



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

November 2, 2022

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) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-17
Newcomer Enhancements and Assistance

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-17 *Newcomer Enhancements and Assistance* is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County, as it addresses the acute needs of recently arrived migrant families (many of whom are seeking asylum) and supports strategic planning for ongoing response coordination. Taking these steps will ensure that County residents already burdened by health and other inequities do not face additional challenges caused by extra stress on the county's systems.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-17 is to fund a number of activities that support the County's response to migrant families and youth arriving from Texas and Arizona. Activities outlined in an August 2022 memo from the County Executive to Council include:
- investment in strategic planning;
 - expanded multilingual and multicultural case management;
 - increased in-home and community-based behavioral health and crisis stabilization services;
 - emergency assistance; and,
 - food security.

The exact number of migrant families arriving in the Washington Metropolitan region is unclear. According to a report from NY-1 Spectrum News, as of October 5th, more than 8,200

migrants on nearly 200 buses have been sent to Washington, DC from Texas¹. For comparison, as of June 30, 2022, Montgomery County had received 1077 unaccompanied children. It is estimated that 10-15% of newly arrived migrants arriving from Texas and Arizona plan to remain in the region as they do not have connections elsewhere in the US². According to information that accompanied this request, newcomers arriving to the region have an increased level of need compared to other newcomer residents such as unaccompanied children living with sponsors in Montgomery County.

In August 2021 and in February 2022, ORESJ conducted racial equity impact assessments related to the funding of Newcomer Enhancements (Supplemental Appropriation [#22-7](#) and [#22-64](#)). In both cases, ORESJ found that the supplemental appropriations were likely to advance racial equity and social justice as they addressed the unique challenges facing newcomer families and children:

- Uncertainties in immigration status and complex systems of obtaining legal representation and status after release from federal custody;
- Financial insecurity and indebtedness related to the migration journey, resulting in difficult decisions about school and work, often leaving newcomers vulnerable to further exploitation and abuse; and,
- Traumatic experiences and inadequate healthcare before, during, and after release from federal custody leading to high rates of negative physical and mental health outcomes.

In the case of Supplemental Appropriation #23-17 it is unclear what specific activities may be expanded or changed considering the circumstances surrounding the more recent arrival of migrant families (many of whom are seeking asylum):

“...the process normally happens organically, quietly, and gradually. The buses have instead brought migrants to these cities in an orchestrated, visible, and deliberately disorderly way, generating challenges for cities trying to meet the newcomers’ humanitarian needs and raising the visibility of any failures to do so.”³

Presuming supplemental appropriation #23-17 continues and builds upon infrastructure described in previous supplemental appropriation requests, the needs of newly arrived families are likely to be met while also ensuring the continuity of service for existing county residents.

It’s important to note that recent migrant bussing is not the first time in US history that bussing has been used to make racist political statements by dehumanizing entire groups of people based on race. In 1962, southern segregationists paid to send Black Americans from the South to northern destinations like Cape Cod. This forced migration of about 200 Black Americans came to be known as the Reverse Freedom Rides. A February 2020 article called

¹ <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2022/10/05/-they-re-my-family-now--maryland-woman-houses-migrants-lured-to-dc-by-texas-gov->

² This information was provided to ORESJ in its REIA racial equity and social justice template. These percentages could not be independently verified through research.

³ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migrant-asylum-seeker-busing>

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“The Cruel Story Behind The 'Reverse Freedom Rides'” described the short and long-term consequences of these racist acts on families and entire communities⁴. As the county responds to the immediate needs of newly arrived families, it should also collaborate with regional and national partners to investigate these acts and bring legal challenges against perpetrating states when necessary. Further, investments in the county’s humanitarian response systems will become increasingly important as migration and asylum cases are unlikely to recede given ongoing political instability and climate change disruptions across the US (and globally).

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

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2020/02/29/809740346/the-cruel-story-behind-the-reverse-freedom-rides>