

Environmental Health Services - Inspections Program

Dear Multnomah County Licensed Operators,

This letter is intended to provide early notice of the upcoming increases in the licensing fee schedule, which will take place January 2026.

The health inspections program safeguards public health and supports a strong restaurant, food cart, and hospitality economy by conducting over 12,000 annual inspections, responding to hundreds of public complaints, and investigating numerous food and waterborne illnesses at facilities throughout Multnomah County. These efforts support business growth and disease prevention, fostering a safe environment for the public.

As you may know, Multnomah County is required by state law to license and regularly inspect restaurants, food carts, lodging, pool and spa establishments as well as temporary food events. In addition, Environmental Health Services is required to cover these costs through full-cost recovery of license fees. License fees historically increased 5 to 7 % each year to cover necessary program costs.

As part of the County's support of the community and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, license fees have been frozen since 2020. This was made possible through the availability of pandemic relief funds and County General Fund. From July 1, 2020 to the present the County has spent over \$13 million dollars to cover program costs to support the food and hospitality industry including:

- Over \$8 million in General Fund
- An additional \$5.3 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds given as grants

As federal, state and local funds for post-pandemic relief have ended, the County must return to our standard model of full-cost recovery through annual assessment of program costs and incremental increases to license fees.

After five years of deferred license fees, the County is proposing a 33% fee increase to achieve full-cost recovery for the services provided by the Inspections Program. As part of the County's budget process, we have submitted a requested budget of \$7.6 million to operate the program. The budget and fee schedule are subject to Board of Commissioners approval.

Once the 2026 fee schedule is finalized and approved by the Board of County Commissioners, it will be posted online and mailed no later than June 30, 2025.

More information is available here: mhealthinspect.org. To share additional questions, please contact us: <https://forms.gle/TnY8aFPGFRQcqTdK6> or scan

