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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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MSDE Hosts Virtual Town Halls for Historic \$193 Million Investment in Childhood Care and Early Education

Stakeholders are Invited to Attend One of Three Sessions to Provide Input in Child Care Development ARPA Plan

BALTIMORE, MD (August 19, 2021) - The Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood is hosting three virtual town hall meetings to discuss the needs of the child care community and seek input on the \$193 million historic investment provided by the American Rescue Plan Act's (ARPA) Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Discretionary funds. These funds, together with an additional \$309 million in ARPA stabilization grants, will sustain and bolster Maryland's child care system as the State continues to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and move forward.

To maximize participation, the virtual town halls will be hosted on three separate dates and include day, evening and Saturday morning timeframes. Registration for the virtual town halls is now open and can be found here: <https://forms.gle/NzqHiwQ7BwrMMKwq8>

- Monday, August 23, 2021, 2-4 p.m.
- Wednesday, August 25, 2021, 7-9 p.m.
- Saturday, August 28, 2021, 9-11 a.m.

Written comments may also be sent to earlychildhood.msde@maryland.gov by August 31, 2021.

“Our family child care and center-based providers and families have held strong during the pandemic, and this federal funding provides a historic opportunity to provide our early childhood educators the quality supports they need to rebuild stronger and move forward,” said Mohammed Choudhury, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools. “By engaging care providers, families and other partners, we want to fully understand current challenges, needs and opportunities. Our goal is to apply the appropriate tools and resources to grow and strengthen our early childhood education community, increase access to quality child care and ensure equitable access for every child.”

The town halls will provide a general overview of the funding opportunity and then break into small, facilitated groups for meaningful engagement with stakeholders. In addition, stakeholders will be able to submit written suggestions. The input collected will be incorporated into the finalization and implementation of the ARP Act Plan funds.

In response to the urgent need to address the child care system crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency, Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law, the American Rescue

Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, which included nearly \$15 billion in supplemental to support child care in states, territories and tribes. Maryland received \$193 million of these supplementary funds.

Federal guidance for the ARPA CCDF Discretionary Supplemental Funds can be found here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/policy-guidance/ccdf-acf-im-2021-03>. Lead agencies may use supplemental funds for any activities allowable under the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act and CCDF regulations. These activities are not restricted to responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition, the federal guidance encourages states to use funds in a way that allows parents equal access to high quality child care, supports the developmental and learning needs of children, meets parents' employment needs and child care preferences, and supports a professionalized workforce that is fairly and appropriately compensated for their essential skilled work.

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