



Deborah Kafoury

Multnomah County Chair

Multnomah County Adopted Budget Message

Four months ago, when we thought we were putting the final pieces of the FY 2021 budget together, I could never have imagined the current state of affairs halfway through 2020.

Since that time, our country and our community have been jarred by a pandemic and the growing chorus of calls for justice. Many people are outraged — and rightfully so — at the ways oppression and white supremacy continue to strip opportunity, stability and even life from Black, Indigenous and other people of color. People have lost their jobs and families fear losing their homes. And without a vaccine or cure for COVID-19, most people are worried that they or someone in their family might get sick.

And yet this is a moment that I believe calls me, my colleagues and Multnomah County to a higher level of leadership, engagement, justice and accountability. Now is an opportunity to lean fully into the work that needs to be done.

This \$2.06 billion budget, adopted by the Board of Commissioners on June 23, maintains Multnomah County's core safety net services, tackles urgent needs to combat COVID-19, advances equity and accelerates reforms to the criminal legal system. I am inspired by the hope that, in solidarity and in collaboration, we can take giant leaps forward.

The budget is our strongest policy document, translating our priorities and values into a roadmap for being the kind of local government Multnomah County pledges to be. And though this year's budget process was filled with unprecedented challenges, I believe that this budget is capable of meeting the needs of our community members while also tending to the financial health of this organization.

In this budget:

- We managed to close our structural deficit in part with a long-overdue update to our Business Income Tax.
- We avoided deep reductions in staffing by forgoing cost of living adjustments among our non-represented employees and freezing the pay of managers.
- We maintained core safety net services and increased investments in culturally specific services that close gaps in our community and address systemic injustices, putting our dollars in the hands of community-based organizations who have the trust, lived experience and relationships to reach people that traditional government approaches cannot. We are making a new \$1 million investment in culturally specific services within our adult homeless services system and an additional \$250,000 a year to create new homeless services for the trans and non-binary community.

- We invested \$90 million in local, state and federal funds to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to do so in a way that prioritizes the needs of those who are most vulnerable to severe illness and death. This includes investing in our public health response, housing stability, support for people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic, wraparound services, and increased communication and outreach.
- We upheld our commitment to workforce equity. By ensuring that the County has the resources and capacity to continue the work outlined in our Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, we can transform the way we approach and implement our recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, retention and culture-building.
- We are continuing our work to reduce our reliance on jails, dismantle racial and ethnic disparities, and invest in community-centered models of safety and wellness. This budget reduces jail capacity, as well as capacity in the misdemeanor and pretrial units in the District Attorney's Office, and permanently suspends parole and probation fees.

The adoption of the FY 2021 budget is an important step, but there is much more we need to do to work toward a reimagined justice system. We're also building up a system that invests meaningfully in Black and other communities of color by reallocating funds to programs and services that are needed long before someone has an encounter with law enforcement, offering resources and pathways for stability and opportunity. This starts with a \$2 million community health reinvestment plan. And for those who have already been involved with the criminal justice system, we're strengthening the services that break down barriers to successful community reentry.

These investments are significant, but initial, steps toward true change. The County will continue to listen humbly to the wisdom within impacted communities. We're committed to achieving a shared vision of public safety and criminal justice that moves away from downstream interventions and reinvests in resources that promote deflection, diversion, supported reentry and healing.

The FY 2021 budget is my sixth budget as County Chair, and 11th as a member of this board. Although this year's budget seeks to address numerous timely and urgent needs, the ultimate vision for Multnomah County endures: to be a community where anyone who needs help can find it, where everyone shares in opportunity and where the most vulnerable among us know they are protected.

The partnership and work of my fellow commissioners has been critical to this budget process. Thank you, Commissioner Sharon Meieran, Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson and Commissioner Lori Stegmann, for leading with your values and for your commitment to ensuring this budget document was the best we could put forth.

I'm grateful for the relentlessly exceptional work of my Chief of Staff, Kimberly Melton, as well as my team: Liz Smith Currie, Anna Marie Allen, Adam Renon, Liam Frost, Nicole Buchanan, Raffaele Timarchi, Allison Conkling and Paul Park.

Thank you to Interim Chief Operating Officer Peggy Brey, who has stepped up in tremendous ways over the last several months.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible work of Budget Director Christian Elkin and her team. I have been thankful every single day of this budget process for their insight and guidance.

And finally, thank you to the thousands of Multnomah County employees who have continued to support each other, and who have continued to serve the community. I'm inspired by your dedication, your resilience and your creativity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent than the last.

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair