

Multnomah County District 2

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Commissioner Shannon Singleton proposes SHS reform; reallocation of \$22 million requested by non-homeless service departments

Multnomah County Commissioner Shannon Singleton proposed a host of reforms to Multnomah County's Supportive Housing Services (SHS) program, including a reallocation of \$22 million in SHS dollars requested for programs outside of the Homeless Services Department.

"Chair Jessica Vega Pederson's press conference two weeks ago made clear that Multnomah County needs leadership from the commission on homeless services spending. Our community will not stand by while we cut shelter beds and outreach programs that are needed to combat the crisis of homelessness," said Singleton. "I scoured the Multnomah County department requested budgets and found \$22 million in SHS dollars proposed to be spent on a range of administrative and other programs outside of the Homeless Services Department. We need to move those dollars back to the core function of serving people experiencing homelessness."

Chair Jessica Vega Pederson announced Feb. 21 an expected \$104 million gap in the Homeless Services Department budget. If the gap isn't filled, it would mean cuts to shelter beds and services needed for the Homelessness Response Action Plan (HRAP), Multnomah County's plan coordinated with the city of Portland and Gresham.

Since the announcement, Homeless Services Department (HSD) Director Dan Field has identified reserve dollars that reduce the gap by \$34 million. With a reallocation of dollars spent outside of the homeless service department, the gap narrows again to \$48 million, a total savings of \$56 million from the originally announced deficit.

"With a renewed focus on our core services, we have a smaller, more manageable gap in our budget. We can meet this challenge, but we will have to reform the work of the Homeless Services Department in order to rebuild public trust," said Shannon Singleton. "SHS dollars are the most precious we have because voters granted us these dollars in order to do a job: address chronic homelessness. Anything

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we spend on outside of that job is at best a distraction, at worst it's us not doing what voters sent us here to do."

In order to reform the work of the Homeless Services Department, Commissioner Singleton is proposing three tracks of public oversight led by the Multnomah County Commissioners.

Shelter operation review: Commissioners will review all shelter programs currently in place looking for quality, financial and service improvements. This will lead to a prioritized list of shelter strategies to inform the commission's budget decisions later this year.

Outreach operational review: Commissioners will review homeless outreach efforts funded by the county to identify ways that these efforts could better align with other programs and develop a prioritized list of services for budget decisions.

Administrative structure review: Commissioners will review the administrative duties of the Homeless Services Department to ensure that any cost-savings that are possible are enacted to prioritize service dollars.

"Last week, my colleague Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards called for a public discussion about how we as a board tackle the gap in funding at the Homeless Services Department. I'm proposing a public review of existing services that can help us as commissioners build the public's trust and willingness to continue these vital programs," Singleton said. "For too long, we've been talking about whether this money will be spent, instead of talking about what it will be spent on. That needs to change."

This review by Multnomah County commissioners of the county's SHS program will run parallel to the work of a group commissioned by Metro President Lynn Peterson tasked with establishing regional goals for the SHS program and overarching reform as well as the discussions at the HRAP Steering and Oversight Committee.

On January 7, Multnomah County officials reported to county commissioners that the Homeless Services Department is facing a budget gap in this fiscal year. Commissioner Singleton is also calling for a review of expenditures that can be delayed or scaled back in this budget year to ease the pressure on next year's budget.

Commissioner Singleton's top priority for budget modifications would be programs that are going to end, such as those investments made outside of the Homeless Services Department with SHS dollars.

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“We need to do absolutely everything that we can to make our commitments on shelter beds and housing services real,” Singleton said. “This is our job. It’s what people elected us to do. We need to make it right.”

Voters region-wide passed the Supportive Housing Services ballot measure in 2020. It established a tax on high-earners and profitable businesses in order to fund housing and homeless services. The tax and program will sunset in 2030 without voter reauthorization.

Programs funded with SHS dollars outside of the Homeless Services Department:

District Attorney total: \$283,869

Victims Assistance Program: \$18,867

MCDA Access Attorney Program (MAAP) 1.0FTE ADA: \$265,002

Library total: \$191,665

Peer Support Specialist at Central Library: \$191,665

Department of County Management total: \$203,058

FRM Fiscal Compliance Supportive Housing Services: \$203,058

Health Department total: \$12,676,372

Shelter and Housing - Supportive Housing Services: \$6,263,857

Behavioral Health Crisis Services: \$1,719,784

Culturally Specific Mental Health Services: \$398,512

Adult Addictions Treatment Continuum \$1,867,683

Promoting Access To Hope (PATH) Care Coordination Continuum: \$551,167

Behavioral Health Resource Center (BHRC) - Day Center: \$1,059,134

Behavioral Health Resource Center (BHRC) - Shelter/Housing: \$816,235

Department of County Human Services total: \$6,636,318

DCHS Director's Office: \$198,440

IDDSD Budget and Operations Support: \$172,931

IDDSD Services for Adults: \$234,076

ADVSD LTSS Nursing Homes and Homeless Services (Medicaid): \$1,142,295

YFS - Gateway Center: \$612,953

YFS - Youth & Family Services Administration: \$188,927

YFS - Multnomah Stability Initiative (MSI): \$3,867,515

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YFS - Data and Evaluation Services: \$219,181

Department of Community Justice total: \$2,355,415

Adult Transition Services Unit (TSU): \$1,361,752

Adult Stabilization and Readiness Program (SARP): \$993,663