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Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards Middlesex Community College and UMass Boston \$170,000 to Strengthen and Diversify the Behavioral Health Workforce

BOSTON – The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced today that the Department of Higher Education is awarding grants to two public campuses in Massachusetts for efforts to strengthen and diversify the behavioral health workforce. Through grants of \$70,000 to Middlesex Community College and \$100,000 to the University of Massachusetts – Boston, the institutions will partner with behavioral health providers to promote workforce training, assess the behavioral health education landscape, and plan for growth and diversification in the workforce.

“As we recognize Mental Health Awareness Month, we owe many thanks to our behavioral health professionals,” said **Governor Maura Healey**. “Our administration is working in partnership with the Legislature to grow and diversify the behavioral health workforce to support our hardworking providers and make sure Massachusetts residents get the high-quality care they deserve.”

“We’re proud to support the pipeline of behavioral health professionals in Massachusetts,” said **Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll**. “We need more qualified professionals in the behavioral health field who represent the diversity of the communities they serve, and these programs will help us advance in those goals.”

The behavioral health grant program will help to ensure a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse mental and behavioral health workforce, serving patients who need support in areas such as mental health diagnoses, physical and emotional trauma and addiction. This funding is intended to promote immediate workforce training responses in critical and actionable areas of need, while also launching a broader assessment of the landscape and which capabilities and gaps exist.

“We must do the crucial work of understanding who our current behavioral health workforce is serving and where there are barriers to accessing effective care,” said **Education Secretary Patrick Tutwiler**. “I am pleased to see two of our public institutions receiving funding to help us learn where the gaps in behavioral health care are, allowing us to be intentional about growing the workforce in a way that truly meets the needs of Massachusetts.”

“Across our state, behavioral health providers are facing unprecedented challenges recruiting and retaining the staff they need,” said **Health and Human Services Secretary Kate Walsh**. “Massachusetts residents deserve a quality, competent behavioral health workforce, and I’m so grateful our administration is making investments at the ground level to grow and sustain this talent.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic made clear that our communities need stronger mental health workforces that serve all who need care,” said **Commissioner of Higher Education Noe Ortega**. “Our public campuses are uniquely positioned to partner with local providers on addressing our behavioral health workforce needs, and I’m grateful that funds are available to advance this important work.”

“Grants like these are essential to DMH and other mental health service providers in establishing different educational paths for a broad group of workforce to address long-term staffing and treatment needs,” said **Department of Mental Health Commissioner Brooke Doyle**. “We appreciate this effort to address staffing shortages and create a more diverse workforce, furthering our agency mission to provide, ‘Hope, Equity and Service’ for our staff and the people they serve.”

UMass Boston will use the grant funds to launch Charting Paths: The MB-Health WEAVE Framework, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, healthcare provider organizations, and other academic institutions. The project aims to develop a comprehensive framework for behavioral health workforce planning.

"As Boston's premier public research university, we are pleased to partner with the Healey-Driscoll Administration on creating a pipeline for a culturally competent behavioral health workforce. To adequately address the increased demand for behavioral health - especially with our young people - we need more providers, and I am proud UMass Boston is taking a leadership role with joining the Healey-Driscoll Administration," said **Chancellor Marcelo Suárez-Orozco**.

Middlesex Community College (MCC) plans to use the grant funds to expand its 16-credit Mental Health Peer Support Specialist (MHPSS) certificate program by adding a practicum experience in which 10 students will function as peer support professionals in human services environments.

“Thank you to the Healey-Driscoll Administration and the Department of Education for the generous funding toward MCC’s Mental Health Peer Support Specialist program,”

said **Arlene Rodríguez, MCC's Provost & Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs**. "Middlesex understands the value that hands-on learning adds to a student's education. This support will ensure students pursuing this path will gain the relevant experiences they need to be well-equipped to enter and transform the workforce."

"At Middlesex, we serve a diverse population of students who bring with them a rich variety of lived experiences and perspectives," said **Matthew Olson, MCC's Associate Provost of Academic Affairs and Strategic Initiatives**. "With MCC's comprehensive and interactive learning opportunities, these students not only strengthen the workforce, but make mental health resources more accessible to people who have historically been underserved."

"For years, the Senate has been working to increase access to quality mental and behavioral health care, and one of the biggest challenges in doing so has been a shortage of behavioral health care workers," said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. "I am thrilled to see the Healey-Driscoll Administration direct these investments to support the development of a robust, diverse and culturally competent behavioral health care workforce. Not only will this help to meet our health care goals, we will be creating pathways for high-demand jobs for graduates."

"The importance of supporting behavioral health care is revealed to us more and more each day," said **House Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education Dave Rogers**. "The grants provided today to Middlesex Community College and the University of Massachusetts – Boston offer such support and also were created with the importance of equity and diversity in mind. I applaud the Healey-Driscoll Administration for making these grants and look forward to our continued collaboration to invest in the behavioral health workforce."

"One of our Commonwealth's greatest challenges is that we simply do not have enough providers working in the behavioral health space to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents," said **Senator John Velis, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery**. "Building up a diverse workforce has been a priority of the Senate since the introduction of the Mental Health ABC Act, and I am beyond thrilled and grateful to the Healey-Driscoll Administration's for their leadership on this critical issue today. These grants awarded by the Administration will not only help diversify our workforce pipeline but will also help identify any other gaps in our workforce so that we can address them together."

"In FY24, the House of Representatives appropriated funding to support a mental health workforce pipeline program to encourage a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse behavioral health workforce through collaboration between colleges and behavioral health providers," said **State Representative Adrian Madaro, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery**. "Today, I'm thrilled to see the Healey-Driscoll administration implement these investments to help train and prepare the next generation of mental and behavioral health providers."

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