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Multnomah County **Executive Budget Message**

INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to submit the Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget to my board colleagues and the public for their consideration and approval.

The Multnomah County budget provides a way to carry out the plans that we as a community want to accomplish, and to help us prepare for the unexpected.

Thankfully, our 2016 financial condition is strong enough to attain both. Our revenues reflect both an improving economy and prudent financial leadership from our Board of Commissioners with guidance from our Budget Office. But, if the Great Recession taught us anything, it is that it would be unwise to go on a spending spree just because of a good economic forecast. That is why the proposed Executive Budget builds on the programs and services that are working and invests in areas that will prevent much larger -- and costlier-- problems down the line.

One particular focus is the needs of our youngest and most vulnerable residents. Children are the foundation of a strong and successful community. Yet three 2014 county reports provide overwhelming evidence that this foundation is under duress. Over the past 20 years, the number of children in poverty in Multnomah County has grown at a rate much greater than the population overall. More children are likely to live in poverty in Multnomah County than adults. Children of color live in the most dire circumstances of all.¹

Health experts increasingly talk to parents and policymakers about how a child's brain grows and how homelessness, hunger, violence, and fear can harm that natural development.² The effects of that stress can linger beyond the short-term crisis, changing a child's brain and life course. It is for that reason that investing in housing, early mental health assessment and treatment, health equity, school attendance, and juvenile crime diversion are all critical. We are truly building Multnomah County's future.

¹ 2014 Poverty in Multnomah County Report, p. 25

² Maternal, Child and Family Health Data Book-Multnomah County, Oregon, September 2014; 2014 Report Card on Racial and Ethnic Disparities

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To be sure, I did not arrive here alone. Crafting an Executive Budget is one of the most important responsibilities of the Chair and one best undertaken in partnership with the community. This year my office organized a series of community budget listening sessions with Asian Health and Services Center, the Coalition of Communities of Color, Slavic Advisory Council, Somali Council of Oregon and Latino Network. In addition, I have met with, and heard from, residents throughout the county and their input has greatly informed my budget decisions.

I also want to acknowledge and express my appreciation to Multnomah County's Citizen Advisory Budget Committee (CBAC). This group of volunteers spends countless hours analyzing county programs. They examine history, review funding requests, and provide advice and insight into how we should spend the public's dollars.

BUDGET PRIORITIES AND HIGHLIGHTS

HOUSING

My top priority is making sure every child and family has a safe home. The lingering effects of the Recession, loss in safety-net benefits and demographic and market changes have pushed many people toward homelessness even as thousands of others have been successfully housed.

Reversing this trend requires Multnomah County to more closely collaborate with government partners, nonprofits, and the private sector in identifying goals, reducing duplication of efforts and aligning our resources. A Home for Everyone is our new community-wide initiative to end homelessness, led collaboratively by Multnomah County, the City of Portland, the City of Gresham, Home Forward, and local philanthropy.

Housing Placement The budget includes \$2 million in ongoing funds to increase the number of vulnerable people who are housed. This will fund a combination of direct rental assistance, housing placement services, and wrap-around income acquisition and health care supports for families with children, chronically homeless individuals and families, veterans, and youth.

New Housing Development This effort is supported by \$5 million in one-time-only funds to build additional affordable housing units, which are urgently needed in parts of the county.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

If Multnomah County is to flourish now and in the future, we need to make sure children develop intellectually, emotionally and physically. County government has a unique role in supporting families and children by providing services, convening a network of health, social and support partners, and promoting prevention.

SUN Expansion The budget supports departments working with school districts across the county to expand services to children and families who are most in need. This budget includes

\$280,000 to expand SUN services in Parkrose, Gresham and Reynolds school districts. We are partnering with educators to improve our ability to support pre-kindergarten transition which is proven to help children succeed in kindergarten.

School-Based Mental Health Of the roughly 142 schools in Multnomah County, only 25 percent have a dedicated mental health consultant. This limits the community's ability to identify and help children in need of mental health care. Yet early intervention and treatment is key to preventing more serious disorders, improving behavior and making sure a child develops and succeeds in school. The budget includes \$450,000 of new funding to put culturally-specific mental health services in schools so kids can more easily access the care they need to be healthy and ready to learn.

School Attendance The budget includes \$575,000 to expand the School Attendance Initiative to provide attendance case workers in five school districts to respond to high chronic absence rates. Attendance case workers will work intensively with 480 students and their parents/caregivers to address barriers to attendance and engagement in school.

Family Economic Opportunity Initiative Families living on a low income have fewer financial resources and fewer choices. The budget includes \$175,000 for a pilot that will provide financial literacy and asset building services to low-income households to help them move toward economic stability.

HEALTH

Health experts increasingly talk to parents and policymakers about how a child's brain grows and how homelessness, hunger, violence, and fear can harm that natural development.³ The effects of that stress can linger beyond the short-term crisis, changing a child's brain and life course. It is for that reason that investing in housing, early mental health assessment and treatment, health equity, school attendance, and juvenile crime diversion are all critical. We are truly building Multnomah County's future.

Promoting Health Equity This budget invests in dedicated Health Department staff to partner with communities of color which suffer lower life expectancy and higher rates of disease and poverty. They'll work to advance policy solutions that promote resilience, reduce community health risks and improve programs' ability to meet the needs of diverse communities. The budget also includes funding for a refugee coordinator for newly arrived refugees. It includes \$1.56 million for culturally specific outpatient mental health services for five underserved communities including Pacific Islander, African American, Eastern European and Native American and more comprehensive treatment and support for refugees. Finally, the budget

³ Maternal, Child and Family Health Data Book-Multnomah County, Oregon, September 2014; 2014 Report Card on Racial and Ethnic Disparities

includes \$140,000 for culturally specific training for community health workers to facilitate access to services and self-sufficiency in the refugee and African immigrant community.

Strengthening the Crisis Safety Net Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis are overwhelming current community resources, including our local hospital emergency departments. These individuals need and deserve specialized care and support. The budget sets aside \$3 million for a new behavioral health center. The budget also maintains a \$411,000 investment in an innovative Corrections Health pilot to reduce the risk of suicide in Multnomah County jails.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Approximately half of our General Fund budget goes toward public safety. The proposed budget maintains our current 1,310 jail beds and continues funding for the Department of Community Corrections Adult and Juvenile Service Divisions. In addition to maintaining core services, the budget adds funding for programs that emphasize prevention and early intervention services.

Youth Violence Prevention This budget includes \$323,000 for STRYVE, an initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that uses a public health model to prevent youth violence. Funding will provide outreach to geographic communities that experience higher levels of violence and risk factors through community health workers who have a direct connection with youth in the target communities.

Youth Intervention: Juvenile Justice Diversion Pilot There is a well-documented need to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system and provide meaningful alternatives for youth needing intervention and support. The budget includes \$500,000 for a collaborative pilot where we will partner with community providers, the Court system, Juvenile Services Division, school districts, and law enforcement on a program to divert first-time offenders to support services as an alternative to formal entry into the justice system.

Mentoring In response to recommendations from the Multnomah County Comprehensive Gang Assessment, the budget includes \$220,000 for mentoring services, which are a prevention and intervention strategy aimed at reducing youth involvement in gangs.

Neighborhood DA Program This innovative program is designed to assist the community in solving local crimes and improving public confidence in the justice system. The budget includes \$358,000 for the Albina Neighborhood DA and the Rockwood Neighborhood DA to continue the positive relationship with prosecutors, law enforcement, and the community.

Suicide Prevention in the Jails This budget strongly supports the Sheriff's Office work to prevent suicide in our jails and their commitment to provide a safe and secure housing environment for all inmates. To enhance this effort, the budget includes \$704,000 to replace outdated vent covers in cells which will greatly enhance safety and reduce the risk of suicide among inmates.

SAFE AND EFFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Multnomah County has an urgent need to replace the seismically deficient and functionally obsolete Courthouse. The budget addresses this need by dedicating a total of \$31.6 million of additional one-time-only General Fund resources to facility capital projects. In particular, this budget includes \$28 million of one-time-only funds to replace the Courthouse, a building essential to the functioning our judicial system and the safety of nearly 600,000 people a year.

CONCLUSION

The Executive Budget could not have come together without the work of many individuals.

I want to personally thank my colleagues Commissioners Jules Bailey, Loretta Smith, Judy Shiprack, and Diane McKeel for their invaluable insight and advice in this effort. Their public service and passion for equity and fairness makes us a stronger Multnomah County.

My thanks also to District Attorney Rod Underhill, Sheriff Dan Staton, and County Auditor Steve March for their valuable input.

None of this would be possible without the steady hands of Budget Director Karyne Kieta and her staff, who bring the highest professional standards to their analysis and assembly of this budget. Each entry reflects countless contributions by department directors, departmental leaders and their budget staffs. I would especially like to thank my staff for their work on this budget, in particular, Chief of Staff Nancy Bennett and Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal.

My goal for this budget is to equip the employees of Multnomah County with the means to best serve our community. Every day, these often invisible public employees patrol our streets, maintain our bridges, immunize our children, shelter the homeless, treat the sick, and protect the most vulnerable. In their name, I dedicate this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair