

Multnomah County District 2

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## **PRESS RELEASE: Commissioner Shannon Singleton Proposes Homelessness Response System Reforms**

Multnomah County Commissioner Shannon Singleton proposes new partnership structure for addressing homelessness in Multnomah County through dissolving the current HRS IGA with the City of Portland in favor of a new multi-city compact with all cities within the Multnomah County boundaries.

"Despite the funding challenges we all face this year, I still believe that we have the opportunity to build a true system of care if we lean into each jurisdiction's expertise," Singleton said. "But we can't keep doing the same thing we've been doing and hope for a different outcome."

Multnomah County and the City of Portland established the Joint Office of Homeless Services in 2016 with an intergovernmental agreement. That first partnership merged the shelter network operated by the city of Portland, serving single adults experiencing homelessness, with a shelter system operated by Multnomah County serving families and youth experiencing homelessness.

The partnership between the City of Portland and Multnomah County has evolved since the joint office's formation, and the passage of the Supportive Housing Services measure dramatically increased resources available for sheltering and housing people across Multnomah County experiencing homelessness.

"The joint office was an important first step to building the homelessness response system that exists today. But the facts on the ground have changed, and we need to change how we do this work to better serve our community," said Singleton.

Singleton's plan would end the fiscal partnership between Multnomah County and the City of Portland, returning **\$31 million** in resources that are earmarked for sheltering to the city of Portland. Instead, Multnomah County would lead talks to form a multi-city compact, that would allow all of Multnomah County's cities to coordinate services and care with the county.

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Ending the fiscal relationship would remove overhead by easing administrative costs. Last year, while the city of Portland sent **\$24.6 million** to Multnomah County to provide sheltering, Multnomah County sent **\$10 million** to the city of Portland for similar services.

“Instead of trading money back and forth, we should be laser-focused on what we’re best at,” Singleton said.

As the largest social services provider in the State of Oregon, Multnomah County’s roles, responsibilities, and expertise include homelessness services like shelter, housing placement and retention, eviction prevention, food and income security, domestic and sexual violence services, health, HIV, addiction, and workforce development. The roles, responsibilities, and expertise of the cities in Multnomah County include public space management, public safety, public works, economic development, emergency management, asset management, real estate, and housing development.

Through the multi-city compact, Multnomah County would ensure that each city has access to its coordinated entry system and Homeless Management Information System, along with the ability to coordinate with safety net service providers.

“The multi-city compact should focus on how we ensure people can move from the City of Portland’s overnight only shelters that are designed for public space management, and into the homelessness services programs at Multnomah County,” said Singleton. “And in Gresham, Wood Village, Troutdale, and Fairview, we must ensure equitable access to homelessness services.”

The multi-city compact would help first responders and outreach workers coordinate their interventions to ensure that people have the ability to exit the County’s homelessness services system by being prioritized for access into affordable housing, helping them move back into their communities.

"We have been stuck in the same argument for decades. It is well past time to move forward with all of our city partners to develop a system of care where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. It will take all of us working together to collaborate on our points of cross over, so we can better leverage local and regional investments and save money in duplicative administrative overhead." Singleton said. "I look forward to discussing this proposal with my colleagues on **DATE** when we have our work session regarding the HRS IGA."