EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD
March 8, 2021

Dear Dr. Benner-Tompkins,

Thank you so much for your presentation, "Local Data and Best Practices for Advancing Policing Equity" at the ECCAB meeting December 9, 2020. The report is significant and insightful and gives us much to think about as it informs our thinking about policing issues in East County.

The East County Community Advisory Board (ECCAB) finds the research on race and ethnicity in Section 5, "Disparities by Race and Ethnicity Evident in MCPD Interactions with the Public" compelling; however, we would like more clarity on how the data were collected. According to the report, "MCPD collects and reports race and ethnicity data for every policing dataset." (PowerPoint p. 14) At our meeting you stated the data on race and ethnicity were collected by police officers. Our understanding is the determination of someone's race or ethnicity was based on Officer observations. In the full report, "Local Policing Data and Best Practices," the section on "Data Limitations" states the following:

> "The fields for the race of the suspect and officers involved are open-ended, and no field exists for ethnicity. As such, data on the race or ethnicity of suspects and officers may be based on inconsistent terminology from reports. In addition, the data may undercount Latinx suspects or officers, if the officer writing the report does not consider Latinx to be a race." (Chapter 4, p. 32.)

As was referenced during our discussion at the meeting, this is problematic due to the fact that the personal observation of another person's racial or ethnic identity is subjective and raises questions about the validity of the findings. To ensure ECCAB understands more clearly this portion of the report we have a few questions and comments:

1. What is the source of the data for the overall racial and ethnic makeup of Montgomery County and the subareas as represented in the charts on pages 9-13 of the report presented at our December 9th meeting? Is this data derived from Census reports or some other dataset?

2. Is there a standard set of definitions for race and ethnicity that is used by the County and by the MCPD? Are these definitions derived from the Census or another source? Are these definitions provided to police officers making the reports? What steps have been taken to ensure police officers have a shared understanding of these definitions? How are multiple identities reported?
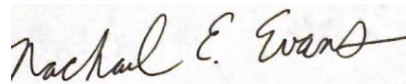
3. It appears from the charts that the only listed ethnic group is "Latinx". Are there others? Is ethnicity defined culturally, geographically or some other way? How do police officers indicate a person's ethnicity in their reports? This is especially important given the ethnic diversity of Montgomery County and East County in particular.

There is much confusion in the general public about what constitutes race and ethnicity and the differences between them, therefore it is important that there be a shared understanding of each term for the purposes of this research. Thus, we hope that the MCPD has provided clear definitions and applications of those definitions to help officers determine a person's race and/or ethnicity to the best of their ability.

We understand the importance of the role of race and ethnicity in policing, and hope our questions provide an opportunity to clarify how the data are collected. This will ultimately strengthen the analysis and recommendations that will come from the report. We appreciate the wealth of information and analysis provided in the report overall and feel certain it will have a positive impact on citizens of Montgomery County.

With appreciation,

Rachael E. Evans

Rachael Evans
Chair of East County Citizens Advisory Board

CC: Marc Elrich, County Executive
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