



Committee: Joint
Committee Review: Completed
Staff: Christine Wellons, Chief Legislative Attorney
Purpose: Final action – vote expected

AGENDA ITEM #8A
November 4, 2025
Action

SUBJECTS

Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Lead Sponsors: Councilmember Alborno and Council Vice President Jawando

Co-Sponsor: Councilmember Fani-González

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

N/A

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- The joint Education and Culture (EC) and Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee voted (5-0) to recommend the enactment of Expedited Bill 23-25 with amendments.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Expedited Bill 23-25 would:

- (1) specify the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity;
- (2) clarify the membership of the Board of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity;
- (3) alter reporting requirements of the Entity; and
- (4) generally amend the law regarding early care and education in the County.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The joint EC/HHS Committee held two worksessions on the expedited bill. After extensive deliberations with the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, as well as with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Committee adopted several amendments to the expedited bill.
- The amendments adopted by the Committee would:
 - alter the composition of the board of the Entity by reducing DHHS representatives from 3 to 2, and by reducing the number of higher education representatives from 3 to 2;
 - clarify the permitted uses by the entity of County funds and non-County funds;
 - restate the Entity's commitment to racial equity and social justice;
 - clarify duties related to public outreach regarding the importance of quality early care and education; and
 - make other technical clarifications.

This report contains:

Staff Report	Pages 1-14
Expedited Bill 23-25	1
Fiscal Impact Statement	11
Economic Impact Statement	13
Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement	17
Climate Assessment	22
Public Testimony	26
Amendments by Councilmembers Luedtke and Mink (first worksession)	35
Chart Comparing Quasi-Governmental Entities	38
Council Staff Report Dated January 28, 2021 (contains MMF report)	45
Chart of Grants Awarded by the Entity (provided by COA)	179
DHHS Responses to Council Staff Questions	184
Memorandum by the County Executive	198
Comments submitted by Jennifer Arnaiz for the First Worksession	201
Chart and Comments Submitted by COA on October 8, 2025	204
Comments submitted by Montgomery Moving Forward	215

Additional public testimony is available on the Council website at: [Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity](#)

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M E M O R A N D U M

October 30, 2025

TO: County Council

FROM: Christine Wellons, Chief Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

PURPOSE: Action – roll call vote expected

Committee Recommendation: The joint Education and Culture (EC) and Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee voted (5-0) to recommend the enactment of Expedited Bill 23-25 with amendments.

Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, was introduced on June 17, 2025. The Lead Sponsors are Councilmember Albornoz and Council Vice President Jawando. Councilmember Fani-González is a Co-Sponsor. A public hearing occurred on July 15. An initial joint EC/HHS worksession was held on July 23. A second worksession occurred on October 16, at which time the joint Committee recommended the enactment of the bill with amendments.

The joint Committee's amendments to the bill are described beginning at page 10 (Issue #5) of this memorandum.

Expedited Bill 23-25 would:

- (1) specify the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity;
- (2) clarify the membership of the Board of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity;
- (3) alter reporting requirements of the Entity; and
- (4) generally amend the law regarding early care and education in the County.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Council enacted Bill 42-21 to establish an Early Care and Education (ECE) Coordinating Entity. Expedited Bill 23-25 would refine the original legislation by clarifying the duties and responsibilities of the entity.

BILL SPECIFICS

Under Expedited Bill 23-25, the duties and responsibilities of the ECE Entity would be clarified as follows. The Entity would:

- conduct a County-wide needs assessment for ECE programs;
- identify and analyze specific ECE needs through periodic mapping of ECE services and resources throughout the County;
- research and evaluate strategies to strengthen and sustain the ECE system in the County;
- analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians qualify for a government benefit based upon income, families of children with special needs, and English language learners;
- create, publish, and periodically update a comprehensive common ECE agenda based upon the consensus of ECE stakeholders;
- measure outcomes and progress towards the common agenda;
- educate the public about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;
- advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater investment in and improvements to the ECE system; and
- solicit and accept public and private funding to support the work of the Entity.

In an effort to avoid the duplication of services between the Entity and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and to bring more clarity to the permitted activities of the Entity, the bill – as originally introduced – would clarify that the Entity must not:

- provide ECE;
- award or fund grants;
- enter into a contract with an ECE provider;
- provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or
- fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT STATEMENTS

Fiscal Impact. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) found that Expedited Bill 23-25 would not have a fiscal impact. OMB stated that, “The department will not require new positions to implement the bill/regulation. The bill/regulation is not expected to generate revenues.”

Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact. “The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 23-25 will have a minimal impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County. Updating the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity is not likely to meaningfully impact racial and social inequities in early childhood care and education in the County.”

Economic Impact. “The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Expedited Bill 23-25 would have no direct impact on economic conditions in the County, as measured by the Council’s priority economic indicators.”

Climate Assessment. OLO “anticipates that Bill 23-25 will have no impact as it is clarifying the duties and responsibilities of an entity whose operations do not impact the County’s contribution to climate change.”

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public speakers were supportive of the ECE Entity and its mission. Multiple speakers recommended that the bill be amended to permit the Entity to continue grantmaking, especially with respect to providing technical assistance to childcare providers. Some highlights of the testimony included:

- The Executive Director of the designated Entity (the Children’s Opportunity Alliance) emphasized that private philanthropy must grow, and that placing limits on the use of grants would limit Entity’s fundraising potential. She asked for the removal of the restrictions under the bill related to contracts, grantmaking, and services to childcare providers.
- Board members of the Children’s Opportunity Alliance testified that the Entity should be permitted to provide grants, provide direct support, and enter into contracts with child care providers. They emphasized that a 360-degree view of education is essential, and that equity must remain the focus of the Entity. They opposed provisions of the bill restricting grantmaking, contracts, and other services.
- Grantees of the Entity testified that the services the Entity provides are not duplicative of services provided elsewhere, and that the Entity must have flexibility to raise philanthropic dollars. Grantees stated that the Entity has provided valuable technical support, supported innovative programs, and provided culturally competent training to childcare providers.
- A retired Council Legislative Analyst stated that the Entity was intended to be a neutral convenor and to focus on systems-level change. The speaker stated that competition among stakeholders (*e.g.*, competing for grants from the Entity) would not be consistent with the purpose of the Entity and could create conflicts among stakeholders. The speaker also stated that grantmaking by the Entity would be redundant of County services. Therefore, the speaker supported the bill as introduced.
- Parents testified that the Entity has been successful in providing access to critical information and advocacy.

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST WORKSESSION

Participating in the first worksession, on July 23, were Mr. Hodge, Chief Operating Officer; Ms. Garibay-Aquino, Chief of Children, Youth, and Families; and Ms. Gallipoli, Planning Specialist from the County's Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) as well as Ms. Rusnak, Executive Director and Ms. Jahromi, Manager of Strategic Initiatives from the Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA) participated in the discussion.

The joint Committee discussed the merits of potentially: altering the size and membership of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity (ECECE); reducing the number of DHHS representatives on the ECECE board; altering the voting status of *ex officio* ECECE board members; and giving to the ECECE board the authority to remove members based upon lack of attendance at meetings.

The Committee discussed the potential roles of ECECE as a provider of services, a systems builder, a researcher, and an advocate for policy and funding. Committee members also discussed whether ECECE should provide pilot programs as a component of systems building.

The Committee also had a preliminary discussion of potential amendments regarding: grant-making by the ECECE; the use of private versus public funding by ECECE; and whether and how ECECE should provide "direct services". The panelists clarified legislative intent that being a "neutral" convenor means that the ECECE is neutral between stakeholders; it does not mean that the recommendations of the ECECE are necessarily agreed to by all stakeholders.

The Committee asked ECECE to provide specific proposed amendments to the bill that it would like the joint Committee to consider.

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND WORKSESSION

The joint EC/HHS Committee held a second worksession on Expedited Bill 23-25 on October 16. Participating in the discussion were Lori Garibay-Aquino, Chief, Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); Jennifer Arnáiz, Senior Administrator, Early Childhood Services, DHHS; Deborah Lambert, Senior Fiscal & Policy Analyst, Office of Management and Budget (OMB); Kimberly Rusnak, Executive Director, Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA); and Tiffany Jones, Chair, Board of COA.

The joint Committee considered numerous issues and potential amendments in connection with Expedited Bill 23-25. Issues # 1 through #4, below, provide background information and context considered by the Committee – including some additional information provided by COA after the first worksession.

The Committee adopted several amendments, which are described beginning at Issue #5 (page 10 of this memorandum). The amendments are also reflected in the bill at © 1.

Additional background information regarding the issues discussed at the second worksession is available here:
montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=18319

1. Purpose of the Entity – “Neutral Convenor”

In 2021, Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) recommended to the Council the creation of a public-private ECE coordinating entity. The entity would be a “neutral, cross-section convenor” and “facilitator of collective impact.” *See* Council Staff Report dated Jan. 28, 2021, which encloses the MMF Report, at © 45.

Specifically, MMF recommended: “The entity must be able to accomplish the following:

- ☐ Focus solely on Early Care and Education (ECE) in order to support the vision for our early childhood system and a thriving workforce for today and tomorrow.

- ☐ Have a governance structure comprised of representatives from both the public and private sectors who serve in a fiduciary capacity and have legal voting and decision-making authority.

- ☐ Solicit and receive both public and private funds and regularly report to the community on its strategic plan, implementation and use of funds to support those efforts.

- ☐ Map and make recommendations about all ECE dollars, whether in its control or not, with an eye to a comprehensive and cohesive strategic response to community- identified ECE priorities.

- ☐ Represent and reflect the full landscape of those providing, using and benefitting from ECE which includes a diverse group of community stakeholders such as parents, philanthropy, ECE providers and employers/business leaders outside of the ECE sector.

- ☐ Act as a system-wide convener, connector, and champion to mobilize the ECE priorities that benefit the entire community and advance our community’s collective work to support the vision for our early childhood system and a thriving workforce for today and tomorrow.

- ☐ Make decisions through the lens of racial equity, human development, and economic development.

- ☐ Develop a clear, realistic, actionable, and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity, and that includes both representation from and the voice of an inclusive group of community stakeholders.

- ☐ Use data and metrics to establish targets, define accountability and measure progress on our community’s most pressing needs.

- ☐ Have dedicated, paid staff to advance its mission which may involve the shifting of existing resources given economic realities.

□ Work at a systems level with a 360° view of all of the ECE programs and services in Montgomery County, but not provide ECE services directly.

□ Work with existing policy and advisory committees and groups in the county to incorporate, align and amplify a consistent and singular voice for ECE issues by meaningfully incorporating all ECE advisory groups, inclusive of community, business, and parent voices.”

Following MMF’s recommendations, the Council enacted **Bill 42-21**, which established the framework for the designated Entity. The legislation provided that the Entity – similar to MMF’s recommendation – would be established as a “neutral” convenor of stakeholders, and would not be permitted to “provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education”.

To establish the Entity as a neutral convenor focused on systems-level ECE, Bill 42-21 mandated that the Entity would be incorporated for the purpose of serving as the County’s designated Entity. Specifically, one prerequisite for Council designation is that the Entity’s articles of incorporation must provide that the Entity is “incorporated for the purpose of serving as the County’s Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity responsible for monitoring and supporting the early care and education system in the County.”

Additional information about the enactment of the original legislation is available at [Montgomery County Council - Legislative Information Management System – bill details](#).

2. Discussion of “Direct Services”

As mentioned under Issue #1, above, the legislation creating the Entity stated that the Entity, as a “neutral convenor”, must not “provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education”. In practice, the determination of what constitutes “direct services” has been challenging.¹

A purpose of Expedited Bill 23-25 is to delete the term “direct services” in favor of specifying clearly that the entity, consistent with its role as a neutral convenor, must not:

- provide ECE;
- award or fund grants;
- enter into a contract with an ECE provider;
- provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or

¹ The COA provided to Council staff the following interpretations:

Direct Service: Providing programs, interventions, and other forms of support that help residents achieve outcomes and benefits.

Indirect Services: Providing services, support, and capacity building efforts to staff or organizations to help them provide increased or better services to residents.

- fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals.

DHHS has explained the rationale as follows: “All funds [of the Entity] must support COA’s legislated role as a neutral convenor, not a service provider. This includes responsibilities such as conducting research and analysis, engaging stakeholders across the early care and education (ECE) system and making informed policy recommendations. Public and private dollars alike are intended to support COA’s leadership in advancing a collective impact approach, including implementation of the Common Agenda, which guides coordinated, community-driven efforts to build a more sustainable, equitable ECE system. COA’s role is to assess the system as a whole and recommend action to agencies and organizations equipped to deliver services.” (© 187).

3. Duplication of Services Between the Entity and DHHS

In an effort to maintain the focus of the Entity on systems-building,² and to prevent the duplication of services between the Entity and DHHS, Expedited Bill 23-25 would restrict the provision of ECE seats or services, grantmaking, and contracting with providers.

In particular, the duplication of services could occur to the extent that the Entity provides the following services or grants, which are provided through the DHHS Child Care Support Services:

- Technical assistance and coaching to enhance program quality.
 - Professional development and training opportunities to support ongoing educator growth.
 - Recruitment and business support, including assistance in opening new programs or expanding capacity.
 - Financial assistance for families, which helps stabilize provider enrollment.
 - Quality enhancement initiatives to help providers meet state and national standards.
- (See © 191).

The Entity has provided a chart to explain the grants it has awarded since FY2023. (© 179). The Entity states that, in summary:

² The COA has shared the following definition of “systems change”:

Systems Change: Changing the conditions that hold a problem in place. It is about removing the barriers to progress or creating an enabling environment for more progress to happen. There are typically six conditions that hold problems in place: (1) mental models and narratives: the ways residents and decision makers understand an issue, problem, and solutions; (2) relationships and connections: the ways that lack of collaboration, coordination, and integration among programs, organizations, and agencies make it harder for residents to get what they need; (3) shifting power: making sure those closest to the issue and solutions are at the table or have influence; (4) resource flows: how dollars flow to providers and residents; (5) rules and practices: the rules and practices that govern how providers serve residents; and (6) policy: the public policies that govern the definitions, rules, and regulations that providers must follow.

“In FY23, COA granted \$155,000 through a combination of MCPS and private philanthropic funds, which was approximately 15% of our budget.

“In FY24, COA granted \$30,000 using private philanthropy to support grant writing supports implemented by MSCCA and FCCAMD, which was approximately 3% of our budget.

“In FY25, COA granted \$168,000 to support raising awareness amongst Family Child Care Programs about the Blueprint PreK opportunity, which was approximately 8% of our budget. These grants were provided through a blending of private philanthropy and HHS funds.”

Based upon a comparison of DHHS services to the Entity’s specific grants, Council staff noted *potential* overlap of services in the following areas.

- Providing technical assistance to providers seeking MSDE grants;
- Providing training to ECE professionals;
- Financially supporting the expansion of certain childcare programs;
- Enrolling individual families in SNAP;
- Providing back-office administrative support to childcare providers; and
- Purchasing curriculum for specific programs.

As follow up to the first worksession, the Committee asked the Entity to provide comparable information about contracts the Entity has entered into with child care providers. COA provided the following information about its FY2025 contracts. The bolded contracts fund childcare “seats” – in the amount of approximately \$689,650:

- Alta CPA: FY25 - \$39,537, FY24 - \$20,000 (Accountant) - partially funded by DHHS, MCPS and private philanthropy
- Capacity Partners: FY25 - \$25,000, FY24 - \$25,000 (fundraising) - partially funded by DHHS, MCPS and private philanthropy
- Children’s Funding Project: FY25 - \$15,500, FY24 - \$15,400 (research & evaluation) - DHHS funded
- C-Impact: FY25 - \$8,000 (MMF) - DHHS funded
- Danielle Ewen: FY25 - \$5,000 (MMF) - DHHS funded
- Data Quality Campaign: FY25 - \$5,000 (MMF) - DHHS funded
- Doctor Teacher Mommy: FY25 - \$10,386 (ECE expertise and event planning) - private philanthropy
- Farah Nageer-Kanthor: FY25 - \$1,500 - DHHS funded
- Friedman Strategies: FY25 - \$12,500 - DHHS funded

- **Goddard of Gaithersburg: FY25 - \$130,000 (school year 10 seats) + \$41,600 (summer seats) - DHHS funded**
- **Horizons: FY25 - \$34,450 (school year) + \$11,700 (summer seats) - DHHS funded**
- Jeong Collective: FY25 - \$3,800 (ECE Expert) - private philanthropy funded
- Leading Inside Out: FY25 - \$56,000 + \$7,811 (travel costs) - (common agenda) - MCPS and private philanthropy funded
- Lynn Andreas Arndt: FY25 - \$50,000 - DHHS funded
- Maryland State Child Care Association: FY25 - \$59,150 (back office & grantwriting) - DHHS funded
- **Minds in Motion: FY25 - \$260,000 (PreK classroom) + \$52,000 (summer seats) - DHHS funded**
- Mullins, PC: FY25 - \$12,850 (auditor) - DHHS funded and MCPS
- NAEYC: FY25 - \$20,000 (MMF) - DHHS funded
- Nauticon: FY24 - \$17,628, FY25 - \$16,562 – DHHS, MCPS and private philanthropy funded
- **The Nurturey: FY25 - \$45,500 (PreK classroom) + \$23,400 (summer seats) - DHHS funded**
- Social Justice Works: FY25 - \$64,000 (equity coach) -DHHS funded
- **The Arc: FY25 - \$52,000 (PreK seats) + \$39,000 (summer seats) -DHHS funded**
- True Blue Consulting: FY25 - \$3,500 (Annapolis advocacy night) - private philanthropy funded
- Vector Media Holding Corp: FY25 - \$15,887.50 (PreK bus ads) - DHHS funded

4. Quasi-Governmental Entities - in General

The County has several County-designated nonprofit organizations or quasi-governmental entities created to serve specific purposes the County determined were best suited in a public-private model. For general context, an enclosed chart (© 38) highlights the purpose, designation, key provision of funds, ethics requirements, and board composition of several quasi-governmental entities.

In 2021, OLO also provided a [report](#) on the County-designated nonprofits as it related to the creation of the ECECE.

5. Amendment - Clarification of Duties – Use of Public vs. Private Funds

As discussed above, Expedited Bill 23-25 would delete the term “direct services” and, instead, provide that the designated Entity must not provide ECE; award or fund grants; enter into a contract with an ECE provider; provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals. The purpose of these restrictions would be to avoid the duplication of services, and to clarify the role of the Entity as a coordinating body and facilitator of systems-building, as opposed to a provider of ECE.

The Committee extensively deliberated regarding potential amendments to clarify the scope of the Entity’s permitted activities. The joint Committee members desired to preserve the ability of the Entity to raise private funds to support innovative, scalable pilot projects consistent with the common ECE agenda. At the same time, the Committee members expressed that DHHS should oversee the use of County funds via a contractual relationship with the Entity.

Council staff drafted the following amendment to reflect the Committee’s decision regarding the Entity’s use of County funds versus non-County funds. The use of funds by the Entity would be permitted only in accordance with the following subsection (k).

(k) [Direct Services] [~~Independent and coordinating role of the entity~~] Use of funds by the Entity. The Entity [must not] [provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education] may use funds:

(1) [provide ECE] from the County if the Department of Health and Human Services, or another County department or office designated by the County Executive, approves the use of funds in accordance with a contract between the County and the Entity; and

(2) [award or fund grants] from an entity other than the County:

(A) if the Board, or the Board’s designee, determines that the use of funds:

(i) aligns with the common ECE agenda established under subsection (i)(5) of this Section; and

(ii) addresses ECE systems-level change; and

(B) in accordance with any legal terms and conditions placed upon the use of the funds.

[(3) enter into a contract with an ECE provider;

- (4) provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or
- (5) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals]].

6. Amendment - Commitment to Racial Equity and Social Justice

The Committee adopted the following amendment, which was proposed by Councilmembers Luedtke and Mink.

- (i) *Duties.* [In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the] [[The]] In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism, and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convenor of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders:

The COA and DHHS agreed with the amendment. Regarding the term “neutral convenor,” COA states that DHHS and COA agree that “neutral” means “having shared ownership and supporting co-creation, being transparent, being inclusive, being data informed, bringing together all voices, implementing a clear decision-making process, and that the North Star for this work is what is best for Montgomery County Children and Families.” (© 204).

For additional context regarding the Entity’s commitment to racial equity, the current law, Code Section 10A-12, contains several provisions expressing a commitment to racial equity and social justice, including the following text of subsection (j). The language of subsection (j) would be unchanged by Expedited Bill 23-25.

- (j) *Racial Equity and Social Justice.* To effectively address the complex needs of the County’s racially and economically diverse children and their families and strategically expand access to critical early care and education services to underrepresented populations, the Entity must adopt and implement a racial equity and social justice policy that applies a racial equity and social justice lens into all aspects of the Entity’s operations in alignment with the County’s racial equity and social justice strategic plan. The racial equity and social justice policy must include:
 - (1) a statement of commitment to racial equity and social justice as part of the organization’s core values;

- (2) active recruitment of potential Board members from diverse backgrounds and outreach to communities of color for consideration by the County Executive and County Council;
- (3) a formal process to assess Board culture and identify barriers to inclusion in Board participation and leadership;
- (4) communications and business practices that are tailored to the needs of communities of color and other marginalized communities;
- (5) a process to identify and address discriminatory or non-inclusive behaviors;
- (6) organizational policies and procedures that address diversity and inclusion; and
- (7) a clear, realistic, actionable, and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity that includes representatives of an inclusive group of community stakeholders.

7. Amendment - Duty of the Entity to Increase Public Awareness – Clarification

Councilmembers Luedtke and Mink proposed, and the Committee adopted, the following amendment regarding the Entity’s role in raising public awareness about the importance of high-quality ECE programs.

Amend the Entity’s duty under lines 147-148 to read as follows.

- (7) engage, educate, [[the]] and build public awareness about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;

The COA reports that “there is agreement and alignment” between DHHS and COA on this amendment. See © 205.

8. Amendment – Self-Sufficiency Standard – Clarification

After extensive discussion with DHHS and COA, the Committee adopted the following amendments concerning Board representation and the Entity’s focus on evaluating services to lower-income families.

Amend the Board membership under lines 65-70 to read as follows.

The Executive should appoint the following voting members:

- (1) 3 parents or guardians with children in childcare and/or pre-kindergarten programs, including 2 [low income] parents or guardians [[who qualify for a government benefit based upon income]] whose households earn no more than the self-sufficiency standard of Montgomery County;

Amend the Entity's duty under lines 144-150 to read as follows.

- (4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians [[qualify for a government benefit based upon income]] earn no more than the self-sufficiency standard of Montgomery County, families of children with special needs, and English language learners;

The self-sufficiency standard is explained on the DHHS website. See [Interactive Self-Sufficiency Standard](#) ("The Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS) defines how much income a family of a certain composition in a given place needs to adequately meet their basic needs – without public or private assistance.").

9. Amendment - ECECE Board – Board Composition and Voting Status of Ex Officio Members

The Committee considered the composition of the Entity's board and whether all members of the Board should be voting members. The Committee determined that all members, including *ex officio* members, should have the right to vote. In addition, the Committee agreed with COA and DHHS that: (1) DHHS should have two appointees on the Entity's board, as opposed to the current three; and (2) the current positions for Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove should be consolidated into a single position for a representative of an institution of higher education. See © 210.

The amendment regarding membership is as follows:

- (c) *Board of Directors.* To qualify as the County's Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, the [Corporation's] Entity's Board of Directors must have no more than [[9]] 7 *ex-officio* voting members and 12 other voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Each member must reside or work in the County. Each member appointed from the public sector as an *ex officio* member represents the public interest and is not precluded from participating in a matter as a board member if that member's

government employer is a party to the matter. The Executive should appoint the following *ex officio* voting members:

- (1) a Council staff member with expertise in early childhood education;
- (2) [two] 2 representatives jointly designated by the County Board of Education and the Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools;
- (3) [[3]] 2 representatives of the County Department of Health and Human Services;
- (4) a representative of the Office of Management and Budget;
- (5) a representative of [[Montgomery College]] an institution of higher education]; and
- (6) a representative of the Universities at Shady Grove]].

NEXT STEP: Roll call vote on whether to enact Expedited Bill 23-25, as recommended (5-0) by the joint EC/HHS Committee.

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Expedited Bill No. 23-25
Concerning: Early Care and Education
Coordinating Entity
Revised: 10/16/2025 Draft No. 3
Introduced: June 17, 2025
Expires: December 7, 2026
Enacted: _____
Executive: _____
Effective: _____
Sunset Date: None
Ch. _____, Laws of Mont. Co. _____

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsors: Councilmember Albornoz and Council Vice President Jawando
Co-Sponsor: Councilmember Fani-González

AN EXPEDITED ACT to:

- (1) specify the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity;
- (2) clarify the membership of the Board of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity;
- (3) alter reporting requirements of the Entity; and
- (4) generally amend the law regarding early care and education in the County.

By amending
Chapter 10A, Child Care.
Section 10A-12

Boldface	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

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

Sec. 1. Section 10A-12 is amended as follows:

10A-12. Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity.

(a) *Findings and definitions.*

- (1) Early care and education [(ECE)] is an essential service and economic imperative for the well-being of children, families, employers, and the greater community.
- (2) High quality ECE services prepare young children to enter school ready to learn and start on a pathway of success in life.
- (3) Accessible ECE programs are economic drivers that allow parents to participate in the workforce and support the local economy. ECE programs play a key role in workforce development by attracting and retaining a talented workforce through support to families with young children, and by addressing the opportunity gap to ensure a future skilled workforce by addressing the opportunity gap.
- (4) A strong system of high quality, accessible, sustainable ECE is needed to support the well-being of children and families in the County and eliminate systemic racism and structures that have been barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations.
- (5) Designating an independent nonprofit entity to work with [parents, employers and providers as] key stakeholders will ensure community priorities are reflected in [building] a collaborative and robust system that supports all residents having access to high quality, affordable early care and education.

(6) For purposes of this Section, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

(A) ECE means early care and education.

(B) ECE seat means the capacity of an ECE provider to enroll a child in ECE.

(C) ECE stakeholder includes parents, caregivers, guardians, employers, ECE providers, philanthropy, nonprofit and business communities, and the public sector.

(D) Entity means the early care and education coordinating entity under this Section.

(E) Public sector includes the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Recreation, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Montgomery County Public Schools, institutions of higher education, including Montgomery College[,], and the Universities at Shady Grove, and any County board, committee, or commission that advises the County regarding ECE issues.

* * *

(c) *Board of Directors.* To qualify as the County's Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, the [Corporation's] Entity's Board of Directors must have no more than [[9]] 7 *ex-officio* voting members and 12 other voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Each member must reside or work in the County. Each member appointed from the public sector as an *ex officio* member represents the public interest and is not precluded from participating in a matter as a board member if that member's

government employer is a party to the matter. The Executive should appoint the following *ex officio* voting members:

- (1) a Council staff member with expertise in early childhood education;
- (2) [two] 2 representatives jointly designated by the County Board of Education and the Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools;
- (3) ~~[[3]]~~ 2 representatives of the County Department of Health and Human Services;
- (4) a representative of the Office of Management and Budget;
- (5) a representative of ~~[[Montgomery College]]~~ an institution of higher education; and
- (6) a representative of the Universities at Shady Grove]].

The Executive should appoint the following voting members:

- (1) 3 parents or guardians with children in childcare and/or pre-kindergarten programs, including 2 [low income] parents or guardians who [[qualify for a government benefit based upon income]] earn no more than the self-sufficiency standard of Montgomery County;
- (2) 2 center based early care and education providers;
- (3) 2 family child care providers;
- (4) 2 representatives of an employer who is not an early childhood education provider;
- (5) a representative of a philanthropic foundation; and

(6) 2 representatives of a nonprofit corporation focused on equity and inclusion, youth development, economic development, or workforce development.

The Board must permit the County Executive, the County Council's Lead for Early Care and Education, and the President of the Montgomery County Board of Education, or a designee of each public official, to attend and participate at each Board meeting without voting. The Executive must strive to achieve Board representation from diverse geographic areas, socio-economic groups, and ethnic groups.

* * *

(i) *Duties.* [In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the] [[The]] In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convener of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders:

[(1) develop recommendations for increasing availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs, with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations, including low-income children, families of children with special needs, and English language learners and with a focus on children from birth to 5 years old;]

- 102 [(2) convene and solicit input from all ECE stakeholders to identify
103 unmet needs and barriers to accessing quality ECE services,
104 develop common goals and priorities for system expansion and
105 improvement, and identify opportunities for and barriers to
106 collaboration and coordination among stakeholder groups. The
107 Entity must seek advice from the members of the Early
108 Childhood Coordinating Council while the Entity develops final
109 recommendations for realigning existing County committees and
110 advisory groups that provide input into the early care and
111 education system;]
- 112 [(3) solicit board members through a community-based process
113 involving parent groups and other advisory bodies. Create and/or
114 maintain existing advisory bodies to ensure continuing direct
115 input from a wide range of community perspectives;]
- 116 [(4) engage and educate families and the wider community about the
117 importance of high-quality early care and education programs
118 and advocate at the Federal, State, and local level for greater
119 public and private investment in and improvements to the early
120 care and education system;]
- 121 [(5) research and facilitate innovative service models and strategies to
122 improve the early care and education system and identify
123 community needs through periodic mapping of early care and
124 education services and resources and County-wide needs
125 assessments;]

- 126 [(6) secure and administer private-sector funding to support the early
127 care and education system and manage and administer public
128 funding that is directly appropriated to the Entity;]
- 129 [(7) measure and report on the efforts to improve and expand the early
130 care and education system with a focus on achieving tangible
131 results that improve access to high-quality ECE across the
132 County;]
- 133 [(8) address current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high
134 quality, affordable care for all communities; and]
- 135 [(9) create, as a neutral convener, a common early childhood
136 education agenda based on community consensus that all major
137 stakeholders commit to and maintain a 360 degree view of all
138 aspects of the County's early childhood education sector.]
- 139 (1) conduct a County-wide needs assessment for ECE programs;
140 (2) identify and analyze specific ECE needs through periodic
141 mapping of ECE services and resources throughout the County;
142 (3) research and evaluate strategies to strengthen and sustain the ECE
143 system in the County;
144 (4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County
145 Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to,
146 high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents
147 or guardians [[qualify for a government benefit based upon
148 income]] earn no more than the self-sufficiency standard of
149 Montgomery County, families of children with special needs, and
150 English language learners;

- (5) create, publish, and periodically update a comprehensive common ECE agenda based upon the consensus of ECE stakeholders;
- (6) measure outcomes and progress towards the common agenda;
- (7) engage, educate, [[the]] and build public awareness about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;
- (8) advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater investment in and improvements to the ECE system; [[and]]
- (9) solicit and accept public and private funding to support the work of the Entity under this Section; and
- (10) use funds only as permitted under subsection (k) of this Section.

* * *

(k) *[Direct Services] [[Independent and coordinating role of the entity]] Use of funds by the Entity.* The Entity *[[must not]] [provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education] may use funds:*

- (1) [[provide ECE]] from the County if the Department of Health and Human Services, or another County department or office designated by the County Executive, approves the use of funds in accordance with a contract between the County and the Entity; and
- (2) [[award or fund grants]] from an entity other than the County:
 - (A) if the Board, or the Board's designee, determines that the use of funds:
 - (i) aligns with the common ECE agenda established under subsection (i)(5) of this Section; and

- 177 (ii) addresses ECE systems-level change; and
 178 (B) in accordance with any legal terms and conditions placed
 179 upon the use of the funds
 180 [[(3) enter into a contract with an ECE provider;
 181 (4) provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or
 182 (5) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals]].
- 183 (1) *Reports.*
- 184 (1) The Board of Directors must report annually on the activities and
 185 finances of the Entity and provide an audited financial statement
 186 of the Entity to the Executive and Council by October 1 of each
 187 year. The report must include:
- 188 (A) the Entity's plan to solicit and receive additional public
 189 and private funding for its operations;
- 190 (B) [outcomes] an analysis of available data that measures the
 191 progress of early care and education system improvements,
 192 including changes in:
- 193 (i) the level of public and private investment in the
 194 ECE system;
- 195 (ii) the availability and use of [early care and education]
 196 ECE seats in the County as a whole and
 197 disaggregated for isolated and vulnerable
 198 populations;
- 199 (iii) the provision of ECE seats by private employers;
 200 and
- 201 [(iii)] (iv) school readiness (including academic,
 202 physical, and social emotional competencies) rates

broken out by total population, race/ethnicity,
income categories, and special education status;
[and]

(C) advocacy and outreach efforts and outcomes for the prior
year; and

(D) recommendations for developing an equitable system of
high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and
education.

(2) The Entity must make [public data sets] available on [the
internet] its website the Entity's assessments and
recommendations, the common ECE agenda, community
mapping, data on outcomes, and links to public data sets, to
improve public knowledge of the Entity and its operations,
further its mission, [or] and increase [its] the accountability and
responsiveness of the ECE system.

(3) The Entity must provide the Executive and Council, upon
request, all non-confidential data produced and received by the
Entity, including research, data related to the delivery of early
care and education services, and minutes of Board meetings.

* * *

Sec. 2. Effective Date. The Council declares that this legislation is necessary
for the immediate protection of the public interest. This Act takes effect on the date
on which it becomes law.

Sec. 3. Transition. This Act must not affect any contract or grant executed on
or before the effective date of this Act. This Act must not affect the term of any
Board member that began before the effective date of this Act.



Fiscal Impact Statement

Office of Management and Budget

Bill 23-25

Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Bill Summary

Expedited Bill 23-25 would clarify the duties and responsibilities of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity (the Entity) which is currently the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA). To avoid duplication of services between the Entity and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the bill provides further restrictions on the Entity not to provide: (1) Early Care and Education (ECE); (2) award or fund grants; (3) enter into a contract with an ECE provider; or (4) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals.

Fiscal Impact Summary

The bill/regulation does not have a fiscal impact. FY26 approved expenditures are \$775,465 in ongoing costs. Annual expenditures total \$775,465 each year thereafter. The department will not require new positions to implement the bill/regulation. The bill/regulation is not expected to generate any revenues.

Fiscal Year	0	0	0	0	0	0	Total
Personnel Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Operating Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Impact	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Fiscal Impact Analysis

There is no fiscal impact because the bill does not impact any services that DHHS currently funds COA to provide. In the FY26 contract that DHHS has with COA totaling \$775,465, \$640,677 in funding is provided for existing COA staff, \$20,000 is provided for COA's ongoing communications expenses, and \$114,788 is provided in indirect administrative costs (15%). None of the additional restrictions on COA's activities considered in this bill will impact DHHS' contract with COA. DHHS has no current revenue related to its contract with COA and DHHS' revenue will not be impacted by this legislation.

Staff Impact

The bill is not expected to impact staff time or duties.

Actuarial Analysis

The bill is not expected to impact retiree pension or group insurance costs.

Information Technology Impact

The bill is not expected to impact the County Information Technology (IT) or Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems.

Other Information

Later actions that may impact revenue or expenditures if future spending is projected

The bill does not authorize future spending.

Contributors

Jennifer Arnaiz, Senior Administrator, DHHS Early Childhood Services
Deborah Lambert, Senior Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Office of Management and



Budget



Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Expedited Bill 23-25: Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Summary

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Expedited Bill 23-25 would have no direct impact on economic conditions in the County, as measured by the Council's priority economic indicators.

Background and Purpose of Expedited Bill 23-25

In 2022, the County Council passed Bill 42-21.¹ This Bill created the non-profit Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, which is currently the Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA).² The Entity is comprised of 21 members who represent a range of stakeholders in early care and education (ECE). Members include parents, ECE providers, private employers and several County departments and agencies.³ The Entity is primarily responsible for developing recommendations to increase "availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations."⁴

If enacted, Expedited Bill 23-25 would update the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity.⁵ The Appendix includes current language of the Entity's duties and proposed language in Expedited Bill 23-25. Additionally, the Bill would:⁶

- Specify activities the Entity cannot engage in, such as providing ECE or awarding and/or funding grants;
- Clarify the Entity's members to include two parents or guardians who qualify for a government benefit based on income; and
- Make changes to the data and recommendations the Entity must include in their annual report.

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 23-25 on June 17, 2025.

Information Sources, Methodologies, and Assumptions

As required by 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, this Economic Impact Statement evaluates the impacts of Expedited Bill 23-25 on residents and private organizations, using the Council's priority economic indicators

¹ Bill 42-21 - Child Care – Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity – Established, Legislative Information Management System.

² Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance.

³ Montgomery County Code § 10A-12.

⁴ Action Staff Report for Bill 42-21, Montgomery County Council, Action February 15, 2022, PDF pg. 3.

⁵ Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 23-25, Montgomery County Council, Introduced June 17, 2025.

⁶ Ibid.

as the measure. In doing so, it examines whether the Bill would have a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.⁷

By updating the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, the Bill could affect future recommendations made by the Entity to the County Executive and County Council. In turn, this could have *indirect effects* on the Council's priority indicators, meaning effects that depend on other factors such as the Council's willingness to adopt the Entity's recommendations.⁸

However, OLO cannot predict the nature of these potential changes to the Entity's recommendations or the Council's willingness to adopt them. For this reason, OLO anticipates the Bill would have no *direct* impact on private organizations, residents, and overall economic conditions in the County in terms of the Council's priority indicators.

Variables

Not applicable

Impacts

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Not applicable

Discussion Items

Not applicable

Caveat

Two caveats to the economic impact analysis conducted here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration.

Contributions

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.

⁷ Montgomery County Code, "[Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements](#)."

⁸ A direct causal effect is an effect on a variable that is not mediated by one or more variables.

Appendix

Current and Proposed Language for Duties of Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Current Language

Duties. In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must:

- (1) develop recommendations for increasing availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs, with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations, including low-income children, families of children with special needs, and English language learners and with a focus on children from birth to 5 years old;
- (2) convene and solicit input from all ECE stakeholders to identify unmet needs and barriers to accessing quality ECE services, develop common goals and priorities for system expansion and improvement, and identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among stakeholder groups. The Entity must seek advice from the members of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council while the Entity develops final recommendations for realigning existing County committees and advisory groups that provide input into the early care and education system;
- (3) solicit board members through a community-based process involving parent groups and other advisory bodies. Create and/or maintain existing advisory bodies to ensure continuing direct input from a wide range of community perspectives;
- (4) engage and educate families and the wider community about the importance of high-quality early care and education programs and advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater public and private investment in and improvements to the early care and education system;
- (5) research and facilitate innovative service models and strategies to improve the early care and education system and identify community needs through periodic mapping of early care and education services and resources and County-wide needs assessments;
- (6) secure and administer private-sector funding to support the early care and education system and manage and administer public funding that is directly appropriated to the Entity;
- (7) measure and report on the efforts to improve and expand the early care and education system with a focus on achieving tangible results that improve access to high-quality ECE across the County;
- (8) address current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high quality, affordable care for all communities; and
- (9) create, as a neutral convener, a common early childhood education agenda based on community consensus that all major stakeholders commit to and maintain a 360 degree view of all aspects of the County's early childhood education sector.

Proposed Language in Bill 23-25

Duties. The Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convenor of ECE stakeholders and in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders:

- (1) conduct a County-wide needs assessment for ECE programs;
- (2) identify and analyze specific ECE needs through periodic mapping of ECE services and resources throughout the County;
- (3) research and evaluate strategies to strengthen and sustain the ECE system in the County;
- (4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians

qualify for a government benefit based upon income, families of children with special needs, and English language learners;

- (5) create, publish, and periodically update a comprehensive common ECE agenda based upon the consensus of ECE stakeholders;
- (6) measure outcomes and progress towards the common agenda;
- (7) educate the public about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;
- (8) advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater investment in and improvements to the ECE system; and
- (9) solicit and accept public and private funding to support the work of the Entity under this Section.

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

EXPEDITED BILL 23-25: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION COORDINATING ENTITY

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 23-25 will have a minimal impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County. Updating the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity is not likely to meaningfully impact racial and social inequities in early childhood care and education in the County.

PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS

RESJ impact statements (RESJIS) evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice in the County. RESJ is a **process** that focuses on centering the needs, leadership, and power of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and communities with low incomes. RESJ is also a **goal** of eliminating racial and social inequities. Applying a RESJ lens is important to achieve RESJ.¹ This involves seeing, thinking, and working differently to address the racial and social inequities that cause racial and social disparities.²

PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 23-25

In 2022, the County Council passed Bill 42-21.³ This Bill created the non-profit Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, which is currently the Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA).⁴ The Entity is comprised of 21 members who represent a range of stakeholders in early care and education (ECE). Members include parents, ECE providers, private employers and several County departments and agencies.⁵ The Entity is primarily responsible for developing recommendations to increase "availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations."⁶

If enacted, Expedited Bill 23-25 would update the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity to include conducting a County-wide needs assessment of ECE programs, mapping ECE services, evaluating programs, and reporting outcomes.⁷ Figure A in the Appendix includes the current language of the Entity's duties and proposed language in the Bill. Additionally, Expedited Bill 23-25 would:⁸

- Specify activities the Entity cannot engage in, such as providing ECE or awarding and/or funding grants;
- Clarify the Entity's members include two parents or guardians who qualify for a government benefit based on income; and
- Make changes to the data and recommendations the Entity must include in their annual report (current and proposed language included in Appendix Figure B).

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, on June 17, 2025.

This RESJIS builds on the RESJIS for Bill 42-21, Child Care – Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity – Established, which OLO published in December 2021.⁹ Please refer to this RESJIS for background on economic opportunity, childcare, and racial equity.

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 23-25

ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

If enacted, Expedited Bill 23-25 will expand the responsibilities of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity (currently the Montgomery County Children’s Opportunity Alliance) to include more evaluation and research functions. As observed in the RESJIS for Bill 42-21 that established the Entity, the most significant factor shaping racial and social inequities in ECE is the absence of significant government funding, which puts high-quality ECE programs out of reach for many low- and moderate-income families in the County. Due to a history of systemic racism, BIPOC families and providers are especially under-served by ECE programs because they often have less wealth and income than White families and providers in the County.

Given that Bill 23-25 does not change funding for ECE programs, OLO anticipates it will have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County. Updating the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity is not likely to meaningfully impact racial and social inequities in early childhood care and education in the County.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Act requires OLO to consider whether recommended amendments to bills aimed at narrowing racial and social inequities are warranted in developing RESJ impact statements.¹⁰ OLO anticipates Expedited Bill 23-25 will have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County. As such, OLO does not offer recommended amendments.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to this racial equity and social justice impact statement should be noted. First, predicting the impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, this RESJ impact statement is intended to inform the legislative process rather than determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

APPENDIX

Figure A. Current and Proposed Language for Duties of Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Current Language

Duties. In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must:

- (1) develop recommendations for increasing availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs, with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations, including low-income children, families of children with special needs, and English language learners and with a focus on children from birth to 5 years old;
- (2) convene and solicit input from all ECE stakeholders to identify unmet needs and barriers to accessing quality ECE services, develop common goals and priorities for system expansion and improvement, and identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among stakeholder groups. The Entity must seek advice from the members of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council while the Entity develops final recommendations for

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 23-25

realigning existing County committees and advisory groups that provide input into the early care and education system;

- (3) solicit board members through a community-based process involving parent groups and other advisory bodies. Create and/or maintain existing advisory bodies to ensure continuing direct input from a wide range of community perspectives;
- (4) engage and educate families and the wider community about the importance of high-quality early care and education programs and advocate at the Federal, State, and local level for greater public and private investment in and improvements to the early care and education system;
- (5) research and facilitate innovative service models and strategies to improve the early care and education system and identify community needs through periodic mapping of early care and education services and resources and County-wide needs assessments;
- (6) secure and administer private-sector funding to support the early care and education system and manage and administer public funding that is directly appropriated to the Entity;
- (7) measure and report on the efforts to improve and expand the early care and education system with a focus on achieving tangible results that improve access to high-quality ECE across the County;
- (8) address current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high quality, affordable care for all communities; and
- (9) create, as a neutral convener, a common early childhood education agenda based on community consensus that all major stakeholders commit to and maintain a 360 degree view of all aspects of the County's early childhood education sector.

Proposed Language in Bill 23-25

Duties. The Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convenor of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders:

- (1) conduct a County-wide needs assessment for ECE programs;
- (2) identify and analyze specific ECE needs through periodic mapping of ECE services and resources throughout the County;
- (3) research and evaluate strategies to strengthen and sustain the ECE system in the County;
- (4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians qualify for a government benefit based upon income, families of children with special needs, and English language learners;
- (5) create, publish, and periodically update a comprehensive common ECE agenda based upon the consensus of ECE stakeholders;
- (6) measure outcomes and progress towards the common agenda;
- (7) educate the public about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;
- (8) advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater investment in and improvements to the ECE system; and
- (9) solicit and accept public and private funding to support the work of the Entity under this Section.

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 23-25

Figure B. Current and Proposed Language for Annual Reporting of Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Current Language

- (1) The Board of Directors must report annually on the activities and finances of the Entity and provide an audited financial statement of the Entity to the Executive and Council by October 1 of each year. The report must include:
 - (A) the Entity’s plan to solicit and receive additional public and private funding for its operations;
 - (B) outcomes data that measures the progress of early care and education system improvements, including changes in:
 - (i) the level of public and private investment;
 - (ii) the availability and use of early care and education seats in the County as a whole and for isolated and vulnerable populations; and
 - (iii) school readiness (including academic, physical and social emotional competencies) rates broken out by total population, race/ethnicity, income categories, and special education status; and
 - (C) advocacy efforts.

