



Montgomery County Commission on Health



ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2020

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

Table of Contents

Letter from the Chair	3
Mission, Purpose and Meeting Information	4
Membership	5
Meet the Members	6-8
Priorities, Testimonies, Correspondence	9
Liaisons, Committees and Work Groups	10-11
Commission on Health Workgroup Summary Reports	11-12
Appendices	14-21



Commission on Health FY 2020 Annual Report

The Commission on Health (COH) respectfully submits its Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Annual Report. Working both with the County's leadership as well as the dedicated, professional and conscientious staff of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the COH focused on key public health issues. The COH also provided recommendations to county leadership and DHHS staff on improving county resident health and well-being.

In FY20, the COH focused on communicable disease, school health, and tobacco prevention and vaping. The COH worked to gather information and respond to the staffing deficiency within school health rooms at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The COH also continued to support DHHS in achieving public health accreditation.

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of the COH changed dramatically as the pandemic brought the existence of health disparities in Montgomery County to the forefront. The pandemic reinforced the need for additional epidemiological resources within the County to support data analysis and reporting. As a result, COH members were able to recommended additional funding to increase Public Health Services' (PHS) capacity for collecting and analyzing health data; specifically recommending at least two positions dedicated to planning specialty and epidemiology to strengthen capacity of the County. In FY21, the COH hopes to continue its efforts with the addition of cross cutting priorities that are geared towards tackling racial inequities in health.

It has been an honor to serve as the chair of the COH during FY20. The Commission is filled with 19 dedicated and very accomplished professionals who willingly volunteer their time and knowledge to leave a lasting positive effect on DHHS and Montgomery County Residents. The Commission also benefits from the expertise of ex-officio DHHS members, support from DHHS staff and liaisons from other commissions. The COH respectfully submits the attached FY20 Annual Report and looks forward to continued work and collaboration to improve public health and advise the County Council and County Executive.

Desiree de la Torre, MPH, MBA
Chair, Commission on Health

Mission and Purpose

The primary mission of the Montgomery County Commission on Health (COH) is to advise the County Executive and the County Council on public health issues, programs, services and the allocation of funds devoted to public health needs and to monitor and assess the priorities of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) in its efforts to address the health needs of residents in this County. The purpose of this report is to comply with the annual requirement that the COH provide the County Executive and the County Council with an update on the activities of the COH from July 2019 through June 2020.

**CHAPTER 24-24 OF
THE MONTGOMERY
COUNTY CODE
PROVIDES
AUTHORITY FOR THE
COMMISSION ON
HEALTH. THE
COMMISSION ON
HEALTH (COH) WAS
ESTABLISHED ON
JULY 1, 1988**

Structure

The Commission is comprised of 19 voting members with representation from consumers and providers of health services in the County. As dictated by County Code, the COH also has a representative from the Montgomery County Medical Society. In FY20, there were 9 consumers, and 9 providers and the Medical Society representative. The ex officio (non-voting) members of the COH include: the County Health Officer; the Montgomery County Public Schools liaison; and the County Council liaison. The COH continues to represent a diverse cross-section of Montgomery County residents.

Membership consisted of 19 members who were racially and ethnically diverse and vary in age, gender, geography and experience in health policy, public health, and the health care system.

The COH Chair and Vice Chair are elected by COH members and serve one-year terms. During FY20 Desiree de la Torre was the Chair of the Commission and Christopher Burt was the Vice Chair.

Meetings

The COH meets at 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month (except in August) at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850. All meetings are open to the general public. The entire COH met monthly with the exceptions of August 2019 and March and April of 2020. The meetings were not held in the aforementioned 2020 months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meetings resumed in May via the virtual meeting platform Microsoft teams.

At a minimum, every member of the Commission is expected to either serve on one workgroup and, when possible, as a liaison to other health-related County boards, commissions, committees or minority health initiatives and programs.

