



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To receive testimony/final action - vote expected
Keywords: #child care, #distance learning

AGENDA ITEM #11
September 29, 2020
Public Hearing/Action

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget, Montgomery County Government, Early Care and Education Non-Departmental Account, COVID-19 School-Age Child Care During Distance Learning, \$7,687,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant Funds)

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Public hearing and action.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

This special appropriation will provide funding to allow school-age child care providers to open licensed child care programs in public school buildings to support working parents. Child care providers for school-age children need support in order to meet COVID-19 social distancing and safety requirements and keep tuition affordable for parents.

The special appropriation also provides before, during and after school child care to children in low-income working families and children in foster care while MCPS is meeting virtually during the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. Many parents and caregivers do not have the ability to telework and provide supervision for their children as they navigate on-line school. Low-income families and foster families need additional support so that their children can access virtual learning.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The County Executive and the County Council recognize the need for this special appropriation and have collaborated to develop this special appropriation with input from community-based partners.
- This special appropriation will provide \$1.8 million for reopening grants for full-day, school age child care services in Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) buildings. Grant awards will be based on the number of classrooms that the child care provider will be opening in school space during the first semester of the MCPS 2020-2021 school year multiplied by \$19,500. The maximum grant amounts for each organization is \$250,000

- This special appropriation will provide \$5.6 million to support the tuition for full-day school-age child care services for low-income working families whose income is below 400% of the Federal Poverty Level and children in foster care while MCPS is meeting virtually during the first semester.
- The special appropriation also provides \$287,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services for staffing to administer the grants to child care providers and tuition support services for low-income families and foster families.
- The Source of Funds is Federal Grant Funds.

This report contains:

Proposed Resolution

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Memo to Council President from Councilmember Navarro

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: September 22, 2020
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Early Care and Education Non-Departmental Account
COVID-19 School-Age Child Care During Distance Learning
\$7,687,000 (Source of Funds: Federal Grant Funds)

Background

1. Section 308 of the County Charter provides that a special appropriation is an appropriation which states that it is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency, or to act without delay in the public interest. Each special appropriation shall be approved by not less than six Councilmembers. The Council may approve a special appropriation at any time after public notice by news release. Each special appropriation shall specify the source of funds to finance it.
2. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared coronavirus COVID-19 a pandemic, and it has spread rapidly throughout the world. As of September 8, 2020, there were 20,766 confirmed cases in Montgomery County. There were 798 confirmed deaths and 39 probable deaths in Montgomery County.
3. To slow the spread of the disease, Maryland Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency on March 5, 2020 and issued several Executive Orders that closed schools, closed non-essential business, and required Maryland residents to shelter at home. After the State closed child care programs in Maryland in March 2020, it imposed various requirements for reopening child care including limiting group sizes and establishing health standards necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The smaller group sizes reduce tuition payments to be collected by providers, while they must continue to maintain the staffing levels and other fixed costs and increase spending for personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and other materials needed for the safe delivery of services. These restrictions along with parental fears about COVID transmission place great strain on child care providers who have struggled with sustainability challenges prior to COVID restrictions.

4. The County Executive and the County Council recognize the need for this special appropriation and have collaborated to develop this special appropriation with input from community-based partners.
5. With the start of the school year in a distance-learning environment, many parents and caregivers do not have the ability to telework and provide supervision for their children as they navigate on-line school. Additionally, during this continued period of social distancing practices, students may also need access to social-emotional supports, physical activity and learning assistance. From an equity perspective, children of low-income families are least likely to have access to quality licensed child care and supports to help them navigate virtual learning.
6. This special appropriation will make it possible for school-age child care providers to open licensed child care programs in public school buildings to support working parents. This funding is needed to offset increased COVID related expenses and decreased revenue from lower classroom capacity and the inability to operate in school space since March 2020. These providers did not likely receive prior support for school-age services through the County's Public Health Emergency Grant program or the Early Care and Education Initiative Recovery Fund. Funding of \$1.8 million will support reopening grants for full-day, school age child care services in Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) buildings. Grant awards will be based on the number of classrooms that the child care provider will be opening in school space during the first semester of the MCPS 2020-2021 school year multiplied by \$19,500. The maximum grant amounts for each organization is \$250,000. To be eligible for a grant, child care providers must (1) reopen full-day, school-age child care classroom(s) in MCPS building(s) during the first semester of the MCPS 2020-2021 school year, (2) have a State license to operate child care in the classroom(s), (3) have a facility use license for the classroom(s) through the Office of Community Use of Public Facilities, and (4) be in good standing with the State of Maryland.
7. This special appropriation will also support low-income working families whose income is below 400% of the Federal Poverty Level and foster families by funding before, during and after school child care while MCPS is meeting virtually during the first semester of school ending on January 29, 2021. This care will provide supervision to children ages 5-13 who would otherwise be in school but for the restrictions to in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding of \$5.6 million will support the tuition for full-day school-age child care services offered by child care centers, registered family child care homes or letter of compliance programs located in the County. Reimbursement for services must be based on the Maryland Family Network average rate for 5-year-olds in Montgomery County. Eligibility for this tuition assistance will be determined separately and differently from existing subsidy programs. To be eligible for these services, children must reside in Montgomery County and be enrolled in Montgomery County Public Schools, and their families must have income at or below 400% of the federal poverty level and apply for State and local child care subsidies. The family income requirement will not apply to school-age children in foster care needing child care. Reimbursement under this section of the resolution will be reduced by the amounts received or eligible to be received from existing State and local childcare subsidy programs. For a provider to be eligible to participate, they must comply with COVID health requirements, including appropriate

social distancing of students in child care space, and be able to access and support the MCPS virtual curriculum for each child. Technical Assistance that is culturally and linguistically proficient must be available for providers in partnership with DHHS, MCPS, and the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center to ensure that providers can meet these eligibility requirements.

8. This special appropriation will also provide \$287,000 to support additional staffing that is culturally and linguistically responsive in DHHS Children, Youth and Family Services to implement the program described herein. DHHS must create a streamlined application process for working families that is easily accessible and culturally and linguistically responsive to the diverse needs of this constituency. In partnership with the Minority Health Initiatives, including “Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar” (which includes the health promoters) and the African American Health Program, all information that is put out across different outreach platforms must be accurate and consistent. The Multilingual Unit and both the County Executive and County Council PIO will also partner on this outreach and communications effort.
9. The Source of Funds is Federal Grant Funds.
10. Notice of public hearing was given and a public hearing was held.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

A special appropriation to the FY21 Operating Budget of the Early Care and Education NDA is approved as follows:

<u>Personnel Expense</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>Capital Outlay</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$7,687,000	\$0	\$0	Federal Grant Funds

This special appropriation must only be used to implement the program using the guidelines described in paragraphs 6, 7, and 8. The Department of Health and Human Services will administer the funding.

The Executive must provide monthly reports on implementation of the grant and tuition programs to the County Council beginning on October 15, 2020 with a final report by March 15, 2021 about the use of these funds that includes: 1) information about the number of students served by the tuition assistance program each month; 2) the number of students who applied for the tuition assistance program but were not eligible and the reasons they did not qualify; 3) the average monthly award amount and total monthly distribution; 4) names of businesses, total award amount, and location of services provided for any business that receives assistance under the grant program.

The Executive must designate an employee to lead an effort to notify childcare businesses throughout the County about the programs supported by this appropriation. Also, consistent with our Racial Equity and Social Justice law, outreach should emphasize childcare businesses located in significantly impacted communities and assist businesses on how to apply.

The funds appropriated in this special appropriation must be placed in the General Fund account associated with the Early Care and Education NDA, in which any unspent funds will be re-appropriated in FY2022.

This appropriation is needed to address a public health emergency and to act without delay in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

NANCY NAVARRO
COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 4

CHAIR, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
FISCAL POLICY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council President Sidney Katz
FROM: Councilmember Nancy Navarro
SUBJECT: Special Appropriation for Full-day School Age Childcare Availability during
Virtual School Instruction

Thank you for your efforts in bringing forth this special appropriation to address service gaps in full-day school age childcare availability, that includes before and after school care, as schools have begun the 2020-2021 school year virtually and parents face a myriad of challenges when it comes to finding care during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Council has led, and invested in several efforts to support providers and families, we must continue to creatively deploy our resources to ensure programs are in place that support our constituency, especially those who are disproportionately feeling the brunt of this pandemic.

Our diverse childcare provider community is key in the successful re-opening of our County. Given that the school system has guaranteed space until November 9th, we must continue to collaborate and keep the dialogue going to ensure that we don't create unintended disruptions, so I would appreciate being a part of these discussions as well.

In reading through the appropriation, there are a few areas where we can strengthen the intent of this program we are creating. In line with what my staff discussed with your staff yesterday, I am proposing the following:

- 1) Technical Amendment under the \$5 million language as County "residents" may imply immigration status:
 - a. **REVISED LANGUAGE:** "To be eligible for these services, children must ~~be County residents~~ **reside in** the County and **be** enrolled in Montgomery County

Public Schools and their families must have income at or below 400% of the federal poverty level and apply for State and local child care subsidies.”

- 2) Inclusion of new language under the \$5 million language regarding the application process since families will need to apply, which will require a robust communication and outreach plan:
 - a. **NEW LANGUAGE:** “The Department of Health and Human Services must create a streamlined application process that is easily accessible to families, and that is culturally and linguistically responsive to the diverse needs of this constituency. In partnership with the Minority Health Initiatives, including “Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar” (which includes the health promoters) and the African American Health Program, all information that is put out across different outreach platforms must be accurate and consistent. The Multilingual Unit and both, the County Executive and County Council PIO will also partner on this outreach and communications effort.”

- 3) Inclusion of revised language under the \$5 million language to support providers. While some may have the technical assistance in-house to easily access, support, and meet MCPS virtual curriculum, some childcare providers may not:
 - a. **REVISED LANGUAGE:** “Technical Assistance available for providers in partnerships with DHHS, MCPS, and the Resource and Referral Center, that is culturally and linguistic proficient to ensure that these providers meet the requirement that in order for a provider to be eligible to participate they must follow COVID health requirements, including appropriate social distancing of students in space, and be able to access and support the MCPS virtual curriculum for each child.”

- 4) On the HHS Staff Capacity language:
 - a. **REVISED LANGUAGE:** “\$287,000 to support additional staffing **that is culturally and linguistically responsive** in the DHHS Office of Eligibility and Support Services to implement the program described herein.”

Thank you for all your work and consideration, and for bringing a broad coalition of providers and agencies to the table. I look forward to reviewing a version of this special appropriation that includes the language outlined above.