

APPROVED APRIL 30, 2024

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Zoom Meeting
March 19, 2024

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Elaine Carballo, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Denise Fredericks, Jeffery Johnson, Will Kenlaw, Lisette Orellana Engel, Myriam Paul, Timothy Robinson, Claudia Simmons, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Jones

CAB Members Absent: Pamela Lockett and Evelyn Okutu

CAA Staff: Shantá Johnson, Charlene Muhammad, and Leah Goldfine

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm.

Consent Agenda

Mike moved to approve the consent agenda and Denise seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes from the February 2024 CAB meeting; meeting evaluations summary from the February 2024 CAB meeting; Executive Director's Report; Head Start Report, FY25 HS narrative and budget justification, FY25 HS budget, Notice of Competitive Status, Letter of request for corrective action plan, and Approval letter for extension request regarding corrective action plan; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison's Report; Budget report and P Card update; TESS and Navigation reports; VITA report; and CAB testimony regarding HB 1304 - Maryland Department of Health and Department of Human Services - Earned Income Tax Credit - Distribution of Information.

CAB Updates

Board members received a detailed written report from the staff liaison ahead of the meeting, which included updates on CAB activities, along with the board's recent testimony. Staff shared that the CAI is now in the final few months. Lisette led a well-attended CAI alumni workshop about the Self-Sufficiency Standard the previous week. More volunteers were needed to support the CAI testimony practice session that Saturday.

Staff shared that the board's Advocacy Committee was continuing to meet weekly. Dr. Johnson testified at the Senate hearing for the ENOUGH Act, Governor Moore's bill focused on ending child poverty. The bill passed in the Senate and has crossed over to the House.

Volunteers were needed to serve on the CAB Nominating Committee, which would develop the CAB Executive Committee slate for FY25. Denise and Mike volunteered to call and email all board members to see who would be interested in serving.

Staff led a special presentation to thank four outgoing board members: Valerie Chatfield-Smith (member since 2017), Myriam Paul (member since 2018), Lisette Orellana Engel (member since 2017), and Zelda Wafer-Jones (member since 2017). All four board members have been very involved in the board's advocacy work, the Community Advocacy Institute, and the CAB's special activities over the years. They are all strong advocates who are extremely committed to issues impacting lower-income County residents. Board members and staff thanked these four outstanding members and looked forward to continuing to collaborate with them on advocacy efforts and the CAI in the future.

Executive Director's Report

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency's programs, along with program reports from TESS, Navigation, and VITA, and a budget and P Card report. Shantá shared that she has continued with her onboarding process, including training, one-on-one meetings with staff and all-staff meetings. Training is being incorporated into staff meetings and Shantá recently led a presentation about de-escalation at the March meeting.

Shantá is part of a roundtable discussion group hosted by MCAP for new Executive Directors. She has also been touring Navigation sites and the TESS Center. Having completed all required trainings, Shantá is now approving invoices for the contract monitors. Shantá reminded the board members that VITA tax season services will end on April 11.

Shantá is working with staff and DHHS leadership on enhancing staffing capacity. This includes converting broker positions to full-time merit staff positions. She is also looking into a partnership with the County's Office of Food Systems Resilience, which may be able to offer support for the Navigation Team.

Head Start

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the Head Start program, along with the FY25 HS grant application (narrative and budget justification and FY25 HS budget), Notice of Competitive Status, Letter of request for corrective action plan, and Approval letter for extension request regarding corrective action plan. Charlene shared that the Head Start grant application is due April 1st. She shared a presentation about the grant application, which will also be shared with the Head Start Parent Policy Council later in the week.

The FY25 grant application is for year five of the five-year grant cycle. Charlene's presentation included an overview of our program and governing structure and a list of partners. This year's application reflects an increase in school readiness and gains in program goals. For example, 86% of four-year-olds are at the "proficient" level and 60% of three-year-olds are at the "proficient" level for overall school readiness. The program has seen improvements in social and emotional skills. There has also been very consistent parent engagement with participation from parents at every school and a resurgence of parent education programs.

The FY25 grant is for \$7,481,679 and does not yet include a Cost of Living Adjustment for staff or Quality Improvement funding (may be a separate application/addition later). Most of the funding goes

to MCPS, with School Health Services receiving 12%, Community Action Agency receiving 7%, and Childhood Support Services receiving 3%.

The board members discussed the grant application and Charlene addressed several questions. She explained that we do not anticipate a shortfall in FY25 since funding remains the same. We may receive an increase later if there are COLA or QI increases, both of which are federally funded. Charlene noted that the County has allocated \$1 million to expand part-day classes to full-day classes for several years. The state also provides funding for the program, which is used to expand the summer Head Start program. Lisa noted that MCPS provides a lot of support to Head Start, some of which (space, transportation, special classes, etc.) is not accounted for in the dollar amounts listed in the budget.

A question was asked about the CAB advocating for funding to support more full-day classes. Currently, 27 out of the 34 classes are full day and the remaining part-day classes are for three-year-olds. Board members were encouraged to attend the priorities meeting on March 29th to determine if this request or others related to HS should be included in the CAB's budget advocacy.

Denise moved to approve the FY25 Head Start grant application and proposed budget. Claudia seconded the motion and all board members present voted in favor.

Contracts

Staff deferred to the detailed written report with updates on the agency's contract partners that CAB members received with their meeting materials.

Open Forum

Dr. Johnson shared that Action in Montgomery is engaged in a lot of advocacy work now. They recently hosted a largescale community convening about early childhood education.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 6:56 pm.