

SUBJECT

Action – Approval of Montgomery County Council Commitment Statement to Racial Equity and Social Justice

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINT

Approve Commitment Statement to Racial Equity and Social Justice

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Commitment Statement to Racial Equity and Social Justice

BACKGROUND

1. On April 24, 2018, the Montgomery County Council adopted a “Resolution to Develop an Equity Policy Framework in Montgomery County”. Lead sponsors were then-Council Vice President Navarro and then-Councilmember Elrich.
2. During the Spring and Summer of 2019, the County Council along with County Executive Elrich, sponsored a racial equity and social justice community engagement campaign in several areas throughout the County. Over 1,000 diverse stakeholders participated in large and small gatherings.
3. Leading up to the enactment of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act, the Council requested that the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) prepare three reports - “Racial Equity in Government Decision-Making: Lessons from the Field”; “Racial Equity Profile - Montgomery County”, and “Findings from the 2019 Racial Equity and Social Justice Community Conversations”. For the profile, researchers collected data and prepared a profile describing prevalence rates by race and ethnicity across several indicators, namely, population, education, business, employment, economic security, housing, health, criminal justice, transportation, and connectedness. The findings from the community conversations revealed that racial and social inequities were driving both systemic and individual racism; that education, housing, criminal justice, and employment were the four main policy areas regarded as the biggest challenges for achieving equity in the County; and that certain action was necessary to advance racial equity.

4. On September 17, 2019, the 19th Council introduced the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act (“Act”). The purpose of the Act is to establish a racial equity and social justice program. Enacted unanimously on December 2, 2019, the Act became effective on March 2, 2020.
5. Among other things, the Act requires the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) and each County department and office to develop a racial equity and social justice action plan designed to remedy individual, institutional, and structural racism or social justice issues which adversely impact County residents. Also, the Act requires racial equity and social justice impact statements for bills, appropriations, and zoning text amendments.
6. Since the enactment of the legislation, this Council has enhanced its racial equity and social justice work and strengthened the ability of the Council to serve all County residents by requesting research centered on racial equity and social justice; passing legislation that addresses various racial inequities and social injustices; increasing collaborative efforts with partners; enhancing efforts to communicate with residents; and engaging in an organizational assessment.
7. The Council also invested the commitment in time, space, and resources for staff to build effective interpersonal skills and competencies and experience resilience and wellness; addressed organizational systems and practices; helped all-staff, through various methods, develop and sharpen equity analyses to comprehend the social construction and history of race, develop group norms and behavioral expectations, and explore and enhance interpersonal skills in certain areas, namely, microaggressions, privilege and power, toxicity in the workplace, and antidotes to address toxins.
8. This Commitment Statement captures in one place, the 19th Council’s ongoing and deep commitment to transforming daily, organizational, cultural, internal and external practices to ensure racial equity and social justice that it seeks to foster and expand in Montgomery County.
9. The Act, the background leading up to its passage, and other supporting documents have been placed on the Montgomery County Council website.

ACTION

1. The County Council affirms the need for future Councils to continue this racial equity and social justice transformation as outlined in the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act.
2. The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Commitment Statement to Racial Equity and Social Justice.

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The Council affirms racial equity as a core value in which race does not affect life outcomes, and social justice as a core value that improves opportunities and outcomes for all people. Since race and ethnicity are the key predictors of the outcomes of Montgomery County residents across all social indicators and societal systems, the Council aims to achieve racial equity and social justice by dismantling the policies, practices, and systems of oppression that have developed and sustained these inequities. The Council acknowledges historical racial inequities and is committed to oversight over the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act, and transparent, intentional, and actionable solutions that will address and remedy those inequities and serve all Montgomery County residents.

The Montgomery County Council is committed to establishing and advancing an equitable community by striving to ensure that every enacted policy, practice, and system reflects racial equity and social justice.