

Resolution No.: 18-1095  
Introduced: April 17, 2018  
Adopted: April 24, 2018

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsors: Council Vice President Navarro and Councilmember Elrich  
Cosponsors: Councilmembers Floreen, Leventhal, Katz, Berliner, Council President Riemer,  
Hucker, and Rice

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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:

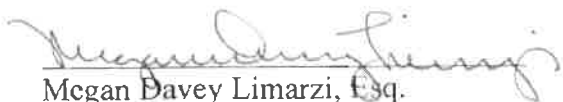
The Council is committed to examining the data needed to develop an equity policy framework that would require the County to question how budget and policy decisions impact equity.

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, land use, 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.

  
Megan Davey Limarzi, Esq.  
Clerk of the Council

- 2.6.4. Initiatives to support existing lower income residents through affordable and safe ways to access home equity without selling, and for mitigating the impact of increasing property taxes.
- 2.6.5. Enforce Fair Housing laws, which in Austin today are for all practical purposes ignored. The City must aggressively root out all vestiges of housing discrimination through law enforcement actions based on a widespread program of testing and prosecution using the only effective fair housing enforcement technique—matched pair testing.
- 2.6.6. Make Austin the national center for “neighborhood integration, diversity, and inclusion” by:
  - Establishing a Joint Center for Urban Integration, Diversity, Inclusion, and Affordability at the University of Texas, Huston-Tillotson University, and St. Edwards University, with an extension program working in Austin’s neighborhoods for students to work with residents to observe, learn, and innovate.
  - Supporting Austin neighborhoods to serve as living laboratories for neighborhood and housing equity and inclusion.
  - Workforce Training and investing in neighborhood-based Community Development Corporations, to engage people of color, persons of all incomes, developers, architects, planners, and community leaders to develop neighborhood level initiatives to achieve integration, diversity, and inclusion. This could certainly tie to the recommendation on the East Austin Conservancy. For data and recommendations regarding home equity and seniors: <http://www.urban.org/urban-wire/whats-stopping-seniors-accessing-wealth-stored-their-home-equity>



## 2.7. City Accountability

While it is critical that Austin City government make meaningful changes to achieve the goals outlined in this report, success is not likely without basic understanding and buy-in from City Staff.

- 2.7.1. The Mayor, with assistance from the Task Force, should produce an executive order that acknowledges the City’s racist policies of the past (and present) and calls all City officials and employees join him in a commitment to educate themselves and to begin immediately to do their part in delivering meaningful change. All City leadership and staff should be required to develop action plans to address race-based disparities in our city and to promote multiculturalism and full involvement and participation by all residents. Staff performance reviews should measure progress in those plans.
- 2.7.2. The City’s Chief Equity Officer should be supported with additional staff to conduct an annual review of each City department using a “report card” developed by his team, approved by the Mayor, and endorsed by the Task Force. Among the staff should be one or more dedicated to coordinating efforts among various City departments, specifically the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, to ensure: equity in publically subsidized affordable housing; the implementation and enforcement of fair housing laws; the delivery of City and County programs aimed at assisting vulnerable residents maintain their homes and remain in their neighborhoods. The City should also consider third party training for its departmental managers and team leaders to provide them with the understanding, skills, and tools needed to lead the effort to eliminate institutionalized racism.
- 2.7.3. Finally, we recommend that every new City code, ordinance, plan, or policy be reviewed and approved by the Chief Equity Officer whose responsibility it should be to identify any potential negative consequences for people of color, as well as potential for improvement to proactively make reparations for those negatively impacted by current and prior codes, ordinances, plans, or policies. This would include the current draft of CodeNext.
- 2.7.4. Through both legislative advocacy and through the courts, defend Austin’s right to enact policies and ordinances to combat residential segregation and to support “integration, diversity, and inclusion of everyone.” Start by mounting aggressive challenges to State of Texas legislative





actions infringing on Austin's ability to use inclusionary zoning, linkage fees, and prohibition of source of income fair housing protection.

### 3. Health

#### Summary

Good health is a key determinant in the ability of an individual to live and work with dignity, but not all Austin residents have equal and equitable access to health care services in their communities. The burden of the inequity in access and availability of health care services falls primarily on low-income communities of color.

Current issues in health disparity are not isolated to problems in the health system. They are the cumulative result of both past and current racism throughout the Austin minority populations. For instance, because of institutional racism, minorities have less education and fewer educational opportunities. Minorities are disproportionately homeless and have significantly poorer housing options. Due to discrimination and limited educational opportunities, minorities disproportionately work in low paying, high health risk occupations (e.g., construction, migrant farm workers, fast food workers, garment industry workers). Historic and current racism in land and planning policy also plays a critical role in minority health status. Minorities are much more likely to have toxic and other unhealthy uses sited in their communities than Whites, regardless of income. For example, over-concentration of alcohol and tobacco outlets and the legal and illegal dumping of pollutants both pose serious health risks to minorities. Exposure to these risks is not a matter of individual control or even individual choice.

Improving health takes much more than improving health care. By aligning the city budget and policies to advance equity, improvements in social conditions that determine health will result in health improvements.

Our recommendations are based on the idea that the City of Austin can intentionally redress historic and systemic forms of institutional racism and systemic inequities in order to improve the social determinants of health of the communities facing health inequities.

#### Background

*"Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced."*

—James Baldwin

Institutional racism and systemic inequities have deep historical roots of hundreds of years of explicitly racist policies reinforced by de-facto practices that are on-going nationally and locally. The impact of this history on the health of Austin residents is profound. Current day institutions perpetuate these inequities if they do not intentionally address them. To truly address the cumulative impact of racism will require a commitment – that will be uncomfortable - to re-prioritize and reallocate resources to begin to “turn the Titanic.”

#### ***Where We Are Today: The Impact of the Unconscious Bias***

Standard protocols for practice help ensure that everyone receives the right care or services to meet their needs. Implicit and explicit bias influences how those protocols are interpreted and carried out. The following story (or case study) is an example of how the implementation of a care protocol can be influenced by implicit bias:

