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Multnomah County Executive Budget Message

Introduction

The 2019 Multnomah County Executive Budget strives to reflect the mission and values of Multnomah County and maximize what I believe is the critical role this county and its hundreds of partners play in our community.

I am proud of, and motivated by, Multnomah County's record of aggressively tackling complex and long-standing challenges to our community, including homelessness, critical infrastructure needs such as bridge replacements, the opioid epidemic and gaps in physical and behavioral health care. Through its many lines of work, the County both seeds and spreads its vision of a community where anyone who needs help can find it, where everyone shares equally in opportunity, and where the most vulnerable are protected.

This vision has led me to develop a budget that prioritizes investments in equitable outcomes and eliminating disparities; strengthens the County's ability to respond to crisis and critical emerging needs; and both builds, and clears, pathways for families to achieve safety and stability, and to thrive.

This includes funding supportive housing vouchers for our hardest-to-house and most vulnerable families. We are boosting critical staffing to help us prepare for and navigate weather events and natural disasters. And, we are providing resources to implement the strategies that will improve equitable recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention here at Multnomah County. This budget also continues to dedicate dollars for capital infrastructure including the replacement of the Central Courthouse and Health Department headquarters. Investing in critical infrastructure needs today saves us money long term.

I approached this process mindful that the economic forces that have led to the County having expanded resources the last three years are turning. Inflation and interest rates are rising beyond our revenue growth and the cost of retaining our workforce and providing services in our community continues to rise. Our economic forecast shows a structural deficit in the coming years that requires us to carefully balance this budget with the future in mind. Toward that end, I have

directed every department to offer savings through administrative costs and clear-eyed evaluations of programming.

With these challenges in mind, this budget strives to accomplish the County's vision of justice, safety and belonging for our community, while keeping the organization fiscally sound and directing county dollars to where they can accomplish the most.

Equity in action

This 2019 budget makes unprecedented investments in strategies that directly address entrenched disparities in our county and within this organization. Racism and poverty are not unfortunate accidents. They are the unjust result of systematic decisions. And it is only through deliberate and sustained action on our part that we will make progress.

The County strives to have a workforce that reflects — and deeply relates — to the people who call Multnomah County home. This connection, enriched by diversity, creates a more effective organization and a community where all can flourish and lead productive lives. After spending months identifying structural and policy barriers to creating and maintaining the County workforce we envision, this budget invests \$500,000 for the implementation of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and recommendations from our organizational development consultants to shift our training, policy, practice.

As part of this work, the budget also includes full-time staffing for the College to County mentorship program that recruits, hires and develops students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college. The program offers unique access to careers at the County with a three-month paid internship for substantive work on projects that innovate, fill service gaps, and add capacity for existing staff in providing critical services. Students learn and apply the knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully complete assigned projects while gaining experiences that prepare them for permanent positions upon graduation.

Voter Access

The budget supports universal voter access and addresses barriers that keep people from successfully participating in elections by permanently funding successful pilots initiated by the Elections Division. This \$90,000 investment includes: improved ballot tracking and voter communication; offering voter information in extensive multiple languages; expanding 24-hour ballot drop sites and supporting a Voter Center Express in Gresham to reach the underserved areas of East County.

Pacific Islander Research Project

Communities that are closest to a problem are often closest to the solution and accurate data plays a key role in a community's ability to tell their story and seek effective and relevant services. Last fall, I met with the Pacific Islander Coalition, a group launched out of the efforts of the Health Department's Health Equity Initiative to better understand the barriers to health for a community

that represents families from many countries, traditions and languages. For too long, Pacific Islander children and families have been grouped into a single broad category for data collection, making it difficult to understand and address their unique challenges. This budget invests in a new partnership between the Health Department and Pacific Islander community to gather qualitative and quantitative data to understand needs, gaps and opportunities. This includes gathering baseline health behavior information, identifying health disparities, ensuring extensive community engagement, translation and co-created design and oversight with community members.

Responding to crisis and critical needs: Preventing harm, promoting safety, saving lives.

The County has a uniquely broad obligation to be there in a crisis, from a community emergency such as the Eagle Creek Fire, to an individual situation that threatens a person's safety, health or housing. The 2019 budget supports our overall emergency preparedness with a dedicated planner to update and manage the County's plans and training. For the first time, this budget also funds with the city of Portland, an emergency management position in the Joint Office of Homeless Services to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in our community during a disaster or weather emergency.

The 2019 budget also addresses the following emerging needs around individual public safety among some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Deputy Medical Examiner

The County Medical Examiner investigates and determines the cause of any sudden, violent or suspicious death. Although our community has grown nearly 30 percent since the 1970s, the number of Deputy Medical Examiners, or death investigators, has not. This budget covers an unfunded portion of a new deputy medical examiner position in order to increase the number of investigators able to respond to scenes, respond more quickly, and reduce overtime.

