



**Committee:** Directly to Council  
**Committee Review:** N/A  
**Staff:** Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst  
**Purpose:** To introduce agenda item – no vote expected  
**Keywords:** COVID-19, food assistance

AGENDA ITEM #2D  
April 28, 2020  
**Introduction**

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## **SUBJECT**

Supplemental appropriation to the County Government's FY20 Operating Budget, COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA) Support for COVID-19 Response – Food Assistance/Feeding Our Families, \$750,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves)

## **EXPECTED ATTENDEES**

None

## **COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

- Introduction. Public hearing and action are scheduled for April 30, 2020.

## **DESCRIPTION/ISSUE**

The COVID-19 public health crisis has led to significantly reduced income for many county residents, making it difficult for them to afford basic needs like food. The number of the food insecure in the County is evidenced by the growth in unemployment claims and the substantial increase in clients accessing meal distribution centers in the County. The increased demand for food assistance has placed strain on the resources of food assistance programs, which are trying to meet this demand.

The Montgomery County Food Security Task Force has identified strategies to increase the volume of food in the food assistance system, improve the food distribution methods, and ensure that residents are aware of available resources. The Department of Health and Human Services has directed \$500,000 to provide immediate support to food assistance providers consistent with Food Council/Food Security Task Force Strategies. This special appropriation will provide \$750,000 to further support the Task Force's current and future recommendations.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Many individuals and families in Montgomery County are experiencing food insecurity as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, and it is expected that the number of food insecure will continue to rise.
- The need for resources has increased dramatically for nonprofit food assistance providers.
- This special appropriation provides additional resources to assist food providers in serving residents, securing and distributing ethnic and culturally appropriate food to vulnerable populations, and developing a long-term strategy for food security. It supports the Food Security Task Force recommendations for Phase I and Phase III.

**This report contains:**

Proposed Resolution

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Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: \_\_\_\_\_  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsors: County Council

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**SUBJECT:** Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget  
Montgomery County Government  
COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental  
Account (NDA)  
Support for COVID-19 Response – Food Assistance/Feeding Our Families  
\$750,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves)

**Background**

1. Section 308 of the County Charter provides that a special appropriation is an appropriation which states that it is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency, or to act without delay in the public interest. Each special appropriation shall be approved by not less than six Councilmembers. The Council may approve a special appropriation at any time after public notice by news release. Each special appropriation shall specify the source of funds to finance it.
2. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared coronavirus COVID-19 a pandemic, and it has spread rapidly throughout the world. As of April 26, 2020, there were 3,645 confirmed cases in Montgomery County. There were 160 confirmed deaths and 20 probable deaths in Montgomery County. To slow the spread of the disease, Maryland Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency. Executive Orders have closed schools until May 15, closed non-essential business, and issued a stay-at-home order for Maryland residents.
3. The efforts to contain the spread of the disease and the disease itself have threatened food security for an increased number of vulnerable residents in Montgomery County. The need has already increased as residents experience income loss from the resulting economic disaster. March unemployment claims for Montgomery County totaled 13,776. The first two weeks of April alone saw 25,299 claims. Once the Maryland Department of Labor system can accept unemployment claims from independent contractors and gig workers per the expanded benefit under the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program, another jump in unemployment claims is anticipated.

4. The loss of income for residents has resulted in a substantial increase in clients accessing meal distribution centers in the county. As of April 20, Montgomery County Public Schools had served almost 950,000 grab and go meals to students at 50 distribution sites. Community and faith-based organizations are reporting more demand. Nonprofit organizations that have not typically provided food assistance have started distributing food to hundreds of families, and food pantries have seen demand triple in just two weeks. In addition, the County is experiencing a decline in food supply due to COVID-19's fiscal impact.
5. The Montgomery County Food Council, in partnership with numerous food providers, continues to facilitate a collaborative approach to address food insecurity in Montgomery County and produces the Food Assistance Resource Directory. In response to the current COVID-19 public health crisis, the County has also established the Montgomery County Food Security Task Force, adapting an incident command system framework. The Task Force has identified strategies to increase the volume of food in the food assistance system; improve the food delivery system through home delivery and community pick-up sites; and communicate to and connect residents with resources.
6. The Department of Health and Human Services has directed \$500,000 to begin to address the Food Council /Food Security Task Force strategies. This special appropriation provides additional resources for food providers that serve County residents and to further support Phase One and Phase Three of the Food Security Task Force Recommendations through (1) \$400,000 to assist the countywide network of food providers providing direct assistance to residents; (2) \$300,000 to secure ethnic and culturally appropriate food items from ethnic grocery stores to be distributed in key geographic and accessible areas of the County with a high concentration of vulnerable populations in partnership with members of the Food Security Task Force, such as Manna Food Center, providing all logistical support and coordination of effort; and (3) an additional \$50,000 to design a long-term strategy that challenges and taps local food producers.
7. Notice of public hearing was given and a public hearing was held.

**Action**

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

A special appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance NDA in the amount of \$750,000 is approved as follows:

	<u>Personnel Expense</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance NDA	\$0	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000

This appropriation will be administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Four-hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) of this appropriation must be used to support nonprofit organizations with existing FY20 grant or service contracts to provide food assistance resources as described in Phase One of the Montgomery County Food Security Task Force recommendations.

Three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) of this appropriation must be used to secure ethnic and culturally appropriate food items from ethnic grocery stores located in Montgomery County to be distributed in key areas of the County with a high concentration of vulnerable populations in partnership with members of the food assistance network of providers, in conjunction with Phase I distributions.

Fifty-thousand dollars (\$50,000) of this appropriation must be used to increase the contract with the Montgomery County Food Council, Inc. to provide continued planning, coordination and implementation of efforts to address food security. The Executive must provide a written update to the Council by May 7, 2020 on strategies that have been identified to provide ethnically and culturally appropriate food, which of these strategies have been implemented, the amount of funding that has been spent for this purpose during the public health crisis, and the methods of distribution.

The County will seek Federal and State reimbursement for any eligible costs. The County is committed to collaborating with the philanthropic sector to maximize the assistance that can be provided.

This appropriation is needed to address a public health emergency and to act without delay in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

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Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.  
Clerk of the Council