



**Committee:** HHS

**Committee Review:** At a future date

**Staff:** Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst

**Purpose:** To receive testimony – no vote expected

**Keywords:** Casa Ruben, Pediatric Mobile Medical

AGENDA ITEM #7

March 29, 2022

**Public Hearing**

## SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; Department of Health and Human Services; Pediatric Mobile Medical Vehicle; \$450,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves); and Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget Resolution 19-872, Section G, Fiscal Year 2022 Designation of Entities for non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Casa Ruben, Inc. Lead Sponsors: Council President Alborno and Councilmember Friedson; Cosponsors: Councilmember Katz and Councilmember Navarro

## EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

## COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Public hearing only.
- This special appropriation was introduced on March 22, 2022. A Health and Human Services Committee worksession is scheduled for March 31, 2022.

## DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

With approval of this funding, Casa Ruben, Inc., the Robert I. Schattner Foundation and Montgomery County would create a public-private initiative to use a mobile medical clinic to connect uninsured, under-insured, and under-resourced children and youth (ages 0-21 years) to healthcare and increase the number of children and youth who receive vaccinations needed for overall health and to enroll in school. The County will fund the purchase of the mobile medical clinic and the Schattner Foundation will provide matching funds of up to \$450,000 directly to Casa Ruben, Inc. to fund the staff and operating expenses. Casa Ruben Inc. and the Department of Health and Human Services will collaborate on target areas and connecting children and families to health care homes.

## SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Casa Ruben is a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive primary care, vaccinations, referrals to behavioral health care, and HIV and GBLTQ care predominately to low-income people, immigrants, and families of color. Casa Ruben provides these services with language and cultural competence. During the pandemic, Casa Ruben found that there were delays in children receiving their needed vaccinations and that this was a particular issue for newcomer children and children in certain under-resourced zip codes. These delays impacted children's ability to enroll in school. Casa Ruben has provided more than 7,000 immunizations to Montgomery County children during the pandemic.

- Mobile medical care has been shown to be cost effective and an effective way to reach underserved and disenfranchised communities that do not access mainstream healthcare.
- This initiative has three main objectives: (1) To improve vaccination rates among children and youth 0-21 years of age; (2) To provide developmentally appropriate primary care evaluations for children and youth who have missed their routine health care examinations; and (3) To address social determinants of health and linkages to care to youths 0-21 years of age.
- The Schattner Foundation invests in a range of health, human services, and education programs, with a goal to “make grants where they will do the most good...” The Foundation has generously agreed to match the County’s funding level. These funds will be provided directly to Casa Ruben to fund staff and operating expenses.
- The County has invested in efforts to address health disparities, eliminating barriers to accessing healthcare, and in reaching residents in their communities in innovative ways. Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar and the African American Health Program/Black Physician Healthcare Network have leveraged partnerships with community-based organizations to reach residents who may not have otherwise accessed COVID vaccination and testing resources.
- Data being collected on COVID vaccinations continues to highlight certain zip codes and census tracts in the County where additional effort is needed to bring vaccination rates to levels equivalent to other areas of the county.
- The Racial Equity Impact Assessment transmitted on January 26, 2022, by the County’s Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice for the Immunization and Vaccines for Children Grant noted that since the collection of data on COVID vaccinations for children ages 5-11 began, consistently smaller shares of Black and Latino children - compared to their representation in the population – have received their first dose of the COVID vaccine...An equitable distribution would guarantee that all children are fully vaccinated and gain protection against COVID-19...

**Attached:**

Appropriation Resolution

© 1-3

Racial Equity and Social Justice: prepared by Council staff

© 4-6

Vaccination excerpt from March 23, 2022 Pulse Report

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

COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Lead Sponsors: Council President Alborno and Councilmember Friedson  
Cosponsors: Councilmember Katz and Councilmember Navarro

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SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; Department of Health and Human Services; Pediatric Mobile Medical Vehicle; \$450,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves) Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget Resolution 19-872, Section G, Fiscal Year 2022 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Casa Ruben, Inc.

