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# Council Vice President Navarro and Councilmember Elrich introduce resolution to develop an equity policy for Montgomery County Government

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For Immediate Release: Tuesday, April 17, 2018

## **Council Vice President Navarro and Councilmember Elrich introduce resolution to develop an equity policy for Montgomery County Government**

*Resolution calls for partnership with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and County residents to establish equity policy to be used in future budget and policy decisions*

ROCKVILLE, Md., April 17, 2018—Today the Council introduced a resolution, sponsored by Council Vice President Nancy Navarro, chair of the Government and Fiscal Policy Committee, and Councilmember Marc Elrich, chair of the Public Safety Committee, to create an equity policy for County government. The goal of this resolution is to begin collecting the data needed to develop an equity policy framework that would be used in future budget and policy decisions. A Council vote on the resolution is scheduled for April 24.

“Montgomery County’s diversity is one of our greatest assets,” said Council Vice President Navarro. “As our County continues aging and growing more racially and culturally diverse, we need to ensure that we are taking a targeted approach towards eliminating disparities that affect many in our communities. County government plays a vital role in dramatically improving outcomes for low-income people and people of color. Developing an equity policy framework will enable current and future legislators to conduct a systematic examination of how a proposed action or decision will likely have an effect on different racial and ethnic groups. Whether you have children entering the school system or a parent that is aging in place, we want to make sure that policymaking responds to our demographics.”

“This resolution asserts Montgomery County’s commitment to fairness and justice in creating policies and processes,” said Councilmember Elrich. “If we are going to close the achievement gap, get rid of health disparities and effectively confront other disparities, we must use tools and systems that help us examine how communities of color will be impacted by policy and budget decisions. Using a racial equity lens informs and empowers County officials to make the best allocation of resources and respond to the needs of residents effectively.”

While the County is known for embracing its diversity, disparities in education, employment opportunities, health care and housing persists across ethnicities, income levels and genders. Racial and linguistic diversity generally compounds these disparities and exacerbates inequity.

The resolution calls on County leaders to look at disparity data and work with community leaders and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), which is a national network of government representatives working to achieve racial equity, to establish an equity policy framework that will be used to make future decisions. The sponsors of the resolution believe that local government leaders, working in concert with community stakeholders, are ideally situated to implement the policy changes needed across multiple departments and agencies to ultimately drive systemic change.

The Council will provide additional resources to its Office of Legislative Oversight to develop a report describing the current scope and breadth of the disparities that exist in the County by May 31, 2019. After this data is received the Council will introduce legislation to develop an equity policy for County services.

The complete resolution can be viewed at:

<https://tinyurl.com/ycqhv76> .

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Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: April 17, 2018  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Lead Sponsors: Council Vice President Navarro and Councilmember Elrich

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SUBJECT: Resolution to Develop an Equity Policy Framework in County Government

Background

1. Montgomery County is a community with a strong economy and public services that embraces its residents and the future. Our strong public services include awarding-winning public schools, community college, and park systems, vibrant performing and fine arts, and essential safety net programs in housing, public health, and other social services.
2. Montgomery County is a diverse and welcoming community. No one race or origin is a majority of Montgomery County's population. Almost one-third of the population is foreign-born. Our diversity is our strength and is key to our continued success as a community.
3. While we embrace our diversity, disparities exist by ethnicity, income, disability, gender, sexual identity, and other factors that can impede our future prosperity. These disparities in education, employment, health, and housing result from institutional and individual biases that undermine opportunities for vital members of our community.
4. Furthermore, the aforementioned disparities can be exacerbated by **racial** and **linguistic diversity** that intersect with and compound the effects of additional disparities and inequities based on racial background and limited English language proficiency.
5. Eliminating disparities by promoting equity - the fair treatment of individuals and diverse groups - is an economic imperative. The Urban Institute's *Racial Inequities in Montgomery County, 2011-15* report shows that a more equitable Montgomery County would increase the number of immigrants, Latinos, African Americans, and Asians with some college education, and would also increase employment and homeownership rates among people of color. A more equitable Montgomery County would enhance opportunities for all residents, thereby improving the economy.

6. The Montgomery County Government is responsible for all of its residents, and is in a position to address both unconscious and overt bias, to advance equity, and to address disparities based on race, ethnicity, national origin, English language proficiency, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, differing abilities, and income.
7. As part of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a growing number of jurisdictions are undertaking the work needed to operationalize equity, and integrate it into the decision-making process. These include the use of an “equity lens” to determine who benefits from public policies, regulations and practices and the development of equity tools and plans to inform local decision-making.
8. It is time for Montgomery County to move beyond disjointed efforts to reduce disparities, and commit to advancing the actions necessary to intentionally develop strong equity policies and create a strategic plan.

#### Action

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

The Council is committed to examining the data needed to develop an equity policy framework that would require the County to question how budget and policy decisions impact equity.

This effort must be a partnership between the County Council, County Executive, County Government, county agencies, institutions, and our community. The County Government must challenge itself to bring new and different partners to the table. Partnering with other jurisdictions as members of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) will also enhance the County’s effort and commitment to fostering equity.

Equity analyses should be part of capital and operating budget reviews, appropriation requests, and legislation. Program and process oversight should be undertaken viewing programs and processes through an equity lens. Equity targets and measures of progress must be put in place.

The Council will provide additional FY19 Operating Budget resources for the Office of Legislative Oversight to develop a baseline report describing current disparities in education, employment, housing, health, employment, and other measures of opportunity by May 31, 2019. Following the transmittal of the baseline report, the Council will introduce legislation for the County to develop an equity policy framework to inform the delivery of all County services.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

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Megan Davey Limarzi, Esq., Clerk of the Council