

News Release

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

May 20, 2021, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI. – The minority caucus of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners has issued the following statements in reaction to County Executive David Coulter's 2021 State of the County Address.

On the pandemic:

2021 has been a challenging year for everyone in Oakland County. County Executive Coulter, his team and the Board of Commissioners have worked very closely to ensure we have provided residents with the best support possible through these difficult times. This is a testament to what has made the county one of the best communities to live, play and work over the years, and it will continue to be a driver for what brings us into the future. County Executive Coulter refers to these efforts as 'Herculean,' and we could not agree more. The effort to distribute \$219 million of CARES Act funding to businesses, organizations and citizens around the county was a great team effort and accomplishment.

We must also thank all the essential services workers that have continued to be on the front lines of this global pandemic.

*"The effect of this last year has really impacted all of our children and one of the first things we must do is open our schools," Commissioner **Michael Spisz** (R-Oxford) said. "I am very proud of all the school districts that have been able to have in person learning. I must commend Oxford Community Schools, their teachers and administration for their effort to maintain an environment of learning, both in person and virtual. Also, during this timeframe, many parents have had to look for alternative options for their children, including home schooling. This has taken many of our working parents out of the work force. The challenge going forward will be how we as a county best manage this. As a first step, we must open our schools back up!"*

There is also a lot of information floating out there on social media. We recommend that everyone receives a vaccine per the approved CDC guidelines. But we also support your choice as an adult

and or parent to make this decision. We also do not support, in any way, 'vaccine passports' and will continue to push back on any such rumors or potential actions within Oakland County.

On sustainability:

What is sustainability? Everyone's definition is slightly different. Our colleagues on the Board and the administration have already approved \$650,000 for a consultant to tell the county how to become sustainable. Last we checked, Oakland County was considered one of the top counties in the state and country. We agree you should look forward, but also approving the hiring of a sustainability officer at an annual salary of \$120,000, prior to any consultant feedback, makes no logical sense. As Republicans we support efficient, costs-saving, reliable, green energy as we move forward into the twenty-first century. But after spending \$770,000, a consultant will tell Oakland County how to spend even more money to become 'sustainable.' When asked to provide a business case with a potential payback period, no one could provide any details supporting such a spend, nevertheless the potential ongoing costs.

On future federal funding:

The county is expecting roughly \$243 million of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds from the federal government, which ultimately comes via the taxpayers of the United States. We must use these dollars to bring back a thriving economy, and we are looking forward to working closely with the Coulter Administration and our colleagues across the aisle to do just that. One of the first steps is to open up our businesses and the economy safely. We must continue to push Lansing and the federal government to allow businesses and people to get back to normal – not a new normal, but a true normal. As we evaluate how best to use the \$243 million, we must maintain our fiscal responsibility while helping those most in need at all corners of the county. We must focus on economic viability and sustainability, with funding, and programs and a topnotch workforce, that focuses on economic recovery for businesses impacted by COVID-19, plus continued business attraction. This includes infrastructure investment and programs that focus on infrastructure improvements with long-term benefits to Oakland County residents. We will also focus on social programs to help those in need, in addition to wellness programs to create and maintain healthy communities. And, of course, health and safety initiatives through promoting world class training, systems and support for our first responders, police, fire and health care workers.

On the future:

In closing, we would like to thank County Executive Coulter and his team for their work and support throughout this pandemic. We all want to continue to work closely to ensure Oakland County's future, but we do not need to move away from what has made the county great over the

last few decades. We need to build on top, while not eroding the foundation that was built by our predecessors.

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