

For two decades, Action in Montgomery has worked to make Montgomery County an affordable place to live, work, raise families, and retire. While the work has borne fruit (\$760+ million for affordable housing, passage of the Maryland Dream Act, etc.), Montgomery County continues to be unaffordable for many families. Many families continue to live check to check. Many families do not have health insurance. **This local trend is part of a larger national trend that considers our labor force not as human beings, but a source from which our capitalist apparatus extracts profit.**

In order to have a bigger impact on housing affordability in Montgomery County, AIM has to take on the issue of **jobs** more directly.

During this time of COVID, we have seen and recognized our essential laborers. In addition to doctors and nurses, they are phlebotomists, grocery store workers, trash collectors, and cleaning staff. We want to capitalize on this moment of recognition to find ways to create conditions that lead to better paying jobs and job protections. Well-paying jobs with health insurance and a retirement plan are key to financial sustainability, to raising a family, to participating in civic and religious life, to housing stability, and to stable education for children and school communities.

- We will explore ways to partner with unions to insist on prevailing wages in county contracts.
- We will listen to small businesses to understand the challenges they face in providing health insurance and retirement options.
- We will engage in deep listening in our congregations, schools, and communities about the challenges faced by those who are underemployed or unemployed.

PART I: Address disparities in testing, tracing, and treatment

Montgomery County must develop a transparent, coordinated, and comprehensive plan for COVID-19 testing, tracing, and treating in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. The County Executive and Public Health Director must be held accountable for their inadequate response to the needs for COVID-19 testing and tracing.

- **Testing sites** must be available in the communities hardest hit by COVID. We call on the county to partner with AIM member organizations that have volunteered outdoor space to set up community-based testing sites.
- **Tracing.** The county must improve and expand its contact tracing procedures to expedite outreach and education for impacted individuals, social networks, and businesses, particularly in communities of color.
- **Treatment.** Ensure that when scientifically proven treatment and vaccine(s) are available, that the communities hardest hit, and workers most at risk, are given top priority for care.

PART II: Address healthcare deserts in Montgomery County

- Work with the county and private partners to bring **affordable, community-based primary care** to existing healthcare deserts including Gaithersburg, White Oak, and Langley Park.
- Address the **gap in healthcare access created by distance learning**, which has closed health centers at Title I elementary schools, and resulted in fewer families registering for school and therefore not receiving preventative medical care. Adequate preventative care includes vaccinations for communities of color in schools where AIM organizes.

Action in Montgomery demands that the Montgomery County Council allocate sufficient funding so that the renovation of **South Lake Elementary School** can begin in FY 2021 as originally proposed by the Board of Education. Such funding would begin with \$7.182 M in FY 2021, with a total of \$34.9 M to be allocated towards completion of a new school building by FY 2023.

The children of South Lake Elementary School deserve better than the several major health hazards they are forced to navigate on a daily basis. Whether it is rodent feces in lunch bins, dead rodents throughout the facility, a nonfunctioning HVAC system, standing water, or the many other dangers they face—not to mention the physical crowding and obstructed views many students encounter in classrooms—**Montgomery County children deserve better**. The challenges presented by COVID-19 make it utterly unsafe for children and staff to return to the current overcrowded school building and its inadequate health room and 14 trailers.

The temporary solutions that have been offered have only exacerbated existing issues and created new challenges. This is the second time South Lake has been delayed while other schools with far fewer Black and Brown children, less crowding, and fewer and less urgent infrastructure needs have been prioritized by the County Council. Delaying South Lake's new school building not only **deepens distrust** in our county government's stated commitment to equity and social justice, it also **endangers the lives** of 900 Black and Brown children and their teachers and staff.

The continued neglect of South Lake Elementary School is a glaring racial and educational equity issue in Montgomery County.

PART I: Stem the tide of evictions caused by the COVID pandemic

Win funding for rental assistance from County Council, Governor, and State House, and ensure funding is spent to prevent evictions. Most immediately, support special appropriation of \$6 Million before Council leaves on recess at the end of July.

PART II: Continue to support the preservation and production of affordable housing through a variety of strategies.

Most immediately:

- Support Councilmember Riemer's legislation to build high-density housing on WMATA land
- Support legislation to end building moratoriums based on school overcrowding which slows development of affordable housing and supports racial inequity in school construction funding

Longer term, AIM is working on strategies to support more affordable housing on public land, push policy changes in the General Plan that lead to increased affordable housing, and address evictions in courts.