MEMORANDUM

February 24, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
   Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President
    Montgomery County Council

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

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Special Appropriation #22-64
    Newcomer Enhancements

I. FINDING: The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Special Appropriation #22-64 Newcomer Enhancements is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County, as findings from related Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) and additional information about youth violence prevention suggest that continuing and expanding supports to newcomer children and families will help to address racial disparities in violence risk factors and impacts.

II. BACKGROUND: The purpose of Special Appropriation #22-64 is to continue funding of social services, school-based services, mental health services, and case management needs for Newcomer families and individuals. In August 2021, ORESJ conducted REIA of Special Appropriation #22-7, which provided initial funding for these services. In that REIA, ORESJ provided information about the unique challenges facing newcomer families and children and the following finding statement:

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice finds that Special Appropriation #22-7 advances racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County by comprehensively recognizing and responding to the experiences of newcomer children and their families/sponsors. The County’s person-centered and whole of system response supports newcomer children and families/sponsors in navigating often
complex education and social support systems, while also prioritizing critical data collection and analysis, which along with direct community engagement will give departments insight into what's working and what can be strengthened in the County's ongoing response to the arrival of unaccompanied children and their families/sponsors.

Special Appropriation #22-64 continues these efforts and expands them in response to emergent concerns regarding violence prevention and the threat of human trafficking. Therefore, ORESJ recommends that those considering Special Appropriation #22-64 do so by first reviewing:

- REIA of Special Appropriation #22-64 Newcomer Children and Families

In addition, ORESJ also recommends reviewing ORESJ’s REIA of Special Appropriation #22-11 which describes the racial equity and social justice impacts of a proposed human trafficking prevention program, implemented in partnership with the University of Maryland SAFE Center:

- REIA of Special Appropriation #22-11 Human Trafficking

Finally, ORESJ offers the following information about youth development and violence prevention to complement information provided in the previously mentioned REIAs:

Youth violence, like violence among adults, is strongly correlated with social and economic disparities. As ORESJ’s previous analysis reveal, these disparities are the consequence of policies and systems, not individual behavior. For example, in looking at the consequences of these disparities, studies show that the overrepresentation of youth of color in the juvenile justice system cannot be accounted for by differences in behavior. The drivers of youth violence are complex, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as well as other factors found in the community or school-setting:

- Bullying victimization and perpetration
- Cyber violence
- Anti-social peers
- School connectedness
- School performance
- School climate
- Gun availability
- Media
- Collective efficacy

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3 Kristin Anderson Moore, et al.

4 Kristin Anderson Moore, et al.
These factors are also impacted by racial disparities in poverty rates, parent/caregiver education level, and neighborhood quality\(^5\) as well as systemic drivers of bias.

To address incidence of youth violence, prevention strategies and activities in the school environment are critical, as is curtailing exclusionary disciplinary action. Related to the school environment, there is mounting evidence about the effectiveness of Social and Emotional Learning, restorative practices, and creating trauma-informed school systems in preventing youth violence in schools. These approaches help to mitigate risk factors for violence. In recent testimony to the US Education and Labor Committee, Vice president for public policy and engagement at Child Trends, Kristen Harper, explained “when young people feel connected to schools and to school staff, they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., substance use, violence), be absent from school, or experience emotional distress, and are more likely to have higher grades. Connected students also do not bring weapons into the learning environment and are more likely to report the presence of weapons.”\(^6\)

Taking steps to prevent violence, while also providing universal and targeted supports to meet student needs is also linked to reductions in disparities in disciplinary action: “schools implementing universal supports, with fidelity, within a multi-tiered system of support have lower rates of out-of-school suspension for students with disabilities and less racially disproportionate rates of out-of-school suspension.”\(^7\)

The emphasis on strengthening relationships within schools, proposed in this Special Appropriation, align closely with the evidence for violence prevention. While reducing youth violence is on its own a worthwhile outcome, given the racial disparities in the consequences of violence and in the factors leading to violence, interventions like those described in this special appropriation are likely to have many positive externalities in the school environment and overall community.

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

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\(^5\) Kristin Anderson Moore, et al.


\(^7\) Kristin Anderson Moore, et al.