

Resolution No.: 19-611  
Introduced: September 22, 2020  
Adopted: September 29, 2020

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsor: County Council

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

**Background**

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

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

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

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

**Action**

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

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

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

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

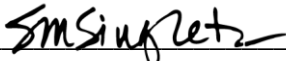
The Executive must provide monthly reports on implementation of the grant and tuition programs to the County Council beginning on October 15, 2020 with a final report by March 15, 2021 about the use of these funds that includes: 1) information about the number of students served by the tuition assistance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

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

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

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

This is a correct copy of Council action.



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Selena Mendy Singleton  
Clerk of the Council