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Multnomah County **Executive Budget Message**

The 2024 Multnomah County Executive Budget is the first budget created by my administration in a year of transition for the County and for our communities. We are at once emerging from years of hardship, organizational restructuring, investment and constraint brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and turning an important corner to take forward the lessons we've learned and the things we've accomplished together despite historic challenges.

As a community we are pulling back together following the worst devastations of the pandemic, reckoning with centuries of racial and social injustice, and wrestling with the continued impacts of homelessness and a lack of affordable housing, community violence, climate change and economic inequality.

Yet I know that a just recovery is possible — especially as we lean into our ability to grow together as a community and work more closely and effectively, building unlikely but fruitful partnerships in the face of unprecedented needs and changes.

The complex challenges we face today demand strong and bold leadership. The investments in my proposed \$3.5 billion Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget strategically help us continue our recovery from the pandemic and shore up the systems we need for the future. This budget effectively makes significant positive impacts, especially around the priority areas of housing and homelessness, health and safety, infrastructure, and our continued investments in community partnership and sustainability.

The past three budgets under previous Chair Deborah Kafoury were built in direct response to the deadly threat and outsized challenges of the pandemic. Those spending plans featured multimillion-dollar investments in the County's COVID-19 response and appropriated the federal lifelines we received through the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the 2021 American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act.

These federal stimulus programs were and continue to be sustaining to our recovery efforts. However, considering the stage of our pandemic recovery we are now in, as well as the end of federal COVID-19 funding, we deemed it necessary to examine which ARP-funded programs would still be needed in the year ahead. The decisions to continue certain programs were based on what's happening currently in our community, and we worked to appropriate the right kind of funding to those programs in the form of ARP, and one-time or ongoing County General Fund dollars.

When I was sworn in as Chair, it was with a commitment to solve big problems — and one of those in my first 100 days has been the stewardship of this budget. While I took office amid a budgeting process that was well underway, it has still yielded a deep look at what our opportunities are for continuing the investments made in response to the pandemic and prioritizing our dollars to make the greatest impact on the biggest challenges before us.

My team and I have used our first months to deepen our understanding of the work of the County; engage with the broader community and Community Budget Advisory Committees (CBACs) through an abbreviated community engagement process; and thoughtfully consider the investments needed to sustain our communities with dwindling federal ARP dollars.

The FY 2024 budget was built to reflect the values that are foundational to Multnomah County and the ways we bring those values into a deeper relationship with our communities as the social safety net that helps people and communities not just meet their basic needs, but rise and thrive.

But as we've known for many years — and as was made even more stark during the pandemic — we cannot ignore the root causes of disparities that impart more harm on some communities than others. While no single budget can eradicate the interconnected root causes that contribute to community turmoil and crises, Multnomah County has a meaningful leadership role to play. The setting of our fiscal priorities through this budget is one of the most important ways we show leadership in this area.

This is why it is so critical for the County to provide services that address the consequences of systemic and historic inequalities regarding the resources and solutions to which communities have access. It's why we continue to endeavor and invest more deeply in direct services that recognize those harms while also strengthening our ability to build systems of justice and equality.

Our FY 2024 investments in equity look at priorities both within Multnomah County's infrastructure, providing ongoing resources and support across every single departmental budget, and our continued efforts to engage deeply with people throughout our communities whose voices deserve to be heard, uplifted and prioritized in our commitment to healing, engagement and service.

New investments in this area include internal work to provide updates to our Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and equity coordination, coaching and best practices for manager and human resources partners and external work in equitable contracting and contract-management, along with a large-scale purchasing and contracting redesign. We're also investing \$1.0 million of one-time-only General Funds to continue support for Equity-focused system development and capacity-building in the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS).

I am also prioritizing a re-visioning of Multnomah County's Mission, Vision and Values to provide better alignment in all of our departmental work. This process will engage partners from all across the County to revise these foundational ideas for the first time in over a decade.

This budget focuses on accountability and prudent fiscal stewardship. With a continued focus on fiscal stability, we've considered infrastructure and capacity at many levels of service and investment. And as we, by necessity, ramp down services that were funded with ARP dollars, we prioritized the most critical services by strategically allocating our limited General Fund dollars across departments.

The County Budget Office's fiscal projections inform the extent of the constraints we must account for as we build the budget. Every year, we make realistic assumptions about revenues while also planning for worse scenarios to ensure that our safety net is as stable as possible.

For the FY 2024 budget, we increased our General Fund and Business Income Tax (BIT) reserves, by allocating one-time-only funding, to 12% of anticipated revenues in service of good governance and a healthy rainy day fund.

We do this partly in anticipation of a recession, and partly in preparation for any rebalancing of statewide funds, and we are increasing our reserves to meet both of these challenges should they arise.

In this vein, we've also invested \$6.8 million in one-time-only dollars to pay off the final year of the Enterprise Resource Planning (Workday) debt and free up ongoing funding for services in the future. We also invested \$14 million for a second year in retention incentives for Multnomah County employees.

The County, under my leadership, will continue to prioritize urgency, transparency, accountability and collaboration. Regional and jurisdictional coordination is more important than ever, especially in our work to address homelessness, behavioral health, community safety, and environmental and climate work.

Just as our safety net is built through partnership, so is our map of investments to support it.

As such, I want to emphasize that this budget is not built in a silo, separated from other sources of funding, development and resource coordination, but rather in concert with the many other jurisdictional and community partners who share in these investments.

When I look at the many issues and crises that have already been brought before us in the first 116 days of my administration, I am confident that this budget positions us well to respond effectively and equitably. It represents a recognition and a desire to take profound challenges across many critical areas head on, including and especially through careful stewardship of the Metro Supportive Housing Services Measure (SHS) dollars, increased investments in and accountability for Multnomah County Animal Services, support for operating the Behavioral Health Resource Center (BHRC) and developing the Behavioral Health Emergency Coordination Network (BHECN), and the stabilization and modernization of County services and our workforce.

We are supporting a community that is working to remember how to be together again. We're meeting each other out for a meal or gathering in the park or community center for an event – sometimes for the first time in years. We're also coming back together to address the biggest issues our community faces and that's what this budget helps to focus our attention on and address.

As we continue to adapt to this post-pandemic world and structure our investments accordingly, we also must continue to lean into opportunities to help define what our safety net looks like and how it serves those who need it. I believe that all of us, no matter where we come from in Multnomah County or what our particular challenges are, have a right to thrive, and this Executive Budget is built with that goal in mind.

Housing, Shelter and Our Homelessness Continuum of Care and Prevention

Never in the history of our county has there been more of a call or a need to address the short-, medium- and longer-term goals that will help us resolve our homelessness crisis with urgency, accountability and transparency, across all of our programs and investments.

The reality of our situation right now in Multnomah County is that too many of our neighbors are living on the streets — without shelter, without the services needed to stabilize and address basic needs and behavioral health challenges, and without a pathway to supportive, long-term housing. There are also many among us who live with housing instability, living at risk each month of losing their homes. Our investments in these priority areas mark Multnomah County's commitment to addressing these issues with increased urgency, transparency, accountability and collaboration.

One of the defining features of the FY 2024 budget is the record amount of funding devoted to addressing housing and homelessness — including from the General Fund, SHS and other investments. Each investment we've made felt both necessary and essential to addressing this pressing crisis with the urgency it requires. These investments also reflect the enormous priority every one of our partners — from the federal government, the state, regional jurisdictional partners and providers of homeless services — is also putting into a collaborative effort we hope and expect will reduce unsheltered homelessness this year and prevent thousands from becoming homeless in the first place.

The Program Offers in my Executive Budget reflect \$128 million in investments for housing placements, rent assistance and support services designed to meet those experiencing homelessness where they are - on the streets, in vehicles, in shelter beds - and assist them to successfully move into permanent housing and help them stay there. And \$87 million in strategies to provide safety on and off the streets, including alternative shelter, motel-based shelter and vital outreach workers on the ground every day.

Data and Accountability

This budget comes at an important moment for the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS), which welcomes new Director Dan Field this week. Director Field joins us ready to help set the priorities and spending of a \$280 million total investment in a system-wide response to homelessness that not only addresses this crisis in the short-term, but also builds the infrastructure needed to grow our response over the longer-term.

