



Office of Community Involvement



Department of County Human Services CBAC

TO: Chair Deborah Kafoury and Board of County Commissioners (4) pages

FROM: Department of County Human Services Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

DATE: April 16, 2021

SUBJECT: DCHS Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This letter represents the Department of County Human Services Community Budget Advisory Committee's (CBAC) recommendations regarding the pending FY 2021-2022 budget. The DCHS CBAC is aware that the County Commission Chair has requested that all departments impose a two percent constraint within their submitted budget requests, which equals approximately \$1M in County General Fund reductions within DCHS. Our recommendations for the Chair's executive budget focus on communities who had the least access to resources prior to the pandemic that are at higher risk of adverse health and economic impacts during the pandemic, and those who face disproportionate challenges in recovering from those impacts.

Our CBAC consists of members who take civic participation and equity work very seriously, which is why we strove to make recommendations to maximize benefit to citizens of the County--particularly its most vulnerable residents, while considering local budget realities and global health and economic uncertainties. We made sure to adhere to the following guiding principles while making our recommendations:

DCHS CBAC Guiding Principles:

1. Apply an equity lens
2. Emphasize stable housing
3. Identify program offers we cannot support cutting or reducing because of their vital impact on vulnerable populations
4. Protect match/leverage dollars
5. Protect programs/services not provided in another venue/mission

PROCESS

The DCHS CBAC met every month year round during this budget cycle to hear from County staff and discuss budget priorities. We began the process by reviewing the Multnomah County

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Budget Process; the FY22 financial and 5-year General Fund forecasts, and the roles CBACs play in the county budget process. All meetings were attended by DCHS Interim Director Mohammad Bader and/or Interim DCHS Deputy Director Lee Girard, and Finance Manager Senior Rob Kodiriy, who provided overviews, context, and support. This year, we invited Equity and Inclusion Manager, Dr. Carlos Richard to join our meetings on a regular basis to enhance our equity discussions as a group.

To inform our budget recommendations, various DCHS Division Directors attended meetings and presented overviews to their divisions, the services they provide and how their programs are funded in regards to CGF and other funds. Bienestar de la Familia gave a presentation to the CBAC, outlining the services provided with County funding, including changes to operating models and need in the community as a result of COVID-19. The CBAC also worked with Dr. Carlos Richard on equity in budgeting to guide decision-making and utilize an equity lens in budgeting decisions; the CBAC was impressed with the level of scrutiny and review that program offers went through to prioritize equity and empowerment in the decision-making process. The CBAC also heard from the Preschool for All initiative. This year the DCHS CBAC was intentional in allowing committee members more time to consider and debate budget recommendations than in previous years; this included gathering supporting information earlier and scheduling consecutive meetings during the decision making process.

The DCHS CBAC feels that DCHS is doing an admirable job of prioritizing critical human service programs during a time of decreasing budgets, increasing demand, and tremendous uncertainty. Department staff provided thorough program details and were very responsive to requests for further information, and clear rationale was given for all proposed budget changes. At the same time, the CBAC is cognizant that its members could not read all of the program offers put forth by DCHS in the time period given. Further, the CBAC members are continuously examining how to be more efficient with the information we receive and request from DCHS, including how we digest this information and strengthening the link between the presentations we've received throughout the year and our ultimate budget recommendations. As a result, the DCHS CBAC members do not possess extensive knowledge each program offers, and as such, limited the scope of our recommendations to the program offers that were out-of-target.

EMERGING ISSUES & CHANGES

The committee formed its recommendations under the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic, and its effects on County citizens and programs needed to aid those disproportionately affected were heavy factors in our decision making. We also focused on supporting programs which provide aid to immigrants and refugees, those affected by domestic violence, the housing crisis, and communities of color who experience inequalities in economic opportunities, housing, health care, the justice system, and other areas.

Members: Kali Glenn-Haley (Co-Chair), Nyla Moore (Co-Chair), Jeff Scroggin, Ashley Hess, Mark Sturbois, Mariel St.Savage Staff: Mohammad Bader, Rob Kodiriy, Lee Girard, Dr. Carlos Richard, Tahira Rivera

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BUDGET FEEDBACK

The CBAC believes that DCHS provides a critical safety net through the provision of essential services in our community. We believe that a strengthened social safety net is the foundation of recovery for the populations that DCHS serves, particularly given the pre-existing vulnerabilities of these populations. The DCHS CBAC expects the following communities to experience the most significant impacts of COVID-19:

- Historically vulnerable populations
- Seniors
- Domestic violence survivors
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color populations
- Unemployed people or people whose work hours/pay has been reduced due to COVID
- Immigrant and refugee communities- particularly undocumented people
- People who live in food desert areas and lack transportation
- Houseless populations

Given the priority of housing, particularly in light of COVID-19, the DCHS CBAC recommends that the County allocate appropriate funding for housing related programs. In particular, the County should consider not reducing funding for Program Offer 25133 - YFS Housing Stabilization for Vulnerable Families (\$237,500), which is currently slated for a budget reduction, especially as 78 percent of the people that this program serves are BIPOC.

PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated above, the DCHS CBAC recognizes the essential services that the County provides as a social safety net for the County's vulnerable residents, particularly in light of the impact of COVID-19 and the inequalities resulting from oppressive systems, both historic and contemporary. The CBAC prioritized wrap-around services for households grappling with one or multiple needs in order to provide holistic support. The CBAC also recognized that domestic violence has increased during the past year, and was alarmed by the statistic that 25 percent of homicides in the County are the result of domestic violence.

Accordingly, our specific recommendations are as follows, in priority order:

1. 25047B - YFS Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team - Increase DVCRU staff coverage to 24/7 response - \$443,272; 4.00 FTE.
2. 25145B YFS SUN Community Schools - \$131,098; 1.00 FTE Program Specialist Sr
3. 25156B YFS Bienestar de la Familia - \$120,000; 1.00 FTE Youth Program Coordinator
4. 25050C YFS Gateway Center - \$190,000; 2.00 FTE staff capacity
5. 25050B YFS Gateway Center - Funds Legal Supports - \$60,000.

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6. 25136B YFS Legal Navigation for Immigrant Families - \$250,000.
7. 25134 YFS Fair Housing Testing - \$70,000.

The CBAC also acknowledges that decisions made by the City of Portland Government can impact the County's General Fund. The CBAC urges collaboration between the City and County governments in making decisions that have funding implications to prioritize our social safety net and reduce inequality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee would like to give special thanks to the DCHS staff for their work during such a difficult year, and to the organizations funded by the County to provide these essential services.