

Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson's 2022 Budget Adoption Remarks

The approval of our Multnomah County budget is always a momentous accomplishment and an important occasion.

This year's budget is an investment in our community's resilience, recovery, and long term vitality. Investment which is sorely needed for our community members who have face illness, economic devastation, isolation,

With this vote, we're providing historic amounts of funding to address our community's health and economic recovery from COVID-19, tackling complex challenges like our homelessness crisis and the surge in gun violence, and build a more equitable economy for all who call Multnomah County home.

These investments I'm particularly proud of include:

- \$149.5 million for housing and homelessness services, including: \$105 million in rental assistance and relief, 460 additional permanent year-round shelter beds, 12 new outreach workers who will connect the houseless with resources and opportunities, \$450,000 for enhanced hygiene services, and funding for an additional 1,300 housing placements;
- \$88.4 million for behavioral health services, a \$6 million increase from last year, which includes funding for a Black/African American Mobile Behavioral Health team, school-based mental health services, and additional resources for those seeking treatment for addiction;
- \$8 million in the County's new downtown Behavioral Health Resource Center;
- \$3.9 million in new funding for community violence prevention to address the gun violence crisis on our streets in a comprehensive manner;
- Funding for a new Conviction Integrity Unit, allowing the District Attorney's office to work on cases where actual innocence may be at issue due to the discovery of new or changed evidence;

- \$23.5 million to continue work on the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge; and
- \$4.6 million in flexible client assistance funds to support over 5,800 households with resources for basic needs, debt reduction, and savings.

I'm also proud of the work of our board to modify and build upon the chair's budget.

We've created a community gun violence intervention program, which will provide life coaching and mentoring for youth at-risk of gun violence, as well as help incubate new community partners to expand outreach and effectiveness;

We're funding three neighborhood focused violence prevention efforts in the areas most impacted by gun violence;

On the eve of Gun Violence Prevention Day, these are appropriate and much needed investments in our community.

We've also set aside \$1.5 million to support the creation of community and services hubs with our non-profit partners throughout our communities; I am especially excited about funding La Plaza Esperanza which will provide critically needed space in Mid and East County for a range of services, including early childhood programming, violence prevention and youth intervention, community economic support and empowerment, and health and wellness programming

We're funding an additional position to strengthen our response to harmful woodsmoke pollution; and

We're contributing to the Black Economic Prosperity Initiative, which will support the development of a regional strategic plan for Black economic opportunity and resiliency.

Due to the American Rescue Plan, Multnomah County is receiving federal resources to address the costs and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our board is investing those resources in places where they are needed the most: our public health system and COVID response, flexible client

assistance resources to support those who need our services, and emergency rental support to keep families housed and prevent an eviction crisis.

Thanks to three voter-approved ballot measures last year, our community also has robust additional resources to address our homelessness crisis, invest in our world-class library system, and bring high quality preschool to every child in Multnomah County. Through this budget our board begins working to implement these measures in earnest, including scaling up our homelessness response system, expanding and improving our world class library, and ramping up Preschool for All.

This year has been unlike any other.

We've faced a once in a lifetime pandemic, a national reawakening for racial justice, and attacks on the foundation of our democracy.

Through all of it, our community has come together to demonstrate our resilience.

I believe that this budget will allow us to recover from the pandemic and begin to address our biggest challenges, all while laying the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous community, especially prioritizing the needs of our Black, Indigenous, Latinx and all People of Color communities.

I'm always proud to serve on this board, with this distinguished group of elected leaders, but I am particularly proud today.

So thank you all for your leadership and work, and I also want to thank the budget team led by Christian Elkin, all the staff and directors who helped brief us on this budget and answer our questions, as well as our own office staff, including the amazing work done by Kim Melton, for their very hard work too.

This is a positive, important day for our community.