To ensure the best possible foundation for that growth, the FY 2024 budget will put new resources toward improving the reliability of data. This includes our sustained work with the Built for Zero initiative, part of an ongoing effort to build systems transformation into the ways we collect, use and disseminate information about people experiencing homelessness. Improved data collection and reporting through efforts like Built for Zero will enable the Joint Office to prioritize resources, test investments in the system and understand whether its efforts are truly helping solve chronic homelessness.

Housing Multnomah Now

With strong partnership with the City of Portland, the State of Oregon, emergency management and regional jurisdictional partners, the County has established a Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) group focused on reducing unsheltered homelessness. The MAC group will coordinate an infusion of SHS and state resources and a new initiative called "Housing Multnomah Now," fully funded in the FY 2024 budget, that is built on best practices from across the country.

This initiative, led by the Joint Office through the MAC group, is a \$32 million, 12-month plan to unify local and state efforts to bring urgency and coordination toward reducing unsheltered homelessness starting in Portland's central city.

From there, Housing Multnomah Now will expand to helping unhoused individuals in a part of East County into homes. This program uses a by-name list and a targeted timeline with the purpose of providing options, support and a path connecting people directly to housing to stop the shuffle of moving people from one location to another as they're living outside.

This combined investment will rehouse 300 households and create 140 new shelter beds by the end of this year. Until the local housing vacancy rate is 0%, there are rental units in the metro area available right now to address the crisis of homelessness outside. Landlord incentives, guaranteed rental subsidies, and stability-focused wraparound services offered through Housing Multnomah Now will increase access to these available units.

Housing Multnomah Now's focus on housing placement also supports and strengthens our shelter system. Funding devoted to this effort will help limit the length of stay in all shelters by eliminating bottlenecks that keep people from being housed. That will enable us to make better use of the beds we already have, and provide safe sleep options for more people in a time when they need them most.

Housing Multnomah Now also leverages the state's Medicaid 1115 waiver that, along with funding for supportive services, can help move those with behavioral health needs into vacant rental units and support them in staying housed.

Shelter and Stability

In this Executive Budget, \$87 million will be directed to investments to aid safety on and off the street, including population-specific and trauma-informed congregate shelters, motel shelter rooms and alternative shelters. Sustaining our existing shelter capacity is a priority for me, and is evidenced by the \$17 million dollar investment in one-time-only General Funds to ensure that diversity of shelter beds created with ARP funds from the City of Portland and Multnomah County remain, so that hundreds of people have a safe place to sleep off the street.

Should all beds come online as currently budgeted and predicted — including all beds funded through other sources — this will support more than 2,500 beds of year-round shelter off the street with the wraparound services required to support those seeking it. If funding is successfully deployed to its full capacity, this will ensure the number of available shelter beds continues to exceed pre-pandemic levels at a time when the pandemic (and the fallout from it) has made this support more critical than ever.

This budget also uses SHS dollars to stabilize funding for the Promoting Access to Hope (PATH) programs, which is designed to connect people experiencing homelessness to treatment for substance use disorders while also helping them overcome other barriers that can keep them from becoming or staying housed. This includes detoxification and withdrawal management, ongoing recovery support services and culturally specific care coordination for clients across a continuum of needs.

Between 2018 and 2020, the Joint Office, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the County Health Department, Health Share of Oregon and the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council participated in the Frequent Utilizer System Engagement (FUSE) analysis, sponsored by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH).

Comparing data from the homeless services, healthcare and public safety systems, FUSE identified a subset of people who were most frequently engaged in all three. The study revealed that the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) model, more than any other intervention, significantly reduced their engagement in the legal and healthcare systems. To ensure ongoing housing stability, this budget allocates \$1.0 million of SHS funding to continue the FUSE pilot, providing PSH to up to 40 frequent users of these systems.

Cross-departmental Investments

Numerous cross-departmental investments made possible through SHS ensure that we can foster cohesion, capacity-building and collaboration across the many connections the County shares with our community in our work to address homelessness and housing. These include deep investments through the Joint Office in the Department of County Human Services' Aging, Disability and Veterans Services Division and Multnomah Stability Initiative, behavioral health crisis services in the Health Department, and housing assessment and referral services in the Department of Community Justice.

Public, Behavioral and Community Health

Across our community, creating and prioritizing opportunities for people to sustain or regain their health — and the stability it can bring — continues to be a focus of our investments and programs. This is as critical today as it has ever been, as Multnomah County is called upon to provide a robust and responsive health and social safety net that can meet the needs created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, offer services across our behavioral health continuum of care, and the implement health initiatives through partnerships with community-based organizations, the State of Oregon and health system partners.

