



Board of County Commissioners Multnomah County

May 21, 2021

The Honorable Governor Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301-4047

Dear Governor Brown,

Having reached the required 65 percent threshold of population vaccination rates as set out by the Oregon Health Authority, we are writing to apply to move Multnomah County into the Low Risk category.

Our attached Vaccine Equity Plan demonstrates the deep, planful equity work Multnomah County has undertaken over the course of the pandemic and our ongoing work to address vaccine disparities. Our partnerships with organizations, representing numerous communities of color, have been integral to contextualizing and leveraging the data we have into the development of an equitable COVID-19 response. These relationships with community-based organizations have been equally essential to converting our approach into a tangible public health response that meets the needs of specific cultural communities.

Several key highlights are outlined below:

- **COVID-19 BIPOC Plan** – This plan was released in June 2020 and has served as the North Star to guide Multnomah County’s COVID-19 response priorities and activities. The plan was developed to ensure that racial equity was centered in the following areas: 1) Data, Trends, Visibility, and Accountability; 2) Contact Tracing; 3) Community Testing; 4) Isolation and Quarantine; 5) Personal Protective Equipment; 6) Communications and Innovation; 7) Prevention, Basic Needs, and Safety Net Services; 8) Health Care and Wellness; 9) Community Wisdom and Faith Communities; and 10) Economic Vitality.
- **Community Engagement** – Intensive, culturally specific community engagement has been a primary strategy to lead with race from the start of the pandemic.

Multnomah County both leveraged existing community advisory bodies and convened newer COVID-specific groups to ensure continuous input from communities. By establishing these feedback channels, we were able to learn about their concerns and recommendations, as well as insights into the experiences and needs of specific cultural and language communities.

- **Community Partnerships** – Multnomah County funds 17 community-based organizations (CBOs), with 13 of them also funded by the Oregon Health Authority, to serve as a bridge of trust between community and government. Those partnerships have been essential to successfully connecting community members to critical public health messaging, testing events, isolation and quarantine supports, wraparound services, resources to meet basic needs, and vaccination opportunities.
- **Robust and Inclusive Communication** – Multnomah County has developed and implemented a comprehensive communications plan with the goal of eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death, and to curb community spread of the virus.
- **Community-based Clinics** – Multnomah County has worked with its community partners to hold community vaccination clinics focused on culturally specific communities and located strategically to promote low-barrier access. As of May 14, 2021, the Multnomah County Health Department’s Public Health Division has held 120 community vaccination clinics, many of which were coordinated in partnership with community-based organizations. Nearly half of the clinics have been BIPOC-specific or focused on other culturally specific communities. The County has vaccinated more than 20,000 community members with the doses allotted to us, with approximately 75 percent of people vaccinated identifying as BIPOC.
- **County Health Center Partnership** – Multnomah County’s Health Center has collaborated closely with our Public Health Division on shared messaging, equity strategies, and complementary vaccination clinic locations, hours, and communities/languages of focus. Our County Health Center has provided 11,562 vaccinations, with 7,759 patients partially vaccinated and 4,424 patients fully vaccinated as of May 18, 2021. Of these patients, 70 percent identify as BIPOC, 31 percent are uninsured, and 55 percent prefer to speak in a non-English language, with 47 percent requiring an interpreter.

We believe that our approach has been comprehensive and meticulous, understanding that urgency and equity do not have to come at the cost of each other. Rather, we have

committed ourselves to the intent and work that equity requires precisely because of the urgent nature of helping every part of our community endure the pandemic.

As a result of the work that we've done and continue to do to address disparities, **we are requesting approval to reopen Multnomah County as soon as the Oregon Health Authority has reviewed and approved our Vaccine Equity Plan. We are prepared and eager to reopen before May 28th, ideally by Wednesday, May 26th.**

As we reach this exciting benchmark and look forward to reopening our community, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners remains committed to eliminating vaccine disparities through the aforementioned strategies and in close collaboration with the State, neighboring jurisdictions, and community-based organizations.

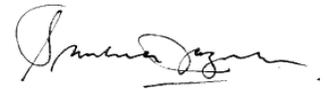
Sincerely,



Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury



Commissioner Sharon Meieran, District 1



Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, District 2



Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, District 3



Commissioner Lori Stegmann, District 4