



CITY OF LAWRENCE

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Kendrys Vasquez
Mayor of Lawrence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Vasquez Expands Access to Affordable Licensed Child Care for Lawrence Residents ***The Mayor's Scholarship Fund will commit \$3.6 million to help working families over two years***

Lawrence, MA - Mayor Kendrys Vasquez has expanded the Mayor's Child Care Scholarship Fund, committing \$3.6 million over the next two years assisting Lawrence families with affordable access to licensed child care.

This fund was inaugurated in the fall of 2020 and managed by The Community Group (TCG). The then \$400,000 fund was created to offer subsidized access to licensed child care, addressing an immediate need for remote learning support within the community for students in grades K-8.

As the year progressed, the City of Lawrence and TCG expanded services not only to families of school-aged children but to families with infants and toddlers. The success of the Mayor's Child Care Scholarship Fund over this past year, and the direct impact it has on parents within our community, has prompted Mayor Vasquez to expand the program with hopes of assisting more Lawrence families with their child care needs. Specifically, with the goal of allowing working families in the City of Lawrence to return to work without logistical or financial impediments.

"The expansion of the Mayor's Child Care Scholarship Fund comes after months of conversations with both workers and employers in the city. Both of these groups have cited their inability to access quality affordable child care as barriers to return to work or to retain staff and expand their businesses. Today, we are providing working families relief with a trailblazing program that also stimulates our city's business community," said Mayor Vasquez.

The access to high-quality licensed child care has long been a challenge for many families who do not qualify for a state child care voucher. Families could be spending close to 20-40% of their income on child care



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alone forcing parents to make difficult decisions. Mayor's Vasquez program expansion caps that cost at 10.2% for families on the high end of the income scale, with most eligible families paying no more than 8% of their income, which is close to the 7% national standard for affordable Child Care.

The Mayor's Scholarship Fund will assist with these stresses and will allow Lawrence families who are working, or training in an educational program, and who do not have a state child care subsidy to access affordable, subsidized, licensed child care. The Mayor's Scholarship Fund will be available at a number of licensed child care providers throughout the city, so that families can choose the provider that best meets their needs.

Licensed child care programs are essential and those who enroll in the Mayor's Scholarship Fund will have access to:

- Child Care licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
- Qualified staff who provide a nurturing environment
- Developmentally appropriate activities
- Lower parent co-pays

The program will be managed and administered by The Community Group (TCG). Since 1970 TCG has provided high quality educational programs in Lawrence, impacting thousands of Lawrence children and families each year. TCG's child care programs include 4 center-based programs, a network of 75 Family Child Care providers, and after-school and summer programs for over 1000 Lawrence students each year. The Community Group also operates Child Care Circuit, the state-designated Child Care Resource and Referral agency for the region. Child Care Circuit will administer the centralized screening and administration process for the Mayor's Scholarship Fund.

"Working parents are faced with the challenges of finding and paying for high-quality child care and this program will give them access to affordable, licensed child care programs which may not have been financially accessible before." states Maria Moeller, CEO of The Community Group. Child care is an essential part of communities, allowing parents to participate in the labor force and supporting economic growth. The Mayor's Scholarship Fund will help sustain the infrastructure of Lawrence, as families and businesses return to the workforce as we begin recovering from the pandemic. These families deserve our help and I am grateful that The Community Group can play such a pivotal role supporting them with their child care needs."

The investment in Child Care will be paid at least in part by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies allocated to the City of Lawrence.

"Lawrence's Child Care Scholarship program has been critical in supporting working families who are doing everything possible to get back on their feet and set themselves up for success in the long term. When we passed the American Rescue Plan earlier this year, we made sure that the investments in communities such as Lawrence could be used with the flexibility necessary to support programs like this one," said Congresswoman Lori Trahan. "I applaud Mayor Vasquez for taking action to allocate a portion of the City's



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American Rescue Plan funding to expand the Child Care Scholarship program for hundreds of families. We know that the return on investments in our children are tremendous and exponential, and the benefits of this allocation will be no different.”

Mayor Vasquez thanked Lawrence’s Federal Delegation by saying “the City of Lawrence is lucky to have an extraordinary Federal Delegation that fought hard to ensure that we could access resources to revitalize our community in the wake of the pandemic. Their vision has allowed us at the municipal level to build programs that take us away from ‘returning to a pre-COVID normal’ and bring us to building a better and brighter future for working families and communities like Lawrence.”

About The Community Group

Established in 1970, The Community Group (TCG) creates, manages, and nurtures high quality programs focused on education and related services. Partnering with families and the larger community, TCG prepares infants through school aged children for bright futures. Thousands of children from several generations have benefited from the programs offered by TCG throughout the years and TCG programs continue to grow and evolve to meet community needs.

About Child Care Circuit

Child Care Circuit (CCC) provides child care resource and referral services for families throughout the northeast region of Massachusetts. The mission of CCC is to provide families with stabilization by connecting them to resources and acting as a first point of family engagement to ensure that children access safe, healthy, and affordable child care.

The program will become effective on September 1, 2021 and run through August 31, 2023. For more information about the Mayor’s Scholarship Fund or to search our child care resources visit: www.ChildCarecircuit.org or www.thecommunitygroupinc.org.

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