care to prevent, intervene in and treat mental illness and addiction for approximately 53,000 children and adults annually. Through culturally responsive and evidence-based practices, we serve low-income, uninsured, and houseless individuals, as well as those experiencing a behavioral health crisis. We will continue to advocate for increased State investment in the Behavioral Health System's services and workforce to ensure all residents can access the critical services we provide.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- Support efforts to **create a new tax to fund 988 services** to ensure local governments have resources to provide and coordinate services.
- **Ensure greater equity in the Aid and Assist reimbursement rates** to better account for actual costs for service delivery across Oregon and increased costs for serving violent and high-risk populations.
- Support efforts to **retain and recruit skilled individuals to the behavioral health workforce**.
- **Amend Measure 110** statute to ensure greater partnership with Local Mental Health Authorities and Community Mental Health Programs and ensure a more equitable grantmaking program that funds substance use disorder treatment and wrap-around services for individuals with SUD and co-occurring mental health needs.
- Strengthen and **enhance treatment options** for those with co-occurring mental health and addiction treatment needs.
- Support an expansion of the Future Ready Oregon grant and **create a new Human Services degree and certificate program**.

Fund Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing

Homelessness remains at a crisis level in Oregon. Approximately 5,228 individuals were found in the 2022 point-in-time count to be unsheltered, in an emergency shelter, or in transitional housing in Multnomah County alone. We know that too many in this population have historically underserved needs; identifying as a person of color, LGBTQIA2S+, or with one or more disabilities. We are committed to supporting legislation that prioritizes expanding transitional housing, supportive housing, rent assistance, and wrap-around services to better meet the needs of adults and families facing hardships in accessing housing and experiencing homelessness in our community.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- Increase investments in long-term funding for local governments to provide **supportive and transitional housing services**.
- Increase funding for **long-term housing vouchers** to help stabilize individuals and families.
- Increase **GAP funding for affordable housing** to address the increased cost of building supplies.

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Promote Equity and Justice

Multnomah County is committed to making this region and the state an equitable, safe, and inclusive place for all individuals and communities. We will continue to work with the Legislature to confront systemic racism and injustice through public policy and budgetary reform. In partnership with our state partners, we will advocate for eliminating criminal justice and juvenile justice policies that disproportionately burden BIPOC, low-income, and special needs communities.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- **Reduce fines, fees, and restrictions** that criminalize BIPOC, low-income, and LGBTQIA2S+ communities and prevent individuals involved in the criminal justice system from finding stable housing, employment, and successful reentrance into the community.
- Correct the school funding formula to **provide juvenile justice settings with equitable funding** for educating students in detention.
- Support **Restorative Justice** policies that refocus on repairing the harm that has been caused.
- Advocate for continued **Juvenile Justice reform** by establishing a **minimum age for prosecuting** youth involved in the justice system.

Fully Fund and Support a Robust Public Health System

As the local public health authority, Multnomah County works to promote and protect health and prevent disease for all residents within the county. We provide each day low-cost family clinical and community services, pharmacy, dental, harm reduction, and laboratory testing services, among others. Our goal is to reduce health disparities experienced by BIPOC communities, especially chronic disease, and injury disparities, and to lower rates of the leading causes of preventable death. As we move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue advocating for increased investments and system improvements for the public health system to ensure better health outcomes for the diverse communities we serve.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- Support **continued investments for Local Public Health Authorities** statewide to ensure essential public health protections are in place for all Oregonians and equitable health outcomes are achieved.
- Establish a **Local Public Health Workforce Incentives Package** to promote a growing and diverse workforce.
- **Protect the integrity of human remains** donations by prohibiting profiting off of the public display of human remains.
- Support a **statewide ban on flavored tobacco** products to protect the health of all Oregonians.

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Support Economic and Community Development

The pandemic has highlighted economic inequities that BIPOC, East County, and other underserved communities in our region experience. Systems, structures, and institutions create barriers for diverse and low-income populations to achieve long-term economic equity. Multnomah County will support innovative and comprehensive legislative approaches that support economic stability, build financial assets and grow generational wealth for all communities by removing barriers and centering racial justice and equity.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- Improve broadband access by:
 - **Increasing broadband adoption** through infrastructure build-out.
 - **Addressing broadband affordability challenges** in areas with existing infrastructure.
 - **Supporting daily access** to the internet.
- Create tools to better **understand the impact of institutional and investment home buyers** on housing affordability and homeownership, especially for BIPOC and low-income communities.
- **Retain and improve tenant protections** including keeping a 10-day eviction notice, right to redemption, cap rent increases to 10% per year, and other policies that help tenants stay in stable housing.

Protect our Environment

Multnomah County works to protect the most vulnerable in our community by making the county a healthy and safe place to live, work and do business. We carry forward this work at the Legislature by advocating for budgetary and policy improvements that increase our tree canopy, address inequities in street safety, leverage federal transportation for sustainable projects, reduce wood smoke and diesel emissions, uplift our food system, and improve water health. We are especially focused on utilizing resources that can ensure the resilience, safety, and well-being of communities in the wake of climate change.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- **Protect and improve air and water quality**, especially in low-income communities and communities of color, by utilizing tools such as the Indirect Source Rule.
- **Aid residents in gaining access to heating and cooling options** as climate change continues to cause more extreme seasonal temperatures.
- **Support environmental justice efforts** to mitigate disparities in current and past social, environmental, and health policies and practices.
- **Create climate and disaster-resilient communities** by providing resources for vulnerable communities at centrally located resilience hubs.
- **Assist owners and operators of diesel engine equipment and vehicles to transition to cleaner technology** through incentives and assistance programs.

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Sustainably Fund Transportation and Infrastructure

The County carries significant responsibility in ensuring the economic vitality and safety of residents in our region and state by overseeing bridge and road maintenance, road capital improvements, transportation planning and development, and water quality surveying in Multnomah. The County is responsible for managing and maintaining six Willamette River Bridges and over 20 smaller bridges. We are committed to ensuring our most traveled bridges in the state are earthquake ready and receive necessary local, state, and federal investment.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- **Ensure that users pay an equitable share to use the road in Oregon**, including large heavyweight vehicles, to increase the safety for all road users and especially those in urban areas with many pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Enable counties to recover costs when issuing permits** for access to county right of way.
- **Assert an equitable share of transportation revenue for counties** from options such as gas tax, congestion pricing, bonding, or vehicle registration fees.
- **Seek a long-term and sustainable transportation funding mechanism** such as the road user charge.
- Leverage local and federal funds for the **Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge** project through State investment.
- **Fund safety, ADA and maintenance upgrades** on both state and local urban arterials.

Support More Equitable Revenue

As a county, our revenue-raising options are severely limited. It falls on county assessors and tax collectors to fund property tax state law administration, assessment, and tax collection. Multnomah County has lost significant revenue since property tax laws were changed in the 1990s, eliminating vital funding for local health and human services, schools, bridges, and fire departments, among others. Property tax law changes are unfair to homeowners and have created a system where two homes selling for the same value often have drastically different property tax rates. We need the State to provide leadership and make our current property tax and fee system more equitable in addition to raising other new revenue to better support local governments' important services.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- **Increase funding for the County Assessment Function Funding Assistance** grant program to better reflect the cost to administer property tax laws.
- **Ensure greater equity in the property tax and fee systems** to increase revenue for local government services.

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Provide Safe Harbor and Reproductive Health Protections

Multnomah County joins the millions of Americans who are profoundly dismayed and outraged by the Supreme Court's ruling to overturn Roe v. Wade. We believe reproductive health protections are a right, and access to abortion is fundamental to the autonomy, dignity, and freedom of those who can become pregnant. Multnomah County remains committed to advancing reproductive justice and preserving people's ability to make their own decisions about their reproductive health in Oregon.

Budget and policy priorities this session:

- **Provide a safe harbor** to individuals regardless of residency, receiving reproductive health care (e.g. abortions, birth control, anti-HIV medicine), and medical providers providing services in the state.
- **Increase funding for providing reproductive health care** for in and out-of-state residents.