



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

July 3, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

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

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-109  
Montgomery County Public Schools, *Sustainability Initiatives* (\$105,003)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that SA #23-109 *Sustainability Initiatives* has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) by implementing projects that increase energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advance sustainability efforts. However, given the lack of details specifying which schools or buildings will directly benefit from supplemental funding, it is unclear the extent to which this project will impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income students—which are more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Therefore, ORESJ’s finding is inconclusive.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** SA #23-109-*Sustainability Initiatives* is needed to offset the cost of energy efficient improvements in existing MCPS buildings and support the school systems efforts on energy savings. The supplemental leverages funds through the EmPOWER Maryland energy incentive rebates program.

The *Sustainability Initiatives* Capital Project provides funds to implement a variety of new capital projects to improve energy and utility use efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve resiliency, and align with other sustainability priorities for MCPS. This level of effort (LOE) project was first approved in the FY23-FY28 Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Activities mentioned in the project description include upgrading to automated building automation systems, building retrofits to improve energy efficiency,

solar panel installations, renovating greenhouses, and support towards integrating sustainability features into academics.

III. **ANALYSIS**: ORESJ has previously analyzed the link between facility condition and student achievement as well as teacher performance and satisfaction in several school facility upgrade projects REIAs. Our full analysis can be found in the following REIA's:

- MCPS Major Capital Projects – Secondary  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-05.pdf>
- MCPS Lifecycle Upgrades  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-63.pdf>
- Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement: MCPS  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-12.pdf>
- MCPS HVAC - Mechanical Systems Replacement  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-83.pdf>

The goal of the *Sustainability Initiatives* project is to fund projects that help meet the goals of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan (MCCAP)<sup>1</sup>. The MCCAP is Montgomery County's strategic plan to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035 compared to 2005 levels. The MCCAP also details the effects of a changing climate on Montgomery County and includes strategies to reduce climate-related risk to the County's residents, businesses, and the built and natural environment. The report also applies a racial equity lens to climate change through analysis of the connection between climate change and racial equity, also known as the climate gap. Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement (RESJIS) for Bill 3-22 provides further analysis of the climate gap<sup>2</sup>. The MCCAP's examination of the climate gap highlights the need to address structural racial inequities and protect vulnerable BIPOC and low-income communities from the disproportionate impacts of climate change.

Implementation of the *Sustainability Initiatives* project aligns with not only the County's Climate Action Plan goals, but also aligns with MCPS' Sustainability Policy. The policy sets forth that MCPS will incorporate sustainability priorities into decision-making processes, based on the equitable and strategic deployment of resources to address climate based impacts on health, safety, and wellness and to achieve more energy-efficient and

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<sup>1</sup> Montgomery County Climate Action Plan. Building a Healthy, Equitable, Resilient Community. June 2021. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/climate/Resources/Files/climate/climate-action-plan.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> RESJIS Bill 3-22-Legislative Branch – Climate Assessments-Required. Climate gap is the – the disproportionate impact that global warming has on people of color and low-income communities and the historical drivers that contribute to the climate gap and its consequences Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/resjis/2022/Bill3-22.pdf>.

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cost-effective school operations<sup>3</sup>. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or improve energy efficiency should prioritize these principles to ensure a more equitable transition to a sustainable future for the County.

cc: Monifa McKnight, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools  
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

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<sup>3</sup> Policy ECA, Sustainability. June 2022. Available at:  
<https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/eca.pdf>