**Background**

1. Section 308 of the Montgomery County Charter provides that a special appropriation: (a) may be made at any time after public notice by news release; (b) must state that the special appropriation is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency or to act without delay in the public interest; (c) must specify the revenues necessary to finance it; and (d) must be approved by no fewer than six members of the Council.
2. Montgomery County is constantly in search of ways to connect all its residents with quality medical care. While many residents are connected to community clinics and health care providers, many residents, including children and young adults, remain uninsured or under-insured and disconnected from mainstream healthcare. This is particularly true for newly arriving migrant and asylum-seeking children. These children may lack any or parts of medical records and are in need of physicals and vaccinations in order to enroll in school. The COVID pandemic has disproportionately impacted under-resourced and underserved children and families. Data shows that many have fallen behind with recommended scheduled vaccines. Data from COVID response also shows that there are geographic communities in the County that continue to have barriers to care.
3. Mobile health clinics provide an effective way to connect people to healthcare who are disconnected due to lack of insurance, issues of trust, language, cultural competence, immigration status, lack of transportation, lack of nearby appropriate medical facilities or facilities that operate during non-traditional hours. Studies have shown that mobile health clinics are cost effective and can address both medical and social determinants of health, improving outcomes for underserved groups.

4. Casa Ruben, Inc., through its Silver Spring clinic, provides a range of health care to under-resourced and underserved Montgomery County children and families, many of whom identify as individuals of color, immigrants and/or low-income who are not eligible for, or cannot afford, health insurance. Casa Ruben, Inc. and the Robert I Schattner Foundation will enter into a public private partnership with Montgomery County to purchase, equip and operate a mobile clinic to: (1) improve vaccination rates among children and youths aged 0-21 years of age; (2) provide developmentally appropriate primary care evaluations for children and youth who have missed their routine health examinations; and (3) address social determinants of health and linkages to care for children and youth age 0-21 years of age. While under-resourced zip codes will be the target areas, no one will be denied access.
5. The Robert I. Schattner Foundation will provide up to \$450,000 to fund the Casa Ruben clinic's staff and operating expenses to match the County's investment. This appropriation will fund the purchase of the mobile medical van and equipment for Casa Ruben, Inc. The Schattner Foundation says its overriding goal is simple and straight forward – "to make grants where they will do the most good and where our gifts will make a real difference." The Foundation supports a wide range of health, human service, and education efforts.
6. Notice of public hearing was given, and a public hearing was held.

### **Action**

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

1. A special appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget of the Department of Health and Human Services is approved as follows:

<u>Personnel Services</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Capital Outlay</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$450,000	\$0	\$450,000	General Fund Reserves
2. The County Council declares that this action is necessary to act in response to a public health or safety emergency and to act without delay in the public interest.
3. The Council approves an amendment to Resolution 19-872, Section G, FY22 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award. The Chief Administrative Officer has recommended this action and stated that this action serves a public purpose

and is in the public interest. The FY22 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status resolution is amended to authorize a new contract with Casa Ruben, Inc. in the amount of \$450,000 with a purpose of, “Provides funds for the purchase of a mobile medical vehicle, vehicle wrap, and mobile clinic equipment.”

This is a correct copy of Council action.

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Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.  
Clerk of the Council

## **Council Sponsored Special Appropriation: Racial Equity and Social Justice**

**SUBJECT:** Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; Department of Health and Human Services; Pediatric Mobile Medical Vehicle; \$450,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves); and

Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget Resolution 19-872, Section G, Fiscal Year 2022 Designation of Entities for non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Casa Ruben, Inc.

Council Introduced: March 22, 2022

Public Hearing: March 29, 2022

Health and Human Services Committee: March 31, 2022

### **DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND:**

The COVID pandemic has highlighted the importance of finding effective ways to serve uninsured, under-insured, and under resourced county residents who have barriers to accessing the traditional healthcare system. The County has invested in providing additional linguistically and culturally competitive healthcare outreach, education, and COVID testing and vaccination clinics. During the pandemic, Casa Ruben, a non-profit healthcare organization that provides comprehensive healthcare and referrals predominately to low-income people of color, found that low-income children were not keeping up with regular vaccinations and examinations. These vaccinations are required for children to attend school. Casa Ruben reports that they provided more than 7,000 immunizations to Montgomery County children during the pandemic.

Casa Ruben<sup>1</sup> has proposed a partnership to provide healthcare services through a pediatric mobile clinic. The proposal calls for Montgomery County to fund the cost of the vehicle and equipment and the Robert I Schattner Foundation<sup>2</sup> will providing a matching amount of funding to Casa Ruben for operations. The Schattner Foundation has indicated that it is also open to multi-year funding upon Casa Ruben meeting certain benchmarks. Casa Ruben will collaborate with the Department of Health and Human Services on services to targeted communities and coordination with other efforts, including connecting people to primary healthcare homes. This initiative has three main objectives: (1) To improve vaccination rates among children and youth 0-21 years of age; (2) To provide developmentally appropriate primary care evaluations for children and youth who have missed their routine health care examinations; and (3) To address

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<sup>1</sup> Casa Ruben, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that since 2003 has provided comprehensive primary care services, vaccinations, referrals to behavioral and sub-specialty health care, HIV, and GBLTQ care, and access to affordable medications. Up to now, it has provided services at no cost to low-income families of color. Casa Ruben serves predominately immigrant and low-income individuals who are not eligible or cannot afford health care insurance. Dr. Ligia Peralta, Casa Ruben founder, is an expert on innovation in health care for extremely under-resourced communities in Maryland and worldwide and has designed an innovative model in partnership with community-based agencies and churches to enhance the access to care and reduce cost.

<sup>2</sup> <https://robertischattnerfoundation.org/>

social determinants of health and linkages to care to youths 0-21 years of age. Casa Ruben expects that there will be about 1,000 patient encounters a year and that 70% of the children and youth served will be Hispanic and Latino, 25% Black and African American, and that they will serve special populations including LGBTQIA and people with disabilities.

#### **DATA and RESEARCH:**

In their proposal, Casa Ruben reports that data from the Maryland State Immunet system on uninsured residents shows that approximately 70% of uninsured/recently arrived youth aged 0-21 years old missed their recommended scheduled vaccines during the pandemic. Casa Ruben further reports that the State of Maryland reported a drop of 46% in vaccinations during the pandemic and leaders encouraged the pediatricians to re-engage families in care and use mobile units to bridge the gaps. <sup>3</sup>

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice provided a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) on January 26, 2022 for the \$5.4 million State grant, Immunizations and Vaccines for Children Grant, which was approved by the Council on March 1, 2022.<sup>4</sup> The REIA said with regards to COVID vaccinations:

“An equitable distribution would guarantee that all children are fully vaccinated and gain protection against Covid-19. Protection is critical for all children, but like racial and ethnic disparities affecting adults in the US, children of color are experiencing disproportionate rates of Covid-19 cases and death, in addition to the mental health and academic impacts of the pandemic...”

It further said:

“Even prior to the availability of vaccines for children ages 5-11, KFF [Kaiser Family Foundation] warned about potential disparities in vaccine distribution affecting children of color. Stating that. “Hispanic and Black parents are more likely than White parents to report potential access barriers to vaccination. Reported barriers include:

- Not being able to get the vaccine from a trusted place
- Believing they may have to pay an out-of-pocket cost
- Having difficulty traveling to a vaccination site
- Needing to take time off work to get their child vaccinated”

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<sup>3</sup> [https://urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103090/urgent-action-needed-to-meet-childrens-unmet-health-care-needs\\_0.pdf](https://urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103090/urgent-action-needed-to-meet-childrens-unmet-health-care-needs_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2022/20220301/20220301\\_8.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2022/20220301/20220301_8.pdf)

The March 23, 2022, Pulse Report<sup>5</sup> indicates that while 26% of County children age 5-11 years old are Hispanic, 21% have received a first dose of COVID vaccine. While 20% of County children aged 5-11 are Black or African American, 16% have received a first dose of COVID vaccine. First dose vaccinations for County children ages 5-14 are at 59% or below in zip codes 20903, 20904, 20866, 20851, 20860, 20879, 20876, and 20841. For the general County population, census tracts that have below average first dose rates are in Silver Spring, East County, Aspen Hill, and Gaithersburg/Germantown/Clarksburg corridor.

