

## Multnomah County Sheriff's Office CBAC

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TO: Chair Deborah Kafoury and Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) CBAC

DATE: April 16, 2021

SUBJECT: MCSO Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

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### **Introduction and Executive Summary**

The MSCO and its CBAC are determined to make our community's values an essential part of the fabric of the Sheriff's Office, and we are committed to having a budget that reflects that determination. We spent much of our time considering the priorities we want to bring to this work, including an emphasis on treating incarceration as a truly last resort, increasing equity and inclusion, an imperative that equity come with accountability, and the importance of community engagement.

We welcomed a number of new members to the Committee this year, reaping the benefit of the thoughtfulness they bring to this work. We struggled with the boundaries and contours of our role – sometimes we felt an urgency to focus on very specific aspects of the budget, sometimes we felt that such focus could swallow us and we shifted to a broader 30,000 foot focus. And as part of our resolution of this tension, a number of committee members are eager to structure next year's conversation to include time for both deep dives on issues of pressing concern, but also more big-picture value setting.

The Committee is also eager to see "lessons learned" from the experience of the pandemic. As a public health imperative, Multnomah County dramatically reduced incarceration over the past 12 months, going from 90-95% to 75% or less of funded capacity. This is on top of the already low jail incarceration rate in Multnomah County, which as of 2018 had among the lowest per capita jail incarceration rates in the country (149 persons per 100k residents, per the Vera Institute). We are hopeful there are important lessons and opportunity to be learned here – lessons about where we can safely scale back on incarceration in the future, and maybe some lessons about where we cannot.

#### *Values Guiding Our Deliberations*

The Sheriff and MCSO have adopted a guiding philosophy that as the Agency moves to address revenue restrictions, it should prioritize having a smaller jail population with better and more effective services

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rather than a larger jail population with more limited programming. The Committee offered unanimous approval for this guiding philosophy.

The Committee, in our work, also identified a number of guiding values:

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** We commend the MCSO for expressing interest in work related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which will have profound implications on shifting the culture of the County's law enforcement. We are concerned that the County has a history of harm that disproportionately impacts the Black and Indigenous communities (through incarceration, stops, citations, and arrests). Working towards equity means addressing the systems that helped get our County to this point and working to reverse those trends. This committee enthusiastically supports any aggressive actions, with a focus on accountability, that vigorously move our county away from the disproportionate harm that it has created.

**Community Engagement:** The Committee recognizes that the MCSO has had some success with certain efforts at community engagement, and we encourage more work in this effort. Engagement and dialogue are essential components of trust-building, and are all the more important at a time when trust of law enforcement is low. In particular we support outreach to communities of color, immigrant communities, and other communities for which English is not their first language.

**Data-Driven Decision Making:** Striking the balance of building a more trauma-informed public safety system, while maintaining public safety, is not obvious – and the Committee expressed a focus on using data to help guide these decisions. For example, we have seen a significant increase in gun violence over the past year – and at the same time, to meet budget limits, the MCSO is proposing to close all or parts of 3 dorms. We are eager to see data drive this kind of decision – can we do our part to reduce gun violence while reducing capacity like this?

**Family Access for Incarcerated People:** MCSO has, through COVID, made a special effort to improve virtual connections to family and community for people incarcerated in the County, as live visitation has been suspended. We applaud this effort, but the Committee urges the Commission and MSCO to take steps to not only continue but to broaden these efforts even post-COVID. Reflecting both our value on community engagement and data, we know that connecting people who are incarcerated to their families and communities leads to greater chance for success upon release. We should take this lesson and the experience of COVID to broaden community and family access for people in custody.

We believe the MSCO has a commitment to these values and is ready to lean in further – and we urge the Commission to support initiatives consistent with these values with resources and political will.

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## Process

The CBAC met as a full group six times between January and April 2021. These meetings included attendance by MCSO staff, with the Chief of the Business Services Division and the Budget and Finance Manager attending each meeting. Other MCSO leadership, including the Sheriff and Chiefs of the Corrections and Law Enforcement divisions, attended one or more meetings.

At these meetings CBAC members were provided information on the overall operations and goals of the Sheriff's office, as well as information on the agency's considerations and direction in the FY22 budget process. Members had the opportunity to ask questions and request information in these meetings as well as via email.

## Emerging Issues and Changes

As noted above, many of the perspectives we bring to this work have been informed by the events of 2020. Calls for racial justice in general, and reform or outright defunding of law enforcement in particular, make this a pivotal time for MCSO. And while the ever-presence of COVID-19 has certainly had a significant impact on our lives to-date, we are interested in the lessons it teaches about life going forward. We hope that many of the changes brought about by the past year can be preserved even when the pandemic abates, and that MCSO and the County continue to look for opportunities to innovate and improve.

