



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY OF JACKSON AWARDED \$1.2 M GRANT TO INTRODUCE UNIVERSAL PRE-K PILOT PROGRAM

Universal Pre-K pilot program seeks to prepare all Jackson students for grade level learning

(Jackson, Miss.) – Monday, Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba along with Chief Administrative Officer, Dr. Robert Blaine, and Director of Human and Cultural Services, Dr. Adriane Dorsey-Kidd announced plans to develop a Universal Pre-K pilot program in Jackson, funded by a \$1.2M grant awarded to the City by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

During the announcement, Mayor Lumumba said, “We are excited about the partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support the city’s initiative to provide universal pre-K. We have recognized that one of the significant deficits in our children’s ability to learn in Jackson Public Schools is that they are entering into the school system at different levels of preparation and we need to assist our community in preparing our young people to start the learning process. To take a quote from Frederick Douglas, it is said that it is a lot easier building strong children than repairing broken men. And so, as we try to build a dignity economy, we need to prepare our children from the start.”

While research shows that 90% of children entering grade-school are ill-equipped for learning, the Universal Pre-K pilot program, *Ready To Learn*, seeks to ensure that every child in Jackson is well prepared to enter Kindergarten by the age of five.

“*Ready to Learn* creates the opportunity to develop a program that ensures that all five-year-olds enter Kindergarten ready for the learning environment. One of the greatest enhancements that we can make to our educational system is to make sure that students enter Kindergarten on grade level. If we can make this transition, it will both enhance what happens in our public schools and provide a foundation of educational success for all of our students,” said Dr. Blaine.

The *Ready To Learn* pilot program will undergo a two year development process with the first year dedicated to building data and coalitions of early childhood educators across the city. The second year will focus on implementing the pilot universal pre-K program at two early childhood development centers in Jackson.

“I think the grant from Kellogg is going to be life-changing. It gives us an opportunity to level the playing field. Our kids are invested just as any other child would be. I think their brightness will shine through, because if given the same opportunity, we can perform at the same rate or

better according to research,” said Dr. Kidd.

The *Ready To Learn* program will be made available to homeschooled children through child television programming and curriculum offered on the City of Jackson’s PEG Network.

Additionally, the grant seeks to offer technical assistance for early childhood development centers to become certified universal pre-K facilities.

Through the implementation and success of *Ready To Learn*, the City of Jackson hopes to expand the program with federal funding.

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