

PRESS RELEASE

# Baker-Polito Administration Celebrates Summer Learning Opportunities

Administration Awards \$7 million to New Summer Step Up Programs to Give Extra Support to Young Learners

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Executive Office of Education

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**REVERE** — The Baker-Polito Administration, in partnership with the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, awarded more than \$7 million to 29 school districts and 84 non-profit organizations across the Commonwealth to expand and enhance summer programs focused on young learners. Today, Governor Charlie Baker, Department of Early Education and Care Commissioner Samantha Aigner-Treworgy, Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo, and United Way CEO Bob Giannino highlighted the Administration's summer learning opportunities by visiting For Kids Only Afterschool - a Summer Step Up program aimed at giving extra support to young learners entering school in the fall made possible through the administration's commitment of **\$70 million for summer learning opportunities.**

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Summer Step Up is a new program launched by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) designed to accelerate learning during critical summer months for young children who have had limited access to in-school experiences due to COVID-19. More than 2,000 young children entering pre-kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade will benefit from these expanded summer learning opportunities. Summer Step Up programs engage young learners and smooth the transition to in-person learning to give young children a strong foundation in the early grades.

"We set aside \$10 million for our youngest learners to create programs like this one offered by For Kids Only, so preschoolers and kindergarteners have a chance to learn and play this summer before they head into classrooms – some for the first time," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "We were pleased to provide schools and community partners opportunities and funding to make these important activities happen this summer for students in all grades, at no cost to their families."

"Our Administration is glad to be supporting communities to expand vital summer services to our youngest learners," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "By partnering with United Way and community organizations, more children throughout the Commonwealth will be offered the opportunity to make up for lost time prior to starting school in the fall, maximizing the critical summer months to accelerate learning."

For Kids Only Afterschool, a community-based organization, was awarded \$729,600 from the Summer Step Up program to support partnerships with five school districts and municipalities: Chelsea, Everett, Winthrop, Revere, and Peabody. For Kids Only is providing students with nine weeks of in-person summer learning and socialization. Young learners will follow a "*Journey Around the World*" and explore different cultures through the arts, cooking, language, sports, STEM, and more. The program also partners with Project Adventure for outdoor recreational activities. The state funding enabled For Kids Only to expand enrollment to 200 additional children this summer.

"The Summer Step Up Program offers Revere an incredible opportunity to provide for the students of Revere and the surrounding communities," **said Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo.** "For Kids Only has always been a pillar for Revere families and they have always been an asset in our community. We are grateful to the Baker-Polito Administration, as well as For Kids Only, Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy, and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley for the partnership on this program – it will be apparent as this generation grows up in the City of Revere with the foundation to learn and grow."

The Baker-Polito Administration committed more than \$70 million in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Response (ESSER) discretionary funds for school districts and community-based organizations to offer summer learning and recreational programs to help students grow academically and socially after a school year disrupted by COVID-19. The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is working with the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley to administer \$10 million of these funds in grants for Summer Step Up programs through the fall.

"We have yet to understand the full, long-term impact of COVID-19 on young people's social-emotional and academic development," **said Bob Giannino, President and Chief Executive Officer at United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley.** "The immediate effects of disrupted learning are already evident, and we applaud the Baker-Polito Administration and Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy for investing in the power of wraparound supports to expand summer learning opportunities available at the scale they are needed. United Way is proud to foster coordinated, meaningful partnerships between school districts and community-based organizations to support transitions to in-person learning for our youngest students."

EEC today also opened the grant application process for child care providers to apply for \$314 million in stabilization funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These unprecedented funds will be distributed in six-month grants to help child care businesses sustain operations during a time of fluctuating enrollments and bolster the availability of child care in vulnerable communities. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, child care has proven to be critical infrastructure and these funds will provide stability for the businesses and nonprofit organizations that provide this critical service. Child care centers and family child care programs can [apply here.](#)

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From pre-school to post-secondary education, the Executive Office of Education works to connect all Massachusetts residents with an education that creates opportunities.

While Massachusetts' students rank first in the nation on many educational measures, the Executive Office of Education strives to strengthen the foundations of education reform, empower schools and educators, and develop pathways to college and careers so all students in the Commonwealth can succeed, regardless of their zip code.

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