With its broad perspective of public health, the COH recognizes the value of collaboration and communication with other health-related boards, commissions and committees. Many commissioners have an area of specialization, interest or constituency of public health and are therefore encouraged to serve as liaisons with other relevant health-related boards, commissions and committees (BCCs). Integral to this area of special interest is the constraint that all actions are in voice of the entire COH and not self-serving in any manner. Finally, members of the COH also served on committees that allowed the COH to conduct its business such as the membership, nominating and retreat planning committees. These committees require significant time and are in addition to the monthly scheduled meetings.

FY20 MEMBERSHIP

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVES

Alana Aronin, MPH
Brenda Brooks, MA
Elliott Brown, MS
Christopher Burt, MPH, MBA, MS
Desiree de la Torre, MPH, MBA
Sarah Galbraith-Emami, JD, MPH
Kendra Harris, MBA
Jessica Kronstadt, MPP
Jelani Murrain, JD, MHSA

PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVES

Jessica Chung, PharmD
Crystal DeVance-Wilson, MS, MBA, PHCNS-BC
Nadia Hashimi, MD
Michelle Hawkins, DNP, MSN, MBA
Lenna Israbian-Jamgochian, PharmD
Brittne Jackson, DPT, MPH
Terri McGuire, PA, MHSc, MPH
Fabienne Santel, MD, MPH
CAPT Jason Woo, MD, MPH, FACOG

MEDICAL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE

Brent Berger, MD

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Marla Caplon, RD, LD, Director, School Wellness Initiatives, MCPS
Travis Gayles, MD, PHD, Chief, Public Health Services, Health Officer, DHHS
Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council

STAFF

Vanessa Kachipande, MPH, MCHES, Program Manager, DHHS
Ellen Segal, Office Services Coordinator, Public Health Services, DHHS
Karen Thompkins, MPH, Program Manager, DHHS

MEET THE MEMBERS

Alana Aronin

Alana is President of Forte Group Consulting, a consulting firm specializing in public policy, community organizing, and public relations services for the broad range of public health interests. She has extensive experience in training advocates to create change at all levels of policy and building grassroots mobilizations to advance public health agendas. Alana has a MPH from The University of Michigan, and an undergraduate degree in Public Policy from James Madison College of Michigan State University.

Brent Berger

Brent is an internist with Bethesda Medical Associates, a primary care practice with a focus on prevention and wellness. A native of Montgomery County, he has been practicing here since 1990, and is on the staff at Suburban Hospital. Brent received his BA from Johns Hopkins University and his MD from the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Brenda Brooks

Brenda is a Program Analyst at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), within the Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats (OCET). Prior to joining the FDA, she had a long career as a federal Contracting Officer within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She received a MA degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a BA degree from the University of Maryland.

Elliott Brown

Elliott is George Washington University Hospital's Associate Administrator. In that role, he oversees support and ancillary services at the hospital. He received his Bachelor of Business Administration, with a minor in Public Health, from George Washington University and his Master of Science in Health Systems Administration from Georgetown University. Elliott also served as an EMT in Montgomery County for more than 10 years.

Christopher Burt

Chris serves as a Special Volunteer of the Health Inequities and Global Health Branch within the Center for Translation Research and Implementation Science (CTRIS) at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Institutes of Health (NIH). Chris' academic background includes a B.S. in Social Science from Indiana University, M.S. in Exercise Science from California University of Pennsylvania, M.B.A in Applied Management from Indiana Wesleyan University and a M.P.H. in Epidemiology and Emergency Management from Benedictine University, Lisle, IL.

Jessica Chung

Jessica is a pharmacist at Barquist Army Health Clinic (BAHC) where she serves active and retired military members. Jessica Chung is a native of Rockville, Maryland. She received a BS in Biology at University of Maryland, College Park and a PharmD at Howard University.

MEET THE MEMBERS

Desiree de la Torre

Desiree is the Director of Community Affairs and Population Health Improvement for Children's National Health System in Washington, DC. She leads the organization's population health improvement planning process, including support for community-based organizations, health equity, and compliance with federal community benefit regulations. She received a BS degree in Psychobiology from the University of California, Los Angeles, a MPH from Boston University, and a MBA from The Johns Hopkins University.

Crystal DeVance-Wilson

Crystal has nearly 30 years of nursing experience working in acute and community settings across diverse populations and specialties. She is currently is a faculty member at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. Her specialty is Community/Public Health Nursing. She is a board-certified public health clinical nurse specialist and holds bachelors and master's degrees in nursing and business administration from Suffolk University, University of Maryland School of Nursing and the University of Baltimore and a PhD from the University of Maryland School of Nursing. Crystal's research interests are medication adherence and health behaviors.

Sarah Galbraith-Emami

Sarah has spent over 15 years working in issues around international and comparative health law and policy for the World Health Organization and other international organizations. She currently works as a senior consultant in tobacco product regulation for WHO and teaches as an adjunct faculty at American University. Sarah received her law degree from Georgetown University Law Center and her Masters in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

Nadia Hashimi

Nadia is a pediatrician, an internationally bestselling author, and public speaker. She is a member of the US-Afghan Women's Council, a member of the Gaithersburg Book Festival organizing committee, and board member of Aschiana Foundation, Sahar Education for Girls and Kallion. She graduated from Brandeis University with a BA in Biology and Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. She obtained her medical degree from SUNY Downstate.

Michelle R. Hawkins

Michelle recently retired as the Director of Care Management /Population Health at Johns Hopkins HealthCare LLC. In that role, she maintained oversight of the population health case management programs, specialty care management programs and care management training. Training responsibilities included care management training at Johns Hopkins HealthCare and their International Partners. Additionally, she was responsible for the oversight of the social workers, community health workers and the outreach department that supported care management efforts. She received a BS in Zoology from Howard University and a BSN from the University of Maryland School of Nursing. She received a MSN/MBA from Johns Hopkins University and a Doctorate in Nursing Practice from the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

MEET THE MEMBERS

Kendra Harris

Kendra is a medical liaison where she is directly responsible for overseeing the development, coordination, and execution of The Living Legacy Foundations programmatic efforts to increase and raise awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation. Prior to joining The Living Legacy Foundation, she worked as a Licensed Funeral Director in Silver Spring, MD. Kendra received a B.S. in Biology from Norfolk State University, an A.S in Mortuary Science from Gupton Jones College of Funeral Service and an M.B.A. from the University of Maryland University College. She is committed to serving her community and advocating for the citizens of Montgomery County.

Lenna Israbian-Jamgochian

Lenna is a pharmacist with more than 20 years of experience in her field. She is a District Pharmacy Manager for Safeway/Albertsons and currently manages 35 pharmacies in Maryland and Delaware. She received her Bachelors in Pharmacy from Ohio State University and her Doctorate in Pharmacy from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Jessica Kronstadt

Jessica is the Director of Research and Evaluation at the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). In this role, she oversees efforts to evaluate the accreditation program and to promote research to build the evidence base around accreditation. She received her Master of Public Policy from Georgetown University.

Terri McGuire

Terri is a Certified Physician Assistant with experience in Primary Care, Urgent Care and Liver Transplant Surgery as well as Research Clinician in HIV-focused trials. She received her Bachelor of Science from Wake Forest University, Master of Public Health from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Master of Health Science with Physician Assistant Certificate from Duke University. Terri is passionate about the ways in which public health and medicine intersect and she is thrilled about helping address health concerns within Montgomery County.

Fabienne Santel

Fabienne is a physician, medical writer and clinical research consultant. She received her BA from the University of Maryland at College Park, her Masters of Public Health from Florida A&M University and her MD degree from the SUNY Downstate College of Medicine in Brooklyn, New York. She is board certified in internal medicine and has practiced as a hospitalist, a primary care physician and volunteer provider in Montgomery County.

