

Esteemed Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing in support of the **Special Appropriation - DHHS - \$450,000 for Pediatric Mobile Medical Vehicle; and Amendment to Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Casa Ruben, Inc.** The Special Appropriation that would create a public private partnership to provide a pediatric mobile clinic for Montgomery County. This initiative has three main objectives: (1) To improve vaccination rates among children and youth 0-21 years of age; (2) To provide developmentally appropriate primary care evaluations for children and youth who have missed their routine health care examinations; and (3) To address social determinants of health and linkages to care to youths 0-21 years of age. I believe Casa Ruben is well positioned to support this initiative.

Casa Ruben is a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive primary care, vaccinations, referrals to behavioral health care, and HIV and GBLTQ care predominately to low-income people, immigrants, and families of color. Casa Ruben provides these services with language and cultural competence. During the pandemic, Casa Ruben found that there were delays in children receiving their needed vaccinations and that this was a particular issue for newcomer children and children in certain under-resourced zip codes. These delays impacted children's ability to enroll in school. Casa Ruben has provided more than 7,000 immunizations to Montgomery County children during the pandemic.

With approval of this funding, Casa Ruben, Inc., the Robert I. Schattner Foundation and Montgomery County would create a public-private initiative to use a mobile medical clinic to connect uninsured, under-insured, and under-resourced children and youth (ages 0-21 years) to healthcare and increase the number of children and youth who receive vaccinations needed for overall health and to enroll in school. The County will fund the purchase of the mobile medical clinic and the Foundation will provide matching funds of up to \$450,000 directly to Casa Ruben, Inc. to fund the staff and operating expenses. Casa Ruben Inc. and the Department of Health and Human Services will collaborate on target areas and connecting children and families to health care homes. Mobile medical care has been shown to be cost effective and an effective way to reach under- served and disenfranchised communities that do not access mainstream healthcare.

The County has invested in efforts to address health disparities, eliminating barriers to accessing healthcare, and in reaching residents in their communities in innovative ways. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar and the African American Health Program/Black Physician Healthcare Network have leveraged partnerships with community-based organizations to reach residents who may not have otherwise accessed COVID vaccination and testing resources.

Data being collected on COVID vaccinations continues to highlight certain zip codes and census tracts in the County where additional effort is needed to bring vaccination rates to levels equivalent to other areas of the County.

The Racial Equity Impact Assessment transmitted on January 26, 2022, by the County's Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice for the Immunization and Vaccines for Children Grant noted that since the collection of data on COVID vaccinations for children ages 5-11 began, consistently smaller shares of Black and Latino children - compared to their representation in the population – have received their first dose of the COVID vaccine...An equitable distribution would guarantee that all children are fully vaccinated and gain protection against COVID-19.

I'm a proponent of public private partnerships as a means of leveraging the advantages that each partner brings to the program. A shared accountability delivers is good for our citizens and our economy. I think this is an economic and social justice imperative that demands our utmost and immediate investment. I urge you to give this initiative favorable consideration.

Respectfully and sincerely,

Kevin Beverly

Former President/CEO Social & Scientific Systems, Economic Development Advocate and  
Montgomery County resident