Mobile medical care has been shown to be cost effective and an effective way to reach underserved and disenfranchised communities that do not access mainstream healthcare. A June 21, 2021 blog from Tulane University<sup>6</sup> says:

“Despite efforts to improve access to quality health care, the United States faces increasing costs and high rates of chronic disease. Worse, vulnerable groups — including low-income people, those who belong to racial and ethnic minority groups, and rural communities — continue to face disproportionately negative health outcomes. To combat these disparities, health care must increase access to affordable, equitable, culturally sensitive health services.

Mobile health clinics can bring such needed health services directly to underserved populations. These clinics take many forms, including buses, vans, RVs, and trailers that can operate independently from or as extensions of existing healthcare organizations. Mobile health clinics provide a wide range of services to people who may not otherwise receive care, including urgent care, primary care, and preventive health support.

Mobile health clinics benefit communities by making health care more affordable and accessible, which in turn improves patient outcomes.

Mobile health clinics provide quality care at a lower cost than that of traditional healthcare delivery modes. According to Mobile Health Map, for every \$1 spent on mobile health, \$12 are saved, resulting in a return on investment of 12:1.”

A study that reviewed 51 articles<sup>7</sup>, says that “current literature supports that MHCs are successful in reaching vulnerable populations, by delivering services directly at the curbside in communities of need and flexibly adopting their services based on the changing needs of the target community...Furthermore, evidence suggest that MHCs produce significant cost savings and represent a cost-effective care delivery model that improves health outcomes in underserved groups.”

Written by: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/Resources/Files/pulse/DHHS-Pulse-220323.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/mobile-health-clinics/>

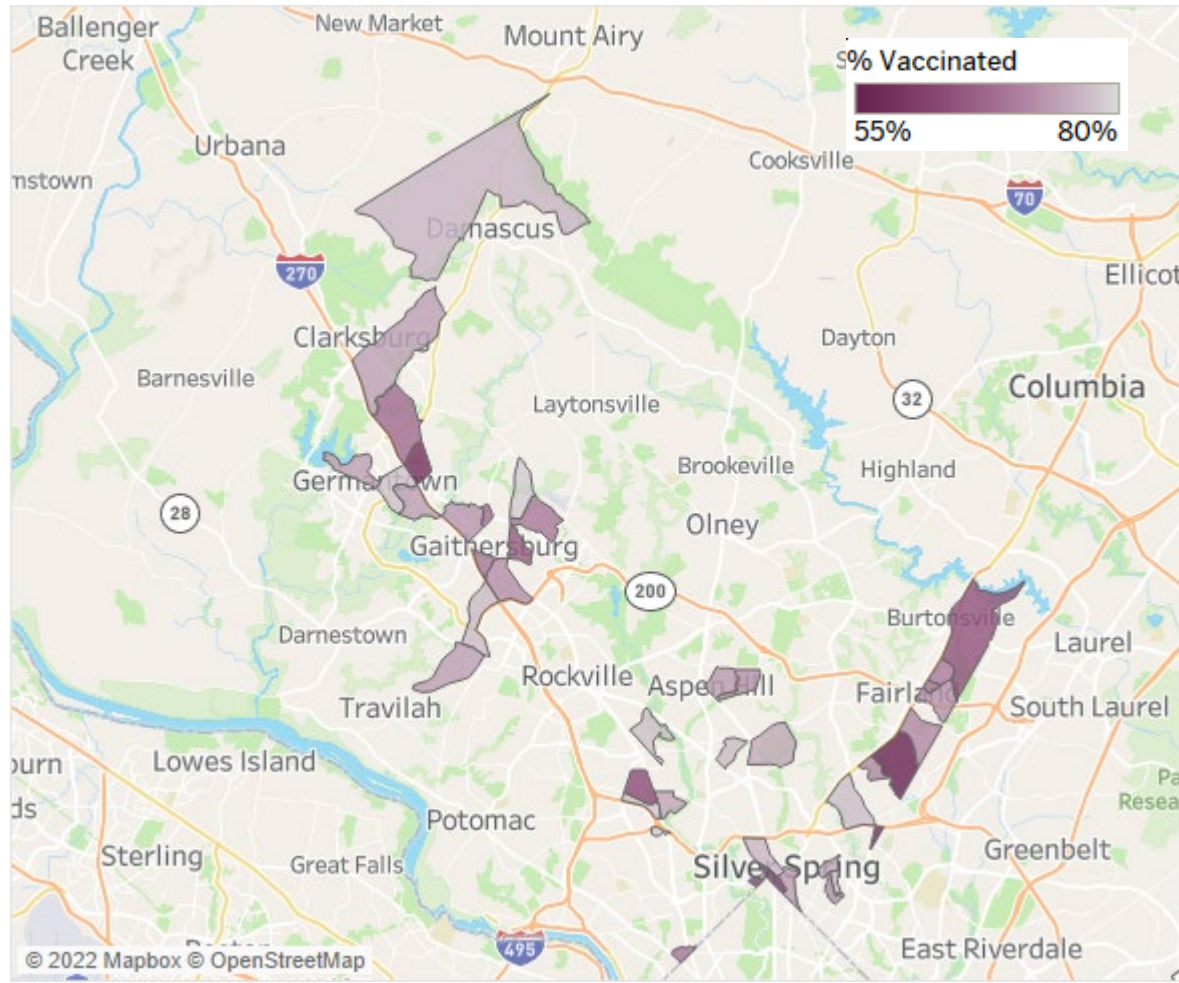
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5629787/>