Senior-Specific DVERT Case Manager

Across local law enforcement, senior services and adult protective services, we are seeing sharp increases in the abuse of seniors by family members including adult children and grandchildren. This budget provides \$150,000 for a new position to link the domestic violence system to the senior service system, focusing on seniors who are being abused and are at increased risk of death.

Immigration Legal Consultation and Education

With continued fear and uncertainty around federal immigration and refugee policy, this budget maintains our investment of \$160,000 in providing education and legal counsel for families being served in our programs and boosts our capacity to work with domestic violence survivors who need immigration consultation.

Syringe Disposal

As we respond to the ongoing opioid epidemic, we've heard from community members increasingly concerned about syringes found in neighborhoods, public spaces and businesses. We know there are common sense solutions. My executive budget includes \$143,000 for more disposal boxes, as the County continues to work with our local and regional partners to provide more community-based syringe disposal options that are safe and accessible

Building pathways to safety, stability and thriving

I am committed to connecting families to a safe, stable home and to the supports and services that help young people grow and gain the social-emotional, academic and employment skills to successfully navigate high school, higher education and careers.

SUN Service System

The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) program is one of the central partnerships and investments that support our schools and the children and families who are most in need. Through SUN, students gain access to after school activities, academic support and mentoring. And, families can access classes, early childhood services, housing, energy and employment assistance. This budget maintains our core SUN services and adds \$230,000 for four sites. Specifically, we are partnering with the Centennial School District in East Multnomah County to ensure two current SUN sites are able to stay open despite changes in state and federal grant funding. And in Portland Public Schools, we are pleased to partner with the district as they open two new sites at middle schools this coming fall. We believe - as they do - that the community school model is a tremendous asset to support the reopening of Harriet Tubman and Rose City Park.

We are also partnering for a second year with the city of Gresham in an evidence-based program to link volunteer families, couples and individual mentors to young people in East Multnomah County who are in need of support.

Children, Trauma and Mental Health

In response to school and community partner requests for increased support for children who have experienced deep trauma, in 2018, we worked together to design a school-based mental health case management and technical assistance pilot. This budget continues funding for that collaboration that is improving our outreach and prevention efforts, and bringing additional skills training and resources for children and families.

Youth, Violence and the Justice System

In 2018, the Department of Community Justice worked with partners to build on the success of our Juvenile Service Division's Community Healing Initiative (CHI) by expanding eligibility through the Adult CHI program. Adult CHI works with African American males aged 17 to 25 convicted of felonies and some misdemeanors through mentorship, case management, and peer support. As a result we have decreased recidivism while supporting young men in their efforts to reach personal

goals, gain access to employment, and further their education. I'm excited to continue our \$90,000 investment in this program that works and help address long standing inequities in our criminal justice system.

We're also expanding our preventative efforts through other programs. For four years, Multnomah County helped convene a diverse set of stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan to address gang violence in our community. This work is vital, and requires resources to be successful. This budget includes funding to help coordinate implementation of the plan, as well as ongoing funding to culturally specific providers to ensure those community developed strategies move forward.

Housing Support for Families

We know what gives families the best chance at supporting their children and young people the best chance to thrive is a home - a stable place to rest, do homework, eat breakfast, read with their families. Children should be in a home, not in a shelter.

Toward that end, this budget includes a new investment of \$600,000 in supportive housing for families. This new program creates longer- term rent assistance vouchers and wrap around support services to help move some of our hardest to house families from shelter into permanent housing.

This budget continues a 2018 pilot that established a local long-term voucher program tailored to households with fixed incomes, to improve housing stability and reduce rent burden. In addition, we are increasing our capacity to divert families from shelter and keep them in their homes in the first place and investing for the first time in a position to increase services and connection to renters in unincorporated Multnomah County.

Community Partnership

The development of this budget has involved difficult choices. And it has been important to me to hear from community voices throughout its development.

I want to thank the Community Budget Advisory Committee for its work overseeing this process.

I also want to thank Commissioners Sharon Meieran, Loretta Smith, Jessica Vega Pederson and Lori Stegmann for their leadership, partnership and steadfast commitment to the values of justice and fairness. I'm grateful to the hard work of my policy staff, especially Kimberly Melton, Adam Renon, Anna Marie Allen and Liz Smith-Currie.

And as much as this document relies upon the Board to make it a reality, it wouldn't exist at all without the work of Budget Director Mike Jaspin and his staff. They have put in countless hours counting and recounting, balancing and rebalancing. And the budget I am presenting today is a product of that diligence and commitment to excellence.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the thousands of employees at Multnomah County. For some of you, the financial impact of this budget will be very direct. While departments have tried to direct cuts toward vacant positions, that was not always possible. I want to thank each of our employees for

their dedicated service, their commitment to the cause of improving our community, and their daily contributions. They make people's lives better, and I believe we all owe them gratitude and respect.

Sincerely,

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

Deborah Kafoury