Proposed Language in Bill 23-25

- (1) The Board of Directors must report annually on the activities and finances of the Entity and provide an audited financial statement of the Entity to the Executive and Council by October 1 of each year. The report must include:
 - (A) the Entity’s plan to solicit and receive additional public and private funding for its operations;
 - (B) an analysis of available data that measures the progress of early care and education system improvements, including changes in:
 - (i) the level of public and private investment in the ECE system;
 - (ii) the availability and use of ECE seats in the County as a whole and disaggregated for isolated and vulnerable populations;
 - (iii) the provision of ECE seats by private employers; and
 - (C) advocacy and outreach efforts and outcomes for the prior year; and
 - (D) recommendations for developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education.

¹ Definition of racial equity and social justice adopted from [Marlysa Gamblin et al., “Applying Racial Equity to U.S. Federal Nutrition Programs,” Bread for the World](#) and [Racial Equity Tools](#).

² Ibid.

³ [Bill 42-21 - Child Care – Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity – Established, Legislative Information Management System.](#)

⁴ [Montgomery County Children’s Opportunity Alliance.](#)

⁵ [Montgomery County Code § 10A-12.](#)

⁶ [Action Staff Report for Bill 42-21, Montgomery County Council, Action February 15, 2022, PDF pg. 3.](#)

⁷ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 23-25, Montgomery County Council, Introduced June 17, 2025.](#)

⁸ Ibid.

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 23-25

⁹ [RESJIS for Bill 42-21, Office of Legislative Oversight, December 8, 2021.](#)

¹⁰ [Bill 27-19, Administration – Human Rights – Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice – Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee – Established, Montgomery County Council.](#)

Climate Assessment

Office of Legislative Oversight

EXPEDITED BILL 23-25: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION COORDINATING ENTITY

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 23-25 will have no impact as it is clarifying the duties and responsibilities of an entity whose operations do not impact the County's contribution to climate change.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 23-25

In 2022, the County Council passed Bill 42-21.¹ This Bill created the non-profit Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, which is currently the Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA).² The Entity is comprised of 21 members who represent a range of stakeholders in early care and education (ECE). Members include parents, ECE providers, private employers and several County departments and agencies.³ The Entity is primarily responsible for developing recommendations to increase "availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations."⁴

If enacted, Expedited Bill 23-25 would update the duties of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity.⁵ The Appendix includes current language of the Entity's duties and proposed language in Expedited Bill 23-25. Additionally, Expedited Bill 23-25 would:⁶

- Specify activities the Entity cannot engage in, such as providing ECE or awarding and/or funding grants;
- Clarify the Entity's members include two parents or guardians who qualify for a government benefit based on income; and
- Make changes to the data and recommendations the Entity must include in their annual report.

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 23-25 on June 17, 2025.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

As the Bill clarifies the duties and responsibilities of an entity whose operations do not impact the County's contribution to climate change, OLO anticipates the Bill will have no impact.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Climate Assessment Act requires OLO to offer recommendations, such as amendments or other measures to mitigate any anticipated negative climate impacts.⁷ OLO does not offer recommendations or amendments as Bill 23-25 is likely to have no impact on the County's contribution to addressing climate change, including the reduction and/or sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions, community resilience, and adaptative capacity.

CAVEATS

OLO notes two caveats to this climate assessment. First, predicting the impacts of legislation upon climate change is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and the broad, global nature of climate change. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to inform the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the Climate Assessments is to evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on the County's contribution to addressing climate change. These climate assessments will provide the Council with a more thorough understanding of the potential climate impacts and implications of proposed legislation, at the County level. The scope of the Climate Assessments is limited to the County's contribution to addressing climate change, specifically upon the County's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and how actions suggested by legislation could help improve the County's adaptative capacity to climate change, and therefore, increase community resilience.

While co-benefits such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed County bills may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Kaitlyn Simmons drafted this assessment.

APPENDIX

Current and Proposed Language for Duties of Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Current Language

Duties. In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must:

- (1) develop recommendations for increasing availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs, with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations, including low-income children, families of children with special needs, and English language learners and with a focus on children from birth to 5 years old;
- (2) convene and solicit input from all ECE stakeholders to identify unmet needs and barriers to accessing quality ECE services, develop common goals and priorities for system expansion and improvement, and identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among stakeholder groups. The Entity must seek advice from the members of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council while the Entity develops final recommendations for realigning existing County committees and advisory groups that provide input into the early care and education system;
- (3) solicit board members through a community-based process involving parent groups and other advisory bodies. Create and/or maintain existing advisory bodies to ensure continuing direct input from a wide range of community perspectives;
- (4) engage and educate families and the wider community about the importance of high-quality early care and education programs and advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater public and private investment in and improvements to the early care and education system;
- (5) research and facilitate innovative service models and strategies to improve the early care and education system and identify community needs through periodic mapping of early care and education services and resources and County-wide needs assessments;
- (6) secure and administer private-sector funding to support the early care and education system and manage and administer public funding that is directly appropriated to the Entity;
- (7) measure and report on the efforts to improve and expand the early care and education system with a focus on achieving tangible results that improve access to high-quality ECE across the County;
- (8) address current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high quality, affordable care for all communities; and
- (9) create, as a neutral convener, a common early childhood education agenda based on community consensus that all major stakeholders commit to and maintain a 360 degree view of all aspects of the County's early childhood education sector.

Proposed Language in Bill 23-25

Duties. The Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convenor of ECE stakeholders and in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders:

- (1) conduct a County-wide needs assessment for ECE programs;
- (2) identify and analyze specific ECE needs through periodic mapping of ECE services and resources throughout the County;
- (3) research and evaluate strategies to strengthen and sustain the ECE system in the County;
- (4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians qualify for a government benefit based upon income, families of children with special needs, and English language learners;
- (5) create, publish, and periodically update a comprehensive common ECE agenda based upon the consensus of ECE stakeholders;
- (6) measure outcomes and progress towards the common agenda;
- (7) educate the public about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;
- (8) advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater investment in and improvements to the ECE system; and
- (9) solicit and accept public and private funding to support the work of the Entity under this Section.

¹ [Bill 42-21 - Child Care – Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity – Established, Legislative Information Management System.](#)

² [Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance.](#)

³ [Montgomery County Code § 10A-12.](#)

⁴ [Action Staff Report for Bill 42-21, Montgomery County Council, Action February 15, 2022, PDF pg. 3.](#)

⁵ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 23-25, Montgomery County Council, Introduced June 17, 2025.](#)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bill 3-22, Legislative Branch – Climate Assessments – Required, Montgomery County Council, Effective date October 24, 2022



Written Testimony Opposing Expedited Bill 23-25

Charo Torres, Executive Director
Latino Early Care and Education Coalition (LECEC)
July 15, 2025

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Charo Torres, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Latino Early Care and Education Coalition (LECEC). I am writing to express my strong opposition to Expedited Bill 23-25, as currently written.

LECEC is a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Spanish-speaking family child care (FCC) providers in Montgomery County. Thanks to a grant from the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA), we launched a highly impactful program to help FCC providers build the foundational skills and confidence necessary to eventually apply for the Maryland Pre-K Expansion Grant.

These providers, who live and work in low-income immigrant communities, are committed to delivering high-quality early education. However, they face significant barriers — including language, documentation, lack of access to culturally responsive training, and fear stemming from immigration status. What they don't lack is commitment. What they need is support that is accessible, culturally grounded, and delivered by people they trust.

Our program was showing measurable progress. While the providers we support are not yet eligible to apply for the Pre-K grant, they have made substantial strides and were on track with our continued guidance. We were counting on a continuation of the COA grant to maintain this momentum and help them reach full eligibility.

The current version of Expedited Bill 23-25 would prohibit COA from offering this kind of direct support — including awarding grants, entering into contracts with providers, and offering services. I believe this would be a step backward for equity and inclusion in the County.

The bill outlines that the Coordinating Entity must conduct needs assessments, identify barriers, and increase equitable access to high-quality ECE, particularly for low-income families and English language learners. But how can this be achieved without direct

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11403 Idlewood Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20906
(301) 310-9671 * latinoece.org * latinoearlycareandeducation@gmail.com*

collaboration with the community organizations already doing this work — the ones who have built trust, understand the challenges, and operate on evenings and weekends to meet providers where they are?

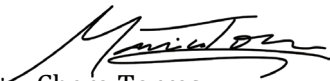
LECEC's program is a model for equity in action. We offer linguistically and culturally responsive assistance, delivered by trusted messengers, in the timeframes our providers need. Without COA's ability to fund organizations like ours, the County will lose a vital bridge to the providers it aims to uplift — and the trust we've built over years will be difficult to restore.

The Children's Opportunity Alliance is doing what no county agency has done before — reaching providers who have been invisible in the system for too long. Their commitment to equity is not just words — it's action. And we applaud their work. Without COA's ability to fund organizations like ours, the County will lose a vital bridge to the providers it aims to uplift — and the trust we've built over years will be difficult to restore.

On behalf of the dedicated family child care providers we serve, I respectfully urge the Council to amend the bill to preserve the ability of the Coordinating Entity to fund and collaborate with grassroots organizations that directly support underrepresented providers.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to equity in early care and education.

Sincerely,



Charo Torres

Executive Director

Latino Early Care and Education Coalition (LECEC)

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Testimony Favorable with Suggested Changes Expedited Bill 23-25 Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

My name is Larry Bram, and I am Senior Vice President for Innovation for Easterseals DC MD Va, based in Montgomery County. I am also the parent of an adult child with disabilities who has lived in Montgomery County for her entire life. I am here to speak against some of the proposed changes to the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA) mandate.

First is the provision that prohibits COA from engaging in "direct services" with early childhood education providers. That would mean it could not enter into contracts, provide grants, or fund ECE seats at childcare providers. Let me give you one clear example about why this is a bad idea. In my career I've written and secured literally hundreds of millions of dollars in grants. And I was an English major, so I mean that "literally." In 2024, Easterseals applied for the to be a state Blueprint Pre-K program. This was (again) literally one of the most difficult applications I have ever seen. I have no idea how a family child care provider or single location child development center owner could ever successfully complete the application. COA has done a lot of work supporting these programs in building their capacity and assisting in these applications. This is a policy goal we want to support; this proposed change would prevent that work.

The second item is the removal of many references to having a duty to address inequities. I get the pressure to remove language that the current federal administration might deem Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. I refuse to use the acronym. It was not so long ago, however, that Montgomery County bravely required all actions be evaluated through just such a lens. Try getting inclusive child care for a child with disabilities, even now, more than 50 years after the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and 35 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act. I can tell, you...it is very difficult. At Easterseals, we routinely see children 2-years-old who have been "expelled" from multiple programs as if the child is to blame. There is still so much work to do, and we should never forget that or hamstring efforts to make it better. COA should continue to be able to have that as a central component of their mission—to foster Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility of all kinds. Disability, race, economic status, religion. Montgomery County should be proud of its focus on this and never back down. We need to remove the barriers that allow all the county's children to get a world-class early education.

I admit that I was at first skeptical about the creation of COA, but over the years I've become a big supporter and now serve on several of their committees. They are leading the way by thinking big, with a focus on strategy and systemic innovation, all while offering real hands-on support to the programs that need it. It is critical that COA maintain a 360-degree view of the sector and pilot new ideas and fill the gaps that can be supported by philanthropy and an independent nonprofit that can be more nimble and quick compared to government agencies.

Please, I urge you to further empower COA, not hamstringing it.

Jennifer Nicholls

10402 Hutting Pl
Silver Spring, MD 20902
journeypreschoolmd@gmail.com

11 July 2025

Montgomery County Council

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my support for the **re-designation of the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA) as Montgomery County's Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity — favorable with amendments**. As a passionate advocate for early childhood education and a committed community member, I urge the Council to thoughtfully consider the implications of the proposed amendments.

While I understand the intent to avoid duplication and agree that the legislation can benefit from targeted revisions, the current proposed changes — specifically those restricting COA from awarding or funding grants, entering into contracts with child care providers, providing goods and services, or funding seats — would severely limit COA's ability to innovate and offer meaningful supports within our early care and education system.

I am a Family Child Care Provider and have benefited from COA's unique role in our county. I currently serve as Treasurer on the board of the Family Child Care Association of Montgomery County. Our current membership is 100 family child care educators. With funding support from COA, our association implemented a PreK mentoring program. We have 18 educators that are getting specialized mentoring to get them ready to apply for the PreK expansion grant. This mentorship program will expand the private provider seats available in our county.

I also had the opportunity to participate in COA's common agenda meetings with other stakeholders in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education. Our County has always been forward-thinking when it comes to including all the players, even Family Child Care, who are often left out of important conversations. COA is uniquely positioned to bring together all the entities that are working hard for our children, including those who are doing on-the-ground work.

As an independent nonprofit, COA is uniquely positioned to provide a 360-degree view of the ECE sector, pilot innovative ideas, and quickly fill critical gaps — efforts that are often difficult to achieve within traditional government structures. Restricting these functions would fundamentally change what COA was designed to do and diminish its potential as a **coordinating, amplifying, and gap-filling entity**.

I urge the Council to adopt the legislation **with amendments that preserve COA's ability to collaborate with providers, pilot new solutions, and serve as a true systems-level leader** for Montgomery County's youngest residents and the educators who serve them.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Nicholls

Owner and Educator at Journey Preschool

Journeypreschoolmd@gmail.com

July 11,2025

Re: Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Coordinating Entity

To: Members of the Montgomery County Council

Who requested this Bill?

Why did they request it?

Just a few years ago you set aside funds for this Entity- The Children's Opportunity Alliance- (COA) to take a fresh look at our child care and early care education system.

Certainly, you expected them to do a complete job and to propose new approaches and solutions.

If you really meant it, why would you now eliminate their mission to **“identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration among stakeholder groups”**.

Don't you want to know if there are problems?

Don't you want to hear honestly from the early childhood community?

And why shouldn't COA **engage in Direct services** if their Board and Community Committees think that is an impactful resource in accomplishing goals.

You wanted new ideas, innovation, creativity and positive movement. Why cut out potential solutions if a contract makes sense?

Don't you want to give COA time to do the job you gave them?

Who requested this? Why?

I have spent 50 years working as a child care and early education professional in Montgomery County. I have been on every Board, Commission, Committee, Study Group, Team and Advocacy Organization that we have formed over the past 50 years. The issue of child care and ECE has been and continues to be an intractable problem.

Why pull the rug out while this new group COA tries to identify new ideas, approaches, solutions?

Respectfully,

Mary Ellen Savarese

████████████████████ – happy to discuss any of these issues

July 11, 1015

To the Members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Doreen Engel , and I am The Director of Children & Youth Services for The Arc Montgomery County. Our specialty is inclusive childcare and early childhood education for children with disabilities and who are medically fragile. I am writing in regard to the Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity.

I first heard about the Children’s Opportunity Alliance through a community meeting in May of 2024. I was drawn to their mission of connecting our community to build an equitable, accessible, affordable, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts all young children on a path to reach their greatest potential. Since then, I have volunteered for many activities and given input to COA, particularly enlarging the voice of parents who have children who are medically fragile or have disabilities who need childcare. They have provided me with valuable data and insights for grants that we are pursuing to increase childcare for medically fragile children and those with disabilities.

As an ECE Educator, my experience has been –

- There are a lot of opportunities available, such as the state PreK grant, but the systems and supports are not set up for us to be successful. Specifically see items in bold below.
- It is challenging to find and retain high quality ECE staff, we do the best we can with pay and benefits, but the margins are thin and if our center is not fully enrolled, it makes the business model even more challenging
- The support we have received through the Children’s Opportunity Alliance has helped us to participate in the state PreK Blueprint grant. As changes are happening at the state level to build out a mixed delivery system, we were fearful of being left behind. *One key point is that prior to the summer of 2024, there were always additional funds for summer PreK programs. We always participated – this is comparable to ESY for young children with disabilities. Last year, there was no funding. This year, we are able to have students with us for the summer because of COA support. This is just one reason our students have such wonderful kindergarten readiness scores in kindergarten.*
- *The Blueprint forces us to enroll children in March for the coming fall, but does not confirm our receipt of the grant until mid-May at the earliest. Last year, we learned we had space for more children after our PreK grant application was submitted. With COA’s assistance we were able to*

enroll four more children in our outstanding PreK program. Most of our students qualify under more than one of the three descriptors (income, language spoken at home, IEP) and thus do benefit from a high quality PreK environment before attending kindergarten.

I applaud you all as leaders for creating the Children's Opportunity Alliance and having the vision and understanding about the importance of early childhood. The first five years of life, and particularly the first three, are a critical stage in human development – laying the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. Well-prepared and supported educators can provide intentional experiences that support children's learning and development, helping to build the critical cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills that can set them up for a lifetime of success.

The reality is nearly every family, regardless of income, employment status, race, gender, or geographic location needs support for their youngest children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers child care affordable when it costs families no more than 7% of their household income – but most families in Montgomery County are paying between 25-30% of their income to pay for child care. That's more than many families' mortgage or rent payment. COA has set county-wide goals to increase access and affordability and the new legislative changes will limit COA's ability to work toward achieving those goals.

Over the past three years that COA has been in existence, we have had the following successes:

- Building a Common Agenda and setting county-wide goals related to ECE that include improving kindergarten readiness, increasing access to publicly subsidized seats from 11,000 to 18,000 over the next five years and working to better support the ECE workforce.
- Partnering with community-based organizations like LCAM and other associations to support outreach, mentoring and capacity building for Family Child Care programs.
- Greater transparency and inclusion of a variety of stakeholders (FCC, Centers, parents, nonprofit partners, business, and philanthropy) at the decision-making table (on the COA board) which ensures authentic voice and authority.
- Increasing awareness and supported family childcare and centers in accessing grant funding related to Blueprint PreK expansion in Montgomery County to build out a strong mixed-delivery system.
- Creation of a data dashboard and fiscal map on our website, so there is more public information about our ECE System.
- Advocated for systems change at the local and state level, including writing testimony and funding buses for educators to visit Annapolis and speak with state legislators.

We understand the legislation needs to be amended and we understand the concerns related to duplication, however these changes (related to not awarding or funding grants, not entering into contracts with childcare providers, not providing goods and services to child care providers and not funding seats), will limit innovation and supports that COA can provide to transform the ECE system.

These changes to COA's legislation are not in service of the youngest children or early care and education providers in Montgomery County. These changes will impact and change the mission and efforts of COA.

Childcare providers and parents have felt heard and included in this legislation when it was first created three years ago, but this feels like a targeted message to child care educators that early child care educators cannot be as connected to COA as they may want to be. COA intentionally listened to community before they began to lead and implement efforts to transform the ECE system in Montgomery County. We asked for help with the State Blueprint PreK application and COA helped make that possible for us.

Part of the mindset shift that COA has been working toward is one of inclusive leadership. This means that COA is trying to lead in a way that focuses on creating a work and partnership environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute. COA is actively promoting diversity and inclusion and ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate and succeed. These legislative changes feel very top down and not inclusive of the perspectives of the proximity experts of early childhood professionals and families. COA is trying to build a transformative mindset where multiple stakeholders are at the decision-making table – parents, early childhood educators, nonprofit partners and advocates, business, philanthropy and government partners and policy makers. We are requesting additional time to work with our various stakeholders to present amendments that are in alignment with what we all can agree upon.

It is critical that COA maintain a 360-degree view of the sector and pilot new ideas and fill the gaps that can be supported by philanthropy and an independent nonprofit that can be more nimble and quick compared to our government partners. This is what COA did with the \$1 million dollars during the previous fiscal year.

- COA was created as an independent nonprofit, to coordinate efforts and be a multiplier – to amplify efforts already underway and work to address and identify gaps, which is what COA has done for the past three years.
- Equity needs to continue to be a top priority and guiding principle that influences this work and aligns with the County's racial equity and social justice goals.

Doreen Engel
Director of Children & Youth Services
Doreen.Engel@TheArcMoCo.org



Expedited Bill No. 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Amendments by Councilmembers Luedtke and Mink

Amendment #1 – Role of the Entity - clarification

Amend lines 154-161 to read as follows:

- (k) ~~[Direct Services]~~ Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not [provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education];
 - (1) provide ECE;
 - (2) award ~~[[or fund]] grants of funds received from the County; or~~
 - ~~[[~~(3) enter into a contract with an ECE provider;~~]]~~
 - ~~[[~~(4) provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or~~]]~~
 - ~~[[~~(5) (3) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals.

Amendment #2 – Duties – in general

Amend lines 83-88 to read as follows.

- (i) Duties. [In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the] ~~[[The]]~~ In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism, and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a ~~[[neutral]]~~ convener of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders:

Amendment #3 – Duty to engage and educate

Amend the Entity's duty under lines 147-148 to read as follows.

- (7) engage, educate, ~~[[the]]~~ and build public awareness about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;

Amendment #4 – Area median income (AMI) criteria related to membership and duties

Amend the Board membership under lines 63-67 to read as follows.

The Executive should appoint the following voting members:

- (1) 3 parents or guardians with children in childcare and/or pre-kindergarten programs, including 2 [low income] parents or guardians [[who qualify for a government benefit based upon income]] whose households earn no more than 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for family size;

Amend the Entity's duty under lines 137-142 to read as follows.

- (4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for:
 - (A) children whose parents or guardians [[qualify for a government benefit based upon income,]] earn no more than 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for family size;
 - (B) families of children with special needs[,] and
 - (C) English language learners;

Amendment #5 – Ex officio Board members – voting status

Option #1. *Amend lines 42-53 to read as follows.*

- (c) *Board of Directors.* To qualify as the County's Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, the [Corporation's] Entity's Board of Directors must have no more than 9 *ex-officio* [[voting]] non-voting members and 12 [[other]] voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Each member must reside or work in the County. Each member appointed from the public sector as an *ex officio* member represents the public interest and is not precluded from participating in a matter as a board member if that member's government employer is a party to the matter. The Executive should appoint the following *ex officio* [[voting]] non-voting members:

Option #2. *Amend lines 42-63 as follows.*

- (c) *Board of Directors.* To qualify as the County's Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, the [Corporation's] Entity's Board of Directors must have no

more than ~~[[9]]~~ 6 *ex-officio* voting members, ~~3~~ *ex-officio* non-voting members, and 12 other voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Each member must reside or work in the County. Each member appointed from the public sector as an *ex officio* member represents the public interest and is not precluded from participating in a matter as a board member if that member's government employer is a party to the matter. The Executive should appoint the following *ex officio* voting members:

- (1) a Council staff member with expertise in early childhood education;
- (2) ~~[two]~~ [[2 representatives]] a representative jointly designated by the County Board of Education and the Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools;
- (3) ~~[[3 representatives]]~~ a representative of the County Department of Health and Human Services;
- (4) a representative of the Office of Management and Budget;
- (5) a representative of Montgomery College; and
- (6) a representative of the Universities at Shady Grove.

The Executive should appoint the following *ex officio* non-voting members:

- (1) a representative of Montgomery County Public Schools; and
- (2) 2 representatives of the County Department of Health and Human Services.

* * *

Quasi-Governmental Entities

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
Early Care and Education Entity (Designee: Children's Opportunity Alliance) Montgomery County Code, § 10A-12 (current law; potential amendments under Bill 23-25 not included)	Nonprofit to ensure community priorities are reflected in building a robust system that supports all residents having access to high quality, affordable early care and education.	Designation by Council resolution. Suspension or revocation by Council resolution.	Secure and administer private-sector funding to support the early care and education system and manage and administer public funding that is directly appropriated to the Entity; The Entity must not provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education.	A member is not subject to Chapter 19A {Ethics} because of serving on the Board. The Entity's bylaws must protect against any conflict of interest or similar impropriety by members of the Board of Directors or the Executive Director or any other employees.	9 <i>ex-officio</i> voting members and 12 other voting members
Local Management Board (Designee: Collaboration Council)	State law requires the County to establish or designate a local management	Designation by Council resolution.	The local management board may apply for and receive funds from the State and other sources, including:	The corporation's bylaws must contain ethics provisions to prohibit conflicts of interest, require financial disclosures, and include appropriate remedies.	21 voting members, including 12 public members and 9 private members

For discussion purposes.

Page 2 of 7

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
Montgomery County Code, §§ 2-117 <i>et</i> <i>seq.</i>	board to ensure the implementatio n of a local, interagency service delivery system for children, youth, and families.		<p>(1) the Federal government; (2) County departments, offices, and agencies; (3) private donations; and (4) government and private grants.</p> <p>However, the board must obtain the Council's approval before it applies for any non-government grant or donation that would exceed \$500,000 in any fiscal year, that would require a County match that would exceed \$10,000, or that would require the local management board to provide or</p>		

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
			fund any service after the grant or donation is fully spent.		
Arts & Humanities Council Montgomery County Code, §§ 5A-1 <i>et seq.</i>	The County government should help establish a County-based, nonprofit organization to develop, promote, advocate, and coordinate efforts to support, investigate, encourage, and present arts and humanities in the County	Designation by Council resolution	The Arts and Humanities Council should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide and coordinate funding for the arts and humanities in the County. - Advise local, State, and federal agencies about financial and other needs of arts and humanities programs in the County. - Avoid duplication in arts and humanities activities by coordinating Arts and Humanities Council activities with other existing and planned governmental 	The Arts and Humanities Council must require each officer and director, and the executive director to annually disclose, confidentially and in writing, all activities and interests related to arts and humanities organizations , programs, or funding to the governing board of directors for the Arts and Humanities Council. Each officer and director, and the executive director of the Arts and Humanities Council is a public employee under Sections 19A-11 {participation of public employees} and 19A-14	Not mandated

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
			programs and activities.	{misuse of prestige of office}.	
Green Bank Montgomery County Code, §§ 18A-44 <i>et seq.</i>	Promote and support investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation activities and provide financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities in the County. These activities include clean energy technologies and resiliency, sustainability, or climate adaptive projects.	Designation by Council resolution. The designation may be revoked or suspended by Council resolution.	The Green Bank may: - offer a range of financing structures...that can both lower the cost of financing and increase private investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation activities; and - leverage private investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation activities through financing mechanisms.	A member is not subject to Chapter 19A {Ethics} because of serving on the Board. The Bank's bylaws must include provisions defining and regulating conflicts of interest by Board members and Bank staff.	No more than 15 voting members. The corporation's bylaws should specify that the County Executive may appoint up to 5 board members, including the Directors of Environmental Protection and Finance, subject to confirmation by the County Council.
Montgomery County	Periodically develop a draft	Designation by Council resolution.	For the microloan program:	A member is not subject to Chapter 19A {Ethics}	- 13 voting members

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) Montgomery County Code, §§ 15A-1 <i>et seq.</i>	<p>Economic Development Strategic Plan and submit it to the Executive and the Council.</p> <p>Recommend economic development programs and associated performance measures to the Executive and Council.</p> <p>May administer, as part of a microenterprise development strategy, a culturally proficient microlending program.</p>		<p>(1) loans must not exceed \$15,000;</p> <p>(2) loans must only be issued to Montgomery County residents...</p> <p>(3) loan recipients must participate in educational and technical assistance provided by the program;</p> <p>(4) non-County funds may be used as a source for capital and program administration; and</p> <p>(5) materials and assistance are provided in multiple languages reflective of the County's population.</p>	<p>because of serving on the Board. The Corporation's bylaws must protect against any conflict of interest and address other ethics requirements.</p>	<p>appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council.</p> <p>- non-voting, ex officio: the immediate past chair of the Board and the chief executive officer of the County's Workforce Development Organization</p> <p>- Additional non-voting members: one appointed by the County Council; one appointed by the County Executive; and one appointed by</p>

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
					the Maryland Secretary of Commerce.
Revenue Authority Montgomery County Code, §§ 42-1 <i>et seq.</i>	The Authority is created to construct, improve, equip, furnish, maintain, acquire, operate, and finance projects to be devoted wholly or partially for public uses, good or general welfare.	<p>Created by Code Section 42-3:</p> <p>The Montgomery County Revenue Authority is established as a body corporate and politic, and is an instrumentality of the County and a public corporation. The Authority is a continuous body with the Montgomery County Revenue Authority established under Chapter 446 of the 1957 Laws of Maryland, as amended.</p>	<p>The Authority may exercise all powers necessary or convenient for carrying out its purposes.</p> <p>These powers include (among others):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - perpetual existence as a corporation; - power to acquire, purchase, hold, and use any property; - power to lease as lessee any property; - power to sell or otherwise transfer to the County any project at any time constructed by the Authority- power to borrow money and issue negotiable revenue bonds, on a 	Members and employees of the Authority are subject to Chapter 19A {Ethics}.	5 voting members appointed by the Executive and confirmed by the Council. In addition, the Chief Administrative Officer, or the Chief Administrative Officer's designee, serves as an ex-officio, non-voting member.

For discussion purposes.

Page 7 of 7

Entity	Purpose	Designation	Key Provisions re: Use of Funds	Ethics Requirements	Membership; Voting
			taxable or tax exempt basis.		

M E M O R A N D U M

January 27, 2021

TO: Health and Human Services Committee
Education & Culture Committee

FROM: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) Recommendations for a Public-Private
ECE Coordinating Entity

PURPOSE: Receive presentation from MMF and consider recommendations

Expected Participants:

- Kevin Beverly, MMF Co-Chair, Economic Development Advocate
- Susan Madden, MMF Co-Chair, Chief Government Relations Officer, Montgomery College
- Kathy Stevens, MMF Co-Chair, Executive Director, Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy
- Mike Knapp, MMF Leadership Group member and CEO, Skillsmart, Inc
- Sharon Friedman, Project Director, Montgomery Moving Forward/Nonprofit Montgomery
- JoAnn Barnes, Chief, Children, Youth and Family Services, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Ruschelle Reuben, Associate Superintendent, Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

Additional MMF representatives including Bob Buchanan, Annice Cody, Joanne Hurt, Amy Turner-Thole, and Meredith Bowers are expected to attend the meeting and will be available to answer questions.

The January 2021 MMF report “Recommendation for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity in Montgomery County” and the accompanying transmittal memo from the MMF co-chairs are attached at ©4.

BACKGROUND

On September 15, 2020, the Council approved a special appropriation of \$75,000 to allow MMF, as a neutral, cross-sector convenor and collective impact project of Nonprofit Montgomery, to lead an effort to stand up a public-private Early Care and Education (ECE) coordinating body to build an efficient, effective and equitable system of high quality ECE that will meet the needs of children, families and employers in the County. MMF has mobilized leaders and experts across sectors to address the need for a better system of ECE in Montgomery County.

MMF agreed to perform the following in standing up a public-private coordinating body:

1. Conduct public convening and awareness activities about the need for a coordinating entity;
2. Evaluate potential candidates and recommend the appropriate organization to serve as the entity;
3. Identify necessary legislative action to establish the recommended organization as the entity;
4. Evaluate best practices and recommend a specific governance structure and board composition for the entity;
5. Draft start-up goals and a mission and vision statement for the entity; and
6. Evaluate and recommend a plan for fiduciary responsibilities of the entity including how it may receive, manage, and disburse public and private dollars and make recommendations on the best use of funds dedicated to ECE.

Need for Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity

MMF has concluded that a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity is needed to reform the ECE system and coordinate the “complicated tapestry of ECE programs, services and funding sources.” According to the report, the urgency for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to ECE has increased because the COVID-19 pandemic “and its economic repercussions have devastated the ECE sector and those it serves, supports, and relies upon, especially early care providers, parents and employers.”

While the report acknowledges that a diverse, cross-sector of stakeholders currently have a strong advisory role in the existing ECE structures, it emphasizes that there must be a truly independent governing board with equal private-sector and public-sector decision-making authority. The report states that this authority is needed to overcome existing challenges; break down existing silos; identify gaps in ECE access; improve outcomes for children, families and employers; seek efficiencies through monitoring and mapping public and private funding streams; and unite the public and private sectors in their support of ECE.

MMF RECOMMENDATIONS

Criteria for Coordinating Entity

MMF has identified the criteria it deems necessary for a successful coordinating entity on ©41. MMF states that the entity must be able to accomplish the following:

1. Focus solely on ECE;
2. Have governance structure with representatives from public and private sectors who serve in a fiduciary capacity and have legal voting and decision-making authority;
3. Solicit, receive and disperse public and private dollars with regular reporting on strategic plan, implementation and use of funds;
4. Map and make recommendations about all ECE dollars to support strategic response to community-identified ECE priorities;
5. Represent, reflect, and bring together a diverse group of community stakeholders who provide, use and benefit from ECE to advance the vision for the ECE system;
6. Make decisions through a lens of racial equity, human development, and economic development;
7. Develop a realistic and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity;
8. Use data and metrics to establish targets, define accountability and measure progress;
9. Have dedicated, paid staff to advance the entity's mission;
10. Work at a systems level with a 360° view to align, strengthen, and coordinate all ECE programs and services in Montgomery County; and
11. Work with existing policy and advisory committees and groups to achieve a consistent and singular voice for ECE issues.

The report also suggests that “an independent nonprofit entity works best because its neutrality allows stability through political transitions.”

MMF stresses the importance of the equitable allocation of resources and of addressing racial equity in the work of the coordinating entity. Council staff notes that the report leaves open how the entity will determine what equity means and how it will be measured; how the entity will incorporate the opinions of different groups in making decisions; and how the entity will make decisions. e.g., quorum requirements, majority rule, consensus decision-making, etc.

Proposed Models

The following table summarizes the three models recommended by MMF. MMF notes, however, that “these models are not mutually exclusive, and elected leadership and the community may choose to start with one model with the aspirational goal of moving toward another model should that be in the best interest of the community.”

	ECE Montgomery	Children’s Opportunity ECE Fund	ECE Alliance
New or existing organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New organization • Allows fresh start • Subject to risk and challenges in starting new entity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert existing fund within GWCF to new independent entity • New focus on ECE. • Streamlined-not adding a new organization • Comes with existing views of COF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New organization • Contracts with existing organizations for management and technical support and leverages their resources and expertise. • Focus on ECE coalition building • Non-traditional model
Governance Board and Management Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Board with internal management structure and dedicated staff. • Must hire leadership and recruit board from scratch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Board with internal management structure and dedicated staff. • Experience with fundraising, grants management and gap filling. • Limited experience in analytics, advocacy, and system mapping and building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Board focuses on ECE strategy and implementation vs. running an organization. • Requires higher level of engagement from Board/governance structure members. • May be difficult to unwind management/contractual relationships.
Experience working in public private model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model can leverage the expertise of existing organizations.
Relationship with exiting ECE support organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COF, Collaboration Council and ECCC could continue in complementary or contractual relationship. • Possibility for redundancy or competition for resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration Council and ECCC could continue in complementary or contractual relationship. • Possibility for redundancy or competition for resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits from operational expertise, infrastructure and organization depth of existing entities. • Contracted organization’s other activities could conflict.
Required resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires significant resources to establish and operate a new entity. • Possibility for entity to partner with other organizations for fundraising purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires significant resources to establish and operate a new entity. • Has existing fundraising and grants management capabilities. • May disrupt fundraising support provided by GWCF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially less expensive and staff dependent than standing up new entity. • Need to determine how to integrate existing ECE work to avoid duplication.

Governance Structure

The MMF report highlights “the need for a strong, active and influential not-for-profit board, as well as a visionary and innovative leadership of both board and staff, in order to drive the ECE agenda with both public-sector and private sector decision-makers.”

The report recommends the structure and composition of the entity’s governing board shown from ©49, including the following:

- The Governing Board would consist of 19-21 members, 10-12 private sector seats and 9 public sector seats.
- The Board would initially be headed by two co-chairs, one from the public sector and one from the private sector.
- 10-12 of the private sector seats would be designated for representatives of 7 Community Advisory Boards: 1) parents and guardians, 2) private ECE providers/employers and ECE workforce advocacy, 3) employers (non-ECE), 4) philanthropy, 5) equity and inclusion, 6) County groups, e.g. Commission on Child Care, Early Childhood Coordinating Council, Early Care and Education Initiative Steering Committee, Community Action Board, and 7) MMF Leadership.
- 9 board seats for the public sector would represent: 1) MCPS, 2) County Executive, 3) County Council, 4) Maryland State Representative, 5) Board of Education, 6) DHHS, 7) Office of Management and Budget, 8) Montgomery College, and 9) Universities at Shady Grove.
- The governance board would be appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council.

Although the report also notes that “the proposed governance structure will require additional exploration and refinement,” the Joint Committee may be interested in understanding how private sector representatives will be chosen given that there would be a total of 10-12 individuals coming from 7 advisory groups. The Joint Committee may want to solicit feedback from public entities including MCPS about the proposed selection process for co-chairs and board members. Finally, Council staff notes the recommended board structure gives greater voice to the private sector with 10-12 representatives compared to 9 public sector representatives. There may be additional perspectives that should be included on the board.

Executive Proposal for an Early Care and Education Coordinating Board

The MMF report also responds to the draft proposal circulated by Executive staff to reformulate the current Early Childhood Coordinating Council into the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Coordinating Board (ECCB), as the coordinating body of the ECE system in the County. Council staff understands the proposed ECCB would be tasked with developing recommendations on policy development, governance oversight financing, and practices that strengthen the ECE system and chaired by the DHHS Chief of Children, Youth, and Family Services, the MCPS Chief Academic Officer, and a private-sector representative from an early childhood association or community member.

MMF did not offer the ECCB for consideration as the coordinating entity because it felt that the ECCB would not be an independent legal entity, which does not allow the neutrality necessary for effective ECE system-building; the proposal does not explain how financing would work or the structure for seeking and receiving private-sector dollars; the proposal does not incorporate an economic lens, which would include a stronger employer decision-making role; and there was no real input into the proposed reorganization of the ECCB by the wider community. Council staff notes that many of the concerns expressed by MMF could inform changes to the proposal with relative ease except for the requirement that the ECCB be an independent legal entity.

Action Requested by MMF:

In the January 11 letter transmitting MMF reports, the MMF Co-Chairs requested that the Council “move swiftly” to:

- Endorse the coordinating entity criteria
- Select a coordinating entity model;
- Adopt legislation necessary to establish the coordinating entity (including establishing the governing body of the entity and authorizing it to receive and distribute County and State funds)
- Make timely council and executive branch staff appointments to the governing board of the entity;
- Provide start-up operational funds (MMF provides a sample first year operational budget of \$456,800 for any of the proposed models); and
- Indicate the commitment to receive and favorably view the coordinating entity’s recommendations.

Issues for Consideration

- **CE January 25 letter (©1):** The County Executive expressed support for building an early childhood system that ensures the well-being of children and strengthening all ECE stakeholders, but did not support the MMF ECE coordinating entity recommendations and believed them to be inefficient and an unnecessary use of limited resources. The Executive highlighted the public sector accomplishments in implementing the ECE Strategic plan and ECEI plan that included participation from MMF. The Executive requests the Council consider the following questions:
 - What will this entity do to benefit children and providers that is not currently happening under the public led system?
 - Given the financial crisis providers have experienced through this pandemic, is it prudent to invest almost \$500,000 in standing up a new entity rather than directing such funds into supports towards economic recovery?
 - Why is creating a new entity the best way to strengthen the system?

- How will the new entity be accountable as is required for government funding? (Should this independent entity be fiscally responsible for a system that is largely financed by public dollars?)
- **Moving forward:** If the Joint Committee is interested in moving forward with legislation to establish the coordinating entity, Council staff could work with Council attorneys to develop draft legislation for the Joint Committee's review and identify any potential concerns. During this time, there could be the opportunity to further clarify important issues before Council action, including the following:
 - How will equity be defined? How will it be measured?
 - What process will the board use to make its decisions? How will it resolve issues where there is no consensus?
 - How should the governance structure be further refined as noted in the MMF report?
 - What accountability measures should be put in place to ensure appropriate use of public funds and furtherance of the Council's priorities?
 - How would the transition take place? Would there be any functions that transfer from County Government to the entity, and if so, how would the process work? What is a realistic timeline for standing up the entity?
 - Given the constrained nature of the County budget, are there ways to minimize impact of first year funding on the County operating budget overall?



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel, Psy. D.
Director

M E M O R A N D U M

January 25, 2021

TO: Tom Hucker, President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive

SUBJECT: Early Childhood Coordinating Entity

The County Executive's Office and DHHS acknowledge that we share similar goals with MMF and the Council of building an Early Childhood System that ensures the wellbeing of our children by supporting and strengthening all the ECE stakeholders in Montgomery County including children, families, business owners and ECE staff, however, we do not support the recommendations of the MMF report "Recommendations for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity" because we believe it is inefficient and unnecessary use of limited resources.

Over the last five years DHHS has implemented the ECE Strategic plan and the subsequent ECEI Plan which has led to significant public sector accomplishments including expanded access through increased funding of WPA; improved supply and quality of the workforce through increased trainings and educational scholarships, leveling the career ladder for ECE workforce as it has historically competed with elementary education and routinely loses staff to the same; added over 600 ECE seats; coordinated and streamlined processes across county agencies; developed a roadmap for the next three years ensuring continuity of this important work MMF leadership has been an integral part of this work through its participation on the steering committee.

Where we have differed with MMF is how to continue to improve the coordination of the ECE system. In the Fall of 2020, we shared our plans with council members to make significant changes to the existing ECCC and the ECEI steering committee and the ECE Policy Office to shepherd a stronger public private partnership without the creation of a new entity. We slowed that process as Council had already invested in the research and recommendations being presented today.

We have reviewed the recommendations made by MMF and we are proposing that the council seriously consider the following:

What will this entity do to benefit children and providers that is not currently happening under the public led system?

Given the financial crisis providers have experienced through this pandemic, is it prudent to invest almost \$500,000 in standing up a new entity rather than directing such funds into supports towards economic recovery?

Why is creating a new entity the best way to strengthen the system?

How will a new entity be accountable, as is required for government funding?

In our proposal we noted that the existing public led system could be consolidated under the lead of the ECCC (to be revamped as the Early Care Coordinating Board). We proposed a stronger board with adjustments in the membership to include the appropriate private partners and to build from a network of subcommittees that include the ECEI subcommittees and the Commission on Child Care. Our initial proposal of the membership would be finalized only after collaboration with MMF to ensure that their vision of membership was adequately included.

We have had HHS staff involved in various levels as the MMF Leadership Group has formulated this recommendation. We also have had staff participate in various activities, symposiums, collection, and analysis of ECE data, we've invested in the toolkit and participated wherever we could in growing the knowledge base for ideas to enhance the ECE system.

Council asked DHHS to work with MMF and as part of the leadership team, our Chief of Children Youth and Family Services was invited to be part of the MMF Leadership Group and consistently had opportunity to offer suggestions to consider a re-vamped ECCC as the basis for the entity. In the end, MMF determined that the ECCC (to be revamped as the Early Care Coordinating Board) did not fit their vision for this work and was an advisory board as opposed to a board with responsibility for administering the policy and direction of public financed programs. We also believe that more discussion is needed concerning the fiscal

Tom Hucker, President, County Council
January 25, 2021
Page 3

responsibility for a system that is largely financed by public dollars that come from Federal, State, and local levels.

We have been excited about the convenings that MMF has brought to Montgomery County and our ECE stakeholders. We are excited about the propensity for advocacy that comes from the MMF team and we are very interested in having voices around the table to direct ECE policy decisions. However, we do not think that the Council should support a transfer of leadership away from the County Government and to a new publicly funded public-private entity. It is the responsibility of government to provide for the youngest residents through services, coordination, and funding to be sure they are successful as they grow and enter school. It is the role of government to support their families. We recommend that the Council consider the CE's proposal prior to deciding on these recommendations.

ME/rlc/bb

January 11, 2021

Dear Council President Hucker:

Please find enclosed per the County Council's request as outlined in memorandum-dated July 23, 2020, *Recommendations for a Public Private ECE Entity in Montgomery County, Maryland* prepared by Montgomery Moving Forward.

This extensive report provides significant background and justification for a public-private coordinating entity to advance early care and education in our community. Most importantly, it provides the Council a road map—for bold action—to stand up a coordinating entity including three different entity models, a governance structure and criteria that any model must meet to have the capacity to build a real and lasting ECE system. In our view, key among the criteria, is meaningful authority residing in the Montgomery County Code and private sector participation. These along with other criteria—including a commitment to equity—listed in the report are crucial to the success of any entity. All three models outlined the report meet the criteria.

Given the urgency of the times in which we find ourselves, we must ask you to stand up the entity now to continue your work to mitigate the economic consequences of the pandemic on families, employers and the childcare/ECE sector, as well as begin the long-term work of creating a true ECE system beginning with a community plan.

Specifically, we ask you to review this report and move swiftly to:

- ☐ Endorse the entity criteria, page 32
- ☐ Select a model, pages 33-42
- ☐ Adopt legislation necessary to establish the entity, pages 46-48
- ☐ Make timely council and executive branch staff appointments to the governing board of the entity, pages 41 and 48
- ☐ Provide start up operational funds, page 53
- ☐ Indicate your commitment to receive and view favorably the coordinating entity's recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to do this important work—work that stands on the solid foundation of programs and resources for ECE built by your leadership and many stakeholders from County staff, to advocates, parents, philanthropists, and providers.

