



---

# Deborah Kafoury

## Multnomah County Chair

April 22, 2021

### **Multnomah County**

### **Executive Budget Message: COVID-19 and American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**

A little over a year ago, we watched, and prepared, as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated quickly from a far-off news story into a direct threat to the health and safety of our own community. And in the year since, we have seen our community stretched to its limits by illness, by financial hardship and by profound disruptions to our sense of stability.

There isn't a day that goes by when I don't reflect on how much things have changed, and how those changes have come on the backs of some of the steepest and most urgent challenges that Multnomah County has ever faced. But I think just as frequently about how we responded with urgency and with compassion, relying on a depth of learned expertise and community wisdom to navigate the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has been 14 months since Multnomah County fully activated our Emergency Operations Center and the countywide response to this emergency. In this time, we've acted to give public health guidance to our community and trained trusted community health workers to share information and foster engagement. We've investigated thousands of positive COVID-19 cases and outbreaks, and used that information to better understand profiles, risks and connections.

We developed an online destination to share news and answer questions, including a data dashboard that gives critical insight into how the virus is moving through our community. And most recently, we worked alongside community members, leaders and partners to launch vaccination efforts that focus our limited resources on reaching those at highest risk for illness and death.

As the pandemic led to an increase in both the frequency and severity of domestic violence and sexual assault, I saw our programs collaborate within the system and come up with new ways to make sure survivors could connect to critical, life-saving services.

We tapped into our network of partners to make sure that every last dollar of rent assistance we were given made it into the hands of families. And when we received funding that could be used as direct aid, Multnomah County established dozens of partnerships with community-based organizations to quickly distribute more than a million dollars to struggling families.

In FY 2021, Multnomah County deployed more than \$120 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds from local, state and federal sources. And we know that the needs in our community have only continued to deepen and increase.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) was signed into law on March 11, 2021, and provides \$350 billion in additional funding for state and local governments navigating the impact of the

COVID-19 outbreak. These resources will greatly bolster our ability to respond to and recover from this public health emergency, address the impacts of COVID-19, and help offset reductions in revenue where feasible.

Funds will be distributed by the U.S. Treasury to states and eligible local governments, and are to be used to cover expenses related to COVID-19 and impacts from the pandemic. This legislation includes a direct allocation of funds to Multnomah County — \$157.6 million to be spent by 2024 — as well as opportunities to access other specific programmatic resources to respond to the pandemic. The County's initial allocation for FY 2022 is \$78.8 million. This memo's spending plan reflects this direct allocation, as well as other dedicated COVID-19 funds from state and federal sources, in total allocating more than \$95 million.

In order to live, to work, to connect and to rebuild our community, we must continue many of our current efforts and lean further into the health, housing and community services that not only help manage the spread of the virus, but also provide stability and accelerate recovery within our county. But most importantly, we must strive to respond in ways that truly reflect our values. We were guided by several key principles as we developed our FY 2022 ARP investments:

- We **inclusively lead with race** in order to best serve people and populations who have been disproportionately impacted by inequities. We honor the expertise, relationships, and resilience within communities of color through our partnerships and co-create solutions.
- Using an **equity and racial justice approach** helps us take into consideration inequities, current disease trends and a deeply held belief that there is tremendous value and positive impact in services provided in the language and cultural traditions of our diverse communities.
- Providing excellent service and supporting people in our community is a hallmark of what we do as a government, safety net system and Local Public Health Authority. County employees and our community partners are the heart of this work. Our work is at its best when we **engage and listen to the expertise and insight of those who are in and working with our community each day**.
- Embedding a **public health approach** within our priorities allows us to consider opportunities to impact the health and wellness of our community at an individual, community and population level, using data and making investments that can have short-term and long-term benefits.
- **Partnership with our jurisdictional partners, community leaders and community-based organizations** is a key component to increasing the effectiveness and impact of the millions of dollars being deployed throughout the county, region and state.

## **FY2022 American Rescue Plan Investments**

Supporting the response to this public health emergency continues to be our top priority. With state and federal funds, **we will dedicate more than \$60 million to fund these critical activities within the County**. This includes nearly \$5 million for contact tracing and case investigation, about \$20 million to support isolation, quarantine, wraparound services and the call center, and more than \$20 million dedicated to testing and vaccination through the Public Health Division and our Community Health Centers. We will continue to support increased behavioral health services, increased capacity for the Health Officer program, and additional staffing in County communications and emergency management. This plan will also fund activities that improve remote work, air quality within County buildings, and the ability to track and manage these new federal funds.

