



**Committee:** Directly to Council  
**Committee Review:** N/A  
**Staff:** Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst  
**Purpose:** To receive testimony/final action - vote expected  
**Keywords:** #PorNuestraSalud

AGENDA ITEM #18  
July 28, 2020  
**Public Hearing/Action**

## SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA); \$7,545,590; (Source of Funds: \$6,593,042 Federal Grant and \$952,548 General Fund Reserves; Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing); Lead Sponsor: County Council

Proposed amendment to change amount to \$5,596,115 (Source of Funds: \$4,643,567 Federal Grant and \$952,548 General Fund Reserves as contact tracing can be funded through FEMA reimbursement.)

## EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Monica Escalante, Co-Chair, Latino Health Steering Committee  
Andrew Kleine, Chief Administrative Officer  
BB Otero, Special Assistant to the County Executive  
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)  
Sonia Mora, Latino Health Initiative (DHHS)

## COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- This special appropriation was introduced on July 21.
- There was no committee meeting. Motions will be required.
- There are recommended amendments based on the continuing work, in consultation with the Latino Health Steering Committee, to refine the project and funding. They are shown in brackets and underlines on the resolution that is attached at pg. 1-5. In summary they are:
  - Reduce amount by \$1,949,475 (\$5,596,115 total) as contact tracing can be funded through FEMA reimbursement and update language in the action clause regarding FEMA reimbursement (pg. 3-4),
  - Update language for the Community HUBs to reflect more flexibility.
  - Add the Office of Community Partnership's minority liaisons to those that will be engaged in the ongoing response to COVID-19 that will use this framework as a model for reaching other communities. (pg. 5).

## DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Nationally, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted communities of color and this is true for Montgomery County as well. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says, "Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put some members of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness, regardless of age." It further says that as of June 12, 2020, Hispanic or Latino persons have a rate approximately 4 times that of non-Hispanic white persons. In Montgomery County, data from the months of May and June

showed significant disparities for Hispanic/Latino residents. Councilmembers Alborno and Navarro engaged with the Latino Health Initiative and its collaborative non-profit partners and requested a plan of action on how to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in the Latino community. This group of experts has provided the Council with the proposal, **Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing)** that provides a comprehensive approach and framework.

## SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- In Montgomery County, data from the months of May and June showed significant disparities for Hispanic/Latino residents. At the Council’s July 14 session, Dr. Travis Gayles, Montgomery County Health Officer, provided data showing that in the top 10 zip codes with the highest number of COVID-19 cases, the percent of positive tests in May for Whites was 16.1% compared to 67.6% for Hispanics and in June was 2.7% for Whites compared to 28.3% for Hispanics. Dr. Gayles shared that 73% of the new cases in June were Hispanic residents and Hispanic residents account for 37% of all COVID cases.
- The Latino Health Steering Committee has worked to address the health, language, economic, and professional disparities impacting Latinos in Montgomery County.
- There are many underlying social determinants of health underlying the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on the Latino community. They include lack of access to healthcare, the high percent of people working front-facing essential service jobs, crowded housing and chronic health conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity.
- The **Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar** initiative will comprehensively respond to the impacts of COVID-19 through community mobilization and engagement and partnerships with the County on testing and contact tracing to ensure they are responsive to the linguistic, cultural, and work realities of the Latino community and overcome barriers such as a lack of transportation or access to primary care. Comprehensive cases management and clinical follow-up will be provided for those who test positive and case management will serve family members and other who are in distress. The community service HUB model will be expanded to provide an accessible way for people to access food, supplies (such as diapers and cleaning supplies), and be connected to community-based assistance.
- This framework can be used as a model for working collaboratively to reach other communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Certain pieces of the infrastructure created, such as the Community HUBs, can be integrated into the plans to meet the needs of others.

