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PRESS RELEASE

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The Bowser Administration Awards Nearly \$70,000 to Friendship Public Charter School to Support DC Students Experiencing Homelessness

Today, the Bowser Administration announced that the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) awarded \$69,800 in McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant funds to Friendship Public Charter School to serve nearly 400 students who are experiencing homelessness throughout the 2019-20 school year and during the summer of 2020.

“At OSSE, we know that each child is capable of learning at high levels, but that sometimes these vulnerable students need additional support to access those opportunities,” said State Superintendent Hanseul Kang. “This grant will provide much needed assistance that will help eliminate barriers that hinder learning and academic success for students experiencing homelessness.”

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance program, funded through the US Department of Education, provides local education agencies (LEAs) with support for programs and services that help remove barriers for children and youth experiencing homelessness while addressing the challenges that this population faces in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Children and youth experiencing homelessness are defined as school-aged individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Specifically, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funds are used to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Friendship Public Charter School, which operates 14 schools in wards 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, will use the grant funds this school year and next summer to help provide transportation to and from school for students experiencing homelessness; before- and after-school care to give students experiencing homelessness an early start to academic success; school supplies, especially school uniforms and outer clothing, to ensure students experiencing homelessness are not stigmatized; and age-appropriate mental health services to support research that indicates young students, especially, must feel safe and secure before they can learn.

“At Friendship PCS, we have approximately 400 families in transition that we serve every school year. Our goal is ensure that this population has access to resources and interventions in order to eliminate any potential barriers to their educational experience. Currently, we provide transportation services, school supplies, uniforms, personal care items, coats, hats, and gloves,” said Rachelle Roberts, senior director of Student Support Services at Friendship PCS. “We are excited about this additional funding and we plan to use a portion of these funds to train social workers in the area of trauma to help students and families deal with the delicate situations experienced by this population.”

A total of four LEAs applied for the grant, which totaled \$69,800. Priority was given to LEAs with high numbers of identified children and youths experiencing homelessness, as compared to the LEA’s overall student population; a significant increase of identified children and youths experiencing homelessness in the previous school year; a high percentage of identified children and youths experiencing homelessness, as compared to the number of homeless children and youths identified in the District of Columbia; or a high percentage of newly identified children and youths experiencing homelessness, based on the proximity of LEAs/schools that are near the newly established local shelters in all wards of the District of Columbia.

A review panel reviewed and scored all four eligible applications using the published application scoring rubric. Final scores were added and averaged, and of the four applications reviewed by the review panel, the highest scoring application was Friendship Public Charter School (PCS).

For information on upcoming competitive and formula grant opportunities, visit [OSSE’s Grants Forecast webpage](#), which is updated regularly.