We provide quality care to our most vulnerable populations, including people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, individuals housed in the County's jails or juvenile detention, and people facing severe and complex behavioral health challenges.

In a recent board meeting to celebrate Public Health Awareness Month, I was struck by the coordination across our Health Department when it comes to providing public health programming, connections through community organizations, advisors with lived expertise, and equitable and thoughtful approaches to keeping Multnomah County residents healthy.

The FY 2024 budget reflects the intentional and successful interconnectedness of our approach to health and wellness, as well as the ways the Health Department’s programs relate to and impact the work of other County departments. It also continues funding to support communities most impacted by the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, like a \$500,000 one-time-only investment to continue behavioral health outreach to older adults, as well as Black, Indigenous and other People of Color, experiencing significant barriers that helps address symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, isolation, fear and loneliness.

We must prioritize our recovery not only by mitigating COVID-19’s effects on people’s health, but also by addressing the needs of those whose long-term stability has been upended by structural inequalities that were only deepened by the pandemic.

Behavioral Health Resource Center (BHRC)

The Behavioral Health Resource Center utilizes a first-of-its kind peer-led model, with a day center that employs a workforce with lived experience to connect with people who are experiencing chronic homelessness along with severe and persistent mental illness and substance use. The goal of the BHRC is to offer immediate assistance through hygiene services and other resources, and build relationships to help stabilize and eventually house people who currently fall outside most systems. Opened in December 2022 in downtown Portland, the BHRC received more than 17,000 visits within its first four months of operation.

This FY 2024 budget allocates \$2.5 million of new, ongoing General Fund to sustain daily operations at the BHRC, which will include the addition of 33 shelter beds and 19 bridge housing beds in spring 2023. These new services will assist BHRC clients, who often fall outside of the reach of other services, find permanent housing placements and stability. The critical work happening at the BHRC is meeting an incredible need in our community, and its programs are just one piece of a system-wide puzzle that requires investment and expansion.

Behavioral Health Emergency Coordination Network (BHECN) Sobering Facilities

The Behavioral Health Emergency Coordination Network is a multi-jurisdictional and cross-agency collaboration that is developing an improved triage and assessment network for people experiencing behavioral health crises, especially those driven by substance use disorder. Under the County’s leading role in this vital effort, previous budgets have funded project management support based in the Health Department to develop and sustain this partnership.

Since the December 2019 shutdown of a sobering center run by Central City Concern, our community has lacked the sobering-bed resources and harm-reduction support needed to serve people suffering from substance use disorders who require acute monitoring and care.

Our \$2 million investment in BHECN, utilizing money received from an opioid settlement, will go to fund project management for continued community-centered collaboration, along with the hard costs associated with projects slated to come online in the next fiscal year to address critical gaps in our system and increase the number of beds available for community members to stabilize from acute intoxication.

Leveraging these dollars in this way bolsters our ability to meet a huge unmet need in our community and give us the long-range benefit of the sobering beds we need in order to provide immediate stabilization, transitional support and a better solution for responding to acute crises.

Rockwood Health Center

Purchased from our partner CareOregon, the acquisition of this critical Community Health Center was the first piece of paperwork I signed as Multnomah County Chair. This east Portland health center was originally established to reduce significant barriers to healthcare for low-income and underinsured residents in the Rockwood area who previously had to travel outside of their neighborhood to access primary care, pharmacy and dental services. Today, Rockwood Health Center continues to meet some of the greatest needs across Multnomah County for community health services. Investing more than \$3 million of County General Fund dollars into the development and revitalization of this facility ensures continued access to this critical community resource. Staffed by four family practice providers, one internal medicine provider, two providers specializing in mental health and addictions, and two providers with a community health specialization, this clinic serves more than 8,000 individuals each year. More than 65% of Rockwood patients identify as people of color, and 35% utilize interpretation services.

School-based Mental Health Supports

We continue to prioritize upstream mental and behavioral health supports in 38 school-based mental health sites across six school districts, including six sites that are culturally specific. In response to the dearth of culturally responsive mental health providers across the community, this FY 2024 investment also includes a partnership with existing educational access programs to provide workforce development opportunities that can help expand the pool of bicultural bilingual mental health providers. This pipeline will pair interns to Youth Engagement Specialists and help implement afterschool programs for 6th through 12th grade students in 13 schools.

Stabilization and Modernization

Multnomah County has a huge opportunity in this moment to capitalize on what we learned during the pandemic and turn those lessons into positive change on behalf of our community members, Multnomah County's more-than-6,000 employees, and the spectrum of partners critical to our ability to help communities recover and thrive. I am committed to making sure Multnomah County is positioned to think proactively about investments to our workforce, our partnerships and our infrastructure to make sure we are supporting those doing the work in the best possible ways.

Increased Pay for Human Service Providers

The County relies on an extensive and committed network of community-based organizations to provide health and human services, including shelter services, outreach, and assistance for seniors, youth and families. But we know that recruitment and retention challenges among our nonprofit partners continue to be a limiting factor in our ability to provide the safety net services the community needs.

Investments in increased pay at the service level for the human service providers who make up our continuum of care are an important feature of this FY 2024 budget. This includes \$1.5 million dollars for a 3% increase in wages, along with more than \$500,000 to stabilize partnerships and contracts. This addition of one-time-only dollars to our budget will help us incentivize accountability and outcomes while also making sure our partnerships are sustainable over time.

Multnomah County Animal Services

On my first day in office in January, I learned of a crisis at the Multnomah County Animal Shelter in Troutdale, which had taken in so many dogs over the holidays and experienced so many staff vacancies that it required a surge of assistance and support. After stabilizing the immediate crisis, we took the next steps in the County's promise to conduct a detailed review of the division and began addressing long-standing structural and management challenges in partnership with the community.

The work to stabilize Animal Services is prioritized in this Executive Budget with the addition of 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to this division, including seven animal care staff (a 31% increase in animal care staffing levels) needed to ensure adequate levels of care for the animals in our custody. It will also bring needed support to a systems-based overhaul, workflow revisions and the completion of the remaining phases of the detailed review needed to develop long-term stabilization, both for the people who work in our shelter and the animals who need and deserve the best care available.

Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

The County's Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Project is a critical infrastructure investment to ensure our region has at least one downtown bridge we can count on when the next major earthquake strikes. As our region is overdue for a major Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, we are facing a 1 in 3 chance in the next 50 years of being hit by an earthquake of magnitude 8 or higher.

Over the next decade, this multi-million-dollar seismic overhaul will bring \$545 million into the local, state and regional economies and create 6,200 years of employment (in job-years), with 3,400 job-years in the tri-county area and up to 35% of job-years going to minority- or women-owned and emerging new businesses or apprenticeships. Multnomah County will set ambitious goals for ensuring the project employs a diverse workforce and involves a diverse group of subcontractors.

As we complete the project’s Environmental Review phase, this budget invests the specific dollars needed to begin and complete a Design Phase of the bridge and its infrastructural and seismic-enhancements.

Elections Expansion

The Multnomah County Elections team has a very big job in front of them with the implementation of the City of Portland’s ranked-choice voting election system by 2024, approved by voters in November 2022, followed by the implementation of Multnomah County’s ranked-choice voting system by 2026.

In order to make sure this division has everything it needs to implement the technical changes necessary for these new systems, this budget allocates \$133,000 in new ongoing resources for elections infrastructure and staffing needs. And to help expand culturally specific voter education and outreach in the critical years ahead, we are investing close to \$800,000 for expanded voter outreach and engagement relating to charter reform, including two education and outreach staff positions.

County Management

This Executive Budget invests in modernizing our workplace, including investments in information technology and data tracking systems, a down payment on a forthcoming website redesign, investments in a contractor capacity review, and \$4.0 million in one-time dollars to increase our infrastructure for planning for and responding to our Future of Work needs.

We are also looking closely across this FY 2024 budget at ways to increase equity and accountability in contracting, including adding staff in contracts management to help Multnomah County restructure our contracts, starting with procurement and through the contracting process. We expect this to both increase accountability around the work we do with contractors and provide a more robust on-ramp for all contractors looking to work with the County, including and especially from minority- and women-owned businesses.

Further, the County’s ability to advance equity in our community is deeply rooted in our ability to build and work toward equity inside our organization. Included in our management dollars is a new 1.00 FTE in the County’s Office of Diversity and Equity. This staff position will assist in the work to further Multnomah County’s Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP), one of the primary vehicles for making progress toward countywide and departmental equity goals that promote an organizational culture of safety, trust, and belonging.

The WESP is the foundation for equity work in the areas of promotion and professional development, employee retention, recruitment, and workforce development. By working along all avenues of the employee experience, we can attract, cultivate and retain a dynamic and diverse workforce to best serve the needs of Multnomah County communities.

We are also continuing ongoing funding for our Community Budget Advisory Committees, our Office of Community Involvement, the Multnomah Leadership Academy and the Multnomah Idea Lab to connect and deepen our partnership with active community members.

Community Safety and Violence Prevention

Multnomah County, like many communities, is facing an undeniable epidemic of gun violence and increased behavioral health acuity needs in our community. The County is deeply committed to addressing gun violence in our community, and will continue to support both upstream prevention programs and interventions, while also providing access to mental and behavioral healthcare for community members who need it most. In order to effectively address the emergency situation we are in, I am investing in multi-departmental and multi-agency work that provides a comprehensive approach through upstream, downstream and intervention strategies.

We are committed as a County to family stabilization efforts and resource-building across departments to address root causes and break the cycles of violence. More than ever before, we're taking a "one-county" approach to our strategic investments, spreading them across the Department of Community Justice, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the Department of Human Services, and the Health Department. This approach will have the most impact on the underlying causes that lead to community violence and behavioral health acuity, and work to end this ongoing crisis for Multnomah County.

Behavioral Health

In addition to our investments in the Behavioral Health Resource Center, Behavioral Health Emergency Coordination Network, school-based mental health supports and homelessness continuum of care services, we are continuing to fund strategies that respond to and support behavioral health crises in our community. This includes funding the Behavioral Health Division's Crisis Line, mobile crisis outreach team, urgent walk-in clinic and peer support services. Both the Crisis Line and mobile crisis outreach team provide 24/7 access to clinical support.

Moreover, over the past two years, we have witnessed an increase in behavioral health acuity, illicit substance use and violence in the central city, impacting the most vulnerable and marginalized population of houseless individuals. In response, we are continuing to fund the Old Town Inreach Project to provide targeted clinical and peer support services to people surviving on the streets of the Old Town neighborhood.

Corrections and Corrections Health

The safety and health of corrections staff and people in the County's custody are at the forefront of my mind. As a County, we want to limit incarceration but also make sure that people in our custody have access to robust and thorough care and that our staff has the resources it needs to do that.

This is why one of the largest focused investments in this department is for maintaining the full capacity of our jail beds so we're successful in protecting victims and the rights of people accused of crimes while also increasing community safety. Our jail bed capacity ensures that we're able to stand up a corrections system that meets Multnomah County's needs and supports the safety, health, and well-being of those who work and reside in our correctional facilities.

In addition, we are funding a Behavioral Health Nurse Practitioner and continuing to support our investments in Corrections Health's behavioral health services to support the influx of youth and adults in custody with higher-acuity behavioral health needs. Currently, over 40% of youths in custody have significant mental and behavioral health challenges.

We are also funding a revised staffing model for Corrections Health, a department that has struggled over the past few years due to staffing shortages and the need for overtime. This new \$1.0 million dollar investment will help build a staffing model more suited to this current job market, improving recruitment, retention and the staff's ability to provide care to those in our custody.

This budget also provides one-time-only funding to increase safety and security at our Juvenile Justice Center.

Gun Violence Prevention

Successful violence prevention will only happen when we consider a connected, system-wide approach built through the work of many communities, partners and Multnomah County departments. This Executive Budget shares a commitment to increasing coordination and collaboration with community and government partners to ensure that behavior rooted in social inequities, such as racism and poverty, is mitigated.

The FY 2024 budget also prioritizes the Community Healing Initiative (CHI), a culturally specific program that serves individuals and families involved with both the Adult and Juvenile service divisions of the Department of Community Justice. CHI is a family- and community-centered collaboration that provides supervision, intervention, and prevention strategies to youth and families who have recent involvement with high-risk behaviors associated with violence.

In addition to CHI, we are funding 3.00 FTE culturally specific Community Health Specialists positions within the Health Department to focus on youth violence prevention and mentoring, and to provide training to Latine, Somali, and Black and/or African American communities.

