Maine DOE Newsroom

MEDIA RELEASE: Mills Administration Announces $25 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds To Support Maine's Working Parents and School-Aged Children

AUGUSTA — Governor Mills announced today that her Administration will provide $25 million in federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to support Maine schools in developing and offering day programming for students to supplement in-person instruction. The funding comes as many school districts across Maine are implementing hybrid learning models that incorporate both in-person and remote learning days this fall to protect the health of students and school staff. The funds will support Maine's working parents find alternative child care on days students learn remotely while ensuring that all Maine children receive nutrition, supervision, and learning support both in and outside of the classroom.

"As the parent of five now grown daughters I can only imagine how difficult the pandemic has been for working parents trying to balance the demands of their job with their children learning from home or finding child care for when they otherwise would have been at school," said Governor Mills. "The success of our families and the strength of our economy depends on parents being able to safely return to work. Funding these programs is critical to ensure working parents, especially those on the frontlines of our state's pandemic response, stay in the workforce while being confident their children are cared for."

The Department of Education will distribute these funds through December 2020. The program is modeled on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which provide support to students across the state. Through a simplified application process, school units may apply for funds towards the initial costs of materials and supplies, facilities expansions, and staffing as they work with community partners to establish day programming. The Department will accept applications through September 4, 2020 and may prioritize available

funds based on the district's number of economically disadvantaged students. The funding comports with a recommendation of the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee, which highlighted child care as a key stabilization measure for Maine's economy.

"Now more than ever, Maine schools are critical to the infrastructure of our communities," said Commissioner of Education Pender Makin. "These funds will assist with the additional structures and supports that students and their families need."

The funds are the latest effort by the Mills Administration to support Maine families and child care providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier today, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) **announced** that it will invest $1 million in existing funding to support well child visits, vaccinations, and dental care for children covered by MaineCare. In July, DHHS **announced** it would provide $8.4 million from the CRF to more than 1,700 Maine child care providers for the extra costs and challenges of operating during the pandemic. Additionally, DHHS is preparing to issue this month the remaining awards to child care providers as part of **$11 million** in separate CARES Act funds Maine received through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families' Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program.

The DHHS Office of Child and Family Services, which licenses child care providers, will provide technical assistance for school units interested in establishing partnerships with afterschool and child care programs in their communities, with applications for emergency licenses when necessary, and assistance with implementing COVID-19 health and safety protocols and best practices.

DOE and DHHS coordinated on this initiative as part of the Administration's broader collaboration across Departments through Governor Mills' **Children's Cabinet**. The Cabinet continues its work to ensure that Maine children enter Kindergarten prepared to succeed and that Maine youth enter adulthood healthy, connected to the workforce and/or education.

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