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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2024

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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON, MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, ADA S. MCKINLEY COMMUNITY SERVICES LAUNCH DIVERSE LEARNERS RECOVERY FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Up to 8,000 students with disabilities to receive one-time cash grants through Mayor's Office for People With Disabilities and Ada S. McKinley Community Services, to support families affected by COVID's aftermath

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson, in partnership with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and Ada S. McKinley Community Services – one of Chicago's largest and oldest human services organizations – is today announcing a new grant program aimed at providing financial assistance to families of children with disabilities, a population that was disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$5 million Diverse Learners Recovery Fund will provide one-time grants of \$500 to up to 8,000 eligible K-12 students through a lottery.

"When I ran for Mayor, I made a commitment to do everything in my power to invest in our young people," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Our young people with disabilities face unique challenges but we are committed to their success and these grants are one way through which we are able to directly invest in them."

The program provides grants for as many as two eligible students per household, for a maximum one-time payment of \$500 for one student and \$1,000 for two students. A parent or guardian will be responsible for applying to the fund and receiving the cash payment on behalf of their student[s] if their eligible application is selected from the lottery. This no-strings-attached grant will not affect any benefits for families receiving government assistance, and there are no restrictions on what the money can be used for.

"The Diverse Learners Recovery Fund is part of our ongoing commitment to making Chicago the most accessible and inclusive city in the world," said **Commissioner Rachel Arfa, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities**. "We are proud to launch this effort to address the disproportionate negative economic impact that COVID-19 has had on Chicago students with



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disabilities and families, who've already faced additional costs to provide the physical, therapeutic, and educational support their children require."

"The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to pose financial, educational and social burdens for Chicago families of students with disabilities," said **Jamal Malone, CEO of Ada S. McKinley Community Services**. "All students faced educational and social-emotional setbacks during the pandemic. This was exponentially the case for students with disabilities. The Diverse Learners Recovery Fund will provide some relief. These funds can be used to pay for medical expenses, supplemental education resources, or other necessary accommodations."

The program is funded by The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLRF) program authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Eligibility Requirements for the Diverse Learners Recovery Fund

To apply for the Diverse Learners Recovery Fund, families need to satisfy the following criteria:

1. Live in Chicago.
2. Have a household income less than or equal to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (ex. \$90,000 for a household of four, according to the 2023 Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines).
3. Have a student(s) in the household with an identified disability (up to two eligible students per household may be approved).
4. Student(s) is currently enrolled in a K-12 public or private school.
5. Student(s) has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a 504 plan, an Individual Support Plan (ISP) or a doctor's note verifying a disability diagnosis that is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

When and Where To Apply

Eligible parents or guardians can apply online at www.AdaMOPD.com. Since the program uses a lottery selection method, submitting an eligible application is not a guarantee of receiving a grant.

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