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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DEVELOPS NEW CHILD CARE RECOVERY PLAN; ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL CHILD CARE EXPANDED IN IMMEDIATE TRANSITION PHASE**

*Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Child Care Outlines Path Forward for Child Care During COVID-19 Pandemic*

BALTIMORE - (May 20, 2020) - The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Child Care*, a plan to continue and expand child care during the COVID-19 Pandemic. As the State entered the first recovery stage, MSDE announced the immediate start of a transition phase for child care, expanding access to child care to include families returning to work under Governor Hogan's latest Executive Order. MSDE established a comprehensive stakeholder task force, including family and center-based providers, child care advocates, as well as Maryland Department of Health representatives, to provide recommendations that helped to inform the recovery plan.

"We extend our heartfelt thanks to Maryland's child care providers, teachers and staff who have agreed to deliver services for essential persons and first responders, as well as those child care providers who have remained closed for the health and safety of their staff and families," said Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools. "Maryland's family and center-based child care providers are critical to our recovery efforts – we will move forward together with safety as the priority."

Parents newly returning to work as part of the State's Stage 1 opening of businesses can immediately access an open Essential Personnel Child Care or Essential Personnel School-Age program, recently expanded by 125 sites and ready to provide care for 21,500 more children than are being served presently. In this transition stage, all new families, not designated as essential persons under Governor Hogan's March 25<sup>th</sup> Executive Order, accessing child care will pay tuition directly to providers. The State will extend payment of childcare tuition for all pre-recovery phase essential personnel through June 7; and beginning June 8, child care tuition will be paid by all parents directly to the provider.

MSDE will ensure that there are Essential Personnel School-Age Child Care facilities available to provide care for students through the end of the school year. Additional child care providers (family and center based) can apply to open as new Essential Personnel Child Care or Essential Personnel School-Age programs. New child care sites must follow rigorous health and safety guidance set by MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), and attend orientation webinar and regional conference calls. Each new site will receive a one-time grant in the amount of \$800 (for family-based centers) and \$1600 (for child care centers) for cleaning,

sanitization and supplies. MSDE/MDH guidance for child care programs can be found at <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/covid-faqs>. Providers seeking to become an essential personnel child care program should contact their licensing specialists.

The first recovery stage continues to stress social distancing and reducing exposure to the virus as much as possible. If parents/guardians are able, they are strongly urged to keep children at home as the first and best option to protect them from the virus. As the State slowly and safely reopens during Stages 1 and 2, eligible persons can find family and center-based child care programs at <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/state-funded-child-care-essential-personnel> or by using LOCATE: Child Care <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/for-parents/state-funded-child-care-for-essential-personnel-only>, a free service available by phone Monday - Friday at 877-261-0060 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

The child care recovery plan details the progression of future child care openings through Stage 2 of the Governor's Roadmap to Recovery, and the eventual opening of all child care facilities and the end of the essential personnel child care program in the third recovery stage. The plan also outlines operational changes required throughout the recovery stages including healthy hygiene practices; intensified cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation; social distancing, and limited sharing.

Families who qualify can apply for the Child Care Scholarship Program, which subsidizes child care tuition for a child who is younger than 13 years old who does not have a disability, or an individual younger than 19 years old who does have a disability: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/child-care-scholarship-program>.

The draft Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Child Care is posted here: <http://marylandpublicschools.org/newsroom/Documents/MSDEChildCareRecoveryPlan.pdf>

Frequently asked questions are posted here:

[https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/faqs\\_providers\\_maryland\\_together\\_marylands\\_recovery\\_plan\\_for\\_child\\_care\\_final.5\\_20\\_2020.pdf](https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/faqs_providers_maryland_together_marylands_recovery_plan_for_child_care_final.5_20_2020.pdf)

[https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/faqs\\_parents\\_maryland\\_together\\_marylands\\_recovery\\_plan\\_for\\_child\\_care\\_final.5\\_20\\_2020.pdf](https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/faqs_parents_maryland_together_marylands_recovery_plan_for_child_care_final.5_20_2020.pdf)

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