



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To introduce agenda item/Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #school-age child care, #equity hubs

AGENDA ITEM #20C
December 14, 2021
Introduction/Action

SUBJECT

Amendment to Resolution 19-832, Early Care and Education Non-Departmental Account. COVID 19 School-Age Child Care During Distance Learning

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Introduction and action to amend Resolution 19-832 to allow \$2.2 million in funding to support operating expenses, including rent, cleaning, and personal protective equipment, for childcare services delivered in the County. The total amount of the appropriation and the source of funds remain the same.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

This amendment allows \$2.2 million of previously appropriated federal grant funding to be used to support operational expenses of child care providers, making service delivery possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The original appropriation of \$7,687,000 was approved on September 29, 2020, to support the reopening of licensed child care programs in public school buildings and tuition for child care for low-income children. The amendment allows the County to spend out the full amount of federal funding originally appropriated to support child care delivery in the County.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- This amendment shifts \$2.2 million in funding originally targeted for child care tuition for school-age children to be used for operational support for child care providers to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The shift allows the funding targeted in this resolution to be fully spent in support of child care delivery in the County. There is an additional technical change that removes the requirement that unspent funding be reappropriated into the next fiscal year.

- The total amount of the appropriation and the source of funds remain the same.

This report contains:

Proposed Amended Resolution

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Amendment to Resolution 19-832, Early Care and Education Non-Departmental Account. COVID-19 School-Age Child Care During Distance Learning

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 \$4.18 million will support reopening grants for full-day, school age child care services in Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) buildings and other operating support for child care services delivered in the County. 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 amount 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. The funding will also provide operating support, including rent, cleaning, and personal protective equipment expenses, for child care services delivered in the County.
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. This care will provide supervision to children ages 5-13 and allow currently unemployed parents find work, which benefits each family as well as local businesses. Funding of \$3,113,000 [5,313,000] 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 weekly cost of full-time child care 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 if services are supporting the child’s school participation. Six-hundred thousand of the amount allocated for tuition will be provided to the Greater Washington Community Foundation – Children’s Opportunity Fund to continue the operation of Educational Equity and Enrichment Hub sites. 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 \$574,000 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, 2022 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].

The County must enter into a noncompetitive agreement of \$600,000 with the Greater Washington Community Foundation to administer funds through the Children's Opportunity Fund consistent with the requirements described in paragraphs 7.

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