



Committee: HHS
Committee Review: At a future date
Staff: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To receive testimony – no vote expected
Keywords: FY21; Community Clinic; Primary Care; Medical; Dental

AGENDA ITEM #8
July 14, 2020
Public Hearing

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget; Montgomery County Government; COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account (NDA); Assistance to Community Clinics, Medical and Dental Practices; \$3,000,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant) Lead Sponsor: County Council

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Introduced July 7, 2020.
- Health and Human Services Committee scheduled for July 16, 2020.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The COVID-19 health emergency required medical and dental practices, including community clinics and primary care, to stop non-emergency in-person visits, work to transition to telemedicine, and incur costs for protective equipment for emergency services and re-opening. While non-emergency visits are now allowed, private outpatient practices face substantial financial challenges because of a 3-month loss of revenue and a continued decline in patient visits. In addition, Montgomery Cares community clinics are doing additional work to reach communities that are highly impacted by COVID-19 and people who may lack health insurance or access to healthcare.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Additional funding is needed to support the work of the Montgomery Cares community clinics' work with communities highly impacted by COVID-19 and to make sure people without insurance have access to healthcare. This special appropriation allocates \$500,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services to provide additional support to these community clinics.
- Many primary care private medical and dental practices have experienced a significant loss of revenue from reduced patient visits during the time that only emergency procedures could be provided. This special appropriation allocates \$2 million for a competitive grant program for Montgomery County-based independent primary care medical and dental practices. A primary care physician or dentist is a licensed practitioner who has the initial contact with the patient and who may refer the patient to a specialist. The maximum grant to any one practice is \$50,000 and the maximum amount will be reduced by any award a practice received under the County's Public Health Emergency Grant (PHEG) program.

- Medical and dental practices have had to innovate to reach patients during this pandemic, including initiating or enhancing the use of telemedicine. It is important to continue to innovate to increase access to healthcare even as practices re-open. These types of innovations can improve access to health for people who are not able to or have difficulty travelling to appointments and can reduce the amount of time needed by patients to consult with health professionals. This special appropriation allocates \$500,000 for a grant program to expand telehealth and implement other innovations with a focus on reducing disproportionate health outcomes. The maximum for this grant is \$25,000.

Attached:

Special Appropriation Resolution

pages 1-3

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance NDA
Assistance to Community Clinics, Medical and Dental Practices
\$3,000,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant)

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. By June 28, 2020, there were more than 10 million cases reported worldwide. In the United States there were more than 2.5 million confirmed cases and over 125,000 deaths. On June 28, the State of Maryland reported 66,777 confirmed cases and 3,042 deaths. In Montgomery County there were 14,607 confirmed cases and 696 confirmed deaths.
3. To slow the spread of the disease, Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency and has issued several Executive Orders with actions that include, but are not limited to, closing schools, closing senior centers and adult medical day care programs, closing all non-essential businesses and limiting the number of people that can gather. The Governor also ordered that starting March 24 all elective and non-urgent medical procedures had to cease and licensed or certified healthcare providers could only provide medical procedures that were critically necessary for the maintenance of health for a patient. The Governor later revised this Executive Order to allow resumption of elective and non-urgent medical procedures and appointments as of May 7 with certain requirements and protections.

4. Nationally and locally, the pandemic has had a significant impact on medical practices. The Commonwealth Fund reported that the number of visits to ambulatory practices declined by 60% from March 1 to early April and as of mid-May were still about one-third lower than before the pandemic. One area where the initial reduction was most evident was the mid-Atlantic and New England region. While revised standards for telemedicine allowed for increased telemedicine appointments, and in-person visits are increasing, most outpatient practices face substantial financial challenges because of a 3-month loss of revenue.
5. The Montgomery Cares system of community-based clinics continues its mission to provide access to health care to low-income people and people without access to health insurance. Clinics have implemented telemedicine appointments and continue to reach out into the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to help connect people to testing and other healthcare needs.
6. Closures have caused financial strain on dental practices as well. The American Dental Association (ADA) Health Policy Institute reported its March 23, 2020 poll showed that nationally 19% of dental practices had closed completely and 76% were seeing emergency patients only. By June 1, the ADA reported that 90% of practices had re-opened since early May but over 70% reported lower patient volume. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that Dental settings have unique characteristics that warrant specific infection control consideration.
7. Public 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 FY21 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, in the amount of \$3,000,000 is approved as follows:

	Personnel Expense	Operating Expense	TOTAL	Source of Funds
COVID-19 Human Services and Community Assistance NDA	\$0	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	Federal Grant Funds

\$500,000 of this special appropriation must be used for the Department of Health and Human Services to continue to support the work of the Montgomery Cares community clinics and their work with County residents who live in neighborhoods and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 or work in settings with a high risk of contracting COVID-19.

The Executive must use \$2.0 million of this special appropriation for a competitive grant program for Montgomery County-based independent primary care medical and dental practices to respond to lost revenue and costs associated with changes that are necessary to re-open their practices. The maximum grant to any one practice must be \$50,000. The ranking and review system for these grants should include consideration of whether the practice is serving patients from communities and neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 or fill specific needs, such as serving clients in languages in addition to English. A practice that has received funding through the Public Health Emergency Grant (PHEG) program may receive no more than a total of \$50,000 from PHEG and this grant assistance.

The Executive must use \$500,000 of this special appropriation for a grant program to help Montgomery County-based independent medical and dental practices expand telehealth and implement other innovations to increase and enhance patient access to healthcare, with a focus on reducing disproportionate health outcomes. The maximum amount of this grant is \$25,000. A practice may receive this grant in addition to other County funding.

In this resolution, an independent primary care medical or dental practice means a group of primary care physicians or dentists who own a majority of the medical or dental practice and retain key decision-making rights for the practice. A Montgomery County-based independent medical or dental practice must have one or more offices located in the County that is primarily used for treating patients. A primary care physician or dentist means a licensed physician or dentist with whom a patient has initial contact and by whom the patient may be referred to a specialist.

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