



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

February 17, 2022

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman, House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street, Room 35
Providence, RI 02903

RE: ARPA Proposals in Article 1 – Section 16 (Municipal Learning Centers and Municipal and Higher Ed Matching Grant Program)

Dear Chairman Abney:

Thank you for hearing ARPA Proposals in Article 1 – Section 16 specifically relating to the Municipal and Higher Education Matching Program and Municipal Learning Centers. I offer my strong support for these proposals.

Throughout both the operating and ARPA budget processes, I sought opportunities where the State could partner with the 39 cities and towns on various projects, so the State and the cities and towns could get the most out of this one-time federal funding. During this process, the federal government provided guidance on the specific permissible uses of the ARPA Capital Projects Fund (ARPA-CPF). One permissible option for the fund was investing in multi-purpose community facility projects that enable work, education and health monitoring. Around the same time, several municipal leaders told me that they were looking to invest in these types of community centers. My office and PRO then spoke with the League of Cities and Towns to see if there was demand for this type of partnership and if the cities and towns were planning on rehabilitating or constructing these community centers. The feedback from the cities and towns has shown that there is demand for this partnership opportunity. Within two weeks from the initial discussions, 12 cities and towns (30%) expressed interest in pursuing this opportunity to partner with the State. The amount for the fund was based on the estimates from these 12 cities and towns plus we provided further room in the fund for additional interest from other cities and towns.

- **Municipal and Higher Education Matching Program:** In accordance with guidance from the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Governor recommends deploying \$46.7 million of the State's \$112.3 million ARPA-CPF allocation to invest in multi-purpose community facility projects that enable work, education, and health monitoring.
- **Cities and Town List:** Below is a current list (as of February 11, 2022) of multi-purpose community facilities projects being contemplated by cities and towns across the state.
 - Providence
 - Cranston
 - Woonsocket
 - East Providence
 - South Kingstown

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- North Kingstown
- Westerly
- Bristol
- Warren
- Smithfield
- Hopkinton
- Richmond

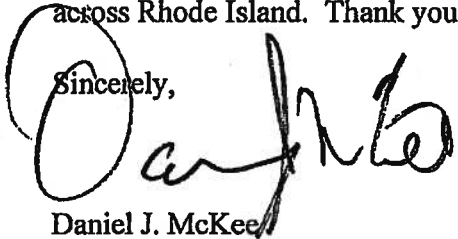
I also offer my strong support for the Municipal Learning Center proposal. Report after report has shown that the pandemic has caused significant learning challenges in our student population. These same reports show that our students need additional opportunities to engage in order to assist in the critical need of learning recovery. Municipal learning centers provide our students with these critically needed additional opportunities to engage, which, in turn, will increase the learning recovery in our student population. Moreover, when I was mayor of Cumberland, I quickly realized that the school department and my office had very little interaction about educating our town's students; the only time we had clear communication was when it came time to vote on school budgets. I created the first municipally lead education center to provide our community with additional education and leadership programing and I believe every community in Rhode Island could benefit from a similar program.

- **Municipal Learning Centers:** The State will support the creation of municipally run learning centers to provide programming, such as tutoring, art and music classes, early education opportunities, and non-profit services, available for free or in a fee-for-service rate structure. The programming will be available year-round, focusing on out-of-school time, vacation, and summer learning; families will receive an annual report on student's progress. This model will increase the capacity of municipalities to organize existing resources and assets (e.g. parks and recreation, libraries, school districts, constituent services) along with Community Based Organizations to specifically provide programming to address the needs of students and their families. The long-term plan is to create at least one program in each municipality in Rhode Island. The initial phase will establish a total of eleven programs including five in Providence, two in Pawtucket, and one each in Central Falls, Cumberland, Middletown, and North Providence.

Some cities and towns may choose to apply for both of these programs The ARPA Capital Projects fund does not allow for funds to be expended on programming. The Municipal Learning Center program grant could provide a strong foundation for programming within the Centers.

I offer my strong support for these ARPA and ARPA-CPF proposals which are important to communities across Rhode Island. Thank you for your time and consideration on these important matters.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. McKee
Governor

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Legal Counsel to the Speaker