### Attached:

Special Appropriation Resolution with proposed amendments	1-5
Special Appropriation Resolution as introduced July 21, 2020	6-9
Staff report from July 21, 2020	10-13
Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar proposal from Latino Health Steering Committee and non-profit Partners organizations	14-18

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Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: July 21, 2020  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsor: County Council

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**SUBJECT:** Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget  
Montgomery County Government  
COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental  
Account (NDA); [\$7,545,590; (Source of Funds: \$6,593,042 Federal Grant and  
\$952,548 General Fund Reserves)]  
\$5,596,115 (Source of Funds: \$4,643,567 Federal Grant and \$952,548 General  
Fund Reserves  
Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing)

**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. 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. By July 18, 2020 there were more than 3.7 million confirmed cases and over 140,000 confirmed deaths in the United States. On July 18, the State of Maryland reported 77,206 confirmed cases and 3,238 confirmed deaths statewide. In Montgomery County there were 16,251 confirmed cases and 730 confirmed deaths.
3. Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that as of June 12, 2020, Hispanic or Latino persons have a rate of hospitalization or death that is more than four times that of a non-Hispanic Person. Disparities are present in Montgomery County. At the County Council's July 14 session, the County Health Officer provided data showing that in the top 10 zip codes with the highest number of cases, the percent of positive tests in May for Whites was 16.1% compared to 67.6% for Hispanics and in June was 2.7% for Whites compared to

28.3% for Hispanics. In June, 73% of new cases were Hispanic residents and Hispanic residents accounted for 37% of all confirmed cases.

4. Social determinants of health including lack of access to healthcare, the high percent of people working in front-facing essential service jobs, crowded housing, and chronic health conditions underly these disparities. Addressing these disparities requires a comprehensive approach to outreach, testing, contact tracing, clinical follow-up, and case management with wrap-around services and supports.
5. Since its founding in 2000, the Latino Health Initiative has worked to address the health, language, economic and professional disparities impacting Latinos in Montgomery County. Its mission is to contribute to the development and implementation of an integrated, coordinated, and culturally and linguistically competent health and wellness system that supports, values, and respects Latino families and communities. Programs and services are provided in collaboration with the County’s community-based health and social services non-profit organizations. These partnerships build relationships with communities and can reach people in ways that government cannot, especially in times when the Federal government has made many people fearful of seeking any government help. Engaging with these partners is critical to addressing the impacts of COVID-19.
6. Since the first weeks of the pandemic, Councilmembers Alborno and Navarro have urged the County to have a comprehensive and culturally appropriate response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the Latino community. They engaged with the Latino Health [Initiative], Steering Committee requesting their input. The Latino Health [Initiative] Steering Committee and partner organizations propose the Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing) Initiative. The Initiative addresses outreach, education, testing, tracing, clinical follow-up, case management, coordination of mental health services, and access to food and other assistance through a system of Community HUBs. The Latino Health Steering Committee [Initiative] will monitor and evaluate output and outcome data.
7. Public notice of this special appropriation was provided and a public hearing was held.

**Action**

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

A special appropriation to the FY21 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, in the amount of \$5,596,115 [7,545,590] is approved as follows:

	<u>Personnel Expense</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance NDA	\$0	[\$6,593,042 \$4,643,567	\$6,593,042] \$4,643,567	Federal Grant

COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance NDA	\$0	\$ 952,548	\$ 952,548	General Fund Reserves
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These funds must be used by the Executive to implement the **Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing) Initiative**. The Executive must provide staff support for the overall administration and coordination of the Initiative and must implement it in collaboration with the Latino Health [Initiative] Steering Committee and its community-based partner organizations.

Up to \$662,808 must be used for the overall administration and coordination of the program. The funds provide full-year funding for a program manager and three team coordinators and associated operating expenses. In addition, [associated operating expenses and] information technology (IT) support for [all] program components is included.

Up to \$125,504 must be used to fund data management including a data management coordinator and a report writer. This focus area will manage the systems and data needed to monitor the ongoing service delivery and the data needed for evaluation of the outcomes for the Latino community.

Up to \$250,000 must be used for Communications promotional materials that are culturally appropriate and targeted to reach specific communities throughout the County. Campaign materials and the use of multiple forms of media and advertising are funded.

Up to \$447,951 must be used for Outreach and Engagement that will staff a Spanish speaking health navigation phone line as well as a cadre of health promoters. A volunteer manager will work to mobilize volunteers to reach into the Latino community.

Up to \$397,881 must be used for clinical follow-up. A team including a clinician, Registered Nurse, emergency medical technician, care coordinator, patients support specialist, and receptionist will follow-up on all positive case cases to assist with care coordination, connection to medical and other support services, and patient education.

