



Deborah Kafoury

Multnomah County Chair

July 19, 2022

TO: Multnomah County Charter Review Committee

Dear Committee Members,

I want to express my gratitude for your service on the Multnomah County Charter Review Committee. Your commitment to ensuring more equitable access to County services and better outcomes for all residents through this intensive, but intentional, review process is greatly appreciated. Your work to explore and ultimately recommend changes to the Charter is vital to making our government more accountable, accessible and equitable.

Before you move to finalize your recommendations to County voters, I'd like to address two of the recommendations you have been considering: inserting the Good Government Hotline and Ombuds Office into the Charter. To be sure, I strongly support the goal of having a dedicated and transparent process for residents and employees to share their concerns about County services and operations, and for those concerns to be adequately addressed in a fair and independent manner.

In my previous communications to the Review Committee, I offered my support for the Good Government Hotline and Ombuds Office to be enshrined in the Charter if they were properly scoped. Upon reflection, I want to acknowledge the rigidity that comes with including a defined service or program in the Charter.

As you well know, the process to change the Charter is extensive and relies on voter approval of any recommended change. Inserting the Ombuds Office and Good Government Hotline into the Charter risks tying the County's hands when it needs to make necessary and timely adjustments to ensure the effectiveness and responsiveness of those programs.

A look at the County's past ombuds efforts and the Good Government Hotline program will show that flexibility was required to assure efficiency, and avoid overlap and duplication of service. If these functions were affixed to the Charter, neither the Auditor or the Board of County Commissioners would be able to address program or service delivery redundancies in an effective or efficient manner to better meet the needs of residents and employees.

As the needs of our community become more diverse, maintaining the County's ability to be nimble will help ensure that services like the Good Government Hotline and

Ombuds Office remain successful, accessible and equitable. In this case, I believe the best way to do that is to adopt an ordinance codifying the two functions in the County Code. I encourage this committee to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to take this approach. I pledge to work with the Auditor, along with other stakeholders and community partners, to bring an ordinance before the Board of County Commissioners.

Thank you again for your service and dedication to this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair