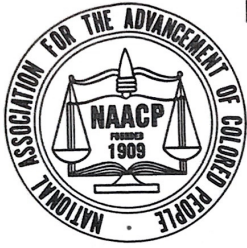


**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND BRANCH**



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Montgomery County Council
11 Maryland Avenue
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For Immediate release:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Montgomery County Branch of the NAACP, in support of Council Bill 5-24, a measure which would establish a Child Investment Fund.

As you may know, the NAACP has a long history of advocating on behalf of children in this county. We have active Parents Council programs in the schools, sponsor an annual ACT-SO competition, distribute educational scholarships every year, and routinely contribute to the MCPS Foundation's Dine with Dignity program to pay the school lunch debts of children. This year, we have expanded our efforts to educate, advocate and provide for children by sponsoring funding for field trips to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. In essence, we have long been concerned about the day to lives of children in the county and have worked to address disparities which adversely affect the lives of children.

Our history and continuing concern requires us to support this bill. Bill 5-24 would: (1) establish a non-lapsing Child Investment Fund administered by the Department of Finance; (2) prescribe the permitted uses of the fund; (3) establish individual eligibility requirements to seek disbursements from the fund; (4) require the Department of Finance to issue annual reports regarding the fund; (5) establish a Child Investment Fund Advisory Committee; and (6) generally amend the law regarding County investment funds for children.

According to the 2023 Montgomery County Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger, there were approximately 52,000 children living in Montgomery County in households with incomes below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The Strategic Plan further notes

that in 2021, roughly 45% of children in the County are estimated to have lived in households with incomes below the University of Washington's Self Sufficiency Standard for this area. Taken together, the Plan indicates that at least 14% of children in Montgomery County are food insecure, and far more live in households without sufficient income to meet their basic needs.

This data indicates that many people in Montgomery County struggle to meet their basic needs. We believe that Bill 5-24 may constitute an important mechanism to provide a *tangible measure of hope for families struggling with the inequitable life chances caused by poverty.*

If enacted, this bill would require the county to set aside \$1800 to be invested for every child born in the county after January 1, 2025. The initial amount would be invested, and each eligible person would be able to seek a distribution from the fund after their 18th birthday. Under the terms of the legislation, the money distributed could only be used for certain purposes.

While we support this legislation and believe that the distribution of these funds could be life-changing for many young people and their families, we also offer the following observations and request that the legislation be amended to reflect these concerns:

- 1) While the bill allows distribution from the fund for many endeavors, we believe that many of these endeavors may not be available for young people who would meet all other eligibility requirements but may be physically or mentally disabled in a manner that may prevent them from using the funds for the prescribed purposes. Therefore, we believe that the Director should have the authority to consider distributions outside of the prescribed areas for young people who may be disabled. For instance, we note that the purchase of assistive technologies may be extremely helpful for disabled young people to access educational opportunities. However, distribution for such a purchase does not seem to fall within the parameters of the proposed legislation.

- 2) As it is currently written, the bill would provide a distribution to someone who was born in Montgomery County but did not live in the county after birth and may well return to another state after receiving the distribution. Such a scenario would undermine building wealth within the county and improving the life chances of

County residents. Therefore, we would suggest a pre-distribution County residency requirement of at least 2 years.

- 3) Finally, the bill would not cover a child who may not have been born in Montgomery County but had lived in the county consistently for most of their lives. While we understand that including this group of children may be complicated, we believe that children who have called Montgomery County home for most of their lives, attended Montgomery County schools and been a part of the fabric of this community should also be included in efforts to reduce wealth disparities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with you on this bill.

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