

HHS/ED COMMITTEE #2  
March 3, 2016  
**Discussion**

**MEMORANDUM**

March 1, 2016

TO: Health and Human Services Committee  
Education Committee

FROM: Essie McGuire, Senior Legislative Analyst *Essie McGuire*  
Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst *Vivian Yao*

SUBJECT: **Discussion – Children’s Opportunity Fund**

The Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education Committees will receive a status report and progress update on the Children’s Opportunity Fund. The following individuals are expected to participate in the discussion:

- Shirley Brandman, Interim Director, Children’s Opportunity Fund
- Dr. Maria Navarro, Chief Academic Officer, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
- Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

The Children’s Opportunity Fund (COF) is a joint initiative between MCPS and the County Government to establish a dedicated funding source to support policy priorities that address the social determinants that impact the educational achievement gap.

The focus of the work to date in this fiscal year has been to determine the policy and organizational structures for the COF. The overview presentation materials attached at circles 1-8 outline the progress toward defining the roles and governance for this significant initiative. Council staff highlights below some of the overview elements below that Committee members may want to discuss further.

- **Priority Areas:** The presentation highlights three priority focus areas:
  - **Early Childhood Focus:** Every child reading on grade level by the end of third grade.
  - **Closing Opportunity Gaps in Middle Schools:** Every middle school student has access to quality hands-on learning experiences outside the school day.
  - **Expansion of the Community Schools Initiative**

**The Committees may want to understand more about how these priority areas were identified and the vision for how they will inform investment going forward. What process is anticipated to refine or add to these priorities as investment strategies evolve over time?**

- **Organizational Structure:** Identifying the governance and organization of the Fund has been a primary undertaking to date in this fiscal year. Circles 6-7 outline the proposed structure. The COF will be established as a fund by the Montgomery County Community Foundation. Key government leaders will serve as the Policy Leadership Group and establish investment priorities. The Steering Committee will identify evidence informed strategic investments to further COF priorities.

**One next step in implementing the organizational structure is hiring a permanent director for the COF. The Committees may want to hear more about the timeline and anticipated process for hiring a director.**

- **Evaluation:** Each investment will have evaluation plan to assess impact and return on investment and efforts to scale up evidence based approaches.

**This is a critical component of the COF strategic process. It may be useful to discuss further what entity or entities are expected to conduct the evaluations, or what process will be used to determine the evaluation structure for COF funded initiatives.**

- **Current funding:** The FY16 COF funding of \$250,000 was contributed in equal parts from the MCPS and DHHS budgets. For FY17, the MCPS budget currently includes the same level of funding, and the Executive's operating budget will be released shortly. In addition, funding of \$750,750 was appropriated to the COF Non-Departmental Account to support the Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) summer program.

**The Committees may want to hear more detail about anticipated FY16 spending levels.** Some limited operating expenses have been incurred, and some FY16 funding may be necessary to support the new Director depending on the hiring timeline. It appears that the intent is to transfer any remaining FY16 funding to the Community Foundation for future investment.

Circle 6 also identifies some possible short term priorities for FY16 investments. **The Committees may want to understand more about these possible funding efforts and the process and timeline for making these funding decisions.** Will these short term priorities also be included in the evaluation efforts?



## **Children's Opportunity Fund**

Montgomery County, Maryland

**Brief Update on the Children's Opportunity Fund**  
**March 3, 2016**

### **What is the Children's Opportunity Fund?**

*A work in progress...*

- A public/private initiative to support investment in the well-being of Montgomery County's children and families
- Created in recognition of the growing opportunity gap
- Jointly launched and funded initially by the County government and MCPS

## What is the Children's Opportunity Fund?

- Intended to leverage public funds to attract private investment
- Designed to invest in disrupting the social and health determinants that predict and perpetuate the achievement gap

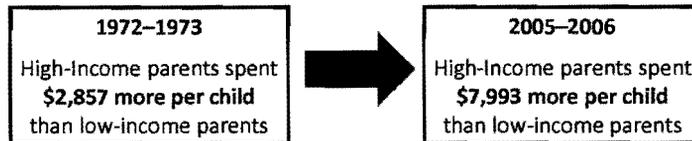
Of the 27,472 pre-K students who enrolled in MCP, over the last six years, 29,589 were eligible for COTF.

