



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director

MEMORANDUM

June 17, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President
County Council

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #22-95
Circuit Court Appellate Court Judge's Chambers (No. 362202)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-95 Circuit Court Appellate Court Judge's Chambers (No. 362202) will address the health and safety of all workers impacted by Circuit Court renovations. However, this request is unlikely to advance racial equity and social justice in the county as it does not deploy targeted strategies that recognize how different staff in the Circuit Court and Appellate Judges—based on demographic characteristics and countywide health disparities—are differently situated, and thus may be impacted differently by complications arising from an unhealthy workspace.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-95 Circuit Court Appellate Court Judge's Chambers (No. 362202) is to fund renovation of Circuit Court space, which will be used as appellate court judge's chambers. The funding will also address safety concerns, created by an existing Halon fire suppression system, in a server room being repurposed for office space.

Renovations outlined in this supplemental appropriation are necessary to address the health and safety of all those working in the circuit court space. However, we know based on the use of a racial equity and social justice lens that, not all staff working in these spaces will be affected by exposure to an unsafe work environment in the same way. Those with preexisting health conditions, and those most likely to encounter racial or other bias in accessing health care would be more deeply impacted by any harms created by an unsafe workspace. While information about specific healthcare needs or disability status of employees isn't available, we know by looking at staff demographics¹ and health disparities² in the County, that these 15 Circuit Court employees and Appellate Judges are differently situated in terms of their risk for certain health conditions that could be complicated by exposure to unhealthy workspaces.

Centering the needs of these staff would not only result in the removal of the Halon fire suppression system (which benefits all) but could also result in renovations and strategies that would make the workspace healthier and more productive for all. For example, creating workspaces that promote and facilitate physical activity and healthy food choices³ could support employees with increased risk for cardiovascular disease, while also improving the health and well-being of all employees (thus reducing their risk of cardiovascular disease as well). An approach like this is aligned with jurisdictions across the country who are using targeted universalism⁴ to advance racial equity and social justice.

cc: Kara L. Hawkins, Acting Court Administrator
Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive

¹ Demographics of employees: 53% white, 20% black, and 27% Hispanic; 67% female and 33% male. There are four appellate judges—three are White, one is Black; three are female and one is male. This demographic information was shared along with the Supplemental Appropriation request.

² Chunfu Liu, ScD, Rita Deng, MHS, and Bridgette Heine, MPH. Health Equity in Montgomery County, Maryland: Healthy Montgomery Core Indicators, 2010-2018. Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Services Office of Planning and Epidemiology.

³ Eamon Y. Duffy, Pranoti G. Hiremath, Pablo Martinez-Amezcuca, Richard Safeer, Jennifer A. Schrack, Michael J. Blaha, Erin D. Michos, Roger S. Blumenthal, Seth S. Martin, Miguel Cainzos-Achirica, "Opportunities to improve cardiovascular health in the new American workplace", American Journal of Preventive Cardiology, Volume 5, 2021, 100136, ISSN 2666-6677 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajpc.2020.100136>

⁴ John A. Powell, Stephen Menendian, Wendy Ake. Targeted Universalism Policy & Practice. Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. May 2019. Available at: https://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/targeted_universalism_primer.pdf