



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

September 17, 2021

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: REIA-Human Trafficking Supplemental Appropriation # 22-11

- I. **FINDINGS:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice Finds that Special Appropriation #22-11 will advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County as it provides a targeted support for survivors of human trafficking, who because of structural inequities are more likely to be people of color and other historically marginalized populations. The collaboration between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the University of Maryland University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment Center for Human Trafficking Survivors (SAFE Center) will provide survivors of trafficking in Montgomery County with a range of services and supports that address the complexity of mental health, housing, and employment challenges survivors experience.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** Special Appropriation #22-11 provides grant funding from the University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment Center for Human Trafficking Survivors (SAFE Center) to the Department of Health and Human Services, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness to provide rapid rehousing, energy assistances, and moving assistance for individuals and families who are survivors of human trafficking. The SAFE Center and its network of partners will provide legal, intensive case management, mental health, primary medical, economic and crisis intervention services to victims and survivor of sex and labor trafficking of all ages,

genders, and nationalities. DHHS' primary role will be to support SAFE Center-identified individuals and families with rapid rehousing services, the goal being to achieve permanent housing. Grant funding will also support the collection of data which will be used in the development of future strategies.

The United States Department of Justice defines human trafficking (sometimes referred to as trafficking in persons or modern-day slavery) as “a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts.”¹ Polaris, a leading non-profit operating the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline adds that human trafficking “is the business of stealing freedom for profit.”² This explicit link to the ways human trafficking takes “freedom” from those who are victimized is echoed in a US Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons brief that describes the connection between systemic racism and human trafficking. The brief explains how human trafficking globally and, in the US, reflects “the living legacy of the systemic racism and colonization globalized during the transatlantic slave trade through chattel slavery and regional practices of indigenous dispossession.”³ The US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime explains that while there is no single profile of a trafficking victim, data indicate that traditionally underserved populations are highly represented⁴. These populations include those marginalized by structural inequities, including persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, indigenous peoples, and members of racial, ethnic, and religious minority groups⁵. On a local level, data from the University of Maryland SAFE Center 2019 suggests that people of color are disparately impacted by trafficking in the state. Between 2016 and 2019, the Center served 165 survivors and over 50 families. Survivors were from the US and other countries; an estimated⁶ 45% of survivors are Black, 30% are Latinx, 15% are Asian, and 5% are White.

The complexity of issues facing many survivors, including significant histories of trauma and victimization, require that service providers from across systems collaborate to provide a range of supports that respond to the survivor's unique experiences. This special appropriation will enable DHHS to provide short-term housing assistance through its Rapid Rehousing Program, and with the complementary support of SAFE Center's intensive wrap-around services enable program participants to eventually take over their entire lease payment. The Freedom Network Training Institute explains benefits of Rapid Rehousing programs emphasizing that they can “preserve a survivor's ability to connect

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking>

² <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/>

³ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Acknowledging-Historical-and-Ongoing-Harm_LOW.pdf

⁴ <https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/ovc-tims-report-508.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

⁶ The data provided are estimates based on author's interpretation of data displayed in the SAFE Center 2019 Annual Report

with supportive services and engage with long-term education and employment opportunities”⁷.

The grant funding and program structure allows DHHS to pay participants’ full rent during the first several months of the program. This aspect of the program’s design addresses the persistent systemic barriers to accessing affordable safe housing for trafficking survivors, many of whom (based on SAFE Center’s client data) are likely to be people of color. Providing this initial subsidy and then structuring the program towards the goal of each trafficking survivor becoming permanently housed is also supported by the Freedom Network Training Institute’s recommendation that service providers develop long-term housing plans when Rapid Rehousing rental assistance is initially utilized⁸. The County’s provision of additional staff (at 50% FTE) to support the administration and implementation of this grant will strengthen the program’s ability to meet the permanent housing goal for trafficking survivors. This is especially important given how the Covid-19 pandemic has created higher levels of housing instability overall and particularly for communities of color⁹.

Finally, the special appropriation will also support the collection of data that can be used in the development of strategies for ending human trafficking in Montgomery County. While available information does indicate what data will be collected and how it will be used, data collection can support systems-level changes by shedding light on the kinds of structural challenges survivors are facing and the types of collaboration and coordination that might be necessary to remove barriers and create long-term stability and healing for trafficking survivors.

- III. **DATA ANALYSIS:** The scope of Human Trafficking in Maryland is complex to measure as it relies on victims and survivors reporting their victimization. It is therefore the case that the following data from Polaris’ 2019 National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics may underestimate the total number of victims, trafficking cases, and trafficking businesses. According to the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, the reported 187 trafficking cases in 2019 is an 11% increase from 2018 and 55% increase from 2017¹⁰.

⁷ <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/app/uploads/2019/07/Rapid-Rehousing-Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf>

⁸ <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/app/uploads/2020/07/Housing-Options-for-Survivors-of-Trafficking-Final.pdf>

⁹ https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/FAQs_COVID-19_Racial-Equity.pdf

¹⁰

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53d105bae4b009be345a11ba/t/607604b13a440767d6a681d7/1618347185527/Maryland+HT+Stats+Updated+1.21.20.pdf>

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Trafficking Case	Sex Trafficking	Labor Trafficking	Sex and Labor Trafficking	Form of Trafficking not specified
187	127	36	11	13

Victims identified	Traffickers identified	Trafficking businesses
402	94	45

cc: Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive