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MULTNOMAH COUNTY OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

2023

# Federal Legislative Agenda

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# MULTNOMAH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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The Office of Government Relations coordinates with elected officials, County staff, the federal delegation, and the contracted lobbyist to monitor and influence federal legislation, appropriations, and policy. While many federal issues are of interest, only those with a direct impact on County services and/or challenge Multnomah County's core values will likely warrant a response.

All advocacy is coordinated with the County's elected officials and impacted departments and may include: coordination with the federal delegation; information dissemination to staff and residents; public comment on proposed administrative rules; written and/or oral testimony; a targeted funding request, and/or; other efforts deemed necessary and appropriate.

**March 2023**

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## **Introduction**

Multnomah County partners with federal leadership, departments, and the Oregon delegation to improve access to quality, evidence-based services; prioritize the needs of vulnerable residents; and promote an equitable, healthy, and prosperous community for all. These efforts have a singular focus: to ensure federal investments, policies, and actions are consistent with the County's values of social justice, equity, stewardship, acceptance, and integrity. Equally, the County supports a service continuum across functions that offers a responsive mix of prevention and intervention services for residents of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, and backgrounds, particularly those least able to advocate for themselves.

The County recognizes priority issues facing residents are complicated, requiring multiple systems weaving together resources and solutions to make long-term progress towards shared goals. County leadership is committed to encouraging collaboration across systems for long-term results while also maintaining a laser focus on improving short-term outcomes for the community's most vulnerable residents. The priorities outlined in this document reflect this dual focus across programs and services.

In FY 22, the County received approximately \$336 million in federal funding: \$59 million in appropriated program funds; approximately \$100 million in Medicaid/Medicare reimbursements, and; \$177 million in one-time only COVID stimulus, including ARPA and CARES Funding. (See *Appendix A for more information on Federal Funding Trends*). These funds supported a broad array of services including WIC, housing, health clinics, emergency management and aging services, among others, and were combined with County General Funds and other non-federal sources to form the foundation of interdependent services and supports essential to the community and its long-term ability to thrive. The following report details Multnomah County's Federal Legislative Agenda including budget and policy priorities for the 118th Congress.

**[Reduce Homelessness and Improve Housing Resources](#)**

**[Expand Access to Health and Behavioral Health Services](#)**

**[Protect and Expand Supports for At-Risk Individuals](#)**

**[Ensure an Effective and Equitable Public Safety System](#)**

**[Ensure Effective Tribal Consultation Capacity](#)**

**[Dismantle Systemic Racism](#)**

**[Improve Resiliency](#)**

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## **Reduce Homelessness and Improve Housing Resources**

Multnomah County works collaboratively across jurisdictions and non-profit partners to provide a continuum of services that meet the complex needs of those experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their housing. In addition, the County works closely with partners to expand affordable housing in the region and coordinate efforts to transition individuals into available units.

**Related budget and policy priorities include:**

- Support continued investments in **coordinated, community-driven, and equity-focused efforts to reduce homelessness**, as outlined in the White House’s “All In” Initiative.
- **Expand federal investment into vital existing funding streams, including housing vouchers** (e.g. HUD’s Continuum of Care (CoC), Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), HOME Investments Partnerships Program, and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)).
- Promote policies allowing local governments flexibility to **address local issues and ensure access to all vulnerable populations in need of services**, regardless of gender identity, immigration status, etc.
- **Support an elevated focus on the intersection of homelessness, behavioral health, and criminal justice**, a unified and necessary approach to provide the level and quality of services required to succeed.

## **Expand Access to Health and Behavioral Health Services**

Federal policy and funding is a cornerstone of County efforts to equitably ensure residents’ health and well-being by adequately funding medical and behavioral health services, public health systems, and other essential programs to improve the overall health of the County’s most vulnerable residents.

**Related budget and policy priorities include:**

- Support the recent policy changes and expanded funding options for critical programs such as Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) as well as behavioral health services that **improve the health and well-being of vulnerable populations**.
- Implement and sustain **full funding for essential public health infrastructure and planning efforts** to ensure the safety and well-being of residents in advance of the future pandemics and public health emergencies.
- Support **codifying women’s right to health care and abortion nationally**.
- Support coordinated efforts with state and federal partners **to fully fund, train, retain and expand the health/behavioral health workforce**, which has been decimated by our COVID-19 response and economic changes.