Jason Woo

Jason retired from the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service in August 2019 after a 31-year career that started with his medical education at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. He completed a residency in obstetrics/gynecology at Georgetown University Hospital. Jason received his MPH from the University of Arizona School of Public Health and has a Diploma in Economic Development from the London School of Economics. He is currently the Senior Managing Partner of Mindset4Results, bringing mindset transformation to health and healthcare.

Commission on Health Priorities

At the Commission on Health Annual Retreat held on September 19, 2019, the Commission on Health set three priorities for FY20.

- Communicable Disease
- School Health
- Tobacco Prevention & Vaping



Photo: Commission on Health Annual Retreat held on September 19, 2019

Commission Correspondence

The Commission on Health sent the following letters during Fiscal Year 2020:

- Letter to the County Council supporting the Council's proposed addition of 6 School Community Health Nurses (SCHN) with late FY19 budget funding, September 2019 (Appendix A)
- Letter to the County Executive advocating for full funding of SCHNs in the FY20 budget. The County Council added funding for 10 additional SCHNs, March 2020. (Appendix B)
- Letter to the County Executive expressing gratitude for the addition of 10 SCHNs, June 2020. (Appendix C)
- Letter to the County Council to increase Public Health Services' (PHS) capacity for collecting and analyzing health data. Specifically recommended were at least two positions dedicated to planning specialty and epidemiology to strengthen capacity of the County, June 2020. (Appendix D)

Commission on Health Testimonies

The Commission on Health testified at the following forums:

- BCC Chairs meeting with HHS Director Raymond Crowel on October 02, 2019 to discuss COH priorities and ongoing operations.
- County Council HHS Committee Work Session for HHS Boards, Committees and Commissions on October 17, 2019.
- Presentation to the County Council sitting as the Board of Health on October 29, 2019.

Commission on Health Liaisons

Board, Committee or Commission	Liaison
African American Health Program	Crystal DeVance-Wilson, Chris Burt
Commission on Aging	Brenda Brooks
School Health Council	Lenna Israbian-Jamgochian
Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee	Michelle Hawkins and Crystal Devance-Wilson
Mental Health Advisory Board	Jessica Kronstadt
Montgomery County Medical Society	Sarah Emami

Commission on Health Committees

Membership Committee

Jessica Chung
Michelle Hawkins
Jason Woo

Nominating Committee

Michelle Hawkins
Jessica Kronstadt
Jason Woo

Retreat Planning Committee

Crystal Devance-Wilson
Christopher Burt
Desiree de la Torre

Commission on Health Workgroups

Communicable Disease

Brent Berger (Chair), Brenda Brooks, Jessica Chung, Crystal DeVance-Wilson, Lenna Israbian-Jamgochian

Tobacco Prevention/Vaping

Sarah Emami (Chair), Michelle Hawkins, Jason Woo

School Health

Alana Aronin (Chair), Elliott Brown, Desiree de la Torre, Kendra Harris, Crystal DeVance-Wilson, Terri McGuire, Jelani Murrain

Governance

Jessica Kronstadt, Michelle Hawkins, Jason Woo

Commission on Health Workgroups Summary Reports

Communicable Disease

The Communicable Disease Workgroup sought collaboration with other work groups, primarily the School Health work group, looking for areas of mutual interest to help prevent communicable diseases. The workgroup had planned to investigate ways to improve the County's approach to managing tuberculosis, but following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus changed dramatically.

The pandemic has reinforced the existence of health disparities in Montgomery County, and while all can benefit from routine immunizations, reducing cultural, language, and other barriers to recommended vaccinations is essential to promote equity.

We hope to continue to encourage focus on science-based approaches to preventing communicable diseases, with particular attention routine influenza vaccinations for everyone over six months of age. We plan to also work to help counter misinformation that could reduce the willingness of County residents to receive recommended vaccinations, including one for coronavirus.

Tobacco and Vaping

On April 16, 2019, the County Health Officer issued a health advisory about the rise in vaping among adolescents. In response, various agencies within Montgomery County began to collaborate on efforts to develop strategies to decrease use.

Commission on Health Workgroups Summary Reports

Tobacco and Vaping (Cont.)

To support these efforts, the workgroup invited two speakers to the November meeting to discuss vaping in the county. These included a senior at Churchill High School who described the prevalence of vaping in the school system and related challenges. The second speaker was the Program Manager of the MCDHHS Cancer and Tobacco Control Program who gave an overview of vaping in the county, current resources, and related legislation.

MCDHHS partnered with the schools on a PSA video anti-vaping competition for youth, ages 13-18. The competition was held November 2019 - February 2020. A member of the COH vaping workgroup served on the panel of judges and scored the top 14 videos from the contest. The finalist's videos can be viewed on the Healthy Montgomery website.

School Health

The School Health Workgroup was formed at the September 2019 COH Annual retreat, to gather information and respond to the staffing deficiency within school health rooms at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Based on DHHS data, MCPS health room nurse-to-student ratios were significantly above the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommended of 1:750, and well above the ratios of every other Maryland county. Given the increasing demands on School Community Health Nurses (SCHNs), the expected continued growth of student population, and the need to respond to growing complexity of cases within schools, the COH advocated for increased funding for SCHNs, both with the County Executive office and the County Council.

The COH sent a letter to the County Council in fall 2019, supporting the Council's proposed addition of 6 SCHNs with late FY19 budget funding. This was passed. Letters were sent to Marc Elrich in November 2019 and to the County Commission shortly thereafter, advocating for full funding of SCHNs in the FY21 budget. The County Council added funding for 10 additional SCHNs. MCPS school health rooms are now able to place a dedicated SCHN in every high school, with better coverage of middle and elementary schools as well.

Governance

The Governance Workgroup was formed in January 2020 to strengthen the operations of the COH. The Workgroup drafted a calendar of events to ensure that members are able to plan their Commission work around key annual milestones (e.g., meetings with the County Council, the County's budgetary schedule).

The Workgroup also documented the roles and responsibilities associated with members' participation in workgroups and their roles as liaisons to other BCCs. The Governance Workgroup assisted with planning orientation for new members and surveyed them to gather feedback on how best to support them as new Commissioners. The Workgroup also serves as the Nominating Committee for securing nominations for the COH Chair and Vice Chair.

Montgomery County Commission on Health

Commission on Health
1401 Rockville Pike
2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/PHS/CommOnHealth/COHIndex.html>



The Commission on Health was established on July 1, 1988. See chapter 23-24 of the Montgomery County Code for a description of the mission of the Commission on Health.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel
Director

The County Executive and County Council encourage people who live or work in Montgomery County to become actively involved in matters affecting the quality of life in Montgomery County. Appointments are made to over 75 Boards, Committees, and Commissions by the County Executive, with confirmation by the County Council.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/boards/index.html>



Montgomery County Commission on Health

November 18, 2019

Mr. Marc Elrich, County Executive
Office of the County Executive
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville MD 20850

Dear Mr. Elrich:

The Montgomery County Commission on Health supports fully funding the Department of Health and Human Services budget to cover an additional 26 school health nurses in your 2021 County Operating Budget.

The current nurse-student ratio in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been a concern for some time and is not consistent with policy recommendations from pertinent professional organizations. The American Academy of Pediatrics specifically recommends no less than one full-time registered nurse (RN) in every schoolⁱ. Currently, 100 School Community Health Nurses (SCHN) are assigned to 206 MCPS schools, with 81 SCHN covering 190 schools – a rate of .43 nurses per school. The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends a ratio of 1:750 for the general population of students, and 1:225 for students requiring daily professional services. In FY19, the nurse-student ratio was nearly three times (1:1824) the NASN recommendation of 1:750 for the general population of students. Montgomery County lags significantly behind *all* other counties. Montgomery County nurses have, on average, three schools to cover while Prince Georges County has a nurse for every school. Anne Arundel County has a nurse for every high and middle school. Howard County has a nurse for every high school and Baltimore County has a nurse for every schoolⁱⁱ. This deficit leads to a high nursing turnover rate as a result of being understaffed and the potential for medical errors and less than optimal health outcomes for studentsⁱⁱⁱ.

MCPS is the largest district in Maryland and the student population continues to grow. In addition, the reality of more complex medical needs places increased pressure on already overtaxed SCHN and School Health Room Technicians. According to Montgomery County school health services data, the number of visits to school health rooms last school year neared 900,000, higher than the previous years. Though this number is staggering, it still does not fully grasp the high acuity of many of these visits or all of the responsibilities that the nurses hold. The complexity of the visits has also increased, such as opioid use, anaphylaxis, diabetes, trauma, anxiety, suicidal ideation, teen pregnancy, and dysautonomia, as well as case management for social determinants of health like homelessness or providing health education.

While School Health Room Technicians (SHRT) are vital members of the school health team and certainly help to address some of the health needs that students face, their training and capacity is limited. They primarily support the RNs, who are also responsible for their training and supervision. SHRTs must have a high school diploma, 1 year experience working in any capacity with children, and receive training upon hire as employee orientation. On the contrary, SCHN's hold a minimum 4-year college BSN degree, are Registered Nurses, and have 2 years previous experience working in pediatrics, women's health or public health. SHRTs simply are not adequate replacement for fully staffing SCHN's at high schools and middle schools.

Ultimately, school-based health services provide a critical role in stabilizing students so they can learn, along with handling the increased volume and complexity of medical needs facing students today. School health services are also a source of primary care to hundreds of families. In addition to care planning and implementation, medication management, triage and treatment for acute illnesses, SCHN's provide a safety net for marginalized and other high-risk students, including LGBTQIA. This workload cannot be sustained without a fully staffed work force.

The quality of care provided by school health services will be compromised without adequate funding. Despite returning 91% of students to class ready to learn, it will be impossible to meet the critical health needs in the future, provide necessary education, linkages to services, home visits and follow-up care because of understaffing and unmanageable caseloads.

For all these reasons, the current nursing staff is simply inadequate to meet the needs of those they serve which include the most vulnerable populations. We strongly urge you to provide funding for School Health Services so that health rooms can be fully staffed by RNs in FY2021. Like you, we are all committed to the safety and well-being of all MCPS students and school nurses are an important component to that objective.

Sincerely,



Desiree de la Torre
Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Health

Cc: Montgomery County Council, Richard Madaleno, Director of Office of Management and Budget,
Raymond Crowel, Director Montgomery County DHHS

ⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/137/6/e20160852>

ⁱⁱ Montgomery County Council Health and Human Services Committee and Education & Culture Committee Work Session, April 26, 2019.
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2019/20190426/20190426_HHSEC1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ National Association of School Nurses. <https://www.nasn.org/nasn/advocacy/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-medication>



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel
Director

March 3, 2020

The Honorable Marc Elrich
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Elrich:

The Commission on Health (COH) embraces your vision for a Montgomery County where children and families thrive. We agree that “[C]hildren need great schools” and understand that great schools must not only provide a good education but must also be a safe environment where the physical and mental health needs of our children, to whom we are entrusted, can be met. In Montgomery County, however, school health resources are not adequate to support the ever growing health needs of the County’s children and adolescents. For this reason, we are writing to continue our discussion regarding full funding for School Community Health Nurses (SCHNs) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

Through the advocacy of the COH and others, a special appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget, was approved by the County Council for \$164,279 to support the addition of six SCHN positions allowing for a SCHN at every County high school. Despite the additional funding, the disproportionately high SCHN-to-student ratios and number of schools assigned to SCHNs persists. This is an urgent matter that can only be solved by the County Executive. For this reason, on behalf of the children, families and School Community Health Nurses, we urge you to do all you can to protect their health and safety by fully funding the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) budget including the addition of 20 school health nurses in your FY 2021 County Operating Budget proposal.

On average today, one SCHN may be assigned to up to three MCPS schools. As schools have increased in size due to growing enrollment and facility additions, the SCHN to student ratios have further exceeded professional standards. Furthermore, health room visits have continued to increase, with nearly 900,000 unique school health room visits recorded in 2018-2019. These visits include increasingly complex health concerns, such as opioid use,

Commission on Health

1401 Rockville Pike, 2nd Floor • Rockville, Maryland 20852 • 240-777-3860

anaphylaxis, diabetes, trauma, anxiety, suicidal ideation, teen pregnancy, and dysautonomia, as well as case management for social determinants of health, like homelessness.

As we referenced in our first letter on November 18, 2019, the American Academy of Pediatrics specifically recommends no less than one full-time registered nurse (RN) in every schoolⁱ. At the start of this school year, 100 SCHNs were assigned to 206 MCPS schools, with 81 SCHN covering 190 schools – a rate of .43 nurses per school. The six additional SCHNs has reduced this ratio only slightly. The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends a ratio of 1:750 for the general population of students, and 1:225 for students requiring daily professional services. In FY19, the nurse-student ratio was nearly three times (1:1824) the NASN recommendation of 1:750 for the general population of students. Montgomery County lags significantly behind *all* other Maryland counties. Montgomery County nurses have, on average, three schools to cover, while Prince George's County has a nurse for every school, Anne Arundel County has a nurse for every high and middle school, Howard County has a nurse for every high school, and Baltimore County has a nurse for every schoolⁱⁱ. This deficit leads to a high nursing turnover rate as a result of being understaffed, the potential for medical errors, and less than optimal health outcomes for studentsⁱⁱⁱ.

Ultimately, school-based health services provide a critical role in stabilizing students so they can learn, along with handling the increased volume and complexity of medical needs facing students today. School health services are also a source of primary care to hundreds of families. In addition to care planning and implementation, medication management, triage and treatment for acute illnesses, SCHNs provide a safety net for marginalized and other high-risk students, including LGBTQIA. This workload cannot be sustained without a fully staffed workforce.

The quality of care provided by school health services will be further compromised without adequate funding. Although impressive (91%), returning students to class cannot be the only metric by which we measure the quality and adequacy of our school health care services. It is increasingly more difficult to meet the critical health needs, provide necessary education, linkages to services, home visits and follow-up care because of understaffing and unmanageable caseloads. This is a dire situation that must be addressed with a viable solution.

For all these reasons, the current nursing staff is simply inadequate to meet the needs of those they serve, which include our most vulnerable children and families. The COH supports the County Council's current effort to provide MCPS additional SCHNs and strongly urge you to provide funding for School Health Services so that health rooms can be fully staffed by SCHNs in FY2021. Like you, we are all committed to the safety and well-being of all MCPS students and school nurses are an important component to that objective.

Sincerely,



Desiree de la Torre
Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Health

Commission on Health

Cc: Montgomery County Council, Richard Madaleno, Director of Office of Management and Budget, Raymond Crowel, Director Montgomery County DHHS

ⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/137/6/e20160852>

ⁱⁱ Montgomery County Council Health and Human Services Committee and Education & Culture Committee Work Session, April 26, 2019.

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2019/20190426/20190426_HHSEC1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ National Association of School Nurses. <https://www.nasn.org/nasn/advocacy/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-medication>



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel
Director

June 30, 2020

Councilmember Albornoz
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Albornoz:

On behalf of the Commission on Health, we are recommending that the County Council consider providing additional funding to increase Montgomery County Public Health Services' (PHS) capacity to collect and analyze health data. As opportunities arise to make additional appropriations in the midst of the health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we advise the county to invest in building epidemiological capacity. The launch of the county's COVID-19 Data Portal is a critical step in keeping the public and policy makers informed about this ever-evolving pandemic. However, more analytic ability is needed to be able to delve deeper into those numbers to understand which neighborhoods are most impacted and to understand correlations between the COVID-19 data and information on demographics, socioeconomic status, community assets, etc. This information will support the effective targeting of preventive measures and needed health and social services.

