



DEEP
Diverse & Empowered
Employees of Portland

DEEP is dedicated to enhancing a work environment that is inclusive and supportive of the City of Portland's diverse workforce that is committed to quality public service.

February 26, 2025

To: Mayor Keith Wilson

City Councilors - Candace Avalos, Jamie Dunphy, Loretta Smith, Dan Ryan, Elana Pirtle-Guiney, Sameer Kanal, Angelita Morillo, Steve Novick, Tiffany Koyama Lane, Eric Zimmerman, Mitch Green, and Olivia Clark

City of Portland Auditor Simone Rede

cc: Chief Administrative Officer Michael Jordan
Budget and Finance Deputy City Administrator Jonas Biery
Community and Economic Development Deputy City Administrator Donnie Oliveira
Public Works Deputy City Administrator Priya Dhanapal
Vibrant Communities Deputy City Administrator Sonia Schmanski
Public Safety Deputy City Administrator Mike Myers
City Operations Deputy City Administrator Sara Morrissey
BHR Director Tracy Warren
BHR Deputy Director Ron Zito
Office of Equity Director Jeff Selby

Re: Return to Office and Hybrid Work

City of Portland Leadership,

Diverse and Empowered Employees of Portland (DEEP) supports Employee Resource Group (ERGs) members, advances opportunities for employee growth and leadership development, fosters diversity events and cultural celebrations, and is dedicated to enhancing a work environment that is inclusive and supportive of the City of Portland's diverse workforce. Our partnerships and service empower the City of Portland employee community to provide quality public service to our internal and external communities.

DEEP and Partners write today with serious concerns about the direction to return to office for managers and supervisors, and reduced hybrid work options. We request you reconsider the new requirement that managers and supervisors increase the amount of time they work in person from 50% to 100%. We advocate for maintaining the hybrid flexibility that supports employees and allows them to serve our communities and maintain their well-being while upholding the City of Portland Core values.

DEEP encourages the City of Portland Leadership to review all the accomplishments employees have achieved across the service areas during the last five years while managing our work in a variety of in person and remote working conditions. Employees have demonstrated a strong work ethic and remained available for all our city partners, via remote access or in person, by meeting workplace needs and continuing to bring service delivery to community, being intentional about collaboration and bridging across workgroups. Hybrid work and flexibility also increased accessibility and allowed employees to meet folks where they are to better serve our community. In a BTS Remote Work Pilot in 2017, Jeff Baer, former Director of BTS, recorded that the benefits of teleworking to the City of Portland were continuity of operations during snow and ice events, national and local emergencies, and future pandemics. The ability to implement the HRAR 4.04 Teleworking since 2002 for conducting hybrid work has allowed employees to provide essential services during emergencies and other disruptions.

DEEP and its Partners urge City of Portland Leaders to recognize their responsibility in making decisions that shape our shared vision and priorities. We call on you to foster open and transparent communication, build trust, actively listen to employees' concerns, and support us to deliver on our promises to serve our teams and community.

Hybrid work provides the following key benefits to the City of Portland and the employees:

Improves Employee Satisfaction and Well-being:

- The City of Portland is currently seen as an Employer of Choice where community members want to work. Employees with hybrid schedules can better manage personal responsibilities, leading to reduced stress, improved overall well-being, and decreased employee burnout and turnover. According to ECONorthwest recent report "The Current Urban Doom Loop", people are struggling to find jobs in Portland and people are leaving for other counties. Continuing to offer flexibility and hybrid work would increase the chances of future workers wanting to work for the Employer of Choice.
- Hybrid work protects people from traditionally marginalized and oppressed groups who experience microaggressions, overt racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, etc., in the workplace or during their commute.
- Staff living with disabilities (visible and invisible, physical and mental) and immunocompromised people are better able to manage their medical, mobility, and exposure needs, which improves their safety and increases retention of critical skilled workers for the City of Portland.
- Decreased absenteeism during minor illnesses and personal obligations which normally would prevent staff from working in person, preventing spread of illness or disruptions in the workplace.
- **No commute.** Whether it takes 10 minutes to drive to work or 1 hour, it saves this time when working from home. Surveys reports that, on average, a worker saves **8.5** hours a week by not commuting to work. For a year, this adds up to **408** hours which can be used for increasing employee well-being. That's 408 hours to spend with family, with pets, in our gardens, visiting with our neighbors, volunteering in community, and resting so we can show up as our best selves.