Part of our responsibility at Multnomah County is to uphold the welfare of those who are in our direct care, particularly those in our **congregate settings like shelter, jail and juvenile detention**. We work to minimize risk and leverage increased supports, continuing to recognize that this is a virus that thrives on people being together. As part of our COVID-19 response, we have dedicated nearly \$2.2 million to continuing social distancing, enhanced cleaning and increased health services within our adult and juvenile facilities. We also continue to support additional transportation and housing supports for those exiting jail and correctional facilities.

This spending plan also continues — with partners at the City of Portland — funding the COVID-19 response within the Joint Office of Homeless Services to protect those who are unsheltered and in shelter. For FY 2022, Multnomah County has dedicated \$5.1 million in ARP resources towards the ongoing response, which will be combined with additional revenue sources, including federal CARES funds, federal grants and projected FEMA reimbursements. This plan also allocates an additional \$675,000 to a partnership with Portland Street Medicine and expanding access to hygiene services.

New investments through the American Rescue Plan have also allowed the County to restore and continue important services that might have been impacted by budget cuts at the local, state or federal level. Our FY 2022 ARP spending plan ensures the District Attorney's office has sufficient staffing to work through the backlog of domestic violence cases created as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. It also fully funds staffing positions within Corrections Health and within the Nurse Family Partnership program in Public Health.

**Wraparound services and meeting basic needs** are the core work of Multnomah County, and we are committed to maintaining our social service safety net and, as much as possible, investing in services that increase access to food, housing assistance, healthcare, mental health services and case management. That means investing more deeply in the kind of client assistance — gift cards, utility support and food access, for example — that our communities need most. This plan includes more than \$9 million for these efforts across County programs.

When this pandemic began, we didn't know how long it would last, who would become ill or how deeply it would impact us. What we have seen over the past year is the ripple effects of a virus that reach far beyond physical health. Our community has been deeply impacted economically, mentally and emotionally, as many have lost loved ones, housing, stability and community connection.

With the American Rescue Plan funds, Multnomah County has the opportunity to respond to crisis and make investments that address some of the negative impacts of this pandemic, and strengthen our community as we turn toward recovery and health.

#### Housing Stability and Eviction Prevention – \$816,000

The State's residential eviction moratorium is currently set to expire on June 30, 2021. Upon its expiration, we expect evictions for non-payment of rent to begin immediately and to disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous and other communities of color. Legal representation can mean the difference between keeping a home and losing one, or securing enough time and resources to find a new one. This plan funds two attorney positions and a paralegal position to represent households in eviction proceedings in Multnomah County.

The economic impacts from COVID-19 will likely be felt by many families well into the future. And compounding this potential scenario are the projections that rents will soon rapidly increase due to a shortage of new housing in the pipeline. A new investment in renter support would provide critical help for families in mid and east Multnomah County, focused on communities of color. Peer counselors will provide culturally specific one-on-one support and coaching to help renters work on their credit and budget, and prevent evictions.

This Executive Budget already includes \$48 million of state and federal Emergency Rent Assistance to continue our efforts to keep people housed throughout this pandemic. Our ARP spending plan includes additional staffing resources to help get these dollars out to community members quickly, effectively and equitably.

#### Wraparound Supports for Youth and Families – \$5.4 million

As many students return to the classroom this spring after a year of distance learning, families will look to summer as an opportunity to rebuild skills and social connection in preparation for next school year. With ARP dollars, we will support an enhanced SUN School summer program that will provide students with opportunities for academic support and enrichment activities in collaboration with partner school districts.

While our SUN programs were not able to offer activities and academic support in school buildings for almost a year, that hasn't kept our community partners from reaching out to and engaging with families and youth. As families faced new and increased obstacles, our SUN System responded with increased personal connection to basic needs and services. To continue these vital services for families, my spending plan includes new family resource navigators for our SUN schools and community-based partners.

#### Addressing Community Violence through Prevention, Intervention and Healing – \$2.7 million

Right now, our community is hurting from a surge in gun violence that has killed people, injured more, and traumatized communities and neighborhoods. But the underlying contributors to violence didn't just appear overnight. They've existed in our community, but were made worse and more volatile by the pandemic.

We are committed to confronting this pressing challenge by investing more in services that help reduce risk factors, and build the resilience of individuals, families and communities who have been most impacted by the violence in our community.

Starting with prevention investments, the County is expanding the reach of its successful Habilitation Empowerment Accountability Therapy, or HEAT, program. Additionally, we are investing in the Department of Community Justice's Elevate program that will provide community support and resources to young men in the Latinx and the African Immigrant communities impacted by gang involvement and gun violence, including peer support, skill building and culturally responsive services.

We're also expanding intervention strategies that focus on addressing behavioral health needs and interrupting cycles of violence. The Gun Violence Behavioral Health Response Team provides mental health consultants and peers to work with gun- and gang-impacted youth and families. At the Department of Community Justice, 23 of the last 55 homicides have had a connection to their adult or juvenile caseloads. The Addressing Trauma of Gun Violence program will use Community Health Specialists to help families develop safety plans and provide trauma support. In the Public Health Division, additional Community Health Specialists will work with youth using the Cure Violence model, addressing violence, health promotion and disease prevention.

Addressing trauma and providing victim supports is a critical part of breaking cycles of violence and harm. We've seen a 60 percent increase in the number of victims of violence who have signed up to be notified of their rights. Added capacity will ensure those notifications of rights happen in a timely manner in compliance with state statutes.

New funding in the Behavioral Health Division will also provide culturally specific opportunities for women emerging from trauma or transition to engage in workshops and one-on-one support to heal and recover using values from various faith practices.

#### Deepening Safety Net Services – \$1.155 million

During this pandemic, we have seen a marked increase in domestic violence within our community. This spending plan increases culturally specific case management services to better meet the needs of community members seeking help. Additionally, we are investing resources to ensure that in cases of high lethality domestic violence, we have victim advocates available to provide long-term case management and advocacy.

There is also additional funding for the Behavioral Health Division's peer recovery services and recovery center operations. Reports of increased substance abuse during the pandemic require multilayered responses, and peers play a critical role in building relationships and assisting individuals in recovery.

#### Disease Prevention, Intervention and Surveillance – \$1.4 million

Never has it been more clear that the assets and infrastructure of Multnomah County Public Health are vital for the protection of all our county's residents. Even as we have centered our public health work around COVID-19, other diseases like Ebola, tuberculosis and syphilis continue to impact families and communities. This spending plan expands staffing in the County's Communicable Disease Services to respond to outbreaks, perform case investigation and do lab reporting. It also creates and adds Emerging Infectious Disease staffing to expand and deepen disease response.

This plan also invests in a Health Data Exchange, which will allow Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers and hospitals to better share data and create a more robust system for communicable disease notification. This shared technology will also improve quality assurance and quality improvement for emergency care systems.

#### Building Community Connection, Assets and Resilience – \$1.9 million

At Multnomah County, we often focus on the vital services that we provide to individuals, to families and to those in the midst of crisis. But what we also recognize is that services are just one component to stability, health and thriving communities. This spending plan invests in initiatives that are critical to building community strength, break cycles of poverty, and help build generational wealth and wellness.

An expansion to our Public Health Community Partnerships and Capacity Building team will increase investments in community coalition development in culturally specific communities — specifically Asian, Pacific Islander, Latinx, and Black and African immigrant communities.

A new Library Mobile Resource Center will take the Multnomah County Library into neighborhoods most in need of the services our library sites offer as our community recovers from the various impacts of the pandemic. It will provide hands-on access to 21st century technology, wireless internet access and STEAM learning opportunities.

The mobile resource will also be used to provide access to library materials and programs.

As we continue to respond to the immediate needs of our community during the pandemic, we must equally focus on how we will build the pathway to a racially just and equitable economic recovery. This plan supports the creation of the Multnomah Mother's Trust Project, which will partner with approximately 100 Black, women-led families to provide immediate access to a monthly income to meet basic needs and, over the coming year, develop connections to other community assets. With this investment, Multnomah County will continue efforts to develop a Baby Bonds pilot program.

## Conclusion

We anticipate the needs in our community will far exceed even the resources and investments shared here. Our community has done herculean work in following guidance to stay home and stay safe, but the impact on the fabric of our community's physical, mental and economic health has been significant.

Even with the beginning of the end of the pandemic in sight, our community and our organization face a long road ahead. The work of addressing the deep harms that the pandemic has caused will take years, as will the work of recovering from the pandemic in a way that builds something better, more equitable, and more just than before.

We've all seen how capable Multnomah County is in responding to big challenges, and I have never been more hopeful about what this community and this organization can become.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Deborah Kafoury