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools

## Mission/Vision

- The Children's Opportunity Fund brings together top government leadership and dedicated community partners to plan, advocate for and fund strategic investments that improve the lives of children and families in Montgomery County.
- The Children's Opportunity Fund envisions a deliberate, coordinated strategy for aligning public and private resources to ensure that all children have access to the essential services and growth opportunities they will need to thrive.

### Child Enrichment Spending: Low-Income vs. High-Income



Source: Restoring Opportunity by Greg Duncan and Richard Mumane

*The achievement gap between children from high and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40% larger among children born in 2001 than among those born twenty-five years earlier.*

*"Consensus on how to reduce poverty and increase opportunity must tackle the question of how to reduce the growing gap in educational achievement between children from wealthy and poor families"*

### COF Goals

<b>Goal 1</b>	The COF will provide a community-based infrastructure for aggressively seeking out new funding sources outside of the school system budget to fund innovative, evidence-based efforts targeted at disrupting the social determinants that currently predict the achievement gap and will rigorously evaluate all interventions to determine return on investment.
<b>Goal 2</b>	The COF will be strategic in identifying priority areas for investment based upon unmet need; and will rely on data and research into best practices for reducing opportunity and achievement gaps to support meaningful impact on a large scale.
<b>Goal 3</b>	The COF will afford a mechanism for more deliberately aligning resources toward effective county inter-agency and cross system collaborations serving our most vulnerable youth and their families to achieve maximum positive impact on improving outcomes for children and families.

## **Identified Priority Areas (a multi-year effort)**

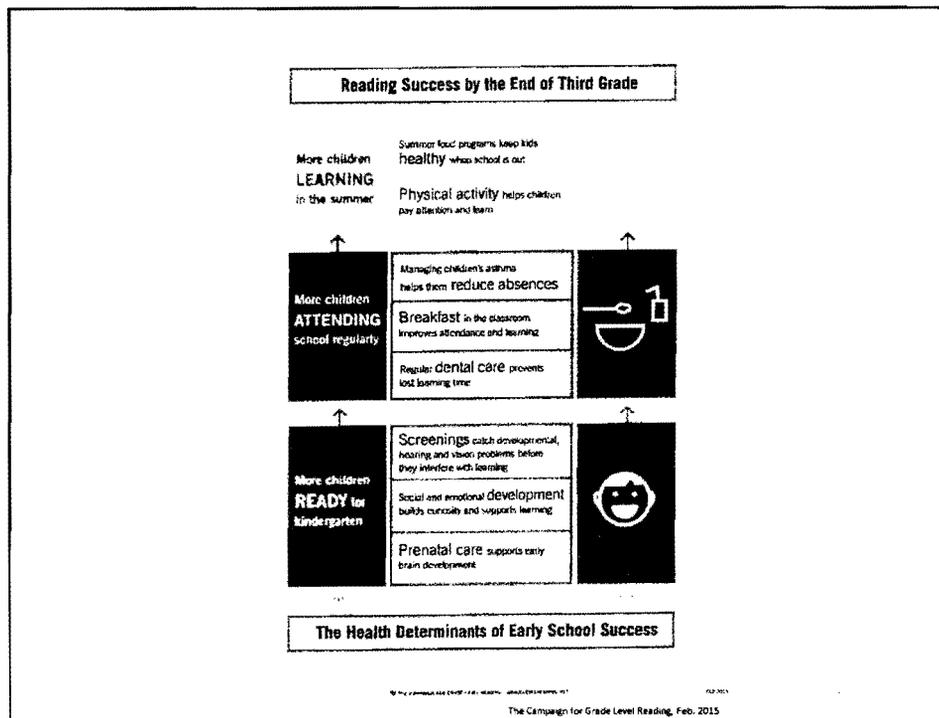
### **1. EARLY CHILDHOOD FOCUS: Every child reading on grade level by the end of third grade (early childhood).**

- Join the Annie E. Casey Grade Level Reading Communities Network with a focus on school readiness/attendance/summer learning loss. Build on BELL Foundation.
- Identify for investment/intervention health and education related barriers that keep children from being ready for Kindergarten on "day one".
- Identify before and after school and summer learning opportunities that can improve outcomes for low income students.

## **Identified Priority Areas (a multi-year effort)**

### **1. EARLY CHILDHOOD FOCUS continued: Why does it matter?**

- The Readiness Gap: Only 48% of entering kindergartners in MCPS demonstrated readiness on "day one".
- The Attendance Gap: 7.5% of FARMS ES students are absent more than 20 days per year and 10.2% of FARM MS students miss more than 20 days compared to less than 5% for their non-FARMS peers.
- Summer Learning Loss: 2/3 of the ninth-grade achievement gap can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities.



**Identified Priority Areas (a multi-year effort)**

- 2. CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS IN MS: Every middle school student has access to quality hands-on learning experiences outside the school day.**
  
- 3. EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE**

## **Immediate Focus: Increasing Capacity of Existing Investments**

The COF is looking to deploy FY 16 funds to enhance the impact of current county investments.

Under early consideration:

- Enhancing early literacy by purchasing books to seed a “Reach out and Read” effort with local pediatricians.
- Defraying the transportation costs for after-school programs serving low income youth in order to increase capacity.

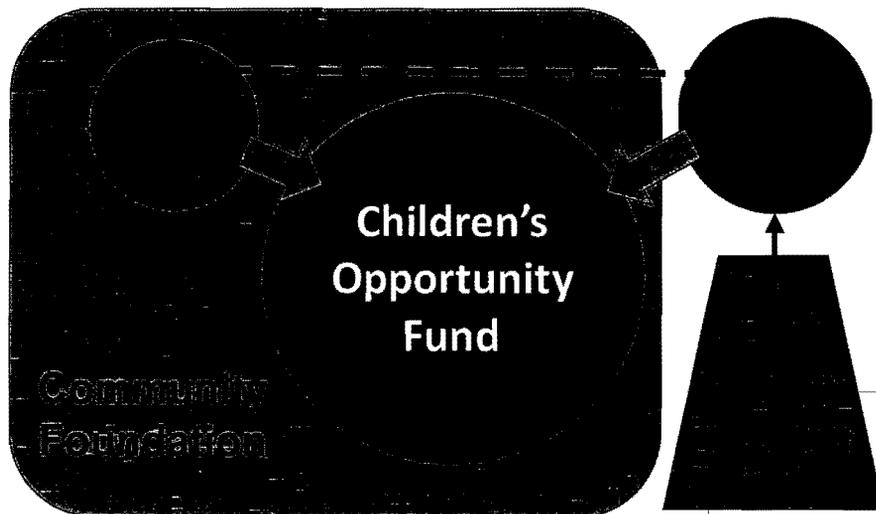
## **COF at the Community Foundation**

- COF will be established as a Fund at the Montgomery County Community Foundation.
- The County Executive, Superintendent, Member of the County Council and Member of the Board of Education will serve as the Policy Leadership Group to the COF guiding the establishment of investment priorities.
- A Steering Committee consisting of philanthropy, business, child experts as well as representatives of the County agencies that serve youth will implement the COF investment priorities.
- The COF Director will serve as a consultant to the Community Foundation providing guidance and support to the Policy Leadership Team and the Steering Committee.

## Why the Community Foundation?

- Nimbleness in the creation of the COF with immediate ability to accept private funds.
- Offers a chance to incubate while COF evolves.
- Provides a ready-made, cost effective accounting and reporting infrastructure.
- Greater access to Community Foundation's network of philanthropists.
- No conflict of interest for elected officials because Community Foundation Board exercises fiduciary obligation.

## Organizational Structure



## **Organizational Structure**

- The COF Policy Leadership Group will convene a few times per year to set guiding priorities for COF based upon the County' changing social, health and educational needs.
- The Policy Leadership Group will meet with the COF Steering Committee to share their recommendations on COF direction.
- The Steering Committee, assisted by the Director, will identify a few key evidence informed strategic investments predicted to have maximum impact toward accomplishing one or more of the COF priorities and/or solicit providers to meet existing needs.
- Any COF investments in a strategic intervention will have an evaluation plan from the outset to assess impact and return on investment.
- COF evaluations will be shared with the County's elected officials to support ongoing efforts at scaling up evidence-based approaches.

## **COF Time Frame**

- COF will be set up at the Community Foundation by early spring 2016.
- Steering Committee members are invited and seated by late spring 2016.
- COF is publicly launched by summer 2016 and aggressive outreach to private foundations and donors begins.
- Steering Committee begins the process of identifying next strategic investments by summer-fall 2016.