Provide Cost Savings for the City of Portland

- Not all 700 managers and supervisors have a desk available to work fulltime. Cost for modifying areas (assuming 350 supervisors/managers) and installing TPB building standard sit-stand desk and task light could cost $\$1,660 \times 350 = \$581,000$. Providing a chair, keyboard/mouse, ergonomic assessment and adjustment could cost the service area $\$1,800 \times 350 = \$630,000$. The combined cost for 350 supervisors/managers returning to the office could cost **\\$1.2 million dollars**.
- Modifications to existing spaces does not account for extra leasing of office space which would require finding space and paying higher costs for property and property insurance. The cost for leasing in Portland is approximately $\$57.75$ per sf. If considering leasing a remote location, parking may be an addition cost of $\$30,000$. Cost for leasing a 1,500 SF building and parking is $\$116,625$. Accounting for 350 supervisors/managers needing a space, the City of Portland would need to lease about 9 buildings (of 1,500 SF) to account for 40 spaces each. The total cost for leasing the buildings could cost approximately **\\$1.02 million dollars**. In a year when service areas are being asked to cut drastically, this extra cost could mean less services to communities and more employee layoffs. Additionally, locations like the Columbia Wastewater Treatment Plant do not have adequate space onsite or nearby for managers to all be onsite fulltime.
- The additional costs of more personal vehicles on the road are leveraged directly onto the residents and visitors of Portland: more money needed for stormwater treatment, more money for road repair, worse air for everyone but especially impacting children and the elderly, and increased risk of vehicle crashes and serious injury.
- Hybrid work could change how record management is done in the City of Portland. With the introduction of Content Manager (TRIM) and the ability to use e-Builder at Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), staff has moved from paper records to electronic file management. At BES Construction Division, in 2013 the organization generated about 40,000 records a year that were kept in banker boxes and filing cabinets. The cost for maintaining records was about $\$800,000$ a year. When BES implemented e-Builder (Heron), the cost for a license in 2013 was $\$50,000$ a year. This was considerably less than what BES was spending on paper record management. BES was one of the first bureaus to move to electronic file management. During COVID 19 pandemic, employees were required to work remotely, and record management and other processes, such as project management, changed in the City of Portland. The ability to do hybrid work encourages creativity in how employees manage processes, increases sustainable operations, saves money, and improves productivity.

Provide Cost Savings for Parents

- Many parents who work hybrid schedules can break up their day around family needs, while working full- or over-time schedules. Workplaces that accommodate hybrid schedules experience 33% lower turnover and greater job satisfaction. Research has found that companies can save up to $\$11,000$ for every employee working two or three days remotely per week. Savings come from reduced rent as well as increased productivity and lower absenteeism and turnover. Keeping parents employed helps the City of Portland budget along with the triple bottom line.
- For pregnant people and new parents, daily life involves additional needs and challenges, including pregnancy symptoms, postpartum recovery, breastfeeding and pumping,

unpredictable sleep routines, and bonding by physically being present with a young child. Hybrid work allows folks to take care of themselves and their baby's needs while not compromising on work productivity and increasing their opportunities for full-time employment.

- Hybrid work opportunities increase support for parents, especially in the current budget environment. Many parents manage drop-off and pickup for their children as well as medical appointments and other commitments. Hybrid work allows caregivers to use sick, vacation, lunch, or flex time to attend to these commitments and more efficiently transition back to work. When the Portland Building was renovated, the childcare center was removed and there are very few options nearby, and most after-school programs that are affordable have long waiting lists.
- Reflect on the prohibitive cost of childcare which continues to be a leading obstacle to workers' ability to stay in or reenter the workforce. Across the nation, the [cost of care](#) for just one child ranges between 8% and 19% of total family income. See the data below for Multnomah County. At this price, families often conclude it is better to have one parent remain home to provide that care – and the most common choice is the birthing parent, typically a cis woman.

