



May 15th, 2026

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd.
Portland, OR 97214

RE: FY 2026–27 Budget Priorities

Chair Vega Pederson and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Portland Metro Chamber and our coalition, we write regarding the County's FY 2026–27 proposed budget and to urge the Board to prioritize three critical investments that are essential to Multnomah County's public safety, economic stability, and long-term community recovery.

Specifically, we urge the Board to:

1. Fully restore funding to the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office;
2. Increase funding for the proposed partnership with Oregon State University Extension Service; and
3. Adopt Commissioner Moyer's Recovery Housing Voucher pilot amendment.

These investments represent practical, outcome-oriented priorities that directly support public safety, behavioral health stabilization, workforce development, housing continuity, and economic resilience.

First, we strongly believe that fully restoring funding to the District Attorney's Office must be among the Board's highest priorities in this budget cycle.

Multnomah County continues to face significant public safety and livability challenges that impact residents, employers, workers, and neighborhood business districts throughout the region. The District Attorney's Office is a foundational component of the County's justice system and plays a central role in ensuring accountability, supporting victims, addressing repeat offending, and maintaining confidence in the rule of law.

At a time when Portland and Multnomah County are working to restore public trust in public safety systems, additional reductions to prosecutorial capacity would move the community in the wrong direction. Staffing shortages, case backlogs, workload pressures, and system delays already strain the justice system. Further reductions risk undermining the effectiveness of law enforcement, diversion programs, behavioral health interventions, and broader community safety strategies that depend on a functioning prosecution system to succeed.

Public safety and economic recovery are inseparable. Employers, employees, customers, and visitors must have confidence that the region can provide safe, stable, and well-functioning public institutions. Fully restoring the District Attorney's Office is a necessary investment in that stability.

Second, we urge the Board to increase funding for the partnership with the Oregon State University Extension Service. OSU Extension provides research-based, non-regulatory technical assistance and workforce development support that directly advances County priorities related to food access, small business development, agricultural viability, and economic opportunity.

The proposal offers scalable investment options that would support:

- Food systems coordination and workforce readiness in East Multnomah County;
- Long-term sustainability planning for the Feed'em Freedom Foundation Food Hub;
- Technical assistance and education for producers in West Multnomah County and Sauvie Island; and
- Vendor readiness and market access support through partnership with the OSU Food Innovation Center.

These investments are practical economic development tools that strengthen local food systems, expand workforce pathways, support small producers, and improve long-term economic resilience in both urban and rural parts of the County. Importantly, OSU Extension already maintains statewide expertise and local relationships that allow services to be delivered efficiently without creating duplicative government infrastructure.

Finally, we strongly support Commissioner Moyer's amendment establishing a Recovery Housing Voucher pilot program.

92% of individuals connecting to deflection programs are currently unhoused, and many individuals exiting treatment return directly into homelessness because of the severe

shortage of recovery housing. The proposed pilot would provide short-term recovery-focused housing support for a minimum of 240 individuals and families annually, helping stabilize people during the critical post-treatment transition period.

We believe this proposal represents exactly the type of targeted, outcome-oriented investment the County should prioritize. It aligns directly with the County's Homelessness Response Action Plan goals related to homelessness prevention, behavioral health coordination, and care continuity.

Without stable transitional recovery housing, significant public investments in treatment, deflection, and behavioral health interventions are less effective and more likely to fail. Recovery housing is not simply a housing strategy—it is a public safety, behavioral health, and system-efficiency strategy that improves outcomes across multiple County systems simultaneously.

The County faces difficult fiscal constraints, and we recognize the challenge of balancing competing priorities within a constrained budget environment. However, budgets ultimately reflect values and priorities. Investments in public safety capacity, workforce, and economic resilience, and recovery-oriented housing stabilization are foundational services that support the long-term health and stability of the region.

We respectfully urge the Board to fully restore District Attorney funding, increase support for the OSU Extension partnership proposal, and adopt Commissioner Moyer's Recovery Housing Voucher pilot amendment as part of the FY 2026–27 adopted budget.