One of the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is a significant backlog of gun violence cases for the District Attorney's Office.

This budget, which was \$750,000 of formerly ARP dollars, funds 2.00 FTE Investigators and 2.00 FTE Prosecutors with general and one-time-only funding to handle these complex cases and reduce the backlog.

Support for Women and Families

Multnomah County is committed to addressing the increase in domestic violence and supporting victims and survivors. This budget continues investment in the Victim and Survivor Services team in the Department of Community Justice (DCJ), a team that has continued to meet the growing demands exacerbated by the pandemic. The funding will allow DCJ to continue its collaboration with the District Attorney's Office and the courts to seek solutions and to provide much-needed advocacy and direct assistance to victims and survivors for safety planning that can help stop the cycle of harm and increase self-sufficiency. This budget stabilizes funding in this area as well, moving the funding for 1.00 FTE of Domestic Violence Case Management from the American Rescue Plan to the County's General Fund.

This Executive Budget also continues to invest in the Diane Wade House, a first-of-its-kind Afrocentric transitional housing program for adult women involved in the criminal justice system in Multnomah County. The home provides gender-responsive, trauma-informed services and offers a variety of daytime services, including mentoring and life-skills programs. It is intended to be a low-barrier, transitional housing program, with eligibility requirements designed to reduce barriers to entry rather than place undue burdens on those who need housing and services. The Diane Wade House is a crucial part of an overall Multnomah County strategy to reduce unnecessary incarceration and the number of African Americans who are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

DCJ's Transforming Juvenile Probation initiative, which assists families and youth, is a collaboration with juvenile system partners and stakeholders designed to shift probation practices away from prioritizing surveillance and sanctions toward a more developmentally appropriate strategy that focuses on promoting positive behavior change and long-term success for youth.

Auto and Retail Theft

Last year, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office received the most stolen car referral cases in its history. And businesses of all sizes are complaining about increases in retail theft, likely driven by organized theft rings. In response to these upticks, this budget allocates new funding for an Auto and Commercial Retail Theft Unit that will take a more targeted and coordinated approach in addressing these rising crimes.

To further aid investigation and prosecution efforts, this budget also supports the District Attorney's recruitment and retention initiatives by bringing the department's retirement contributions in line with other public safety departments.

Youth and Family Supports

Multnomah County invests in a two-generation approach that centers whole families and supports both children and caretakers simultaneously with services that are inclusive, culturally responsive and reflective of ongoing engagement with parents, educators, community providers, organizations, policymakers and early childhood specialists.

Among the things Multnomah County does best is meeting community members where they are, deeply investing in early childhood education and after-school programs, developing relationships with young people and families early, and staying with them over the course of the many years it takes for a young person to develop supportive relationships with their family, friends and school communities.

Preschool for All (PFA)

In 2020, Multnomah County residents passed a measure by a wide margin to fund Preschool for All, Multnomah County's universal preschool program. Preschool for All is an historic, once-in-a-generation investment that is already serving more than 700 families in its inaugural 2022-23 school year.

Expanding access to high-quality early childhood services, especially childcare and preschool, is a monumental priority for our community. We know investments in early childhood education will pay our community back many times over in educational achievement and stability in the future, with every \$1 spent today resulting in \$7 in future savings. The closure of more than 16,000 childcare providers across the country during the pandemic, including many in Multnomah County, only underscored the dire need for more availability and access to preschool.

The FY 2024 budget funds Preschool for All for the upcoming year and its ongoing work to build the infrastructure necessary to reach universal access. This includes funding to double the number of slots for the 2024-25 school year to 1,400; \$10 million to build up the inventory of developable spaces to accommodate the preschool sites needed to continue PFA expansion; and \$17.8 million into the current infrastructure to increase the active pipeline of both preschools and preschool providers.

With ongoing investments, Preschool for All will steadily increase the number of families it serves each year, make strategic investments in infrastructure to make sure our community builds and maintains the preschool sites we need to achieve universal preschool by 2030, and continue to address structural needs to achieve this extraordinary goal.

Multnomah Mother's Trust

As we continue to respond to the immediate needs of our community following the pandemic, we are equally focused on building pathways to a racially just and equitable economic recovery in partnership with those who most need and deserve investment.