To allow Montgomery County to better understand the health of residents throughout the community and target interventions more effectively, we recommend at least two positions dedicated to planning specialty and epidemiology to strengthen the capacity of the County.

State-of-the-art data collection and analysis capability is also integral to ongoing priorities related to reducing vaping among youths, combatting diabetes, and ending the AIDS epidemic. Expanded epidemiology capacity is also critical to support the County's efforts to address racism as a public health crisis and to advance health equity. The Zip Code Ranking Project Report, developed by Public Health Services (PHS), highlighted disparities among different geographic areas of the County.ⁱ These findings inform the work of the health department, in partnership with Healthy Montgomery, governmental agencies, and community-based organizations to map out steps to enhance the health of the County. This underlines the importance of having access to and being able to dig deeply into the data to understand: (1) which parts of the county might be underserved, and (2) where it is necessary

to invest in programming and policies to ensure all County residents have an equitable opportunity to be healthy.

Strong internal capacity is necessary to continue these and future efforts. Although PHS has built strong relationships with local universities, it is essential that the agency has dedicated and experienced staff to support on-going health data collection and analysis. There are currently two staff in the epidemiology/data team for Montgomery County with its population of over one million residents. In contrast, we have learned that Prince George's County has 6 staff positions with its population of just under one million residents, and Anne Arundel County has 3 staff positions with a population of approximately 570,000 residents. In addition, the National Association of County and City Health Officials 2016 Profile indicates that local health departments serving one million residents or more nationwide have a median of 6 FTEs in the role of epidemiologist/statistician.ⁱⁱ

One of the greatest assets of Montgomery County is its rich diversity. Strong epidemiologic capability is required for PHS to provide critical information related to COVID-19 and to further our understanding the health status, determinants of health, and health disparities among the different populations that reside here. It will allow for data-informed strategic planning to address the pandemic and to support more efficient allocation of resources within the County as we strive for greater health and health equity in our communities. For this reason, we respectfully recommend additional planning/epidemiological staff resources to enhance PHS' data collection and analysis.

Sincerely,



Desiree de la Torre, MPH, MBA
Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Health

Cc: Montgomery County Council Health and Human Services Committee

ⁱ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS/Resources/Files/Reports/Zipcode%20Ranking%20Final%20Results.pdf>

ⁱⁱ http://nacchoprofilestudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ProfileReport_Aug2017_final.pdf



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel
Director

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Marc Elrich
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear County Executive Elrich,

On behalf of the Commission on Health (COH), I am writing to express our gratitude to you and the Montgomery County Council for sincere consideration of our request for additional school community health nurses. We are encouraged by your strong support of the children and families of Montgomery County.

The addition of 10 school health nurses will allow the nursing staff to more robustly address the complex medical needs facing students today, including primary care services provided to students and families. It will also allow for critical health services that students need and improve student health outcomes. Additionally, this action has the potential to decrease workforce attrition, by decreasing the workload of overburdened nurses.

Nurses will have more time to conduct necessary patient education, provide home visits, work collaboratively with social workers and other health professionals to identify and connect students to necessary services. These additional nurses will further benefit the students of Montgomery County in this turbulent health environment, handling the complex needs of schools and students, especially with the emergence of COVID-19.

Your attention and subsequent investment in this important matter will undoubtedly improve the provision of health services in Montgomery County schools and is approaching parity with our neighboring counties. Thank you for your commitment to the health and well-being of all MCPS students as evidenced by your investment in school community health nurses.

Sincerely,

Desiree de la Torre, MPH, MBA
Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Health

Cc: Montgomery County Council, Richard Madaleno, Director of Office of Management and Budget, Raymond Crowel, Director Montgomery County DHHS