

## Garrett County BOE, Community Action Awarded \$440,000 For PreK Expansion

Maryland has been awarded a \$15 million federal grant to expand access to "high-quality" prekindergarten for 4-year-olds, Gov. Martin O'Malley and Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown announced Wednesday. Of that funding, Garrett County Public Schools will receive \$330,000 to establish a Judy Center or a satellite to an existing Judy Center at a Title 1 school operated by the Board of Education.

Garrett County Community Action will also receive \$112,000 for half-day or full-day prekindergarten programs.

In all, 18 school districts across Maryland received funding. As a result, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will continue to increase access to prekindergarten for families who, until now, did not meet income eligibility requirements to enroll in the programs, building on the state's initial expansion this year.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced that 18 states received the awards as part of the new \$226 million Preschool Development Grants program.

Depending on available funding, the grant may be renewed for up to four years, for a total of \$60 million. Duncan said that increasing access to quality prekindergarten has become a bipartisan cause, and "these states are leading the way."

"We know that education is a ladder to middle class success, which is why we've focused on creating opportunity by making record investments in Maryland's top-ranked public schools, while expanding the opportunity for a prekindergarten education to more Maryland

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Continued from Page A-1 families," said O'Malley. "Today's award builds on the important work that we've started and will help more of our students lead the nation and world in achievement."

"This award from our federal partners builds on our efforts to expand prekindergarten in Maryland and brings us one step closer to making high-quality prekindergarten available to all of Maryland's children," said Brown. "By continuing to invest in high-quality prekindergarten programs, we're helping more of our children climb the ladder of opportunity toward success and continuing to close the achievement gap throughout our state."

Thirty-five states and Puerto Rico applied for the grant, one of President Obama's

priority initiatives. Maryland applied with 18 other states that had received a Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant. Maryland received a \$50 million Early Learning Challenge grant in December 2011.

Maryland's Preschool Development Grant application spans four years and builds on the state's Prekindergarten Expansion Act of 2014, which was spearheaded by Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, Senate President Mike Miller, and House Speaker Michael Busch during this year's legislative session.

Under the expansion, the state is partnering with local providers and school systems across the state to expand "high-quality" full and half-day pre-K to another 1,563 children during the 2014-15 school year.

After an application process was conducted by MSDE during the spring, the O'Malley-Brown Administration announced \$4.3 million in grants to 24 providers spanning nearly every part of Maryland. The federal grant award announced on Wednesday will expand access for nearly 3,000 additional students during the 2015-16 school year.

"We are absolutely elated about receiving this award. Expanding access to high-quality preschool is the single most important step we can take to improve the future of our children," said Dr. Lillian M. Lowery, state superintendent of schools. "The brain research is clear: When very young children are exposed to a variety of learning experiences, their foundations for learning are strengthened and accelerated. Investing in our children's earliest years is critical to closing the opportunity gap for success among all students."

A 2007 study by the Economic Policy Institute found that in Maryland, revenues to the state treasury would increase more than \$2 for every \$1 spent on early education. The overall return on investment on general economic activity is predicted to be 8.7 times the amount invested.

This is because investments in early education help children succeed later in life and reduce the likelihood that a child will end up needing government assistance or spending time in a correctional facility ("Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation Maryland Summary," Lynch, Economic Policy Institute, July 2007).

As one of the O'Malley-Brown administration's 16 strategic goals, the state has set benchmarks designed to boost the number of children in Maryland who enter kindergarten fully ready to learn. Last year, 83 percent of Maryland's kindergarteners entered school fully ready - that is up 38 percent (from 60 percent) since 2005, according to the administration.