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## **Protect and Expand Supports for Vulnerable Populations**

Lingering impacts of the pandemic and rising inflation have stretched the ability of vulnerable individuals and families to meet their basic needs, let alone thrive. Federal entitlements (e.g. Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare) and means-tested safety net services (e.g. SNAP, TANF, WIC, etc.) as well as access to jobs and broadband are essential to the well-being of the County's most vulnerable residents, including vulnerable children, families, disabled/aging residents, survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking, as well as immigrants and refugees. Without these supports, the County's efforts to address homelessness and ensure all residents have opportunities to succeed would be negatively impacted.

**Related budget and policy priorities include:**

- Ensure the full suite of entitlement and safety-net services is **viable for the long-term, funded at levels adequate to meet individual's needs, and accessible to all**, regardless of immigration status.
- Work to reinstate an **expanded and accessible Child Tax Credit for all families with children 0-17**.
- Support passage of the **Asylum Seekers Work Authorization Act of 2023 and other jobs programs**.
- Expand **access to Broadband through infrastructure build-out and subsidies** for low-income individuals.

## **Ensure an Effective and Equitable Public Safety System**

Multnomah County is a recognized leader in progressive public safety programming and has successfully reduced prison, jail usage, and recidivism across populations. Despite these successes, crime rates and gun-violence have risen since the beginning of the pandemic, stressing the public safety system and the community's perception of the region's livability. In response, public safety partners have launched an array of interlinked initiatives to ameliorate these concerning trends.

**Related budget and policy priorities include:**

- **Expand justice reform efforts** and the use of evidence-based practices.
- **Increase support for community-based violence prevention activities**.
- Prioritize efforts to identify and address **racial and ethnic disparities** into all federally funded public safety programs.
- Ensure on-going federal funding to **address the needs of all survivors of crime**.
- Ensure adequate funding for **a balance of prevention and intervention services** that encourage strong communities and families.
- **Support legislation that would allow Medicaid and Medicare benefits be maintained for those housed in county jails** and the braiding of criminal justice, housing, and behavioral health funding to address these interrelated issues.

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## **Support Effective Tribal Consultation Capacity**

While Tribal consultation has become a priority for local, state, and federal agencies seeking to align policies and services, Tribal funding allocations and other resources remain stagnant. As a result, many Tribes do not have the capacity to adequately respond, let alone engage, in processes with the potential to impact the health and vitality of their members and lands. Furthermore, Tribes will continue to see an increase in requests for partnership as more US government agencies require consultation or engagement as a part of planning processes. Without ongoing support to create additional staffing capacity, Tribes and the County will miss opportunities to develop or inform culturally responsive and equitable programs and services designed to serve the vast Native American population that resides here.

**Related budget and policy priorities include:**

- **Advocate for federal investments to create capacity within Tribes** to establish clear, formal consultation practices.

## **Dismantle Systemic Racism**

The County is committed to advancing equity and justice in our community, a commitment that includes transforming local systems that have historically harmed Black and other people of color into systems that equitably serve all community members.

**Related budget and policy priorities include:**

- **Maintain and expand the 2021 and 2023 Executive Orders committing federal agencies to a comprehensive and systematic approach to advance equity for all**, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.
- Support efforts to build on the success of the Inflation Reduction Act's (IRA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Job Act (IIJA) by **increasing investments in programs impacting the lives of our community's most marginalized residents, protecting voting rights, addressing persistent discriminatory practices and prioritizing projects in marginalized neighborhoods.**

## **Improve Resiliency**

Multnomah County collaborates with regional partners to plan and oversee emergency management efforts to protect residents and infrastructure for all disasters. This system has worked throughout the pandemic response while continuing to prepare for, and plan mitigation efforts related to, a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and the increasing threat posed by global heating like wildfire, wildfire smoke, and extreme heat. Congress' historic passage of the IIJA and IRA will address a long standing need to repair and replace the nation's infrastructure and advance community-level resiliency.

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Related budget and policy priorities include:

- **Advocate for federal investments from IIJA, IRA or other funding mechanisms to rebuild the Burnside Bridge**, which will serve as the region's single lifeline route across the Willamette River in the event of a catastrophic seismic event while also meeting sustainability and climate change goals. In addition, the EQRB project will create 6,200 'job years' and infuse \$545 million into the local, state, and regional economy.
- **Support federal investment in the region's Columbia levee projects and continued regional eligibility for Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)** and other emergency services funding streams.
- Invest in **Resilience Hubs, facilities that provide vital day-to-day services and are built to withstand major disruptions** like prolonged power outages, seismic events, extreme weather, and other hazards. Resilience Hubs serve as key staging grounds for a community's response and recovery.