[Up to \$1,949,475 must be used for contact tracing to increase the number of residents testing positive who engage in contact tracing and increase the ability to engage those they have been in contact with to prevent further spread of the disease. These tracers will be linguistically competent and have support from trusted community partners. This will encourage people who are fearful of government to answer the request for information and receive education on follow-up. This appropriation must not fund any cost for contact tracing that is reimbursable through FEMA.]

The Department of Health and Human Services will support the Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar initiative through a collaborative effort that will ensure there is a cadre of linguistically and culturally competent contact tracers who are affiliated with trusted community partners. This will increase the ability to engage people who have tested positive and who may be fearful of government and will increase the probability that these residents

will respond to requests for information. Effective contract tracing will help reduce the spread of the disease. The Executive branch should pursue FEMA reimbursement for all costs related to the implementation of this component of the program, to the extent that those costs are eligible for reimbursement.

Up to \$2,319,613 must be used for a robust case management program for residents who test positive and also for their family members and residents who test negative but are distressed by the overall COVID-19 health and economic emergency. Case managers and supervisors will be deployed with lower case ratios to serve those in high distress. Operating expenses for the case managers and supervisors are funded. Included is \$800,000 in emergency assistance.

Up to \$31,625 must be used to fund the coordination of mental health services by connecting residents with appropriate community-based and County-funded services.

[Up to \$1,360,733 must be used to increase the system of Community HUBs by four. This appropriation funds a director, four coordinators, and eight HUB assistants for a full year. This special appropriation funds other operating for a period of five months. It is expected that the County will provide needed vehicles and that food and supplies for distribution will be provided through a combination of this appropriation and resources that are donated and funded through the work of the Food Security Task Force and partnership with the Community Foundation. The sites will be located in key geographic and accessible areas of the County with a high concentration of vulnerable populations.]

Up to \$1,360,733 will be used to sustain and increase the number of Community HUBs to provide easily accessible centers for the distribution of food, diapers, cleaning supplies and other essentials, as well as connections to community-based support services. A portion of the funds will be used to hire staff that may include a director, coordinators, and assistants and who may be hired for a full year. Funds may support costs associated rent, refrigeration, food, and other operating expenses for five months. The County will offer access to its fleet of vehicles to support the program. The HUB model mobilizes volunteers. Food and supplies for distribution will be provided through a combination of this funding and donations. The HUBs created through this appropriation will serve as infrastructure for the delivery of assistance to all residents in areas and zip codes that have been impacted by COVID-19. This appropriation is not expected to provide all the funding that is needed to establish a system of HUBs. The Executive branch should pursue FEMA reimbursement for all costs related to the implementation of this component of the program, to the extent that those costs are eligible for reimbursement.

The Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar's COVID-19 testing component will be implemented in collaboration with the overall testing program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. [It is expected that this component will be funded through FEMA reimbursement.] It is critical that testing protocols are culturally and linguistically appropriate and that the sites and times of testing are responsive to the realities of the work hours of Latino residents. Sites must address barriers to transportation and strategies using a mobile van should be employed. The Executive branch should pursue FEMA reimbursement for all costs related to the implementation of this component of the program, to the extent that those costs are eligible for reimbursement.

The Executive will provide a written progress report on the implementation of Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar every two weeks beginning August 14, 2020 until January 1, 2021.

This comprehensive framework serves as a model for working collaboratively to reach and address the needs of other communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The Executive branch, with a lead from the Department of Health and Human Services should engage with the African American Health Program, Asian American Health Initiative, the County minority liaisons through the County's Office of Community Partnerships, and community partners serving other groups with social determinants that increase the likelihood that they are negatively impacted by COVID-19. Certain service infrastructure, such as the creation of additional Community HUBs can be integrated into plans to address the needs of others.

The County will seek reimbursement from the Federal Government for all eligible costs associated with this initiative.

This appropriation is needed to act in response to a public health or safety 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

Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: July 21, 2020  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsor: County Council

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The Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar's COVID-19 testing component will be implemented in collaboration with the overall testing program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. It is expected that this component will be funded through FEMA reimbursement. It is critical that testing protocols are culturally and linguistically appropriate and that the sites and times of testing are responsive to the realities of the work hours of Latino residents. Sites must address barriers to transportation and strategies using a mobile van should be employed.

The Executive will provide a written progress report on the implementation of Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar every two weeks beginning August 14, 2020 until January 1, 2021.

