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Maryland State Department of Education to Invest More Than \$35 Million in Prekindergarten Programs Across the State

MSDE Awards 53 Public and Private Pre-K Programs with Funding to Expand Access to More Families and Launches New Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant Opportunity

BALTIMORE, MD (July 26, 2023) – In service of providing high-quality, affordable prekindergarten opportunities to Maryland families, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is proud to announce opportunities for three grant programs which will collectively provide more than \$35 million to prekindergarten programs across the state.

"When we strengthen the foundation our young people stand on, we build stronger pathways to success and opportunity," says Governor Wes Moore. "This funding will help expand access to high-quality, highly inclusive prekindergarten for children of all backgrounds. By starting education earlier, we are taking an important step toward building out the world-class school system Maryland deserves."

Through the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant, MSDE has awarded 53 public and private prekindergarten programs a total of \$28 million in funding. MSDE has also announced the launch of the Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant, a competitive grant program designed to provide funding for targeted technical assistance, resources, and support for new and/or existing programs.

"Our recently adopted Strategic Plan: Maryland Transforms makes it a priority that all Maryland students are prepared socially, emotionally, and academically for success in kindergarten," says State Board President Clarence C. Crawford. "That's exactly what these grant programs will do. This is another step in the right direction to ensure prekindergarten programs continue to grow

and create more opportunities for our children and families, especially those who have been historically underserved.”

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant & The Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant

Through the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant, a total of 13 local education agencies (LEAs) received funding for one or more additional prekindergarten classrooms. In addition, 40 private providers including child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, and other programs across the state have been awarded grant funds. Collectively, the private and public prekindergarten programs will create 2,731 new prekindergarten seats and will provide three and four-year-old children from low-income families access to full-day prekindergarten.

“We at the Goddard School in Owings Mills are honored to receive the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant for the fifth year in a row,” said Lisa Ann Dickinson, the program’s Grant Manager. “When we started, we only offered 10 prekindergarten spots to the community and filled every single one. Through the years, we gradually increased the number of spots we could offer and continued to fill them. This year we are excited to offer 40 prekindergarten spots to the community with the anticipation of filling all of them. Over the past five years, this grant has allowed the Goddard School in Owings Mills to provide a free prekindergarten education to 140 students.”

These grant funds allow school systems and early care and education programs to increase the length of the school day from a half day to a full day, fund highly qualified and certified early childhood teachers in each classroom, and serve more children who otherwise would not have access to early childhood education necessary for success in school and life.

“Bright Beginnings Children's Center is excited to receive the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant which will allow families in northern Calvert County the opportunity to have the Pre-K experience,” says first-time grantee Angie Figueiras of Owings, MD. “By receiving this grant, we will implement a project-based inquiry curriculum to strengthen early language, literacy, and mathematical skills, in addition to social foundations and social and emotional learning. There will also be strong family engagement opportunities to serve students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), students from homes where English is not the primary spoken language, and economically disadvantaged students.”

Funds for these grants were made possible by House Bill 1300/Chapter 36 (2020), as amended House Bill 1372. Chapter 55 – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future enables the State to expand high-quality prekindergarten, provide technical assistance, and ensure family support services are accessible in many high-need communities.

Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant

Recognizing that programs may need additional support to administer high-quality prekindergarten, MSDE will be launching the Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant on July 27, 2023. The grant is a one-year, one-time competitive grant that provides additional seats for eligible three- and four-year-olds across the state. The Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant also provides a pathway for LEAs

and private providers to become eligible to apply for either the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant or the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant for the following school year.

As part of the grant, recipients will receive targeted technical assistance as well as support with accessing additional teacher credentials and State-approved teacher certification to support high-quality instruction. In addition, MSDE's Division of Early Childhood staff, partnered with staff from Maryland EXCELS, will support the grantees to reach a quality rating of at least 3 or 4. This will enable each grantee to be ready to receive either the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant or the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant in fiscal year 2025.

“We must set our prekindergarten providers up for success. Our children’s lives depend on it. The early childhood years are the most critical period for brain development to set the foundation for lifelong learning and achievement,” says State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury. “I am excited for the launch of the Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant which is designed to support the expansion of classroom capacity for prekindergarten providers. It’s not enough to just create more seats. We must also ensure the quality of every prekindergarten program and the Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant does just that by providing targeted technical assistance and support for early childhood providers.”

The Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant Information Guide, Frequently Asked Questions, and other information about the grant program, including customer service support sessions, can be found on the MSDE [Division of Early Childhood Grant Programs webpage](#). Grant information, including applications, will be released on July 27.

The Prekindergarten Capacity Building Grant is leveraging one-time American Rescue Plan Act funds to support a pipeline of high-quality prekindergarten programs that are ready to receive State funding.

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