



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To receive testimony/final action - vote expected
Keywords: COVID-19; Community Assistance Fund

AGENDA ITEM #20
April 30, 2020
Public Hearing/Action

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; COVID-19 Human Services Response and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA); Department of Health and Human Services; \$5,000,000; (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves)

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Caroline Sturgis, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- This special appropriation was introduced on April 28, 2020

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The COVID-19 public health crisis has closed non-essential businesses leaving many county residents with no or significantly reduced income and facing extreme financial hardship. The Council previously approved \$5 million to establish a program to provide direct financial assistance to County residents. This week, the program began to distribute funds to low-income households identified through current Health and Human Services programs and is working with non-profit partners on future distribution of funds. The County Executive indicated in his April 20 update that he would request an additional \$5 million for this effort and has transmitted this special appropriation to do so.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Low-income households were rent burdened and financially stressed prior to the COVID-19 public health crisis and now face additional challenges from lost income. Direct financial aid will help individuals and households with children to meet essential needs, including food and hygiene products.

Attached:

CE memo and Special Appropriation Resolution
CE Update on \$6 million appropriation – April 20, 2020

pages 1-3
4-7

Alternative format requests for people with disabilities. If you need assistance accessing this report you may [submit alternative format requests](#) to the ADA Compliance Manager. The ADA Compliance Manager can also be reached at 240-777-6197 (TTY 240-777-6196) or at adacompliance@montgomerycountymd.gov




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
*County
Executive*

MEMORANDUM

April 23, 2020

TO: Sidney Katz, President, County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation #20-463 to the FY20 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Health and Human Services
COVID-19 Response: Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account, \$5,000,000

As I indicated in my April 20th memo to Council reporting on the progress we are making with providing financial assistance to County residents facing hardship as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, I indicated that the need for this assistance is greater than the amount of funds originally proposed for this program. Therefore, I am recommending an additional special appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget of the Department of Health and Human Services in the amount of \$5,000,000 for the COVID-19 Response: Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA).

This increase is needed to provide financial support for County residents currently facing hardships resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. This County assistance is intended to fill gaps not covered by COVID-19 related State and Federal assistance. The unencumbered balance of the COVID-19 Response: Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA) will be re-appropriated through the May 2020 Montgomery County Government operating budget resolution.

I recommend that the County Council approve this special appropriation in the amount of \$5,000,000 and specify the source of funds as General Fund Undesignated Reserves. This special appropriation will reduce General Fund Undesignated Reserves by \$5,000,000.

I appreciate your prompt consideration of this action.

ME:ll

Attachment: Special Appropriation #20-463

cc: Lisa Mandel-Trupp, Chief of Staff to the Council President
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Richard S. Madaleno, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead sponsor: Council President at the request of the County Executive

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation #20-463 to the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
COVID-19 Human Services Response and Community Assistance
Non-Departmental Account (NDA)
\$5,000,000 (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. The Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for somatic and behavioral health services to meet the needs of County residents. The Department has a strong set of safety net services for the County's most vulnerable and at-risk households.
3. A new coronavirus disease, named COVID-19, appeared in China in December 2019 and spread extremely quickly. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the disease a pandemic. The March 20, 2020 situation report from the World Health Organization stated that the number of confirmed cases worldwide has exceeded 200,000. It took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases, and only 12 days to reach the next 100,000. As of April 23, 2020, there were over 800,000 confirmed cases in the United States, including 15,737 confirmed cases in Maryland, of which 3060 were in Montgomery County.
4. To slow the spread of the disease, Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency and has issued several Executive Orders with actions that include, but are not limited to, closing schools, closing senior centers and adult medical day care programs, closing all non-essential businesses and limiting the number of people that can gather.

5. This public health crisis has resulted in the immediate loss of income for many households as businesses have been required to close and people have been told to stay home. This creates a financial crisis for many County residents, and it may not be addressed through financial assistance provided by the federal or State government. A program has been created to provide direct financial assistance to ease this burden and was funded with \$5 million for that purpose on March 31, 2020. This special appropriation increases the budget of that program by \$5 million to address the expected demand on those resources.
6. Public notice of the special appropriation was provided by news release and specified the source of funds as General Fund Reserves.

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, in the amount of \$5,000,000 is approved as follows:

	<u>Personnel Expense</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
COVID-19 Human Services Response and Community Assistance NDA	\$0	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000

This special appropriation must be used for direct financial assistance to County residents facing financial hardship because of the COVID-19 health crisis. Any direct financial assistance program must take into account resources available through federal and State programs. The County is committed to collaborating with the philanthropic sector to maximize the help that can be provided.

The County will seek federal and State reimbursement for program costs associated with response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

April 20, 2020

TO: Sidney Katz, Councilmember and President, County Council
Gabriel Albornoz, Councilmember and Chairman,
Health and Human Services Committee
Evan Glass, Councilmember, Health and Human Services Committee
Craig Rice, Councilmember, Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

RE: COVID-19 \$6M Human Services and Community Assistance Fund Reporting

In accordance to Resolution 19-411: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget Montgomery County Government COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA) \$6,000,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves), I submit this bi-weekly report on the use of these funds and the parameters of any new direct financial assistance program, including eligibility criteria and application process.

