



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

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

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment for Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 FY23
Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services
(DHHS) Food Staples Program

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Special Appropriation #23-27 FY23 Montgomery County Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Food Staples Program aligns with the County's overall objective to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities and could ultimately advance equitable outcomes for those at greatest risk of experiencing food insecurity.

ORESJ's assessment finds that funding from this special appropriation will primarily provide resources to communities identified as low-income (who are disproportionately communities of color) as well as low-income communities that are unable to access governmental food support due to their immigration status. This assessment is based on how food distribution will be targeted using an approach that responds to the structural inequities influencing racial disparities in food insecurity within Montgomery County. It is important to note however that funding from this special appropriation will not address the underlying structures creating food insecurity in the County, however, it will provide resources to those who are disproportionately impacted by the financial strain imposed by current levels of inflation, and the high cost of housing and childcare.

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Special Appropriation #23-27 FY23 DHHS Food Staples Program is to support food assistance providers within Montgomery County. Specifically, this appropriation is intended to fund continued supplies of food to over 70

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Food Assistance Partners (FAP) throughout the County in partnership with Capital Area Food Bank and Manna Food Center which will distribute the food to identified local providers. The current financial strain created by inflation in the global economy has led to increased demand for food support. As a result, this funding increase is needed to support residents struggling with food insecurity as the present food staples program is on track to run out of financial resources by November 2022.

Unsurprisingly, DHHS's research has found that the burden of food insecurity has most acutely affected low-income communities of the County, particularly those with higher concentrations of immigrants as they are most often excluded from governmental supports such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and housing assistance due to their status as undocumented. Information accompanying this funding request specifically identified Hispanic/Latino populations as those with the highest level of need in addition to significant populations of African and African American individuals in the down and east county areas.

Utilizing Geographic Information System (GIS) data to map areas of the County with high concentrations of poverty and other determinants of health, in addition to research from the Capital Area Food Bank's *2022 Hunger Report*¹, DHHS developed a methodology that enables them to support local partners in their efforts to purchase food (including produce, meat, staples, and canned goods) based on community need. In this effort, DHHS will partner with organizations serving high-need communities in a culturally responsive manner including those who observe kosher restrictions and those who identify as Muslim and may also observe strict dietary needs. DHHS will also work to connect food insecure residents with additional resources such as diapers, Community Health Workers, and case management to connect them with other vital services from nonprofit partners and County agencies—bringing a holistic approach to food assistance that aims to eliminate barriers to accessing services.

III. **ANALYSIS:** ORESJ has previously documented the increased need for food support for Montgomery County residents, primarily during the COVID-19 pandemic which has disproportionately impacted low-income communities of color, in the following Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs):

1. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation Food Security Bridge Funding Proposal
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/FoodSecurity.pdf>
2. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-27 Food Security Bridge Funding Proposal updated
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-27.pdf>

¹ Capital Area Food Bank. *2022 Hunger Report*. 2022. Available at: <https://hunger-report.capitalareafoodbank.org/report-2022/>

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3. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-79 Bridge Funding for the Food Security Task Force

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-79.pdf>

The REIAs highlighted above provide readers with context regarding the state of food insecurity in Montgomery County—whose most affected and why. While the funding put forth by this special appropriation will undoubtedly serve those in greatest need of food support in a culturally responsive way while also connecting these communities with additional resources, these funds will not address the underlying structures that create food insecurity in the County. This would require the County to assess its systems and address the ways in which they exclude particular communities, pushing them further into poverty. These communities have been previously identified by the Montgomery County Food Council as residents with incomes below the County’s self-sufficiency standard of \$91,252 as well as populations facing the greatest risk of food insecurity, which includes²:

- residents lacking access to personal vehicles and adequate transit options; eligible but not enrolled in benefits programs; working multiple jobs and/or experiencing homelessness;
- children in school, and/or in single-parent households;
- seniors aging in place and/or with medical dietary restrictions;
- foreign-born residents with limited English proficiency in mixed immigration status families, with a lack of knowledge of or access to culturally appropriate services; and,
- people with disabilities with limited mobility and/or waiting for case mana.

cc: Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

² Montgomery County Food Council. *Montgomery County Food Security Plan*. 2017. Available at: https://communityfoodrescue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/moco_food_plan.pdf