US Department of Labor Women's Bureau

County name: Multnomah County, Oregon

Care type and age: Infant center-based

Median yearly price in 2018 dollars: \$16,049

Median yearly price in 2023 dollars (estimated): \$ 18,890

Childcare price as share of median family income: 19.7%

County Economic Characteristics

Women's labor force participation rate: 77.7%

Women's median earnings: \$31,301

Median family income: \$81,564

Percent of families in poverty: 9.5%

County Demographic Characteristics

Total population: 798,647

Percent Asian: 7.3%

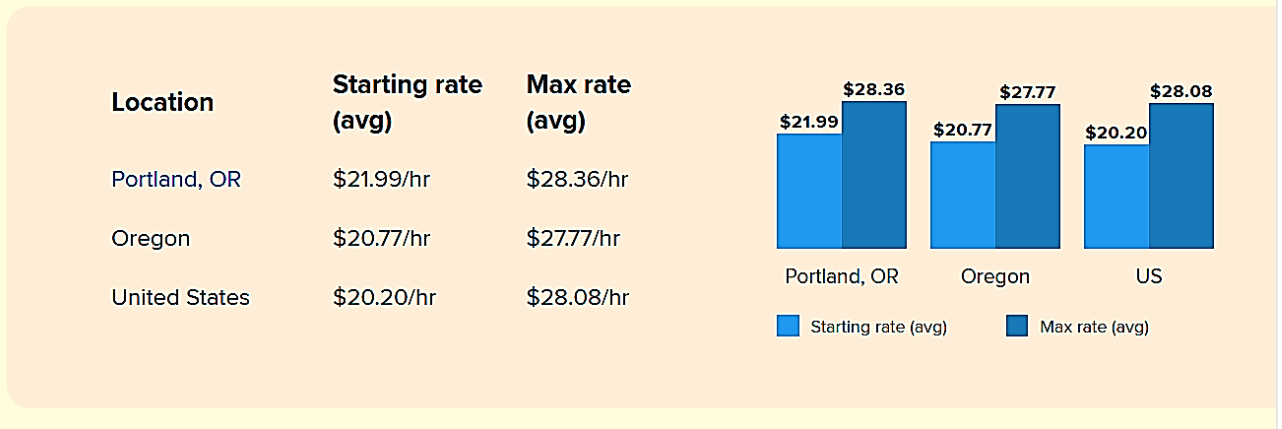
Percent Black: 5.4%

Percent Hispanic (of any race): 11.4%

Percent White: 77.8%

- Being able to weave family schedules to reduce hours of childcare increases employee retention and selection, allowing the City of Portland to retain highly qualified employees with increased quality of life to parents of childcare-aged children. As of February 2025, the average starting cost of infants' childcare in Portland, OR is \$21.99 per hour. The weekly rate for infants' childcare in Portland is \$880 for working a 40-hour week and the monthly cost is approximately \$2,859 for 130 hours of work.

The cost of hiring infants child care in Portland, OR is approximately **6% higher** than Oregon average starting rate of \$20.77 per hour and **9% higher** than the national average of \$20.20.



- For the employees, hybrid work and flexibility are a life saver given the current economic climate and rising expenses. They use the money they would pay for childcare, parking or transportation on their families or invest in their local communities. If a parent needed to flex 6 hours of childcare per week and not pay for transportation, this could result in a savings to the parent of \$630 per month.

Promotes Climate Resiliency and Meets the Transportation System Plan Goals

- Hybrid work allows employees to do less driving which can reduce greenhouse emissions and save money to the City of Portland with less wear and tear of the roads and infrastructure. This also aligns with the Transportation System Plan the has the goal by 2035 to reduce Portland's transportation-related carbon emissions to 50% below 1990 levels, at approximately 934,000 metric tons. (TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN Policy 9.49.g)
- Fewer personal vehicles on the road reduces pollutants entering the stormwater systems and impacting our soil and water. Per the 2021 Oregon Climate Change Adaptation Framework climate which made telework a core business practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, when both the public and private sectors significantly increased telework, there were improvements in traffic and parking congestion, vehicle emission reductions, and improved air quality. Hybrid work improves public health by reducing the amount of driving while improving safety, public health, and air and water quality and complying with the requirement to reduce pollution from transportation to meet statewide statutory and executive goals to reduce climate pollution (Division 12 TRANSPORTATION PLANNING 660-012-000) and meet Title 6 Goals in the Transportation Plan.

Improves Succession Planning and Diverse Leadership

- Diversity is a key driver of innovation, and return-to-office policies have a significant impact on women, and marginalized groups, making affected management and supervisory roles less attractive. City of Portland succession planning benefits from implementing an inclusive environment that encourages diverse leadership. The cost to the City of Portland, however, is not only a loss of equity and diversity but groupthink, as people with the same backgrounds and perspectives tend to approach work the same way, limiting innovation, creativity, and the ability to solve complex problems.
- During the past five years, the City of Portland has supported families with the ability to do hybrid work which has help to balance childcare and work. However, despite increased flexibility that benefits all people, birthing parents continue to provide most childcare responsibilities. This means short-term absences from work, like leaving early or taking sick days to take care of a child, often affect them more and can be misconstrued as less productive or not being able to manage their work-life balance. Long-term absences can result in women missing a promotion or growth opportunity, further widening the wage gap and making it difficult to maintain full-time employment or choose career advancement. Hybrid work increases flexibility and contributes to a culture that values caregiving. Reducing flexibility for working parents sends a strong message that the City of Portland does not support working parents and that it is acceptable to have fewer women in the workforce.

DEEP and its Partners welcome the opportunity to better understand the needs and concerns of our new City Leaders. We ask to participate on a special committee focused on improving employee experience while ensuring Portland is a safe, clean, adaptable and welcoming place to live and work.

We thank you in advance in supporting us to be part of the human circle of concern that is committed to making Portland a community where all thrive.

Respectfully,

DEEP Leaders and Partners

Adrienne Schaefer
Corrine McQueen
Francesca Jones
Courtney Duke
Maria Segoviano Hernandez
Janet Tucker
Ana Brophy
Leah Espinoza
Rebecca Criscillis
Debbie Caselton
Marvin Dean
K Bullock Clayton
Carolyn Quan Lee

Carol Stahlke
Judith Mowry
Juan Carlos Ocana-Chiu
Magnolia Blackwood
Anna Shook
Arielle Bradford
Kylie Simonstrong
Anna Cowen
TroyLynn Craft
Vanessa Curtis
Miranda Wood
Molly Esteve