

# RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 191

Approved June 1, 2022

WHEREAS, Expanding access to high-quality early education opportunities is essential to improving Providence education; and

WHEREAS, Access to high-quality education reduces learning deficits and leads to positive outcomes for students; and

WHEREAS, Learning deficits that begin in kindergarten are likely to follow the student through their entire K-12 education, even impacting graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, Providence Promise is the only program in Rhode Island focused on early planning for higher education beginning as early as birth through the use of 529 college savings accounts and family engagement; and

WHEREAS, Providence Promise is a parent-driven partnership that provides a foundation to support public school students to continue their education after high school; and

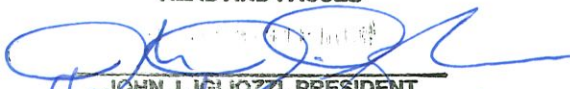
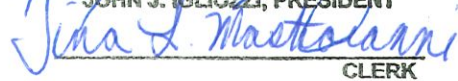
WHEREAS, The savings accounts established through the program provide essential funding for school and create a family and community expectation that their child will attend an institution of higher education; and

WHEREAS, A financial commitment from Providence Public Schools would enable the program to provide a pilot cohort of every Providence kindergartener (1,500 - 2,000 children) with a college savings account, 400 of whom would also be fully enrolled in the Providence Promise program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council in conjunction with Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza respectfully requests that Commissioner of Education, Angélica Infante-Green, and Superintendent Dr. Javier Montañez commit to funding the Providence Promise.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That upon passage copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Mayor Jorge Elorza, Commissioner Infante-Green, Superintendent Montañez, and the Providence School Board.

IN CITY COUNCIL  
MAY 19 2022  
READ AND PASSED

  
JOHN J. IGLIZZI, PRESIDENT  
  
CLERK  
ACTING

I HEREBY APPROVE.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor  
Date: 6/1/22



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

April 22, 2022

Angélica Infante-Green  
Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Infante-Green,

As the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) considers the Providence Public School District's (PPSD) proposed spend of \$128 million from Phase III of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) portion of the American Rescue Plan, the City of Providence is eager to collaborate to secure this generational opportunity to invest in the families, children, and people of Providence. I would like to share with you details of the City's community outreach process, data from our support of the PPSP community engagement, and details on the City's planned deployment of American Rescue Plan funds.

My hope is to find areas of collective investment to maximize the impact of these funds on Providence students and families. When considering the opportunity of this moment for Providence, one of my primary goals has been to ensure sustained impact beyond the course of this initial investment. Creating and executing these spending plans together will help ensure that these funds can be receptive towards the community needs that have been identified through processes of Providence, PPSP, and RIDE.

From the initial passage of the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in the spring of 2020 through the allotment of ESSER III funds, PPSP will receive over \$224 million in federal relief dollars. Considering the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the Providence community, deployment of these vitally needed funds require a holistic and coordinated response to support our most at-risk students and families. I am proud of PPSP and the City's shared efforts in promoting health and safety throughout the pandemic, partnering on needs assessments, and collaborating within the By-All-Means Initiative. I am seeking to continue forward in that model of collaboration to ensure these funds are strategically invested for sustainable impact.

To determine that strategy for Providence, our COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Task Force (the Task Force), comprised of 14 community leaders representing a wide array of interests and expertise, spearheaded our expansive and in-depth community engagement process on the use of American Rescue Plan funds. This process included months of community surveying, five interactive sessions hosted by community-based organizations, and two interactive sessions with the Providence business community. The resulting report, "Recommendations for Use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds," forms the framework for the City's allocation of ARPA funds.

