

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

RESOLUTION NO. 07-102

Affirming “Our Bill of Rights: Children and Youth” and Promoting Youth Engagement Strategies for Multnomah County

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

- a. The well being of children and youth is an important indicator of the health of the community.
- b. Children and youth deserve basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, medical resources, a well-rounded education, and opportunities for recreation. They also must receive support, encouragement and respect from adults.
- c. Multnomah County provides many services which directly impact the lives of young people including after-school programs, school-based health clinics, and mental health care, juvenile justice and homeless youth services.
- d. 147,250 children and youth in our community under age 18, who account for 22% of our population (2000, Census Bureau), do not have voting powers and thus are often denied the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives.
- e. Only 23% of young people feel wanted and needed in their community (CCFC Time for Success Youth Asset Survey, 1997).
- f. Only 37% of American adults believe today's children, once grown, will make the world a better place (<http://www.ysa.org/nysd/statistics.html>).
- g. 90% of students believe the interaction of public officials with young people builds civic engagement (citation from US Mayor’s Conference website).
- h. The Bill is the first of its kind in the Nation written by and for children and youth and adopted by a City government (City of Portland, August 16, 2006) and now County government, and thus gives Multnomah County the opportunity to serve as an outstanding model of innovation in the development of youth-friendly policies and procedures using a youth-created planning tool as guidelines for policy and program development and review.
- i. Almost 500 children and youth were directly engaged in this initiative through writing the bill of rights, participating on the Committee for the Rights of Children and Youth, and ratifying the Bill at the Convention on the Rights of Children and Youth, and thousands of children and youth provided the Committee with their feedback, ideas, and what they envisioned their rights as.
- j. Multnomah County’s Commission on Children, Families, and Community established a Youth Advisory Board in 1996 to “help provide a voice for youth.” In 2002, the Youth Advisory Board voted to change its name to the Multnomah Youth Commission and work to engage young people in policy-level discussions and programs. The Multnomah Youth Commission currently represents a large and broad sample of the County’s diverse youth population. It is composed of young people ages 13-21 from middle schools, high schools and colleges throughout Multnomah County.

- k. Young people who are not old enough to vote have no formal way to contribute their opinions to civic dialogue. The Multnomah Youth Commission promotes positive youth involvement in County government through a variety of youth-led projects and efforts. The Multnomah Youth Commission has been instrumental in identifying the concerns and needs of the children and youth in Multnomah County, as well as meeting with various Board members to collect valuable information relevant to policy advisement.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Resolves:

- 1. To affirm "Our Bill of Rights, Children & Youth" attached as Exhibit A; considering that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) regards the well- being of children and youth to be of primary concern and importance to Multnomah County, and considering that the BCC recognizes that children and youth are our future leaders and thus that their welfare is crucial and their inclusion in the political process vital.
- 2. To refer to the Bill as a resource and as a tool to identify and evaluate additional mechanisms to support children and youth.
- 3. To involve children and youth in decision-making and other review processes and to take the views of children and youth into consideration when making decisions, and promote this involvement throughout the other departments and agencies in the county.
- 4. To charge the Commission on Children, Families & Community and the Multnomah Youth Commission with producing a report, by December 2007, on the current state of youth engagement efforts throughout Multnomah County government, and recommend practices that will provide increasing opportunities for youth to engage with and serve the County (especially in the County budget process).
- 5. That this Resolution is non-binding county policy.

ADOPTED this 22nd day of May, 2007 and ratified May 24, 2007.



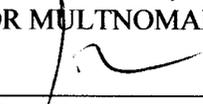
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Wheeler", is written over a horizontal line.

Ted Wheeler, Chair

REVIEWED:

AGNES SOWLE, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By 
John S. Thomas, Deputy County Attorney

SUBMITTED BY:

Ted Wheeler
Maria Rojo de Steffey
Jeff Cogen
Lisa Naito
Lonnie Roberts

our bill of rights

The Bill of Rights for the Children and Youth of the City of Portland and Multnomah County

We, the Children and Youth of the City of Portland, OR and Multnomah County, in order to establish our basic rights, to protect our liberties as human beings, to ensure ourselves a valuable education, and to assert the power to make choices for ourselves, affirm this Bill of Rights for Children and Youth. The decisions we make will affect our individual futures and happiness, as well the future prosperity of our local community and of the world. Therefore, we call upon ourselves and upon other individuals, organizations, elected officials, and government bodies to recognize these rights, to uphold them through observance, and to defend them through progressive legislative measures:

