

Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Expedited Bill 4-23

Administration – Non-Merit Positions – Special Projects Manager

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Expedited Bill 4-23 would have an insignificant impact on economic conditions in the County in terms of the Council’s priority indicators.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 4-23

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance defines digital equity as “a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.”¹

The goal of Expedited Bill 4-23 is to enhance the County’s focus on digital equity issues and establish a central point for the coordination and oversight of digital equity initiatives. The Bill seeks to achieve this goal by establishing a second, non-merit Special Projects Manager in the Office of the County Executive. According to the County Executive, a major initiative for the Special Projects Manager would be to improve digital equity by:

- coordinating efforts to extend the physical infrastructure needed to access high speed broadband in the County;
- expanding access to affordable high-speed broadband, home computers, and digital literacy training;
- seeking and deploying grants;
- establishing a network of digital navigators;
- creating a comprehensive online digital literacy resource portal; and
- managing relationships with County Government and local partners, such as educational institutions, employers, and Worksource Montgomery, to align County efforts on equity, digital literacy, and career training.

Bill 4-23, Administration - Non-Merit Positions - Special Projects Manager, was introduced by the Council on behalf of the County Executive on January 31, 2023.²

¹ Digitalinclusion.org, “[Definitions](#).”

² [Bill 4-23](#); and Elrich to Glass, [Memorandum](#).

INFORMATION SOURCES, METHODOLOGIES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

Per Section 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, the purpose of this Economic Impact Statement is to assess the impacts of Expedited Bill 4-23 on County-based private organizations and residents in terms of the Council's priority economic indicators and whether the Bill would likely result in a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.³ While certain residents and private organizations would economically benefit from improved digital equity,⁴ establishing a non-merit Special Projects Manager in the Office of the County Executive focused on digital equity in itself would not achieve this outcome. For this reason, OLO anticipates that the Bill would have insignificant impacts on private organizations, residents, and overall economic conditions in the County in terms of the indicators prioritized by the Council.

VARIABLES

Not applicable

IMPACTS

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Not applicable

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Not applicable

WORKS CITED

Digitalinclusion.org. "[Definitions](#)." National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Elrich, Marc to Evan Glass. [Memorandum](#). January 6, 2023.

Montgomery County Code. [Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements](#).

Montgomery County Council. [Expedited Bill 4-23, Administration – Non-Merit Positions – Special Projects Manager](#).
Introduced on January 31, 2023.

Ochillo, Francella. [The Economic Consequences and Generational Impact of the Digital Divide](#). Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. May 2022.

³ Montgomery County Code, [Sec. 2-81B](#).

⁴ Ochillo, [The Economic Consequences and Generational Impact of the Digital Divide](#).

CAVEATS

Two caveats to the economic analysis performed here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.