



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2021

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

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

Re: Supplemental Appropriation: #22-14 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) REIA -
Disinfecting

- I. **FINDINGS:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-14 is unlikely, as currently described, to advance racial equity as there is no indication that the enhanced disinfecting plan takes into consideration heightened Covid-19 risks affecting students of color and other students experiencing disparities in access and opportunity during the pandemic. Enhanced cleaning is necessary across MCPS, but ORESJ cannot conclude that this plan will target or prioritize schools experiencing known disparities in ways that have the potential to advance racial equity.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** Supplemental Appropriation #22-14 authorizes funding from federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to implement a school reopening plan that aligns with the mission of the Board of Education. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) will use these funds to implement a districtwide cleaning and disinfecting program. The appropriation in the amount of \$1,205,690 will be used to provide for contractual services, supplies and materials, and equipment. The goal of the enhanced cleaning activities is to promote the successful and safe reopening of school for in-person instruction.

As of September 30, 2021, MCPS had a total enrollment of 160,564 students¹, operating 209² schools in the 2020-2021 school year. The majority of MCPS students are students of color with the following distribution by race and ethnicity: 21.8% Black/African American; 14.3% Asian; 32.8% Hispanic/Latino; 25.8% White; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native; 5% two or more races; no students reported being Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Students in MCPS also have diverse socioeconomic characteristics and are represented in the following service groups in 2021: 16.4% were enrolled in English as a Second language (ESOL) programs; 38.7% were in Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) programs; and 12.5% received special education instruction. Trends in MCPS student enrollment reveal that the school system has become more diverse and is largely a socioeconomic and racially segregated system³.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, students of color experienced disparities in resources, opportunities, and outcomes across educational settings (K-12 and post-secondary)⁴. These disparities are explored in a 2019 Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report, *MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps*⁵. The report notes persistent disparities across a number of achievement performance metrics by race, ethnicity, and service group status. The analysis also explains the inequities underlying many of these disparities, describing how “concentrated poverty and segregation among MCPS schools and the under-funding of compensatory education and ESOL programs relative to student need”⁶ shapes student opportunity.

A growing body of evidence suggests that racial, ethnic, and service group disparities have been exaggerated by the pandemic. The US Department of Education explained in a June 2021 report how the pandemic has impacted students of all ages and backgrounds, noting the following challenges for students of color, students with disabilities, and students experiencing the destabilizing effects of new or persistent financial insecurity:

- Live in households where adults are more likely to experience job losses or Covid-19 exposure, creating or exaggerating economic constraints and negative health outcomes.
- Disparities in access to mental health services or the full range of academic and wrap around services that a school provides

¹ MCPS Data Dashboard. Learning Accountability and Results. “Enrollment: Individual Measures”. Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/data/LAR-charts/enrollment.html>

² “About MCPS”. Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/about/>

³ Elaine Bonner-Tompkins. MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps. Report Number 2019-4. December 2019. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLOReport2019-14.pdf>

⁴ *Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impact of Covid-19 on America’s Students*. US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. June 2021. Available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>

⁵ Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Montgomery County Council, Office of Legislative oversight.

⁶ Elaine Bonner-Tompkins.

- Barriers in access to technology or necessary supports to stay connected to school and educational opportunities.
- Amplification of language barriers for students and households with English-language learners.
- Disrupted educational opportunities for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and;
- Overall, the report noted for all groups slow to non-existent recovery in academic achievement due to preexisting resource and opportunity gaps that produce disparate student performance outcomes.

In addition to education disparities affecting K-12 students during the pandemic, there are continued health risks that disproportionately affect students of color. Similar to racial and ethnic disparities affecting adults, children of color (ages 0-17) have higher rates of Covid-19 cases and deaths compared to their white counterparts. See data analysis section for additional detail. Using Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention Covid-19 Case Surveillance data from August 31, 2021, the Kaiser Family Foundation adds to this observation, reporting that American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic children had the highest rates of hospitalization, followed by Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander and Black children, who are two to three times as likely to be hospitalized than White children⁷. While data is not yet widely available, KFF also reports early signs of 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”⁸. Because of these disparities in access and long-standing economic, health, and housing inequities disproportionately affecting households of color, KFF reports that children of color returning to in-person learning may be at higher risk of being infected with Covid-19 (even after vaccines are approved for children 12 and under)⁹.

Based on the heightened risks facing students of color and ARPA’s emphasis on the equitable distribution of resources, the proposed supplemental appropriation should take into consideration where enhanced cleaning and disinfecting may be—based on existing disparities—most necessary. This would include schools in areas experiencing higher numbers of Covid-19 cases, lower levels of vaccine penetration, or in schools where racial, ethnic or service group disparities are known to exist. The Education trust describes this as an “opportunity and responsibility to direct funding toward uses that will specifically meet the needs of underserved students.”¹⁰

⁷ Samantha Artiga, Latoya Hill, Nambi Ndugga. Kaiser Family Foundation. “Racial Disparities in Covid-19 Impacts and Vaccinations for Children”. September 2021. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-covid-19-impacts-and-vaccinations-for-children/>

⁸ Samantha Artiga, Latoya Hill, Nambi Ndugga.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

III. **DATA ANALYSIS:** Covid-19 cases and deaths data by age and race, reveal disparities in how Covid-19 is impacting youth of color; the pattern is similar to how Covid-19 has affected adults of color. Based on available data from the CDC, Hispanic/Latino, Black, and Native Indian/Alaska Native children have experienced disproportionately higher percentages of cases and deaths. Hispanic/Latino children consistently had higher percentages of cases compared to their representation in each age group; Black children experienced the starkest disproportionality in percentage of deaths compared to their representation in each age group. Across age groups, Black children also consistently experienced higher percentages of deaths compared to cases. This data point is **bolded** below. This is notable given that the opposite pattern is true across all other racial/ethnic groups. For all other racial/ethnic groups, the percentage of cases is higher than the percentage of deaths (except for Asian non-Hispanic children ages 12-15). Highlighted below are disparities at the national level, a similar analysis at the local level would be valuable for determining where Covid-19 related resources are most needed.

Covid-19 Cases and Deaths, 0-4 years by Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Percent of cases	Percentage of deaths	Percent of US population
Hispanic/Latino	33.1	28.2	26.02
American Indian / Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic	1.4	0.5	0.83
Asian, Non-Hispanic	3.1	2.1	4.9
Black, Non-Hispanic	14.4	22.9	13.71
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	0.3	<0.1	0.2
White, Non-Hispanic	40.5	40.4	49.53
Multiple/Other, Non-Hispanic	7.2	5.8	4.8
Covid-19 Cases and Deaths, 5-11 years by Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Percent of cases	Percentage of deaths	Percent of US population
Hispanic/Latino	31.9	30.9	25.93
American Indian / Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic	1.5	2.4	0.85
Asian, Non-Hispanic	3	0.8	5.06
Black, Non-Hispanic	12.9	21.1	13.78
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	0.3	0.8	0.2
White, Non-Hispanic	44	38.2	49.6
Multiple/Other, Non-Hispanic	6.3	5.7	4.57

Covid-19 Cases and Deaths, 12-15 years by Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Percent of cases	Percentage of deaths	Percent of US population
Hispanic/Latino	30.9	30	25.19
American Indian / Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic	1.4	4	0.85
Asian, Non-Hispanic	2.1	4	5.1
Black, Non-Hispanic	12	18	13.6
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	0.3	0.7	0.2
White, Non-Hispanic	47.7	36	51.03
Multiple/Other, Non-Hispanic	5.6	7.3	4.04
Covid-19 Cases and Deaths, 16-17 years by Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Percent of cases	Percentage of deaths	Percent of US population
Hispanic/Latino	28.9	24.8	24.16
American Indian / Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic	1.2	0.8	0.84
Asian, Non-Hispanic	2.2	3.4	5.21
Black, Non-Hispanic	11	27.4	13.62
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	0.3	<0.1	0.2
White, Non-Hispanic	50.9	37.6	52.36
Multiple/Other, Non-Hispanic	5.4	6	3.62

Source: CDC | Data as of Sunday, October 17, 2021 12:37 PM ET. Posted: Sunday, October 17, 2021 2:17 PM ET. Data from 35,717,611 cases. Race/Ethnicity was available for 23,386,093 (65%) cases. Data from 586,246 deaths. Race/Ethnicity was available for 494,407 (84%) deaths.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive