

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

BILL 12-22: ELECTRICITY – BOARD OF ELECTRICAL EXAMINERS – LICENSES – PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Bill 12-22 will have a little to no impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County, as it does not make any fundamental changes that will affect the composition of electricians in the County.

PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENT

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, leadership, and power 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 12-22

As described by the Occupational Outlook Handbook, “electricians install, maintain, and repair electrical power, communications, lighting, and control systems.”³ Electricians are among the construction skilled trades, along with occupations such as plumbers, carpenters, and bricklayers.⁴ Typically, electricians have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and licensure can be obtained for the profession through apprenticeship or attending a technical school.⁵ In 2021, electricians earned a median pay of \$60,040 annually, higher than the median pay of \$45,760 for all workers.⁶

The purpose of Bill 12-22 is to rewrite ‘Chapter 17 – Electricity’ of the County Code to conform with changes in State law to the licensing process for electricians. The Maryland Electricians Act, enacted in July 2021, authorized the State to issue licenses for apprentice electrician, journeyman electrician, and master electrician. Among several changes, the Bill if enacted achieves the following:⁷

- Removes licensing categories that have been assumed by the state, effectively allowing the County to recognize state-licensed electricians in the permitting process without any additional licensing requirements.
- Creates a new Low Voltage Electrician License category in the County, which is not provided by the state.
- Eliminates the Montgomery County Board of Electrical Examiners since its primary function of administering licensure examinations has now been assumed by the state. Examinations for the Low Voltage Electrician License will be administered by the International Code Council (ICC).
- Allows for a third-party to review permit applications for simple residential rooftop solar projects to streamline the permitting process.

Bill 12-22 was introduced to the Council on June 14, 2022.

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SKILLED TRADES AND RACIAL EQUITY

Careers in skilled trades such as electricians can offer a pathway to financial security that does not require obtaining a college degree. However, a history of racism in apprenticeships established racial disparities that are present in skilled trade employment to this day. As described by Jobs for the Future (JFF):⁸

“The [National Apprenticeship Act of 1937] was created to provide protections for apprentices, and it established the labor standards, national certification standards, and safeguards for apprentices’ welfare that a work-based learning program must adopt in order to be considered a Registered Apprenticeship. However, Black workers were still subject to racist and exclusionary policies, such as Jim Crow laws, upheld by states and cities, employers, and labor unions, reflecting the racist views of the times. As a result, they were still significantly underrepresented in most apprenticeships after the Apprenticeship Act was passed. When a Black worker was admitted into an apprenticeship, it was most commonly for a low-wage, less-skilled position.”

Research suggests that Black workers are still generally underrepresented in skilled trades,⁹ a pattern that is evident in electrician occupations. Nationally, while 12.3 percent of the employed are Black, 6.7 percent of electricians are Black.¹⁰ White people are overrepresented as electricians (77.5 percent of employed and 88.3 percent of electricians), while Latinx people are proportionally represented as electricians (18.0 percent of employed and 22.9 percent of electricians). Local data summarized in Table 1 suggests that Latinx workers are overrepresented as electricians in the County. Conversely, Black and Asian workers are underrepresented as electricians, while White workers are proportionally represented.

Table 1: Percent of Residents 18 Years and Over and Percent of Electricians by Race and Ethnicity, Montgomery County, Maryland

Race and ethnicity ¹¹	Percent of Residents 18 Years and Over	Percent of Employees in Electrician Occupations
Asian	16.0	5.7
Black	18.1	9.8
White	45.6	46.7
Latinx	18.6	54.9

Source: 2020 Decennial Census (Table P3, P4), OLO Analysis of 2020 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), Census Bureau.

Of note, skilled trades are also marked by a significant gender disparity. Nationally, women are 80% less likely to work a craft job than men.¹² A study examining the experiences of Black tradeswomen noted patterns of racial and gender microaggressions experienced throughout their careers.¹³ A 2021 report from the PBS NewsHour highlights the continuing discrimination experienced by Black Americans and women in skilled trades.¹⁴

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ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

Bill 12-22 primarily codifies changes made to the electrician licensing process at the state-level. One of the primary implications of the Bill is that it will eliminate the requirement for state-licensed electricians to reciprocate their license with the County, a practice that has been in place since state law became effective in July 2021. While the changes will generally make it easier for electricians to operate in the County, the Bill does not make any fundamental changes to electrician training or licensing, factors that would potentially have RESJ implications for the people currently employed as electricians or those potentially entering the profession. Additionally, while the Bill adds a new licensing category for Low Voltage Electrician, it is not clear that this addition will have any meaningful impact on the composition of electricians in the County. Thus, OLO anticipates that Bill 12-22 will have a little to no impact on RESJ in the County.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The RESJ Act requires OLO to consider whether recommended amendments to bills aimed at narrowing racial and social inequities are warranted in developing RESJ impact statements.¹⁵ OLO does not offer recommended amendments for this Bill, as its limited scope would not address racial and social inequities 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.

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 “Electricians,” Occupational Outlook Handbook, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor Last Modified April 18, 2022. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/construction-and-extraction/electricians.htm>

⁴ “Skilled Trades,” College and Career Access Center, Accessed June 30, 2022. <https://www.jcisid.org/domain/307>

⁵ “Electricians,” Occupational Outlook Handbook

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Bill 12-22, Electricity – Board of Electrical Examiners – Licenses – Permit Requirements, Montgomery County, Maryland, Introduced June 14, 2022. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2022/20220614/20220614_3D.pdf

⁸ Eric M. Seleznow and Cassandra McGhee, “Together We Can Increase Black Participation in Apprenticeship,” Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning, Jobs for the Future, February 25, 2021. <https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/center-for-apprenticeship-and-work-based-learning/together-we-can-increase-black-participation-apprenticeship/>

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⁹ Eric Hoyt and J.D. Swerzenski, “Who’s Getting the Skilled Blue Collar Jobs? A Look Into the Top and Bottom 5 States,” Center for Employment Equity, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Accessed June 30, 2022.

<https://www.umass.edu/employmentequity/who%E2%80%99s-getting-skilled-blue-collar-jobs-look-top-and-bottom-5-states>

¹⁰ “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Last Modified January 20, 2022. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

¹¹ Latinx is an ethnicity rather than a race. Therefore, Latinx people are included in multiple racial groups throughout this impact statement, unless where otherwise noted.

¹² Eric Hoyt and J.D. Swerzenski, “Who’s Getting the Skilled Blue Collar Jobs? A Look Into the Top and Bottom 5 States”

¹³ Roberta Suzette Hunte, “‘My Walk has Never been Average’: Black Tradeswomen Negotiating Intersections of Race and Gender in Long-Term Careers in the U.S. Building Trades,” Doctoral Thesis: Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg 2012. https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item?id=TC-MWU-8860&op=pdf&app=Library&oclc_number=1032914121

¹⁴ “Black Americans and Women Continue to Face Discrimination in the Skilled Trades,” PBS NewsHour, March 12, 2021. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/black-americans-and-women-continue-to-face-discrimination-in-skilled-trades>

¹⁵ Bill 27-19, Administration – Human Rights – Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice – Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee – Established, Montgomery County Council