## **Emphasize Climate Action**

The climate crisis' negative impact on public health, the environment, and marginalized communities are well documented. Multnomah County has worked collaboratively with regional partners to reduce the impacts of the climate crisis on our most vulnerable communities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through broad action, including, but not limited to, advocacy to support rapid transition to an economy powered by 100% renewable energy.

Related budget and policy priorities include:

- Fully implement the administration's all-agency approach to the climate crisis as demonstrated by passage of the IIJA and IRA which will **provide funding for environmental justice and climate change planning, research, and programs**.
- Strengthen environmental standards, especially clean air act rules regulating PM and ozone, and more stringent restrictions on the storage and transport of hazardous materials, including transportation fuels, and toxic inhalants.
- **Advocate for sustained federal investments in important energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment, grid modernization and resilience, combined with research and development of new technology** efforts.
- Encourage federal investment in **local community efforts to develop decarbonization plans and sequester atmospheric carbon in the landscape**.
- **Ensure communities of color, in particular environmental justice communities, receive the economic benefits of energy transition within their communities**, after a long history of being locked out of economic gain due to government policy through full implementation of initiatives like Justice 40.

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## **Appendix A: Federal Funding Trends**

Any analysis of recent federal funding is complicated by an historically large infusion of COVID stimulus; \$317 million between FY20 and FY22. Despite this, trends are clear: a comparison of the four most recent audited financial statements (FY19 - FY22) show non-COVID federal funding has been relatively flat, ranging from a low of \$54 million in FY21 to a high of \$59 million in FY22. Similarly, in FY22 the County passed through \$16 million (28%) of non-COVID federal funds to community partners, a percentage that has been relatively consistent over the last four fiscal years. This consistency masks program level shifts and may be impacted by recent federal legislation increasing funding for high-cost infrastructure projects, providing an opportunity for the County to increase federal support in the coming years. Departments are working collaboratively to prepare and apply for these highly competitive funds as funding opportunities are released.

The following chart provides a snapshot of FY22 non-COVID federal funding streams, \$400,000/year or above, by department.

<b>County Dept.</b>	<b>Federal Agency</b>	<b>Federal Program</b>	<b>FY22 Funding</b>
EM	DHS	Emergency Management Performance Grants	\$464,573
MCSO	FEMA	Boating Safety Financial Assistance	\$404,267
JOHS	HUD	Emergency Solutions Grant Program	\$952,826
JOHS	HUD	Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS	\$1,797,493
JOHS	HUD	Continuum of Care Program	\$2,691,958
JOHS	FEMA	Disaster Grants - Public Assistance	\$8,189,117
HD	HHS	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children	\$3,178,080
HD	HHS	Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Site-Based Program	\$552,977
HD	HHS	Injury Prevention and Control Research and State and Community Based Programs	\$439,705
HD	HHS	Consolidated Health Centers	\$8,880,564



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HD	HHS	Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Program	\$1,570,701
HD	HHS	Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Program	\$1,017,723
HD	HHS	HIV Emergency Relief Project Grants	\$3,722,335
HD	HHS	Grants to Provide Outpatient Early Intervention Services with Respect to HIV Disease	\$882,529
HD	HHS	Healthy Start Initiative	\$994,582
HD	HHS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus Syndrome (AIDS) Surveillance	\$498,052
HD	HHS	Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Block Grants	\$2,363,008
DCS	DOT	Highway Planning and Construction	\$4,457,657
DCS	DOT	Highway Planning and Construction	\$8,433,521
DCJ	DOJ	Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program	\$550,242
DCHS	HUD	Weatherization Assistance for Low-Income Persons	\$692,994
DCHS	HHS	Special Programs for the Aging-Title III, Part B-Grants for Supportive Services and Senior Centers	\$771,158
DCHS	HHS	Special Programs for the Aging-Title III, Part C-Nutrition Services	\$1,006,395
DCHS	HHS	Nutrition Services Incentive Program	\$405,289
DCHS	HUD	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	\$425,810
DCHS	HHS	Low-Income Home Energy Assistance	\$5,175,098
DCHS	HHS	Community Services Block Grant	\$640,125
DA	DOJ	Crime Victim Assistance	\$1,079,126
DA	DOJ	Child Support Enforcement	\$2,815,491