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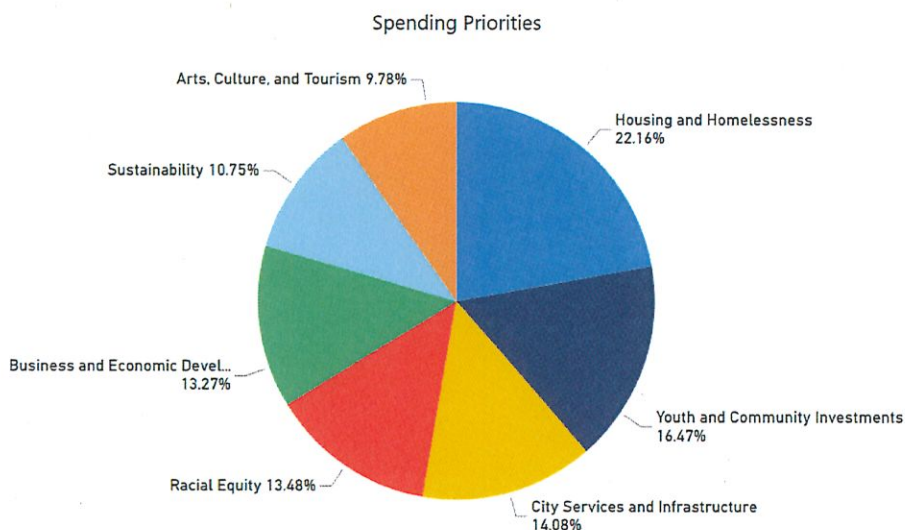


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The City of Providence divided the budget of American Rescue Plan funds into two rounds. The first round of ARPA funding totaling \$42.8 million was allocated on July 16, 2021 after a multi-step process, which included input from City officials and initial data from the community process described above. These funds were allocated towards areas of immediate need, with the Mayor's Office and Providence City Council collaboratively reviewing and prioritizing programs on violence prevention, youth programming, infrastructure, and small business relief. The second round of ARPA spending totaling \$123,469,438 is based on the priority areas details in the Task Force's Report.

Throughout the process of surveying and community engagement, the Taskforce repeatedly explained that direct K-12 education had a separate pool of relief funding. Despite this, the Providence community repeatedly and urgently called for youth-centered programs outside of the K-12 school day. In Providence's community survey, respondents were asked to divide \$100 on seven funding categories and a quarter of respondents assigned 25% or more of funds to be spent on youth and community investments. All total, the category of "Youth and Community Investments" was behind only "Housing and Homelessness" as the top spending priority of the over 1,100 Providence residents who completed the survey. The division of all categories is here:



Having completed this extensive process, I deployed my staff and our support team at Systems Change Strategies to support PPSD in their process of soliciting community input on the use of this final round of ESSER funds. The administration of PPSD chose to hold three virtual town halls for a 30-minute presentation on existing plans for the funds, followed by a 30-minute question and answer session. The presentation detailed the

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district's plan to prioritize spending following the Learning, Equity, and Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) report, with 80% of funds deployed towards the LEAP plan.

In total, there were 82 questions posed by the participants, 35 of which were answered during the sessions with the rest collected and answered over email. The top four topics of questions and concerns were:

1. Teaching staff, specifically concerns surrounding recruitment, retention, professional development, and equipping teachers to instruct multi-lingual learners and students with special needs. There were 14 questions on this topic.
2. Social and emotional health, specifically concerns regarding student wellbeing, mental health, and support in and out of school. There were 12 questions on this topic.
3. Curriculum and classroom instruction. There were 10 questions on this topic.
4. Extended learning, specifically afterschool programs, summer learning loss, and sports. There were 8 questions on this topic.

Following both PPSP's town halls and the City's process of community engagement, surveying, and public hearings held by the Providence City Council, I believe there are many areas of alignment in the both the feedback provided by our shared community, and between the LEAP plan and the City's programmatic investments. I look forward to continuing to closely collaborate with newly appointed Superintendent Montanez and the PPSP administration in achieving our goals for the students and families of Providence. As RIDE and your office consider your role in both approving and overseeing the deployment of ESSER funds, I ask that you consider some the following programs that the City of Providence has initiated in response to these areas of need.

