

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

PROCLAMATION NO. 2024-092

Proclaiming October 2024 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

- A. Approximately [61 million](#) people in the United States have a disability. Almost [15%](#) of Multnomah County residents live with some form of disability. Disabilities are ordinary and familiar parts of who people are, and we honor the diverse experiences of disability and perspectives within our community.
- B. [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) (NDEAM) is an annual campaign that takes place each October to celebrate the value and talent workers with disabilities add to America's workplaces and economy. NDEAM's purpose is to confirm the commitment to ensuring disabled workers have access to good jobs, every month of every year. The 2024 NDEAM theme is "Access to Good Jobs for All."
- C. In the [2023 Countywide Employee Survey](#), 24.5% of Multnomah County staff identified as having a disability. This number is a call to action to increase the support available for employees with disabilities. Policies, practices, and processes should be developed with a [Universal Design](#) approach and with people with disabilities in mind. The accommodation process under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be streamlined and straightforward, adequately resourced, and tracked in a way that tells us who is and isn't getting needed accommodations, as well as any disparities in access or outcomes.
- D. Even within the disability community, disability can be experienced very differently. These diverse experiences can be exacerbated in the workplace. Disabilities that impact sight and hearing may further exclude folks as accessibility efforts are not broadly implemented. Employees with invisible disabilities often report not being believed or being charged with exaggerating symptoms and impacts. Staff with Long COVID are navigating the workplace post-COVID infection. These staff members continue to support County operations while experiencing varied and ongoing symptoms. Neurodivergent individuals may struggle to get their

workplace limitations accommodated due to a lack of awareness of available accommodations and bias from co-workers.

- E. Workplace accommodations are an imperative part of creating an inclusive organization. While Multnomah County maintains a robust reasonable accommodation process, there is still opportunity for a scent-free policy, or improved COVID precautions. Without clear policies, Human Resource staff and managers assisting employees in implementing needed accommodations are not always able to create a safe and accessible environment for all.
- F. The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan renewal process included forming a Disability Equity Workgroup. This body put forward disability-specific recommendations for inclusion in the ['24-'28 WESP](#). One of these initiatives, a Disability Experience Survey, has recently been launched from the Office of Diversity and Equity. The purpose of this anonymous tool is to hear directly from staff with disabilities and create a baseline from which to measure the success of future initiatives.
- G. The Department of County Assets (DCA) plays an important role in making Multnomah County a welcoming and inclusive workplace for people with disabilities. DCA serves the people who serve the people by managing technology suites, assistive tech, contracts, and buildings and facilities.
- Facilities and Property Management recently executed a contract with Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc. (MIG), an on-call accessibility consultant, to update building design standards and incorporate physical accessibility best practices. This was a direct response to feedback from staff with disabilities and the disability community.
 - The Information Technology (IT) division provides software and hardware to assist with a wide range of accessibility needs, as well Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI tools. These new tools benefit all staff and, in particular, employees with disabilities. IT recently launched a new county-wide Digital Experience Standard that ensures all new websites, tools and applications comply with Federal WCAG 2.1+ and County accessibility standards. As the County designs a new website, IT is leading the way with community reviewers including an intentional focus on including reviewers with disabilities.

- H. The IDEA employee resource group (“Including Disability in Equity and Access”) offers ongoing support and resource connection for employees with disabilities. IDEA also regularly engages in countywide equity efforts and continuous improvement processes. Recently, IDEA formed a Neurodivergence subcommittee, a space where neurodivergent staff can connect and support continued progress for equity and inclusion of neurodivergent employees.
- I. Future work for Multnomah County includes benchmarks outlined in the WESP. This includes creating a centralized accommodation unit to facilitate ADA accommodations; utilizing Disability Experience Survey data to inform future initiatives and areas for improvement; required training for all staff on ways disability shows up in the workplace; raising awareness of disability justice principles; and bringing in disability equity consultants to provide an evaluation report from an outside perspective. Additionally, the Office of Diversity and Equity is standing up a Digital Accessibility Program that is expected to establish community channels to understand accessibility needs for both employees and community.
- J. Employers tend to prioritize the accommodation and accessibility needs of their current employees, which may overlook those of potential employees. For example, externally facing websites and systems should be accessible to screen readers to support job applicants with disabilities.
- K. As we consider “Access to Good Jobs for All”, we must ask ourselves and our organization what steps we can take individually and collectively to increase disability inclusion in Multnomah County. Enacting needed policy, implementing WESP benchmarks, elevating the voices of those with lived experience, and acknowledging the reality that we are living and working in an ongoing pandemic may be first steps. Increasing awareness of disability justice principles and the intersectional nature of many marginalized communities is key to operationalizing the Safety, Trust and Belonging we strive to create and uphold.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaims:

The month of October 2024 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month in Multnomah County, Oregon. We celebrate and recognize the significant

contributions of people with disabilities to the workforce and to the community and invite other organizations to do the same.

ADOPTED this 24th day of October, 2024.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Jessica Vega Pederson

Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair

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