Governor McMaster Provides $19.9 Million in Education, Workforce Training Funding

$8 Million

January 5, 2021

COLUMBIA, S.C. – Governor Henry McMaster today announced a $19.9 million education and

for Job Training, $7 Million for Early Childhood Education, $4.9 Million for Foster Children

workforce training investment in the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund. The grants will be distributed between the Department of Social Services (DSS), the South Carolina Technical College System, the Office of First Steps, and the Department of Education. The grants will provide job training, give educational resources to foster children, and prepare children in poverty for kindergarten.

"Through this pandemic, South Carolina has remained a place of enormous opportunity, and we must continue to work to create these opportunities for our children and those seeking employment," said Governor Henry McMaster. "These targeted grants will train thousands of South Carolinians for high-demand jobs and provide the groundwork for our next generation to excel in the workplace."

A breakdown of the investments can be found below:

Department of Social Services (DSS) - **$4,913,800** to address the educational needs of foster care children and youth in group homes. Foster care children were the state's most vulnerable children before the pandemic. The pandemic has only exacerbated the educational needs of these children. The award will fund the following for the approximately 600 foster care children and youth in our 74 group homes:

- Purchase and deploy electronic devices to group home settings at $225,000;
- Increase bandwidth for the 74 group homes at $88,800;
- Provide tutoring services for children and youth in group home settings at $4,320,000; and
- Fund special education services for children and youth with disabilities in group home settings at $280,000.

South Carolina Technical College System - **$8,000,000** to provide training programs for 3,100 adults in such career areas as: Healthcare, Computer Technology & Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Distribution & Logistics, and Criminal Justice & Corrections.

The demand for non-credit, continuing education programs has increased due to the pandemic. South Carolinians negatively impacted by COVID-19 rely on our technical colleges to provide retraining programs that prepare them for employment in high-demand fields.

Early Childhood Education - $7.0 million for expanded day or summer programs for children eligible for the full-day 4K program.

There are two state agencies that administer the full-day 4K program for at-risk children in 61 school districts in our state: the Office of First Steps to School Readiness and the South Carolina Department of Education. Currently, children who are Medicaid-eligible or whose family income is 185 percent or less of the federal poverty level can attend a full-day 4K program at no cost to the family. Families have the option of choosing a private child care or a public school.

Due to the pandemic, enrollment in the full-day 4K programs is down. In private settings, enrollment is down 12%. In public schools, the decline is more dramatic at 23%.

Kindergarten readiness is one of the most important predictors of a child's success in school. Children in poverty who attended full-day 4K programs were more likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn than their peers who did not have access to quality, full-day programs.

Therefore, providing extended day and summer programs for these at-risk children who will enter kindergarten in the fall of 2021 and in the fall of 2022 is imperative to ensure that they are ready for kindergarten.

The allocation of the funds will be $5.0 million to the Office of First Steps and $2.0 million to the South Carolina Department of Education. Throughout the history of the program, private providers have provided more extended day and summer programs to children than public schools. If there is more interest in this program in public schools, additional funds will be provided.

GEER funds - provided to states through the CARES Act - are to be allocated by the governor to state agencies and other entities that have a role in educating South Carolinians that have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. South Carolina's share of GEER funds was $48.4 million, the remaining balance will be awarded prior to the May 11, 2021 deadline.

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