

# Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

## **BILL 9-23: ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE ADVISORY COUNCIL - RENAME**

### **SUMMARY**

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Bill 9-23 will have a minimal impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County, as it does not appear to have differing effects on constituents by race and ethnicity nor impact racial and social inequities. However, the name change proposed by Bill 9-23 could advance social justice if it reduces negative bias and stigma toward people with substance use disorders.

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### **PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS**

The purpose of RESJ impact statements (RESJIS) 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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### **PURPOSE OF BILL 9-23**

The Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council (AODAAC) is comprised of experts and representatives with a range of viewpoints concerning alcohol and drug addiction in the County. AODAAC provides guidance in identifying alcohol and other drug prevention and treatment needs in the County and in reviewing the County's efforts to address these needs.<sup>3</sup>

If enacted, Bill 9-23 would rename the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council to the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Council. The Bill also makes amendments to language throughout the County Code, replacing the word "abuse" with "addiction." The AODAAC has requested these changes to reduce the stigma associated with the word "abuse" and better reflect the need to provide access and support for persons afflicted with addictions.<sup>4</sup>

Bill 9-23, Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council – Rename, was introduced by the Council on behalf of the County Executive on February 14, 2023.

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### **DRINKING, ALCOHOL USE DISORDER, AND RACIAL EQUITY**

As described by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the social determinants of health "are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks."<sup>5</sup> ODPHP groups the social determinants of health into five domains: economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context.<sup>6</sup>

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Structural racial inequities within the social determinants of health are rooted in a history of oppression against Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC). These inequities cause racial disparities across a range of health conditions and compound the consequences of health conditions for BIPOC.<sup>7</sup>

On drinking and alcohol use disorder, the 2016 study, “Drinking, Alcohol Use Disorder, and Treatment Access and Utilization Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Groups,” analyzing 140 articles and reports highlighted that:<sup>8</sup>

- Studies have found that, as a whole, American Indians/Alaska Natives generally drink more and have higher rates of alcohol use disorder than people of other racial and ethnic groups. At the same time, more disaggregated studies have found that several American Indian/Alaska Native groups have lower rates of substance use than the U.S general population.
- Research findings have generally demonstrated a positive association between experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination, drinking, and alcohol-related consequences among BIPOC.
- Research suggests that highly segregated neighborhoods negatively impact the health and substance use behaviors of residents, particularly in predominantly Black neighborhoods.

The authors noted that, “reasons for racial/ethnic disparities in drinking and AUD are complex and are associated with historically-rooted patterns of racial discrimination and persistent socioeconomic disadvantage.”<sup>9</sup>

Local data suggests racial disparities in health complications from substance use, which includes alcohol use. Between 2017 and 2019, Black constituents had the highest rate of emergency room visits for substance use (990.5 per 100,000 constituents), followed by White constituents (429.2), Latinx constituents (426.5), and Asian constituents (91.0).<sup>10</sup>

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## ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

OLO anticipates Bill 9-23 will have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County, as it does not appear to have differing effects on constituents by race and ethnicity nor impact racial and social inequities. While the proposed name change for the AODAAC and related language changes in the County Code will not materially impact RESJ, Bill 9-23 could advance social justice if it reduces negative bias and stigma toward people with substance use disorders.

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## RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Act requires OLO to consider whether recommended amendments to bills aimed at narrowing racial and social inequities are warranted in developing RESJ impact statements.<sup>11</sup> OLO anticipates Bill 9-23 will have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County. As such, OLO does not offer recommended amendments. However, if the Council seeks to improve the RESJ impact of the Bill, OLO offers one item for consideration:

- **Consider items offered for Bill 8-23 to advance RESJ through BCCs.** Considerations include requiring BCCs to undergo RESJ training and develop RESJ action plans; amending Executive Regulations to require BCCs to develop RESJ action plans; and requesting a diversity audit of BCCs. Particularly for the AODAAC, integrating a RESJ focus and ensuring diversity could help address racial inequities and disparities in alcohol and drug addiction in the County.

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### 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> “Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council,” Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/BHCS/AODAAC/AODAACIndex.html>

<sup>4</sup> Introduction Staff Report for Bill 9-23, Montgomery County Council, Introduced February 14, 2023. [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2023/20230214/20230214\\_2B.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2023/20230214/20230214_2B.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> “Social Determinants of Health,” Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> “Racism and Health,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/racism-disparities/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> Patrice A.C. Vaeth, et al, “Drinking, Alcohol Use Disorder, and Treatment Access and Utilization among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Groups,” Alcohol: Clinical & Experimental Research, December 26, 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5205547/>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid (Abstract)

<sup>10</sup> “Health in Montgomery County 2010-2019: A Surveillance Report on Population Health,” Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, April 2022. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/healthymontgomery/Resources/Files/Reports/Health-in-Montgomery-County-201019%20Final.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Bill 27-19, Administration – Human Rights – Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice – Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee – Established, Montgomery County Council