

I am Kimberly Rusnak, Director of the Children's Opportunity Fund. Our mission is to work with community partners to address the opportunity gap, which has been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. Thank you to the County Council for voting today to provide continued support for Equity Hubs through June 16.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Equity Hubs served children who otherwise couldn't gain access to care. For many working families and families where English is not their first language, navigating our childcare and out of school time systems is challenging. If we are pushing for true Equity— this means addressing the fact that those who can afford do, but those who cannot afford don't and often they aren't even aware of the various options for care and support. They don't know where to look or who to trust to provide quality, positive care for their children.

In partnership with the Black and Brown Coalition and 12 childcare providers, we created a system that was easily accessible to families and provided full day care from 8am to 6pm because 75% of families in Montgomery County have both parents working or are single parent families.

The Children's Opportunity Fund is now focused on summer. We are excited that MCPS will be offering summer school for all students. However, for many families, offering a summer program that is only 5 or 6 hours per day, for 5-6 weeks, doesn't cover the need for full-time care during the summer. Summer camps are expensive, about \$350-400 per week. We are embarking upon a summer mapping project that will help us to determine what summer program access is like in the areas of our County that have the highest need.

Our community cares about our youngest residents, and we want to ensure students gain access to quality summer programs. Summer is a time for fun, for exploration and also for learning – but in different ways than the traditional school year. This summer, more than ever, our highest priority must be on providing safe spaces with caring adults, and learning opportunities grounded in student interest that can re-spark their engagement, foster their recovery and prepare them to return to in-person learning in the fall.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to continuing to work with you moving forward.