Please accept our appreciation for the research and guidance of the Council staff and the Office of Legislative Oversight. Additionally, we valued the time and insight of Executive Branch staff in addition to the many of members of the community who took the time to participate in discussions and provide feedback. The report details, on pages 22-31, the engagement process and the input from the community.

On behalf of the MMF Leadership Group, we look forward to your deliberations. MMF stands ready to aid in the transition to a coordinating entity and to respond to any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kevin Beverly

Susan Madden

Kathy Stevens

Montgomery Moving Forward Co-Chairs



Recommendations for a **Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity** in Montgomery County, Maryland

Prepared for the Montgomery County Council

January 2021

**montgomery
moving forward**

mobilizing leaders to solve our biggest problems together
nonprofits / business / philanthropy / government / education / community

Recommendations for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity in Montgomery County, Maryland

Prepared for the Montgomery County Council | January 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why We Need an Early Care and Education (ECE) Coordinating Entity

Our current ECE system needs bold reform and a visionary entity at the helm.

In 2016, Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF), an initiative of Nonprofit Montgomery, issued its *Call to Action for Early Care and Education*. The first action step in that call was to “boldly reform the ECE system” and an essential step toward that goal was the creation of a coordinating body for ECE. Subsequent fiscal mapping of the county’s ECE sector conducted for MMF by the Children’s Funding Project reinforced the vital need for such an entity to coordinate the complicated tapestry of ECE programs, services, and funding sources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the urgency for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to ECE, both as an economic and social justice imperative. The pandemic and its economic repercussions have devastated the ECE sector and those it serves, supports, and relies upon, especially early care providers, parents, and employers – in short, the workforce of today *and* tomorrow.

Recovery demands that we look to the future by investing in real and lasting systems change to resolve long-standing inequities. County-wide consensus has emerged in both the public and private sectors that our ECE system needs a coordinating entity. MMF’s recommendations set forth a new vision built on the well supported understanding that to engage in effective system building, the ECE Coordinating Entity *must* have an independent governing board with the ultimate legal responsibility for governing the entity. Further, its board must include private-sector and public-sector decision-making authority.

Establishing an organized, fully coordinated ECE system has the potential to help overcome the challenges we face, but only if it is a truly independent ECE Coordinating Entity with a 360° view of system gaps, inequities, and opportunities for increased collaboration and innovation.

As we rebuild from the devastation caused by the pandemic, Montgomery County has the opportunity to transform the ECE system through an ECE Coordinating Entity.

We can build back better by investing in real and lasting systems change and developing an infrastructure for ECE that delivers high-quality, affordable, accessible child care to every family in the county. We can strengthen the partnership between the public and private sectors and develop common goals that reflect community priorities and are widely supported. We can meaningfully support the workforce of today and develop the workforce of tomorrow by providing care and education that puts children on a path to lifelong achievement.

An ECE Coordinating Entity can break down existing silos, improve outcomes for children, families, and employers and play a key role in post-pandemic recovery by providing a 360° view of the entire ECE landscape, starting with seeking efficiencies through monitoring and mapping the full array of public and private funding streams. This entity will unite the public and private sectors in their support of ECE.

With a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity at the helm, Montgomery County could see a transformation that would:

- ▶ Establish a comprehensive, cross-sector ECE community plan undergirded by robust and sustained community engagement aligned with the current ECE efforts and initiatives in the county.
- ▶ Establish and maintain open lines of communication with every component of the ECE sector and its many stakeholders.
- ▶ Regularly monitor and map the ECE landscape, including all current and potential funding streams.
- ▶ Address and resolve current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high quality, affordable care for some communities (e.g., Black and Brown, immigrant, low-income neighbors, families of children with special needs).
- ▶ Coordinate and strengthen investments in ECE professionals to ensure a ready and growing ECE workforce.
- ▶ Support short-term investments, partnerships, and innovations that serve a long-term vision of systems building.
- ▶ Ensure system-wide accountability.
- ▶ Work across sectors on a systems level to coordinate and account for the cost-effective allocation of ECE resources, reduce duplication of effort, identify gaps in need, and provide a significant return on investment for Montgomery County.

What should the entity look like?

In September 2020, recognizing the foundational work done by MMF to assess the ECE sector and strengthen it, the Montgomery County Council, with the leadership of Councilmembers Nancy Navarro, Craig Rice, and Gabe Albornoz, approved an appropriation for MMF to develop and recommend a framework for an independent public private ECE coordinating body.

Based on the extensive work MMF has done over the past five years, including a study of national models and best practices from around the country, an intensive community-engagement process over the past several months, and systematic investigation of local organizations which could potentially become the entity (the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families; the Children's Opportunity Fund; and the Early Childhood Coordinating Council), MMF arrived at three recommended models for a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity.

In considering the existing options, MMF developed, with community feedback, key criteria for a successful coordinating entity, including: 1) a strong, active, and influential not-for-profit board with legal voting authority; 2) visionary and innovative leadership of both board and staff; 3) a sole focus on ECE; 4) a realistic and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity; 5) representation from and the voice of an inclusive group of community stakeholders; and 6) an ongoing 360° view to align, strengthen, and coordinate all of the people, policies, and programs related to ECE the county.

Additionally, the entity should be able to receive and disperse public and private dollars and make recommendations on the best and most cost-effective use of funds dedicated to ECE. A critical role of the entity will be to monitor all public and private ECE dollars received and spent in the county, with an eye toward aligning those resources to best serve the community ECE priorities that will improve equitable outcomes for children and families.

Especially important in the context of Montgomery County are the emphasis on the entity having an independent governing board with legal responsibility for governing the entity and a board that includes both private and public sector representatives with decision-making authority.

MMF's recommendations for the governing board can be found on pages 40-42 of the report.

The three recommended models are as follows:

1. **ECE Montgomery:** Create a wholly new organization with both a governance body and management structure. This has the advantage of providing a clean slate to set a new focus and mission from the outset.
2. **Children's Opportunity ECE Fund (COF):** Convert COF to a new **independent** entity with a governance body and management structure. This has the advantage of COF's experience working with public-private partnerships and its fundraising success.
3. **ECE Alliance:** Create a new ECE Coordinating Entity in the form of a governance body which is supported by contracted management. This has the advantage of directly leveraging the existing staff and operations expertise and infrastructure from other entities (e.g., the COF as currently configured; the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families; Early Childhood Coordinating Council).

All three models recommend a stand-alone public-private entity with independent governance. Please note that these models are not mutually exclusive, and elected leadership and the community may choose to start with one model with the aspirational goal of moving toward another model should that be in the best interest of the community. *Details of the models can be found on pages 34-42 of the report.*

Next Steps

For any of the models, MMF envisions that the County Executive would appoint the board and the County Council would confirm its members. Given this process, the County Council will most likely have to pass legislation establishing a governing board and the County Code will also likely need to be modified to indicate the parameters of the board, as well as the nominating and appointment process.

MMF would continue to play a role supporting the entity until it is fully launched. This could include convening and facilitating stakeholders to continue work on improving ECE in the county, advocating on behalf of a coordinated ECE system, and ensuring that the entity is accountable by helping to define outcome metrics and track progress on them. **As the entity launches, it will need to prioritize the following:**

1. Map the current landscape of ECE policies, programs, and funding in the county to establish a baseline for future work.
2. Align the current ECE efforts in the county to create a comprehensive and synthesized community ECE plan (these include the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services' Early Care and Education, Strategic Plan 2017: Investments in Our Future, the county's current Early Care and Education Initiative), and Montgomery Moving Forward's Call to Action for Early Care and Education.
3. Develop accountability for operational progress and community-based progress (e.g., preparedness of children for kindergarten), as well as creating a system for integrating equity considerations into all aspects of the entity's work.
4. Operationalize the entity, including hiring staff and developing a budget.
5. Ensure mechanisms for ongoing community engagement and awareness building around the economic and social imperative of ECE.

Early Care and Education should be an economic and social pillar that differentiates a thriving Montgomery County – today and tomorrow.

i **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1 **SPECIAL APPROPRIATION**

2 **BACKGROUND**

- 2 [History of MMF’s Work on Early Care and Education](#)
- 9 [Why We Need an ECE Coordinating Entity](#)
- 13 [Entity Project: Process and Timelines](#)

15 **RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

- 15 [National Models and Best Practices](#)
- 17 [Local ECE Landscape and System Builders](#)
- 22 [Evolving Community Stakeholder Engagement](#)
 - Community Engagement
 - Equity
 - Business Leader Engagement
- 32 [Criteria for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity](#)

33 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 36 [Shared Characteristics for All Models](#)
- 37 [Recommended Models](#)
 - ECE Montgomery
 - Children’s Opportunity ECE Fund
 - ECE Alliance
- 40 [Governance Structure](#)

43 **FUNDING & FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITIES**

46 **IMPLEMENTATION**

- 46 [Legislative Action](#)
- 49 [Proposed Mission and Vision](#)
- 49 [Ensuring Accountability](#)
- 51 [First Steps and Activities](#)

55 **GLOSSARY**

58 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

60 **APPENDICES**

Charting the Way Forward: Standing Up a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity

Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Montgomery County Government Early Care and Education (ECE) Non-Departmental Account Montgomery Moving Forward - ECE Coordinating Entity Plan \$75,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves) and Amendment to FY21 Operating Budget Resolution 19-472 Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Nonprofit Montgomery

This special appropriation is needed so that MMF, as a neutral, cross-sector convener, will lead an effort to stand up a public-private ECE coordinating body to build an efficient, effective and equitable system of high quality ECE that will meet the needs of children, families and employers in the County. The funding will be used to: (1) conduct public convening and awareness activities about the need for a coordinating entity; (2) evaluate potential candidates and recommend the appropriate organization to serve as the entity; (3) identify necessary legislative action to establish the recommended organization as the entity; (4) evaluate best practices and recommend a specific governance structure and board composition for the entity; (5) draft start-up goals and a mission and vision statement for entity; (6) and evaluate and recommend a plan for fiduciary responsibilities of the entity including how it may receive, manage, and disburse public and private dollars and make recommendations on the best use of funds dedicated to ECE.

See Appendix A for Montgomery County Council agenda item and memo regarding the appropriation.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

History of MMF's Work on Early Care and Education

Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) is a community-based, collective-impact initiative. MMF has been leading the charge to engage our entire community – child-care providers, business, government, education, nonprofits, the faith community, philanthropy, and families – in building a stronger, more equitable Early Care and Education (ECE) system because our economic well-being and social/emotional health relies on it, both today and in the future. For the past five years, our work on ECE has been a cross-sector, community-based endeavor, drawing on the perspective and insights of a wide range of leaders and stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

How We Chose Early Care and Education

MMF was launched as an initiative of Nonprofit Montgomery in June 2013. MMF offered a new approach to community problems using a Collective Impact framework to bring together leaders from every sector to tackle some of our county's toughest problems. (*See Appendix B for Collective Impact framework*).

MMF's first issue and primary focus through late 2015 was workforce development. Our work on this first issue helped us establish relationships and lines of communication across sectors, especially with the business sector. The decision to embrace ECE as MMF's second issue was the result of a six-month community engagement process that gathered input from more than 500 residents and leaders in Montgomery County. ECE emerged as a top concern for nearly everyone MMF consulted.

In choosing an issue on which to work, MMF considers issues of critical importance to Montgomery County that relate to economic well-being. In particular, we seek out issues – like ECE – that are ripe for systems change, affect a large number of people, and have a disproportionate impact on families who are economically disadvantaged.

ECE directly builds on MMF's first issue, workforce development. ECE has a direct impact on today's workforce because working parents with young children need access to affordable, high-quality ECE to be productive employees. At the same time, ECE plays a critical role in fueling the workforce of tomorrow by helping to ensure that *all* children are ready for school and life. Furthermore, high-quality child care and education should be a thriving and resilient part of our economic infrastructure, not a profession where teachers and caregivers subsidize an underfunded sector by working for low wages.

As seen in many communities working to improve their ECE systems, tackling this complicated issue requires sustained cross-sector cooperation around a shared vision. This made the topic a strong fit for MMF’s Collective Impact approach, which is a way of working that allows an entire community to work toward a shared vision.

Moreover, the complexities and inequities exacerbated during a global pandemic underscore the need for Collective Impact as the most effective model for community systems change.

ECE Definition:

Early Care and Education focuses on the care and education of young children from birth through age 5.* It includes all activities that nurture children's development and prepares them to be ready for school and later life. A system of high-quality Early Care and Education enables employees to be ready to work today, and prepares a well-educated and trained workforce of tomorrow.

Early childhood, beginning in infancy, is a period of profound advances in reasoning, language acquisition and problem solving. A child’s environment can dramatically influence a child's development and learning.

By supporting development when children are very young, early childhood education programs can complement parental investments and can produce large benefits to children, parents and society. In total, existing research suggests expanding early learning initiatives could provide benefits to society of roughly \$8.60 for every \$1 spent, about half of which comes from increased earnings for children when they are working adults.

Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2015

**Although MMF originally used the birth-to-five framework for its ECE definition, it recognizes that the coordinating entity may wish to have a more inclusive approach through early elementary school.*

Convening, Learning, and Listening

In late 2016 through 2017, MMF convened a variety of ECE events and conversations, large and small, that reached more than 1,700 participants from across sectors. These efforts built on the input of more than 500 community members we consulted during the issue-selection process. ECE-focused events and outreach allowed MMF to engage in a sustained strategic conversation with a broad range of community stakeholders and national experts.

We gained a deeper, more nuanced understanding of ECE in Montgomery County – including challenges and needs specific to our community. Here are just few highlights of our work during this time:

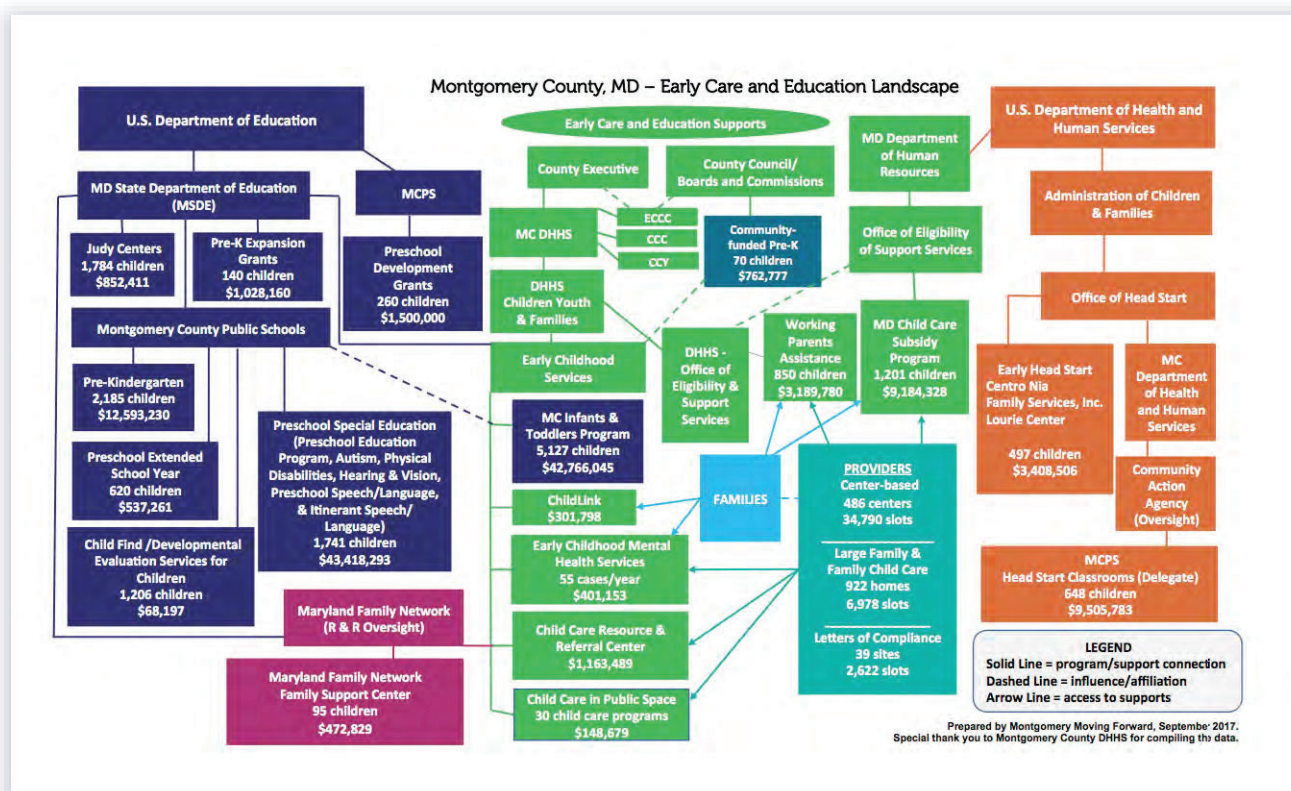
Employee and Employer Surveys: Employers and parents of young children are key stakeholders in the ECE system, and we wanted to be sure their perspectives and concerns were well represented in our Collective Impact process and the ECE Call to Action slated for release in early 2018. To that end, Westat, on behalf of

MMF, administered two surveys, one to employers in Montgomery County and one to employees, on the types of supports that working parents of young children need and want.

Parent Speak Outs: We partnered with community organizations, such as CentroNia, Identity, Housing Opportunities Commission, and the Community Action Board, to reach low-income and non-English speaking parents, as well as young parents who were not using formal care for their children. The goal was to give voice to and gain input from a diverse cross-section of parents of young children in Montgomery County. Parent voices are critical to building a strong equitable ECE system that serves the needs of all families and working parents. These Parent Speak Outs verified how much of the burden of an inadequate, uncoordinated system falls on parents – which in turn impacts their ability to participate in the workforce.

Employer Focus Groups: In partnership with businesses, MMF facilitated three employer focus groups with business leaders in Montgomery County. Participants represented a wide range of fields, including banking, biotech, commercial real estate, communications, education, government, health care, hospitality, and nonprofits. The goal of these focus groups was to provide an opportunity for employers and business leaders to discuss the interplay of workforce issues, such as recruitment, retention, and workforce development, within a successful ECE system and build awareness about the economic imperative of ECE.

Expert Providers Group: In 2017, MMF convened an Expert Providers Advisory Group that includes front-line providers and representatives from both the public and private sectors which met monthly to provide input and guidance. They collaborated on an ECE glossary of terms and mapped funding and programs for ECE services, training, and parent supports currently offered in the county, resulting in an important ECE landscape document that helped demonstrate why an ECE Coordinating Entity is needed. The feedback provided by this group enhanced our understanding the current state of the ECE system and the impetus for MMF's *Call to Action on Early Care and Education*.



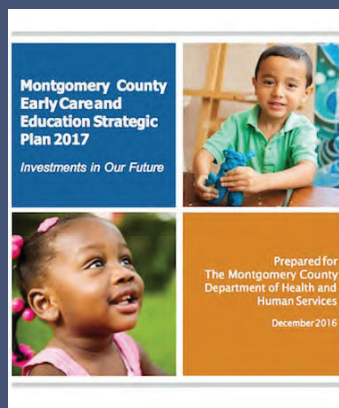
MMF's Expert Advisors Group mapped this ECE landscape to show the size and complexity of the current system.
See Appendix C for larger version.

Business Advisory Group: Through a series of business-leader convenings, MMF launched its Business Advisory Group, which has been a stalwart private-sector partner and advocate for ECE system building in Montgomery County. This group is responsible for two seminal documents: "Principles of a Business-Friendly Early Childcare and Education Environment for Montgomery County, Maryland" and "Employers CAN make a difference in Early Care and Education." (See Appendix B).

Both documents were circulated widely in the business community and brought increased awareness to the connectivity between ECE and economic development. The Business Advisory Group also spun off a new group that advised MMF on its ECE Toolkit for Employers (ECEtoolkit.org), an online resource launched in early 2020 and translated into Spanish soon thereafter.

Alignment with County Initiatives

In March 2019, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and then County Council President Nancy Navarro and County Council members, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), and Montgomery College launched the Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI) with an initial county investment of \$7 million for the first year.



In early 2017 Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services issued its *Early Care and Education Strategic Plan*. As MMF continued its exploration of the issues, this plan was an important resource. As 2016 drew to a close, MMF performed an item-by-item analysis and cross-walked elements of our upcoming Call to Action might align with, complement, or expand on elements of the county's plan.

The ECEI built on the *Early Care and Education Strategic Plan 2017: Investments in Our Future* and these recommendations helped inform the basis of the county's ECEI Action Plan. MMF continues to try to align its ECE work with that of the county's efforts through multiple mechanisms, including maintaining membership on the ECEI Steering Committee.

Culminating Event: Calling the Community to Action in 2018

All the events and activities outlined above – and many more – shaped MMF's *Call to Action for Early Care and Education in Montgomery County*, released in January 2018. (*The Call to Action is available at nonprofitmoco.org/ECE-CTA*).

We knew that for the Call to Action to have real impact and community buy-in, more leaders from every sector would need to embrace ECE as a critical economic imperative and to take ownership for its success. To that end, we also issued an Executive Summary of the Call to Action specifically designed to speak to a broad base of business leaders and other community stakeholders not already engaged in the issue. (*See Appendix B*).

The Call to Action established two big goals supported by three key goals/outcomes:

Goals

We envision a coordinated, comprehensive Early Care and Education system that will support two important goals:

- 1 attracting and retaining a talented workforce of today by supporting families with young children; and**
- 2 ensuring the skilled workforce of tomorrow by addressing the growing opportunity gap.**

In support of these big goals, our community must work toward three key outcomes:

- 1** Every family with young children will have access to affordable, high-quality Early Care and Education.
- 2** Every child in the county will be ready for kindergarten and future school success.
- 3** Employers will be able to attract and retain skilled, productive workers today and into the future.

To support the goals and outcomes, the Call to Action details 6 action steps.

The first action step is: **Break down silos and boldly reform the ECE system** – programs, services and policies tailored to the needs of the county’s unique young child population.

This action step specifies the need for **a coordinating body “to provide ongoing, system-wide oversight for all ECE in the county”** noting that “the currently siloed system of public and private entities requires coordination to improve outcomes for children, families and employers.”

Fiscal Mapping Project: MMF’s Call to Action stressed the inadequacy of ECE funding to meet community need. This prompted MMF to seek a deeper understanding of where there might be opportunities for greater efficiency as well as what strategic financing could look like. To address this goal, MMF engaged the Children’s Funding Project in a fiscal mapping research project in 2018.

Fiscal mapping is a research strategy that ensures fiscal due diligence by facilitating deeper understanding of the current funding landscape for a system before consideration of additional funding. It ensures future action is grounded in common understanding of: flow of funding; current investments; how current investments align with system goals; the level of coordination of supports and services across offices, agencies and communities; barriers and areas for improved efficiency; potential strategies to maximize funding through untapped or new opportunities; and by using existing dollars in the system more efficiently.

This fiscal mapping research identified several critical pieces of information for stakeholders considering the financing landscape of early childhood in Montgomery County:

- ▶ The overall investment in the early childhood system was estimated at \$751,048,269.
- ▶ The vast majority of the resources invested in Montgomery County’s early childhood system come from parents. Parents contributed \$620.6 million, or 82% of the total investment in the system.
- ▶ Parents in the low- to middle-income brackets have limited options for tuition assistance in a very expensive county in which to live and raise children. A single parent with two children under age 5 could spend as much as 50% of family income on child care and early education.

Investing in early childhood

HOW MUCH DO PARENTS CONTRIBUTE?

A 2018 examination of all the funding sources for early childhood services and programs in Montgomery County showed that parents dramatically outspend the federal government, state government, local government, and philanthropy.

\$620,613,927

total parent investment

81.4%

of total investment in the Montgomery County early childhood system

TOTAL INVESTMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD: \$751,048,269

92.6% goes to child care & pre-k costs, 7.2% to family supports & healthy development, & 0.2% to system building.

FUNDING SOURCES:

parents: **\$620.6 M**

state: **\$64.1 M**

local: **\$53.6 M**

federal: **\$22.2 M**

private: **\$1.5 M**

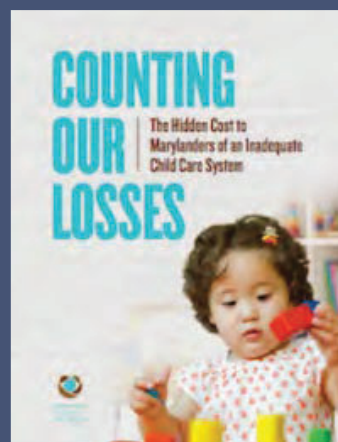


Investments in early childhood in Montgomery County fall primarily into direct service provision of child care and Pre-K programs, with little funding going to develop and sustain a coordinated ECE system. (See Appendix C for fiscal mapping summary).

As part of our intensive work on ECE over the past several years, MMF has endeavored to map the ECE sector – which includes all people, programs, and policies that affect the life of a young child -- to help us fully understand the current landscape. However, these efforts were snapshots in time: diagnostics to help us understand strengths and weaknesses of the current system and point the way toward solutions.

In 2018, the Maryland Family Network (MFN) issued its report *Counting Our Losses: The Hidden Cost to Marylanders of the Inadequate Child Care System*.

This report provided further data demonstrating ECE is an economic imperative, and that failure to invest in a strong, coordinated ECE system results in significant short-term and long-term costs for employers and workers.



The MFN report found that in 2016, absence and turnover due to child-care issues of working parents with children age 5 and under cost Maryland employers **\$2.41 billion**

Moving Forward in the Midst of a Pandemic

MMF entered 2020 with the momentum of two years of sustained work and tangible progress on the goals and outcomes set out in our January 2018 Call to Action. We planned to hold our annual Symposium in March – the fourth year in a row this flagship event would focus on ECE.

Then the pandemic hit. We were forced to postpone the Symposium while finding ways to adapt and respond to the unfolding crisis, while also keeping a long-term vision for the county’s ECE system at the forefront.

ECE Workforce Advocacy Coalition: In late March of 2020, in partnership with the Maryland Family Network, we established an ECE Workforce Advocacy Coalition, which is advocating at the state and federal levels on behalf of ECE providers in the wake of the pandemic. While MMF stepped into the void, our advocacy efforts once again highlight the need for an ECE Coordinating Entity that would be proactive in response to urgent need. Moreover, a cross-sector joint advocacy agenda now exists for both short- and long-term priorities and is ripe for continuation by an ECE entity.

MMF 2020 Symposium: In November, MMF held its rescheduled Symposium as a three-part online event, with the title “Our County’s Commitment to Early Care and Education 2.0: Unlocking Resources and Finding Pathways Forward.” It focused specifically on how the pandemic exacerbated many of the existing inequities in ECE and how Montgomery County could galvanize its public-private collaboration to forge a path forward.

In particular, the Symposium featured a panel of entity experts, including the executive director of First Steps Kent, (an exemplary “best practices” coordinating model) to explore how a public-private entity for ECE could function in Montgomery County and to garner additional feedback on our process and progress.

The annual MMF Symposia and periodic learning events and convenings are a hallmark of how MMF brings broader public awareness to ECE priorities. A public-private coordinating entity would provide a mechanism to continue and build upon this community engagement.

Why We Need an ECE Coordinating Entity

As mentioned previously, the need for a Coordinating Entity was clearly identified in MMF’s *Call to Action for Early Care and Education*, issued in January 2018. Subsequent fiscal mapping of the ECE landscape conducted for MMF by the Children’s Funding Project (CFP) reinforced the critical need for such an entity to coordinate the complicated tapestry of ECE programs, services, and funding sources. In its recommended actions steps, under the category of “ways to spend existing dollars differently,” **CFP advised that the county “connect existing system-building resources to one governing entity for a truly coordinated approach.”**

Our current ECE system needs bold reform. The pandemic exposed the vulnerability of the existing child-care business model, which is built on an unsustainable financial foundation that has been further compromised by the recent economic devastation of COVID-19. Most ECE costs (82%) in Montgomery County are shouldered by families. In addition, most of these families are using providers outside of the public sector at nonprofit, for-

profit, faith-based and family providers. For decades, a complicated state regulatory environment and the rapidly increasing costs to attract and retain quality staff have been allowed to drive up the cost of care till we are now at a breaking point. Quite simply, parent fees cannot fully cover the cost of high-quality care and thus private providers are operating an unsustainable business model.

Establishing an organized, fully coordinated ECE system has the potential to resolve these challenges, but only if there is a truly independent ECE Coordinating Entity with a 360° view of system gaps, inequities, and opportunities for increased collaboration and innovation driven by a community wide shared vision and focused on improved outcomes.

What the county needs going forward is an ECE Coordinating Entity that will break down existing silos and make measurable progress toward better outcomes for children, families and employers. Most immediately, the entity will play a key role in post-pandemic recovery by organizing the fractured ECE landscape, starting with seeking efficiencies through monitoring and mapping the full array of public and private funding streams.

With a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity at the helm, it would:

- ▶ Establish a comprehensive, cross-sector ECE community plan undergirded by robust and sustained community engagement aligned with current ECE efforts and initiatives in the county
- ▶ Identify measurable steps towards achieving accessible and affordable ECE
- ▶ Establish and maintain open lines of communication with every component of the ECE sector and its many stakeholders.
- ▶ Regularly monitor and map the ECE landscape, including all current and potential funding streams.
- ▶ Identify and work to resolve current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high quality, affordable care for some communities (e.g., Black and Brown, immigrant, low-income neighbors, families of children with special needs).
- ▶ Support short-term investments, partnerships and innovations that serve a long-term vision of systems building.
- ▶ Ensure system-wide accountability.
- ▶ Work across sectors on a systems level to coordinate and account for the cost effective allocation of ECE resources, reduce duplication of effort, identify gaps in need, and provide a significant return on investment for Montgomery County.
- ▶ Focus on recovery and rebuilding the ECE system to become part of our economic infrastructure.

The Need is More Urgent than Ever

All the pre-existing challenges pointing to the need for an ECE Coordinating Entity have been amplified and complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and its economic repercussions have had a devastating effect on the ECE sector and those it serves, supports, and relies upon.

PARENTS: Pre-COVID-19, inadequate child care was the equivalent of a five percent pay cut for parents. Now, it's much worse. Without sustainable child-care solutions, many workers may be forced to cut back their hours, switch employers, or leave the workforce entirely. We have already seen the disproportionate impact on

women, with large numbers leaving the workforce due to the pandemic and pushed over the edge by lack of viable child-care options.

EMPLOYERS: When child care is an issue for employees, it’s an issue for employers. Before COVID-19, businesses in Maryland lost almost \$3 billion in revenue annually as a result of employee absenteeism due to child care breakdowns. Now, it’s much more. Employers are losing employees due to child care concerns, and as life returns to something more normal, many parents may not be able to return to work full time, if at all, because they can’t find or afford child care. Employers may also have a hard time attracting and retaining talent.

PROVIDERS: While the ECE sector encompasses more than child-care providers, MMF has taken a strong advocacy position on behalf of that workforce because the pandemic has brought it to its knees. Most child-care programs operate on razor-thin profit margins, which leaves them particularly vulnerable in an economic downturn. Due to the pandemic, providers in Maryland are facing an average of 53 percent increase in costs. Many providers have been forced to complete Maryland State Department of Education paperwork demonstrating that they have reopened, at least on paper, in order to avoid being permanently closed by the state. While these providers may be counted as open, many are, in fact, not accepting and caring for children. Many that have reopened are struggling to serve at their licensed capacity and to attract new clients, and are operating at a loss. One of the biggest challenges to the survival of ECE providers’ businesses is that expenses are rising while enrollment is limited.

As we design our recovery, we have a historic opportunity to choose bold change. ECE should be an economic and social driver that launches us back to a thriving Montgomery County, soon and into the future.

Why a Public-Private Entity?

Montgomery County needs and deserves a robust, resilient, fully coordinated ECE system, and we can get there with a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity.

MMF’s Collective Impact model prioritizes collaboration and equal partnership between the public and private sector, and we contend that any ECE Coordinating Entity must reflect this holistic, cross-sector approach. Our ECE research and outreach have convinced us that the entity must be a true public-private endeavor in order to guide a boldly reformed system.

The public sector, particularly the leadership in the county’s Health and Human Services Department and the Montgomery County Public Schools along with our elected leaders have long been champions of ECE and deeply understand its importance to a thriving and equitable community. Nonetheless, in community conversations over the past several years, and again in the intensive research and outreach conducted in the past several months specific to this report, the need for a public-private approach has been reinforced by a wide array of stakeholders.

The ECE sector is a complex landscape of public and private programs, public and private funding streams, and public and private stakeholders. In order to leverage the good work to date and further advance ECE, it is imperative to connect and coordinate all the public and private aspects of ECE. To do so, the county needs a

public-private entity. In particular, the entity’s governance must reflect the full diversity of the ECE community, which includes not only the relevant government agencies and initiatives, but an array of nonprofits, ECE providers, ECE trainers, parents, all employers, businesses, business associations (including the chambers of commerce), philanthropies, members of the faith communities, arts organizations, and all of the programs and people that are part of the lives of young children and their families. *(For specific recommendations on governance structure for the entity, see page 40).*

While many of these diverse, cross-sector voices currently have a strong advisory role in existing ECE structures, bold reform necessitates true governing authority representing all stakeholders.

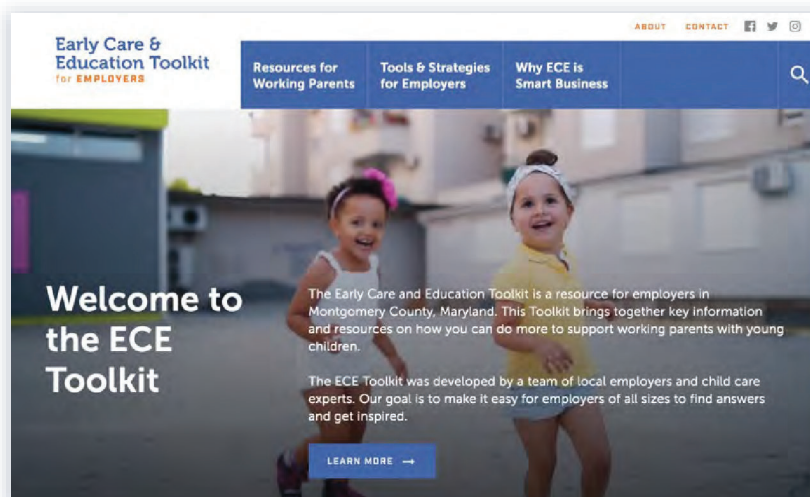
Most importantly, public-private cross-sector representation is necessary to identify gaps in ECE access and connect all aspects of ECE. The current workforce’s productivity depends upon access to high-quality ECE. The private sector needs to be included in any entity to ensure solutions have broad applicability across the county’s workers and the economy as well as deepening the connection between talent development, acquisition and retention. Finally, the ECE Coordinating Entity must have the authority to seek private revenue to braid with public funding to fill identified gaps.

Public-Private Collaboration in Action: ECE Toolkit for Employers

In 2020, MMF launched the ECE Toolkit for Employers, a new web-based resource for employers and parents in Montgomery County:

ECEtoolkit.org

The ECE Toolkit was funded with a combination of public and private dollars, and it was developed by experts and stakeholders from the public and private sectors.



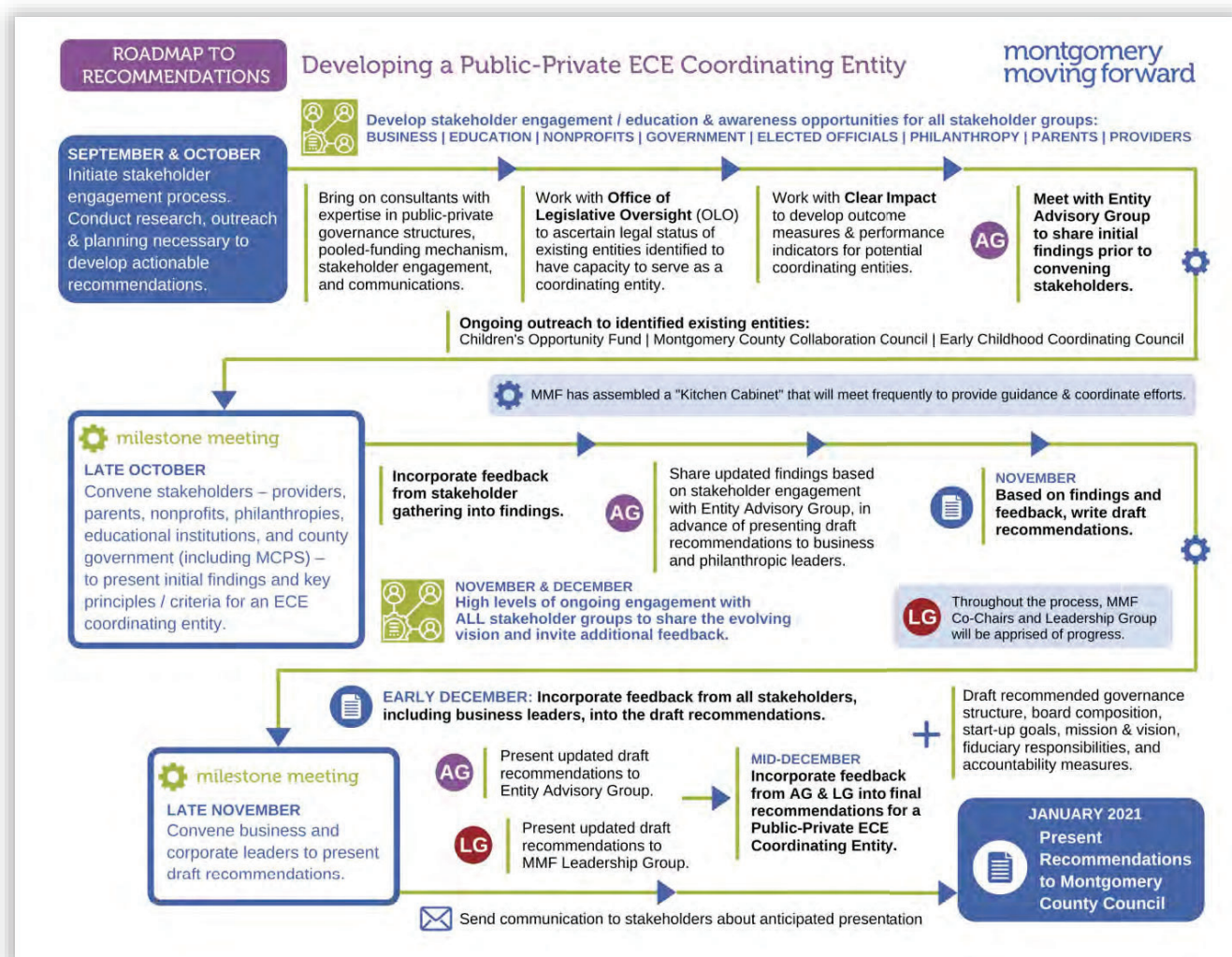
The project benefited from the guidance and support of MMF’s Business Advisory Group, as well as a cross-sector Toolkit Advisory Committee that included employers, leaders from several chambers of commerce, ECE providers, and DHHS representatives. MMF put together additional funding to support creation of a full Spanish translation of the ECE Toolkit: espanol.ECEtoolkit.org.

Entity Project: Process and Timeline

With the pandemic making the need for ECE coordination even more pressing, the co-chairs of MMF's Leadership Group wrote a letter urging the County Council to commit to identifying and funding a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity. (See Appendix A).

On September 15, 2020, through the leadership of Councilmembers Navarro, Rice, and Alborno, the Montgomery County Council unanimously approved a special appropriation to support MMF to lead an effort to devise a blueprint to stand up a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity to build an efficient, effective and equitable system of high-quality ECE that will meet the needs of children, families and employers in the county.

MMF created a Roadmap to Recommendations to help guide its process for identifying governance best practices and garnering stakeholder engagement and feedback, including creating a web page with resources related to the current entity project in order to keep stakeholders apprised of the process and another avenue for questions and feedback. From September to December 2020, as shown on the roadmap below, MMF engaged in a multipronged community- and stakeholder-engagement process.



Local ECE Landscape: MMF met with leadership from three entities in the county currently or formerly in the ECE space: 1) Children’s Opportunity Fund/Greater Washington Community Foundation, 2) Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families, and 3) the Montgomery County Early Childhood Coordinating Council. These meetings were facilitated by one of the governance expert consultants engaged by MMF. (*Learn more about this work on page 17*).

Evolving Community Stakeholder Engagement: MMF held two public Town Halls. The first, on October 28, focused on ECE providers, ECE employers, and advocates. The second was held on November 23 for business leaders outside of the ECE sector. Both these meetings (conducted via Zoom due to the pandemic) were open to the public, professionally facilitated, and afforded ample time for questions and comments.

Before and between these two milestone meetings, MMF staff and consultants engaged public and private stakeholders in one-on-one and small group meetings to garner feedback and review the process and progress of the project. These ongoing meetings have included conversations with parents, providers, DHHS leadership, MCPS leadership, business leaders, and policymakers. MMF made targeted efforts to reach parents and providers in their preferred languages, including Spanish and Amharic. (*Learn more about the community stakeholder engagement process on page 22*).

In addition, at its annual symposium on November 19, MMF featured a panel of entity experts, including the executive director of our aspirational entity model, First Steps Kent, to explore how a public-private entity for ECE could function in Montgomery County and to garner additional feedback on our process and progress.

Internal Advisory Meetings: In addition to its regular and ongoing Leadership Group meetings and updates, MMF has held two meetings of its Entity Advisory Group consisting of MMF Leadership Group and community members. In addition, MMF has a small group of advisers (its “Kitchen Cabinet”) which is assembled weekly to provide guidance on the project. MMF also sought the guidance of Clear Impact to develop a results-based accountability tool to accompany its eventual recommendations.

Arriving at Final Recommendations

These endeavors informed the recommendation process in two ways:

1. We gathered input and guidance on possible models for the entity. We combined that information from what we knew based on our extensive research on national models and best practices.
2. We further developed and refined the criteria for an ECE Coordinating Entity (*see page 32*) – which we began working on nearly a year ago – and the resulting final criteria were applied to the possible models that had been identified. The three models recommended in this report all meet those final criteria (*see the three recommended models on pages 37-39*).

Findings and insights from the activities outlined above, as well as from MMF’s research on national models and best practices, are documented in the next section of this report.

SECTION 2: RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

National Models and Best Practices

In late 2018 and through 2019, MMF surveyed the national landscape to explore best practices and potential models for ECE coordination at local and state levels.

Several state-wide coordination efforts, including Georgia’s Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), were notable in their engagement, systems-level approach, and success. MMF invited the Executive Director of GEEARS to its 2019 Symposium to share best practices with Montgomery County around creating and sustaining a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity. Soon thereafter, MMF made a concerted effort to find similar models on a county or municipal level. (*See Appendix D for more information about GEEARS*).

In investigating county and municipal models, MMF noted that many efforts began as children’s cabinets rooted in government and slowly evolved into stand-alone public-private nonprofits in order to accomplish desired outcomes. Briefly, a children’s cabinet is made up of the people responsible for running all of the programs and services that support children and youth, from schools to health and human services to parks and recreation. Coming together as a “cabinet” gives these decision makers the opportunity to talk about the way their programs and services impact children and youth, and how they can internally work together more effectively and be better partners with other community leaders. However, ultimately, an independent nonprofit entity works best because its neutrality allows stability through political transitions.

Many communities – including Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Louisville, Kentucky – have operationalized this methodology as they began as children’s cabinets rooted in the public sector and then evolved over time to establish a neutral nonprofit organization. (*See Appendix D for a sampling of national models*).

In 2020, MMF found a county-wide entity that seemed most aligned to needs for systems change here in Montgomery County: First Steps Kent (FSK) in Kent County, Michigan. To start with, unlike many models, First Steps Kent is county wide, not statewide or city wide. Also, it focuses solely on ECE, not cradle-to-career like so many of the other organizations (though it does partner and collaborate with other collective impact initiatives in Kent County to provide a holistic view of the cradle-to-career continuum). In developing its governance structure, FSK also identified the need for independence and neutrality and recommended a new nonprofit organization to achieve that.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, FSK shares MMF’s strong commitment to racial equity and social justice, necessary cornerstones of any ECE system-building.

FROM FIRST STEPS KENT: *“We commit to ensuring equity, in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age, ability, and other protected categories of individuals, is embedded in our structure, policies, strategic planning, and advocacy efforts. Promoting equity is critical to truly making a difference in the lives of those we serve. To that end, we make a conscious and explicit effort to:*



- *Ensure our work focuses on the elimination of disparities in child outcomes;*
- *Educate ourselves and others to improve understanding of implicit bias and the historical context of inequities, which is vital to recognizing and dismantling barriers to improved outcomes;*
- *Critically examine First Steps Kent policies and practices using a racial equity lens and work to ensure that both their intent and impact will promote fairness and equity;*
- *Model as an organization the changes we want to see implemented throughout our community and advocate for the elimination of institutional and structural racism in systems we influence; and*
- *Serve our community’s children through active engagement of their families, listening to their needs, understanding their strengths, and advocating for needed policies, programs, and supports.”*

After several decades of community building, fiscal mapping, and coordination, in November 2018 Kent County voters approved the Ready by Five Early Childhood Proposal that included a .25 mill property tax increase/tax levy that will generate \$5.7 million a year from 2019-2024 – more than \$34 million total. That money is being used to pay for services such as home visiting, play and learn groups, developmental screenings, and support to help families access the help that they need. First Step Kent administers that funding, which is awarded in a competitive process to local organizations that serve young children and their families.

