

# Statement of Dan Saltzman in Support of Referring to Voters Renewal of the Portland Children's Levy

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Thank you, Commissioner Ryan, for your leadership bringing this item forward.

The Children's Levy was first approved by Portland voters in 2002. It has since been renewed by voters three times, most recently in 2018.

It was created on the notion that an important way to make children a higher priority is to ask voters to invest taxpayer dollars to expand the number of children served by nonprofit programs that are proven to make children more safe and more successful.

The need to invest in evidence-based practices was a growing recognition in the early 2000s. The benefits of being rigorous about investing in outcomes and in proven programs is perhaps the Levy's hallmark accomplishment.

Its other hallmarks are the 5% limit on its administrative expenses and a five-person Allocation Committee that contains Multnomah County and City of Portland elected officials, city and county residents and a member of the Portland Business Alliance. The successful, cooperative role with Multnomah County is one reason why the Children's Levy has worked well for 20 years. Voters also love the 5% administrative cap on expenses – I mean who does that these days? Subsequent voter-approved ballot measures over the years have emulated the Allocation Committee power sharing principle; none contain an explicit cap on administrative expenses, however.

It's important for the City Council to refer the Children's Levy to voters for another 5-year extension because the challenges children face are still there and they need all the help we can muster to ensure they:

Arrive at school ready to learn

Access afterschool activities and mentors

(OVER)

Are protected from child abuse, and

Are free from hunger.

Foster children also continue to deserve special focus for the daunting challenges each must overcome to be successful.

Another important element of the Children's Levy is the flexibility of its Allocation Committee model. In an environment where there is endless need, the Committee can direct money where the need is greatest, and the resources are most scarce.

The 2018 renewal passed with 83% of voters approving it. It has resulted in an investment in children of over \$260 million since 2002.

City Councils past and present have adhered to its singular focus on children and the ballot language before you today is much the same as it was in 2002.

Finally, all of us know that it's good staff work that make us look good. What makes the Levy succeed is the hard work of staff. Director Lisa Pellegrino and Meg McElroy have been with the Levy practically since its inception and are dedicated, hardworking subject matter experts. John Kelly ensures the Levy meets its 5% administrative cap.

But at the end of the day, the thing that makes the Portland Children's Levy strong is that rare thing: a true partnership between voters and their government with a clear mission, real accountability, delivering on a vital priority – the future of our children. For 20 years that partnership has been something you can all be proud of. I urge you to continue it.

Thank you.

