

Dear Multnomah County Charter Review Committee,

We recognize that with two more meetings, the committee could decide to devote its remaining discussion time to the highest priority topics and may not have time to discuss and advance some of the changes to the MCCRC member selection process proposed by the Government Accountability Subcommittee. [You can view all of the subcommittee's recommendations here.](#)

While one of the proposed changes is more significant, has been the subject of multiple public comments and therefore may need more discussion time than the final two meetings allow, other changes are smaller but still valuable - and we would encourage the committee to advance any changes on which there is immediate consensus so those improvements to the process can go before the voters.

The largest change would task the Office of Community Involvement with appointing applicants by county district, rather than state legislators appointing applicants by senate district. If the committee does not have adequate time to consider this change, these are the smaller changes that we would encourage the committee to advance:

- **If a member moves from their district after being appointed, allow them to continue serving on the committee as long as they remain a Multnomah County resident.** This ensures that members remain eligible to serve on the committee, and is even more important if selection by senate district remains in place so eligibility isn't limited to a very small geographic area. This change ensures that a committee member's move during the process does not jeopardize their eligibility to serve.
- **Provide a general process for filling vacancies, allowing the Office of Community Involvement to fill vacancies if reasonable given the timing of the vacancy.** This change ensures the office is able to fill vacancies if a member resigns early in the process or if multiple resignations occur. If selection by senate district remains in place, this also gives the office the authority to fill vacancies if any legislators do not fulfill their responsibility.
- **Remove the requirement that members serving in the same district be registered with different political parties.** With the increase in non-affiliated voters since the adoption of automatic voter registration, staff feels this requirement is less relevant going forward and adds complexity without necessarily achieving the presumed goal of diverse political ideologies on the committee.

If the committee does not come to quick consensus on all of the above changes, we would still encourage the committee to advance any changes which do not require extensive discussion. Any of these changes on its own would help improve and simplify the process for the 2027-2028 committee.

If the committee does have time to discuss the change to select by county district rather than senate district, our office did want to provide a response to the public comments received, and to do so here in writing rather than taking up time during a committee meeting. We do appreciate all of the community members who have submitted public comments on this issue and who have highlighted the importance of representation from rural communities on the MCCRC.

From our perspective as staff, no system is perfect or provides a guarantee of representation for a set of residents. Even under the current process, the 2021-2022 committee lacks representation from rural residents (though it should be noted that after new redistricting plans take effect in 2023, Senate District 26 will no longer include a part of Portland and the district would be largely rural). Appointing rural residents to the committee still depends on receiving applications from residents in rural areas, and state legislators fulfilling their responsibility and making the appointments for their district. Under any selection process, outreach will be grounded in the county's continued commitment and efforts to encourage diverse representation on all of our boards and committees, including geographic representation.

The current process creates challenges that make it difficult to elevate other aspects of diverse representation. Without the proposed change, challenges of selecting by senate district would remain, including:

- The significant staff capacity required to engage state legislators, their lack of familiarity with the process and limited time to deeply engage in applicant evaluation
- Unequal representation across County districts. Due to the way senate districts overlay our county districts, 7 of our 16 members reside in District 1 (Northwest & Southwest Portland and the inner Eastside), while only 2 live in District 2 (North & Northeast Portland). It should be noted that this may look a little different in 2027 due to redistricting, though looking at the new maps, staff still anticipate a similar imbalance.
- Challenges recruiting applicants and selecting members in senate districts with a very small number of county residents
- No opportunity to consider the makeup of the whole committee in making appointments, as applicants are divided into 11 small applicant pools and state legislators only consider the applicants in their districts

If the committee would like to address these challenges by making the change to selection by county district, and take additional steps to highlight the importance of geographic - and particularly rural - representation, the committee could include a recommendation in its final report to the Board of Commissioners that outreach for the next MCCRC include targeted efforts to reach residents in rural communities. As shared in the public comments, there are county services of particular importance to rural

areas, namely in the Sheriff's Office and Land Use & Transportation, and those program areas provide avenues for outreach that our office could utilize more effectively in future years.

It has been an honor to support your work over the last year. Thank you for all of the ways you are improving the committee's process and county governance for the future.

Sincerely,
Office of Community Involvement