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Multnomah County Executive Budget Message

The 2020 Multnomah County Executive Budget aims to invest our limited resources efficiently and equitably to support the health, strength and sustainability of our community and this organization.

At Multnomah County, we ensure that critical efforts like elections, tax collection and library services are managed with integrity and excellence. Most often, we meet people at a point of crisis or deep need. But it's not just services we provide — these contacts are turning points for community members and opportunities to shift the health, wealth and stability for entire families and generations.

Multnomah County employees are tasked with addressing some of the most urgent and complex issues of our time and they do so every day with creativity, skill and compassion.

Working with our community of nonprofit, business and jurisdictional partners, we leverage our resources to make an even bigger difference in the lives of the more than 800,000 residents.

But like many local governments across Oregon, Multnomah County is about to enter into a period of structural deficit, where the cost of doing the County's business will be greater than the revenue we have coming in. This means that every budget decision we make this year must be guided by our core values and priorities. But as importantly, it also means continuing to take actions to maintain our long-term fiscal health.

We must make some really hard decisions this year, but I am optimistic because Multnomah County, embodied by County staff, has always demonstrated that we are capable of rising to the challenge.

When I was first sworn in as a Multnomah County Commissioner in 2009, we faced the Recession, the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. As Chair, I have served throughout the recovery and subsequent period of economic expansion. Yet, despite falling unemployment and rising apartment towers, the people we serve have experienced continued pressure on their pocketbooks. At least 56,000 households in our region spend more than half of their income on rent, and roughly a third of our neighbors who don't make enough to meet their basic needs.

The County is experiencing pressure, as well, as the largest source of money the Board can spend — property taxes — are capped by 1990s ballot measures. The result is that the costs of providing services are outpacing the County's income. We started the budget process in November facing a \$6 million General Fund deficit. And, that gap is forecast to grow to \$34 million in the next five years.

This shortfall requires us to make strategic and effective investments in programs and services in response to current needs, while at the same time, ensuring we have the workforce and infrastructure capable of delivering those services in the future. We will also explore all options to ensure that future revenues not only provide the stability that we need, but respond to local economic growth, so that in the good times, everyone can benefit.

Advancing Equity

This budget supports the implementation of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and continues our efforts to use an equity lens to improve our practices and programs serving community.

Workforce Equity

When people come to the County for services, they expect equitable treatment, compassion and results. And the only way we can meet those expectations is through the dedication of our employees, who must also experience safety, compassion, inclusion and support at work. Over the past year, the Board of Commissioners adopted a Workforce Equity Strategic Plan to address institutional racism and inequities that have resulted in staff experiencing discrimination and disparities in promotions, terminations and support. This budget prioritizes efforts to better address discrimination complaints, improve our management structure, track our progress on addressing employee issues and support our department staff to implement equity strategies. Investments include:

- Independent Complaints Unit - Creating a nondepartmental unit of experienced investigators will help ensure the County has standardized procedures, training and tracking of complaints and outcomes.
- Management Training, Accountability and Support - Multiple one-time-only proposals within the Department of County Management will support the launch of a training conference for managers and supervisors, building and strengthening the critical skills needed to create and support a thriving workforce. To meet the long-term need for increased training, professional development and mediation, these proposals also include increased resources for conflict resolution, training development and implementation.
- Civil Rights Unit - This unit within the Office of Diversity and Equity will help advance workforce equity by supporting best practices in recruitment, hiring, promotion and termination decisions. This unit also ensures the County meets required Affirmative Action, Equal Employment and ADA accommodation responsibilities.
- Department Equity Managers - This budget supports new dedicated resources for equity managers in the Department of County Management, Department of Community Services and the Sheriff's Office. As departments implement new practices, professional development and organizational culture shifts, equity managers must play a central role in leading efforts across work units, bringing staff together and supporting transformation in a way that is consistent with countywide goals inside departments with diverse services and unique contexts.

Training & Technical Assistance: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women is a national movement that launched in response to the growing concern around American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) women and girls facing life threatening or life ending abuse. AI/AN women and girls are often misidentified when coming into contact with law enforcement and other programs and services overseen by governmental entities. This one-time offer will raise awareness and provide training to County staff working in public safety, law enforcement, community justice, mental health and human services. Training will include basic understanding of Tribal sovereignty, understanding the impact of data inequity and misidentification, and an overview of current national and local statistics.

Fair Pay Initiative

Over the last year, labor unions, community groups, subcontractors and day laborers have raised concerns about workers on construction sites being shorted in their pay throughout the industry. Wage theft robs workers of pay they have earned and makes it more difficult for honest contractors to compete for work. My budget funds a pilot to expand the County's existing compliance and enforcement efforts to prevent wage theft on County construction sites by providing technical assistance to contractors so they can properly classify and pay their workers, make sure workers know their rights, and train volunteers to help us verify our certified payroll.

Community Health, Safety and Housing

The executive budget maintains critical housing assistance and shelter beds for families, youth, justice-involved individuals and those facing domestic violence. We are also prioritizing services to reach those in need throughout our community from downtown Portland to East County. Most importantly, we are using ongoing dollars to improve the quality of our programs and to fill critical gaps in our services to those who are seeking shelter and permanent housing.

Housing Assistance for Employment Program

Housing insecurity is both a function of rising rents and stagnating, or even falling, incomes. But we have seen that, when we can combine rent assistance with job training, people can better achieve stability and take advantage of opportunities. Sixty-seven percent of participants who received rent assistance in this program were more likely to obtain career-track employment while increasing their income at double the rate of those without housing assistance. It's because of proven results like these that we dedicated an additional \$100,000 in ongoing funding to this program.