Authors: Yu, Hill, Ricks, Bennet, and Oriol (2017)



# COVID-19 VACCINATIONS: GAPS

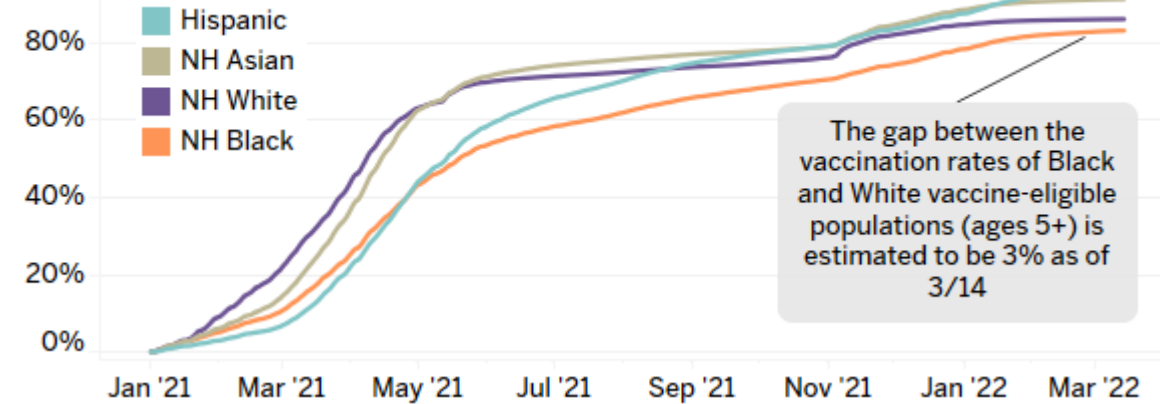
## TRACTS WITH BELOW AVERAGE FIRST-DOSE RATES



Across the highlighted tracts above, 30% of the population is White non-Hispanic, 27% is Black non-Hispanic, 24% is Hispanic, and 15% is Asian/Pacific Islander.

