Massachusetts wins $15 million federal pre-Kindergarten grant, up to $60 million over four years, to provide an additional 750 4-year-olds in five communities with high-quality early education.

Chris Martes, President and CEO of Strategies for Children, issued the following statement:

“On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Strategies for Children, we applaud the Patrick Administration and the Department of Early Education and Care for its successful federal grant proposal for pre-kindergarten. This funding will help the commonwealth close the achievement gap by investing in high-quality early learning experiences for some of our neediest children. Too many children show up for school already behind, and too many never catch up. High quality pre-k is an evidence-based strategy for closing the achievement gap.

High-quality early education is about starting early to support and develop the whole-child: social/emotional skills, vocabulary, early math, executive function, creativity, and a love of learning. The best pre-kindergarten programs do this, all under the safe and supportive guidance of high-quality, well trained, well compensated early childhood educators.

Children in Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell and Springfield will benefit directly from this grant. In these communities, high-quality programs from across the mixed-provider early education field will provide the pre-K program, and partner with school districts to administer the program. Together these partnerships will provide a year of high-quality preschool programming for approximately 3,000 4-year-olds (750 in year one) in the participating communities over the span of the grant.

It is our hope that new federal funding serves as a catalyst for the commonwealth to invest additional state resources in high-quality pre-k. Several more communities could benefit from pre-k funding in the years ahead, and we will continue to advocate and support state and local leaders in order to reach this goal.

The federal grant also presents an opportunity for state policymakers to rethink the funding mechanisms through which we channel pre-K investment. Flexible pre-K dollars like those provided by this grant allow the Department of Early Education and Care to serve more 4-year-olds, without the many eligibility restrictions, such as family work status, that are attached to federal “child care dollars”, the current funding base upon which we’re building our early education and care system.
Lastly, this grant is a reminder that quality counts. We will not achieve goals like “kindergarten readiness” without listening to the research and investing in high-quality pre-k programs.

We look forward to working with Governor-elect Baker and the Legislature in the upcoming legislative session and state budget season to build off the exciting momentum in early education and secure new state investments in pre-K. Only by investing early can we become the first state to close the achievement gap once and for all.

Our children are counting on us.”

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