This comprehensive framework serves as a model for working collaboratively to reach and address the needs of other communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The Executive branch, with a lead from the Department of Health and Human Services should engage with the African American Health Program, Asian American Health Initiative and community partners serving other groups with social determinants that increase the likelihood that they are negatively impacted by COVID-19. Certain service infrastructure, such as the creation of additional Community HUBs can be integrated into plans to address the needs of others.

The County will seek reimbursement from the Federal Government for all eligible costs associated with this initiative.

This appropriation is needed to act in response to a public health or safety 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

**MEMORANDUM**

July 20, 2020

TO: County Council

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Introduction: Special Appropriation to the FY 2021 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA); \$7,545,590; (Source of Funds: \$6,593,042 Federal Grant and \$952,548 General Fund Reserves)  
**Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing)**  
Lead Sponsor: County Council

**Background**

As of July 18, 2020, in the United States there were over 3.7 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, and over 140,000 confirmed deaths. On July 18, Maryland reported 77,206 confirmed cases and 3,238 confirmed deaths statewide, with 16,251 confirmed cases and 730 confirmed deaths in Montgomery County. Communities of color have known for many months that the impacts of COVID-19 have disproportionately impacted them. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says, “**Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put some members of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness, regardless of age.** Among some racial and ethnic minority groups, including non-Hispanic black persons, Hispanics and Latinos, and American Indians/Alaska Natives, evidence points to higher rates of hospitalization or death from COVID-19 than among non-Hispanic white persons.” It further says that as of June 12, 2020, Hispanic or Latino persons have a rate approximately **4 times** that of non-Hispanic white persons.<sup>1</sup>

In Montgomery County, data from the months of May and June showed significant disparities for Hispanic/Latino residents. At the Council’s July 14 session, Dr. Travis Gayles, Montgomery County Health Officer, provided data showing that in the top 10 zip codes with the highest number of COVID-19 cases, the percent of positive tests in May for Whites was 16.1% compared to 67.6% for Hispanics and in June was 2.7% for Whites compared to 28.3% for Hispanics. Dr. Gayles shared that 73% of the new cases in June were Hispanic residents and Hispanic residents account for 37% of all COVID cases.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Gayles noted that racial and ethnic information is missing for about 30% of tests

There are many social determinants of health behind these disparities that include the high percentage of people with front-facing essential service jobs, lack of access to health care, higher rates of underlying health conditions including diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and obesity, and housing conditions. The July 5, 2020 New York Times article, “The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequality of Coronavirus” included data on Fairfax County, Virginia. In Fairfax County, the review of 10,029 cases showed there were 269 cases per 10,000 population for Hispanics compared to 23 per 10,000 population for Whites. The article specifically notes the issue housing plays, noting Latino people are twice as likely to live in a crowded dwelling – less than 500 square feet per person – according to the American Housing Survey.<sup>3</sup>

The CDC says that in public health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these social determinants can also isolate people from the resources they need to prepare for and respond to outbreaks. It notes that community organizations can: (1) prioritize resources for clinics, private practices, and other organizations that serve minority populations; (2) work across sectors to connect people with services, such as grocery delivery or temporary housing, that help them practice social distancing; (3) connect people to healthcare providers and resources to help them get medicines; (4) promote precautions, including the use of cloth face coverings and assisting people who live in small areas or crowded conditions; and, (5) work with employers to modify policies to ensure that ill workers are not in the workplace and are not penalized for taking sick leave. It also says that these community organizations can help stop the spread of rumors and misinformation by providing information from trusted and credible sources.

In addition to the disparate impacts on physical health, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) notes that the behavioral health treatment gaps for Black and Latino people are spotlighted by the pandemic. Blacks and Latinos have lower access to mental health and substance use treatment, they often terminate treatment pre-maturely, and experience less culturally responsive care. Blacks and Latinos with mental health or substance use disorders are more likely to be homeless or incarcerated, putting them at higher risk for COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>

### **Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar**

For many weeks, Councilmembers Albornoz and Navarro have been voicing strong and urgent concern about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 for communities of color. They have emphasized the need for comprehensive action that includes testing, contact tracing, and case management/wrap-around services focused on the most highly impacted zip codes that are home to much of the County’s Latino population. The Councilmembers have been consulting with the Latino Health Steering Committee and its non-profit partner organizations who have presented a plan for action, **Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar** (For Our Health and Wellbeing). Organizations partnering with the Latino Health Initiative include CASA de Maryland, Mary’s Center for Maternal and Child Care, Care for Your Health, Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic, Identity, Proyecto Salud, and the Germantown HUB. The proposal notes that these partner

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latinos-african-americans-cdc-data.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/covid19-behavioral-health-disparities-black-latino-communities.pdf>

organizations have been working together for over 20 years to effectively respond to the needs of Montgomery County’s Latino community in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. The proposal is attached. It states the following goals and objectives:

**Overarching Goal:**

Reduce the impact of COVID-19 among Latinos in Montgomery County, Maryland.