The Multnomah Mother’s Trust Project will receive \$1.3 million to ensure a second full year of support for 100 Black women-headed households and their children, providing unconditional basic income to some of the families hit hardest during the pandemic. The collaboration inherent in this program continues to be a proof of concept of what’s possible through equity- and human-centered design and upstream investments in mothers and families, which we know will ultimately pay off in stronger communities in the future.

Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Service System

The SUN Service System is Multnomah County’s partnership with six school districts and many community-based organizations to support safe, healthy and thriving communities for school-aged youth and their families. SUN does this by providing free meal sites, food pantries, culturally specific case management, and connection to health and mental health services, in addition to educational support and after-school enrichment.

SUN Schools continue to be a priority in this FY 2024 budget, which supports a request for proposal process to re-engage many SUN School providers and improve service hubs. The budget also allocates \$250,000 to maintain four existing SUN School sites that could otherwise shutter, as well as new infrastructure investments to provide an updated SUN database and expand the summer meals program. We are also adding 2.00 FTE in our Youth and Family Services Division with General Fund dollars to support the work of the SUN Service System.

Aging, Disability & Veterans Services

This Aging, Disability and Veterans Services Division provides many of the most vulnerable populations across Multnomah County with the critical support they need to remain stable and supported, especially in these challenging times. Our commitment in the FY 2024 budget is to provide the resources needed for the division to engage in a request for proposals process to increase connections across community providers working in this area and to provide additional short- and longer-term care and case management.

Conclusion

As the first budget of my tenure, this Executive Budget will always represent my first opportunity as Chair to more deeply and comprehensively consider the County’s priorities. In going through this process, I feel confident in the enduring and central role Multnomah County continues to play in our community’s ability to recover from the challenges of this moment and create a just economic and social recovery that focuses our attention on those who need support the most.

There are many people who deserve thanks for helping with this process over the course of many months.

In an abbreviated but meaningful chance to work directly with community members around our budget priorities, I want to thank the Community Budget Advisory Committees, facilitated by Office of Community Involvement Director JR Lilly, who nurtured thoughtful engagement at a pivotal time in our discussions and deliberations.

I want to thank my colleagues on the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners — Sharon Meieran, Susheela Jayapal, Diane Rosenbaum and Lori Stegmann — for your consistent partnership and your commitment to serving the people of Multnomah County.

None of the work related to these many policy initiatives or our ability to think through how best to fund them would be possible without my dedicated staff, almost all of whom were either new to Multnomah County or to the Chair's Office on January 1st of this year. To my Chief of Staff Chris Fick and our entire team — Raffaele Timarchi, Stacy Borke, Hayden Miller, Lakeitha Elliott, Leah Drebin, Sara Guest, Lyne Martin and Olivia Cleaveland — thank you for your dedication to this work and the people of Multnomah County. Thanks also for communications support from Denis Theriault, Julie Sullivan-Springhetti and Paul Park, and strategic leadership and daily partnership from our Chief Operating Officer Serena Cruz.

Our Multnomah County Central Budget Office is exceptional, and has done incredible work as always. My profound gratitude to Budget Director Christian Elkin, County Economist Jeff Renfro, Administrative Analyst Dianna Kaady and the entire budget team for your expertise, guidance and thoughtful stewardship. I am also thankful for the collaboration with the County's Chief Financial Officer Eric Arellano, whose leadership keeps this County on stable financial footing.

There are 6,000 employees of Multnomah County who deserve recognition for everything that they bring to their work daily: dedication to the County's mission and vision, to each other, and to the people we serve in so many ways. Your resilience over the past few years and also this year, as we continue to evolve the way we respond to challenges and opportunities and work together, is inspiring.

One of the great privileges of our organization's role is that we work with and on behalf of a large and diverse population that spans many different geographies and communities. Thank you, Multnomah County, for the trust you show in our leadership, the accountability you ask of us on so many pressing issues, and the many ways your partnership informs the work we do and the ways in which we do it.

As I look forward to this new fiscal year, my first full year in this new role as Chair, I feel assured in our ability to address complex issues by working together, co-creating solutions and progressing toward a more equitable community by breaking down disparities and building up a home where everyone can thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Vega Pederson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Vega Pederson
Multnomah County Chair