

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

BILL 48-21: GENERAL PROVISION — COUNTY SYMBOLS — COUNTY TREE — ESTABLISHED

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Bill 48-21 will have little to no impact on racial equity or social justice in the County.

PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS

The purpose of racial equity and social justice (RESJ) impact statements is to evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice in the County. Racial equity and social justice refer to a **process** that focuses on centering the needs of communities of color and low-income communities with a **goal** of eliminating racial and social inequities.¹ Achieving racial equity and social justice usually requires seeing, thinking, and working differently to address the racial and social harms that have caused racial and social inequities.²

PURPOSE OF BILL 48-21

The purpose of Bill 48-21 is to designate the *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as black tupelo as the County tree.³ The black tupelo (also known as blackgum, sourgum, Pepperidge, tupelo, and tupelo-gum) was selected by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Forest Conservation Advisory Committee after a year-long selection process that engaged multiple stakeholders including Montgomery Parks and Montgomery Planning.⁴ Criterion for selecting a County tree included identifying a local species that was available for purchase, had high ecological value, is large and is also a long-lived species. Bill 48-21 was introduced to the Council on December 14, 2021.

ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

OLO does not anticipate that Bill 48-21 will impact racial equity and social justice as designating the black tupelo as the County tree does not commit County or other resources to addressing racial and social inequities directly or indirectly. If Bill 48-21 included resources aimed at planting additional black tupelo trees in the County, resources aimed at identifying and addressing inequities in the County's tree canopy by race, ethnicity or income could help narrow racial and social inequities. In the absence of this additional commitment, OLO finds that Bill 48-21 will have little to no impact on RESJ in the County.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to this racial equity and social justice impact statement should be noted. First, predicting the impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice is a challenging, analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, this RESJ impact statement is intended to inform the legislative process rather than 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.

RESJ Impact Statement

Bill 48-21

CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Dr. Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Senior Legislative Analyst, drafted this RESJ impact statement.

¹ Definition of racial equity and social justice adopted from “Applying a Racial Equity Lens into Federal Nutrition Programs” by Marlysa Gamblin, et.al. Bread for the World, and from Racial Equity Tools <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

² Ibid

³ Montgomery County Council, Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols - County Tree - Established, introduced on December 14, 2021.

⁴ Ibid and Adam Ortiz memorandum to Marc Elrich on Official County Tree designation, September 29, 2021 included in packet of Livhu Ndou memorandum to County Council on Bill 48-21, December 9, 2021