

LARSON ANNOUNCES \$601,200 EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING GRANT FOR MANCHESTER

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MANCHESTER- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) today announced that the Town of Manchester has been awarded a \$601,200 federal Early Learning Opportunities Grant through U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The award will be used to fund Manchester's Early Learning Opportunities Project (MELO) which offers a variety of programs and services to families and early care providers in a collaborative effort between the town, Manchester Public Library, the Lutz Children's Museum and the Eastern Connecticut Health Network's (ECHN) Family Development Center. The primary goal of the project is to help young children in Manchester prepare for school through care and services for children and families.

"This grant will fund a critical effort to strengthen families and help young children get an early start on learning," said Larson. "Giving kids and their parents the support they need on a local level early in life can make a big difference in their futures. This funding provides the opportunity to do that. I am proud that Manchester was able to secure this grant and look forward to the Early Learning Opportunities program continuing to serve families in town."

Hanna Marcus, Chair of Manchester's School Readiness Council, said, "As the sponsoring Council for the MELO grant, the Manchester School Readiness Council is very pleased that we will have the ability to continue and expand the work begun in the first phase of the MELO program, to assure that early care providers, parents, and young children will continue to receive services which prepare kids to succeed in school."

The new funding will allow MELO to serve 46 home-based care providers and 16 childcare centers. Children at the participating homes will receive monthly visits from the Lutz museum's curator and a town librarian. The home based providers will have access to health and nutrition services, story time kits to use to promote learning and coordination and transportation for local field trips. The home-based providers will also receive visits from health care professionals, police, firefighters, musicians and artists.

The project offers programs for parents of young children enrolled in the MELO early care settings. Parenting services from ECHN's Family Development Center such as playgroups and home visits assist parents with child development. ECHN also provides fatherhood support and enrichment activities as well as other monthly workshops for parents.

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