

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MULTNOMAH COUNTY RECEIVES MEYER MEMORIAL TRUST FUNDING IN SUPPORT OF PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

Today, Multnomah County's Department of Human Services and Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson announced an \$85,000 grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust to support Preschool for All, an initiative that aims to bring universal preschool to Multnomah County three and four year olds.

The funds will support deep engagement with parents, preschool providers, teachers and culturally specific community organizations to obtain ideas and feedback on the Preschool for All Task Force's July 2019 recommendations. This engagement is a critical next step toward addressing troubling disparities in access to early learning in our community.

"Every child in our community deserves the chance to succeed, and we all know that education opens the door to opportunity," said Commissioner Vega Pederson. "But too many of Multnomah County's kids, particularly those who are lower income or from communities of color, are falling behind because they don't have access to high-quality preschool. Creating preschool options that give every child an equal start is simply one of the best investments we can make as a community."

The Preschool for All Task Force convened in 2018. The coalition includes 30 community leaders, 100 community members and 52 community based organizations calling for expansion of affordable, high quality, preschool opportunities for 3 and 4-year-olds in Multnomah County, with a focus on children and families who have the least access to preschool.

Research shows the importance of high-quality preschool on a child's brain development, school readiness and family well-being. But Oregon is the fourth least affordable state when it comes to preschool. Currently only 15 percent of three and four year olds in Multnomah County have access to publicly funded preschool, and economic pressures place access for quality preschool out of reach for many families.

"We are excited to provide support for this equity-driven early childhood work, and for the inclusion of families and preschool providers of color in further development of the initiative. We believe in the impact preschool can make in addressing education, health, and social disparities for children in our community," said Matt Morton, Equitable Education portfolio director for Meyer Memorial Trust.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners is scheduled to receive a briefing on the Preschool for All work this Thursday at 9:30 am. That briefing can be viewed [here](#). The full Preschool for All report can be found [here](#).