- I. **Voice:** We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, are entitled to a voice and opinion in decisions that will impact our lives.
 - a. **Voice in Education:** Students should have a say in their education and should be represented on school boards and other decision-making bodies.
 - b. **Voice in Health:** We have the right to know the reasoning behind any medical decision made on our behalf, as well as alternate options. We recognize that children should not have control over specific medical decisions; however, we expect that children are completely informed of such decisions and their consequences and as they mature are increasingly engaged in their own health decisions.
 - c. **Voice in the Community:** It is our right to be accepted and active members of the community. We have the right to ask questions, receive answers, and have our views acknowledged by adults when making decisions that affect our lives. We have the right to engage in respectful and open dialogue with adults and we insist on being taken seriously when we participate.

- II. **Education:** We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, are entitled to a quality public education that will help us succeed in the future, beginning in preschool and continuing through high school and beyond.
 - a. **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Extra-curricular activities, including athletics, the arts, linguistics, politics, and any other areas in which

students express interest, should be made available to all students, and all students should be supported in their pursuits.

- b. **Curriculum and subjects:** Children and youth are entitled to an education that equips them with basic skills and covers a variety of subjects.
- c. **Safety and Health of Students:** Students' physical and mental safety and health should be protected inside, outside, and around their school. Students are entitled to schools and playgrounds that are free of drugs and violence.
- d. **Individual Needs:** Schools must respect and accommodate the learning abilities and aptitudes of all students. Children and youth have the right to express their own identity and to be respected for their individuality.
- e. **School Funding:** Sufficient funding should be provided for all children and youth to have a successful educational experience. This may include supplying nutritionally sufficient foods, well-trained and paid teachers, appropriate and up-to-date materials, transportation to school, as well as any additional resources. Children and youth should have access to athletics and other activities regardless of their families' ability to pay.
- f. **Preparation for the Future:** Schools must provide students the tools deemed necessary for their personal advancement in all aspects of their educational life. Youth have the right to know all their options and choose their own desired path.

- III. **Health:** We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, have the right to physical, mental, and spiritual wellness.
 - a. **Physical:** We have the right to any medical care, nutrition, and fitness deemed necessary for our health. If children and youth or their families cannot afford medical care, appropriate care should be provided for them.
 - b. **Mental:** We have the right to emotional well-being, and the right to an adequate support system.
 - c. **Spiritual:** We have the right to follow our own spiritual path.

- IV. **General well-being:** We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, have the right to be provided with the tools that will lead to a healthy and productive life.
 - a. **Clothing:** We have the right to sufficient clothing.
 - b. **Shelter:** We have the inherent right to shelter. The City of Portland and Multnomah County should continue their efforts to provide adequate shelter to those who need it.
 - c. **Food:** We have the right to access adequate nutrition, and the community should provide for this right.
 - d. **Employment:** We are entitled to any funds that we earn.

- V. **Family, Home, and Community:** We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, have the right to loving care and a healthy

environment at home, as our homes, families and community provides the basis for our development.

- a. **Safety and Protection:** We have the right to be safe in our homes and communities. Furthermore, we have the right to be protected from all types of abuse and exploitation, whether physical, verbal, emotional or sexual, and to be supported in reporting and combating abuse.
- b. **Love and Value:** Every child should be loved, valued and respected. The community should be supportive and should have positive and high expectations of youth.
- c. **Influences and Role Models:** We have the right to live in safe homes and communities with people whom we trust, and who love and guide us.
- d. **Privacy:** We have the right to have privacy in our homes.
- e. **Freedom from Discrimination and Prejudice:** We have the right not to be discriminated against based on our race, color, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, political views, source of income, gender identity or any other basis prohibited by applicable federal, state, and local laws. Such discrimination poses a threat to the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of Portland and Multnomah County and menaces the institutions and foundation of our community. We have the right not to tolerate any disparaging or insensitive attitudes aimed at the above characteristics.

VI. Recreation: We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, deserve access to safe and clean recreational areas.

- a. **Parks:** We have the right to safe, clean, and affordable access to parks and facilities, at times which are convenient to children and youth.
- b. **Culture:** We have the right to access music, art, libraries and museums and other resources that could strengthen our creative and intellectual abilities.
- c. **Exercise:** We have the right to be supported in our pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.
- d. **Fun:** We have the right to experience freedom and enjoyment in a secure environment.

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Supervised by: Justice Evans, Karin Hansen, Sara Ryan, Joshua L Todd, Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong, and Meng Zhou