



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

April 19, 2023

To: Kate Stewart, Chair, Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee

From: Natali Fani-González, Chair, Economic Development Committee
Gabriel Albornoz, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee

Subject: Funding for Paid Media Campaign Targeting Multi-Cultural Communities

As the Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee considers the FY24 budget for the Legislative Branch Communications Outreach Non-Departmental Account (NDA), we write to request the Committee's support for adding \$315,000 to the reconciliation list to fund a new effort to engage more directly with our County's incredibly diverse constituents.

According to the 2020 Census, Maryland is now one of the most diverse states in the nation, surpassed only by Nevada, California, and Hawaii. Montgomery County is a majority Black and Brown jurisdiction and the most diverse County in the state. As presented by the Montgomery County Planning Board during their annual demographic trends update to the Council on January 24, 2023:

- Fifty-nine percent of the population identify as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, or other race; and
- Six out of seven Council districts are majority BIPOC; and
- A little over one-third of the total population is foreign born; and
- Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Vietnamese, and Amharic comprise the major languages spoken at home.

It is essential to our work to be able to communicate directly with these residents with culturally sensitive messaging and in publications/media they consume.

The Council's Communications Office is already well-equipped to produce multimedia content across different platforms that is both relevant and accessible to our diverse communities. What we now need is a robust effort to put this content where it will have the most reach and impact.

Accordingly, we propose a multi-year paid media campaign in multicultural media with the following components:

1. \$166,000 a year for TV media buys targeting multilingual communities
2. \$50,000 a year for traditional and digital multicultural media buys modeled after a multi-year phased out County-wide strategy for Thrive 2050 that targeted Equity Emphasis Areas.
3. \$83,000 a year for radio ads in ethnic radio and digital media targeting Black and Brown audiences, and Spanish, Chinese, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, and Korean-speaking communities.
4. \$16,000 a year for translation costs for tailoring messages in languages that we are not able to cover in-house

The total cost for FY24 of \$315,000 was informed by detailed conversations between Council communications staff and the multi-cultural media outlets themselves. We envision this to be beginning of an ongoing effort of the Council communications team.

While the Council has not yet embarked on a paid media campaign of this nature, it is a well-worn path for County departments that serve customers (i.e., Montgomery Recreation, Alcohol Beverage Services, the Department of Transportation, M-NCPPC etc.) who all have recurring funding for media buys. Meanwhile, other departments tap into grant funding to pay for media campaigns around critical issues, such as public health, census efforts, and Covid-19.

The County Council has a unique opportunity to create a first-of-its kind multicultural, multilingual paid media initiative in the Legislative Branch Communications Outreach Non-Departmental Account (NDA). The Council's Communications Office will oversee partnering with ethnic media that is diverse owned/founded to produce traditional and digital media ad campaigns that target the County's BIPOC community more authentically and effectively. The purpose of these multilingual ad campaigns is to raise awareness, change attitudes, opinions, or behaviors toward urgent community issues (i.e., fentanyl awareness, fire safety education, pedestrian safety, etc.). The goals and the topics of these advertising ads will be determined by the County Council as part of the Communications Office annual workplan set to be presented to Councilmembers in July 2023. The Communications Office will track engagement and measure the effectiveness of each ad campaign through post-campaign analysis of reach, performance, relevance, surveys, and other available metrics, that will help track, whenever possible, the success and return on investment of this effort.

To be clear, the entire effort will be done in-house, including content production and messaging, based on the Council's designated guidance and work plan for the upcoming year.

We understand that the demands on this year's budget are many, but we sincerely believe this investment will pay dividends over and over. We thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and we look forward to discussing it further with you.