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Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Announces New Maryland Rebuilds Grant Program to Strengthen and Expand Maryland Early Childhood Education

Maryland Rebuilds Provides \$193 Million Investment to Address and Overcome Impact of Pandemic on Child Care, Early Childhood Education, and School Readiness

BALTIMORE, MD (August 30, 2022) – The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) announced today the launch of the new Maryland Rebuilds grant program, designed to support and enhance the State’s early childhood education community as it continues to rally and emerge from the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Maryland Rebuilds invests more than \$193 million in federal funds to stabilize, sustain, and expand the State’s child care and early childhood education systems, with the goal of expanding access to quality early learning programs and building a strong foundation for school readiness, growth, and success.

Last year, MSDE held three statewide virtual town halls to hear stakeholder priorities for the \$193 million in federal funding made available to Maryland through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. MSDE engaged nearly 1,300 child care providers and parents from across the state and created the Maryland Rebuilds grant opportunity in direct response to their input and needs, including customer support and ensuring funds are widely and equitably accessible.

Maryland Rebuilds is centered on six high-leverage strategies and corresponding, defined actionable focus areas. These strategies, informed by the townhalls and community stakeholder input, are:

- Expanding Access to Quality Child Care
- Early Learning Models of Excellence
- Expanding Mental Health Supports and Services
- Growing a Highly Effective Child Care Workforce
- Boosting Family Child Care
- Advancing a Coordinated Prekindergarten Enrollment System

“As we continue to emerge from the pandemic and rebuild our early learning systems, we know that a return to normal is not good enough. Unacceptable gaps and inequities existed before the pandemic and will continue to persist unless we do something differently. Only through bold, innovative efforts and deep levels of engagement can we realize the vision for learning set by the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future,” said State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury. “Maryland Rebuilds is a unique and forward-thinking grant initiative. It envisions a child care system that works for all children, families, child care providers, and educators, especially those who have been historically underserved or otherwise not been able to participate in Department initiatives. Complementing the Maryland Leads investment in school communities, Maryland Rebuilds provides the opportunity to work directly with child care providers and early childhood educators, support families and children, and address systemic issues in the child care system so that all children have access to excellent learning opportunities and the best possible outcomes.”

The Maryland Rebuilds program will bolster the child care provider community and early learning programs compromised during the pandemic. In the first year of the pandemic, there was a 25% decline in prekindergarten enrollment and most of the children who did receive instruction did so attended early learning programs virtually. This year’s Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results illuminate the disruptions in early learning. The majority of kindergarteners (60%) did not demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and behavior to actively engage in the curriculum: one-third of kindergarteners are approaching readiness and may require additional instruction and 27% of kindergarteners are identified as emerging and will require targeted support.

Eligible applicants, including non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, local education agencies, local early childhood advisory councils, and Judy Centers are invited to submit proposals aligned with the six high-leverage strategies to:

- help families find and meet the high cost of child care;
- assist child care providers to improve the quality of their programs;
- provide access for children and families to mental health supports and services;
- offer multiple supports for the early childhood workforce; and
- increase the resilience of family child care businesses.

Today MSDE released grant guidance documentation, including detailed information about each strategic area, and its plan for a series of general and strategy-specific information sessions.

The application window opens immediately (August 30, 2022) and will close October 10, 2022. Monitor <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/MDRebuilds> for updated information pertaining to the grant program, information sessions, and more.

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