First Steps Kent quickly became our aspirational model entity for Montgomery County, and MMF reached out to FSK to learn more about its history, evolution, and mission. Though it started small and lean, it now boasts a double-digit staff; a diverse funding portfolio including 11 foundations, two businesses, the Pritzker’s Children’s Initiative, and the Kent County Public Health Department; and strong collaborations with national public and private sector partners, including Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers, Center for the Study of Social Policy, National Women’s Law Center and National League of Cities. In addition, its governance model reflected a blend of community voices from providers and parents, to businesses, philanthropy, and government.

Today, First Steps Kent continues to work with community partners to build a comprehensive early childhood system, which means having the programs, policies, and supports in place that help all young children and their families thrive. First Steps Kent does that work by:

- ▶ Convening parents, service providers, funders, advocates, and other stakeholders to ensure high-quality programs and services are accessible to families and they are well coordinated and effective.
- ▶ Building public support for early childhood by educating the community about the importance of early childhood development and advocating for policies that support young children and their families.
- ▶ Researching what is working effectively across the country and finding innovative approaches to address gaps and disparities in Kent County, improving equitable outcomes for young children.
- ▶ Using data to make decisions and to measure progress, so that services and programs are evidence-based and aimed at our community’s most pressing needs.

Local ECE Landscape and System Builders

In order to make recommendations for an ECE Coordinating Entity, it was important for MMF to understand the current landscape of ECE-focused organizations. We already had a great deal of familiarity and a working relationship with local ECE leaders in the public and private sectors from our work on ECE over several years. However, we needed to explore best practices for system-building governance amongst the existing organizations in Montgomery County.

Convening System Builders

In 2019, MMF convened 13 local system builders (one of those builders being MMF) to gain a deeper understanding of how a potential ECE Coordinating Entity might be structured and positioned.

In addition to bringing together local entities already providing proven leadership and coordination in the ECE space, we wanted to include organizations focused on other issues, but whose models we wanted to better understand, to see how their experience might be applicable to establishing an entity to coordinate and facilitate effective ECE system building in the county. Importantly, this was the first time MMF shared our draft criteria for a successful public-private coordinating entity for ECE with an external group. (*See Appendix E for original criteria*).

MMF convened representatives from the following groups:

- Children’s Opportunity Fund
- Greater Washington Community Foundation
- Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy
- Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families
- Montgomery County Commission on Child Care
- Montgomery County Community Action Agency
- Montgomery County Early Care and Education Policy Office/Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
- Montgomery County Early Childhood Coordinating Council/Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
- Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation
- Montgomery Moving Forward
- Nexus Montgomery Regional Partnership
- Primary Care Coalition
- WorkSource Montgomery

This gathering resulted in a matrix documenting and comparing each group’s funding source(s), authority, governance model, level of multi-sector integration, monitoring, advocacy efforts, ties to ECE, staff capacity, and funding priorities. (*View the matrix at bit.ly/MMFSystemBuilders*).

This was an important step on MMF’s journey in advocating for an ECE Coordinating Entity. It helped us gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges of local system building, inside and outside the ECE space, and provided important context for how to assess and propose possible models for the entity.

From these earlier convenings, MMF learned several things. First, in response to participant input, its criteria for a successful public-private ECE Coordinating Entity needed to be refined to provide more guidance. Second, it was necessary to home in on those entities already in the ECE space.

Understanding Existing ECE Entities

The following organizations were referenced in the Montgomery County Council appropriation for MMF’s entity recommendation project as potential candidates to become the ECE Coordinating Entity. They also emerged from MMF’s convening of county system builders as the current structures with the most potential to either evolve into or partner with a coordinating entity for ECE:

- ▶ Children’s Opportunity Fund (COF)
- ▶ Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families (CC)
- ▶ Montgomery County Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC)

Part of the work of MMF was to evaluate each of these against the criteria for the ECE Coordinating Entity and assess whether any or all would be a good fit and, if so, what changes (legislative or otherwise) may need to be made to the governance structure(s). If this assessment determined that an organization was not a good candidate to become the ECE Coordinating Entity, the MMF team looked at how it would align to the ECE system-building work that would be led by the entity.

In order to make this assessment, MMF sought to better understand each group and its ECE work, and then determine how each could best align with the goals of MMF’s process to recommend models for a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity.

Montgomery County Council’s Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) took an initial look at COF, CC, and ECCC to determine three things: type of organization, purpose, and current governance structure. The OLO also put together a brief history of each entity, including the legislative action that established each of them. (*See Appendix E*).

The OLO was a natural and important research partner to MMF as many of its earlier ECE related studies informed MMF’s ECE Call to Action and subsequent work.

The following chart was developed with findings from the OLO, drafted at MMF’s request, and clarifications and supplemental information from the entities.

Existing Entities in ECE Space: Summary Characteristics

Entity	Type of Organization	Purpose	Governance Structure
Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families	Quasi-public nonprofit corporation.	To implement a local interagency service delivery system for children, youth and families.	The County Executive appoints the 21-member Board of Directors with 12 public sector members and 9 private sector members.
Early Childhood Coordinating Council	A County BCC (Board, Commission, Council) that is staffed by 3 County staff in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).	To monitor, advocate and make policy recommendations for the development of an early system of care and education in Montgomery County that supports children entering school ready to learn.	The ECCC is composed of up to 33 members, which include members of the public and County and MCPS staff, appointed by the County Executive with an emphasis on early educators, parents and community groups and organizations and philanthropy that focus on young children and their families. The ECCC includes members of the ECE Initiative interagency workgroup from County departments, MCPS and Montgomery College.
Children’s Opportunity Fund	A fund of the Community Foundation of Montgomery County (the local office of the Greater Washington Community Foundation).	To pool public and private funding to close the achievement gap and address barriers faced by vulnerable children and their families.	The County Executive, Superintendent, a Member of the County Council and a Member of the Board of Education serve as the COF’s Policy Leadership Group; there is also a public-private Steering Committee.

To build upon OLO’s grounding research, MMF staff and consultants held a series of interviews and conversations with leaders of each of the three entities. The first conversations were held in mid-October, with the following:

- **COF:** Kimberly Rusnak, Project Director, and Ben Murphy, Associate VP of Community Investment at the Greater Washington Community Foundation
- **CC:** Elijah Wheeler, Executive Director
- **ECCC:** Jody Burghardt, Chair; Taneisha Woods Myles, Vice Chair; Liran Laor, Past Chair; and Monica Ortiz, DHHS staff

We explained the MMF process and asked about each organization’s experience with ECE, public-private partnerships, and collective impact work. We asked how they focus on equity in their organizations and what legislative, legal, or policy changes they feel would be needed for their organization to become the coordinating entity.

Our findings were presented first to the MMF “Kitchen Cabinet”, a small group of public and private sector advisors who were deeply steeped in MMF’s criteria for a successful public-private ECE Coordinating Entity, and later to other stakeholder groups. In particular, we shared the findings with a larger and broader group of advisors, the MMF Entity Advisory Group, that consisted of MMF Leadership Group members and community members met several times throughout the project process.

Leadership from the three aforementioned organizations were invited to all Entity Advisory Group Meetings and were welcome to participate and answer participant questions. Representatives of the three organizations were also present at a late October Community Town Hall focused on the entity project, and at the MMF Symposium on November 19, at which the entity project was discussed.

Throughout October and the first half of November, MMF refined the criteria for the coordinating entity and focused on a few key criteria which impacted the roles that COF, CC, and ECCC could have in MMF's recommended models:

- ▶ The requirement that the entity be focused **solely** on ECE meant that CC could not be the coordinating entity without transitioning out of its work with school-aged children, youth, and young adults, which it is legislatively required to do.
- ▶ The requirement that it be an independent legal entity with a governing board that has voting authority meant that ECCC, an advisory board of the county, could not be the coordinating entity.
- ▶ The requirement that it be an independent legal entity with a governing board that has voting authority also meant COF could not be the entity in its current structure as a program of the Greater Washington Community Foundation. MMF discussed the possibility of a "reimagined COF" becoming an independent 501(c)3 organization.

In mid-November, MMF staff and consultants had a second round of individual conversations with each of the entities to provide an update on the process and share the updated criteria. In those conversations, we spoke again with Kimberly Rusnak (COF), Elijah Wheeler (CC) and Jody Burghardt (ECCC). Also speaking to us about ECCC was Barbara Andrews, Administrator of Early Childhood Services at Montgomery County DHHS.

By the first of December, the MMF staff and consultants came to the three proposed models it would recommend to the MMF Leadership Group on December 7. Prior to that meeting, MMF staff and consultants again met with representatives of each entity to discuss with them what would be presented to the Leadership Group. Those participating in the three separate meetings were:

- **COF:** Kimberly Rusnak and Joan Shaffer, COF Steering Committee member
- **CC:** Elijah Wheeler
- **ECCC:** Barbara Andrews and Jody Burghardt

The representatives asked many questions and some expressed concerns about one or more of the models, but all indicated a strong commitment to work with the eventual ECE Coordinating Entity. We assured all of them that the MMF recommendations would outline roles for all three entities in each of the models and that they would all have an important role to play in the systems work led by the ECE coordinating entity.

Representatives of each entity were present for the December 7 MMF Leadership Group meeting where the three recommended models for the entity were presented.

In addition to meeting with representatives from Children's Opportunity Fund, Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families, and the Early Childhood Coordinating Council, MMF met twice with Natalia

Carrizosa, of Montgomery County’s Office of Legislative Oversight, and invited most of the people interviewed in this process to join the Entity Advisory meetings, Town Halls, and the Equity Task Force launch.

Despite this project’s fast timetable, MMF has prioritized keeping both the County Council and County Executive staff informed and updated. These meetings included key councilmembers, along with Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director, Office of the County Council, and Robert Drummer, Senior Legislative Attorney for the County Council, to share progress and ask for their input as to how to best organize our recommendations to meet the County’s legislative standards. We also included Vivian Yao, County Council Legislative Analyst in many advisory meetings, and met with BB Otero, Special Assistant to the County Executive, and Caroline Sturgis, Assistant CAO for the County Executive. In addition, MMF staff and consultants met with leaders from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), including JoAnn Barnes, Chief, Children Youth and Families Services, and Raymond Crowel, Director DHHS, to update them on the project and elicit feedback about the proposed criteria and models.

Both County Executive staff and County Council Members and their respective staff asked questions and provided input about the authority, governance, funding, structure, strategy, and intended outcomes of MMF’s recommended models. These questions helped MMF shape our recommendations below.

Evolving Community Stakeholder Engagement: An Added Focus on a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity

From the beginning of its work on ECE, MMF has prioritized community input as an essential component of a high-quality ECE system in Montgomery County. By community MMF means a wide range of stakeholders who live or work in Montgomery County including families, faith organizations, social service nonprofits, advocacy and equity organizations, businesses, labor and other community-based institutions that are not part of the public sector.

While researching models for effective system building, as described above, MMF also sought ongoing feedback on strengthening ECE in the county from a wide range of community stakeholders through conversations with formal and informal advisory groups, ECE experts, businesses and business organizations, providers and provider associations, nonprofit advocates, social service providers, and public sector agencies, among others.

From October to December 2020, MMF staff and a team of consultants gathered feedback about community concerns and priorities related to the county's ECE system and what an ECE Coordinating Entity should look like. This process addressed three major components of the new entity: community engagement, equity, and business input. This approach insured that authentic participation from community stakeholders would be integrated into proposed operations and structure of the entity.

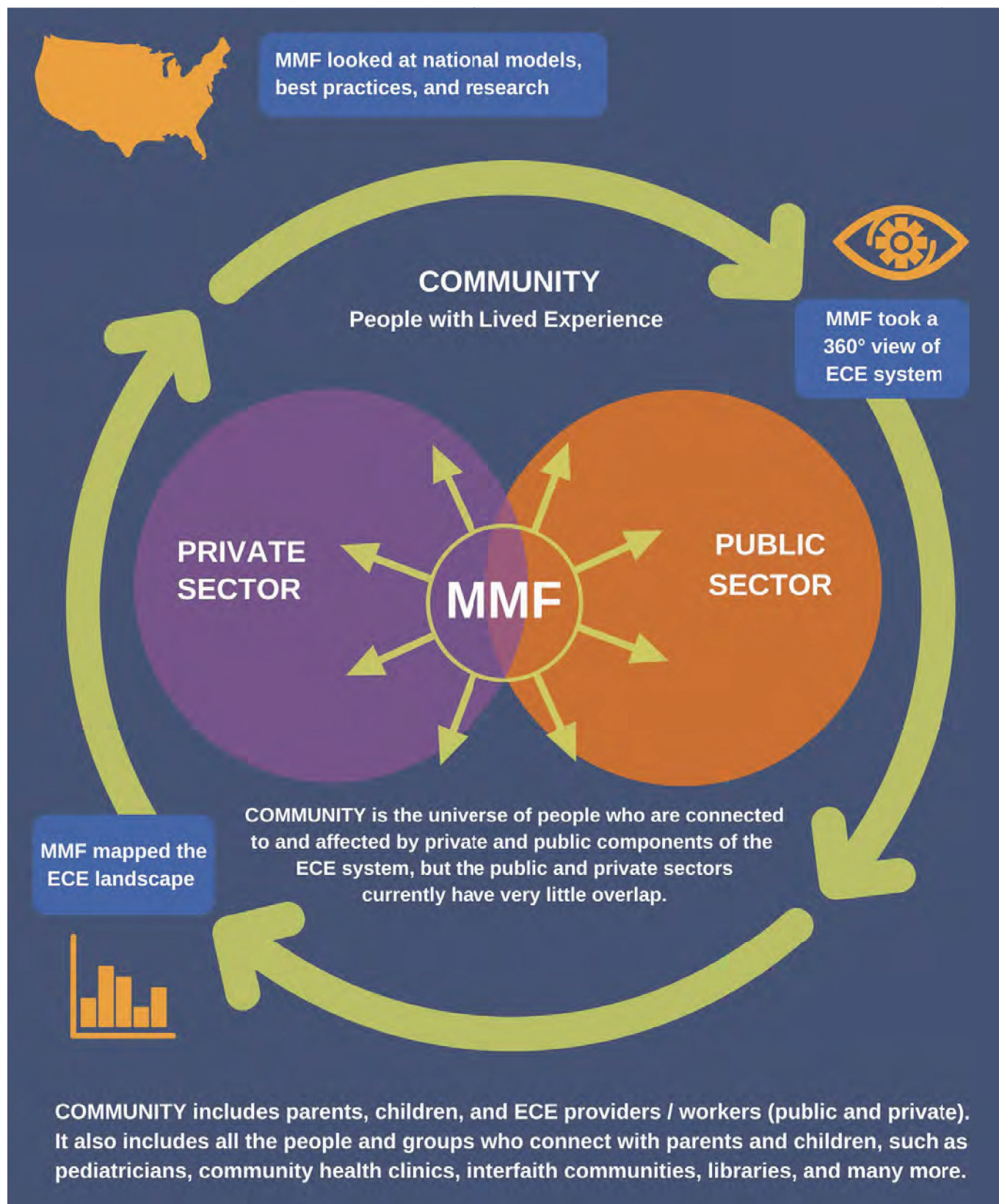
That the entity will work to increase equitable distribution of ECE resources is non-negotiable. To identify the most pressing equity concerns and develop a set of recommendations for addressing them, MMF asked community members about their perspective on how the entity can improve the ECE system from an equity standpoint. Although there is considerable information available about current inequities in access to high-quality child care and education, MMF wanted to hear directly from community members about their priorities and their suggestions for improving ECE for all residents of the county. In addition to the feedback from community members, MMF convened a first meeting of a special group to focus on equity concerns. (*Findings from this meeting are discussed starting on page 27*).

During this several-month community outreach process, **the feedback we received was used to refine the criteria for the entity** (*see final criteria on page 32*) and then evaluate possible models that would fit those criteria. As the criteria and recommendations evolved, MMF invited additional feedback and input.

This intensive, iterative process means that the criteria for the entity and recommended models are community-driven, informed by a wide array of viewpoints and concerns.

It is and will remain important for county and entity leadership to take into consideration what we heard as the entity is established and begins its work. The conversations that shaped this report need to continue.

MMF's Role in ECE Systems Change and Developing Recommendations for an ECE Coordinating Entity



See page 54 for how the ECE Coordinating Entity would be similarly positioned.

Community Engagement

Key Takeaways from Community Engagement

- ▶ Community stakeholders want meaningful voice and representation.
- ▶ The entity should focus on improving access to decision making about ECE operations, policies, and resources for communities that have been marginalized.
- ▶ The entity must balance long-term strategy and crisis response.
- ▶ Clear, frequent, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communication is essential.
- ▶ A system of accountability and ongoing, transparent feedback mechanisms will strengthen connections and build trust.
- ▶ In order to ensure a high-quality ECE system, providers require better support and higher wages and to be part of the decision-making process at every level.

See Appendix F for further exploration of these points.

Outreach methods and contacts:

- 18 in-depth interviews.
- More than 50 organizations and individuals attended a virtual Community Town Hall.
- 79 survey responses from mainly low-income, immigrant families with young children, conducted in Spanish (39 respondents) and English (40 respondents) (distributed by CentroNia, an ECE provider working with a generally low income, immigrant population).
- Presentation to the Commission on Child Care in mid-November, to share findings and invite feedback.

Community stakeholders were also invited to request additional interviews and/or submit comments online.

Current Context:

- ▶ Access to high-quality, affordable ECE is not evenly distributed in Montgomery County. Income, location, race, English proficiency, and immigration status are all factors that influence access. Generally, it is easier for white, English speaking, higher-income families to find child care.
- ▶ There is a limited amount of child care that is culturally and linguistically competent, that supports the needs of working families (e.g., flexible hours), that accommodates special needs of disabled children, and that is “queer” competent, among other concerns.
- ▶ Child care staff in both Centers and Family Care Providers earn low wages and generally have limited opportunities for professional development. The business model for child care is subsidized by the low wages of the staff and teachers. This is both inequitable and unsustainable.

- ▶ Family Care Providers, of which there are almost 900 in Montgomery County, are often staffed and or owned by older women of color. These providers receive less attention, support and resources – even on a per child basis – than Child Care Centers.
- ▶ Families and providers are not consulted about key decisions affecting ECE resources in the county, even though they are most strongly affected.

Community Engagement: Direct Feedback from Families

A survey of 79 CentroNia families*, conducted in both Spanish and English, found that their top priorities were similar, both putting the safety of their children as their first priority. Both groups placed high costs as their top challenge in finding child care.

Top priorities in seeking child care:

Spanish speakers

1. a place where their children are safe
2. high-quality programs and activities
3. flexible hours.

English speakers (a mix of mainly English and Amharic speakers)

1. a place where their children are safe
2. high-quality programs and activities
3. affordable fees

Top challenges in seeking child care

Spanish speakers

1. high cost
2. long waiting list
3. not knowing who to call or how to find a program

English speakers

1. high cost
2. flexible schedule
3. finding a place where their children will be safe

**Note that this set of respondents should be seen as a focus group, as the survey was not statistically rigorous.*

Community Concerns and Recommendations:

The following section presents the key points raised by community members, along with specific comments from the interviews and conversations of October - December 2020.

A successful ECE coordinating entity must:

- ▶ Embed equity into every aspect of the entity.
- ▶ Ensure community stakeholders have both representation and voice in the entity
- ▶ Be clear about who votes and where decision making authority lies
- ▶ Ensure that there is clear, frequent and targeted communication with community stakeholders to build trust.
- ▶ Develop a clear system of accountability and feedback loops on both entity and community input to build trust and achieve transformative change.
- ▶ Push for better support and higher wages to providers.
- ▶ Advocate for ways to make access to resources easier for low income, Black and Brown, disabled, immigrant and low English proficient, and other often marginalized communities.
- ▶ Balance long-term strategy and crisis response.

See Appendix F for more community feedback.

FIRST STEPS KENT CASE STUDY:

ENSURING PARENTS HAVE A MEANINGFUL VOICE

There is a fundamental understanding in Kent County that if parents who need and use early childhood services aren't involved in the system-building work, the system will fail.



There is a fundamental understanding in Kent County that if parents who need and use early childhood services aren't involved in the system-building work, the system will fail. One way parents have both a voice and a vote is in deciding how to allocate Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds. Parents make up nearly half of a proposal review board that determines which early childhood programs and services will be awarded millage funding. The group's funding recommendations ultimately have to be approved by the Kent County Board of Commissioners, which has happened with no modifications to date.

The parents on the review board represent the demographic and geographic diversity of Kent County. Prior to joining that group, all parents participate in training that not only prepares them for the task of reviewing and assessing proposals, but also builds their capacity and comfort level in speaking up and actively participating in making decisions about how those resources will best impact children and families.

Equity

Equity was a key concern going into the community engagement process, and it was a prominent theme in most conversations. Because it is so important, we felt we needed to bring the issue into sharper focus, especially as we knew equity would directly inform several of our final criteria for an ECE Coordinating Entity.

In mid-December, we brought together a cross-sector group of individuals to discuss equity as it relates to an ECE entity.

From the Criteria for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity (see page 32):

Develop a clear, realistic, actionable, and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity, and that includes both representation from and the voice of an inclusive group of community stakeholders.

MMF plans to assemble this group again early in 2021, including additional invitees who were unable to join us in December, and our intent is to create an ongoing Equity Task Force that will eventually be one of the community committees supporting the entity's governance structure (see proposed structure on page X).

Participants in the December meeting emphasized that one of the early, high priority tasks of the entity will be to define what it means by equity and establish standards and a system for measuring accountability as a priority during the launch phase. The Equity Task Force could lay the foundation for this framework and ensure that it aligns with the county's Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation (bit.ly/RacialEquityBill27-19) and the DHHS assessment tool that stems from it. (See Appendix G).

Prioritizing Equity and Social Justice

What follows are key takeaways from the resulting conversations. This input echoes and expands on what we heard from community stakeholders, and these should be priority considerations for a new ECE Coordinating Entity.

Defining equity should be a first step: The entity needs a solid definition of equity and operational framework that is robust enough to guide operations. It will also serve to ensure that equity is prioritized when the entity makes decisions about limited resources for the community or how to use public versus private funds.

Coordination: Culture change is needed to promote cooperation and incentivize collaboration among existing groups in the county. The county has a lot of groups that overlap and operate in the same space but don't talk to each other. There isn't a good system for communication and collaboration, and this leads to a loss of efficiency. Instead of focusing on a common agenda, the ECE sector is characterized by isolation, bifurcation, and a focus on individual and organizational resources/survival. We have not been able to break this pattern. How will a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity address this?

The entity must create a culture of equity from the start: What equity means for the entity – what it means to achieve it, who is included under the equity umbrella, and how the entity will know it is making progress towards achieving it – needs to be understood and embraced by all stakeholders. Those involved in the shaping of the entity (governing board, advisors, staff) need to participate in equity training so that everyone is starting

from the same place of understanding. The entity might use the county's Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) raining, for example, as a reference point and a common starting point for all those involved.

Inclusive representation: The definition of equity and the operationalizing framework should be co-constructed and inclusive of all stakeholder groups. The entity needs to develop criteria that ensure that various marginalized groups are accounted for with presence, power, and real participation. The demographics of the county should be appropriately represented as well. The entity should consider options including having a specific number of slots for each stakeholder group; having rotating terms to allow for different voices to be at the table; ensuring that there is voting power and authority among all stakeholder groups; providing advocacy training for advisory group and board members. **The Community Action Board is an example of what diverse representation and real leadership by the community looks like.**

Key questions about representation include:

- ▶ How will the entity incorporate the opinions of different groups?
- ▶ Will there be a system for determining if there is a quorum that comprises a sufficient number of stakeholders so a decision can be made by voting?
- ▶ Will a majority decision be enough?
- ▶ If there are advisory bodies representing different stakeholder groups, how will those groups have input into decision making?

Access and participation: The entity will need to consider equity in how it communicates and operates. For instance, it will need to ensure interpretation at meetings for those who need it, provide resources in other languages, and make sure those with disabilities also have access. In a virtual world there are more opportunities to bring people together, but timing may still be an issue, and access to laptops and internet service may also be limited. Once some meetings are in person again (post-pandemic), child care and stipends for transportation can help remove barriers and allow greater participation by parents.

The entity should work through and with trusted intermediaries like religious institutions and other community-based organizations to deliver information and gather feedback from different communities. Also, to reach different communities, the entity will need to use different modes of communication: texting, WhatsApp, flyers, word of mouth. **A good model for parent participation is the Head Start Parent Council**, which has developed a system for getting input and participation from parents. Key to this has been providing an incentive through offering training along with participation. Through the training, parents learn how to be advocates and to influence the process, not just weigh in on the final decisions.

Accountability: The entity's equity framework should be measurable and should be measured through annual reporting processes. Accountability goes back to the question of "what is equity" – including what it would mean to achieve it, who is included under the equity umbrella, and how the entity will know it is making progress towards achieving it.

Business Leader Engagement

Business engagement is essential to the success of the entity, not only because of the leadership and resources the business community brings to the table, but also because ECE is integral to local economic development. The workforce of today needs to be able to rely on high-quality, accessible and affordable care and education.

The workforce of tomorrow is being prepared for kindergarten and a lifetime of academic and professional achievement by those who take care of them while their parents work. Additionally, when the thousands of people working in the ECE sector as teachers, staff, and owners get better wages and more opportunities for professional development, the local economy will benefit.

Knowing that employers have a vital interest in ECE, as a strong ECE system supports a talented and productive workforce, MMF cultivated contacts within the business community and engaged several business leaders in its internal advisory groups. When the Council charged MMF with developing a framework for the entity in fall 2020, MMF built on this foundation of outreach and engagement.

Key Takeaways from Business Leader Engagement

- ▶ Incorporate the “Principles for a Business-Friendly ECE Environment” (developed by MMF’s Business Advisory Group) in vision for the county’s ECE system. (*See Appendix B*)
- ▶ Establish a substantive partnership with business leaders beyond a single representative on the entity’s governing board.
- ▶ Drive systemic change, including taking necessary risks and raising the profile of ECE as essential to the county’s economic vitality.
- ▶ Recognize ECE providers as employers and businesses, in addition to their identity as ECE experts.

Outreach methods and contacts:

In addition to the community stakeholder engagement documented above, MMF also devoted time and resources specifically to engaging business leaders. We wanted to get business leaders’ perspectives on outcomes needed from the entity to help Montgomery County’s current and future workforce, as well as explore their potential contributions to the new entity and ECE systems change. These included:

- Virtual Business Leader Town Hall in November, with 25 participants.
- One-on-one interviews with select members of the MMF’s Business Advisory Group.
- Business leaders also were invited to request additional interviews and/or submit comments online.

Current Context:

- ▶ The county has a challenge in attracting and keeping talent, especially young families. Other regions with which the County competes (in DMV and beyond) are seen as more attractive places to work and raise families.
- ▶ The county also needs to raise its profile as a locality that embraces innovation.

- ▶ If business doesn't have a substantive role or positive experience, it will make it harder to create future collaboration.

Business Leader Concerns and Recommendations:

The following section presents the key points raised by business leaders in interviews and conversations October to December 2020. The ECE Coordinating Entity needs to:

- ▶ Incorporate the “Principles for a Business-Friendly ECE Environment” (developed by MMF’s Business Advisory Group) in vision for the county’s ECE system. (*see Appendix B*)
- ▶ Establish a substantive partnership with business leaders beyond a single representative on the entity’s governing board.
- ▶ Build strong relationships between the public and private sector members.
- ▶ Recognize ECE providers as employers and businesses, in addition to their identity as ECE experts.
- ▶ Work with MCEDC to position ECE as a recruitment tool.
- ▶ Drive systemic change, including taking necessary risks and raising the profile of ECE as essential to the county’s economic vitality.
- ▶ Become a prestigious, cutting-edge organization that people want to join and that has funding to support an effective operation.
- ▶ Use business-leader opinions to help assess outcomes, including if services are working to:
 - improve availability of quality child care,
 - support the current and future workforce, and
 - improve the county’s image as a talent magnet, especially for young working families.
- ▶ Seek savings through efficiencies and streamlining first, before asking for more funds (even while recognizing that more funds are needed).
- ▶ Recognize that in addition to having ECE knowledge and expertise, the entity’s leadership (staff and board) should be comfortable and talented at branding, marketing, and managing change.

See Appendix F for more business leader takeaways.

FIRST STEPS KENT CASE STUDY:

**BUSINESS LEADS THE CHARGE TO INVEST
IN YOUNG CHILDREN**

Business leaders who recognize an investment in early childhood is an investment in the workforce of tomorrow have led efforts to create policies and practices that support young children and their families.



Prominent business leaders have been part of the First Steps Kent Board of Directors since its inception and broaden support for investments in early childhood by sharing with their colleagues what they have learned about early childhood development. The advocacy of local business groups helped achieve two significant policy successes at the state level: an expansion of public preschool and a universal kindergarten readiness assessment.

A group of regional CEOs has made early childhood education one of its priorities and is working with First Steps Kent to advocate for state-level policy changes to make child care more affordable and accessible. Business groups, including the local Chamber of Commerce, actively supported the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage, a property tax increase that provides dedicated funding for early childhood services. Their support was critical to the proposal's approval by a bipartisan majority of Kent County voters in November 2018.

Criteria for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity

Through the work described above, we developed and refined the following criteria. **The entity must be able to accomplish the following:**

- ▶ Focus solely on Early Care and Education (ECE) in order to support the vision for our early childhood system and a thriving workforce for today and tomorrow.
- ▶ Have a governance structure comprised of representatives from both the public and private sectors who serve in a fiduciary capacity and have legal voting and decision-making authority.
- ▶ Solicit and receive both public and private funds and regularly report to the community on its strategic plan, implementation and use of funds to support those efforts.
- ▶ Map and make recommendations about all ECE dollars, whether in its control or not, with an eye to a comprehensive and cohesive strategic response to community- identified ECE priorities.
- ▶ Represent and reflect the full landscape of those providing, using and benefitting from ECE which includes a diverse group of community stakeholders such as parents, philanthropy, ECE providers and employers/business leaders outside of the ECE sector.
- ▶ Act as a system-wide convener, connector, and champion to mobilize the ECE priorities that benefit the entire community and advance our community's collective work to support the vision for our early childhood system and a thriving workforce for today and tomorrow.
- ▶ Make decisions through the lens of racial equity, human development, and economic development.
- ▶ Develop a clear, realistic, actionable, and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity, and that includes both representation from and the voice of an inclusive group of community stakeholders.
- ▶ Use data and metrics to establish targets, define accountability and measure progress on our community's most pressing needs.
- ▶ Have dedicated, paid staff to advance its mission which may involve the shifting of existing resources given economic realities.
- ▶ Work at a systems level with a 360° view of all of the ECE programs and services in Montgomery County, but not provide ECE services directly.
- ▶ Work with existing policy and advisory committees and groups in the county to incorporate, align and amplify a consistent and singular voice for ECE issues by meaningfully incorporating all ECE advisory groups, inclusive of community, business, and parent voices.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

We are at a turning point that calls for a bold new approach to Early Care and Education.

When MMF issued its *Early Care and Education Call to Action* in January 2018, the need for an ECE Coordinating Entity was already paramount. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on every aspect of ECE means now is the time for innovation and transformation in order to build back better.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on employers, families, and ECE providers. It has exacerbated the inequities already dividing Montgomery County. Black and Brown people are more likely to get infected with the virus and to be sicker than white people. Less educated, low-wage workers are more likely to have jobs that cannot be moved online, leading to job loss or higher risk from repeated exposure to others. For those parents who do have to leave home to work, the search for safe affordable care for their children has become increasingly difficult.

As we have broadened our definition of who is an “essential worker” it has become painfully clear how critical wide availability of high-quality child care is for the functioning of our economy, so that the people who provide the services we depend on have safe, affordable options for taking care of their children as they work. Moreover, high-quality ECE has long-term economic impacts, as it provides children with a solid foundation for lifelong achievement in school and in the workplace. The ECE sector should be a thriving and resilient part of our economic infrastructure, not a profession where teachers and caregivers subsidize an underfunded sector by working for low wages.

Recovery does not mean rebuilding back to where we were. Recovery requires that we look to the future by investing in real and lasting systems change that resolves the inequities that currently exist. The need for change is not new, but the pandemic has put that need into stark relief.

We are at unique crossroads because all stakeholders recognize the challenges that the ECE sector faces. In this historic moment, Montgomery County has a powerful opportunity to develop a new public-private approach to draw on the best of proven models and innovative strategies to develop an entity that is suited to the needs and reality of the county and the unique social justice challenges facing the community.

MMF has engaged in a comprehensive exploration of the best way to develop an ECE system that will provide the most effective support to Montgomery County workforce, children and families. Based on extensive work on ECE over the past five years (*see pages 2-12*), an intensive community engagement process over the past several months to determine which models the community would recommend and support (*see pages 13-14*), and the final criteria that emerged from that process (*page 32*), MMF has arrived at three recommended models for a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity.

Please note that these models are not mutually exclusive, and elected leadership and the community may choose to start with one model with the aspirational goal of moving toward another model should that be in the best interest of the community. This underscores the importance of the entity’s regularly reporting to and

engagement of the larger community on the progress and challenges of the share vision, outcomes—the community’s plan, to ensure it is meeting the most pressing and current ECE needs.

Our three recommended models:

1. **ECE Montgomery:** Create a wholly new organization with both a governance body and management structure.
2. **Children’s Opportunity ECE Fund:** Convert the existing Children’s Opportunity fund to a new **independent** entity with a governance body and management structure.
3. **ECE Alliance:** Create a new ECE Coordinating Entity in the form of a governance body which is supported by contracted management leveraging the talent and resources of other existing entities dedicated to children. This model grew from what we learned about Nexus Montgomery Regional Partnership in our convening with Montgomery County system builders discussed on page 17.

Descriptions of those three models – including advantages, disadvantages, and key considerations for each – are provided on pages 37-39.

What about other models?

In arriving at the three recommended models, MMF considered several other options, all of which had strengths that we attempted to build upon, but which, on their own, did not meet our criteria for an ECE Coordinating Entity. In particular, these other options while meeting some of the community identified criteria, did not fully reflect what we have heard from all corners of the community, nor did they reflect what we have learned from researching models and best practices.

1. We looked closely at the Montgomery County Executive/Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Proposal for a Montgomery County Early Care and Education Coordinating Board (ECCB). While this proposal reflected a commitment to the importance of coordination and system-building, as well as the influence and expertise of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) in the ECE environment in Montgomery County, ultimately, this proposal did not meet key criteria for an independent, public-private ECE Coordinating Entity (*see page 32*) for the reasons set forth below. These criteria, as documented in this report, were arrived at through extensive research and cross-sector exploration.
 - First and foremost, the ECCB proposal envisioned a public-private steering committee serving as a government advisory group/sounding board with private representation. The ECCB would not be an independent legal entity, which does not allow the neutrality necessary for effective ECE system-building.
 - Second, the proposal also does not explain how financing would work and does not speak to the structure for seeking and receiving private-sector dollars.

- Third, while the suggested reorganization in the ECCB option does focus on the social justice aspects of ECE access, it does not incorporate an economic lens, which would include a stronger employer decision-making role. This is a critical gap in the proposal because ECE is an economic imperative. Furthermore, the viewpoint of the proposed ECCB structure is government-centric, which means it encompasses only a portion of the dollars presently dedicated to ECE in the County. While the public sector leadership in and commitment to ECE is extraordinary compared to other jurisdictions, this perspective is too narrow in that it does not provide an independent, comprehensive 360° view of all aspects of Montgomery County’s ECE system. (*ECE System definition: see Glossary, page 55*)
 - Fourth, there was no real input into the proposed reorganization of the ECCC by the wider community. This reorganization/restructuring of the ECCB proposal is laudable, but does not change the need for an independent, public-private ECE Coordinating Entity to affect real systems change.
2. Another possibility MMF considered was the Children’s Opportunity Fund (COF) as it is currently structured fulfilling the role of ECE Coordinating Entity. COF is a component fund / community impact initiative of the Greater Washington Community Foundation (GWCF). This means COF is not independent and does not have its own governing board, so this model did not meet the essential criteria for a successful public-private entity. Additionally, although COF in its current form has done impactful work with the county especially during the pandemic, GWCF is not solely focused on the county, which is an essential attribute of the Entity.
 3. Similarly, we also examined whether the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families could take on the role of ECE Coordinating Entity. The Collaboration Council has a deep understanding of systems building and that is knowledge which the entity will draw upon as it gets up and running. However, the work of the Collaboration Council is not limited to ECE. The county’s ECE landscape is complex and the systems building required – especially in the wake of a pandemic – means the county needs an ECE Coordinating Entity that is solely focused on ECE.

All three recommended models recognize that the Collaboration Council, ECCC, and COF will be key partners and resources (with their potential roles varying depending on the proposed model).

ECE Coordinating Entity for Montgomery County: Shared Characteristics for All Models

The three recommended models, which are outlined on the next three pages, all share the following characteristics, which are distilled from and consistent with the criteria delineated on page 32:

1. **Meet the criteria for a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity, including a sole focus on Early Care and Education in order to support the vision for our early childhood system and a thriving workforce for today and tomorrow.** *(see page 32).*
2. **Form a new not-for-profit corporation which denotes legal status and the requirement of a governing board.**
3. **Create a common ECE agenda, based on community consensus, that all major stakeholders (community based, private sector, public sector) commit to, and maintain a 360° view of all aspects of Montgomery County's ECE sector.** This includes monitoring/mapping all of the ECE dollars currently received and spent in the county.
4. **Develop a clear, realistic, actionable, and measurable commitment to addressing racial equity that is woven into the governance, culture, and membership of the entity, and that includes both representation from and the voice of an inclusive group of community stakeholders.** Ensure mechanisms for ongoing input from the community at large.
5. **Create a strong, active, representative, diverse, and influential board that can create and drive the ECE agenda for Montgomery County with both public and private sector decision-makers who have the ultimate legal responsibility for governing the entity.** (See page 41 for recommended structure and composition of ECE Coordinating Entity Governing Board, applicable to all three models).
6. **Seek expertise and advice from the Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC), Early Care and Education Initiative Steering Committee (ECEI), and Child Care Commission (CCC) which serve in advisory capacity (combined or separate), have representation on the board, and are aligned with each other and the entity's efforts.**
7. **Engage in systems building, breaking down silos and engages in making continual transformative change.** Keeps a focus on developing new systems and transforming current ones **and** does not get involved in programs or provision of services.
8. **Supported by funding which includes new and discretionary public ECE funds as well as private funds.**
9. **Engage strong leadership that can bring together competing interests and has credibility with all stakeholders.**

ECE Coordinating Entity Recommended Model #1 **ECE MONTGOMERY**

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ECE Montgomery: Creation of new governance and management entity. ▶ Start a new entity with dedicated staff. ▶ Children’s Opportunity Fund (COF) Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families (CC) and Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) continue ECE initiatives complementary to entity or under contract to entity.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fresh start/blank slate to build ideal model to meet identified requirements. ▶ Allows existing entities to continue to focus on their strengths. ▶ Leadership – ability to easily hire new leadership/executive director and form board from scratch. ▶ No baggage. ▶ Can set clear focus, mission, system-building activities from scratch.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Difficulty and risk of starting a new entity and potential for redundancy or competition with COF and CC. ▶ Inefficiency of a new entity overlapping with existing entities. ▶ Without strong leadership and direction could be duplicating other existing groups. ▶ Entity could compete with COF and CC for private dollars.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient funding may not be available to establish and operate a new entity. ▪ The entity might partner with the COF as its fiscal sponsor, so that private funds could come to the COF doing business as the entity and this would use an existing mechanism for braiding public and private funds in one account. ▪ COF, CC and new entity could <i>all</i> try to raise ECE system-building funds.

ECE Coordinating Entity Recommended Model #2 Children's Opportunity ECE Fund (COF)

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children's Opportunity ECE Fund: Convert the Children's Opportunity Fund to new independent governance and management entity. ▶ COF moves from being a public-private program to become a new independent entity with dedicated staff and new focus on the ECE system. ▶ Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families (CC) and Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) continue ECE initiatives complementary to the ECE Coordinating Entity or under contract to the entity.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continues original public-private partnership vision of COF with new focus on coordination of ECE system; leverages existing fundraising and grants management capabilities (additional skills will be needed). ▶ This structure would leverage and deeply connect to existing organizations affiliated with ECE. ▶ More streamlined (not just adding something new!) by using existing ECE asset/organizations. ▶ COF has experience working in public-private model. ▶ COF has a track record of success in fundraising, grants management, and gap filling.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Same difficulty and risk of starting a new entity (as in Model #3); may disrupt fundraising support provided by Greater Washington Community Foundation (GWCF) if COF is no longer in GWCF. ▶ Requires COF to expand its capacity quickly to focus on convening and full system coordination in addition to raising and granting funds as it currently does. ▶ COF has limited experience in necessary functions including analytics, advocating, and system mapping and building. ▶ Entity will carry "baggage" of existing notions of COF.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who has the authority to make COF an independent entity? ▪ What role would GWCF play? Would/could it have an MOU with new COF to provide a philanthropic backbone of the entity? ▪ Sufficient funding might not be available to establish and operate COF as an independent entity.

ECE Coordinating Entity Recommended Model #3 ECE Alliance

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ECE Alliance: creation of new ECE Coordinating Entity in which the governing body is supported by contracted management leveraging the talent and resources of other existing entities dedicated to children. ▶ New entity's board focuses on ECE strategy and implementation of that strategy among partners rather than building/running an organization. Contracts with existing organizations (e.g., Collaboration Council (CC) and Children's Opportunity Fund (COF)) for needed management and technical support.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Entity benefits from operational expertise, infrastructure and organizational depth of existing entities like COF's fundraising and system support and CC's evaluation, training and convening experience; may be faster as well as less expensive and person-dependent than standing up a small new entity. ▶ Innovative and collaborative (keeps focus on coalition building among the many ECE stakeholders).
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Requires higher level of engagement from board/governance structure members. ▶ Nontraditional model with more limited track record. ▶ Contracted organizations' other activities could conflict with entity's. ▶ May be difficult to unwind the management / contractual relationships.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COF and CC are already doing ECE work to varying degrees. Need to determine how to integrate those ongoing efforts to avoid duplication. ▪ The entity might hire a single employee (ED) to oversee governance, management and the contract(s).

Governance Structure

“A predominant belief exists among those engaged in early childhood system building that achieving more comprehensive, coordinated, and aligned programs and services requires an entity that has sufficient power and authority to compel their development. Governance is the common answer provided to meet the challenge.”

*From “Vision to Practice: Setting a New Course for Early Childhood Governance,”
by Stacie G. Goffin, Jana Martella, and Julia Coffman (January 2011)*

NOTE: The recommended governance structure and corollary advisory committees described below seeks to engage the many voices of the community in an authentic way. However, **the proposed governance structure will require additional exploration and refinement.** MMF believes a comprehensive exploration of all of the ECE-related advisory committees should be undertaken by the ECE Coordinating Entity as one of its first priorities. (See *First Steps on page 52*). Though MMF believes some reorganization and realignment of existing committees and advisory groups will be necessary, this must be done in a community-informed way, with the feedback of the various stakeholder groups. This is a process that we began, but which requires continued outreach and communication beyond the confines of this report and its respective timeframe.

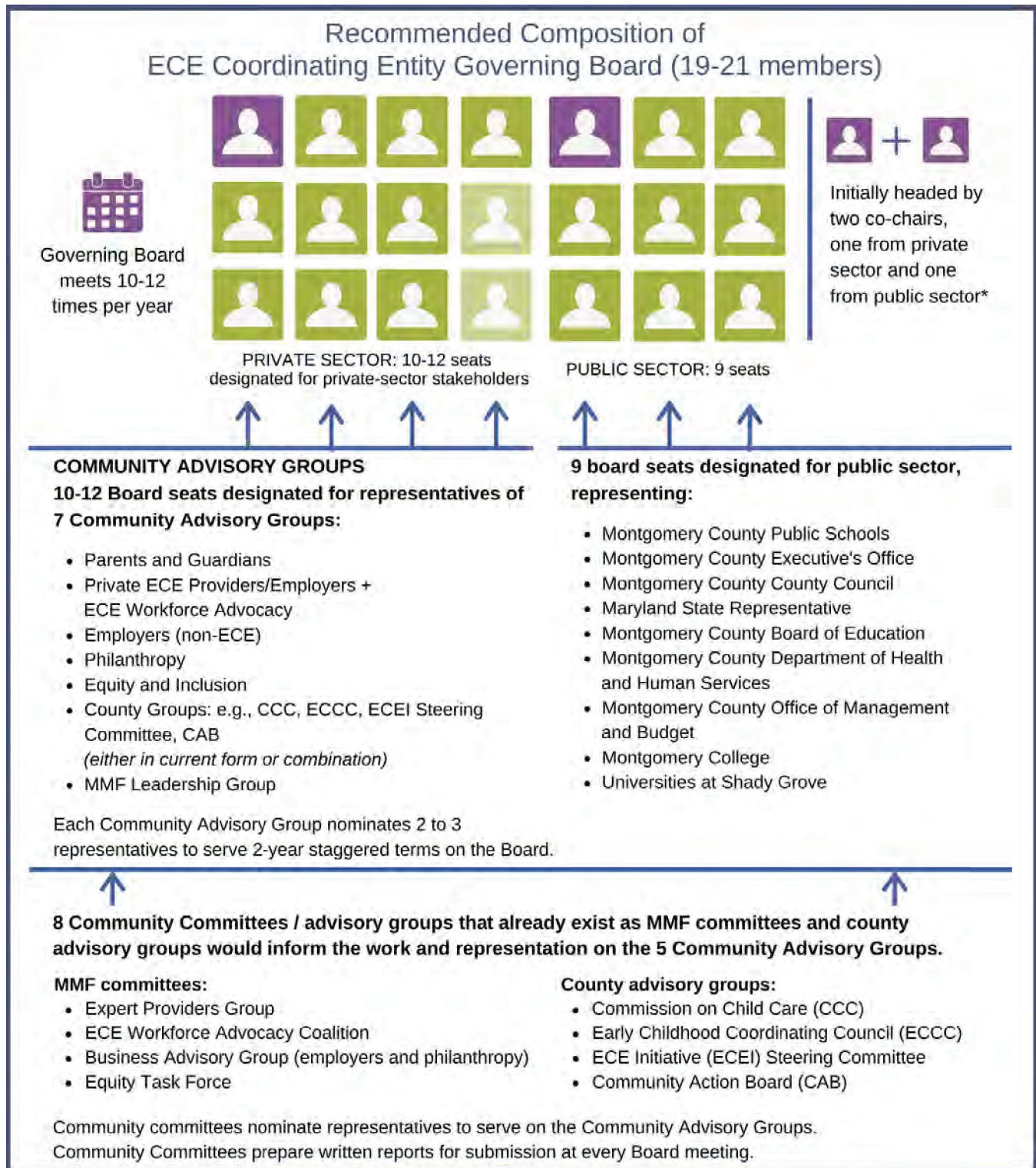
Form a new not-for-profit corporation which denotes legal status and the requirement of a governing board.

One of the shared characteristics of all three recommended models is the need for a strong, active and influential not-for-profit board, as well as visionary and innovative leadership of both the board and staff, in order to drive the ECE agenda with both public-sector and private-sector decision-makers.

To that end, MMF recommends the following structure and composition for the entity’s governing board (see *next page*).

Under all of these models, the County Executive would appoint, and the County Council would confirm, all members of the governing board.

To engage in effective system building, the ECE Coordinating Entity *must* have an independent governing board with full decision-making power, and that board *must* have private-sector and public-sector legal authority and representation.



**Our vision is to ultimately have one chair of the governing board, but for the first few years, as the entity builds trust and creates its first community plan, it may make sense to have two co-chairs (one public and one private) to ensure buy-in and trust in the process.*

As a reminder, the board of directors of a nonprofit has **three primary legal duties**, just as for any corporation:

1. **Duty of Care:** Take care of the nonprofit by ensuring prudent use of all assets, including facility, people, and good will.
2. **Duty of Loyalty:** Ensure that the nonprofit's activities and transactions are, first and foremost, advancing its mission; recognize and disclose conflicts of interest; make decisions that are in the best interest of the nonprofit corporation, not in the best interest of the individual board member (or any other individual or for-profit entity).
3. **Duty of Obedience:** Ensure that the nonprofit obeys applicable laws and regulations; follows its own bylaws; and that the nonprofit adheres to its stated corporate purposes/mission.

(Source: National Council of Nonprofits (NCN), [Board Roles and Responsibilities](#))

According to NCN, other significant roles for board members include providing guidance on strategic focus, effectiveness, and financial sustainability, as well as serving as ambassadors and advocates. These various roles also reinforce the need for a healthy balance of private-sector and public-sector board members, and also for the supporting structure of community advisory groups, government offices/agencies, and community committees outlined in the chart above. The recommended flow of representation and information will help ensure the entity's board is informed by and accountable to a full array of stakeholder voices and viewpoints.

SECTION 4: FUNDING AND FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITIES

MMF has been tasked with evaluating and recommending a plan for fiduciary responsibilities of the entity, including how it may receive, manage, and disperse public and private dollars and make recommendations on the best use of funds dedicated to ECE.

A critical role of the entity is to monitor all public and private ECE dollars received and spent in the county, with responsibility for aligning those resources to community ECE priorities that will improve equitable outcomes for children and families. There are several issues that must be considered to address the entity's funding framework including its fiscal mapping process, 360° view of all ECE dollars, and ability to receive new and philanthropic funds. These all speak to what the entity would do to enhance system efficiency, efficacy, equity, and innovation during pandemic response, recovery, and beyond. The initial operating budget of the entity is addressed separately in the Implementation section (*see page 53*).

In essence, the entity's fiduciary responsibility is to ***align, strengthen, and coordinate the ECE people, data, and money in Montgomery County***. An important caveat is that this core function does not mean that the entity controls or has authority over all ECE people, data, and money. For example, it does not have, and never will have authority over all existing DHHS or MCPS funding streams. However, the entity's 360° view and iterative system mapping will allow it a key advisory role with regard to the money it does not control. Furthermore, the entity will have the ability to bring private dollars and innovations to current county initiatives that will enhance the system overall. In doing so, the entity will intentionally seek and receive system-building funding, but it would not endeavor to provide direct services or divert direct-service funding away from those providing it.

So, what does it mean to “align, strengthen, and coordinate ECE people, data, and money” and what would the entity's responsibilities entail? First, the entity would be responsible for continual and iterative fiscal mapping and aligning to allow the entity to cost out how to meet the ongoing community ECE needs. Second, the entity would create a community plan/vision with ECE priorities that the community supports and that attracts philanthropic support. Third, the entity would seek and receive new sources of funding, both public (state, local, and federal) and private (philanthropic) that would aid in current system building, pandemic recovery, and eventually, would pave a path and a plan for a designated ECE funding stream.

1. A note on fiscal mapping:

The entity will fiscally map and make recommendations about all ECE dollars, whether in its control or not, with an eye to a comprehensive and cohesive strategic response to community-identified ECE priorities. This can help assure maximally effective deployment of resources, effectively leverage public funds to encourage private investment, and ensure that there is one single public-private entity with an overall and strategic view of the flow and allocation of ECE funds in Montgomery County.

MMF started this process in 2018 with a fiscal mapping and strategic financing project. The Children's Funding Project embarked on a comprehensive map of ECE dollars, sources, and programs in Montgomery County. (*See Appendix C for fiscal mapping summary*). However, fiscal mapping is a continual process and

the 2018 CFP report is but a moment in time. The ability of a designated entity to continue this process in an ongoing, comprehensive, and collaborative way will be a game changer in Montgomery County and pave the way for a public-private community plan going forward.

2. **A note on building The Community Plan:** One of the entity's first tasks will be to cross-walk all existing public and private ECE and related efforts in alignment with its fiscal mapping to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive community plan. This involves a systematic crosswalk of the County's ECE Initiative, DHHS' ECE Plan, and Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation and plan, as well as private initiatives like MMF's ECE Workforce Coalition, and philanthropic priorities like those of Washington Area Women's Foundation, Greater Washington Community Foundation, and Healthcare Initiative Foundation.

This process takes time but lays the groundwork for community buy-in, which in turn will provide for joint budgeting, data sharing, and a collaborative system in which ECE stakeholders voluntarily consult with the entity, and one another, when developing their programs or strategies, to benefit from consideration of larger system needs and current inequities. A common plan helps *all* stakeholders, including public and private sector providers and philanthropy, ensure the effective and efficient use of their resources to address the community's most pressing needs.

3. **A note on NEW funding:** There are several examples of new funding. Some would flow to county agencies like DHHS or MCPS and stay within public-sector control. For these dollars, the entity would have a significant advisory role in ensuring that the funds are spent in alignment with the Community ECE Plan. Others may flow to the entity, in whole or in part. Examples of the latter might include those of the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education/Blueprint for Maryland's Future, County directed funds, specified private sector funds, and/or federal CARES funding. For these particular new funds, the entity would have authority over them and in that fiduciary role, it would determine goals, metrics, data sharing, and monitoring of funds contracted out for program delivery, evaluating and reporting back to funders, as well as the ability to supplement it with private dollars.
4. **A note on community investment:** There is no doubt that the public sector in Montgomery County has prioritized ECE in an unprecedented way over the last few years. This same commitment should continue to the entity's system building work so that whatever model the county settles on will have the resources and capacity it needs to bring this vision to fruition. The public sector's commitment to date has focused largely on program enhancement and expansion, but to recover better, we need both the public and private sector to invest intentionally and strategically in systems-level work.

A final funding note on the entity's budget approval:

The governance structure is composed of representatives from both the public and private sectors who serve in a fiduciary capacity and have legal voting and decision-making authority. The governing board would approve the entity's yearly operating budget and direct its program, management, and finances. The entity would present a regular update to Montgomery County – both executive and legislative branches – on its activities as well as annual audited financial statements.

FIRST STEPS KENT CASE STUDY:

THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

Local funders were the earliest champions of an early childhood coordinating entity in Kent County, and they invested both their time and money to ensure its success.



The Steelcase Foundation, Frey Foundation, and Heart of West Michigan United Way provided the initial funding for First Steps Kent, with other community-based foundations coming on board later to support the organization's systems work.

Local funders continue to collaborate to use their influence and leverage to entice organizations to align their work to the community-wide efforts led by First Steps Kent. Service providers seeking philanthropic support for their early childhood programming understand that, to receive funding, they have to demonstrate how it ties into the broader community plans and advances the collective work. There is an understanding that collaboration – not working in silos – is necessary to earn the support of local funders.

FIRST STEPS KENT CASE STUDY:

DEDICATED FUNDING

First Steps Kent led a successful ballot initiative in 2018 to secure dedicated and sustainable public funding for programs that improve the health, school readiness, and well-being of children under age five across the community.

Kent County voters overwhelmingly approved the Ready by Five Early Childhood Proposal. It is a .25 mill property tax increase that will generate about \$5.7 million a year from 2019 to 2024 – more than \$34 million total.

The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage will pay for services such as home visiting, play and learn groups, developmental screenings, and support to help families access the help they need. First Steps Kent administers the millage funding, which is being awarded in a competitive process to community-based organizations that serve young children and their families.

In addition to providing a reliable funding source, the millage has created leverage to require an increased level of cooperation and coordination among community-based service providers. Sharing data among public-sector providers, including schools and county agencies, and private-sector nonprofit organizations has been a hurdle for years. The millage provided resources to build a shared data system as well as the leverage needed to require organizations to collect and share data about who they serve and the outcomes achieved. That is crucial to being able to assess and report on community-level outcomes for young children.

SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTATION

Legislative Action

Montgomery County has a long and laudable history of championing ECE and many of these champions now sit on the Montgomery County Council as well as in the County Executive's chair.

Taken from the memo supporting the Montgomery County Council appropriation that launched this ECE Coordinating Entity report is a brief history of relevant legislative action:

"Evidence suggests that the most strategic and effective academic interventions occur at the earliest possible moment in a child's life. Doing this is key to maintaining our competitive edge as a nation and ensuring that our workforce is prepared for the rapidly evolving job market. Even through this pandemic, the focus of our work continues to be the pursuit of an ECE initiative that is reframed into an economic imperative agenda. As you may recall, in 2015, Councilmember Hans Riemer and Navarro spearheaded an important piece of legislation, Bill 13-15 Child Care Expansion and Quality Enhancement Initiative, which provided technical assistance to prospective and current child care providers, established the Early Childhood Coordinating Council, as well as created the Policy Officer for ECE position in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This Bill also informed a lot of the pieces of the most recent framework authored by Councilmember Navarro and unanimously supported by the Council, which created the County's Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI) in March of 2019.

"In 2016, the Council also established the Children's Opportunity Fund (COF) to begin creating the infrastructure for a potential Children's Trust, a best-practice model for dedicated funding to support children and their families. The governance structure and the mission of the COF were guided by a presentation from Pensarus Education Solutions, a consultant that worked with COF's Executive Director and the Policy Leadership Group that is made up of Councilmember Navarro as the Council representative, the County Executive, Board of Education President and the Superintendent of Schools. The full presentation is attached to this memorandum. That same year, the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) was commissioned to publish OLO Report 2016-11, Out of School Time and Children Trusts, which discussed public finance approaches and systems to meet the needs of children, families, and communities. Both, the Education and Culture and Health and Human Services Committee, as well as the Council as a whole, have dedicated considerable time doing groundbreaking work in the ECE space. As you know, ECE as an economic imperative has been endorsed by Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) and built upon in their 2018 ECE Call to Action to create a "coordinated, comprehensive system that will attract and retain a talented workforce of today by supporting families with young children, and ensure the skilled workforce of tomorrow by addressing the growing opportunity gap." More recently, we have all received MMF's request to identify a "Public-Private Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity" whose mission is to "bring the disparate parts of ECE together to leverage existing resources (including funds, time, and talents), break down silos, and effectively and continuously seek to close gaps in a strategic, systemic, and equitable way."

See Appendix A for full memo.

In July of 2020, Councilmember Navarro, along with her colleagues Councilmembers Craig Rice and Gabe Albornoz, introduced Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Montgomery Moving Forward - ECE Coordinating Entity Plan. The appropriation, along with a \$25,000 private-sector match secured by MMF, was unanimously approved by the County Council in September of 2020. This appropriation enabled Montgomery Moving, as a neutral cross sector convener, to lead an effort towards the stand up of a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity to build an efficient, effective, and equitable system of high-quality ECE that will meet the needs of children, families and employers in the county.

MMF Process: MMF met several times with the Office of Legislative Oversight staff to learn more about the legislative history of entities currently in the ECE space (*for more about this research, see page 18*). MMF also met with Council executive and legal staff to learn more about legal structures for a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity's governance board and the structures that currently exist which might help inform our work.

MMF Recommendations: The County Council's key legislative consideration would be to establish a governing board for the not-for-profit public-private ECE Coordinating Entity. To assure true legal authority of both the public and private sector membership, the County Code would most likely need to be modified to identify the parameters of this governance board and the nominating and appointment process. Several existing public-private legal entities exist in County Code as potential models for this legislation, including:

- ▶ **Governance structure of Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families.** Section 2-120 of the County Code establishes that the local management board (LMB)'s Board of Directors must have 21 voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council, including 12 public sector members and 9 private sector members.
- ▶ **Governance Structure of Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation,** Section 30B-3 established that the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, the Corporation's Board of Directors must have 11 voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. The County Executive should appoint a member of the Workforce Development Board as one of the members of the Corporation's Board of Directors. The Corporation's Board of Directors must also include one ex officio non-voting member appointed by the County Executive; and one non-voting member appointed by the County Council; and should have one non-voting member appointed by the Maryland Secretary of Commerce.

Proposed statutory language for a public-private ECE Coordinating Entity:

Section X-X of the County Code establishes that the ECE Coordinating Entity must have X public sector voting members and X private sector members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council.

Section X-XX of the County Code establishes that the ECE Coordinating Entity can receive and distribute County and/or State funding resources should the County so direct it to do so.

What does a public-private coordinating entity need from the County Council and County Executive?

- ▶ Support of the independent ECE coordinating entity demonstrated in legislation that (1) enables the appointment of executive and legislative branch staff to the board; (2) articulates the need for public funds, provides the appropriate authority and deference to the entity for decision-making regarding ECE and so that decision-makers give strong consideration to the recommendations from the entity.
- ▶ Support MMF's role as transition agent for the entity by recognizing that: (1) Until an entity is firmly established and able to assume the role of cross-sector convener, MMF remains deeply committed to serving in a convening and facilitating role around improving ECE in Montgomery County and could contract to provide ongoing convening support as needed; (2) MMF remains committed to advocating on behalf of a coordinated ECE system now and into the future; and (3) MMF endeavors to maintain an accountability role with an ECE coordinating entity, to ensure accountability and system progress by helping to define outcome metrics and tracking progress of them.

Aside from legislation related to Board of Directors governance (*see page 41 for recommended governance structure*) there are no immediate legislative actions or modifications that are necessary to begin the implementation process for any of the three proposed public-private ECE Coordinating Entity models, but there would likely be a budgetary action necessary to stand up the entity.

That said, there are several legislative changes or additions that the Montgomery County Council may seek in the foreseeable future depending on which of the model(s) it chooses to pursue:

- ▶ If the Council seeks to evolve a new Children's Opportunity Fund independent of the Greater Washington Community Foundation, its donor intent will need to be stated explicitly.
- ▶ The county should provide for flexibility as the entity launches and evolves. To do so, MMF recommends frequent reporting during the first two years (e.g., every four to six months) with explicit feedback on how the entity is meeting benchmarks and what may need to change. After that, MMF recommends ongoing formal, regular reporting from the entity to the public and private sector stakeholders. A combination of flexibility and accountability of an ECE Coordinating Entity, in whatever form it takes, is essential to its success.
- ▶ One of the first tasks of an ECE Coordinating Entity will be to re-examine all of the many county commissions and advisory groups in the ECE space and propose better alignment of them all and, potentially, unification of some of them. ***In pursuing any of these recommendations, the county may need to modify the existing laws that established these groups.***

Proposed Mission and Vision

While the ECE Coordinating Entity will collaborate with stakeholders to develop its specific mission and vision statements, the extensive input and work to date has established a framework for what is ultimately envisioned for Montgomery County:

- ▶ Every family with young children will have access to affordable, high-quality ECE.
- ▶ Every child will be ready for kindergarten and future school success.
- ▶ Employers will be able to attract and retain skilled, productive, homegrown workers today and into the future.

For that vision to become a reality, Montgomery County must have a coordinated, comprehensive system focused on increasing availability of and access to affordable high-quality ECE for all children and families, with an emphasis on underserved communities. Many of the individual pieces needed for that system exist today but operate in isolated silos. It will be the mission of the ECE Coordinating Entity to put the pieces together to build a cohesive system that is aligned to common priorities and outcomes.

The ECE Coordinating Entity will convene diverse cross-sector stakeholders to develop a Community Plan that supports today's workforce, prepares all children for life and learning, and reduces longstanding disparities in access and outcomes. The entity will measure collective progress and impact and report results to the county and broader community.

Ensuring Accountability

The ECE Coordinating Entity will provide enhanced assurance to the community that public and private ECE resources are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible to advance common priorities and improve outcomes for children and families. The entity should be established with an accountability framework and shared measurement system from inception. MMF recommends that the accountability framework should have three tiers:

- ▶ **Population Accountability** with defined outcomes and community indicators of success, including equity considerations. In other words, how will we know if conditions of well-being are better for Montgomery County children and families?
- ▶ **Entity Performance Accountability** with performance measures for its role as a neutral convener and facilitator of collective impact.
- ▶ **Partner Performance Accountability** for all defined partners where each has 3-5 performance measures that speak to whether recipients of their service are better off because of it.

The entity will coordinate data collection and publicly report the outcomes and measures outlined above and any corresponding improvement plans. We recommend an annual Accountability Audit where partners jointly present to the Montgomery County Council on progress being made at all three levels.

An example template can be seen in the [Montgomery County ECE System Accountability Scorecard](#).



Note about Partner Performance Accountability: While it is important to establish performance measures to assess the impact and effectiveness of individual ECE services and organizations, we also recognize the complexities of collecting and sharing common data. It will take time to develop a central data warehouse and build trust so that organizations want to share their data. This can also be incentivized with enhanced funding or other support to participating organizations.

Improving Equitable Outcomes for Children and Families

Community-level data can often paint a more favorable picture than the reality for many children and families in Montgomery County. Accountability measures must not only assess the community, as a whole, but must also identify disparities in access to high-quality ECE and outcomes in child well-being.

It is critical that data be disaggregated based on factors such as race and ethnicity, economic disadvantage, immigration status, gender identity or sexual orientation, and geography. In addition to revealing an accurate picture of the well-being of children and families in Montgomery County, this will help ensure services and supports are targeted to those who need them most. The success of the ECE Coordinating Entity will be judged, in part, on the effective reduction of disparities in both access and outcomes.

First Steps and Activities

Assessment of the Current State

Among the first priorities of the ECE Coordinating Entity is to develop a clear understanding of the current landscape of ECE policies, programs, and funding in Montgomery County. That will provide a 360° view of all existing assets and resources and a base on which a comprehensive Community Plan can be built. That initial assessment includes:

- ▶ Robust fiscal mapping of all public and private ECE dollars received and spent in the county.
- ▶ Thorough crosswalk of all ECE-related efforts in the community, including the county’s ECE Initiative, DHHS’ ECE Strategic Plan and the Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation, as well as private initiatives such as MMF’s ECE Workforce Coalition, and philanthropic priorities like those of Washington Area Women’s Foundation, Greater Washington Community Foundation, and Healthcare Initiative Foundation.
- ▶ Further refine foundational terms so that the community is working from a common definition of concepts like equity, social justice, cultural competence, cultural humility, economic imperative, and systems building.
- ▶ Build upon MMF’s ECE Workforce Advocacy Coalition to continue to advocate on behalf of the sector.
- ▶ Develop ECE community engagement and public awareness strategy.

This will clarify where those efforts are already aligned and help coordinate the work of all stakeholders to maximize their impact. It will also identify any duplication of effort and may unveil opportunities to consolidate advisory groups and/or initiatives, which will streamline efforts and ensure the efficient and effective use of resources.

Vision of the Future State – ECE Community Plan

The fiscal mapping and analysis of existing assets will provide the basis for a comprehensive ECE Community Plan that will essentially become a “north star” for all stakeholders in the ECE system. It will help providers align their work to agreed-upon priorities, ensure resources (existing and future) are directed to where they can have the greatest impact, and reveal gaps in services and supports and who has access to them.

A comprehensive, cross-sector ECE Community Plan is a consensus vision of what should be in place in Montgomery County so that:

- ▶ All families have access to affordable, high-quality ECE.
- ▶ All children are ready for kindergarten and success in school.
- ▶ Employers can attract and retain homegrown talented, skilled workers.

The plan will identify the most pressing community needs and priorities and provide a roadmap of how to get from where we are today to where we want to be. A broad coalition of stakeholders – including parents who need and use the ECE system – must be involved in developing the plan.

Upon completion of the plan, a next step is to identify accountability measures that can assess both short-term gains and progress toward long-term goals. The Community Plan will be a living and iterative document that evolves as conditions in the community change. It is critical that all ECE stakeholders see themselves and their organization reflected in the plan, and that they recognize their roles and responsibilities in advancing it. There will rarely be unanimous agreement about every aspect of the plan, but there should be broad community consensus as well as a commitment to the collective.

FIRST STEPS KENT CASE STUDY:

HOW A COMMUNITY PLAN BENEFITS CHILDREN

When assessing a program, the universe is typically what it does and the people it serves. An assessment of a **system** differs in that it includes the programs and supports that are missing and the people who aren't being served.



In Kent County, that has led both to an expansion of programming and system-wide changes that make existing programs more effective. More young children have access to ECE services and the support they get is higher quality and more relevant to their unique needs. Through convenings of parents and service providers, it became clear that many families are unaware of what resources are available and how to find them. Additionally, many providers don't know what is offered outside of their organization. In response to that, community partners created a network of “navigators” who reach out to families with young children, assess their needs, work with them to determine what programs and resources are the best fit, and ensure they get connected to them. Providers adopted a common algorithm that helps them determine which service is most appropriate for a specific family.

By bringing together providers from multiple sectors – physical and behavioral health, early learning, parent engagement, home visiting – they develop a broader understanding of the barriers that keep families from engaging in services and common approaches to overcome them. That has led to more culturally relevant and appropriate practices in the variety of sectors that impact the lives of young children.

Visionary Leadership

Staff leadership that understands systems building and can mobilize stakeholders to collaborate in new and innovative ways will be critical to the success of the ECE Coordinating Entity. The entity must establish and maintain a 360° view of ECE in Montgomery County and never shift from working at a systems level to program delivery. When and if the systems work identifies gaps in programming or services, the entity should work with partners to develop a solution and secure funding to fill the gaps, but it should never actually provide the services itself.

The ECE Coordinating Entity will encourage community stakeholders to think and act differently, which requires its leadership to establish trust with partners. The entity must be led by a consensus builder with the ability to bring together people and organizations who may have competing interests and convince them to put the

collective good ahead of personal or organizational gain. This also speaks to the importance that the ECE Coordinating Entity be neutral and not stand to benefit or lose from any decisions made.

Continued Community Engagement

As a result of the extensive community engagement that informed this report, there is now a diverse and expansive coalition of people who recognize the need for an ECE Coordinating Entity in Montgomery County. The entity will have both an opportunity and a responsibility to build on that. The entity must be intentional about keeping those stakeholders informed and engaged with consistent and targeted communication, meaningful feedback loops, and true voice and representation. Marginalized communities must have seats at all decision-making tables in the next phases of this work.

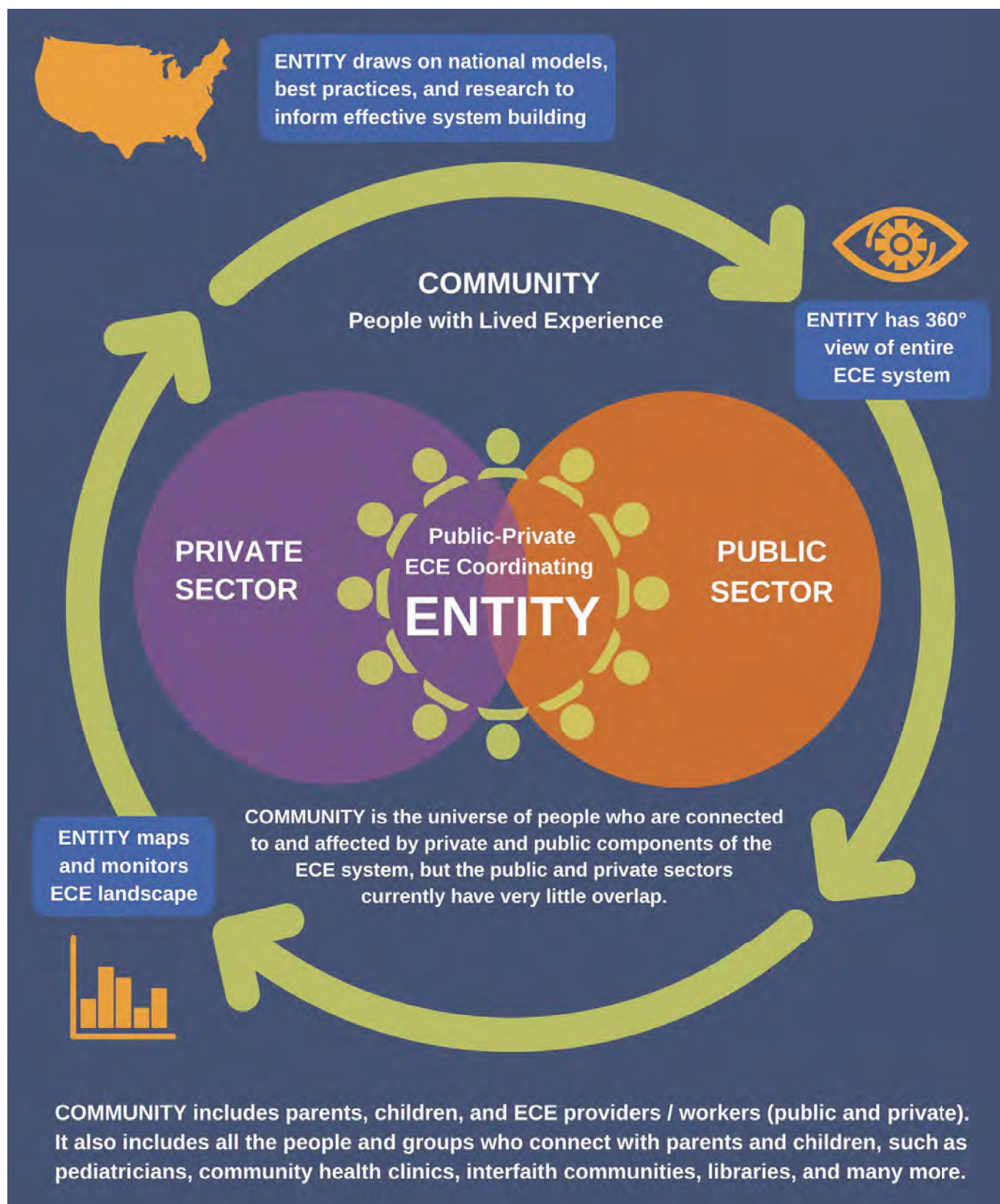
A Realistic Start-up Operational Budget

As referenced earlier on page 48, MMF recommends that the County Council support of the independent ECE coordinating entity both legislatively and also financially.

Below is a sample first year operational budget for any of the proposed models, though in the case of the ECE Alliance, a large portion of the operational costs would be contracted out to other organizations.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE COORDINATING ENTITY FOR ECE: OPERATING BUDGET	ECE Montgomery, Independent COF, ECE Alliance	Note: Some of this work may be contracted to a management body depending on the model chosen
Staffing		
Executive Director (includes development)	\$100,000.00	
Administrative Coordinator	\$40,000.00	
Communications & Advocacy Manager	\$75,000.00	
ECE Specialist	\$75,000.00	
MMF Transition Consultancy	\$10,000.00	
	\$300,000.00	
Organizational costs		
Start-up costs including D&O insurance and liability insurance	\$8,000.00	
Fringe benefits & payroll taxes	\$20,900.00	
Rent & utilities	\$10,900.00	
Data, evaluation, accountability	\$50,000.00	
Travel, meetings, staff development	\$20,000.00	
Communications/Marketing (and related collateral materials)	\$32,000.00	
Equipment/IT/Operations/Supplies	\$15,000.00	
	\$156,800.00	
TOTAL	\$456,800.00	

How the ECE Coordinating Entity Would Be Positioned in the Community



See page 23 for how MMF has been similarly positioned in its work on ECE.

GLOSSARY

These definitions come from the MMF Glossary of ECE terms compiled with the input of public and private stakeholders unless otherwise noted.

Accessibility

In early care and education, the term refers to the availability of child care programs when and where a family needs the care, including programming that is responsive to the family’s linguistic and cultural background and any physical/mental/emotional issues that may affect the child.

Affordability

The degree to which the price of early care and education is a feasible family expense. High-quality care may be available, but it may not be affordable for a family with a low or moderate income.

Child Care

The care or supervision of a child when the child’s parent has given the child’s care over to another for some portion of a 24-hour-day as a supplement to the parent’s primary care of the child.

Child Care Center

Child care provided in a facility that, for part or all of the day, provides care to children in the absence of the parent. Centers are licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care (OCC). Programs that are licensed or otherwise authorized to provide child care services in a non-residential setting.

Community

A wide range of stakeholders who live or work in Montgomery County including families, faith organizations, social service nonprofits, advocacy and equity organizations, businesses, labor and other community-based institutions that are not part of the public sector.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

A branch of educational theory which relates to the teaching of young children up until the age of about eight, with a particular focus on education, notable in the period before the start of compulsory education.

ECE System

The array of organizations and resources that are dedicated to supporting the care and education of young children. The ECE system may include government funding, child care providers and programs, educators focused on young children, employers who offer child care benefits and other components. The use of the word system implies that there is some degree of organization, direction, and integration/coordination of resources. The Early Care and Education system is actually a component of a larger Early Learning System, which consists of interconnected systems which also includes Family Support, Health and Nutrition, and Early Intervention systems. (Source: [Adapted from Build Initiative](#))

Economic Development

A process of creating and utilizing physical, human, financial, and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region

Employer-Sponsored Centers

A child care center located on-site or off-site which is sponsored by a corporation, business, or other employer. Slots are often reserved for employee children.

Equity

The state that would be achieved if individuals fared the same way in society regardless of race, gender, class, language, disability, or any other social or cultural characteristic. In practice, equity means all children and families receive necessary supports in a timely fashion so they can develop their full intellectual, social, and physical potential. (Source: [*NAEYC Advancing Equity Position Statement*](#))

Family Child Care

The care given to a child younger than 13 years old or to a developmentally disabled person younger than 21 years old, in place of parental care for less than 24 hours a day, in a residence other than the child's residence and for which the provider is paid. Family child care is regulated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)/Office of Child Care.

Human Development

The process by which a child acquires skills in the areas of social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, and physical development, including fine and gross motor skills. Developmental stages refer to the expected, sequential order of acquiring skills that children typically go through. For example, most children crawl before they walk, or use their fingers to feed themselves before they use utensils.

In-Home Child Care / Informal Care

Child care provided in the child's home by relatives or non-relatives during the hours when parents are working. Non-relative caregivers are sometimes called nannies, babysitters and au pairs.

Licensed Child Care

Child care programs operated in homes or in facilities that fall within the regulatory system of a state or community and comply with those regulations. States have different levels of regulatory requirements and use different terms (e.g., licensing, certification, registration).

Public Sector

The part of the economy managed and controlled by the government. The public sector includes elected officials and bodies, government agencies, commissions and committees appointed by government, and other government-controlled institutions.

Private Sector

The segment of the economy managed and controlled by individuals, companies, and organizations rather than the government. The private sector includes nonprofits, faith institutions, trade associations, businesses, public-private partnerships, and community-based organizations.

Quality

Quality child care commonly refers to early childhood settings in which children are safe, healthy, and receive appropriate stimulation. Care settings are responsive, allowing children to form secure attachments to nurturing adults. Quality programs or providers offer engaging, appropriate activities in settings that facilitate healthy growth and development and prepare children for or promote their success in school.

Racial Equity

The condition that would be achieved if one's race or ethnic origin was no longer a determining factor in one's success. This concept focuses on achieving comparable favorable outcomes across racial and ethnic groups through the allocation of resources in ways designed to remedy disadvantages some people face through no fault of their own. (Source: [Greenlining Institute](#))

Regulated Child Care

Child care centers and family child care homes that comply with either a state's regulatory system or another system of regulation. A related term is "licensed child care," which often refers to a particular level or standard of regulation.

School Readiness

School readiness is often defined as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. School readiness starts with health and physical development, social and emotional development and cognitive development. School readiness includes children being ready for school, families being ready to support their children's learning, and schools being ready for children.

Unlicensed Child Care

Child care programs that have not been licensed and regulated by the state. The term often refers to informal family child care.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We can't possibly thank all of the people and groups who have contributed to this project and who work to make life better for Montgomery County's children and families every day. We do want to specially acknowledge those who gave considerable time and energy to helping us develop these recommendations, providing both insights and feedback that were extremely valuable. With our grateful thanks, we acknowledge the following groups:

Montgomery Moving Forward Leadership Group (*See Appendix H*)

Montgomery Moving Forward's Advisory Groups:

Early Care and Education Advisors
Business Advisory Group
Entity Advisory Group
Entity Kitchen Cabinet
Equity Task Force
Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition

The MMF Leadership and Advisory Groups have provided a wealth of expertise and insight into this report, specifically, and the larger MMF ECE Call to Action in general. MMF hopes and recommends that any new ECE Coordinating Entity would incorporate the voices of our advisory groups by migrating them in whole or part into its governance and advisory structure.

Nonprofit Montgomery Board of Directors

(*see Appendix H*)

The Boston Basics Campaign
Chattanooga 2.0
Children's Funding Project
Children's Opportunity Fund/Greater Washington Community Foundation
Clear Impact
Early Care and Education Initiative Steering Committee
First Steps Kent
Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS)
Maryland State Department of Education
Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families
Montgomery College
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
Montgomery County Child Care Commission
Montgomery County Community Action Agency & Board
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Montgomery County Early Care and Education Steering Committee
Montgomery County Early Childhood Coordinating Council
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation
Montgomery County Head Start Parents Council
Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight
Montgomery County Public Schools
Spartanburg County First Steps
Universities at Shady Grove

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To the dozens of ECE champions including parents, providers/educators, advocates, interfaith representatives, employers/business leaders, elected officials, philanthropic supporters, and community organizers: thank you for your generous donation of time, talents, and insights that inform this work.

MMF is grateful for each and every member of the Montgomery County Council and their respective staffs, as well as the County Executive and his staff, for championing ECE and the ECEI initiative.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Montgomery County Council Special Appropriation: Agenda Item and Memorandum



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To introduce agenda item – no vote expected
Keywords: #MMF #ECE

AGENDA ITEM #2Q
July 28, 2020
Introduction

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation to the County Government's Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget, Early Care and Education (ECE) Non-Departmental Account, Montgomery Moving Forward - ECE Coordinating Entity Plan, \$75,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves) and Amendment to FY21 Operating Budget Resolution 19-472 Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Nonprofit Montgomery

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Introduction. Public hearing and action are scheduled for September 15, 2020.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

High quality accessible early care and education (ECE) for children 0-5 is an economic imperative, which allows parents to participate in the workforce by providing care for their young children, supports businesses by improving employee productivity, and prepares children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and start on a pathway of success in life.

Efforts to support the childcare sector and improve the ECE system are critical as the COVID-19 public health emergency has placed the sector in crisis. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, the child care industry struggled with sustainability challenges. Cost of care studies showed the typical child care program operating at a deficit or at best, a break-even situation. Revenue loss resulting from efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 and the stringent requirements for reopening has placed great strain on child care businesses. Child care is an essential service to support families as they return to work and is critical to the County's economic recovery.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) is a collective impact project of Nonprofit Montgomery that has mobilized leaders and experts across sectors to address the need for a better system of Early Care and Education in Montgomery County.

- This special appropriation will allow MMF, as a neutral, cross-sector convener, to lead an effort to stand up a public-private ECE coordinating body to build an efficient, effective and equitable system of high quality ECE that will meet the needs of children, families and employers in the County.
- The funding will be used to: (1) conduct public convening and awareness activities about the need for a coordinating entity; (2) evaluate potential candidates and recommend the appropriate organization to serve as the entity; (3) identify necessary legislative action to establish the recommended organization as the entity; (4) evaluate best practices and recommend a specific governance structure and board composition for the entity; (5) draft start-up goals and a mission and vision statement for the entity; (6) and evaluate and recommend a plan for fiduciary responsibilities of the entity including how it may receive, manage, and disburse public and private dollars and make recommendations on the best use of funds dedicated to ECE.
- The source of funding is General Fund Reserves.
- This resolution also amends Resolution 19-472, Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Award Status to enter into a contract with Nonprofit Montgomery with the purpose to “develop a plan to identify and structure a public-private early care and education coordinating entity through the Montgomery Moving Forward Initiative” in the amount of \$75,000.
- The public funding appropriated through this resolution requires a \$25,000 private match to support MMF’s work.

This report contains:

Proposed Resolution

© 1-3

July 23 Memo from Councilmembers Navarro, Rice and Albornoz

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
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 (ECE) Non-Departmental Account
Montgomery Moving Forward - ECE Coordinating Entity Plan
\$75,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves) and Amendment to FY21
Operating Budget Resolution 19-472 Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for
Non-Competitive Contract Award Status: Nonprofit Montgomery

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. High quality accessible early care and education (ECE) for children 0-5 is an economic imperative. Parents need access to early care and education for their young children to participate in the workforce, and reliable child care supports employee productivity. Nationwide, absenteeism and lost productivity due to child care issues cost U.S. businesses about four billion dollars each year. Moreover, children in Montgomery County need access to high quality learning experiences so they may enter kindergarten ready to learn and start on a pathway of success in life.
3. Efforts to support the childcare sector and improve the ECE system are critical as the COVID-19 public health emergency has placed the sector in crisis. Revenue loss resulting from efforts to contain the spread of the disease and the stringent requirements for reopening has placed great strain on child care businesses. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, the child care industry struggled with sustainability challenges. Cost of care studies showed the typical child care program operating at a deficit or at best, a break-even situation. Child care is an essential service to support families as they return to work and is critical to the County's economic recovery.

4. Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) is a collective impact project of Nonprofit Montgomery that has mobilized leaders and experts across sectors to address the need for a better system of Early Care and Education in Montgomery County. MMF has stated that an “improved system of ECE will support today’s working families, address the opportunity gap, and prepare the workforce of tomorrow.”
5. This special appropriation is needed so that MMF, as a neutral, cross-sector convener, will lead an effort to stand up a public-private ECE coordinating body to build an efficient, effective and equitable system of high quality ECE that will meet the needs of children, families and employers in the County. The funding will be used to: (1) conduct public convening and awareness activities about the need for a coordinating entity; (2) evaluate potential candidates and recommend the appropriate organization to serve as the entity; (3) identify necessary legislative action to establish the recommended organization as the entity; (4) evaluate best practices and recommend a specific governance structure and board composition for the entity; (5) draft start-up goals and a mission and vision statement for the entity; (6) and evaluate and recommend a plan for fiduciary responsibilities of the entity including how it may receive, manage, and disburse public and private dollars and make recommendations on the best use of funds dedicated to ECE.
6. Notice of public hearing was given and a public hearing was held.

Action

A special appropriation to the FY21 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, 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	\$75,000		\$75,000	General Fund Reserves

This special appropriation must only be used to perform the functions described in paragraph 5. The public funding appropriated through this resolution requires a \$25,000 match to support these functions. The Department of Health and Human Services will administer the funding.

This resolution amends Resolution 19-472, Section G, FY21 Designation of Entities for Non-Competitive Award Status to enter into a contract with Nonprofit Montgomery with the purpose to “develop a plan to identify and structure a public-private early care and education coordinating entity through the Montgomery Moving Forward Initiative” in the amount of \$75,000.

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

COUNCILMEMBER NANCY NAVARRO
DISTRICT 4

CHAIR, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
FISCAL POLICY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

July 23, 2020

TO: Councilmembers
FROM: Councilmembers Nancy Navarro, Craig Rice and Gabe Albornoz
SUBJECT: Early Care and Education: Charting the Way Forward

Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives in unimaginable ways, the impact it is having on the childcare industry and families with young children weighs heavily on us. We are proud of the efforts we have undertaken to mitigate this impact, but if pre-COVID-19 we faced challenges with demand far outpacing the supply of accessible and affordable quality Early Care and Education (ECE), this gap is only going to widen in the months to come, especially for vulnerable populations. Closing the academic achievement gap does not begin in kindergarten—it starts with ensuring quality and affordable ECE at a licensed home or center.

Evidence suggests that the most strategic and effective academic interventions occur at the earliest possible moment in a child's life. Doing this is key to maintaining our competitive edge as a nation and ensuring that our workforce is prepared for the rapidly evolving job market. Even through this pandemic, the focus of our work continues to be the pursuit of an ECE initiative that is reframed into an economic imperative agenda. As you may recall, in 2015, Councilmember Hans Riemer and Navarro spearheaded an important piece of legislation, Bill 13-15 Child Care Expansion and Quality Enhancement Initiative, which provided technical assistance to prospective and current child care providers, established the Early Childhood Coordinating Council, as well as created the Policy Officer for ECE position in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This Bill also informed a lot of the pieces of the most recent

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framework authored by Councilmember Navarro and unanimously supported by the Council, which created the County's Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI) in March of 2019.

In 2016, the Council also established the Children's Opportunity Fund (COF) to begin creating the infrastructure for a potential Children's Trust, a best-practice model for dedicated funding to support children and their families. The governance structure and the mission of the COF were guided by a presentation from Pensarus Education Solutions, a consultant that worked with COF's Executive Director and the Policy Leadership Group that is made up of Councilmember Navarro as the Council representative, the County Executive, Board of Education President and the Superintendent of Schools. The full presentation is attached to this memorandum. That same year, the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) was commissioned to publish OLO Report 2016-11, Out of School Time and Children Trusts¹, which discussed public finance approaches and systems to meet the needs of children, families, and communities.

Both, the Education and Culture and Health and Human Services Committee, as well as the Council as a whole, have dedicated considerable time doing groundbreaking work in the ECE space. As you know, ECE as an economic imperative has been endorsed by Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) and built upon in their 2018 ECE Call to Action to create a "coordinated, comprehensive system that will attract and retain a talented workforce of today by supporting families with young children, and ensure the skilled workforce of tomorrow by addressing the growing opportunity gap." ² More recently, we have all received MMF's request to identify a "Public-Private Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity" whose mission is to "bring the disparate parts of ECE together to leverage existing resources (including funds, time, and talents), break down silos, and effectively and continuously seek to close gaps in a strategic, systemic, and equitable way."

The County Executive is also proposing to reformulate the current Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) into the Early Childhood Coordinating Board (ECCB) as the coordinating body of the ECE system in the County. While we had no input in the development of this proposal, we appreciate the work that went into the plan. However, in reviewing his proposal and its rationale, it is not clear that the private sector was involved in its formulation through a robust outreach mechanism, a fundamental part of this effort.

¹ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2016%20Reports/OLOReport2016-11OutofSchool.pdf>

² <https://www.nonprofitmoco.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MMF-Call-to-Action-Early-Care-and-Education-Jan2018.pdf>

We have arrived at a point to seriously consider what governance and coordinating entity for all ECE related work may look like. This can be achieved with cross-sector collaboration that involves MMF, OLO, other agencies and stakeholders, to come up with the best hybrid governance model utilizing the research and work that has already taken place. This is why we are interested in the possibilities offered by the proposal from MMF because the private sector is key in the success of this work, and MMF has been tirelessly working to bring them on board. MMF is uniquely positioned to do this work as they have cross-sector community support and have been engaging in this work for years. In the past, OLO has incorporated the work of MMF into their research studies (OLO Report 2017-7 Pre-K in Montgomery County and in Other Jurisdictions).³

By copy of this memorandum we are requesting the following:

- **Appropriate \$75,000 for MMF to work with the County, and other public and private stakeholders, including decision makers to detail and draft a specific written action plan with no less than three recommendations to stand up a public-private ECE Coordinating entity to be delivered to Council by the end of this calendar year.** MMF has committed to raising an additional \$25,000 from the private sector to undertake this work.
- **Assign OLO to assist with the structure and guidance of MMF's research work.** Having OLO partner with MMF assist from a perspective that is cognizant of, but independent of the County Executive's proposal, would get us to a desirable blueprint by the end of the year.

We hope we can count on your support. Attached is the special appropriation to go along with this request.

Cc:
Councilmembers
County Executive
MMF
Vivian Yao
Chris Cihlar
Dr. Crowel

3

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2017%20Reports/OLOReport2017_7PreKinMontgomeryCountyandinOtherJurisdictions.pdf

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APPENDIX B

MMF Collective Impact Framework

Call to Action: Early Care and Education – Executive Summary

Employers CAN Make a Difference in Early Care and Education

Principles of a Business-Friendly ECE Environment
for Montgomery County, Maryland

montgomery moving forward

mobilizing leaders to solve our biggest problems together

framework for collective impact

Leaders and experts from across sectors come together...

Nonprofits / business / philanthropy / government / education / community

What are our biggest problems?
Where can we have greatest impact?

Addressing Economic Opportunity



...to collectively define a problem and embrace a common agenda.



Analyze data and trends
Share knowledge & perspectives
Engage community through focus groups, surveys, and meetings
To arrive at a collective vision and identify a focus area

The MMF team orchestrates the work of the group...



Continuous communications to keep group focused on shared goals
Build trust and relationships
Share with community through symposiums, reports, and communiques
Supported by a strong backbone organization



...and coordinates collective efforts to maximize results.



Foster mutually reinforcing activities
Keep a focus on shared outcomes
Frame issues with equity lens



Working toward a shared vision catalyzes systems change.

Economic opportunities for all and a thriving Montgomery County



call to action:

Early Care and Education

Executive Summary



How We Selected Early Care and Education

In choosing an issue on which to work, **Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF)** considers matters that are critically important to Montgomery County that relate to economic well-being. In particular, we seek out issues – like Early Care and Education – that are ripe for systems change, affect a large number of people, and have a disproportional impact on families who are economically disadvantaged.

There are 67,000 children under age 5 in Montgomery County. Today's infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are tomorrow's workers, taxpayers, and parents. The potential long-term return for investing in high-quality Early Care and Education for our children is threefold: decreased costs to government; increased educational achievement (and therefore greater earning power); and increased opportunity in adulthood.

At the same time, this issue has a direct impact on today's employers and employees because working parents with young children need access to affordable, high-quality Early Care and Education in order to be productive employees.

The decision to embrace Early Care and Education (ECE) was the result of a six-month community engagement process that gathered input from more than 500 residents and leaders in Montgomery County. ECE emerged as a top concern for nearly everyone we consulted.

what we did:

Convening, Learning, and Listening

In late 2016 through 2017, MMF convened a variety of Early Care and Education events and conversations, large and small, reaching more than 1,700 participants from across sectors. These gatherings allowed MMF to engage in a sustained conversation with a broad range of community leaders and national experts. We gained a deeper, more nuanced understanding of Early Care and Education in Montgomery County – including challenges and needs specific to our community. What we learned helped shape this Call to Action.

Some Facts to Guide You

1 year of child care for a young child costs more than in-state tuition at a public university, and full-time child care for two children exceeds 20% of income for the majority of families in Montgomery County.

\$4 billion

Annual cost to U.S. businesses from absenteeism and lost productivity due to parents dealing with child care crises.

13%

PER YEAR
RETURN ON
INVESTMENT

High-quality zero-to-5 programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment, according to recent research by Nobel Laureate economist James L. Heckman. These gains are realized through better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment.

51% of children entering public kindergarten in Montgomery County are NOT kindergarten ready. Achievement gaps start early, and students who enter school behind their peers are unlikely to catch up.

78% of new jobs of the future will require postsecondary education. Many jobs already go unfilled due to the mismatch between openings and ready workers, and this skills gap is growing.

Our Recommendations

Goals

We envision a coordinated, comprehensive Early Care and Education system that will support two important goals:

- 1 attracting and retaining a talented workforce of today by supporting families with young children; and**
- 2 ensuring the skilled workforce of tomorrow by addressing the growing opportunity gap.**

In support of these big goals, our community must work toward three key outcomes:

1

Every family with young children will have access to affordable, high-quality Early Care and Education.

2

Every child in the county will be ready for kindergarten and future school success.

3

Employers will be able to attract and retain skilled, productive workers today and into the future.



Action Steps

These Action Steps provide strategic direction for achieving the key outcomes.

1 Break Down Silos and Boldly Reform the Early Care and Education System

The current system in Montgomery County does not meet the needs of families and employers. To be effective, the system must be coordinated across all providers and entities that have a role in Early Care and Education. We need shared measurements and accountability. The goal is a more robust, more cohesive system that serves the needs of all children.

2 Improve Early Care and Education Access for ALL Families

Accessing Early Care and Education is a daunting challenge for many families. We must find ways to remove common barriers, including the high cost of care, lack of options for parents who work nights and weekends, and neighborhoods where there aren't enough providers to meet demand. In addition, we must support and expand programs for bilingual children and families, and for children with developmental delays and disabilities.

3 Educate and Engage Our Entire Community

We need to find creative ways to involve all people and places that touch the lives of parents and young children across the county. We need a public awareness campaign that promotes high-quality Early Care and Education as a community priority. In particular, we must identify critical messages that will resonate with business leaders, policymakers, and parents.

4 Facilitate Strategic Financing for Early Care and Education

Our community does not have enough funding for high-quality Early Care and Education, and this isn't a problem that can be solved with a single funding source. Government, business, and philanthropy all have roles to play, and a successful financing solution must include a coordinated set of public and private resources. To help find solutions, we should look at best practices and innovative financing used by other communities.

5 Strengthen the Early Care and Education Workforce and Infrastructure

One of the central challenges in creating an equitable, high-quality system of Early Care and Education is making child care affordable while also providing fair compensation, training, and viable career paths for the teacher-caregivers who nurture young minds. We also need to advocate for changes to address barriers that impact providers, including state regulations and requirements that drive skilled, qualified educators out of the field.

6 Support and Deepen Family Engagement

We must give parents resources, education, and strategies to help nurture the development of their young children. We need to reach parents where they work, learn, live, and play. It's also essential that we add and expand proven family support programs, with a focus on reaching low-income families and communities where most families do not access the formal care system.



The Role of Montgomery Moving Forward

As seen in many other communities that are working on improving their Early Care and Education systems, tackling this complicated issue requires sustained cross-sector cooperation around a shared vision. This makes the topic an especially good fit for our Collective Impact approach, which is a way of working that allows an entire community to work toward a shared vision. Going forward, MMF remains deeply committed to serving in a convening and facilitating role around improving Early Care and Education in Montgomery County.

For more information, visit:

nonprofitmoco.org/mmf

Employers CAN Make a Difference in Early Care and Education

EMPLOYERS CAN...adopt best practices in their own workplace

- ☐ **Educate** yourself about early care and education (ECE)
- ☐ **Offer** the Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP), an employer-sponsored flexible spending account for child care, as an option in employee benefit packages
- ☐ **Connect** employees to ECE resources
 - **Provide** ECE resource and referral information and a list of quality child care options near the office to all employees
 - **Distribute** county and state fact sheets about tax and child care subsidy eligibility and assist with enrollment process
- ☐ **Create or participate** in a consortium of nearby companies that pool resources to support a quality off-site child care center
- ☐ **Establish** on-site child care or contract with a program to provide on-site child care for employees
- ☐ **Donate** learning materials to under-resourced local providers

REDUCE absenteeism	IMPROVE retention rates
ENHANCE recruitment strategies	
Implement policies that help working families balance responsibilities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Flex schedules	<input type="checkbox"/> Job sharing
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal cell phone use	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent schedules
<input type="checkbox"/> Private spaces for new mothers	<input type="checkbox"/> Backup child care options
<input type="checkbox"/> Maternal and paternal leave	<input type="checkbox"/> Adoption support and leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Telecommuting	

EMPLOYERS CAN...influence the creation of an excellent system of early care and education in Montgomery County

- ☐ **Endorse** MMF's Call to Action for Early Care and Education
- ☐ **Attend** MMF's March Symposium and contribute to new ideas for making ECE affordable and accessible for all county families.
- ☐ **Promote** early learning policies as part of the economic development agenda, highlighting the return on investment that early learning programs bring to communities
- ☐ **Encourage** ECE quality so that children are in programs that adequately prepare them for success in kindergarten
- ☐ **Include** ECE as an agenda item for trade meetings, task forces and other industry forums
- ☐ **Engage** in the ECE public discourse
 - **Call** into radio shows
 - **Write or post** op-eds and letters to newspapers, policy makers and blogs
 - **Host** expert speakers at board or company meetings and leadership retreat

Be an ECE Champion
Advocate for public and private investment in a cohesive ECE system
<input type="checkbox"/> Engage public officials on the topic
<input type="checkbox"/> Use social media to follow and share information from industry experts
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop fluency surrounding the link between ECE and its impact on the current workforce
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend and participate in local and state discussions

Principles of a Business-Friendly Early Childcare and Education (ECE) Environment for Montgomery County, Maryland

This is a working document developed by the members of the MMF Business Advisory Group.

Vision

Montgomery County leverages its ECE environment to strengthen the local economy, build strong families, and improve the quality of the public education system.

Montgomery County, MD, will become a recognized model for having a robust, effective and efficient ECE environment; a place where employers seek to keep or move their businesses, where young families look to stay and move to, and where ECE providers can build and enjoy a viable and fulfilling career.

Principles

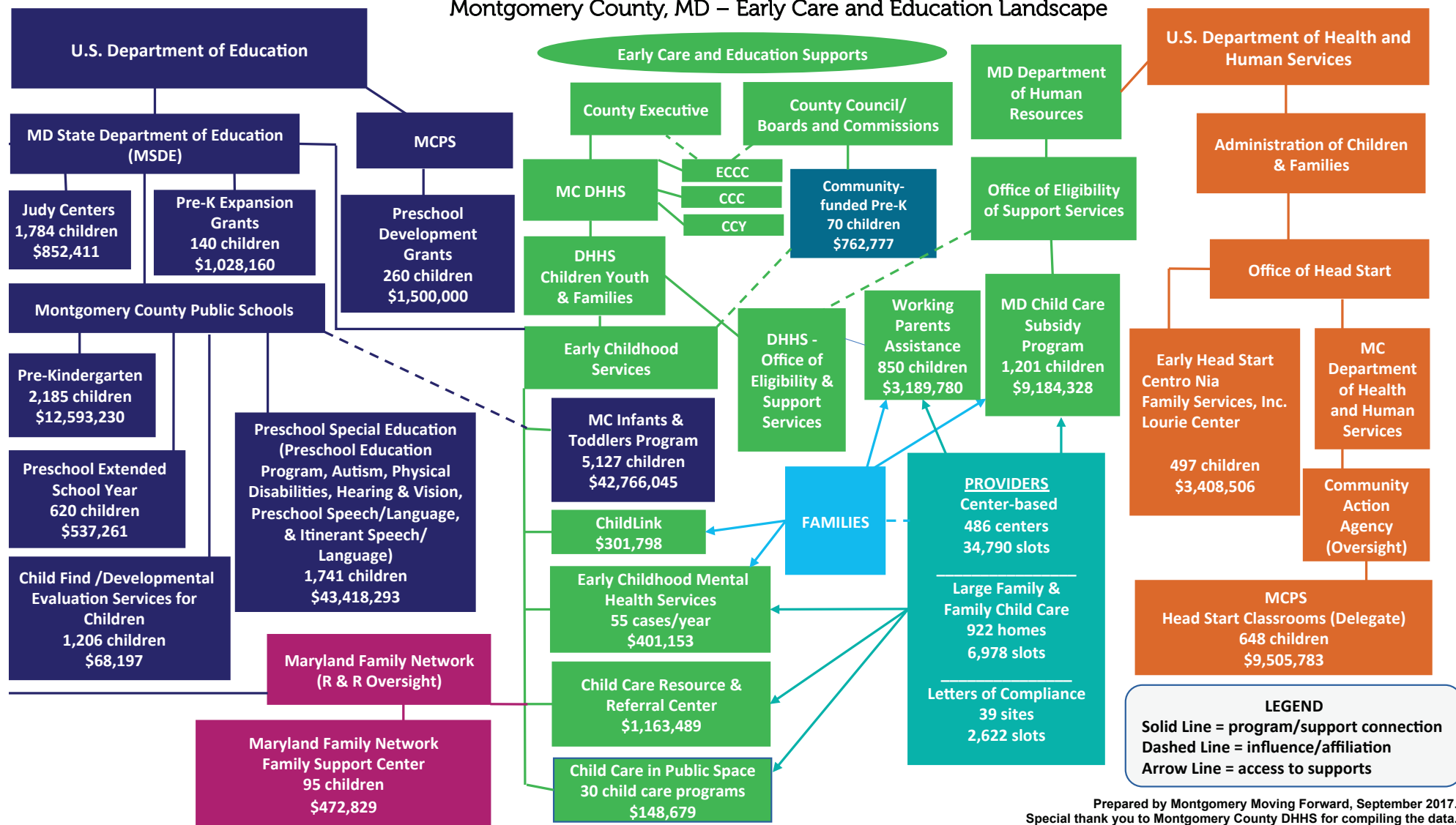
1. The strategic, economic, fiscal, and moral benefits of having an effective and efficient ECE environment are understood by the business community.
2. Montgomery County's ECE environment should be designed and leveraged to attract and retain the household-forming generation (i.e., parents ages 25-40) at all income levels and create a competitive advantage for the county.
3. Government partners with business in this realm by providing the tools (tax credits; efficient, effective use of county resources; comprehensive referral services) to help ease the burden of child care and education in Montgomery County and doesn't dictate or mandate what employers must do.
4. The regulatory environment for ECE providers supports the delivery of high-quality learning and care experiences by ensuring that regulatory oversight is relevant to issues of developmentally appropriate practice, health and safety for children, and supports a service delivery model for ECE providers that allows for sustainability, investment and growth.
5. The business-supported organizations provide educational and best-practice resources to employers.
6. Given the high cost of ECE, government-supported initiatives must support traditional middle- and low-income families that may be struggling to afford quality care.

APPENDIX C

Montgomery County, Maryland
ECE Landscape of Funding and Supports

Montgomery County, Maryland
ECE Fiscal Mapping Summary by Children's Funding Project

Montgomery County, MD – Early Care and Education Landscape





From: The Children's Funding Project
To: Montgomery Moving Forward
Re: Montgomery County's Early Care and Education Ecosystem:
Fiscal Map Findings and Recommended Financing Strategies

Executive Summary

Across the country, local community leaders are endeavoring to develop coordinated systems for the provision of programs, services and supports necessary for children to be successful in the 21st century. The hope is that through better aligning resources and ensuring that all resources are used to their maximum benefit, we can better support and more fully understand the gaps in ensuring secure comprehensive, sustainable and strategic investments for early childhood systems that net dramatically improved outcomes for kids and communities.

In their 2018 [Call to Action: Early Care and Education](#), Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) recommended that Montgomery County, Maryland "address the inadequacy of funding for early care and education" through strategic financing. To facilitate this action step, MMF engaged the Children's Funding Project (CFP) to assist in a collaborative fiscal mapping research project. Fiscal mapping is a research strategy that ensures fiscal due diligence by facilitating deeper understanding of the current funding landscape for a system before consideration of additional funding. It ensures future action is grounded in common understanding of:

- flow of funding;
- current investments;
- how current investments align with system goals;
- the level of coordination of supports and services across offices, agencies and communities;
- barriers and areas for improved efficiency;
- potential strategies to maximize funding through untapped or new opportunities; and
- by using existing dollars in the system more efficiently.

The following memo summarizes the results of fiscal mapping research conducted in the Fall of 2018. It presents an assessment of federal, state, local and private funds currently supporting early childhood programs and systems in the County. Results are reported across three funding categories:

- **Category 1:** child care and Pre-K programs (direct service);
- **Category 2:** family supports and healthy development; and
- **Category 3:** systems building.

The fiscal mapping research identified several critical pieces of information for stakeholders considering the financing landscape of early childhood in Montgomery County:

- The overall investment in the early childhood system is currently estimated at \$751,048,269.
- The vast majority of the resources invested in Montgomery County's early childhood system come from parents. Parents contribute \$620.6 million, or 82% of the total investment in the system.
- Parents in the low- to middle-income brackets have limited options for tuition assistance in a very expensive county to live and raise children in.
- Investments in early childhood in Montgomery County fall primarily into direct service provision of childcare and Pre-K programs with little funding going to develop and sustain a coordinated early care and education system.

Investing in early childhood

HOW MUCH DO PARENTS CONTRIBUTE?

A 2018 examination of all the funding sources for early childhood services and programs in Montgomery County showed that parents dramatically outspend the federal government, state government, local government, and philanthropy.

\$620,613,927

total parent investment

81.4%

of total investment in the Montgomery County early childhood system

TOTAL INVESTMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD: \$751,048,269

92.6% goes to child care & pre-k costs, 7.2% to family supports & healthy development, & 0.2% to system building.

FUNDING SOURCES:

parents: \$620.6 M

state: \$64.1 M

local: \$53.6 M

federal: \$22.2 M

private: \$1.5 M



Additionally, the report includes a stakeholder analysis of barriers associated with using current ECE funding streams in the County. Stakeholder interviews surfaced a number of barriers across key categories including:

- eligibility criteria;
- administrative rules or reporting requirements;
- allowable uses of funds and allowable service delivery; and
- areas of insufficient funding.

Finally, the results of the fiscal mapping study, stakeholder interviews and leadership roundtable discussions are captured in a set of recommended action steps. The action steps are presented in categories aligned to the goals of the fiscal mapping study [Chart 1]. The attached

memo and appendices provide rationale for the recommendations as well as examples of other communities and systems that have pursued comparable strategies.

The attached report presents critical due diligence information that will enhance the ability of MMF and other county leaders and ECE system stakeholders to strategize around achieving the goal of a coordinated, comprehensive ECE system. Ultimately, closing the gaps in financing for such a system will support the twin outcomes of attracting and retaining a talented workforce of today by supporting families with young children and ensuring the skilled workforce of tomorrow by addressing the growing opportunity gap, leading to a stronger Montgomery County.

Chart 1: Recommended Action Steps

Ways to spend existing dollars differently

- Convene budget and program administrators who support Pre-K and child care to coordinate their funding approaches.
- Obtain waivers or leverage flexibility of CCS to fill holes in the HOURS OF CARE and INCOME LEVELS that currently are eligible for slot/tuition funding.
- Ensure that supplementary funding streams cover families currently ineligible for child care assistance because they are not also pursuing child support.
- Re-align funding to serve more 0-2-year-olds, where resources are currently limited.
- Serve more families through home visiting programs.
- Connect existing system building resources to one governing entity for a truly coordinated approach.

Explore new strategies to bring money into the system

- Leverage private funding, such as scholarships, to enhance quality.
- Encourage the Business Advisory Task Force to consider a scholarship program to alleviate some of the family burden of child care.
- Consider pursuing new federal funding streams in HHS and ED.
- Consider the feasibility of a Pay for Success Model.
- Build support for a dedicated flexible public funding stream.
- Explore tax credits as incentive for investing in and accessing high quality ECE.

Level the playing field between the Pre-K and child care Systems

- Examine potential income eligibility cliff for 3- and 4-year-old Pre-K and the effect it is having on child care choices of those in low to middle income brackets.
- Align Pre-K and child care agenda vertically with the state and federal government.
- Advocate for better wages for child care providers.

Improve family supports and connections

- Clarify and communicate eligibility for families without Social Security Numbers.
- Review Early Care and Education resources posted on info Montgomery and link child care providers and parents to this online resource.
- Align and blend family support program funds to facilitate outreach to non-English speaking families.
- Work with the Maryland Family Network to expand Family Resource Centers.
- Align Montgomery County Library early literacy programs to other parent and family resources.

APPENDIX D

National Models: a small sampling of national models MMF researched to better understand governance models for Early Care and education Coordinating Entities.

- GEEARS (Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students)
- First Steps Kent
- Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families
- Fairfax Successful Children and Youth Policy Team
- BUILD Initiative: A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System

ABOUT GEEARS

MISSION. To inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on early learning and healthy development for children ages birth to five.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT. Align and mobilize key stakeholders for collective impact.


PUBLIC AWARENESS. Create widespread public awareness and support for improved early learning and development.


ADVOCACY. Advocate for quality early learning and development for all of Georgia's children.


ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY. Build organizational capacity to support the movement.


VISION. By 2020, all Georgia students will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by third grade.

SUPPORT EARLY EDUCATION


 **LEARN MORE.** Sign up for the GEEARS e-mail list to receive early education updates at www.GEEARS.org.

 **TAKE ACTION.** Contact your local legislators or write a letter to the editor of your newspaper supporting early education.

 **SPREAD THE WORD.** Encourage your colleagues to get involved and support early education. Invite GEEARS to speak at meetings of your professional association, faith community or civic organization.

 **LEAD BY EXAMPLE.** Read to your child, enroll your child in quality early care and learning programs and encourage others to do the same.

 **CHAMPION GOOD BUSINESS PRACTICES.** Encourage business organizations and networks to adopt positions in support of public investments for high quality early learning.

 **SUPPORT QUALITY RATED.** Ask your child care provider to enroll in Georgia's quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated.

CONTACT GEEARS

www.GEEARS.org

mbinderman@gears.org

Twitter: @GEEARS

Facebook: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students

Mindy Binderman
Executive Director

Stephanie V. Blank
Board Chair



BY 2020, ALL GEORGIA STUDENTS WILL ENTER KINDERGARTEN PREPARED TO SUCCEED AND ON A PATH TO READ TO LEARN BY THIRD GRADE.

WWW.GEEARS.ORG

INVESTING IN EARLY EDUCATION HAS HIGH RETURNS

Early education benefits children, their families and their communities. From improved academic outcomes to the economic savings to school systems and our state, the benefits of high-quality early education are irrefutable.

SCIENCE PROVES THAT EARLY EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATION SHAPE THE BRAIN. In the first few years of a child's life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second through the interaction of genes and a baby's environment and experiences. These connections build the brain's foundation upon which all learning, behavior and health depend.



CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR EARLY EDUCATION HAS BOTH SHORT AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR GEORGIA. The availability of child care in Georgia supports annual parent earnings of at least \$13.1 billion. Research proves every \$1 invested in high-quality early education saves, on average, \$7 down the road.



CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION ARE MORE LIKELY TO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL, ATTEND COLLEGE AND ARE BETTER EQUIPPED FOR THE WORKFORCE. The foundation of skills needed in school and the workforce is built during the first five years.



HIGH-QUALITY CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION SERVICES HELP ENSURE THAT EVEN THE MOST AT-RISK CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN PREPARED TO SUCCEED.



Children who receive high-quality early education begin school ready to succeed.



Children who begin school ready to succeed are more likely to read at grade level by 3rd grade.



Children who read at grade level by 3rd grade are more likely to graduate from high school.



Children who graduate high school are more likely to go to college and enter the job market prepared.



Employable, tax-paying citizens are critical to our economy.

EARLY EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

Georgia was proud to be the first state to offer universal pre-K for 4 year-olds. Yet, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure every child enters kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by 3rd grade.



QUALITY RATED. Georgia's new voluntary, community-powered early education rating system, Quality Rated, identifies and rewards early education programs exhibiting high merit. Quality Rated programs set children on solid educational footing by developing skills they need to succeed in K-12 and beyond. For more information, visit: www.QualityRated.org.



FUNDING. We must increase funding for early care and education programs to sustain quality improvements, fulfill the promise of universal pre-K, and ensure that hard working, low-income families can access subsidized child care.



HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT. The early years of a child's life lay the foundation for success. Children who are exposed to six or more risk factors, including poverty, poor nutrition, lack of preventative care, substance abuse, caregiver mental illness, or family violence, have a 90 to 100 percent chance of developmental delays.



The History of Kent County's Early Childhood System 1990-2019

The Kent County community has a strong history of collaboration and innovation to support children and their families. Over the last three decades, considerable time and resources have been invested in identifying the needs of young children in Kent County and working to develop a comprehensive and coordinated system of support services to meet those needs. A commitment to continuity has guided the process; today's work is building on and refining earlier work and follows the direction previously set by the community.

A series of documents released in the 1990's focused attention on Kent County's youngest children. Beginning in 1990, the Citizens League of Greater Grand Rapids presented a community call to action with a document entitled *When the Bough Breaks...Kent County's Child Care Crisis*. In 1991, *Perspective 21!* was initiated and was groundbreaking in its collaborative approach to identifying and implementing solutions for preventing child abuse and neglect. *Our Children, Our Future* was released in the mid-1990's and provided a set of standards for minimal care at birth, after birth and throughout the child and adolescent years. In 2000, *Next Steps* was released examining the link among resources, service providers and service recipients.

By 2000, there was a growing understanding in the community of the importance of quality early childhood services. The Grand Rapids Education Reform Initiative began its work in the spring of that year and identified early childhood education as one of two key priorities critical to the success of local schools and the community. Around the same time, the Kent County Board of Commissioners made a long-term commitment to improve the well-being of children and families through the establishment of the Kent County Prevention Initiative. The areas of focus included family support services, early intervention for children at risk of abuse or neglect, and substance abuse services. Kent was the first county in the state to commit general fund resources to services for children and families and continues to invest annual in the Prevention Initiative.

Shortly thereafter, the Kent County Family & Children's Coordinating Council formed an Early Childhood Committee that was charged with developing a system of support for young children and their parents. The funding to begin that work was provided by a federal Early Learning Opportunities Act grant. Beginning in January 2003, groups were convened to identify and define various components of the early childhood system, including a governance structure.

The committee studied several governance models that had been adopted in other communities around the country. Eventually it settled on something often referred to as the "Power Sneezers Model", in which influential leaders in the community raise awareness of the importance of early

childhood and advocate for increased investment in policies and programs that support young children and their families. Locally, that approach led to the Early Childhood Children's Commission in Kent County.

Kent County's Early Childhood System: A Community Plan, also known as the *Connections for Children Community Plan*, was released in September 2004 and was the result of the work begun after the receipt of the Early Learning Opportunities Act. In addition to outlining the proposed governance structure, it also identified four core service areas, listed several strategic goals, and recommended increased evaluation and greater quality assurance.

In early 2005, an executive director of the Commission was hired, and Commission members were selected, with Doug DeVos and Kate Pew Wolters agreeing to serve as co-chairs. That spring, Memorandums of Understanding were signed between the Commission co-chairs and the Kent County Family and Children's Coordinating Council and between the Commission co-chairs and the Heart of West Michigan United Way, which had begun serving as fiduciary for the early childhood systems building work in 2002.

The first Commission meeting was held in August 2005, beginning a 2-year process of education regarding early childhood development, the needs of young children and families in Kent County, and the correlation between quality early childhood services and community prosperity.

While Kent County was working to develop an early childhood system, the issue was also gaining traction at the state level. In 2005, Governor Jennifer Granholm proposed an early childhood initiative known as Great Start, which led to the creation of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation. The following year, the ECIC awarded our community a grant to begin the Great Start Collaborative of Kent County and the Great Start Parent Coalition.

Around this same time, intense work was getting underway to advance the ideas laid out in the *Connections for Children Community Plan*. Five committees (Infant-Toddler Care and Education, Home Visiting, Family Health, Communications and Infrastructure) comprised of members of the Collaborative and Commission as well as other community members began development of the first phase of the early childhood system. Their work was presented in *Making Strides: Kent County's Early Childhood System*, which was released in October 2007 and provides the basis for work that continues today.

The work to develop Kent County's early childhood system became much more public in July 2008 with the community announcement of First Steps, defined at the time as a "partnership of parents, community agencies, business leaders, healthcare providers, educators, foundations, faith leaders and individuals who are investing in our youngest children to ensure a better future for all." Later that year, a small committee was formed to look at a sustainable governance structure for the First Steps partnerships and the Early Childhood Children's Commission. The Committee emphasized the need for independence and neutrality and recommended a new non-profit organization: First Steps Kent, with the Early Childhood Children's Commission to

serve as its board of directors. The process to form an independent 510(C)(3) organization was completed in 2009.

In its early years, First Steps Kent worked with the Great Start Collaborative and a diverse coalition of community partners – including parents – to implement the recommendations made in *Making Strides*. That included launching three demonstration projects that were intended to fill identified gaps in services in the community. Each of the three was independently evaluated and shown to be reaching its goals and objectives. After the demonstration phase ended, the three programs were moved to other organizations in the community where they continue to evolve to best meet the needs of children and families in Kent County.

Today, First Steps Kent continues to work with community partners to build a comprehensive early childhood system, which means having the programs, policies, and supports in place that help all young children and their families thrive. First Steps Kent does that work by:

- Convening parents, service providers, funders, advocates, and other stakeholders to ensure high quality programs and services are accessible to families and they are well coordinated and effective.
- Building public support for early childhood by educating the community about the importance of early childhood development and advocating for policies that support young children and their families.
- Researching what is working effectively across the country and finding innovative approaches to address gaps and disparities in Kent County, improving equitable outcomes for young children.
- Using data to make decisions and measuring progress, so that services and programs are evidenced based and aimed at our community's most pressing needs.
- Securing resources that support the community's early childhood system.

First Steps Kent led a successful ballot initiative in 2018 to secure dedicated and sustainable public funding for programs that improve the health, school readiness, and well-being of children under age five across the community. In November 2018, Kent County voters overwhelmingly approved the Ready by Five Early Childhood Proposal. It is a .25 mill property tax increase that will generate about \$5.7 million a year from 2019 to 2024 – more than \$34 million total.

The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage will pay for services such as home visiting, play and learn groups, developmental screenings, and support to help families access the help they need. First Steps Kent is administering the millage funding, which is being awarded in a competitive process to community-based organizations that serve young children and their families.

The early childhood system as it exists today is based on decades of hard work and collaboration from parents, educators, service providers, county government, and business and philanthropic leaders. Continuing to strengthen it, so it works for all young children and their families, requires ongoing commitment from those who raise and love young children, those

who work within the early childhood system, those who make policies, and those who want this community to be as equitable and prosperous as possible.

August 2019

Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families Case Study

Mission of the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families:

The mission of the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (the Local Management Board for Anne Arundel County, Maryland) is to assess community human services needs and identify gaps in service, convene a neutral group of diverse stakeholders to build partnerships and develop solutions, fund services for children and families by leveraging state funding and increasing local resources, and advance the Governor's priorities of reducing the impact of parental incarceration on children, families and communities; improving outcomes for disconnected youth; reducing childhood hunger; and reducing youth homelessness.ⁱ

Brief History

Local Management Boards (LMBs) were first established in Maryland during the mid-1990s in an effort to change the way services were provided to children and families in their communities.ⁱⁱ The major focus was to increase local authority to plan, implement, and monitor children and family services. Each county in Maryland was charged by the Governor's Office for Children to convene a collaborative board to manage the implementation of a local, inter-agency, community based human service delivery system for children, youth and families. Now, the core functions of the LMBs are to create a community plan, perform a local needs assessment, identify priorities of their community, target resources, and serve as the county's neutral convener to coordinate children's services. Board members are appointed by the County Executive, with each Board Member serving a four year term.

The Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (the Partnership) was created in 1993. Not all LMBs in Maryland operate the same. The Partnership is an instrumentality of county government, 100 percent grant funded, whereas other LMBs operate under non-profits or within county government agencies. As well as acting as a neutral convener for the LMB, the Partnership's team of full time staff assesses community needs and identifies gaps in services, funds services for children and families, builds partnerships throughout the

Location: Anne Arundel County, Maryland

Target age group: Children and youth

Established: 1993

Method of establishment: Legislation

Organizational home: The Maryland Governor's Office for Children

Funding: The Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund was authorized by legislation and includes dedicated grant funding for Maryland Local Management Boards. The Anne Arundel County Partnership also receives other public and private funding.

Full-time employees: Executive Director, Finance Manager, Compliance Director, Youth Coordinator, Family Homelessness manager, five family navigators, special projects directors, Community of Hope Director, Community Conferencing Coordinator, two administrative coordinators

Members: Directors of all child-serving agencies. Private citizens, service providers and parents of children with special needs comprise up to 49% of the membership.

Meeting schedule: Monthly

Contacts: Pamela Brown (srbrow00@aacounty.org) and Alli Holstrom (SRHols44@aacounty.org)

community and state, seeks grants, and develops the Community Plan. Partnership funded activities are driven by the needs outlined in a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment that is updated every three years.

How are Local Management Boards unique?

LMBs are state funded local children's cabinets that focus on collective impact.

Local Management Boards are unique to Maryland and operate as the local children's cabinets throughout the state. There is one in every county and jurisdiction in the state (24 in all). By design, they marry state and local work. LMBs have a designated state fund that is administered by the Governor's Office for Children (GOC), but also apply for federal, state and other funding depending on community needs. They are held accountable for promoting statewide strategies outlined by the Governor's Office for Children. However, as Executive Director of the Partnership and Chair of the Association of Local Management Boards Pamela Brown states, "Everything (about LMBs) is local. They are driven by the local needs, structure, personalities, etc. LMBs are best at knowing the local level".ⁱⁱⁱ

LMBs play an important role in driving collective impact throughout the state, including within the communities, between communities, and between the state and local level. The Partnership for Children, Youth and Families and many other LMBs act as the backbone organization for collective impact strategies within their local communities. By mandate, the heads of local child serving government agencies are required to serve on the board and have the highest level of leadership at the table, but they are joined by representatives from the community. All members work together to create cross-sector strategies that fit the needs of the community. The Association of Local Management Boards exists to help LMBs share best practices and problem solve on how to keep local issues at the forefront. There are twenty-four jurisdictions in Maryland (including Baltimore City) that range in wealth and span from very rural to very urban.^{iv} Therefore, as Pamela Brown noted, LMBs have to manage an inevitable balancing act between state priorities and requirements with local needs and priorities.

Why the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families stands out?

The Partnership uses diverse funding to make a big impact.

The Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund (the Fund) is authorized by the Human Services Article § 8-501–506 and includes dedicated grant funding for Maryland Local Management Boards. The fund is divided between the twenty-four LMBs in the state by a formula, and each year, the LMB must write a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to say how they are spending the money on priority populations and the community plan, on measures of child-wellbeing, and on measuring progress. Each LMB is able to seek other local, state and federal grants in addition to what they receive from the Fund. The Partnership matches GOC

funding with other funding so that GOC dollars are only one third of the entire funding bucket. All funds are braided and blended to ensure comprehensive services without duplication.

The Partnership uses diverse funding strategically and mindfully to make a big impact on the community needs in Anne Arundel County. For all decision making, including writing grants, forming strategies, and designing initiatives, the Partnership uses a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework. Alli Holstrom, the Partnership's Compliance Director, stands firmly behind the state required use of RBA, saying that it works naturally inside a collective impact model and ensures the best investments to meet community needs by asking and answering two key questions: "1. Are we doing the right things? 2. Are we doing things right?"^v

An example of the Partnership's great impact in their community using RBA is the planning and construction of a youth center for disconnected and unaccompanied homeless youth in northern Anne Arundel County. In order to advance Governor Hogan's priority of reducing the number of unaccompanied homeless youth, the Partnership established a cross-sector working group that included agencies, subject matter experts and people with lived experience. Then, using RBA and human centered design processes, the work group created a plan for the drop-in center that included programmatic and physical space elements that were relevant and imperative to meet the needs of the youth. This includes that the space is easily accessible by bus or walking, and the center offers services ranging from showers and lockers, to resume building courses, and assistance obtaining birth certificates. Even though the original plan was slightly delayed in order to educate the community and gather community input, the Partnership has funding and plans in place, with the goal of opening the center in about two years. In the meantime, a pop-up center funded by the Partnership is operating at the local library.

Key Takeaways

Even though Local Management Boards are distinct to Maryland, other states can learn from the model if they are interested in creating a cohesive state-local partnership and strategy for children's services. Maryland also proves that this model is successful in a diverse state! The Anne Arundel Partnership for Children, Youth and Families is an example of a thriving local children's cabinet. From its conception in 1996, the Partnership planned strategically to be able to use both the dedicated state funds and other grants. The Partnership, and all Local Management Boards, use RBA as its decision making model to use their funds with fidelity and to truly keep the needs and voices of their community members at the forefront of their work.

ⁱ <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/partnership-for-children-youth-families/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://goc.maryland.gov/history-of-lmbs/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Quote from interview with Pamela Brown 2/19/19

^{iv} https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_counties_in_Maryland

^v Quote from interview with Alli Holstrom 2/19/19

July 3, 2018

Fairfax Successful Children and Youth Policy Team



Brief History

In December 2012, an assessment of racial and ethnic disparities in contact with Fairfax County's juvenile justice system was released. Among the key findings of this assessment was the pronouncement that Fairfax County lacked a shared, coordinated vision among and across county agencies serving justice-involved youth. To rectify this deficit, members of the Office of the County Executive convened a group of agency leaders, school administrators, and representatives from prominent youth advocacy organizations to participate in a cross-agency policy coordinating body known as the Successful Child and Youth Policy Coordinating Team (SCYPT). The original SCYPT members quickly realized that without elected officials, agency leadership, and a broader range of sectors represented it would be difficult to create meaningful policy change in the child and youth space. To get buy-in from the School Board and county Board of Supervisors, the original team from the County Executive's Office took the findings of the disproportionality report to a joint meeting of the two boards, which each agreed to appoint high-level members to the SCYPT. The team then started fresh, drawing up their new charter and beginning a more intentional process utilizing collective impact principles. The SCYPT's charter was approved at the first meeting of the second iteration of the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team in May, 2013.

Mission Statement

The Successful Children and Youth Policy Team provides policy and resource guidance and champions the collective efforts of the Fairfax community to ensure all children, youth, and their families and communities have equitable access to quality services, supports, and opportunities to further their success and well-being.

Location:

Fairfax County, Virginia

Target age group:

Children and youth in Fairfax County

Established:

May 2013

Method of establishment:

Informal, followed by charter

Organizational home:

Originally the County Executive's Office, now the Prevention Unit in the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

Funding source:

Fairfax County government

Full time employees:

5, all housed in the Dept. of Neighborhood and Community Services

Members:

Fairfax County Public Schools Members (9), Fairfax County Government Members (10), Community Members (15) [including voices from early childhood, faith-based organizations, families, health care, business, philanthropy, non-profits, higher education, advocacy, and out of school time]

Meeting Schedule:

No fewer than four times a year, primarily during the school calendar year.

Target Outcomes & Strategies for Impact

While the impetus for the creation of the Fairfax County Successful Child and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT) was a report on racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, the SCYPT's mission (see page 1) is much broader than improving a singular system. Developing the vision, mission, and priority outcomes of the SCYPT was a 9-month, multi-step process that included hundreds of community members and representatives from a myriad of stakeholder groups.

This process began with a full-day retreat in 2014 that included dozens of representatives from non-profits, providers, schools, and faith-based organizations as well as members of Fairfax's child, youth, and family-serving departments and agencies. At this convening participants used collective impact principles to discuss community-wide data on how children and youth in Fairfax were doing. While previous child and youth-related collective impact efforts in Fairfax had been focused specifically on education, the SCYPT wanted to emphasize a more holistic approach where behavioral health, physical health, and safety were treated as worthy goals in and of themselves, not just as a means to doing well in school. This retreat yielded a draft vision statement, mission statement, and outcomes. Over several months, the SCYPT elicited feedback on this language from conversations with hundreds of community members. The SCYPT held a day-long community conversation, went to various county conferences, presented at Fairfax County Public Schools' mental health summit and a neighborhood conference of home owners associations, attended staff meetings, all with the goal of getting answers to two questions from as many community members as possible: What do you think of the proposed mission/vision/outcomes? Do you support the proposed mission/vision/outcomes? and; Do you see a role for yourself in this mission/vision and these goals as an individual stakeholder (provider, business community member, etc.)? While community members were primarily supportive, the SCYPT kept meticulous notes to track feedback, the SCYPT's response to that feedback, and any changes made as a result of that feedback. Most changes made reflected the need for language to be more inclusive of all community members. The revised mission, vision, and goals were then returned to the full SCYPT for final approval and to be adopted.

In order to assess progress towards its mission and vision, the SCYPT brainstormed potential indicators of progress for each of the eight community-wide outcome areas. The County's Prevention Data and Evaluation Manager then convened a 'data team' of data keepers from a broad range of agencies and the school system to solidify these indicators. The team, made up of the county's 'keepers and maintainers of existing data' were able to look at the list of outcome

Outcome Areas & Indicators:

1. **Children get a healthy start in life.** [early prenatal care, low birth weight, preterm births]
2. **Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.** [reaching kindergarten literacy benchmarks, number of publicly-funded, high-quality pre-K slots]
3. **Children and youth succeed academically.** [1st grade reading proficiency, standardized test scores, on-time graduation]
4. **Children and youth are physically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally healthy and resilient.** [BMI, childhood mortality, teen pregnancy, asthma, oral health, protective factors, student suspensions, stress levels, suicidal ideation, alcohol and drug use]
5. **Children and youth are safe and free from violence and injury.** [school safety offenses, carrying a weapon, DUI arrests, childhood mortality rates, crimes against children and youth]
6. **Youth earn a post-secondary degree or career credential.** [number of high school students earning a career credential, diplomas and completion, enrollment, degrees awarded]
7. **Youth enter the workforce ready to succeed.** [unemployment, employment status, youth not enrolled or in the workforce]
8. **Youth contribute to the betterment of their community.** [volunteer rates, leadership roles, engagement in faith communities, voter registration]

areas and then speak to what data currently existed that could be used as an indicator, add meaning to that data, and identify what data needed to be gathered or created. The data team then shared this list of available measures and indicators with the SCYPT, and now continuously provides the data and insight that populates the Successful Children & Youth section of Fairfax’s Community Health Dashboard.¹

Jesse Ellis, the Prevention Manager in the Dept. of Neighborhood and Family Services and coordinator of the SCYPT describes two main ways that the SCYPT uses the Community Health Dashboard: “First, they use the data as a starting point for discussions on identifying key issues and priorities...Second, the data is used to frame issues, provide a baseline assessment, and shape proposals to address issues. So, for our behavioral health work, we’re using SCYPT key indicators as long-term outcome measures for the [behavioral health] plan, and we use the disaggregated data to drive our work to address disparities. For example, Hispanic girls have disproportionately high rates of depressive symptoms [in Fairfax]. So, our plan emphasizes that population in its strategies around health equity.”

Embedding Equity

From its inception, the SCYPT was committed to addressing racial and social inequities in the county. Over its first 5 years, it has solidified this commitment by facilitating the development of the One Fairfax Policy², which the school board and county recognized with a unique, joint resolution³ in 2016. Jesse Ellis, the SCYPT coordinator, describes One Fairfax as “a policy that requires the county and the school system to take racial and social equity into account with every decision they make – whether it’s funding allocations or where we put our next bus stop – what impact will that have on racial and social equity and disproportionality?” The policy establishes “shared definitions, focus areas, and processes and organizational structure” to “help county and school leaders to look intentionally, comprehensively and systematically at barriers that may be creating gaps in opportunity.”



In the One Fairfax Policy the county and Fairfax County Public Schools commit to practices and processes aimed at “achieving equity and advancing opportunity for all,” including community engagement, training and capacity building around implicit bias and structural racism, the application of equity tools such as disparity studies, racial and social equity action planning in every department, and the incorporation of an accountability framework for achieving the goals laid out in the action planning process. While the One Fairfax Policy began with children and youth policy, it has expanded to apply to the county as a whole and every policy decision that it makes.

Point of Contact:

Jesse Ellis, Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services, 703-324-5626, Jesse.ellis@fairfaxcounty.gov

1 [Community Health Dashboard](http://www.livehealthyfairfax.org/index.php?module=Tiles&controller=index&action=display&alias=CILandingPage) - <http://www.livehealthyfairfax.org/index.php?module=Tiles&controller=index&action=display&alias=CILandingPage>

2 [One Fairfax Policy](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax) - <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax>

3 [Joint resolution](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/pdf/one-fairfax-resolution.pdf) - <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/pdf/one-fairfax-resolution.pdf>



A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

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May 2013

I. Introduction

In the United States, more than 60% of all children from birth to age five spend time in the care of someone other than their parents.¹ And child development research, neuroscience, and program evaluation affirm the long-lasting effects that high-quality early childhood experiences have on individual and societal outcomes, including school readiness and persistence, economic vitality, workforce preparation, and mental health.² Early education and care services for young children are provided by a wide range of programs with different designs and purposes, including the federal Head Start program; state child care programs that represent a mix of federal and state funds and requirements (and parent co-pays); and state-funded preschool programs. These essential funding streams are part of a larger array of programs that include special education, health and mental health services, home visiting, nutrition, and more. Building comprehensive early childhood systems focuses on these early care and education services and all the other programs and services necessary for healthy child development and learning

“Careful and deliberate assessment of a state’s early childhood governance structure is an integral step in reducing fragmentation, uneven quality, and inequity in programs and services.”

including family support, early intervention, and child health and mental health. States increasingly have sought to develop new governance structures that align authority and oversight of early childhood programs and services.³

A state-level system of early childhood programs and services for children from birth to age five can exist under several different governance models. Governance “refers to how (often multiple) programs and entities are managed to promote efficiency, excellence, and equity. It comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how constituents are given voice, and how decisions are made on issues of mutual concern.”⁴ An effective model of governance should create coherence among policies and services, but current systems of early childhood governance typically are fragmented. Careful and deliberate assessment of a state’s early childhood governance structure is an integral step in reducing fragmentation, uneven quality, and inequity in programs and services.⁵

¹ *Infants & Young Children Learning*, Child Trends Data Bank, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/41> (accessed Sept. 18, 2012).

