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How a Public-Private Coordinating Entity is the Vehicle for Equitable System Change in Early Care and Education

MMF believes that a public-private coordinating entity is the most efficient and effective vehicle to build a truly equitable early care and education system.

One of the first priorities of the entity will be to develop a clear definition of equity and a means for measuring progress towards achieving it. MMF will work with community partners like the Black and Brown Coalition and the MMF Equity Task Force to develop its equity framework and will align with the standards established by the County's Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation and the DHHS assessment tool that stems from it.

We need bold reform now. An entity that has true governing authority, that has accountability rooted in community, and that represents all stakeholders will help the county during pandemic recovery and beyond. It will knit together a real system that can assess equity, quality, and impact across the entire ECE landscape. It will help ensure that all families have access to high quality, affordable care, that organizational practices are culturally and linguistically relevant, and that programs are designed and implemented to have the most positive impact on the well-being, development, and education of young children.

Summary of Report Recommendations to ensure an equity framework:

- **Consider a tripartite co-chair model.** This would mean that a public sector leader, a private sector leader, and a parent, each nominated through community advisory boards, would serve on the governing board. Ensure that parents are represented at every level from advisory to governance.
- **Create an Equity Advisory Committee.** This advisory group would provide expert advice and help hold the governing board accountable in the consistent use of an equity lens. Work with MMF's Equity Task Force and the Black and Brown Coalition to develop an Equity Advisory Committee that nominates representative(s) to the governing board.
- **Replicate inclusion best practices.** Look to local models, including the Community Action Board, the Head Start Parents Policy Council, and the Black and Brown Coalition for

Excellence and Equity in Education, as examples of what diverse representation and real leadership by the community looks like.

- **Ensure all board members can fully participate.** Provide stipends and advocacy training for community members who need or want these resources to support their service.
- **Board tenure must ensure representation.** Consider options including having a specific number of slots for each stakeholder group; having rotating terms to allow for different voices to be at the table; and ensuring that there is voting power and authority among all stakeholder groups and that the demographics of the county are appropriately represented.
- **Define equity.** Co-construct, with advisory groups, a set of shared working definitions of equity, equality, and diversity so all stakeholders are speaking a common language around this work. In addition, everyone involved in shaping the entity, the governance, and at all levels, needs to participate in equity training so that everyone is starting from the same place of understanding. Use the county's REI training, for example, as a reference point and a common starting point for all those involved in the entity.
- **Define high quality.** Develop community consensus, grounded in ECE expert guidance, on what constitutes "high quality" ECE because different communities have different ideas about what makes a program "high quality."
- **Engage in culturally competent communication.** Ensure that the entity meets the community where it is and uses appropriate communication, linguistically and culturally. For example, to reach different communities it will need to use different modes of communication: texting, WhatsApp, flyers, word of mouth. It will need to ensure that those who need it have access to translation at meetings and resources in their own languages, and that those with disabilities also have access.
- **Develop a measurable equity framework.** Align the framework with the County's Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation and the DHHS assessment tool that stems from it (e.g. GARES)
- **Develop criteria for consensus in decision-making to advance inclusion.** At the same time, the board must understand that in areas of disagreement, it must encourage cultural humility amongst its stakeholders in which those involved accept that there is something they can learn from those with lived experience.

Background:

From the beginning of its work on ECE, MMF has prioritized community input as an essential component of a high-quality ECE system in Montgomery County. By community MMF means a wide range of stakeholders who live or work in Montgomery County including families, faith organizations, social service nonprofits, advocacy and equity organizations, businesses, labor and other community-based institutions that are not part of the public sector.

While researching models for effective system building, as described above, MMF also sought ongoing feedback on strengthening ECE in the county from a wide range of community stakeholders through

conversations with formal and informal advisory groups, ECE experts, businesses and business organizations, providers and provider associations, nonprofit advocates, social service providers, and public sector agencies, among others.

During this several-month community outreach process, **the feedback we received helped MMF refine the criteria for the entity** and then evaluate possible models that would fit those criteria. As the criteria and recommendations evolved, MMF invited additional feedback and input.

This intensive, iterative process means that the criteria for the entity and recommended models are community driven, informed by a wide array of viewpoints and concerns. **It is and will remain important for county and entity leadership to take into consideration what we heard as the entity is established and begins its work.**