



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

November 28, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

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

Re: Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-25 FY23 Operating Budget Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Supply Chain Assistance (SAC) Fund

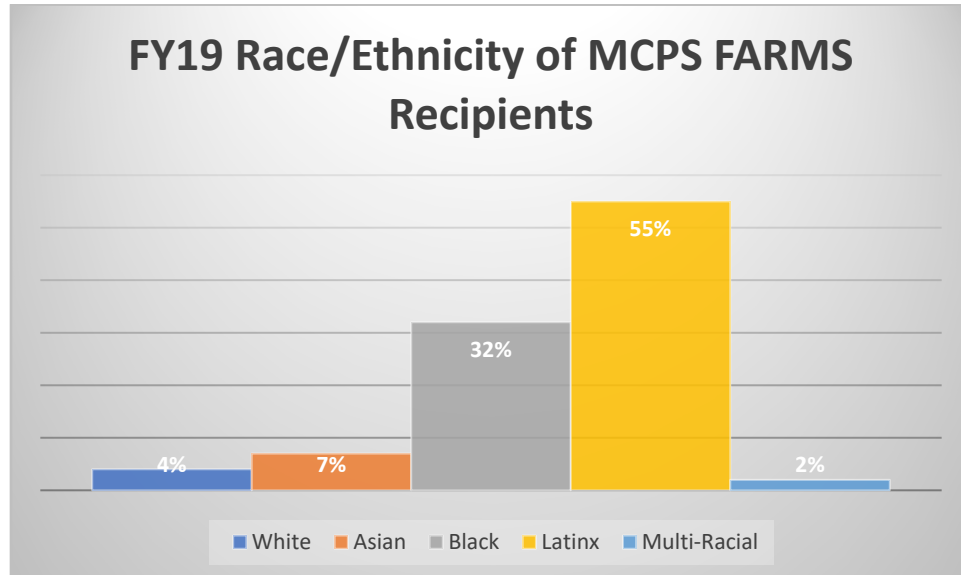
- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-25 FY23 Operating Budget Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Supply Chain Assistance (SAC) Fund can advance equitable outcomes for low-income children enrolled in the MCPS system – specifically those who identify as Black or Latinx. While funds will be used to provide all MCPS students with access to nutritious dairy products, low-income students (who are disproportionately students of color, students living in mixed-status families, and/or students whose primary language is not English) are more likely to benefit from this funding opportunity as they are the primary recipients of the Free and Reduced-priced Meals (FARMS) Program in MCPS.

As noted in previous Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) addressing food insecurity in Montgomery County, funding from this supplemental appropriation will not serve to address the underlying structures creating food insecurity in the County. In turn, these funds will support efforts that aim to serve MCPS students with the greatest demonstrated levels of need—ensuring their chances of improved well-being and academic success by making sure no student goes hungry while learning.

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-25 FY23 Operating Budget MCPS SAC Fund is to assist local educational agencies participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program with resources needed to address current supply chain shortages. The funds are limited to the purchase of

unprocessed or minimally processed domestic food products—specifically milk products. Supplemental information accompanying this request states that the SCA grant is supported by the MCPS Strategic Plan priority¹ of Academic Excellence, Well-Being, and Family Engagement by providing high-quality nutritional meals to MCPS students – enabling the school district to reach more students in need of food support to improve student outcomes.

As previously noted in the [*REIA for Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 FY23 Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\) Food Staples Program*](#), DHHS's research of the County has found that the burden of food insecurity has most acutely affected low-income communities, particularly those with higher concentrations of immigrants as they are most often excluded from governmental supports such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and housing assistance due to their undocumented status. Specifically, DHHS identified Hispanic/Latino populations as those with the greatest level of need for food support, in addition to significant populations of Black individuals in the down and east county areas. This assessment mirrors the level of need for food support amongst MCPS students. In FY19, 32.5% of MCPS students were recipients of the FARMS program² which primarily serves children identified as low-income, homeless, migrant, runaway, or foster children³. Of these FARMS recipients, over half were Latinx while approximately a third were Black.



2019 MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps⁴

¹ Montgomery County Public Schools. *MCPS Strategic Plan FY 2022-2025*. Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/campaigns/Strategic-Planning-FY22-25/>

² Bonner-Tompkins, E. *MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps*. 2019. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLOReport2019-14.pdf>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture. *The national school lunch program: fact sheet*. 2017. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nsfp>

⁴ Bonner-Tompkins, E. *MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps*. 2019. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLOReport2019-14.pdf>

III. **ANALYSIS:** Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of families considered food insecure has surged across all groups, with Black and Latinx households with children being nearly twice as likely to be struggling with food security compared to white families.⁵ Nearly four in ten Black and Latinx households with children are struggling to feed their families — a dramatic spike that is exacerbating racial inequities and potentially threatening the health of millions of young Americans.⁶ Research shows links to developmental delays and health problems as a result of lack of access to healthy foods in children, leading to potential problems such as behavioral issues and the need for intervention support as a result.⁷

Much like national statistics, the increased need for food support among low-income county residents – especially those with children – has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent disruptions in the supply chain as well as inflation. ORESJ has previously documented the increased need for food support for Montgomery County residents in the following REIAs:

1. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation Food Security Bridge Funding Proposal
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/FoodSecurity.pdf>
2. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-27 Food Security Bridge Funding Proposal updated
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-27.pdf>
3. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-79 Bridge Funding for the Food Security Task Force
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-79.pdf>

The REIAs highlighted above provide readers with context regarding the state of food insecurity in Montgomery County—whose most affected and why. These communities have been previously identified by the Montgomery County Food Council as residents with incomes below the County’s self-sufficiency standard of \$91,252 as well as populations facing the greatest risk of food insecurity, which includes children in school, and/or in single-parent households as well as foreign-born residents with limited English proficiency in mixed immigration status families with lack of knowledge of, or access to, culturally appropriate services.⁸ While the funding put forth by this supplemental request will undoubtedly benefit all children enrolled in MCPS, it will be most beneficial to children in

⁵ Bottemiller Evich, H. Stark racial disparities emerge as families struggle to get enough food: The pandemic has left Black and Hispanic households much worse off than white families. 2020. Available at:
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/06/racial-disparities-families-struggle-food-348810?cid=apn>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tolby, D. *Childhood hunger does lasting harm. This new bill can help end it.* 2022. Available at:
<https://www.clasp.org/blog/childhood-hunger-does-lasting-harm-this-new-bill-can-help-end-it/>

⁸ Montgomery County Food Council. *Montgomery County Food Security Plan.* 2017. Available at:
https://communityfoodrescue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/moco_food_plan.pdf

families with limited food security (such as those highlighted by the Montgomery County Food Council). Additionally, while the funding made available through this supplemental request does not address overall systemic factors that lead to food insecure households, serving children with the greatest demonstrated levels of need for food support (Black, Latinx, and English learners) will help to mitigate disparate outcomes facing MCPS students.

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