### **Mentoring:**

In the first ARPA Ordinance passed in June 2021, collaboratively prepared by the Providence City Council and my Administration, we allocated \$1.1 million to support increased mentoring programs in Providence. MentorRI was selected to provide funding, administrative support, and professional development to community facing organizations in 2022 to increase mentoring programs for Providence youth.

This initial round of funding will create over 750 new mentoring opportunities throughout Providence. Many of these programs will directly intersect with Providence Public School students, whether through sports programs, tutoring, or peer-mentoring. These programs will help create a community of support for youth, providing healthy relationships, goal setting, and holistic services to ensure youth are afforded a better chance to accomplish their goals.

*Example: A proposed grant from Hope High School, using the Nonviolence Institute as a fiscal sponsor, would create an innovative pilot program that pairs incoming 9th grade students*

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Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

*who have exhibited repeated flagged behaviors in middle school with an upperclassman mentor. This grant is an exciting opportunity to both support the transition into a new school and provide a moment of intervention to establish a positive relationship within a new environment that can disrupt the cycle of violence in that child's life.*

In the second ARPA Ordinance, the City of Providence has allocated an additional \$2million to support anti-violence programs. With collaborative planning and additional support from the Providence Public School District, both in-school mentoring programs and community-based mentoring could be sustained, expanded, and aligned to intersect with the goals of Providence schools.

### **Extended Learning:**

The first and second ARPA budget plans provide funding for a variety of initiatives that expand learning for Providence youth outside of the K-12 classroom. In addition to mentoring, this includes summer employment programs, extended hours at the Providence Community Libraries, funding for community centers, and expanded recreational programming and services. These investments expand already existing funding of extended learning opportunities, such as the summertime Eat, Play, Learn program.

Since I began the Eat, Play, Learn program, the City of Providence and the Providence Public School District have matched funding for summer learning programs to address summer learning loss and provide a safe and productive space for nearly 1,000 Providence youth during summer. A sustained investment from the Providence Public School District could double the number of youths served through these programs.

### **Early Education:**

Expanding access to high quality early education opportunities is essential to improving Providence education. Learning deficits that begin in kindergarten are likely to follow the student through their entire K-12 education, even impacting graduation rates. To expand access to high quality early learning, I have proposed expanded funding for infrastructure grants to both home- and center-based early learning institutions, the language development program Providence Talks, and parental support through Providence Promise (see below).

Our shared goal of Universal Pre-K is not possible without increasing the number of public-school seats, and your efforts at RIDE have been instrumental in the steady progress towards expanding public options. Additional investment from the Providence Public School District, in collaboration with the city's facility investment, could greatly increase the public access of Pre-K programs within Providence neighborhoods.

### **College Savings:**

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Providence Promise is a parent-driven partnership that provides a foundation to support public school students to continue their education after high school. Providence Promise is the only program in Rhode Island focused on early planning for higher education beginning as early as birth. The savings accounts established through this program provides essential funding for school and creates a family and community expectation that their child will attend an institution of higher education.

While I will continue budgetary support for Providence Promise, funding for this program was removed from the ARPA II Ordinance. A commitment from Providence Public Schools would enable the program to provide a pilot cohort of every Providence kindergartener (1,500 – 2,000 children) with a college savings account, 400 of whom would also be fully enrolled in the Providence Promise program.

### **Wi-Fi and Broadband Access:**

As schools, courts, public meetings, and countless other important services shifted to virtual platforms, the imbalance of reliable internet access exacerbated systemic inequity throughout Providence. Internet at home is no longer a “nice to have” but rather an absolute necessity in a 21st century home. The City of Providence has invested in expanding public broadband access in city parks, recreation centers, and funding for a program which would pilot offering free Wi-Fi within a block of housing. Technology access is crucial to addressing the deficits that have expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic. With additional partnership, Providence could move towards a city in which every student was guaranteed internet access.

In addition to the programs and initiatives that have arisen from the Task Force Report, the city has also received 27 applications for 2022-2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. These applications represent promising programs and possible opportunities, many of which have received at least partial funding within one of our ARPA funding rounds.

These requests are:

- 1) The YWCA Rhode Island requested funding to enhance and support APPLE After School and Summer Enrichment Program serving youth ages 5-13 from low- and moderate-income families within the Olneyville neighborhood. The program follows APPLE Curriculum -- Academics, Physical education/recreation, Prevention, Leadership, and Empowerment -- and builds participant's skills in the areas of Science, Engineering, Technology, Arts and Math (STEAM) and offers enhancements focusing on mental health/trauma support & activities.
- 2) The Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence applied for "Swim Fun" will include Swim Lessons and Recreational Swimming for 50 young people of ages 5-17 from the Wanskuck and Chad Brown clubs, and their family members.

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- 3) Building Futures, which meets employer and industry need for skilled workers through the Registered Apprenticeship system and creates family-sustaining career opportunities for under-served residents. Building Futures applied for support for their nationally acclaimed pre-apprenticeship program that has trained over 450 individuals, with more than 350 individuals entering family-sustaining employment.
- 4) The Center for Dynamic Learning's Teen Apprentice Program, which provides project-based training in construction, design engineering, and fabrication, with a focus on building tiny homes, standard houses, and housing repair. This program receives funding from PPSD for their summer program, supporting the City's Eat, Play, Learn initiative.
- 5) Clothes to Kids Rhode Island, which seeks to lessen the stress on struggling families by increasing the number of free, school wardrobes provided to low- and moderate-income students living in Providence.
- 6) College Visions applied for a new project supporting 100 low-income Providence youth with college awareness, applications, enrollment, all the way to graduation, specifically supporting students interested in careers as educators, healthcare workers, and entrepreneurs.
- 7) Communities for People applied for general operating support for their work with youth in foster care ages 16-20 as they achieve housing, employment and financial stability and work against homelessness through the Youth Development Services Program.
- 8) Community MusicWorks applied to expand their free, intensive after-school Youth Music Program which encourages young people to see the world as rich in possibilities for themselves, their community, and for society. By providing rigorous, high-quality music education and one-on-one ongoing mentoring to children in Providence neighborhoods subject to historic disinvestment, Community MusicWorks seeks to change the expectations young people have for themselves and for their community.
- 9) DownCity Design applied to offer free summer and after-school service-learning programs supporting 75 Providence teens as they design and build structures to improve public spaces in Providence. Youth participants gain academic and workforce skills, while learning that they have the capacity to make positive change for our community.

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- 10) Educational Center for the Arts & Science sought support for the Improving Young Lives Through the Arts in Providence (ILAP) program, in which participants create theater productions, working in English to decrease reticence and increase both Spanish and English literacy and expression. This program is modeled after the successful Brown University ArtsLiteracy Program.
- 11) FirstWorks applied for support to bring arts-integrated education programming to 3,000 Providence students across the 2022-2023 academic year. Youth will engage with world-class creatives through regular in-school workshops, matinee performances, Virtual Learning, and after-school opportunities all tied to FirstWorks programmatic themes of Raise Your Voice (celebrating diversity) and Earth First (promoting environmental stewardship).
- 12) House of Hope applied for general operating support as the only street outreach program in Rhode Island responding to the needs of youth and young adults (ages 13-24) experiencing homelessness and housing instability. While efforts focus on engaging LGBTQ+ young people, activities and services extend to any homeless, housing insecure, or runaway youth encountered.
- 13) Inspiring Minds applied for support in the implementation of the evidence based ResilientKids™ Mindfulness Curriculum in 30 Alfred Lima elementary school classrooms, serving an anticipated 780 students next year.
- 14) The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence requested a fifth year of funding for a Mental Wellness Coach to address complex trauma issues having detrimental impacts on gang-involved youth enrolled in our Skills Enrichment and Employment Development (SEED) program.
- 15) Mt. Hope Learning Center applied for support in providing before and after school care to over 40 students at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School (MLK) on Camp Street. Programming includes morning and afternoon care, spring and summer camps, STEAM activities, homework assistance, a lending library, nutritional breakfasts and healthy snacks, and family engagement and support.
- 16) New Urban Arts applied for support for their core program, Youth Mentorship in the Arts, which provides low-income high school students with free art education, mentorship, homework help, and post-secondary advising. The program takes place in a well-equipped art studio located within walking distance of three Providence public high schools and two charter high schools.
- 17) Oasis International applied to support their youth program, Youth N.O.W. (Navigating Our Way) Leaders Tomorrow, includes the six core components of 1)

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Education Support; 2) IT Education and Innovation; 3) Leadership Development; 4) Civics; 5) Community Service; and 6) Careers. This program responds to the educational support needs, leadership aspirations, and community service demands of at-risk youth in Providence.

- 18) Providence Children's Youth Cabinet at Third Sector New England applied for funds to provide culturally-specific, evidence-based behavioral health programs for Black/African American and Latinx youth in Providence schools and community settings. This includes Strong African American Families, proven to improve family communication, school attachment and positive behavior and the Act and Adapt program, proven to improve symptoms of acute depression.
- 19) Providence CityArts sought funding for general operating support in ensuring Providence youth have equitable access to performing and visual arts programs, unhindered by socio-economic barriers.
- 20) The Providence Community Library sought to use CDBG funds to partially fund a Spanish-language Jobs Training Program: a 9-month GED prep class (high school equivalency diploma), with basic computer skills instruction, with three classes at three different libraries and three additional classes held virtually for participants who have difficulty traveling to an in-person class at the library.
- 21) Providence Promise applied for support of the Youth Engagement Program, which focuses on youth autonomy and empowerment, leading to success in future educational, occupational, and/or professional endeavors. Youth Engagement stresses students' relationships with one another and translating involvement into decision-making, advocacy, recruitment, and leadership within the community. Youth and Family Engagement Programs together emphasize a multi-generational approach to planning and saving for post-high-school success.
- 22) The Providence Public Library requested funds to continue offering expanded Microsoft Office Specialist classes (MOS), offered as part of PPL's Technology Career Pathway, hoping to address an ongoing waitlist for this class by creating additional cohorts of 20 students.
- 23) Refugee Dream Center Refugee Integration Services requested funding to support direct services to promote self-sufficiency and integration for refugees residing in Providence. Services entail case management, adult education, functional integration training, health promotion, youth mentoring, and domestic violence prevention.

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- 24) Rhode Island School for Progressive Education sought funding for staff capacity, specifically retaining a full-time Program Manager for the Alternative Certification Program.
- 25) The Southside Community Land Trust applied for their comprehensive workforce development program, in which 35-40 high school students and young adults build their knowledge and skills in food and health equity, urban agriculture and environmental resilience, and prepare them for high-demand careers in Rhode Island's growing green sector.
- 26) The Manton Avenue Project applied for support related to expenses directly associated with free after-school and summer programs for young people ages 8-18 in Olneyville, culminating in public play festivals and performances of students' works.
- 27) Young Voices applied for support with their intensive afterschool leadership program up to four times a week at two locations in Providence.

These Federal relief funds cannot address all the areas of need within Providence schools and the larger community. Within the Task Force's extensive community engagement process, in addition to identifying areas of critical support, participants called for increased collaboration between all departments of Providence. Families identified overly siloed approaches that had occurred in the past and urged for partnership to maximize impact. While there are many challenges that cannot be purely solved through funding, ARPA and ESSER funds present an opportunity to meet some of the system issues that have set back Providence youth for decades.

I hope we can meet soon to discuss how to collaborate to meet the needs identified through the LEAP plan, the City of Providence Task Force Recommendations for Use of ARPA Funds, and the number of applications received by Providence's Community Development Block Grant Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J-O-Elorza'.

Mayor Jorge O. Elorza  
City of Providence

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