Resolution No.: 19-966
Introduced: July 20, 2021
Adopted: July 27, 2021

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Health and Human Services
Asian American Health Initiative COVID Response
$1,150,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant (American Rescue Plan Act))

Background

1. Section 308 of the County Charter provides that a special appropriation is an appropriation which states that it is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency, or to act without delay in the public interest. Each special appropriation shall be approved by not less than six Councilmembers. The Council may approve a special appropriation at any time after public notice by news release. Each special appropriation shall specify the source of funds to finance it.

2. A new coronavirus disease, named COVID-19, appeared in China in December 2019 and spread extremely quickly. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the disease a pandemic. On July 18, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website showed that there were 33,877,470 cases of COVID in the United States and 606,526 deaths since the pandemic began. Maryland reported 464,197 confirmed cases and 9,564 confirmed deaths. In Montgomery County there were 71,493 confirmed cases and 1,577 confirmed deaths.

3. Montgomery County is home to Asian Americans from many different ethnic backgrounds. About 15.2% of County residents are Asian American. The five largest groups are Chinese, Asian-Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino; but there are many other including Japanese, Burmese, Nepalese, Pakistani, Cambodian, Bangladeshi, Laotian, Indonesian Sri Lankan, and Taiwanese. Asian Americans are the largest minority population age 65 and older in the County. There are many misconceptions about Montgomery County's Asian American population regarding economic well-being. Forty-eight percent of the Asian Americans with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level are over the age of 55.

4. Asian Americans, and particularly Asian American Pacific Islanders have faced unique impacts and challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. The rhetoric falsely associating the virus with Asian Americans is believed to one major reason behind the significant increase in hate incidents. The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, reports a 169% increase in attacks on Asian Americans in 15 major American cities comparing the first quarter of 2021 to 2020. In New York City, attacks went from 13 in first quarter 2020 to 42 in 2021. Washington, D.C. reported no attacks in the first quarter of 2020 and six in 2021. STOP AAPI HATE received reports of 3,795 hate incidents in 2020. They include verbal and online harassment, shunning, and physical assault. Women are 2.3 times more likely than men to suffer these incidents and Chinese are the largest ethnic group of victims (42.2%), followed by Koreans (14.8%), Vietnamese (8.5%) and Filipino (7.9%). Fear and stigma may have led to undertesting and therefore under reporting of the prevalence of cases. Categories for collecting race and ethnicity health data may have led to misrepresentation of how the disease has impacted the Asian community as a whole and by subgroup.

5. The Asian American Health Initiative's mission is to improve the health and wellness of the Asian American community in Montgomery County by applying equity, community engagement, and data driven approaches. The Asian American and Pacific Islander community includes Central Asians, East Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders from the states, jurisdictions, and territories of the United States, Southeast Asians, and South Asians. There are more than 50 ethnicities and ancestries represented in these larger groups.

6. The Asian American Health Initiative's Steering Committee finds that additional funding is needed to support non-governmental organizations and faith based organizations to provide a linguistically and culturally diverse response to need for education about COVID-19 including testing and vaccination, case management and connection to safety net and business support services, and increased access to mental health services to combat the trauma and stress experience in the Asian community, and support to empower Asian American residents to report anti-Asian hate incidents to police and other authorities.

7. On May 20, 2021, the Council appropriated $250,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services so the Asian American Health Initiative could begin the work to plan and implement its resilience program. At that time, it was stated that additional funding would be needed to implement the program. This appropriation will provide the remainder of the funded recommended by the Asian American Health Initiative.

8. The County will continue to partner with Asian American organizations to conduct testing, contact tracing, and vaccination clinics. The cost of these activities is expected to be eligible for federal reimbursement.

9. Notice of this special appropriation was provided and a public hearing was held.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

A special appropriation to the FY 2022 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, in the amount of $1,150,000 is approved as follows:

	Personnel Expense	Operating Expense	TOTAL	Source of Funds
Department of Health and Human Services	$0	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	Federal Grant American Rescue Plan Act

These funds must be used to support the Asian American Health Initiative's COVID response strategy.

This response will include, but is not limited to:

Outreach and education that will promote messages that will reach the many Asian American and Pacific Islander subgroups.

Partnering with non-governmental organizations to help make appointments for COVID-19 vaccines or COVID-19 testing. These organizations will help residents overcome technology and language barriers that can prevent people from being able to schedule appointments easily. This may include assistance at vaccination sites. Organizations will help prepare and ensure that patients show up for vaccinations.

Support to non-governmental organizations that will connect Asian American residents to safety net supports, ensuring they have the information needed to access assistance for food, rent, unemployment, child care, and senior services.

Strategies to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health services, including outreach and information on how to access culturally appropriate mental health supports and to encourage people to seek treatment.

Strategies to address the increase in violence against the Asian American and Pacific Islander community and under-reporting of these crimes.

The County will seek reimbursement from the Federal Government for all eligible costs associated with this initiative.

This appropriation is needed to act in response to a public health or safety emergency and to act without delay in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.,
Clerk of the Council