



**Committee:** Directly to Council  
**Committee Review:** N/A  
**Staff:** Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst  
**Purpose:** To receive testimony/final action - vote expected  
**Keywords:** AAHI, AAPI

AGENDA ITEM #10  
July 27, 2021  
**Public Hearing/Action**

## **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)); Lead Sponsor: County Council

## **EXPECTED ATTENDEES**

None

## **COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

- No Committee recommendation. A motion is required.
- Special appropriation was introduced at the July 20, 2021 session.

## **DESCRIPTION/ISSUE**

Montgomery County is home to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders from many different ethnic backgrounds. The Asian American and Pacific Islander community has been impacted in different ways by COVID-19 including barriers to testing and vaccinations, impacts on mental health from the stress and isolation of the pandemic, and the unique impact of a significant increases in hate incidents and violence, including physical assaults. The Asian American Health Initiative has proposed strategies to address these impacts and disparities. The Council appropriated initial planning funds in May and this appropriation will provide the funds needed to implement the program.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are over 15% of the County residents. The AAPI community includes Central Asians, East Asians, Southeast Asians, South Asians, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders from the states, jurisdictions, and territories of the United States. There are more than 50 ethnicities and ancestries represented in these larger groups.
- The AAPI community faces many barriers to accessing information and health services regarding COVID including information that is language and culturally appropriate, technology gaps, and challenges for households with low incomes, especially seniors.
- The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, reported a 169% increase in attacks on Asian Americans in 15 major American cities when comparing the first quarter of 2020 to 2021.
- The mission of the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) is to improve the health and wellness of the Asian American community in Montgomery County by applying equity, community engagement and data driven approaches.

- AAHI proposes a COVID response initiative to provide access to mental health, social service support, and COVID-19 education and vaccinations by developing linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach materials, connecting residents to services such as filing for unemployment, rental assistance, child care subsidies, and small business loans.
- The initiative will include strategies to empower AAPI residents to report incidents of anti-Asian hate crime, violence, physical and verbal abuse to the County police and other appropriate authorities.
- The effort will focus on supporting the work of the diverse community-based non-governmental organizations that serve Montgomery County’s AAPI community.

**Attached:**

Special Appropriation Resolution	1-4
July 15, 2021 AAHI Progress Report	5

Link to AAHI website:

<https://aahiinfo.org/>

Link to January 14, 2021 Health and Human Services staff memorandum:

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2021/20210114/20210114\\_HHS1.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2021/20210114/20210114_HHS1.pdf)

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Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: \_\_\_\_\_  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsor: County Council

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**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 be 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:

	<u>Personnel Expense</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
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.

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Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.,  
Clerk of the Council



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES


Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D.  
*Director*

MEMORANDUM

July 15, 2021

TO: Tom Hucker, President, County Council

FROM: Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D. Director 

SUBJECT: Asian American Health Initiative Steering Committee - Request for Funding

I would like to share with you activities that have been undertaken since June 2021, in preparation of fully funding the proposal submitted by the Asian American Health Initiative Steering Committee (AAHI SC) to address COVID related needs in the Asian American communities of Montgomery County.

As the initial \$250,000 appropriation from Fiscal Year 2021 is going through the procurement process, staff at the Asian American Health Initiative have begun research of local best practices in grant making by reaching out to experts from Council, Office of Management & Budget, Montgomery County Adult English Learner and Arts & Humanities coalitions to understand how their grants were designed and evaluated to encourage broad participation.

In early July, a survey was designed and sent to a listserv of grassroots and community-based organizations that serve Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities to gather information around individual organizational capacity, target population, services, experience, and interest. We hope the result of the survey will help inform our development of the scope of the Request for Proposals.

Members of the AAHI SC has formed a subcommittee to actively engage in giving input throughout this preparation phase, including sitting on interview panel for the hiring of the project manager via the lead agency, Primary Care Coalition.

The AAHI SC has urged the Department to relay to the Council their advocacy for the Council to vote prior to the summer recess to approve the full amount of the request which included the \$1 million to AAPI serving community based organizations, and the anticipated administrative cost of the lead agency.

For any questions or additional information, please contact me or Betty Lam, Chief, Office of Community Affairs.

RLC:lp

**Office of the Director**

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