

2014 Federal Legislative Agenda

POLICY PRIORITIES

Support key nutrition and food system programs in Farm Bill Reauthorization. Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the Farm Bill in 2014, an omnibus bill that sets agriculture and food policy for the next five years. Included in the bill are two federal nutrition programs --- the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Multnomah County supports opportunities to strengthen federal nutrition programs and policies to support local food systems.

Support stand-alone funding for maintenance and operation of bridges in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization. Ensure that any Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill has adequate and continued funding for the operation and maintenance of bridges and allows local governments to invest in the highest priority bridge projects. Multnomah County relies on this funding source to maintain six Willamette River bridges and 20 smaller bridges in the county's jurisdiction.

Oppose changes to municipal bond interest tax exemption.

Multnomah County opposes changes to the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds. Changing tax exempt status of municipal bonds would eliminate a financing tool that helps reduce the costs of public projects to taxpayers.

Eliminate the federal health benefits “inmate exception” for persons in county jails and detention centers who are in custody pending disposition of charges.

The law prohibits county governments from billing federal programs for the health services provided to jail inmates prior to adjudication. Multnomah County supports federal legislation that would repeal the inmate exception for those in custody pending disposition of charges.

FEDERAL FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

As most Federal FY15 grants have not yet been released, the county will continue to monitor funding opportunities aligned with County priorities, such as mental health and substance abuse, drug courts, healthcare transformation, and services for vulnerable residents. The grants listed below are a current priority for the County.

Healthy Start Initiative. Multnomah County is seeking Healthy Start Initiative funding through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Funding would allow the County to serve at least 500 women and children, a caseload increase of 350. An application for \$750,000 per year for five years was submitted on January 21, 2014.

Nurse Development. Multnomah County is seeking funding through the Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention (NEPQR) Program - Interprofessional Collaborative Practice. Funding from this grant would support coordinated, multi-disciplinary, nurse-led care and transition planning in county jails, for people with chronic medical conditions, mental health and/or substance abuse issues with a focus on those with frequent jail bookings. A grant request for up to \$500,000 per year for three years will be submitted on February 3, 2014.

Ryan White. Multnomah County is requesting an increase in Ryan White (HIV/AIDS) Part A funding of 10.3 percent. The increase is especially important this year because the continuum is faced with increased case management costs associated with health system transformation, particularly insurance enrollment. The total request of \$4,080,389 was submitted on October 9, 2013.

Behavioral Health. Multnomah County will be seeking behavioral health funding for community health centers once HRSA announces the release of funds.

Domestic Violence. Multnomah County is seeking funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women's "Grants to Encourage Arrest" and "Transitional Housing Program" grants. Grant announcements are expected between February and April. An update to the existing "Defending Childhood" award is also anticipated this spring.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Multnomah County supports increased funding for the Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant program to provide funds for mitigation planning and the implementation of those plans before catastrophe occurs.

BLOCK GRANTS

Multnomah County supports annual funding in the following areas to support the community and safety net services vital to our residents. Recent cuts to these programs have had a devastating impact on our most vulnerable populations.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

CDBG funds provide support for public facility improvements, public services, and housing rehabilitation for East County cities. This funding has allowed Multnomah County to support projects that help stabilize low-income communities by improving the safety and livability of neighborhoods.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

CSBG funds are dedicated to legislatively mandated community action agencies. Funds must be used to support work in one of two areas – easing the experience of those living in poverty and ending the conditions that cause poverty. Funds are used to support the work of the new Early Learning Hub and the system of anti-poverty providers linked to our SUN Service System.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP assists low-income households, particularly those that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, in meeting their immediate home energy needs. These funds also support weatherization of low-income homes, primarily those of seniors.