² *Building Ready States: A Governor’s Guide to Supporting a Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childhood State System*, NGA Center for Best Practices, Oct. 2010.

³ The BUILD Initiative and the Early Childhood Systems Working Group have defined an early childhood system as a system of systems that encompasses the areas listed above. In this paper, however, the term early childhood governance is used loosely. Most recent early childhood governance reform has occurred in the arena of formal early care and education.

⁴ Kagan and Kauerz, *Governing American Early Care and Education in Continuing Issues in Early Childhood Education* (Feeney, Galper, and Seefeldt, eds., 2009).

⁵ Goffin, Martella, and Coffman, *Vision to Practice: Setting a New Course for Early Childhood Governance* (Jan. 2011).

This 25-page report from the Build Initiative was an important resource for MMF.

Download the report at: bit.ly/BUILDgovernance

APPENDIX E

Draft Criteria for ECE Coordinating Entity

Fact Sheet on Three Child-Focused Entities in Montgomery County Prepared by the Office of Legislative Oversight for MMF



Criteria for a Public-Private Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

Background:

Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) urges a coordinated, comprehensive Early Care and Education (ECE) system because that's what it takes to attract and retain today's talented workforce so many of whom are families with young children; and because high quality ECE is the most cost effective means of addressing the growing opportunity gap and preparing the skilled workforce of tomorrow. We need a system to ensure that (1) every family with young children will have access to affordable, high quality ECE, (2) every child in the county will be ready for kindergarten and future school success, and (3) Montgomery County employers will be able to attract and retain skilled, productive workers today and into the future.

To work right, a system needs a coordinating entity that can break down existing silos and improve outcomes for children, families and employers. For this reason, one of MMF's priorities in its 2018 Call to Action is to define and resource a coordinating body to provide ongoing, system-wide oversight for all ECE in Montgomery County.

MMF is joined in this recommendation by the three main education entities in the County: Montgomery County Public Schools, The Universities at Shady Grove, and Montgomery College who recognize and endorse the critical importance of a coordinated system.

MMF contends that the following criteria are necessary for an ECE coordinating entity if we are to meet these identified outcomes:

1. Purpose – Why does the Coordinating Entity exist? What is its role?

This entity exists to drive a comprehensive, coordinated, and aligned birth to five Early Care and Education (ECE) system focused on increasing availability of and accessibility to affordable high quality ECE.

Its role is to work as a public-private entity, across sectors, on a systems-level, to coordinate and account for the wise allocation of ECE resources, reduce duplication of effort, identify gaps in need and provide a significant return on investment for Montgomery County.

The entity's work rests on the recognition that a coordinated approach will be the most effective and efficient means for ensuring the high quality care and education that prepares all children for life and

learning, including kindergarten-readiness, and provides meaningful support of our workforce today and into the future. The entity will establish shared accountability metrics by defining common community goals and indicators of achievement.

2. Authority – What authority does the coordinating entity have? Where does it get its authority?

The entity is provided authority through legislation to advance and coordinate all countywide ECE initiatives. The entity assembles partners across sectors to understand, monitor and leverage the full scope of ongoing ECE efforts and to continuously map the allocation of countywide ECE funds and services allowing it to identify unmet needs and barriers. The entity may also be granted authority to specifically administer select ECE funds and to advance select initiatives to improve the availability of and access to ECE services and to support new and innovative models for early care and education.

3. Funding – What is the coordinating entity's role vis a vis the ECE dollars in the County?

A critical role for the coordinating entity is to monitor all the ECE dollars currently being spent in the County. As a coordinating body, the entity will map and track all existing ECE funds allocated within Montgomery County in order to ensure that (1) first community priorities are funded first, (2) there is maximally effective use and impact of resources without duplication or redundancy, (3) public funds are leveraged effectively to encourage private investment and (4) that there is one single private-public entity with a birds-eye view of the flow and allocation of ECE funds in the County. The entity would be initially funded by discretionary and/or unallocated public sector dollars, and it will have the ability and expectation to raise private funds. It will have direct purview over these funds, and any other funding set aside for specific and targeted initiatives. In addition, though it would not maintain direct purview over public funds specifically allocated to County agencies, it would provide recommendations and regularly report to stakeholders about the use and impact of these dollars

4. What initial activities should the coordinating entity pursue?

The entity will build upon the foundational system-building, cross-sector work of Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) by continuing MMF's awareness campaign regarding the importance of ECE and the roll-out of ECE employer toolkit. The entity will advocate for a birth to five ECE system, including a thriving ECE workforce, and a common-sense ECE regulatory environment, with a continual eye toward coordinating disparate programs into a cohesive system. During a specified transition period, the entity may work with MMF as a partner (whether as a contractor or some other delineated relationship) to leverage MMF's unique position as a learning convener and cross-sector facilitator.

The entity will be aware of all ECE funding streams, whether public or private and will provide regular recommendations on County policies affecting ECE access and provision. It will coordinate specified ECE funding streams to improve efficiency, and will recommend the allocation of new investment of funds appropriated by the County Council including funds associated with the multi-year ECE initiative, federal and state funds including funding derived from the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence recommendations, or private funders. The entity will ensure that these funds are allocated pursuant to a coordinated, systemic, deliberate plan to create a sustainable ECE infrastructure through policy recommendations. In addition, the entity will work to facilitate cross-sector partnerships such as the one between Identity and Montgomery College designed to address the county's shortage of trained bilingual ECE providers.

The entity will devise a system to measure progress and remain accountable to all stakeholders, and will publicly report progress to the County Council and/or Board of Education. The entity will work to align

and streamline accountability by coordinating data collection, quality standards and outcome measurement across the ECE system thus breaking down existing silos associated with the administration of funding and oversight of programs. The entity will act as a central data warehouse with agreements to share data and perform analytics across the ECE system.

5. Governance – what type of governance structure should the coordinating entity have? Who should participate?

The entity is a neutral, public-private convener and has a governing body that is comprised of a broad cross-sector of representatives (from both the public and private sector) who have independence to make decisions about the money it controls, monitor funding allocations and coordinate funding streams (even if outside of its control), and provide recommendations on policies pertaining to ECE. The entity's governance must reflect the full diversity of the ECE community, including providers, parents, County agencies (including MCPS and DHHS), nonprofits, ECE trainers, all employers, and businesses. This public-private cross-sector representation is necessary to identify gaps in ECE access (whether public or private), provide input on policy recommendations, and connect all aspects of ECE.

6. Management and implementation – what type of management structure should the entity have? How should implementation be accomplished?

There must be staff, who are employees of the entity, to advance its work. The entity requires a management infrastructure to support governance, financial management, and administrative responsibilities which it can implement directly or contract out. For example, the NEXUS Montgomery model has all-volunteer Board and Committees with a contracted backbone organization—the Primary Care Coalition—providing staff, research, data management and analysis, and outcome measurements.

However implemented—the management structure—must be independent to avoid any conflicts with existing ECE providers, and dedicated exclusively to the charge and purpose of the coordinating entity.

7. Should the ECE coordinating entity be a new or existing entity?

The entity could be a new or a reconstituted version of an existing entity.

- Advantage to having entity already in the ECE space: shorter learning curve, name recognition among stakeholders, possible existing funds for ECE (Examples: Early Care Coordinating Council, Montgomery County Collaboration Council, Children's Opportunity Fund)
- A completely new entity could offer a new energy, an innovative perspective, and a fresh start to advance an ECE system.
- Whether new or an existing entity, the success of the entity will rest not only in its board leadership but with an independent staffing/management structure that could be carried out by staff directly employed by the entity or provided through a service contract.

Existing entities in ECE Space:

[see DRAFT Office of Legislative Oversight Fact Sheet prepared for MMF]

Summary Characteristics

Entity	Type of Organization	Purpose	Governance Structure
The Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families	Quasi-public nonprofit corporation	To implement a local interagency service delivery system for children, youth and families	The County Executive appoints the 21-member Board of Directors with 12 public sector members and 9 private sector members
The Early Childhood Coordinating Council	The ECCC is staffed by County staff in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	To monitor, advocate and make policy recommendations for the development of an early system of care and education in Montgomery County that supports children entering school ready to learn.	The ECCC is composed of up to 33 members, which include members of the public and County and MCPS staff, appointed by the County Executive
The Children's Opportunity Fund	A fund of the Community Foundation of Montgomery County (the local office of the Greater Washington Community Foundation)	To pool public and private funding to close the achievement gap and address barriers faced by vulnerable children and their families	The County Executive, Superintendent, a Member of the County Council and a Member of the Board of Education serve as the COF's Policy Leadership Group

MMF's role vis a vis the ECE coordinating entity:

- Until an entity is firmly established and able to assume the role of cross-sector convener, MMF remains deeply committed to serving in a convening and facilitating role around improving ECE in Montgomery County and could contract to provide ongoing convening support as needed.
- MMF remains committed to advocating on behalf of a coordinated birth to five early care and education system now and into the future.
- MMF endeavors to maintain an accountability role with an ECE coordinating entity to ensure accountability and system progress by helping to define outcome metrics and tracking progress of them.

Final note:

The work of a successful coordinating entity will undoubtedly impact other entities and partners already in this space. The first work of any coordinating entity will be to ensure a smooth transition plan supported by community engagement and robust communication.

DRAFT Fact Sheet on Three Child-Focused Entities in Montgomery County

Prepared by Office of Legislative Oversight Staff for Montgomery Moving Forward

Summary Characteristics

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1. The Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families

The Collaboration Council is a quasi-public nonprofit corporation that is currently designated as Montgomery County's Local Management Board (LMB) to implement a local interagency service delivery system for children, youth, and families, as required by State law.¹ According to the Collaboration Council's website, "The Collaboration Council's goal, as Montgomery County's Local Management Board (LMB), is to collaborate with community leaders and county residents to discover a common understanding of community needs and develop a joint approach to solving it."²

Local Management Boards (LMBs) were established by the State as a way to bring children with special needs in out-of-state placements back to their local communities and to prevent other special needs children from being placed out-of-state. In 1993, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation mandating that each local jurisdiction establish an LMB to ensure the effective coordination and

¹ Md. Human Services Code Ann. § 8-301

² <https://collaborationcouncil.org/assessments-reports/>

implementation of local service delivery systems that improve the well-being of children, youth, and families. Initially, the mission of LMBs was to serve children eligible for services funded by the System Reform Initiative, the State's effort to serve children in their local communities rather than in out-of-state placements.

In 1996, the Maryland Office for Children, Youth and Families expanded the mission and scope of LMBs by adding prevention and early intervention to their responsibilities. In 2002, this scope expanded again when the Office of Crime Control and Prevention began to send funds to communities via the LMBs. In some localities, including Montgomery County, the LMB also works to inform public policy and to advocate for improved services to the jurisdiction's children and families.³

Purposes and duties of the Local Management Board. Section 2-118 of the County Code specifies the following purposes of the County's LMB:

- To administer state funds for certain children's services, and plan and coordinate those state-funded services;
- To participate in community planning for children's services related to the state-funded programs; and
- To apply for and administer funds for children's programs.

State law delineates the duties of LMBs as follows:⁴

- To strengthen the decision-making capacity at the local level;
- To design and implement strategies that achieve clearly defined results for children, youth, and families as articulated in a local 5-year strategic plan for children, youth, and families;
- To maintain standards of accountability for locally agreed upon results for children, youth, and families;
- To influence the allocation of resources across systems as necessary to accomplish the desired results;
- To build local partnerships to coordinate children, youth, and family services within the county to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services; and
- To create an effective system of services, supports, and opportunities that improve outcomes for all children, youth, and families.

Governance structure. Section 2-120 of the County Code establishes that the LMB's Board of Directors must have 21 voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council, including 12 public sector members and 9 private sector members.

Public sector members must include:

³ Downie, S., and Miller, P., "History and Current Status of the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families," OLO Memorandum Report 2010-8, March 9, 2010, https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/olo/resources/files/2010-8_collaboration_council.pdf

⁴ Md. Human Services Code Ann. § 8-303

- a designee of the President of the County Council;
- a designee of the President of the Board of Education;
- a designee of the Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools;
- the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services, or the Director's designee;
- the Director of either the Department of Finance or the Office of Management and Budget, or either Director's designee;
- the Director of the Core Service Agency, or the Director's designee;
- the Regional Director of the state Department of Juvenile Services, or the Director's designee;
- the County Health Officer, or the Officer's designee; and
- a County employee who provides direct client social services to children, youth, or families.

Private sector members may include:

- advocates for services to children, youth, and families;
- providers of services to children, youth, and families;
- parents of children who are receiving or recently received services of the type funded by the local management board;
- individuals between 18 and 25 years of age;
- business owners and managers
- leaders of civic and community service organizations; and
- leaders of religious organizations.

Funding and fundraising. Section 2-122 of the County Code specifies that the LMB may seek funding from the Federal government, County departments, offices and agencies, private donations and government and private grants. However, the LMB must seek the County Council's approval before applying for any donation or grant in excess of \$500,000 or any funding requiring more than a \$10,000 County match.

2. Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC)

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) was formally established in 2015 by Bill 13-15. It builds on the work of the previously existing Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which was formed as the local arm of the Maryland Early Childhood Advisory Council. According to the ECCC's 2019-2020 Priorities document, "The ECCC monitors, advocates and makes policy recommendations for the development of an early system of care and education in Montgomery County that supports children entering school ready to learn." The ECCC meets nine times per year.

Composition and terms of members.⁵ The County Code specifies that the ECCC has up to 33 members, including 15 public members and 18 ex officio members. ECCC members are appointed by the County Executive, confirmed by the County Council and serve four-year terms. DHHS provides staff support to the ECCC. Public members are those selected to represent the following organizations or groups:

- Local providers of early childhood education and development services (up to four)
- The Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations
- The Montgomery County Commission on Child Care

⁵ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 10A-3

- The Organization of Child Care Directors
- The Family Child Care Association of Montgomery County
- The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children
- The business community (a representative with demonstrated leadership in early childhood care and education)
- The local pediatrician community
- The local philanthropic community
- The local interfaith community
- Parents (up to two representatives)

The Executive must appoint the following as ex officio members:

- The Director of the Department of Human Services (DHHS)
- A representative of the DHHS Division of Early Childhood Services;
- A representative of DHHS Community Health Services;
- A representative of DHHS School Health Services;
- A representative of the DHHS Infants and Toddlers Program;
- A representative of the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families;
- A representative of the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center;
- A representative of the Montgomery County Community Action Agency, which administers public Head Start programs in Montgomery County;
- A representative of the Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries
- A representative of the Montgomery County Council;

The Executive must invite the following to serve as ex officio members:

- The Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent or their designee;
- A representative of the MCPS Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services;
- A representative of the School's Division of Prekindergarten, Special Programs and Related Services;
- A representative of the Office of Child Care Region 5, Maryland State Department of Education;
- Up to 2 representatives of public institutions of higher education in the County;
- One MCPS elementary school principal; and
- One MCPS prekindergarten teacher in Montgomery County Public Schools.

ECCC Duties.⁶ This section lists the duties of the ECCC as established in the County Code. These duties mirror those of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council as defined in State law (Article – Education Section 7-101.2)

1. Conduct a periodic county-wide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services;
2. Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among child development, child care and early childhood education programs, services, and advocacy groups;

⁶ Ibid.

3. Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children and their families in existing programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
4. Develop recommendations regarding the implementation and use of the State-established unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the County;
5. Develop recommendations regarding professional development, career advancement plans, compensation scales and incentives for early childhood educators in the County; and
6. Assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education toward supporting the development of early childhood educators,
7. Recommend regulations for the availability of quality child care in public spaces
8. Develop ways to leverage public and private partnerships between private businesses, Montgomery County Public Schools, and the County;
9. Develop a hub consortium that connects family child care providers to accredited child care centers and schools to provide training, technical assistance, and mentoring to family child care providers; and
10. Update and implement an Early Childhood Initiative to integrate public and private early childhood services, including areas such as child care, early literacy, early childhood mental health consultation services, and parent support services.

The ECCC is not permitted to conduct legislative advocacy at the State or federal levels unless approved by the Office of Intergovernmental Relations.

3. Children's Opportunity Fund

The Children's Opportunity Fund was established with the goal of pooling public and private funding to close the achievement gap and address barriers faced by vulnerable children and their families.

History. The Children's Opportunity Fund was created in FY16 as a joint effort of the County Government and MCPS. In September of 2015, the County Executive named an interim director for the COF, who was charged with establishing the governance structure and goals for the fund. In the same year, the County Council approved a special appropriation to the newly created Children's Opportunity Fund Non-Departmental Account (NDA) for Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), a public-private partnership with the Rales Foundation to provide summer programming for 2nd and 3rd graders beginning in the summer of 2016.

In 2016, the interim director presented the proposed structure of the COF to the Health and Human Services and the Education Committees of the County Council. The proposal included establishing the COF as a fund in the Community Foundation of Montgomery County, a local office of the Greater Washington Community Foundation. The proposed mission and vision of the COF were as follows:

- "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.”⁷

Of note, in 2016 the County Council received and released Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Memorandum Report 2016-11, “Out of School Time and Children’s Trusts,” which included several recommendations on how the COF could support out of school time efforts. In her response to the OLO report, the Executive Director of the COF noted:

COF may be best-suited to function as a ‘funding’ intermediary that coordinates a set of strategic evidence-based investments for OOST and other priority areas, rather than in an operational, research and/or programmatic capacity as suggested in the report.⁸

In accordance with the structure proposed on 2016, the COF is currently a fund of the Community Foundation of Montgomery County. The County Executive, Superintendent, a Member of the County Council and a Member of the Board of Education serve as the Policy Leadership Group to the COF to guide prioritization of investment priorities. These priorities guide the decisions of a Steering Committee which identifies specific investments for accomplishing COF priorities.⁹

In May of 2020, the COF Project Director reported that the COF Policy Leadership Group had unanimously approved a new five-year strategy, called “Birth to Eight”. The strategy aims to close the achievement gap, address racial inequities and expand opportunities for the county’s marginalized children and families. A key metric for the strategy’s success will be third grade reading scores.¹⁰

⁷http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2016/160303/20160303_HHSED2.pdf

⁸ Bonner-Tompkins, E., and Carrizosa, N., “Out of School Time and Children’s Trusts,” Office of Legislative Oversight Memorandum Report 2016-11, pp. 41-42 <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2016%20Reports/OLOReport2016-11OutofSchool.pdf>

⁹http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2016/160303/20160303_HHSED2.pdf

¹⁰ Rusnak, K, “Responses to HHS Committee for the Children’s Opportunity Fund,” Memorandum, May 5, 2020, attached to the Council Staff packet on the FY21 Operating Budget for the Children’s Opportunity Fund (COF) NDA, May 11, 2020, https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2020/20200511/20200511_3.pdf

APPENDIX F

Additional Findings/Feedback from Community Stakeholder and Business Leader Engagement (Fall 2020)

Additional Findings/Feedback from Community Engagement

The following section presents the key points raised by community members, along with specific comments from the interviews and conversations of October - December 2020.

Community Engagement Key Takeaways

- Bake equity into every aspect of the entity:
 - Equity considerations must be embedded in all written documents
 - Equity must be factored into operations, policies, governance, funding etc.
 - There should be a person or persons who are specifically charged with vetting all decisions the entity makes for equity.
- Ensure community stakeholders have both representation and voice in the entity.
 - Specify who is at the table and include a wide variety of people representing different interests.
 - The Entity must be clear about where power lies and who has voting authority.
 - Families need to be seen as full partners.
 - Providers and staff/teachers need to be involved in decision making. Family providers as well as Child Care Centers need to have voting roles. In addition, there should be an advisory council for providers, which should include informal caregivers as well.
 - Representatives from the disabled community need to be engaged while decisions are being made, not after.
 - There should be job descriptions for the entity board, with clarity about what group each board member represents.
 - Meetings should be arranged so that the timing and logistics (e.g. location) work for key groups, such as providers.
- Ensure that there is clear, frequent and targeted communication with community stakeholders to build trust and buy in.
 - Communication will need to be two way between the governing board of the entity and community stakeholders so that each is informed by the other.
 - Communication will need to be ongoing to ensure continued engagement of community members, to continually educate the public about the value of the entity and ECE in general, and to promote transparency and build trust.
 - The entity should use tactics and platforms that are tailored to each community e.g. flyers, WhatsApp, texting, etc. Communication will need to be linguistically and culturally competent, including “queer” competence and sensitivity to Black and Brown communities.
 - Communication and outreach need to connect with all those who touch children and families, e.g. pediatricians, social service workers etc. as part of a holistic approach to child wellbeing.
 - The entity should reach out through intermediaries that people trust such as child care providers like CentroNia, churches, and other organizations and leaders already working in the community.

- Ensure that big players are included in the entity/systems conversation such as MCPS, Head start, etc. in order to support a common strategy along the continuum of child development.
- Develop a clear system of accountability and feedback loops on both entity and community input to build trust and achieve transformative change.
 - Adopt a strategy of continuous improvement and create a real-time feedback loop
 - Collect data on entity success and operations, and on community-wide indicators. Track equity achievements as well.
 - Be clear about objectives, priorities, scope of work, and target population. Establish a system of reporting and broadly sharing information.
 - Make equity central to everything, in both the details and big ideas, the operational and policy decisions. Have a team or an individual responsible for vetting all decisions to make sure equity considerations are included.
 - Create a system that can survive if there is a leadership transition. Build *institutional* accountability.
 - Hold the entity accountable for a range of outcomes connected to overall child wellbeing and transformation of the supports offered to children and families. Evaluate its progress in building a child-support ecosystem.
- Push for better support and higher wages to providers.
 - Staff and teachers are underpaid, opportunities for professional development are hard to access (language, timing, cost, lack of incentives). Many do not have basic benefits such as health insurance.
 - Staff are heavily burdened by paperwork, compliance, and accreditation rules. There is no additional compensation when new regulations are added that require time and energy.
 - Family child care providers don't get the same level of support or attention that Child Care Centers do. Even on a per child basis, family providers get less funding through subsidies. This is an equity issue, especially given that the workforce is heavily older women of color.
 - In some cultures, child care is not seen as a profession. The entity can provide training and leadership development to help providers and staff see themselves as business people and leaders.
 - The current economic model relies on low wages to teachers subsidizing the whole industry. Parent tuition is the biggest source of revenue which keeps tuition too high for many families but not high enough to pay decent salaries.
- Advocate for ways to make access to resources easier for low income, Black and Brown, disabled, immigrant and low English proficient, and other often marginalized communities.
 - Base assistance on the needs of the child, not the behavior of the parents (e.g., if mom or dad uses marijuana their child should not be precluded from receiving assistance).
 - Respond to each community based on its own specific needs and acknowledge that those needs will be different. One comment from a stakeholder: language needs have been put ahead of needs of Black and Brown communities.
 - Incentivize providers in gap areas and promote a variety of options for parents to choose from.
 - Connect child care programming and resources to transportation networks, provide subsidies for transportation.

- Create a clear point of access to coordinated services for parents. For beginners it is very hard to navigate to get to the right resources.
- Map services and gaps to understand the whole picture of child care education resources and make sure underserved areas are getting what they need based on usage data as well as community feedback. This will save resources as well.
- Push for reduction in the requirements and paperwork that comes with most forms of assistance which become barriers to families already struggling
- Look at coordinated early intervention to identify disabilities and include the whole family in intervention. Push for an inclusionary approach that places children with mixed abilities together, they will all benefit from the interaction.
- Long-term thinking is essential, but it is equally important to remember that there is a fire in the house: the sector is in crisis. The county should focus on preserving and expanding ECE capacity during the pandemic; once the economy opens up there will be a great need for access to child care.

Additional Findings/Feedback from Business Leader Engagement

Benefits of Business Engagement

Business leaders can:

- Provide expertise on being change agents and managing complex initiatives that must evolve and adapt over time, while recognizing that they are not ECE experts.
- Raise the profile of ECE in the County, emphasizing the value to economic vitality.
- Make the case for increased public and private sector investment in ECE based on the importance of the issue and the opportunity to invest in a more effective and efficient system.
- Help make this entity a prestigious organization that is the central hub for innovation and attracts the best talent on the board and staff (analogous to Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation).
- Support the entity in advancing systems change, by jointly taking the risks necessary to effect systemic change, changing direction as needed (including stopping what isn't working), and holding the system accountable for outcomes.
- Contribute to ECE by supporting their own employees and making some monetary investments, but resources for both the entity and services are the responsibility of the county government, not business.

Also see the following documents in Appendix B:

Employers CAN Make a Difference in Early and Education

Principles of a Business-Friendly ECE Environment for Montgomery County, Maryland

APPENDIX G

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services: Embedding HHS Equity Principles in Recovery Planning



Embedding HHS Equity Principles in Recovery Planning

DHHS holds equity as a critical value to guide the way we work with customers, staff, and partners to promote health, safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency. That is why it is important to pause and reflect on impacts of how we plan our recovery. This discussion tool is meant to ensure equity principles are intentionally considered in those decisions.

What will the tool accomplish?

Provide a set of guiding questions to help you review your decision-making process and determine if the decisions you make bring us closer to or further away from greater racial equity and social justice.

When & how should I use it?

- Use this tool to review and justify short-, medium- or long-term decisions around recovery
- Answering these questions will require gathering of information through a variety of means such as stakeholder input or reference to a variety of county info
- The intent is for users to be able to articulate their decision-making process and its impact on achieving equity for those communities most impacted by the current event and to address systemic inequities.

Questions to ask:

1. Who is and who is not at the table making the decision?
 - a. How can this body be more inclusive?
2. Who will benefit from the decision?
3. Who will be burdened by the decision? Explain Why?
 - a. How will the burden be mitigated?
4. What current community profile, data and on the ground information are you using to shape your decision? What information is missing?
5. How will this decision create/enhance access based on the needs and circumstances of the communities (e.g. literacy level, language, transportation, mobility, access to internet, location of services)?
6. How Is the decision aligned with the HHS Equity principles (see below)?

Communities to keep in the forefront of your thought process:

- Blacks, Asians, and Latinos
- Low-income residents
- LGBTQI
- People with physical or mental disabilities
- Immigration status
- Limited English Proficient

Reference Guide

Equity Value, Principles and Standards

Equity refers to fair policies, decisions, and actions by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services when impacting the lives of people.

Equity is a value of fairness that guides the way that Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services works with customers, staff, and community to promote health, safety, well-being and self-sufficiency.

Equity Principles

Dignity – We believe that all individuals should be treated with dignity and respect.

Elimination of Disparities – We believe in preventing and eliminating social and health disparities to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Access – We believe in ensuring access to effective and high quality services that meet people's needs, when they need them, delivered by a professional workforce which is competent to provide those services in a caring and respectful manner.

Distribution of Resources – We believe that the resources of the Department should be distributed in a manner that maximizes the health, safety, well-being and self-sufficiency of the community as a whole.

Community Engagement and Participation – We believe that our diverse communities should be meaningfully engaged in providing input and feedback on policies, practices and services.

Equity Standards

The MCDHHS Equity Standards are intended to operationalize the Equity value and principles for the department. The standards will guide our actions to improve quality, expand access and eliminate inequities. By these standards, we will measure impact, advocate for resources and maximize health gain for the whole population.

1. An integrated service delivery system equitably supported by technology, which enables staff to share information and work collaboratively for improved client outcomes.
2. Recruit, develop and maintain a workforce that is engaged, accountable, responsible, respected, recognized and prepared for changing roles within the department and representative of the community we serve.
3. Working in partnership with the community, focus on the promotion of community health and well-being and the prevention of adverse outcomes.
4. Services to customers are delivered in a respectful manner and in the context of the customer's culture, language, values, and beliefs.
5. Print and multimedia communication materials and forms are developed in easy to understand language, taking into consideration literacy level, cultural and linguistic appropriateness and people with other forms of communication needs.
6. Program hours are accessible to customers, wait time for walk in services will be reasonable, appointments will be kept on time.

Reference Guide Contd.

7. Locations for direct services have adequate parking and are accessible by public transportation with the physical layout of the exterior and interior adopting a universal design approach to accommodate people of diverse ability.
8. Each employee understands disparities, inequities, the social determinants of health and well-being and is knowledgeable about community issues, needs and resources.
9. Data Standards are in place to accurately describe, measure, and evaluate disparities and inequities in ways that are compliant with federal and other funding requirements.
10. Decision tools supported by quantitative and qualitative data are applied to assist in determining policies and equitable distribution of resources.
11. Clear strategies for community engagement that focus on capacity building, creation of public policy, data collection and data sharing that supports health and equity across communities.

APPENDIX H:

Nonprofit Montgomery Board of Directors

Montgomery Moving Forward Leadership Group

Nonprofit Montgomery Board of Directors

Debbie Riley, President

CEO, Center for Adoption Support and Education

Jacob Newman, Vice President

Managing Director, Montgomery County, Latin American Youth Center

Jackie DeCarlo, Secretary

CEO, Manna Food Center

Ann Mazur, Treasurer

CEO, EveryMind

Shannon Babe-Thomas

Executive Director, Community Bridges, Inc.

Carson Henry

Association Executive, Social Responsibility, YMCA Youth & Family Services

Suzan Jenkins

CEO, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County

Kylie McCleaf

COO, Jewish Social Service Agency

Chloe Perez

President & CEO, Hearts & Homes for Youth

Susie Sinclair-Smith

CEO, Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless

Kathy Stevens

Executive Director, MCAEL

Elijah Wheeler

Executive Director, Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families, Inc.



Montgomery Moving Forward Leadership Group

November 2020

Marilyn Balcombe

CEO
Gaithersburg-Germantown
Chamber of Commerce

JoAnn K. Barnes

Chief
Children, Youth and Family Services
Montgomery County Department
of Health and Human Services

Kevin Beverly *

Economic Development Advocate

Bob Buchanan

Partner
Buchanan Partners

Andy Burness

President
Burness

Annicc Cody

President
Holy Cross Health Network
Holy Cross Health

Raymond Crowell

Director
Montgomery County Department of
Health and Human Services

Stewart Edelstein

Education Advocate

Sharon Friedman

Project Director
Montgomery Moving Forward

Gigi Godwin

President & CEO
Montgomery County Chamber of
Commerce

Anna Hargrave

Executive Director
Greater Washington Community
Foundation-Montgomery County

Julian Haynes

Program Officer
Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer
Foundation

Joanne Hurt

Executive Director
Wonders Early Learning + Extended
Day

Suzan Jenkins

CEO
Arts and Humanities Council
of Montgomery County

Mike Knapp

CEO
SkillSmart, Inc.

Adam Luecking

CEO
Clear Impact

Lesley MacDonald

Executive Director
Nonprofit Montgomery

Susan Madden *

Chief Government Relations Officer
Montgomery College

Catherine Matthews

Director
Upcounty Regional Office
Montgomery County Government

Manny Ocasio

Chief Human Resources
& Compliance Officer
Asbury Communities, Inc.

BB Otero

Special Assistant
County Executive
Office of the Executive

Arlene Pietranton

CEO
American Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

DeRionne Pollard

President
Montgomery College

Dusty Rood

President
Rodgers Consulting, Inc.

Sally Rudney

Philanthropic Advisor
Cliff and Deborah White Family Fund

Kimberly Rusnak

Executive Director
Children's Opportunity Fund

Karla Silvestre

Director of Community Engagement
Montgomery College

Jack Smith

Superintendent of Schools
Montgomery County Public Schools

Kathy Stevens *

Executive Director
Montgomery Coalition for
Adult English Literacy

Tricia Swanson

VP Government Relations
Montgomery County Chamber of
Commerce

C. Marie Taylor

President
Equity Through Action

Bill Tompkins

Executive Vice President
& Chief Operating Officer
Montgomery County
Economic Development
Corporation

Crystal Townsend

President & CEO
Healthcare Initiative Foundation

Diego Uriburu

Executive Director
Identity, Inc.

Elijah Wheeler

Executive Director
Collaboration Council

Cliff White

Founding Partner
National Electronics Warranty
Corp.,
Chair, Neighbors in Need
Montgomery

William N. Wiechmann

Vice President & Regional Counsel
Kaiser Foundation Hospitals /
Health Plan

Janet S. Wilson

Chief of Teaching, Learning and
Schools
Montgomery County Public Schools

Vivian Yao

Legislative Analyst
Montgomery County Government

Hope Gleicher

Chief Strategy Officer
Identity, Inc.
Honorary Member

*** MMFCo-Chair**

Systems Building & Strategic Work Grants (FY23-FY25)

Grants	Amount	Explanation	Source of funding	Systems-level Work & Outcomes	Date/FY
Action in Montgomery	\$40,000	AIM is a non-partisan, multi-faith, multi-racial organization dedicated to making Montgomery County and the State of Maryland a better place to live and thrive. This grant will support organizing teams of BIPOC parents to address structural barriers related to access to early childhood education.	private philanthropy	It is systems-level work because it is mobilizing parents to speak up about the importance of ECE. Outcomes: they held a 200 person action event at Harmony Hills with most County Council members and Board of Education members to talk about importance of ECE.	FY23
CentroNia	\$15,000	This grant will allow CentroNía to prepare and deliver video trainings for Montgomery County educators on high-quality early instruction and care that is responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children, including those exhibiting learning and developmental delays.	MCPS & private philanthropy	Identifying the gaps in the system Outcomes: Provided training to 30 ECE professionals, in Spanish, about social emotional learning, trauma-informed care, epigenetics and the impact of adverse childhood experiences.	FY23
Montgomery County Food Council	\$10,000	Feeding America estimates at least 33,840, or 14%, of children in Montgomery County are food insecure, with an estimated 10,660 of those children being under the age of 6. This grant will support young children and families experiencing food insecurity by increasing SNAP program awareness and	MCPS & private philanthropy	Identifying the gaps in the system Outcomes: enrolled over 300 children in SNAP so that families in need could have better access to nutritional food.	FY23

Systems Building & Strategic Work Grants (FY23-FY25)

		participation in Montgomery County. MCFC has a goal of completing SNAP applications for 300 children from ages 0-15.			
Montgomery Housing Partnership	\$40,000	This grant will support MHP's Play and Learn program, which provides kindergarten readiness opportunities for low-income children and English Language Learners.	MCPS & private philanthropy	Supporting informal, culturally relevant education opportunities for young children. Outcomes: served 86 children and all children showed positive developmental growth.	FY23
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library	\$50,000	This grant supported Imagination Library's program to reopen in targeted zip codes with high need.	DHHS/ Montgomery County Gov't	Expanding free book program for children 0-5; supporting early literacy access. Outcomes: Supported expansion of the program, serving over 1,500 children in high need zip codes.	FY23
Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA)	\$30,000	MSCCA & FCCAMD provided grant writing and back office support to child care centers that applied to MSDE for the State Blueprint PreK application	Private philanthropy	Piloting strategic activities that reduce inequities in the mixed delivery Pre-k system Outcomes: Supported 9 programs in receiving the PreK grant for SY25. Provided back office/admin support to 4 child care centers during SY25.	FY24
Family Child Care Alliance of MD (FCCAMD)	\$58,000	Host two training sessions to raise awareness amongst FCC programs about the opportunity of State PreK grant. A flyer was sent	HHS, MCPS	Provide funds for community proximity experts to share and test their ideas on how to fill a gap and reduce inequities – building the	FY25

Systems Building & Strategic Work Grants (FY23-FY25)

		to every FCC program in Montgomery County letting them know that State PreK Expansion is here and inviting them to a training session to learn more about how they can participate.		capacity of FCC to participate in state Pre-K expansion. Outcomes: supported 80 FCC programs in learning more about the State PreK grant opportunity.	
Latino Child Care Association (LCAM)	\$35,000	Supported 9 FCC programs in purchasing and coaching educators around the Creative Curriculum, which is a MSDE approved State PreK curriculum, a basic requirement of the State PreK grant.	HHS, private philanthropy	Provide funds for community proximity experts to share and test their ideas on how to fill a gap and reduce inequities – building the capacity of FCC to participate in state Pre-K expansion. Outcomes: purchased Creative Curriculum for 9 FCC programs. Providers now use digital curriculum to track children’s developmental progress, maintain documentation aligned with learning goals, communicate with families through the platform, and access high-quality, MSDE approved training.	FY25
Latino Early Care & Education Coalition (LECEC)	\$35,000	Support 15 Spanish-speaking FCC programs in understanding the requirements of PreK grant; includes initial assessment, coaching and mentoring.	HHS	Provide funds for community proximity experts to share and test their ideas on how to fill a gap and reduce inequities – building the capacity of FCC to participate in state Pre-K expansion.	FY25 40

Systems Building & Strategic Work Grants (FY23-FY25)

				<p>Outcomes: supported capacity building for 15 FCC programs. Assessments were completed for all 15 participants as well as customized recommendations for short- and long-term goals. Two providers advanced in Maryland EXCELS from Level 1 to Level 2, and six providers applied to Maryland EXCELS for the first time.</p>	
Family Child Care Association of Montgomery County (FCCAMC)	\$40,000	Provide initial assessment of eligibility, coaching and mentoring to 30 family child care programs in high-need areas of Montgomery County to raise awareness of the State PreK grant.	HHS	<p>Provide funds for community proximity experts to share and test their ideas on how to fill a gap and reduce inequities – building the capacity of FCC to participate in state Pre-K expansion.</p> <p>Outcomes: Conducted initial assessments for 30 mentees and helped focus on the learning outcomes for the mentees. IQR visits were conducted, and this helped the mentees understand what MSDE would expect during the next grant cycle. Ongoing coaching and mentoring from peers for 30 FCC.</p>	FY25

Systems Building & Strategic Work Grants (FY23-FY25)

Summary:

In FY23, COA granted \$155,000 through a combination of MCPS and private philanthropic funds, which was approximately 15% of our budget.

In FY24, COA granted \$30,000 using private philanthropy to support grant writing supports implemented by MSCCA and FCCAMD, which was approximately 3% of our budget.

In FY25, COA granted \$168,000 to support raising awareness amongst Family Child Care Programs about the Blueprint PreK opportunity, which was approximately 8% of our budget. These grants were provided through a blending of private philanthropy and HHS funds.

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

7.14.25 Added questions:

1. DHHS: Please identify all DHHS ECE provision of services— (not just under ECS)

a. *Note: If you believe the response provided for services under ECS is sufficient, please let me know. Also, if detailing all of them is too much at this time-- I can pull from our budget documents but wanted to give you all the chance to summarize them as well.*

i. Early Childhood Services

- 1. Child Care Support Services**
- 2. Early Intervention**
- 3. Pre-K Contractual Services**
- 4. EquiCare Grants**

ii. Head Start

iii. Working Parent's Assistance

iv. In addition to the above services, the following programs and services provided by DHHS include funds for children 0-5 years old:

1. Child Welfare Services

- a. YMCA Interagency Family Preservation Services**
- b. Reginald Lourie Center**
- c. Foster Care**
- d. Court Related Services for at Risk Youth**
- e. Treehouse**
- f. Post Adoption Services**
- g. Client Assistance Payments**

2. Child Assessment Center

3. Linkages to Learning

4. School and Community Based Youth Service

5. Cluster Projects

6. Medical Assistance Eligibility Services

7. Office of Eligibility Social Services

8. Health Services

- a. Dental**
- b. Maternity Dental**
- c. TB/Refugee Health**
- d. Area Health Centers**
- e. School Health Services**
- f. Care for Kids**

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

g. Maternity Partnership

- 2. DHHS: Please identify which services are being duplicated by the ECECE/COA.**
- a. While the FY26 County funded budget does not reflect duplicative items, the overall COA budget includes community-level initiatives that have not been coordinated with the County. The Entity often responds to ad hoc community requests instead of connecting to existing services. This lack of coordination leads to fragmented efforts and missed opportunities for more effective, system-level solutions resulting in overlapping efforts in several areas, including:**
- i. Blueprint Coordination of services: The ECEI and COA collaboratively developed roles and responsibilities related to blueprint outreach, capacity building, and support. However, COA has not consistently adhered to these agreed-upon policies that guide our work. For instance, creating an individualized brochure to promote a program's blueprint award to increase enrollment deviates from our established supports aimed at empowering programs with marketing strategies. There was no attempt to connect programs to our existing business counselor nor was the blueprint coordinator included.**
 - ii. Community Ambassador Work – The County is already engaged in similar efforts through the county programs such as Housing Opportunities Commission, Health Initiatives, Community Action, and the Working Parents Assistance Program. Additionally, MCPS hosts regular partner meetings that include representation from various community-based organizations and other public programs.**
 - iii. Family Navigation Services – These appear to duplicate the work of the County's Family Resource Specialists, creating potential confusion for families seeking support.**
 - iv. Contractors for Blueprint Methodist Church Cohort – There has been insufficient coordination with MCPS and DHHS to align this work with the shared policy goals established by the ECEI and COA. The support has not been shared with the ECEI which results in fragmented implementation of efforts intended to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.**

Budget & Oversight

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

1. Please provide an updated breakdown of the \$1,000,000 allocated for Council PreK Expansion—including actuals vs. budget.

As of July 7, 2025 (June invoice not yet submitted)

Budget Item	Budget	Actual	Balance	Notes
Preschool Contracts	\$837,500.00	\$549,983.33	\$287,516.67	Funds cover 34 converted licensed child care seats to part day/academic-year Blueprint modeled seats at both family-based and center-based child care programs, as well as cover summer enrollment, a program capacity building
Montgomery Moving Forward (Educator Workforce)	\$100,000.00	\$52,275.00	\$47,725.00	Funding allocated to prioritize advocacy for coordinated ECE workforce recommendations (registry for child care providers, career ladder, and task force).
Preschool Contract Monitor	\$51,000.00	\$47,900.00	\$3,100.00	Position to conduct on-site monitoring and TA for programs participating in the \$1M converted seats.
Blueprint Supports	\$11,500.00	\$850.00	\$10,650.00	To supplement the one-time only funding of \$55K included in the FY25 supplemental budget, a portion of the \$1M was set aside to support awardees with grant invoicing and reporting for MSDE Blueprint Grant requirements.
Total	\$1,000,000.00	\$651,008.33	\$348,991.67	

2. Executive Budget Requests: Please describe how COA is involved in the ECECE/COA NDA budget recommendation development process.

Each year the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requests that Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA) submit its budget recommendations for consideration in the formulation of the County Executive's recommended budget that is submitted in March for County Council consideration. If there are any questions about COA's budget recommendations, OMB requests clarification from COA so the County Executive can have a complete understanding of COA's recommendations. Once

Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response

the County Council has approved COA's budget, COA develops a proposed contract budget and submits it to the County's contract monitor for review. The County's contract monitor may return COA's contract budget if revisions are needed, such as to correct mathematical errors or address other required adjustments.

3. Please describe the fiscal management relationship between DHHS and COA—including the delineation (if any) in how public vs. private dollars are obligated. Fiscal management is a core component of the contract between DHHS and the COA, ensuring that all funds are spent in accordance with County policies and contractual requirements. Because fiscal and contractual oversight are closely integrated, DHHS and COA must maintain a collaborative and effective working relationship, as further described in Question #4 below.

All funds must support COA's legislated role as a neutral systems convener, not a service provider. This includes responsibilities such as conducting research and analysis, engaging stakeholders across the early care and education (ECE) system and making informed policy recommendations. Public and private dollars alike are intended to support COA's leadership in advancing a collective impact approach, including implementation of the Common Agenda, which guides coordinated, community-driven efforts to build a more sustainable, equitable ECE system. COA's role is to assess the system as a whole and recommend action to agencies and organizations equipped to deliver services.

4. Please describe the contractual obligations relationship between DHHS and COA. The relationship between DHHS and COA is guided by the formal contract, with the DHHS contract monitor serving as the primary point of contact. This relationship is rooted in partnership, trust, and open communication between both parties. The contract monitor works collaboratively with COA to ensure compliance with all contractual obligations, including guidance on the submission of accurate monthly invoices and clarification of any requirements.

This partnership-based approach reflects DHHS's broader philosophy of contractor engagement, one that prioritizes mutual respect, transparency, and proactive support. Through regular communication and responsiveness to questions, DHHS supports COA's ability to fulfill its role effectively while maintaining alignment with County policies and expectations.

Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response

At times, COA has chosen to elevate concerns directly to the Council when there is disagreement with DHHS guidance or decisions. While we respect COA's independence and advocacy role, bypassing direct communication can create tension and dilute the collaborative relationship we aim to foster. Raising concerns and working with DHHS allows us the opportunity to work through issues together and strengthen the partnership, ultimately serving our shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and families in Montgomery County.

