



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

November 27, 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) #24-37  
Food Security Initiatives

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that *Special Appropriation #24-37 Food Security Initiatives* is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County. This special appropriation will prevent disruption to the Food Staples Program, a critical source of support for food assistance providers in the County. It will also enable strategic investments that address the root causes of food insecurity in the County. Together, this special appropriation addresses the acute and chronic underlying conditions that create food insecurity in the County. By taking a multi-pronged approach, this special appropriation is well-positioned to shrink racial and income disparities that characterize food insecurity in the County while simultaneously building a system that centers food sovereignty and dignity—keys to interrupting inequitable access to food choice and nutrition.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Special Appropriation #24-37 Food Security Initiatives is to allocate \$11,060,000 from the General Fund Reserve to implement food security initiatives aligned with the recommendations in the Strategy to End Childhood Hunger<sup>1</sup> and provide continued support to broader food security initiatives, specifically the Food Staples Program. According to available information, this funding aims to both build upon and initiate new food initiatives to better leverage federal and state funds, close service gaps in communities most impacted by food insecurity, and align current and

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ofsr/Resources/Files/StrategicPlan2023\\_rev9signed.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ofsr/Resources/Files/StrategicPlan2023_rev9signed.pdf)

future investment approaches with strategies that advance equitable outcomes and build food systems resilience.

In October 2022, ORESJ conducted a REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Food Staples Program<sup>2</sup>. In that REIA, ORESJ referenced analysis of previous appropriations for Food Security Bridge Funding proposals, which provided in-depth context<sup>3</sup> about the state of food insecurity in Montgomery County, including the ways in which race, immigration status, and other socioeconomic characteristics shape disparate outcomes. ORESJ found that Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 could advance equitable outcomes for those at greatest risk of experiencing food insecurity, noting the importance of “how food distribution will be targeted using an approach that responds to the structural inequities influencing racial disparities in food insecurity within Montgomery County”.

Special Appropriation #24-37 continues this work and, importantly, will prevent end-of-year disruptions to food distribution. Funding continuity is especially critical given the acute challenges created by high price inflation and the ending of SNAP emergency allotments and other pandemic-related supports<sup>4</sup>. Just as these dynamics are likely to contribute to rising levels of homelessness<sup>5</sup> and loss of critical health and childcare benefits<sup>6</sup>, they’ve also impacted growing levels of food insecurity<sup>7</sup>, invariably putting greater demands on at-capacity food assistance providers. The approximately 56 food assistance providers that will receive support through this special appropriation, collectively serve hundreds of thousands of community members on an annual basis. They have established and trusted relationships in the community, which enable them to serve community members experiencing the combined impacts of systemic racism and structural economic inequality with dignity.

ORESJ’s finding statement about Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 noted the limitations of the Food Staples program in addressing the underlying issues creating food insecurity in the County. The non-food staples program initiatives—proposed in this special appropriation—aim to address many of these underlying issues. According to

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-27.pdf>

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

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/understanding-the-impact-of-the-end-of-the-public-health-emergency-and>

<sup>5</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/impacts-of-covid-19-relief-on-sheltered-homelessness/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/15/politics/covid-19-pandemic-benefits-ending-dg/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/food-insecurity-increased-in-2022-with-severe-impact-on-households-with-children-and-ongoing>

available information, these new initiatives shift County efforts toward more directly addressing the root causes of hunger, including income insufficiency, benefits program eligibility limitations, and transportation and time barriers, and centering food sovereignty<sup>8</sup> through expanding access to retail food purchasing, food gardening, and health care. The proposed initiatives take a data-driven, multi-pronged approach that recognizes and supports the delivery of food assistance to populations most at risk of food insecurity while also making strategic investments that help to build a system centered on and informed by the pursuit of racial equity and social justice. The following examples<sup>9</sup> demonstrate the alignment of proposed food security initiatives with the county’s recent Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger<sup>10</sup> and the county’s goals of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities:

<b>Underlying issue/root cause of food insecurity</b>	<b>Proposed food security initiative</b>	<b>How the underlying issue is affected by the proposed food security initiative</b>
<b>Income insufficiency</b>	<b>Build the capacity</b> of community-based organizations and Parent Community Coordinators to conduct SNAP applications and enrollment assistance	<i>Greater income sufficiency.</i> Increased purchasing power and dignified shopping experiences for hundreds of households.
<b>Income insufficiency</b>	<b>Retail Food Access Program</b> will help reach community members who are otherwise ineligible for SNAP or other federal nutrition assistance programs due to citizenship status or household income.	<i>Greater income sufficiency.</i> Overcome barriers of citizenship status and household income with more independence and choice in food access, enabling residents to purchase healthy food items through a retail platform
<b>Transportation and time barriers</b>	<b>Food as Medicine and School-Based programs</b> expand access to healthy foods in locations where children and families are already going—the doctor’s office and school.	<i>Reduced time and transportation barriers.</i> Facilitating easier access to healthy food options. Contributing to improved health and academic outcomes by collocating benefits.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bia.gov/service/indigenous-tourism/why-food-sovereignty-matters>

<sup>9</sup> These are all examples found in materials (including the RESJ template) that accompanied this special appropriation request.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ofsr/Resources/Files/StrategicPlan2023\\_rev9signed.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ofsr/Resources/Files/StrategicPlan2023_rev9signed.pdf)

<b>Underlying issue/root cause of food insecurity</b>	<b>Proposed food security initiative</b>	<b>How the underlying issue is affected by the proposed food security initiative</b>
<p><b>The legacy of chattel slavery, present day structural racism, and their impact on economic opportunity</b></p>	<p><b>The Resident and Community Garden Grants program will help to ensure residents have access to land, opportunities to carry on cultural practices, and the equipment necessary to store and distribute foods safely.</b></p>	<p><i>Addressing the impacts of structural racism on economic opportunity, wealth disparities, and barriers to land access.</i>            Increased food sovereignty and access to nutrient-dense foods grown within the county.</p>
<p><b>Lack of data disaggregated by race and other relevant demographic characteristics</b></p>	<p><b>New and expanded data collection</b> to evaluate program performance and inform future funding decisions.</p>	<p><i>Produce a richer understanding of the food system's performance and gaps.</i> Will be used to inform the geographic distribution of funding aligned with food insecurity estimates and demographic and geographic analysis of investments to ensure that support is allocated proportionately to the need.</p>

cc: Heather Bruskin, Director, Office of Food Systems Resilience  
 Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive