

# MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

## PROGRAM

Preschool for All

## FUNDING MECHANISM

County Income Tax Levy

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## OPPORTUNITY

In 2016, more than 60 percent of Multnomah County's three- and four-year-old children under 200 percent of the federal poverty level were not served by state or federal preschool programs. Preschool access among Black, Indigenous, and children of color was even lower.

## SUMMARY

The United Way convened parents in 2016 to create the Parent Accountability Council (PAC). The PAC was tasked with hosting community conversations to envision a high quality, culturally specific preschool program for the county. This vision became Preschool for All (PFA). Parents in the PAC represented communities in the county that historically lacked access to high-quality preschool programs, including the Black, Latino, Native American, Vietnamese, Somali, and Slavic families.

In November 2020, Multnomah County voters approved Measure 26-214, Preschool for All (PFA), with 64.09 percent of the vote. Measure 26-214 established a tuition-free preschool program funded by a progressive income tax. The measure authorizes:

- a 1.5 percent marginal income tax on single filers with incomes above \$125,000 and joint filers with incomes above \$200,000;
- and an additional 1.5 percent income tax on single filers with incomes above \$250,000 and joint filers with incomes above \$400,000 in the county.

All rates will increase by 0.8% in 2026. Tax revenue will go to the Department of County Human Services to implement the PFA plan.

# CHALLENGES

**A Crowded Ballot** // Multnomah County had several revenue-generating tax measures on the November 2020 ballot that could overwhelm voters, including measures for libraries; parks and recreation programs and services; and infrastructure improvements and transportation.

**Maintaining Momentum** // PFA was seven years in the making, so maintaining the momentum from vision to referendum took stamina.

**Competing Preschool Measures** // Two initiatives—Universal Preschool Now and PFA—were both slated for the November 2020 ballot, potentially dividing the vote and confusing voters. Organizers of both initiatives regrouped and decided to have just one initiative, PFA, on the ballot.

**COVID-19** // COVID-19 derailed PFA's planned research and campaigning efforts. But PFA effectively pivoted to highlight the importance of childcare given the strain on parents as they simultaneously parented and worked from home.

# GETTING TO ACTION

<b>Feb 2016</b>	The United Way organizes the Parent Accountability Council (PAC) and defines a preschool vision for Multnomah County.
<b>Oct 2016</b>	The PAC finalizes a preschool vision finalized with the Latino Network.
<b>2016-2017</b>	The United Way and the PAC partner with Social Venture Partners (SVP), which researches how other municipalities have implemented universal preschool programs and generates support from the community and the business sector.
<b>Oct 2017</b>	The United Way, the PAC, and SVP host Count Me In, an event to gather pledges of support for PFA and universal preschool from business leaders and the community.
<b>Mar 2018</b>	County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson convenes a Task Force for PFA to create a road map for universal preschool in the county.
<b>Summer 2019</b>	The PFA Task Force presents Preschool for All, a report detailing a set of comprehensive recommendations to make universal preschool a reality.
<b>Jul 2020</b>	The county publishes a Preschool for All plan detailing implementation for the initiative.
<b>Aug 2020</b>	The Board of County Commissioners votes to refer PFA to the November 2020 ballot. In Multnomah County, either the Board of County Commissioners or voters can place an initiative on the ballot.
<b>Nov 2020</b>	PFA passes with a 64 percent majority.

# RESULT

- The tax is estimated to generate \$105 million in 2021 and \$146 million by 2026, which will fund 7,000 preschool slots by 2026. Universal access is anticipated by 2030-2031.
- Access to free, high-quality, culturally specific and developmentally appropriate preschool for three- and four-year olds who currently have the least access to preschool in Multnomah County, identified as:
  - » Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all children of color,
  - » migrant and refugee children,
  - » children who speak languages other than English,
  - » children with developmental delays and disabilities,
  - » children of teen parents or in military families,
  - » children living in foster care, and
  - » children from families affected by homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse, mental health issues, and domestic violence.
- Program-specific features:
  - » Tuition-free for all families for six hours per day
  - » Up to 10 hours of free care per day for families under the Self-Sufficiency Standard
  - » Half-day and full-day; year-round and school-year schedules
  - » Center-based, home-based, Head Start, and public school-based providers
- Pays lead teachers on par with kindergarten teachers, and pays teachers assistants a minimum of \$19.91 per hour, with additional funding available for professional development and educational attainment.
- Prohibits suspensions and expulsions of preschoolers to address issues of racial bias
- Follows Oregon Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines to support kindergarten preparedness

# KEYS TO SUCCESS

▶ **Coalition Building and Key Partnerships**

*PFA forged relationships with political leaders, culturally specific organizations, early childhood partners, and business organizations. With broad outreach, advocates reached large amounts of diverse voters. The business community provided crucial support to the initiative.*

▶ **Parent Involvement Throughout the Process**

*Parent leaders who had been PAC members since the early planning days joined the county-created task force to craft the measures incorporated into the implementation plan. These parent leaders, who represented Black, Latino, Native American, Vietnamese, Somali, and Slavic communities, were credited with keeping PFA true to its original mission and maintaining its racial equity focus.*

▶ **Racial Equity at the Center**

*Preschool for All kept racial equity at its center with:*

- *intentional outreach to culturally specific organizations and parents,*
- *a commitment to ground conversations and decisions in racial equity and explicit conversations about racial equity at all stages of the process, and*
- *authentic involvement of the Parent Accountability Council.*



## HOW DOES COUNTY INCOME TAX WORK IN NORTH CAROLINA?

Local governments do not have the authority to levy income taxes in NC. Only the state of NC can levy personal and corporate income tax.

**LEARN MORE**

[Find more information about Preschool for All.](#)