\$5 Million for Financial Assistance to Residents

In collaboration with the County Council, the Emergency Financial Assistance to Residents program guidelines have been developed and the process outlined. The program was shared with a taskforce of nonprofit service providers last week. We are finalizing the details of the financial disbursements to ensure the process is equitable and complies with applicable county, state, and federal laws.

The first checks will be distributed to recipients this week. We will also begin working with our nonprofit partners to identify additional eligible individuals and families. For other potential applicants not known to these partners, we have developed an outreach and communications effort to reach deep into the community. To ensure the success of this effort, we have begun and will continue to:

- develop a consistent multilingual message that clearly conveys the launch date, eligibility, process, etc.;

- develop flyers and other materials as needed;
- create a portal on the COVID-19 website which will include FAQs and list of other resources;
- schedule a press announcement or release;
- translate prepared communications in multiple languages,
- schedule a webinar with nonprofits and faith-based organizations;
- arrange interpretation services for live events;
- establish a dedicated line for responding to resident calls; and
- train select DHHS staff and assign them to respond to inquiries about the program.

We will continue to share updates with Council on an ongoing basis. Our goal is to ensure a simple and smooth rollout of the individual application portion so residents understand the program and if eligible can get the needed assistance as quickly as possible.

I want to thank you again for the collaboration on the work for this program. Based on your review of the emergency assistance for residents' program, you and your colleagues developed questions. Below are the responses:

1. How quick is the turnaround for funds? *Some families will get checks this week. For the next set of recipients, we are exploring processes that would generate a check (or a debit/gift card) within 2 to 3 days of an individual being approved.*
2. What is the waiting period for review expected to look like once the application is submitted? *Again, some families will receive checks this week. For the others, our goal is to review applications within 2 days of receipt.*
3. How much of this system will be automated? *The first phase of eligibility and disbursements, which is happening this week, will be mostly automated. We are utilizing existing data sets within DHHS to identify those in extreme need. A combination of analytics and human verification is being applied. Once finalized, the checks distribution process will be mostly automated using addresses that DHHS already has on file for these residents.*
4. Will eligibility screening be done over the phone and online? *Yes.*
5. What supporting documents are being requested (if any)? *Yes, we will request photo identification, proof of residency (bill or lease), verification of family size, etc.*
6. What is the nature of the outreach to make sure that we go beyond those who have been served by the County or nonprofit partners? *We will engage faith-based organizations to help us reach unknown individuals and families. In addition, we have outlined above our extensive outreach strategy.*
7. It is always important to help the homeless population but perhaps they are eligible to tap our homeless programs. Is the goal of this specific pot of money to help stabilize people so they don't lose their apartments/homes or worry about other financial issues? *As you know, we have a large population out of work and without income. Since mid-March, these people have not been able to meet their basic needs, let alone pay for rent. Our target is to help people not eligible for other programs so they don't fall into homelessness. The goal of this fund is to*

provide emergency assistance for basic needs. Individuals will have the flexibility in choosing how to spend the dollars. Separately, we have expanded our programs for the homeless, including providing hotel rooms for homeless individuals needing to be isolated as well as opening additional shelters for the homeless to provide the necessary physical separation.

\$1 Million to Support Safety-Net Programs

The Department of Health and Human Services has reviewed critical programs that have requested additional funds to support increased services as a result of COVID-19. The contracts for homeless service providers have already been adjusted to account for changes to service delivery to promote social distancing and COVID response. The following proposals are being considered for funding.

- The Healthcare Initiative Foundation in collaboration with the Food Council food security taskforce (\$500,000 initially) for food security programs. The Healthcare Initiative Foundation will serve as the distributor of funds to organizations and purposes identified by the taskforce.
- Nonprofit Montgomery (\$28,360) for consulting on emergency funding opportunities and assistance with filing applications.
- Nonprofit Village (\$19,350) for an additional Soar cohort to provide support to incubators; a technology and business continuity program; and support for organizations applying for emergency funding programs at federal, state, and county levels.
- Women Who Care Ministries (\$142,800) to expand the weekend food sacks program in response to the increased demand and Women Who Cares' coverage of food distribution during spring break.

SUMMARY

From a preliminary review of DHHS data for the clients being served, we realize that a significant portion of the population in need will not benefit from the \$5 million financial assistance program. I am directing an additional \$5 million for a second round and will submit a supplemental appropriation for this soon. I am aware of ongoing conversations with the Community Foundation to establish a fund to help County residents, and I am in full support of using County dollars as a match to leverage philanthropic dollars as best as possible.

Rich Madaleno, my budget director, is leading a collaborative conversation with Council for the planned use of COVID-19 federal funds. I will work with you to determine future commitments as there are still many unknowns at this time. I appreciate the collaboration with the committee on these efforts. Together, we will work to help communities, families, businesses, and organizations recover once this crisis ends.

ME/cs

cc: Andrew Kleine, Chief Administrative Officer
Caroline Sturgis, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
BB Otero, Special Assistant to the County Executive, Office of the County Executive
Dale Tibbitts, Special Assistant to the County Executive, Office of the County Executive
Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Richard Madaleno, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Linda McMillian, Senior Legislative Analyst, County Council