**Objectives:**

1. Increase the dissemination of culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, and timely information on COVID-19 to mobilize the Latino community around prevention, testing and treatment, and coordinating services.
2. Increase the number of COVID-19 test performed on Latino residents.
3. Conduct case management and navigation to services to address social determinants of health and engage individuals into primary care.
4. Perform effective contact tracing for people with a positive COVID-19 test and assist with a place to quarantine when needed.
5. Provide support and services for people with a negative COVID-19 test.

**Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar has identified several focus areas that will be addressed through the initiative.**

**Community Mobilization** – The proposal calls for the establishment of a dedicated Spanish-language information and testing line. A wide range of methods will be used to increase awareness about testing and the project services.

**Community Outreach and Engagement** – Educational forums (virtual and face-to-face) will be led by health promoters and community health workers. A Spanish-speaking health navigation line is included as a part of this effort.

**Testing in partnership with the County** – Testing protocol must assure ease of implementation and quick results. The proposal emphasizes the need to be flexible in both hours and locations to “respond to the work realities of many Latinos.” It suggests locations including churches, Latino grocery stores, shopping malls, parks, community centers and other venues known to and frequented by the Latino community.

**Contact Tracing** – The County’s contact tracing program must have a cadre of Spanish speaking contact tracers. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will coordinate training to make sure that tracers are sensitive to cultural, linguistic and other social factors that must be respected as a part of the process.

**Case Management and Clinical follow-up** – Case managers and navigators will help people with a positive test in the steps they need to take including clinical services and isolation either at home or through the County isolation hotels or other resources. A community mental health coordinator will assist with connecting people to services.

**Support to address Social Determinants of Health** - The proposal will build on the Germantown HUB model to provide an accessible way for people to access food and other supplies. Partner organizations will also assist by connecting people to medical homes and enrollment in State and county support programs.

**Data Collection and Benchmarks/Evaluation indicators** – Data will be collected and managed by the Latino Health Steering Committee both to use in the response to the needs of residents as well as to monitor and evaluate outputs and outcomes. Some of the items that will be tracked include testing in high impact zip codes and other areas, number of contacts traced, reach of outreach efforts, referrals to other services, and increase in acceptance of County isolation services.

### **Appropriation Recommendation and Funding Sources**

The **Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar** planning group has developed staffing plans and expected costs for the focus areas. This special appropriation is based on these currently estimated costs. However, as implementation moves forward some staffing and costs may be adjusted. It is expected that the new staffing and other program elements will be implemented through contractual agreements with non-profit partners rather than with new County Government staff. Some aspects of the initiative, most prominently testing, will be accomplished in coordination with the overall testing program administered through the Department of Health and Human Services. Costs associated with testing and other components that are expected to be eligible for funding through FEMA reimbursement do not require an appropriation through this special appropriation. This may also be appropriate for the contact tracing component and so the source of funding may be amended prior to Council action. As CARES Act funding will be the source of funds for much of the initiative, this special appropriation funds five (5) months of program costs except for certain administrative staff. As of now, CARES Act funding that has been allocated to the County must be spent by December 31, 2020. For those positions that are funded beyond five months, General Fund Reserves are used.

Link to Montgomery County COVID-19 Testing & Human Services Plan:  
<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing/testing-plan.html>

## *Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar* - Culturally Competent and Linguistically Appropriate COVID-19 Information, Services, and Care for Latino Residents of Montgomery County, Maryland

### **Background**

COVID-19 has amplified inequities many Latinos face in Montgomery County, including having essential jobs without paid sick leave that expose them to others, higher poverty rates, more likely to use public transportation, tight living conditions, lack of health insurance, mistrust of the medical system and a greater incidence of preexisting health conditions like diabetes. Many Latinos don't have the luxury of sheltering at home and lack access to adequate and culturally competent health information, services, and resources that could help them prevent or mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

In the county's top 10 zip codes with the highest number of COVID-19 cases, the percent of positive tests in May for Non-Latino Whites was 16.1% compared to 67.6% for Latinos. In June the disproportionate inequity continued with Non-Latino Whites representing 2.7% of the positive tests compared to 28.3% for Latinos.