5. Please identify COA's contractual obligations per fiscal year (including FY26, if known) and their alignment per the required duties within the enacted legislation. If the funding source is known, please include that as well.

FY	Funding Allocation	Source	Contractual Obligations
FY26	\$775,465	ECECE NDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain By-laws • Maintain Board Membership Requirements • Maintain Staffing Requirements, as well as Staff Training • Maintain and Utilize the Racial Equity Policy • Adhere to the Data Use Agreement between COA and DHHS • Conduct Research and Data Analysis • Conduct Stakeholder Engagement • Implement the ECE Common Agenda • Advocacy of ECE Issues • Reporting and Deliverable Requirements
FY25	\$1,981,438.61	TOTAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain By-laws • Maintain Staffing Requirements, as well as Staff Training • Adhere to the Data Use Agreement between COA and DHHS • Conduct Stakeholder Engagement • Develop a Strategic Plan (including both the Foundational Action Plan and the Common Agenda) • Reporting and Deliverable Requirements • Maintain Board Membership Requirements • Maintain and Utilize the Racial Equity Policy • Conduct Research and Data Analysis • Advocacy of ECE Issues • Back office support for Preschool Expansion programs • Child Care Provider Preschool Expansion Support (\$1M)
	\$750,238.61	ECECE NDA	
	\$231,200	SUPPL 1X ONLY	
	\$1,000,000	ECEI NDA	
FY24	\$928,387.00	TOTAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create By-laws

Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response

	\$728,387	ECECE NDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee and Adhere to Board Membership Requirements • Hire Staff • Adopt and Implement a Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy • Create a Data Plan • Conduct Research and Analysis • Conduct Stakeholder Engagement • Develop a Strategic Plan • Create an Advocacy Plan • Reporting and Deliverable Requirements • Additional appropriation to stand up entity
	\$200,000	Council SPECIAL APPROPRIATION from FY23 to be utilized in FY24	

There has been a growing disconnect between the intent of the enacted legislation and COA's interpretation of its mission. While the Coordinating Entity has demonstrated strength in several key areas and continues to build its capacity, its focus has shifted heavily toward programmatic efforts, including promotion of individual providers and the development of pilot initiatives. These activities divert energy and resources away from strategic planning and system improvement efforts, putting long-term sustainability at risk.

This programmatic direction not only diverges from the Coordinating Entity's intended role as a systems-level convener and analyst but also raises concerns about sustainability, particularly as we look ahead to a continued constrained fiscal environment. To ensure long-term impact, it is essential that COA prioritize its core responsibilities: conducting comprehensive analysis of the early care and education system, identifying gaps and opportunities, convening with diverse stakeholders, and collaborating closely with the Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI) to elevate priorities and enhance system-wide coordination. Refocusing efforts in this way will allow the Entity to fulfill its intended purpose and better serve the broader goals of the County's early childhood strategy.

6. Please highlight any successes or challenges in the contractual and financial relationship between COA and DHHS.

Successes:

- Open communication between DHHS contact monitor and COA
- COA understands that the contract monitor will always follow the proper procedures with any contract or fiscal issues, as well as provide guidance/suggestions on what can be done to deliver contract obligations without going outside those obligations.

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

Challenges:

- When challenges or disagreements arise regarding DHHS guidance on contractual matters, COA has on several occasions opted to escalate concerns directly to County Council members rather than first engaging in collaborative problem-solving with DHHS. While COA has every right to communicate with the Council, the pattern of using this approach, sometimes as a lever, can erode trust and strain the partnership. Issues are more effectively resolved through open, direct, and transparent dialogue between partners.
- There are ongoing concerns about mission drift, as COA's activities at times reflect a lack of clarity regarding its defined role within the early care and education (ECE) system. This has led to instances of mission overlap or intrusion into areas designated for direct service providers. As the Coordinating Entity, COA's charge is to serve as a neutral systems convener and not to implement direct service programs, which is critical to maintaining trust, avoiding duplication, and supporting a coordinated, efficient service delivery ecosystem.

DHHS- ECE

1. Please identify the services provided under the ECS umbrella.

Early Childhood Services, a division within DHHS, offers a wide range of integrated services that support children from birth to age five and their families. These include:

- Early Intervention Services: Screening, therapy, family education, service coordination, and developmental support for children with delays or disabilities (birth to 3).
- Child Care Support Services: Financial assistance, coaching and consultation for health and wellness of children's development, early childhood educator professional development, quality enhancement, recruitment, and licensing support for child care providers.
- Family Supports: Parenting education, child care find services, tuition assistance, and family engagement services.
- Policy, Planning, and Public Awareness: Cross-sector collaboration, legislative advocacy, systems-building, and awareness campaigns through the Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI).

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

- Staffing to Commissions, Committees and Boards: Advisory body guiding policy decisions to ensure quality, affordable child care is accessible for all families in the county.

2. Please describe the relationship between DHHS and child care providers.

DHHS maintains a direct, supportive, and collaborative relationship with child care providers across the county. Through its Child Care Support Services, DHHS offers:

- Technical assistance and coaching to enhance program quality.
- Professional development and training opportunities to support ongoing educator growth.
- Recruitment and business support, including assistance in opening new programs or expanding capacity.
- Financial assistance for families, which helps stabilize provider enrollment.
- Quality enhancement initiatives to help providers meet state and national standards.

In addition to service delivery, DHHS engages early care educators as thought partners, recognizing their expertise and lived experience. Educators are included in committees, workgroups, and decision-making processes, ensuring that policies and programs are informed by those directly supporting children and families. This approach builds trust, promotes shared ownership, and strengthens the overall early childhood system.

3. Please describe the relationships between DHHS and other jurisdictions in sharing best practices.

DHHS actively engages with other jurisdictions to share best practices, drive innovation, and strengthen early care and education systems. This includes:

- Cross-jurisdictional learning through regional networks, inter-county collaborations, and participation in state and national forums.
- Adapting and replicating successful models from other localities, particularly in areas such as workforce development, quality enhancement, and family engagement.
- Ongoing communication with peer counties and cities to align strategies, troubleshoot challenges, and exchange policy solutions.

Additionally, many DHHS staff serve on state-level workgroups and committees, contributing to policy development and ensuring that local perspectives inform broader decisions. As part of the Child Care Resource Center Network and the

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

Infant Toddler Grant Grantee, DHHS is also positioned to optimize state resources and maintain strong coordination with statewide initiatives, ensuring that local educators, providers and families benefit from aligned, high-impact services.

4. Please describe the relationship with the State (including the Early Childhood Advisory Council)

DHHS works closely with the Maryland State Department of Education to align local programs with state priorities, regulations, and funding mechanisms. The relationship includes:

- Coordination on the implementation of state mandates and initiatives, such as the Maryland Blueprint for Education, early intervention standards, Child Care Resource & Referral Centers, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Health Consultation, and MD EXCELS.
- Compliance and capacity building with state licensing and quality requirements for child care providers.
- Participation in state-funded grant programs and pilots, such as financial literacy, mental health supports and workforce development initiatives.
- Regular reporting and data-sharing to demonstrate outcomes and maintain transparency.
- Advocacy and feedback channels that allow the County to inform state policy based on local experience and needs.

The State Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is responsible for coordinating efforts across early childhood education programs, conducting needs assessments, and developing strategic reports to guide Maryland's early childhood policy. Previously, Montgomery County held a jurisdictional seat on the ECAC under its original structure. However, the Council has since been moved under the Governor's Children's Cabinet and restructured to include specific designated positions, which have limited local jurisdictional representation. The current Council is composed of 37 voting members appointed by the Governor:

- The local government Executive, or the Executive's designee;
- The local Superintendent of Schools, or the Superintendents designee;
- The Early Learning Coordinator from the local school system;
- The Director of Special Education and or the Preschool Special Education Coordinator;

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

- The regional managers of MSDE's office of child care or the regional manager's designee;
- The local Infants and Toddlers Director;
- The Judy Center Partnership Coordinator, if applicable;
- The President of the local Child Care Directors Association, or a designated representative;
- The President of the local Family Child Care Providers Association, or a designated representative;
- The Director of the local child care resource and referral center, or a designated representative;
- The Director of the local Family Support Center, or a designated representative, if applicable;
- The Coordinator of the local Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program, or a designated representative, if applicable;
- A representative of an institution of higher education in the local jurisdiction, if applicable;
- Up to two representatives of local providers of early childhood education and development services;
- Up to two representatives of Head Start agencies located in the local jurisdiction;
- Up to two representatives of the Department of Health, at least one of whom specializes in maternal and child health;
- One representative of the Local Management Board of a Maryland county or Baltimore City;
- One representative of the Parent Teachers Association;
- One representative of a local public libraries;
- One representative of the business community with demonstrated leadership in early childhood care and education;
- One representative of the local social services agency;
- One representative of the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals;
- One representative of a local government agency that provides services to children;
- One representative of a local home visiting program;
- One representative of a local community action agency; and

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

- Up to 3 other representatives of early childhood serving agencies as determined locally.

Additionally, it's important to note that the current local legislation establishing the local version of the ECAC, known as the Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC), is being considered for amendment to repeal it in light of the ongoing work led by the COA.

Despite this shift, DHHS remains engaged and committed to ensuring local voices and priorities are reflected in the ECAC's work and statewide strategy. We continue to have representation through two nominated positions (Head Start representation and Director of child care resource and referral center). This partnership helps ensure that local services meet both community and state-level goals for early childhood development and care.

ECEI

1. Please describe the role and function of the ECEI—why was it created and how does it support ECE?

The Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI) was launched in 2019 as a formal agreement between the County Government, Public Schools, and the Community College to prioritize early childhood systems-building. Established with support from both the County Council and the County Executive, the ECEI was created in response to the fragmented nature of early childhood services across public agencies and funding streams. Its purpose is to build a more coordinated, equitable, and sustainable early childhood system by aligning policies, streamlining resources, and elevating the early care and education workforce as a vital component of the education and economic infrastructure. Through strategic investments, cross-agency coordination, and ongoing stakeholder engagement, the ECEI strengthens the systems that support children from birth to age five and the families who care for them.

2. How does the ECEI align with the current ECE stakeholders, including the ECECE?

The ECEI is designed to complement and strengthen the work of existing ECE stakeholders, including the ECE Coordinating Entity. It serves as a collaborative framework that builds on the work of partners rather than duplicating it. The ECEI aligns with the ECE Coordinating Entity by supporting shared policy goals, ensuring consistent messaging, and creating opportunities for joint planning and investment.

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

Through regular engagement and shared data, the ECEI reinforces coordination, transparency, and a unified approach to systems change.

3. What is the makeup of the ECEI and its subcommittees?

The ECEI is composed of a cross-agency leadership team that includes representatives from Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County Public Schools, and Montgomery College departments responsible for child care, early learning, permitting, workforce development, health, and social services. It is supported by subcommittees that focus on key strategic priorities such as Workforce; Access & Affordability; Public Private Partnership, Finance, and Facilities.

4. Please describe the ECEI's impacts on policy and budget decision-making.

The ECEI plays a critical role in shaping policy and budget decisions by providing a coordinated platform to identify priorities, elevate data-informed recommendations, and align funding strategies across agencies. It uses both internal data and relevant research studies to inform decisions, ensuring that strategies are evidence-based and responsive to community needs. The ECEI's work has contributed to increased investments in the ECE workforce, expanded access to child care subsidies, and strengthened support for facilities and quality initiatives. By integrating fiscal and policy planning, the ECEI ensures that decisions reflect shared goals and promote long-term sustainability for the early childhood system.

Success and Challenges

1. Please identify successes in the implementation of the ECECE legislation.

The implementation of the ECECE legislation has resulted in a more strategic, coordinated approach to early childhood systems planning and oversight. Key successes include:

- **Fiscal Mapping and Resource Alignment:** A concerted effort is underway to develop a comprehensive fiscal map that identifies and aligns local, state, and federal investments in early care and education. This promotes transparency, informs policy decisions, and helps identify funding gaps and duplication.
- **Data Dashboard for Public Transparency:** Work is progressing on a public-facing data dashboard to provide families, providers, and policymakers with accessible information on access, quality, workforce, and system performance.

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

- **Parent and Community Voice:** The ECECE has prioritized bringing family and community voices to the table, ensuring that planning and policy reflect lived experience and community priorities.
- **Accountability Structure:** The Coordinating Entity's role is to be a dedicated body for oversight and accountability, focused on aligning strategies, monitoring progress toward shared goals, and avoiding duplication of services.

These efforts reflect a shift from fragmented service delivery to a unified, equity-centered approach grounded in data, accountability, and authentic community partnership.

2. Please identify challenges to implementing the ECECE legislation.

A key challenge in implementing the ECECE legislation has been maintaining clarity around the Entity's intended role as a neutral convener rather than a direct service provider. At times, there has been misalignment between the enacted legislation and the Entity's programmatic focus, which can lead to mission drift, duplication of services, and confusion among stakeholders. Additionally, while the legislation prohibits direct service delivery, it currently lacks explicit accountability mechanisms to evaluate the Entity's performance, transparency, and effectiveness in its convening role.

3. Please share policy or legislative recommendations to enhance the function and role of the ECECE (based on the current enacted legislation)?

Legislative Recommendations:

- **Clarify Prohibited Activities:** Amend the legislation to clearly specify that the ECECE shall not provide direct service to eliminate ambiguity in the current language.
- **Strengthen Outcome-Based Accountability Measures:** Embed statutory accountability provisions, requiring regular reporting by the ECECE. These measures should serve as tools for tracking progress, informing decision-making, and guiding continuous improvement, ultimately positioning the coordinating entity for success in delivering on its mission:
 - Progress toward strategic priorities
 - Effectiveness of stakeholder engagement
 - Identification of system gaps and equity-focused outcomes

**Montgomery County's Dept. of Health and Human Services
ECECE Designation 2025
Council Questions/Response**

- Results of cross-sector planning and convenings
- **Include Language Focused on Maintaining System Neutrality:** Reaffirm the ECECE's role as a neutral systems convener to ensure continued trust and prevent mission drift.
- **Guard Against Duplication:** Include provisions that encourage ongoing assessment of system gaps, ensuring the ECECE fills unmet needs without duplicating services delivered by existing agencies and community-based organizations.
- **Establish Shared Definitions:** Incorporate language that requires the development and use of common terminology across stakeholders to promote consistent understanding of early care and education concepts, structures, and systems. This foundational step is critical to aligning efforts in a complex and evolving policy landscape.

Policy Recommendations

- **Develop a Shared Vision and Roadmap:** Implement a clearly defined and widely endorsed strategic roadmap for the ECECE that articulates shared goals, strategic priorities, timelines, clear roles and responsibilities, and success indicators, ensuring all partners are aligned in purpose and direction.
- **Implement a State-Local Coordination Framework:** Develop and institutionalize mechanisms for regular communication and coordination between state and the ECEI to ensure that ECECE activities reflect community-level needs and realities as well as connect to State activities. Core elements should include clearly defined coordination roles and bi-directional feedback loops. The goal is to promote local innovation aligned with statewide goals, enable responsive policy development, and ensure equitable distribution of resources based on community-identified priorities.
- **Strengthen Stakeholder Engagement Protocols:** Create formal structures for inclusive stakeholder engagement that center historically underserved communities, ensuring the voices of families, providers, and educators inform all aspects of the ECECE's work.
- **Develop Clear Operational Guidelines:** Establish internal policies that guide the day-to-day function of the ECECE, including conflict resolution, decision-making processes, equity practices, coordination efforts, and role clarity among partner agencies.




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

July 18, 2025

TO: Kate Stewart, President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Amendments to Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

This memorandum provides the Department of Health and Human Service's position on the proposed amendments to the Bill 42-21 that established the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity, and to recommend a position for your consideration. The role of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity is to align strategies, foster partnerships, and strengthen early childhood systems across the county. This role is fundamentally distinct from service provision. The proposed amendments reinforce that distinction, which is critical for the following reasons:

1. Preventing Conflict of Interest and Role Confusion

Direct service delivery would blur the lines between planning and implementation, compromising the Entity's objectivity. It would create potential conflicts of interest in decisions related to oversight, funding, and partnerships.

2. Maintaining Equity and Public Trust

Engaging in direct service provision or contracting directly with providers could lead to real or perceived favoritism, harming stakeholder trust and reducing transparency. The entity should instead ensure equitable access by convening partners and facilitating system-wide improvement.

3. Avoiding Duplication and Inefficiencies

Creating parallel or duplicative programs undermines system efficiency and confuses families and providers. Community-based organizations already work in close partnership with government agencies to deliver aligned, responsive services. Introducing new, overlapping services through the Coordinating Entity would fragment the system, dilute the impact of

existing efforts, and strain limited public resources. The Coordinating Entity should instead focus on strengthening coordination and filling system gaps not replicating services already being effectively delivered.

4. Protecting the Role as a Neutral Convener

The strength of a coordinating entity lies in its neutrality by bringing together diverse stakeholders to work toward shared goals. Providing services would make the entity a competitor rather than a trusted systems leader, undermining collaboration.

5. Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability and Focus

Direct service delivery would require new infrastructure, staffing, and ongoing funding. This diverts energy and resources away from strategic planning and system improvement efforts, putting long-term sustainability at risk.

6. Clarifying Definitions to Support Implementation

The proposed amendments introduce two critical definitions that provide much-needed clarity and reinforce the appropriate scope of the Coordinating Entity's work:

- **ECE Seat:** Defined as “the capacity of an ECE provider to enroll a child in early childhood education,” this term helps standardize discussions around access and planning without implying the Entity's role in service delivery.
- **Direct Services Prohibition:** The bill explicitly states that the Coordinating Entity must not engage in direct services or program delivery. Specifically, it may not:
 - Provide early childhood education (ECE);
 - Award or fund grants;
 - Enter into contracts with ECE providers;
 - Provide goods or services to ECE providers; or
 - Fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals.

We are in support of the proposed amendments, as they align with our County's values of transparency, equity, system neutrality, and long-term sustainability in early childhood governance. Our position is based on agreement with three core principles embedded in the amendments:

- The Coordinating Entity should not provide direct services.
- It should serve as a neutral convener, not a service provider.
- Its duties should be clearly defined in statute to prevent mission drift.

We recommend the County Council adopt the proposed amendments as they:

- Clearly define and strengthen the entity's purpose and guardrails,
- Uphold system neutrality and protect stakeholder trust,
- Support strategic use of public funds for long-term impact, and
- Align with national best practices for early childhood systems-building.

Operational Impacts

Enhanced Clarity and Efficiency: Clearly defined roles and prohibited activities help streamline operations by eliminating duplication of services and reinforcing the Coordinating Entity’s purpose as a convener, not a provider.

Strengthened System Coordination: The focus on strategic planning and accountability supports long-term impact and improves alignment with community partners.

Maintained Public Trust: Avoiding direct service provision mitigates conflicts of interest, reinforcing the Entity’s credibility and neutrality.

It is important to note that no negative impacts are anticipated as the amendments reinforce Council expectations rather than significantly altering them.

Additional Concerns

The phrase “provide ECE” in Paragraph K, Item 1 is ambiguous or missing a word. Adding language will clarify definition.

While the amendments prohibit direct services, they do not currently include explicit accountability mechanisms to evaluate the Coordinating Entity’s performance or ensure transparency in its convening and planning role.

Potential Amendments

Clarify Language in Paragraph K, Item 1 to specify that the Entity shall not provide “ECE programming” to eliminate ambiguity.

Embed Accountability Provisions by including explicit statutory language that requires the Coordinating Entity to report on:

- Progress toward strategic priorities,
- Stakeholder engagement and partnership effectiveness,
- System gaps and equity-focused outcomes, and
- Results of cross-sector initiatives and convenings.

cc: Cecily Thorne, Chief of Staff to the Council President, Montgomery County Council
Craig Howard, Executive Director, Montgomery County Council
Richard S. Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer
Sonia Mora, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Tricia Swanson, Director of Strategic Partnerships
James Bridgers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Lori Garibay-Aquino, Chief of Children, Youth, and Family Services, Department of Health and Human Services
Jennifer Arnaiz, Senior Administrator, Early Childhood Services, Department of Health and Human Services

Council Work Session on Expedited Bill 23-25
July 23, 2025

Submitted on behalf of Jennifer Arnáiz, Senior Administrator, Early Childhood Services,
Department of Health and Human Services

Good morning, Councilmembers,

Thank you for allowing my words to be shared in my absence and for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services about the role and responsibility of the early care and education coordinating entity. While our department's detailed input has been provided through the inter-departmental memo, and will be expanded upon during today's work session, I want to take a moment to express our clear agreement with the intent and direction of the proposed amendment. DHHS views these refinements as both necessary and essential to strengthening the role of the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity. We also view and recognize this role as a needed accountability partner that plays an essential role in ensuring transparency, alignment and community voice in this space.

When the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity was created, the vision was for a collaborative partner leading systems change, which means transforming how a system operates to achieve better outcomes. The legislation aimed to address gaps in our early childhood system through improved collaboration and strategic planning. However, it left questions about the Entity's scope and functions unresolved.

The Council's proposed amendments clarify the Coordinating Entity's mission, by focusing on strategic building, systems coordination, and cross-sector collaboration. This legislation was never intended to create another service provider but to establish a body that could drive coordination, effectiveness, and accountability within the early childhood system.

We support a Coordinating Entity that researches innovative change models for the entire early care and education system, focusing on policy-driven impacts on public service delivery while complementing community-based organizations' work. As federal support diminishes due to recent budget cuts, our local early childhood system faces challenges in access, affordability, and workforce stability. In this changing landscape, it is crucial to protect vulnerable children and families and prioritize educators. A clearly defined and strategically focused Coordinating Entity is essential to ensure local investments and initiatives are equitable, intentional, and aligned to fill gaps left by reduced federal resources. The Entity must also serve as a key accountability partner to ensure the County works toward agreed-upon outcomes that benefit children, families, and educators, ensuring progress is measurable, transparent, and sustained over time.

We feel it is important to acknowledge that in its first three years, the Coordinating Entity has increasingly concentrated its efforts on programmatic-level work. While well-intentioned, this focus has diverted attention from the broader and more pressing need for system-level analysis and structural change. Under the term “innovation,” the Entity has initiated various projects in a more reactive manner. While these efforts are commendable, there lacked the opportunity to coordinate and adopt a more strategic approach that includes components for expansion and sustainability. While providers appreciate these temporary infusions of dollars, the work for larger level systems change is lost.

This shift highlights the importance of ensuring that legislation clearly articulates the Entity’s strategic role and aligns expectations to prioritize advocacy and outreach, policy guidance, and systems-level transformation rather than individual program implementation.

We want to underscore that, as a publicly funded entity established through County legislation, the Coordinating Entity should operate with transparency, accountability, and neutrality to maintain public trust.

Its unique value lies in serving as a neutral convener and systems leader, not as a direct service provider or financial competitor. The proposed amendments rightly prohibit service delivery, grant awarding, contracting with child care providers, and funding ECE seats, safeguarding the Entity’s focus and credibility.

At the same time, it’s important to clarify that the contract permits the use of contractors for research, stakeholder engagement, and other system-level functions central to its role to remain data-informed.

To build on this strong foundation, we encourage the inclusion of clear accountability measures in the legislation. These measures should include specific metrics such as progress on strategic priorities, which tracks the completion of key initiatives and milestones outlined in the strategic plan; stakeholder engagement, measured by the level of participation and satisfaction among stakeholders through surveys and feedback mechanisms; equity outcomes, assessed by improvements in access to early childhood services for underserved communities through demographic data and service utilization rates; and cross-sector coordination effectiveness, evaluated by tracking joint initiatives, shared resources, and integrated service delivery.

These measures will be critical for providing clear direction and accountability for systems change, assessing the Entity’s impact, ensuring it meets its legislative mandate, and supporting its ability to evolve in response to the County’s changing needs and priorities.

In closing, we look forward to the Coordinating Entity making true systems change with meaningful impacts over the next few years. DHHS fully supports the broader legislative

effort to enable a unified, strategic approach to early childhood systems building. We support a successful Coordinating Entity that can lead meaningful systems-level change. These amendments are essential to restoring focus, clarifying purpose, and ensuring an Entity can fulfill its role as a neutral, accountable systems leader. This is a pivotal moment that demands bold leadership, shared responsibility, and a relentless commitment to measurable, lasting change for Montgomery County's youngest.

Legislation Comparison: Bill 42-21 vs Bill 23-25 vs Bill 23-25 Amendments

Topic	Original Legislation (Bill 42-21)	Proposed Changes Through Bill 23-25 (Albornoz and Jawando)	Amendments to Bill 23-25 (Luedtke and Mink)	Recommendations from COA & DHHS
1) Equity Language <i>The current legislation includes an opening statement on the organization’s role in developing an equitable system. Bill 23-25 removes this. It also adds in a statement about COA being a neutral convenor. The amendment suggests putting the original language back in and removing the word neutral.</i>	“In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must.”	“The Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convenor of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders.”	“In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must. The Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a convenor of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders.”	We have agreement around including the term “neutral” and it is defined as: having shared ownership and supporting co-creation, being transparent, being inclusive, being data informed, bringing together all voices, implementing a clear decision-making process, and that the North Star for this work is what is best for Montgomery County Children and Families. This is based upon our organizational values of Equity, Family-Centered, Justice, Accountable and Synergy. We recommend the following language: “In developing an equitable system of high quality, accessible, sustainable early care and education and eliminating systemic racism and structures that created access barriers for vulnerable, racially and ethnically diverse populations, the Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must. The Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity must act as a neutral convenor of ECE stakeholders and, in collaboration and consultation with ECE stakeholders.”

<p>2) Duties</p> <p><i>Separates and prioritizes the duty to conduct a needs assessment, and changes wording about engaging and educating families.</i></p>	<p>(1) develop recommendations for increasing availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs, with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations, including low-income children, families of children with special needs, and English language learners and with a focus on children from birth to 5 years old;</p> <p>(2) convene and solicit input from all ECE stakeholders to identify unmet needs and barriers to accessing quality ECE services, develop common goals and priorities for</p>	<p>(1) conduct a County-wide needs assessment for ECE programs;</p> <p>(2) identify and analyze specific ECE needs through periodic mapping of ECE services and resources throughout the County;</p> <p>(3) research and evaluate strategies to strengthen and sustain the ECE system in the County;</p> <p>(4) analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children</p>	<p>(7) engage, educate, and build public awareness about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;</p>	<p>There is agreement and alignment on including this wording in the legislation: “engage, educate, and build public awareness about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;”</p>
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	<p>system expansion and improvement, and identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among stakeholder groups. The Entity must seek advice from the members of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council while the Entity develops final recommendations for realigning existing County committees and advisory groups that provide input into the early care and education system;</p> <p>(3) solicit board members through a community-based process involving parent groups and other advisory bodies. Create and/or maintain existing advisory bodies to ensure continuing direct input from a wide range of community perspectives;</p> <p>(4) engage and educate families and the wider community about the importance of high-quality early care and education programs and advocate at the Federal, State, and local level for greater public and private investment in and improvements to the early care and education system;</p> <p>(5) research and facilitate innovative service models and strategies to improve the early care and education system and identify community needs through periodic mapping of early care and education</p>	<p>whose parents or guardians qualify for a government benefit based upon income, families of children with special needs, and English language learners;</p> <p>(5) create, publish, and periodically update a comprehensive common ECE agenda based upon the consensus of ECE stakeholders;</p> <p>(6) measure outcomes and progress towards the common agenda;</p> <p>(7) educate the public about the importance of high-quality ECE programs;</p> <p>(8) advocate at the federal, state, and local level for greater investment in and improvements to the ECE system; and</p> <p>(9) solicit and accept public and private funding to support the work of the Entity under this Section.</p>		
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	<p>services and resources and County-wide needs assessments;</p> <p>(6) secure and administer private-sector funding to support the early care and education system and manage and administer public funding that is directly appropriated to the Entity;</p> <p>(7) measure and report on the efforts to improve and expand the early care and education system with a focus on achieving tangible results that improve access to high-quality ECE across the County;</p> <p>(8) address current inequities imposing barriers to accessible high quality, affordable care for all communities; and</p> <p>(9) create, as a neutral convener, a common early childhood education agenda based on community consensus that all major stakeholders commit to and maintain a 360 degree view of all aspects of the County's early childhood education sector.</p>			
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3) Low Income vs AMI <i>The changes proposed by councilmembers seek to clarify what is considered low-income.</i>	<u>Parent/Guardian Seats:</u> “...the Executive should appoint the following voting members: 3 parents or guardians with children in childcare and/or pre-kindergarten programs, including 2 low-income parents or guardians...”	<u>Parent/Guardian Seats:</u> “...3 parents or guardians with children in childcare and/or pre-kindergarten programs, including 2 parents or guardians who qualify for a government benefit based upon income ”	<u>Parent/Guardian Seats:</u> “...3 parents or guardians with children in childcare and/or pre-kindergarten programs, including 2 parents or guardians whose households earn no more than 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for family size ”	We would prefer the language to read as follows: including 2 parents or guardians whose households earn no more than the self-sufficiency standard, per the Community Action Agency (CAA) of Montgomery County. There is agreement and alignment that we would like to use the wording of the self-sufficiency standard from CAA, because this is a local measurement of economic need in our community.
<i>Bill 23-25 defines it based on equability for government benefits. The amendment defines it as no more than 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for family size.</i>	<u>Duties</u> “develop recommendations for increasing availability of and access to high quality early care and education programs, with particular attention to underrepresented and special populations, including low-income children, families of children with special needs, and English language learners and with a focus on children from birth to 5 years old;”	<u>Duties</u> “analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians qualify for a government benefit based upon income , families of children with special needs, and English language learners;	<u>Duties</u> analyze and recommend to the County Executive and County Council how to increase the quantity of, and equitable access to, high-quality ECE programs, including for children whose parents or guardians earn no more than 80 percent of the area median income, adjusted for family size , families of children with special needs, and English language learners;	There is group agreement that we preferred “low-income” or “economically disadvantaged” or using the Community Action Agencies (CAA) calculation related to self-sufficiency standard. None of our partners liked AMI (Area median income) or FPL (Federal poverty line), specifically because 80% of AMI does not include Tier 2 Blueprint families nor families eligible for Working Parents Assistance or families eligible for Equicare, which are populations the Alliance must include in these efforts.

<p>4) Reporting – Data and Advocacy</p> <p><i>Bill 23-25 makes changes to how data about the ECE system should be reported. It also adds in a requirement to report on the provision of ECE seats by private employers. Lastly, it requires COA report on outreach efforts in addition to the already mentioned advocacy efforts.</i></p>	<p>“The Entity must report annually by October 1 to the Executive and Council. The report must include:</p> <p>(B) outcomes data that measures the progress of early care and education system improvements, including changes in: (i) the level of public and private investment; (ii) the availability and use of early care and education seats in the County as a whole and for isolated and vulnerable populations;</p> <p>(C)“advocacy efforts”</p>	<p>“...(B) an analysis of available data that measures the progress...(i) the level of public and private investment in the ECE system; (ii) the availability and use of ECE seats...and disaggregated for isolated and vulnerable populations; (iii) the provision of ECE seats by private employers;</p> <p>(C)“advocacy and outreach efforts and outcomes for the prior year; and</p>		<p>There is agreement and alignment on accepting the changes proposed in Bill 23-25 by Albornoz and Jawando</p>
<p>5) Direct Services to ECE Providers</p> <p><i>Bill 23-25 and amendments to Bill 23-25 clarify and define what is considered direct services. Specifically, the changes in Bill 23-25 would prevent direct services to ECE Providers. The proposed amendments to Bill 23-25 remove this restriction from the legislation.</i></p>	<p>“The Entity must not provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education”</p>	<p>“Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not (1) provide ECE; (2) award or fund grants; (3) enter into a contract with an ECE provider; (4) provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or (5) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals”</p>	<p>“Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not (1) provide ECE; (2) award grants of funds received from the County; or (3) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals”</p>	<p>There is some alignment, but not 100% consensus or agreement on the wording related to direct services. See * for further notes below.</p>

<p>6) Grantmaking</p> <p><i>Bill 23-25 and amendments to Bill 23-25 clarify and define what is considered direct services. Specifically, Bill 23-25 prevents COA from entering a contract with an ECE provider. The proposed amendments to Bill 23-25 suggest the restriction be on awarding grants of fund received from the County.</i></p>	<p>“The Entity must not provide direct services or deliver programs for early childhood education”</p>	<p>“Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not (1) provide ECE; (2) award or fund grants; (3) enter into a contract with an ECE provider; (4) provide goods or services to an ECE provider; or (5) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals”</p>	<p>“Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not (1) provide ECE; (2) award grants of funds received from the County; or (3) fund ECE seats or the provision of ECE to individuals”</p>	<p>There is agreement and alignment that COA should be allowed to provide grants that are time bound, include evaluation and sustainability planning and results in recommendations on how to improve the ECE system moving forward. Yet there is disagreement about who should be able to receive grants. See note below from DHHS.**</p>
<p>7) Ex Officio's Voting Rights</p> <p><i>The current legislation requires the board to have 9 ex-officio voting members. Amendments to Bill 23-25, recommend making some or all the ex-officio board members non-voting.</i></p>	<p>“...the Corporation’s Board of Directors must have no more than 9 ex-officio voting members and 12 other voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council...”</p>	<p>No changes</p>	<p>Option #1 “...the Corporation’s Board of Directors must have no more than 9 ex-officio non-voting members and 12 other voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council...”</p>	<p>There is agreement and alignment around some changes to the board composition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) DHHS shall have two appointees to the board in place of their current 3 appointees, 2) Replace 1 University of Shady Grove appointee and 1 Montgomery College appointee with 1 Institute of Higher Education representative

			<p>Option #2 would retain 6 ex-officio voting members, and would make 3 of the current ex-officio members non-voting. The 3 non-voting ex-officio members would be: a representative of MCPS, and 2 representatives of DHHS</p> <p>“If the Committee recommends adopting Option #2, Council staff would suggest also adding an uncodified transition section to the bill, which would indicate how currently voting members would be transitioned to being non-voting members.”</p>	<p>In terms of the amendment from Mink and Luedtke, there were conversations at a board meeting about this and also a straw poll to gather people’s thoughts and feedback. There is not broad agreement on the next steps regarding changing voting membership of the board.</p> <p>*** See below for further data</p>
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***Direct Services Additional Details:**

DHHS Suggested Wording:

(k) (1) Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not: (a) provide early care and education directly; or

(2) Limited Activities. In response to the Entity’s systems-building mission, the Entity may administer grants to associations and alliances for pilot programs, as long as they are time bound for a maximum of one fiscal year, include evaluation and sustainability planning, and results in recommendations on how to improve the ECE system moving forward.

COA Suggested Wording:

(k) (1) Independent and coordinating role of the entity. The Entity must not: (a) provide early care and education directly; or

(2) Limited Activities. In response to the Entity’s systems-building mission, the Entity may administer grants to associations and alliances or early care and education providers for pilot programs, as long as they are time bound, include evaluation and sustainability planning and results in recommendations on how to improve the ECE system moving forward, when the funds are from the non-departmental account, which is managed through the contract held by DHHS.

There are no limitations on how private philanthropic funds are spent; these dollars may be used flexibly, in alignment with the Common Agenda, as long as there is coordination between partners related to how these private philanthropic investments are used to address ECE systems changes.

Comment from DHHS on the use of private philanthropic funds:

The Coordinating Entity was created specifically to carry out work on behalf of the County. That public mandate comes with a responsibility to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with county priorities, regardless of the funding source. Allowing the Coordinating Entity to use private philanthropic funds without clear parameters or oversight undermines the very purpose for which it was established. The use of philanthropic funds should not create a parallel track of work that is disconnected from the County’s goals or oversight. The Coordinating Entity is not a private foundation. It is a public-serving body created through legislation to advance countywide systems change. That role comes with a duty to ensure that all funding, regardless of source, is used in a way that reflects the public interest and supports the broader ECE system.

****Grantmaking Additional Details: :**

Comment from DHHS: There is disagreement about if those grants can be made directly to ECE providers. COA believes they should be able to provide grants to ECE providers because ECE providers are proximity experts and they need additional support and have innovative ideas on how to improve the ECE system overall. DHHS disagrees and sees this as providing goods and services to ECE providers, which they view as direct service and could be duplicative. DHHS views the Coordinating Entity's role as contributing to the broader landscape of the ECE system through coordinated, sustainable and systemic efforts and recommendations. It is critical to underscore that grantmaking should be grounded in systems change. Once a root cause is identified, whether through data, community input, or provider insight, grants administered to associations or alliances should be designed to test scalable solutions, foster cross-sector collaboration, coordinate with public agencies and generate actionable learning that informs policy and infrastructure improvements across the broader ECE system.

***** Voting Rights Additional Details**

A straw poll demonstrated that 68% of the board members do not believe that every current board member that currently has a vote should maintain their vote.

Here are the reasons cited:

- There was question or concern about who they are representing and if they can vote for what is best for COA or if they are voting based upon loyalty to their government positions;
- Government partners should be there to advise, they don't have the freedom to vote as individuals;
- COA needs to be independent and not just an extension of the different government agencies;
- Every organization should have one vote;
- The board has struggled with power dynamics and community members are starting to be optimistic that the system is changing for the better;
- It is a conflict of interest for government partners to have a vote on the board – in the original legislative packet it was noted by the County Attorney that public members of the board owe a fiduciary duty to the government agency they are from and not to COA;
- Government board members already have power and control over COA's funding sources and budget and giving them voting rights in addition to that stacks the power in a very top-down way, that feels very heavy handed.

Those that felt voting that each member of the board should have one vote cited the following reasons:

- COA has spent three years building a better relationship with our government partners and there is concern that if we attempt to change the board voting rights now, it will create greater animosity between the different partners;
- Equity means everyone who serves on the board should have one vote;
- A vote means ownership;
- Community members still have more votes, so it seems unclear what the motivation is to remove votes from government partners;
- Government members are a part of the community so they should have equal vote;
- It's unfortunate that people see it this way, instead of taking away people's votes, let's just expand the board

Data:

- 33% believe MCPS and DHHS should have two votes for each of the two individuals appointed to the board.
- 57% believe that OMB should maintain its voting rights
- 55% believe that County Council should maintain its voting rights
- 72% believe that the new Higher Education seat should have voting rights

Additional comments from DHHS:

DHHS believes that all members of the Coordinating Entity should have an equal vote. This entity was created through legislation to do important county level work in early care and education, and that work depends on strong collaboration across the entire community, including public agencies.

Public agencies are not outsiders. They are deeply involved in the systems we are trying to improve, and they bring critical insights, data, and accountability to the table. Giving them a vote

is not just about fairness—it is about making sure the decisions we make are grounded in the realities of how the system works and how change actually happens.

If public agencies do not have a vote, we risk creating a gap between the recommendations coming out of the Coordinating Entity and the systems that are responsible for putting those ideas into action. Equal voting rights help build trust, ensure transparency, and increase the chances that our work will lead to real and lasting impact.

And finally, it is important to remember that the Coordinating Entity was designed to reflect the full community. That includes families, providers, advocates, and public institutions. Everyone has a role to play, and everyone should have a voice in the decisions we make together

**Montgomery Moving Forward
Comments
Expedited Bill 23-25, Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity
Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity Designation
July 18**

As you well know, report after report, including [*Child Care and the Economy*](#) issued by Maryland's comptroller, shows that affordable and accessible child care and more broadly early care and education (ECE) are a critical piece of a community's infrastructure to ensure a robust economy and thriving community. Yet, in Maryland, the ECE sector is in crisis. And, as a result, as the Comptroller noted, this ECE crisis is hindering the pace of Maryland's economic growth. That is no doubt true in Montgomery County, too. Additionally, you know school readiness remains a challenge here in the County.

That means ECE is everybody's business—the business of our governments, employers, providers, philanthropy, academia, nonprofits, parents, children, educators, entities engaged in workforce and economic development and our community, and many more.

Our community and economy need a coordinating entity devoted to systems-building. The COA should continue to serve as the designated entity.

Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) continues to believe Montgomery County needs a coordinating entity to advance a robust, equitable, sustainable, integrated, and well-aligned ECE system in our community—and that the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA) should continue to be designated as that entity.

In reviewing MMF's report *Recommendations for a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity* provided to the Montgomery County Council in January of 2012, it is clear to us that at this juncture, a full conversation of the goals of the COA and clearer definitions of activities to minimize ambiguity will facilitate collaboration and enhance the efficiency of the COA and the system overall.

We specifically suggest that the Council and the COA seek to agree upon definitions for the following terms: services, common agenda, systems-building, system, neutral convener, and a 360-degree view.

From our perspective, systems-building efforts are COA's most important task and are consistent with MMF's recommendations in its original report to the Council. Systems-building seeks to integrate services, improve efficiency, and elevate quality across the early childhood landscape. Instead of fragmented programs working in isolation, the coordinating body acts as the connector, convener, and catalyst. It helps create a more cohesive and effective system that meets the diverse needs of children and families and the unique needs of regions in our county and employers, and drives our economy forward.

The 360-degree view is imperative to systems-building.

To achieve meaningful systems change, it is imperative that the COA do its work with a 360-degree view—a comprehensive, holistic understanding of the entire ECE ecosystem, seen from multiple perspectives and informed by a wide range of data sources, stakeholders, and system components.

A 360-degree view will:

- Inform better decision-making by illuminating blind spots or siloed efforts.
- Strengthen coordination across systems and services.
- Improve outcomes by addressing root causes rather than symptoms.
- Build trust through transparency and inclusion of all stakeholders.
- Enable strategic investment by showing where resources are most needed.

In short, a 360-degree view ensures that systems-building is not just technically aligned but also *deeply informed by the lived experiences and real-world conditions* affecting employers, parents, children, and providers.

Please amend the bill to include “360-degree view” with a brief definition. A fuller description of such a strategy is outlined below.

Require economic data collection and include workforce and economic development entities as stakeholders.

The continued use of data to drive the common agenda and decision-making is imperative. COA should also collect and review economic data—and the bill should be amended accordingly. The Comptroller’s report noted Maryland’s economy loses approximately \$2.2 billion annually due to child care challenges, including lost earnings, productivity, and revenue. The shortage of ECE options has also led to increased absenteeism, recruitment and retention difficulties, and lost productivity for businesses. As a result, the COA should also coordinate and collaborate with WorkSource Montgomery and the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation as key stakeholders.

Focused grantmaking supports systems-building.

Grantmaking can be useful in systems change. COA should have the capacity for focused grantmaking to support systems-building *and* transformation that has the potential for long-term impact as a component of its work. Perhaps limit the use of public funds for grants to a designated percentage of COA’s tax-payer funded budget and/or agree on specific definitions of the most impactful use of public grant dollars. Additionally, the COA should continue to seek private funds (to use at its discretion) as well as engage the philanthropic sector (and other sectors) in the common agenda to address gaps in the ECE system.

Other suggested language and amendments:

With respect to duties, please amplify the need to use an equity lens in the work of the COA—*eliminating barriers and addressing systemic racism* should be a key duty of the COA.

Language that speaks only to those who *qualify for government benefits* may leave out many families in need of better access to ECE.

We should continue to ask COA to *identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among stakeholder groups*.

We support more robust language regarding efforts to raise public awareness. Such efforts should be done with a goal of driving consensus that ECE is critical community infrastructure and underscore both the economic and social imperatives of a robust, equitable, integrated, and well-aligned ECE system.

Amend line 24 to include: equitable, sustainable, integrated, and well-aligned before collaborative

Amend line 33 to include: workforce and economic development entities

Amend line 70 to clarify that two employers should serve on the Board of Directors

Amend line 137 to add to all stakeholders and sector-specific steps—analyze and recommend to all stakeholders, including the County Executive and the County Council sector-specific steps to increase the quantity...

Amend line 179 to include other ECE programs or supports

Amend line 187 to include cross-sector recommendations

Components of a 360-degree view strategy for systems-building:

- *Child-Centered Perspective*
 - Understanding each child’s development, needs, and experiences across settings (home, childcare, pre-K, health, etc.).
 - Tracking outcomes like school readiness, well-being, and developmental milestones.
- *Equity Lens*
 - Disaggregating data by race, income, geography, language, and ability.
 - Identifying and addressing disparities in access, quality, and outcomes.
- *Economic Lens*
 - Tracks and reviews economic data
 - Engages employers, workforce, and economic development entities
- *Family Perspective*
 - Recognizing the needs, preferences, and challenges of families in accessing and navigating ECE services.
 - Incorporating family voices in planning and evaluation.
- *Provider/Educator Perspective*
 - Understanding the working conditions, training, compensation, and support needs of early childhood educators and caregivers across all settings, whether publicly or privately funded.
 - Assessing quality, capacity, and workforce stability across settings.
- *Cross-Sector Integration*
 - Mapping how ECE connects with health care, social services, early intervention, K–12 education, and postsecondary education.
 - Identifying redundancies, gaps, and opportunities for coordination.
- *Policy and Governance*

- Reviewing how policies, regulations, and funding streams interact at the local, state, and federal levels.
 - Aligning standards, eligibility, and accountability across agencies.
- *Data and Technology*
 - Leveraging integrated data systems to track enrollment, outcomes, and equity.
 - Ensuring data is used ethically and meaningfully to drive improvement.