

News Release

Minority caucus issues response to County Executive Coulter's State of the County Address

March 16, 2022, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI. – Commissioner **Karen Joliat** (R-Waterford) has issued the following the following statements on behalf of the minority caucus of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners in response to County Executive David Coulter's 2022 State of the County Address.

On the future:

Oakland County's future is important to all of us. We are eager to work with Executive Coulter's administration and our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to build on the county's strong foundation. Maintaining Oakland County's fiscal strength while growing opportunities is the best way to serve the residents.

On inflation:

Moving forward as the elected fiduciaries of Oakland County residents, we must acknowledge that inflation is happening and is a huge threat to a successful financial future. Residents, including myself, are feeling the hit at the gas pump and grocery store. Oakland County has a rich history of sustaining a AAA bond rating and surviving recessions with little reliance on fund balance. This is not the time to create new social, fiscally unsustainable programs nor new millages to further financially burden our residents. We must budget within our current means and tax revenue while being mindful of the Headlee Amendment and its impact on property tax revenues. Budgeting future spending shortfalls by relying on a rainy-day fund is irresponsible.

On mental health:

Moving forward was the theme of last night's speech. Although we are seeing a slow return to normalcy, the isolation of the pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of many of our residents. Through bipartisan efforts, the Board has made significant investments to help all residents in need of mental health treatment and services. We, the minority caucus, continue to work on issues pertinent to the county that are inclusive, focusing on similarities rather than

dividing by differences. This is the best way to re-build community, to reconnect and to have a positive impact on mental health.

Coming out of the pandemic has created challenges. The majority of school districts within Oakland County resumed in-person learning for the 2021-2022 year. With the mask requirement recently being removed, in-person learning can now focus on its main goal of education and social development.

On American Rescue Plan Act Funding:

The Board has been tasked with appropriating \$244 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding. This money was ultimately provided by the taxpayers. We must be diligent in reviewing all proposals to make sure they are one-time expenditures. Infrastructure and capital expenditure are examples of these investments, including proper infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water, as Executive Coulter mentioned last night. We also need to focus on health and safety initiatives through promoting world class training, systems and support for our first responders, police, fire and healthcare workers. We cannot support programs that cannot be sustained beyond the ARPA money investment. In addition, we must be extremely careful not to create programs that infringe on individual communities zoning and planning.

On sustainability:

Executive Coulter mentioned a goal of being carbon neutral by 2050. The question remains, at what cost? The county's minority caucus supports being responsible stewards of resources and exploring cost saving through reliable green energy. More than \$700,000 was spent on sustainability in 2021, yet the true monetary value to Oakland County remains unclear. Considering the current financial investment and environment, we have not seen the results from the cost of sustainability that have justified the end.

In closing:

The Board's Republican Caucus is ready to get to work on Oakland County's challenges. We are looking forward to working with the entire Board and county administration to invest in solutions that work for all residents and businesses, while making the best possible use of our tax dollars to ensure our community continues prosper and grow.

For more information about the Board of Commissioners, please visit www.oakgov.com/boc or call 248-858-0100.