



November 8, 2021

The Honorable Michael Schmidt
Multnomah County District Attorney's Office
1200 SW 1st Ave.
Portland, OR 97204

Re: 2021 Corrections Grand Jury Report

District Attorney Schmidt,

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) has received the 2021 Corrections Grand Jury Report. The agency extends its appreciation to the members of the Grand Jury for their dedication and willingness to provide this critical review, and the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, which facilitates this essential process and allows for statutory compliance.

For the second year in a row, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Grand Jury members were not able to visit and tour facilities. I want to acknowledge the creativity and flexibility of all involved as we used virtual technology for the tours and some testimony, while also holding in-person testimony at the new Multnomah County courthouse.

As jurors found, staffing shortages in our Corrections Divisions are an immense challenge. Recruitment of quality staff, hiring to meet growing agency needs and retention of existing employees are top priorities. In the summer of 2021, MCSO ramped up recruitment, hiring and retention efforts after performing an internal analysis of all human resource systems and identifying new strategies to streamline processes, increase outreach and diversify our workforce.

I appreciate the Grand Jurors review of pre-trial release services and programming needs for adults in our criminal justice system. We are committed to working with our partners to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes in treatment programs. Our Close Street Supervision Unit has increased supervision capacity during the pandemic to manage more justice involved adults safely out of custody, as we connect more individuals to resources pre-adjudication. We anticipate needing additional long-term staffing resources to accommodate this growth.

To reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in our corrections facilities during the pandemic, many programs and services were temporarily halted, and housing options were restricted to create quarantine units and increased physical space. Combined with staffing shortages and public health protocols, impacts were felt among staff and adults in our custody.



MCSO is committed to taking important lessons we have learned during our pandemic response and better integrating services when safe to do so. We will continue to work in partnership with Multnomah County Public Health and Multnomah County Circuit Court to find creative solutions in these multifaceted environments.

Jurors applauded the agency's prioritization of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our strategic plan and with the hiring of a DEI manager, the first role of its kind at MCSO. Through this work, MCSO has identified and removed barriers in policy, training, operations and systems of accountability. MCSO is also instituting more opportunities for direct dialogue with line staff to facilitate better communication and shared awareness of strategies to improve public safety outcomes.

We appreciate the grand jurors taking time to hear the perspectives of both our members and the adults in our custody. This report is constructive and sensible in its recommendations, and we have already taken steps to address impacts to services and resources for adults in custody and improve employee satisfaction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Reese".

MICHAEL REESE
SHERIFF

CC: Chair Kafoury, Commissioner Meieran, Commissioner Jayapal, Commissioner Vega Pederson, Commissioner Stegmann, Undersheriff Morrissey O'Donnell, Chief Deputy Gaidos, Chief Deputy Alexander, Chief of Staff Katie Burgard, Captain Denise Diamond, Communications Director Chris Liedle