In addition, 73% of new COVID-19 cases in June in the county were Latinos, and Latinos account for 37% of all COVID-19 cases. Half of pregnant Latinas seen at Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care were found to be positive for COVID-19, and 80% of calls about emergency housing assistance are in Spanish.

To respond to this troubling and urgent situation, a group of the county's preeminent Latino-serving community-based organizations (CBOs), in partnership with the Latino Health Initiative (LHI), Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, are proposing a comprehensive and integrated project – *Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar* (For Our Health and Wellbeing in English) – to prevent and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the Latino community.

### **Goal & Objectives**

Under *Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar*, a series of integrated strategies and activities will be carried out to achieve the following goal and objectives.

#### Overarching Goal

Reduce the impact of COVID-19 among Latinos in Montgomery County, Maryland

#### Objectives

1. Increase the dissemination of culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, and timely information on COVID-19 to mobilize the Latino community around prevention, testing, treatment, and coordinating services.
2. Increase the number of COVID-19 tests performed on Latino residents.



3. Conduct case management and navigation to services to address social determinants of health and engage individuals into primary care.
4. Perform effective contact tracing for people with a positive COVID-19 test and assist with a place to quarantine when needed.
5. Provide support and services for people with a negative COVID-19 test.

## **Management & Partners**

An efficient and effective management approach is crucial to the success of the project. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will employ an interactive participatory approach where all the partners will have an active voice and a “seat-at-the-table” in planning project strategies, implementation, and evaluation. Overall management and direction of the project will be the responsibility of the LHI with each partner CBO providing administrative and technical input and support within their respective areas of expertise and work. Three teams will be charged with leading the planning, coordinating, and review of work under each of the project’s component areas – Testing, Contact Tracing and Social Determinants of Health; Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting; and Communications, Education, and Outreach. A fourth ad hoc team will be charged with planning and coordinating administrative tasks such as developing job descriptions, policies and procedures, identifying and selecting outside consultants and vendors. Each team will include a project staff person coordinating the group/task, representative(s) from one or more CBO partner, and a representative /liaison from the County.

Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar partners include:

- \* Montgomery County, Latino Health Initiative (LHI) (Project Lead)
- \* CASA de Maryland
- \* Mary’s Center for Maternal and Child Care
- \* Care for Your Health
- \* Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic
- \* Identity
- \* Proyecto Salud
- \* Germantown Hub

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Latino community’s realities, need, and challenges requires the participation and lead by organizations that have a proven history of working in the community and are known and trusted to community members. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will employ an integrated “one-stop-shop”, wrap-around services approach. For over 20 years, the Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar partner organizations have been working together to effectively respond to the needs of Montgomery County’s Latino community in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. This broad array of technical and programmatic areas include cross generational clinical services and support; social services; employment placement; workforce development and training; health education; citizenship and legal services; and financial, language, and literacy training; among many other areas. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar project CBO partners will leverage their existing services and in some instances, will provide in-kind support beyond the tasks and activities relating to the specific objectives of the project.

One important example will be leveraging the unique experience, approach, and capabilities of the Germantown HUB – a private public partnership for the efficient and safe distribution of food and essentials to underserved populations throughout Montgomery County which have suffered a disproportionate impact of COVID-19. The program currently provides food, diapers (adult and infant), COVID-19 kits, hygiene kits (for men or women) and age appropriate activity kits and sports kits for approximately 700 families per week.

Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will also invite the collaboration of other community-based organizations to participate and provide input and support in specific areas/efforts. In addition, the project plans to contract the services of vendors and/or consultants to provide support in specific areas such as the development and implementation of a comprehensive media strategy and campaign.

Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will work closely with the County to identify ways to potentially address other system issues that directly impact on COVID-19 risks. For example, addressing airborne transmission by providing sufficient and effective ventilation (supply clean outdoor air, minimize recirculating air) particularly in public buildings, workplace environments, schools, hospitals, and aged care homes; and measures on how to avoid overcrowding, particularly in public transport and public buildings.

