



COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

APPROVED

Friday, January 29, 2021

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland convened via video conference at 1:01 P.M. on Friday, January 29, 2021.

PRESENT

Councilmember Tom Hucker, President
Councilmember Andrew Friedson
Councilmember Will Jawando
Councilmember Nancy Navarro

Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, Vice President
Councilmember Evan Glass
Councilmember Sidney Katz
Councilmember Craig Rice

Councilmember Hans Riemer

The President in the Chair.

(1) **DISCUSSION** - Meeting with U.S. Senator Van Hollen

Senator Van Hollen discussed relief measures passed by Congress in December which included the Paycheck Protection Program to help small businesses and local grass-roots lenders and extended the employment insurance program; and measures taken to provide relief funds to the State and to Montgomery County. He noted that Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) received \$112 million to help retrofit HVAC systems and for other costs associated with the pandemic; Montgomery College received \$23 million, \$5 million of which was directed to help students in need. Also included was funding for rental assistance and extension of the federal eviction moratorium. He stated that they want to ensure transparency with respect to the vaccine distribution and to get the vaccine into arms as quickly as possible, noting that the Biden administration is working to increase the vaccine supply, which includes the purchase of 200 million doses from Pfizer and Moderna. The Defense Production Act is being authorized for production of N-95 masks and other necessities in short supply nationally. The next round of relief, included in Biden's Rescue America Plan, includes a proposed amount of \$350 billion, and Mr. Van Hollen indicated they are trying to make sure counties and cities get funds directly. The Plan includes funding for personal protective equipment (PPEs), vaccine distribution, and a child poverty tax credit, and they are working to develop a strategy get Republicans on board to help pass the bill.

Councilmembers expressed appreciation to Senator Van Hollen for his leadership and representation for Montgomery County and the State, and particularly on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act. Responding to questions from Councilmembers, the Senator indicated that his legislative priorities include the American Rescue bill to help lay the foundation for ongoing help, infrastructure modernization, and clean energy. Long-term unemployment is a concern and he noted that over one million people were unemployed prior to the pandemic. He indicated that there are proposals under consideration for subsidized employment, and he hopes to see structural changes to address unemployment at the federal level.

Continuing, the Senator said infrastructure improvements are needed to address the digital divide and address the learning gap. The Community-Based Response Act was introduced, which would provide federal funds to encourage alternative responses to 911 emergency calls so that police would be dispatched only when appropriate. He expressed support for the creation of a Pandemic Center in the County, the need for more federal resources for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), bus rapid transit, high speed broadband, clean energy infrastructure, and modernization of existing infrastructure. He hopes to see release of the next round of stimulus funding sometime in mid-March.

Senator Van Hollen acknowledged the need for more transparency with respect to vaccine distribution and for private providers to consider equity in the vaccine distribution process. He noted that the Congressional Delegation is pushing the State to collect data by zip code to make sure resources are targeted to areas of greatest need. Noting that the pandemic has shown the high level of food insecurity in the country, he agreed that universal meals (breakfast and lunch) for students is the right goal.

Regarding immigration, the Senator indicated his support for President Biden's position on Ethiopia and temporary protected status designation for immigrants from Cameroon and Venezuela, stating that he is working to get bipartisan support for immigration reform legislation.

The meeting adjourned at 2:19 P.M.

This is an accurate account of the meeting:



Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council