



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

November 26, 2024

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 (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-30  
Youth Vaping and Nicotine Addiction Response

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #25-30 Youth Vaping and Nicotine Addiction Response is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County. Based on vaping and e-cigarette use among high school age youth, the persistence of health inequities that create disproportionate risk and barriers to accessing cessation care and treatment for communities of color and low-income groups, and the targeted beneficiaries of proposed funding, Supplemental Appropriation #25-30 is well positioned to address racial disparities and inequities in Montgomery County.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #25-30 Youth Vaping and Nicotine Addiction Response is to allocate \$1,672,848 in Juul/Altria settlement funds to Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to address youth vaping and nicotine addiction. Information provided by the department that accompanied this request explained that the use of e-cigarettes and other harmful substances like fentanyl have disproportionately impacted low-income and communities of color. The information also described how this funding promotes positive youth development and targets disconnected youth which are disproportionately Black/African American and Latino youth, “The funds will be used to support youth-centered programs that prioritize the needs of youth aged 11-21 highly impacted areas in Montgomery County, with special emphasis on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino youth,

centering collaborative, evidence-based approaches.” According to an October 22, 2024, memo from County Executive Elrich to County Council President Friedson, the funds are required to be used for compensatory restitution and remediation; specifically the funds will be used for the following purposes:

**Competitive community grants (\$1,322,848):** Up to two organizations will be selected to manage and disburse \$1.3 million in community grants aimed at funding innovative, community-based strategies that promote vaping cessation and address the root causes and long-term impacts of e-cigarettes and other harmful substances. These grants will support initiatives that address mental health challenges and substance use (specifically focusing on tobacco/e-cigarettes, cannabis, alcohol, and opioids) among youth aged 11-21 in Montgomery County. The organization(s) will prioritize grants to community-based organizations and private entities with experience serving Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino youth and those operating in the most impacted areas, including Aspen Hill, Gaithersburg/Old Town Gaithersburg, Germantown, Glenmont, Montgomery Village, Silver Spring, and Wheaton.

**RecMode Fitness & Boxing, LLC (\$250,000):** The funds will support a grant for a 12-month Beyond the Gloves project to respond to the increased risk factors facing youth in Montgomery County. RecMode will provide holistic support to promote youths’ success, well-being, and growth. RecMode will leverage relationships with key partners to offer youth a safe haven; provide opportunities to learn from mentors from similar backgrounds; foster both physical and mental health; develop leadership skills; and encourage community engagement to nurture confidence, resilience, and a healthy sense of self as both individuals and members of the Montgomery Country community. The RecMode project will formalize and support work that is already ongoing through the Beyond the Gloves curriculum as part of RecMode and their partners’ work with underserved youth across Maryland. The Beyond the Gloves project will also include education on tobacco and vaping.

**Street Outreach Network (SON)/DHHS (\$100,000):** The funds will support HHS’ SON that provides Positive Youth Development activities targeting communities that have been impacted by violence and poverty. SON helps to connect youth to physical and mental health resources. SON also promotes substance use prevention and harm reduction including e-cigarettes, vaping, cannabis, and opioids. SON will use the funds to strengthen programming in several high-risk areas and host several community-building activities throughout the County.

III. **ANALYSIS:** In an October 2024 REIA, ORESJ provided data about the prevalence of vaping among Montgomery County high school aged youth by race, ethnicity, and gender. In that REIA, ORESJ discussed the ways in which e-cigarette companies targeted their products to Black, American Indian Alaska Native, LGBTQ+ and youth with lower socioeconomic status youth, the persistence of health inequities that create barriers to accessing cessation care and treatment, and the potential unintended consequences of detection and discipline-only regimes in curtailing in-school vaping. For a more complete analysis, please see Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-17 Juul Settlement Fund for Vape Detection and Prevention <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/25-17.pdf>

While the REIA for #25-17 focused primarily on the benefits and tradeoffs of vape detection systems in schools, it did highlight how other jurisdictions are leveraging Juul settlement funds, including education and prevention programs; treatment and cessation programs; supportive school disciplinary practices; regulation; youth engagement; parent and community outreach; research; data collection; tobacco product waste disposal. Within the area of youth engagement, the Public Health Law Center recommends, “Empower[ing] young people to be active participants in addressing the vaping crisis. Support [ing] youth-led initiatives, advocacy groups, and peer support networks that work to raise awareness, educate their peers, and promote healthier choices.”<sup>1</sup>

Given that Supplemental Appropriation #25-30 aims to fund projects that address the underlying root causes and long-term impacts of e-cigarette use and targets communities that have been most negatively impacted by exposure to risk factors that lead to e-cigarette use as well as a lack of access to culturally competent youth focused cessation and treatment healthcare, it’s likely that the funding will help reduce inequities. To mitigate unintended consequences, it will be important to continually center youth experiences and outcomes, adapt programming to reflect emerging needs and preferences, foster trusting and safe relationships, and minimize unnecessary law enforcement intervention.

cc: Dr. James Bridgers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/commentary/230727/7/27/23-how-spend-juul-settlement-funds-champion-our-children-target-commercial>