

Dear Multnomah County Charter Review Committee,

I am a member of the community and have the pleasure of serving on the Multnomah County Auditor's Community Advisory Committee. I bring the lens of a mother, person living with an invisible disability, prosecutor, non-profit founder, former Congressional staffer, and law professor. I chose Multnomah County as my home, and I appreciate that the decisions you make will help our home thrive. The opinions in this letter are my own. I hope that my perspective on the Auditor's Office can be of service.

I call myself a democracy geek because I have always worked in a government sphere. My perspective after these many experiences has solidified: accountability, accessibility and transparency are essential to a strong, trusted democratic government. The Multnomah County Auditor's Office is essential to accountability, so the changes requested by Auditor Jennifer McGuirk are, too.

The Auditor's Office ensures our programs are running the way they are intended. The current office is also dedicated to including a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens, in order to serve all members of our community well. As the County has grown, the need for audits has grown. There are more programs and services to be assessed; however, the staffing and funding for the office has not changed. This hampers their effectiveness and has a negative impact on our community as a whole.

Auditor McGuirk has proposed Charter amendments to you, and I urge you to adopt them. First, she asks that conflicts of interests be removed, and that the ALGA's guidance be adhered to. When an elected official controls the Auditor's budget, there is an inherent conflict in the core tenant of independence for the Auditor's Office. This hampers the work and can degrade the people's trust.

Second, to meet the needs of our population, Auditor McGuirk requests increased budget resources. This will allow her office to not only act independently, but to increase how many audits can be conducted. Our communities deserve to know that their government is doing what they expect. The Auditor's Office provides this information, as well as recommendations for improvement where needed.

Third, the Good Government Hotline allows community members to easily report fraud, waste and abuse of position. It is essential that this service is maintained. Not only does it make sense, but tips from the Hotline have been acted on by the Auditor.

Fourth, establishing an ombuds office would allow better response to public complaints. Many complaints are specific, rather than about a system-level issue. In order to ensure our community members have a responsive government, this ombuds office should be established for Multnomah County.

Lastly, a simple way to ensure the Auditor's work is effective, timely, and useful is to ensure timely access to information. While it is a principle of auditing standards, there have been

incidents where the Auditor Office's inquiries were ignored for too long, impacting the effectiveness of their work. This should be remedied.

Our communities deserve to live in a place where the trust their government. The Auditor's Office provides accountability and transparency that promotes this trust. Each of the amendments requested by Auditor McGuirk should be adopted. They are reasonable, in line with best practices, and in the best interest of Multnomah County residents.

Thank you for your service to Multnomah County and your consideration of my letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel K. Sowray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish above the name.

Rachel Sowray