

# Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

## EXPEDITED BILL 32-25: EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM - SURVIVOR BENEFITS - DEATH DURING LINE OF DUTY (THE "HERO ACT")

### SUMMARY

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The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 32-25 would have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County. While White community members would disproportionately benefit from the proposed changes to death benefits, any increases in death benefits resulting from this Bill would likely be trivial since it is rare for firefighters to die in the line of duty.

### PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS

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RESJ impact statements (RESJIS) evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice in the County. RESJ is a **process** that focuses on centering the needs, leadership, and power of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and communities with low incomes. RESJ is also a **goal** of eliminating racial and social inequities. Applying a RESJ lens is essential to achieve RESJ.<sup>1</sup> This involves seeing, thinking, and working differently to address the racial and social inequities that cause racial and social disparities.<sup>2</sup>

### PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 32-25

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Currently, a surviving spouse or child of a Group G member County employee who died in the line of duty is entitled to death benefits.<sup>3</sup> Group G employees include paid firefighters, fire officers, and rescue service personnel.<sup>4</sup>

Surviving family members currently have two options available for death benefits. Expedited Bill 32-25 would establish a third option that would offer "[t]he benefits the spouse would have received if the member had terminated employment on the day before the date of death with exactly twenty years of credited service and had elected a 100% joint and survivor pension option." The Bill would also:<sup>5,6</sup>

- Establish that any of the options selected would be payable upon the date of death of the Group G member; and
- Require benefit payments to begin on the first of the month following the date of death.

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 32-25 on October 21, 2025.

This RESJIS builds on the one for Bill 9-24, Group G Pension – Social Security Integration.<sup>7</sup> Please read this RESJIS for background on fire personnel and racial equity.

### ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

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To consider the anticipated impact of Bill 32-25 on RESJ in the County, OLO recommends consideration of two related questions:

- Who would primarily benefit or be burdened by this bill?
- What racial and social inequities could passage of this bill weaken or strengthen?

# RESJ Impact Statement

## Expedited Bill 32-25

Bill 32-25 would primarily benefit MCFRS personnel and their families by:

- Providing an additional option for death benefits; and
- Expediting the payment of death benefits following a death in the line of duty.

As noted in the RESJIS for Bill 9-24, local data suggests White people are overrepresented among MCFRS personnel, while BIPOC are underrepresented.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, White community members would disproportionately benefit from the proposed changes to death benefits. However, since it is rare for firefighters to die in the line of duty,<sup>9</sup> any increases in death benefits that result from this Bill would likely be trivial. Therefore, OLO anticipates Bill 32-25 would have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County.

### RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

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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>10</sup> OLO anticipates Bill 32-25 would have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County. As such, OLO does not offer recommended amendments.

### CAVEATS

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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 [Marlysa Gamblin et al., "Applying Racial Equity to U.S. Federal Nutrition Programs," Bread for the World](#) and [Racial Equity Tools](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 32-25, Montgomery County Council, Introduced October 21, 2025](#).

<sup>4</sup> ["Summary Description for Sworn Fire Personnel in Retirement Group G," Montgomery County Employee Retirement Plans, August 2023](#).

<sup>5</sup> Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 32-25.

<sup>6</sup> ["Councilmembers Evan Glass and Sidney Katz Introduce the HERO Act," Press Release, Montgomery County Council, October 21, 2025](#).

<sup>7</sup> [RESJIS for Bill 9-24, Office of Legislative Oversight, April 26, 2024](#).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg. 2.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Maryland Fire-Rescue Service Memorial, seven firefighters in Montgomery County have died in the line of duty over the last 25 years. Refer to [Montgomery County, Maryland Fire-Rescue Service Memorial](#).

<sup>10</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](#).