### **Service Areas**

Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will employ a comprehensive community mobilization/communications campaign that will reach the Spanish-speaking community of the county at large.

Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will prioritize implementation of project outreach, testing, contact tracing/case management, and other related social service support by geographic areas that have been identified as high-risk due to the known incidence of COVID-19 and/or because of existing high-risk health, social, economic, and environmental factors prevalent in those areas. Emphasis will be placed on reaching individuals in the community that are known to be at especially high risk such as pregnant women, service industry and construction workers. The initial service areas/zip codes will include: Silver Spring (20906, 20902, 20904, 20903, 20901); Gaithersburg (20877, 20879); Germantown (20874); Montgomery Village (20886); and Rockville (20852). Additional areas may be added at a future date according to new data.

### **Tasks/Activities by Areas of Focus**

- Community Mobilization – will include the establishment, management and staffing of a dedicated Spanish-language COVID-19 information and testing hotline; a tailored Spanish-language communications campaign including the use of broadcast, electronic and social media to increase awareness of and education on COVID-19 and promote outreach, testing, and other project services;
- Community Outreach/Engagement which will include educational forums (virtual and face-to-face) lead by promotoras de salud/Community Health Workers (CHW) and Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar Project and CBO partner staff.

- The Germantown HUB will be utilized as a model that can be replicated/ adapted in other geographic areas. HUB Directors will offer direct guidance and support to County staff as well as community partners establishing other HUBs, and will connect new HUBs with existing suppliers of food, diapers and other essentials.

Clinical, technical, navigator, CHW, and other required staff will be deployed to carry out the following tasks/activities:

- COVID-19 testing – The Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will partner with the County to plan and conduct testing in priority geographic areas. The County will provide tests through its vendor. The testing protocol must assure ease of implementation/use, strong sensitivity and specificity, and quick turn-around of results. The project will utilize a variety of methods to perform tests including drive-through testing, a mobile unit that can be parked at appropriate locations such as churches, Latino grocery stores, shopping malls, and other venues known and frequented by the Latino community such as community centers and parks. Hours of service will be flexible and respond to the work realities of many Latinos. It is projected that 43,200 tests will be performed in the initial project period of six months.
- Contact Tracing – Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar will coordinate the training of cadres of individuals to perform contact tracing assuring that these individuals are Spanish-speakers and sensitive to cultural, linguistic and other social factors that must be respected and considered as part of the contact and tracing process.
- Case management of positives and support for negatives – People with negative results will be advised on the prevention steps that they should continue to follow and be directed by community navigators to other social services as needed and appropriate. People with a positive test result will be counseled on what steps they must take including referral to clinical services and care and home isolation, as appropriate. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar staff and navigators will assist people with positive test results in obtaining additional services they may require including access to the County’s isolation hotels and other social services needed/required.
- Other Social Determinants of Health (SDH) support- As part of its outreach and intervention, the project will coordinate and provide additional services to lessen the impact of COVID-19, either directly or through referrals to County and/or other non-profit and private/corporate organizations and agencies providing this help. This will include identified priority needs such as food and household/family supplies, housing, access to a medical home, enrollment in county, state programs. To help inform and drive this process, the project will employ a comprehensive and broad information gathering process that will aid in determining the needs and service gaps. For example, information could be gathered to help determine and track immunization practices connect pregnant women into care, and address other somatic, behavioral and dental health care needs.

### **Benchmarks/Evaluation Indicators**

The Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar Data Work group will take the lead in determining what outcome, process and output measures should be tracked and in designing monitoring and evaluation processes.

A clear outcome for the project is a reduction in COVID-19 in the Latino community (infection/mortality).

Examples of outputs include:

- Increased testing in high risk zip codes/areas
- Number of contacts traced
- Service satisfaction measures
- Reach of mobilization and outreach efforts/campaign
- Referral to other social determinants of health services completed
- Increased number of community members accepting the County’s isolation services (hotel)

### Timeline

Baseline Activities													
Establish Fiscal Agent													
Fiscal Disbursement of frontline funds	X												
Establish Management structure													
Community Mobilization													
Communication/Education Campaign													
Enhanced testing in Risk Areas													
Contact tracing													
Case management of positives and support of negatives													
Data collection													
Data Reporting		X		X		X		X		X		X	