

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners urges legislators to protect core safety-net services that keep Oregonians housed, healthy, and safe. And to do so by balancing any necessary cuts with responsible revenue options and a strategic use of reserve funds, including the Rainy Day Fund, to prevent disproportionate harm to core human services and to protect vulnerable Oregonians during a period of economic uncertainty. This must all be done without shifting costs for state services to local jurisdictions.

- **Protect funding for homelessness response**, including **rent assistance, eviction prevention, transitional recovery housing, and shelter capacity**. These programs are keeping thousands of individuals and families housed and stable or at a minimum sheltered. Support effective housing production strategies to address root causes of homelessness.
- **Prioritize behavioral health and treatment services**, including **substance use disorder treatment and community-based mental health treatment programs**, which are essential to maintaining public health. **Hold state agencies accountable to federal law as it relates to individuals with severe persistent mental illness who qualify for Medicaid long-term care**. This would free up critical SHS resources to serve more people experiencing homelessness by funding support services and case management.
- **Safeguard community corrections and specialty court funding**, which supports state-mandated probation and post-prison supervision, accountability, and wrap-around reentry support for justice-involved individuals. These vital resources provide the structure and accountability that folks need for a chance to change their path, strengthen families, and build safer, healthier communities.
- **Support economic development efforts**, including **workforce training and support, small business support, and technology development**, that help residents move from crisis to stability and opportunity. **Expand access to affordable child care**, maintain funding for OSU Extension and seek opportunities to grow natural resource industries. Economic mobility is one of the strongest tools we have to prevent poverty and reduce long-term reliance on the public safety net.
- **Defend local authority and uphold Oregon's tradition of home rule by opposing legislation that preempts local decision-making**. Counties and cities must retain the ability to respond to the needs of their residents, especially given the constraints that exist for local governments to raise revenue.
- **Increase protections for immigrant and refugee community members**, who have been impacted by federal immigration enforcement policies and actions. Advocate for funding and policies to address harms to Oregon communities most impacted by increased federal immigration enforcement.

## **The Human Cost of Budget Cuts**

### *How Funding Reductions Impact Multnomah County Residents*

Every day in Multnomah County, people are being asked to do the impossible - to stretch paychecks, to navigate systems that are broken, and to stay stable in a world where stability feels like a luxury. Federal administration changes and funding reductions at every level have created a slow bleed that's hard to see on a spreadsheet but devastating in real life.

The safety net that was meant to catch people is fraying. Accessing mental health care or substance use treatment often takes months, and by the time a bed or therapist is available, the person who needs help may already be in an emergency room, jail bed, or on the street.

Housing costs continue to push families to the edge. When rent rises faster than wages, one unexpected bill - a car repair, medical copay, a cut in hours - can lead to eviction. For those who lose their housing, getting back into housing is exceedingly difficult.

Without more housing production, particularly homes that are affordable to residents with extremely low to no income, we will continue trying to solve a structural shortage with temporary solutions. Rent assistance and shelter programs are essential, but they cannot be the whole strategy. Without adding supply, we are only managing crisis, not ending it.

These aren't isolated failures - they are the visible consequences of underfunding systems that are supposed to prevent suffering, not react to it. All of these forces - federal instability, state and local budget cuts, and the relentless cost of living - don't just add up; they multiply each other's harm.

Every cut we make now costs more down the road - in emergency rooms, in shelters, and in lives disrupted beyond repair.

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