## Budget Feedback and Program Offer Recommendations

We struggled to come to consensus on a number of recommendations, largely because several members felt that they did not have enough information to be definitive. We also felt challenged to manage decision-making given ambiguity about our purpose and mission – specifically, the tension between a general focus on bringing community values to bear on the budget process versus offering opinions on particular expenditures and budget items. In light of this, the recommendations below are not unanimous and, for several items, we note contrasting opinions and/or a particular desire for more information.

*60330H: MCIJ East Control and Kitchen Deputies (Proposed Reduction)*

*60330G: MCIJ Dorm 12 (Proposed Reduction)*

*60330I: MCIJ Dorm 13 and associated Corrections Counselors (Proposed Restoration of FY21 cut)*

As discussed above, we are generally supportive of incarceration as a last resort in criminal justice. The committee notes that Multnomah County has reduced jail capacity in the last several years even as the population of Multnomah County has grown. Some members of the committee were concerned about rising crime rates, particularly gun violence, and the role that reductions to jail capacity could play in

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exacerbating those issues. Other members feel comfortable with the reduction in capacity despite these factors. The committee is eager to see more data-driven decision making from MCSO on this issue.

Additionally, the committee supports MCSO's Treatment Readiness program, and understands that if dorm 12 is closed in FY22, dorm 13 is not restored, and dorm 11 is closed to meet the State Community Corrections reduction, the Treatment Readiness dorm will have to be converted to a general housing dorm. The commission should take whatever budget steps are required to preserve the Treatment Readiness program.

Finally, the committee notes concern that the elimination of kitchen deputies could result in a lost work opportunity for skill development for adults in custody, and encourages MCSO to find alternative opportunities.

## *60410D: Turn-Self-In Program (Proposed Reduction)*

The committee generally opposes elimination of the Turn-Self-In program. This program allows individuals to maintain ties to family, community, and employment while serving sentences, ties that would likely be diminished if not severed should they need to serve a more traditional sentence.

## *60535C: Community Resource Deputies (Proposed Reduction)*

The committee was split in its support for this proposed reduction. Several members of the committee felt that they simply needed more information on the impact of these officers relative to traditional patrol. Some expressed concern about equity when some communities have community deputies and others do not, and suggested that this particular service should be paid for by the assigned community and not by the County as a whole. Others noted that some communities, including those tied to this particular reduction, simply do not have the resources to pay for such a service themselves.

## *60105B: Equity and Inclusion Unit*

Members of the committee generally support creation of this unit. However, members note that equity and inclusion efforts must include accountability processes and procedures; training alone is not enough, accountability is critical for behavior change. We encourage MCSO and the County to pursue these as part of their equity and inclusion efforts. Other members felt that there was not enough information about what MCSO has done in this space in the past, and what it intends to do with this unit.

## *60125: Corrections Compliance Position*

While members of the committee generally support comprehensive compliance around PREA, several question the need to have this work managed at such a high level of leadership. The committee notes that managing the work below the Captain level would be cheaper, though it's not clear what impact that would have on the quality of the work.

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## *60250B: New Mandated Training Requirements*

Members of the committee generally support funding for these new requirements. MCSO is required to meet these training requirements to continue to work as a public safety agency in Oregon, and as such will have to provide these trainings with or without funding. Without dedicated funding, MCSO's overtime expenditure will continue to grow.

Finally, the committee would like to note several priority issues beyond the comments above:

- The Committee believes it is imperative that the MCSO have a safe and protected system for employees to register, and for the department to evaluate and act on complaints. Such a system is especially important to ensure a safe and supportive workplace for employees from communities of color and other marginalized communities. We urge the Commissioners to ensure that such a system exists, and if it doesn't, to support and fund such a safe and protected system.
- The Committee believes it is imperative that the MCSO have a system that creates direct, transparent accountability for police actions around use of force. We urge the Commissioners to ensure that such a system exists, and if it doesn't, to support and fund such a system.
- Some members of the committee believe that the MCSO should explicitly disclose costs stemming from overtime and costs of munitions incurred in responding to protests in the past year.

## **Conclusion**

We all appreciate the opportunity to serve and be a part of this important process. We deeply appreciate the time and commitment of the Sheriff and his team in supporting our work – and we look forward to learning and growing and adding more value next year.