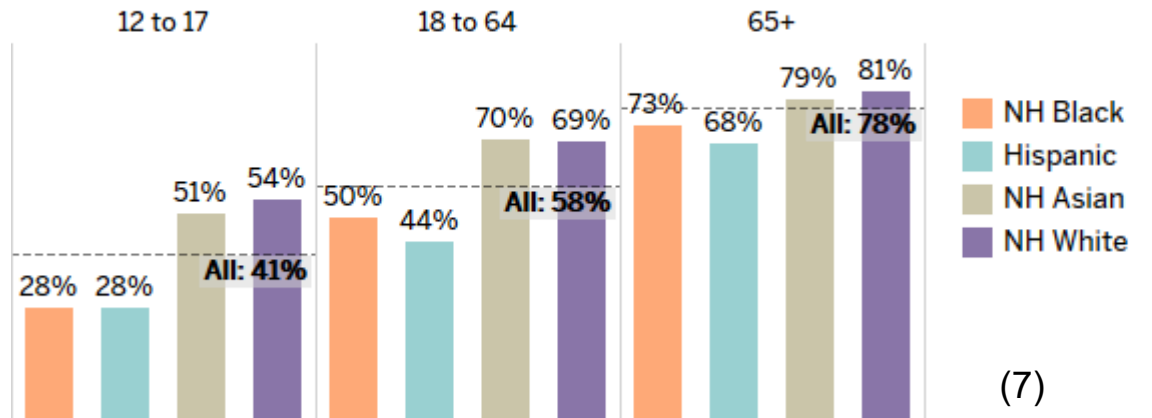
## FIRST-DOSE VACCINATION RATES BY RACE

### Population Ages 5+ First-Dose Rates



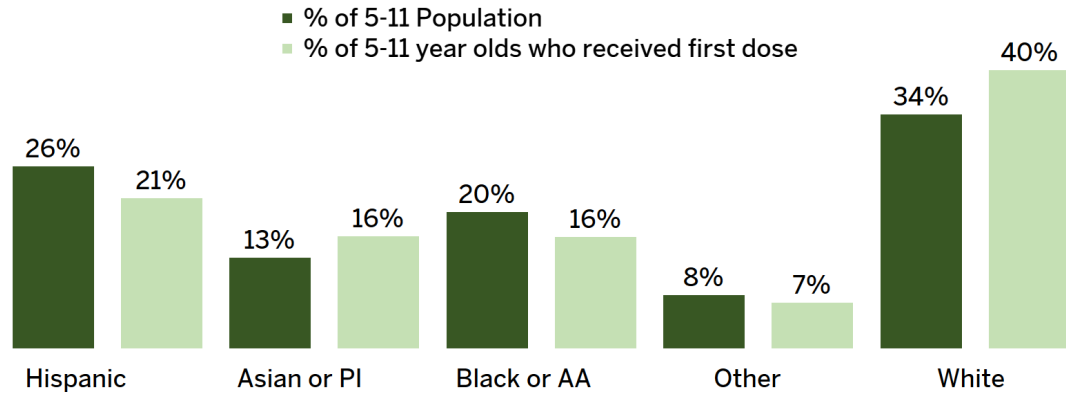
## ADDITIONAL DOSE RATES BY RACE & AGE

### Percent of Vaccinated Who Received Booster



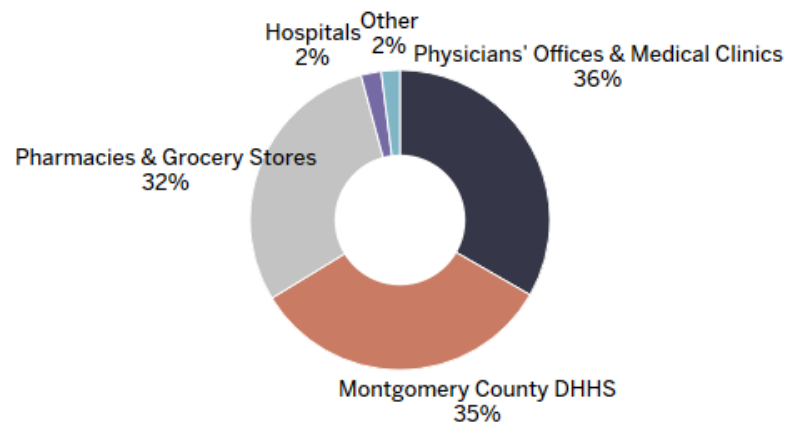
# COVID-19 VACCINATIONS: PEDIATRIC VACCINATIONS

## FIRST DOSES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Charts reads: 26% of 5-11 population are Hispanic, and 21% of vaccinated 5-11 population are Hispanic. <1% of vaccinated children identify as Native American; they are included in the "Other" category. Approximately 3% of pediatric records do not contain race/ethnicity information.

## PEDIATRIC VACCINE PROVIDERS



Pediatric vaccinations are distributed evenly between Montgomery County DHHS (in partnership with MCPS, physicians and medical clinics, and pharmacies and grocery stores.

## FIRST-DOSE VACCINATION RATES BY ZIP CODE

Vaccination rates among residents ages 5-14 are used as a proxy for pediatric vaccination rates in the map below due to the availability of population estimates only for certain age categories. Zip codes with fewer than 100 residents ages 5-14 are excluded.