Gresham Community Outreach

The Gresham Community Volunteer Corps engage people who are transitioning from homelessness and addiction in volunteer opportunities. The \$50,000 ongoing investment supports the program's efforts to build marketable skills for those individuals experiencing homelessness, while also providing avenues for participants to engage with the community. Activities include 60 hours of mentored work experiences, learning new skills and improving work habits with the goal of permanent employment.

H.O.P.E. Team

Under the leadership of Sheriff Mike Reese, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office created the Homeless Outreach and Programs Engagement (HOPE) Team two years

ago. Team members work to build networks with service providers and create relationships with vulnerable populations in the field, connecting them with needed services. This team has been funded with one-time-only dollars in previous budgets. This executive budget provides the HOPE team with ongoing County General Fund revenue to ensure this critical work has consistent funding.

Alternatives to Incarceration

This budget reflects my ongoing commitment to smart alternatives and diversion opportunities that promote public safety in ways that truly change behavior. The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program will continue to provide law enforcement with an opportunity to divert low-level drug offenders away from jail and toward opportunities for treatment and housing. I've also maintained funding for the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Close Street Supervision program. Developing a robust continuum of jail alternatives requires investments in community supervision programs, and Close Street provides effective monitoring and oversight of people awaiting trial. Finally, I've restored funding for the Turn Self In Program, which provides a formal weekend sentencing alternative for judges to impose on offenders. This allows them to maintain their employment or other family and life obligations within the community.

Prevention and Pathways to Stability

Social and environmental factors like poverty, discrimination, a lack of housing and healthcare, food insecurity and isolation can cause lifelong issues that come at a great cost to individuals and to the safety net. This budget also focuses on preventing and taking early action on these challenges to help people from ever reaching the point of crisis. Our upstream efforts include connecting children, families and clients to trusted case managers and health providers. We must also offer options for people with a behavioral health issue to better connect with peers, so they can reach out and find support from people who know what they are going through.

Office of Consumer Engagement

A key part of designing and delivering successful behavioral health services is ensuring peer voice is present. That's why we created the Office of Consumer Engagement three years ago in the Mental Health and Addiction Services Division, which is the only county-level office of its kind in Oregon. The Office works with the division, department and community to lead, support, and advise on peer efforts across our organization. They also strive to increase awareness and engagement of consumers at the policy level and in our community.

The executive budget includes funding for a full-time manager of the office. This leadership will not only manage the existing staff, but also support expansion, coordination and quality of peer services in Multnomah County.

Reynolds Student Health Center

Funding student health centers is a smart investment — keeping kids healthy, in school and ready to learn. Reynolds School District educates more than 11,000 students — two-thirds of them from low-income families — yet lacks a student health center. So I'm pleased that, after a two-year planning process, the Health Department's Student Health Center program will be expanding to Reynolds High School next year.

Vaccine Outreach Program

As we saw during the recent Clark County measles outbreak, vaccine hesitancy remains a serious issue that lowers immunization rates in our community and increases the spread of preventable communicable diseases. In collaboration with HealthShare of Oregon, we are looking closely at vaccination data in Multnomah County to understand where further education and outreach efforts are needed most in our community. This \$80,000 one-time investment will deepen our prevention work and, in partnership with community leaders, will develop culturally-specific resources to expand culturally-responsive communication and outreach strategy.

Nurse Family Partnership

Supporting the health and well-being of mothers and their children is central to Multnomah County's dedication to helping families to break the cycle of poverty. Nurse Family Partnership is an evidence-based, community health program that partners low-income, first-time mothers, with a home-visiting Community Health Nurse. The executive budget funds this program at \$1 million, eliminating vacant positions but maintaining the current staffing and client capacity. In the coming years, we will continue to work with partners in the County and across the community to ensure that we focus our limited dollars on the children and families who are most in need.

Community Legal Clinic

This specialized area of service allows participants to consult and connect with legal experts so they can legally remove the fines and misdemeanors on their record that prevent them from getting housing, education, and other opportunities. By expanding this program with an additional \$100,000, this service will reach more people, supporting community members to remain in their existing homes, apply for new housing, or obtain employment.

Operations and Systems Improvement

This budget funds a number of efforts that will continue to modernize and improve operations and infrastructure to provide services as well as support and strengthen nonprofit partnerships.

Quality Improvement Pilot

This one-time investment will allow us to work with a group of nonprofit partners to assess and assist contractors in establishing best practices and policies that ensure safety, quality and efficiency. This work will also help determine what departmental capacity and approaches can best support social service contractors in meeting these goals.

Electronic Medical Records

Our juvenile justice health system records are still maintained on paper, an archaic and inefficient way of tracking medical documents. This budget invests in electronic medical records for the Juvenile Detention Program at the Juvenile Justice Center. Implementing electronic medical records will increase chart accuracy and support continuity of care for patients who leave the justice system.

Multco Align

Multco Align has modernized our systems - from payroll to purchasing. It's strengthening our human resources and finance systems. This budget continues ongoing and one-time funding to complete the project team's work and ensure we have the support needed to fully implement and use this new cloud-based system.

Conclusion

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, Susheela Jayapal, 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 team led compassionately and tirelessly by Chief of Staff Kimberly Melton.

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 untold hours counting and recounting, balancing and rebalancing. This budget is a product of their 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 improving our community, and their daily contributions. They make people's lives better and I prepared this budget with gratitude and respect, to support their work.

Sincerely,

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

Deborah Kafoury