



Jessica Vega Pederson **Multnomah County Chair**

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August 9th, 2023

Mayor Stovall and City Councilors -

Thank you for your letter regarding the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System and Multnomah County's contract with American Medical Response (AMR), our ambulance service provider.

I share your concerns about this issue, as well as your sense of urgency. The distressing situations you describe are gut wrenching and unacceptable. You should know that Multnomah County has in good faith tried to work with AMR – particularly on increasing recruitment and retention – so that they can meet their contractual obligations, but to no avail. What's more, we are exploring alternative service models with AMR and our other emergency responders because we need to ensure our community receives the level of emergency care it deserves.

However, AMR's ongoing inability to meet its contractual obligations is frustrating and unacceptable, which is why we've informed them today that we will be exercising our contractual authority to levy penalties for their ongoing non-compliance. This penalty could be the first of many, as our contract stipulates monthly performance metrics, which the company has not met in months. We're also reserving our right to levy penalties for prior non-compliance.

I am hopeful that AMR will make the adjustments necessary to come into compliance with its contracted agreement. But as they take on additional work in a neighboring county, I am worried that they are not prioritizing their contractual duties here in Multnomah County.

In the face of ongoing response time challenges, we are piloting two programs that could help address management of the current increased 911 medical call volume with the resources that are currently available. One focuses on better identification of lower acuity complaints with the current state of medical triage at the Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC), and the second allows ambulance transports by vehicles other than the ALS ambulances, freeing up

paramedics for other ambulance responses. The goal of these pilots is to address the concerns Multnomah County has that are shared by the Gresham City Council by increasing the number of ambulances immediately available and reducing response times.

You should also know that we considered other solutions to the crisis of slow ambulance response times, including:

- altering the 911 Advanced Life Support (ALS) Ambulance staffing requirements;
- utilizing fire departments for ambulance transports in an enhanced form;
- subcontracting or contracting for concurrent secondary paramedic response, outside of the contract with AMR; and
- piloting operations that reduce 911 ALS Ambulances responding to lower acuity call types.

Each of these solutions presents its own challenges, with several involving collaboration with local fire departments and BOEC. But we are committed to working with our partners on short-, medium- and long-term solutions to improve our emergency response system.

Again, thank you for your letter and your advocacy for the communities you serve. I appreciate your concerns, and welcome additional dialogue on this and other challenges we face.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Vega Pederson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Jessica Vega Pederson
Multnomah County Chair