



May 9, 2017

The Honorable Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Commission
501 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, OR 97214

Dear Chair Kafoury:

The Portland Business Alliance (“Alliance”) represents over 1,850 small, medium and large employers in the Portland-metro region and has a long history of supporting social services and efforts to address homelessness in our community. We are pleased to see additional attention and focus on these issues under your leadership and in your proposed FY 2018 budget.

We appreciate that you have asked each Multnomah County department to thoroughly review their budget and offer up savings from administrative costs and duplication of services. We understand that there are difficult decisions to make, including potential program and staffing cuts, but we urge that housing and homelessness, mental health services, and public safety remain top priorities for Multnomah County during this budget cycle, especially given the level of state and federal uncertainty to fund these pressing issues. We are, therefore, glad to see that you have set aside \$2.7 million in reserves to plan for potential federal and state cuts.

Communities across Multnomah County are experiencing an unprecedented housing affordability crisis – inadequate supply of affordable units, rising rents, and homelessness. We understand that last year, the city and county added \$20 million to help address our housing and homelessness emergency and are pleased to see that your FY 2018 proposed budget not only maintains the county’s level of investment but that it adds additional resources to expand services to reach more homeless youth and their parents.

As you know, we always look for coordination and alignment between the city and county on delivering services. As a result, we are very supportive of the Joint Office of Homeless Services and request that the city and county continue to work together to maximize public services in the most efficient manner possible. Specifically, we want to ensure that the city and county both maintain their budget commitments from last year to help fund efforts to address our housing and homelessness crisis.

There are great variations in the level and severity of need among our most vulnerable individuals, including those who suffer from drug and alcohol addiction and serious mental illness. We, therefore, are pleased to see that your proposed budget maintains core affordable health care services and increases support for the county’s mental health crisis system.

Greater Portland’s Chamber of Commerce

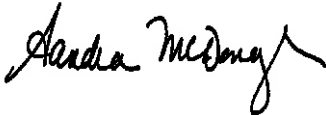
We are also encouraged to see that the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program is funded in your proposed FY 2018 budget. LEAD will allow police and prosecutors to divert people with a low-level drug possession charge into treatment instead of jail. Upstream investments in programs and services such as LEAD help to reduce recidivism and will save public safety dollars in the long-term.

The Alliance has long advocated for either the reconstruction or replacement of the Multnomah County Courthouse downtown and we support the \$25 million budget request to replace it and the health department headquarters. Making infrastructure investments today, rather than deferring maintenance and or construction, will result in cost savings in the long-term.

Finally, we would like to revisit the county's long-time commitment to increase the Owners' Compensation Deduction to \$125,000. We believe this change is critical to the current and future success of small businesses and will greatly add to the county's economic vitality.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra McDonough". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandra McDonough
President & CEO

cc: Multnomah County Commission
Portland City Council