NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 4, 2018

A FRESH START FOR NORWALK HEAD START
CIFC to Sponsor the Head Start/Early Head Start Program in the Norwalk Area

Norwalk, CT- James H. Maloney, JD, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Connecticut Institute For Communities, Inc. ("CIFC"), joined Congressman Jim Himes (CT-4) and U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy in announcing today that the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families has awarded the program sponsorship for Head Start services in the Greater Norwalk area to CIFC’s Early Learning Programs (which currently include Head Start, Early Head Start and School Readiness in the Greater Danbury Area).

Connecticut Institute (CIFC) will assume operation of the program as of July 1, 2018, and will offer a multi-faceted Head Start program serving 156 children in the 5 towns of the Greater Norwalk area, including the City of Norwalk, and the Towns of Weston, Wilton, Westport and New Canaan. The program will be known as the Greater Norwalk Head Start Program (GNHS) under CIFC’s Early Learning Programs.

In operating the program, CIFC will work closely with the City of Norwalk, the municipal and educational leaders of the area towns, a new Greater Norwalk Head Start Parents’ Policy Council, and Norwalk health and education program advisory committees being organized by CIFC.

Executive Program Summary:
Connecticut Institute For Communities, Inc’s, Greater Norwalk Head Start program will provide full-year Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) services to 156 children from the Norwalk area. Early Head Start (for children 6 weeks to 2 years and 12 months) is an entirely new component of Head Start Services to be offered in Norwalk. Of the 156-enrollment total, 16 children (infants and toddlers) will be enrolled in Early Head Start, at least 60 children will be enrolled in full-day Head Start (preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds), 20 of whom in the ordinary course will be funded by the State, and up to 80 children will be enrolled in part-day Head Start (preschool). Currently enrolled 3-year-olds will be able to continue their enrollment as 4-year-olds as of September 2018.

1The federal Head Start definition of the service area for the grant includes the City of Norwalk and the towns of Weston, Westport, Wilton, and New Canaan, but nearly all of the families with income-qualified children reside in Norwalk.

"CIFC: Strengthening Families, Building Communities."
The program will offer a total of 9 classes. Five classrooms will be located at the Nathaniel Ely Center: 2 EHS classes and 3 full-day HS classes (including the State-funded classroom). The Benjamin Franklin Center will house 4 HS classes, all 4 part-day.

A. Head Start (Preschool)

All Head Start services will be center-based, five days a week, operating eight hours per day for full-day and 4.75 hours per day for part-day. Full-day classes will also provide an additional 2.5 hours per day of extended care, for a total of 10.5 hours (7:30 am to 6 pm) per day available to these children. The classes will operate 50 weeks of the year (see below), except for federal and state holidays.

The full-day HS program will provide 230 days of service which equates to 1840 learning hours per preschooler, exceeding the 1020-hour federal Head Start annual minimum requirement. The part-day HS program will provide 230 days of service which equates to 1093 learning hours per preschooler, which also exceeds the 1020-hour annual minimum requirement.

For both part-day and full-day, we limit, per state regulations, classrooms with a majority of three-year-olds to seventeen children per classroom, and those classrooms with a majority of four-year-olds to twenty children per classroom. We staff every classroom with a teaching team of at least two, having corresponding minimum ratios of 1:8.5 or 1:10 (also compliant with state regulations).

B. Early Head Start

Early Head Start classes will operate 8 hours per day, five days per week, from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm, plus an extended day option. The classes will operate 50 weeks of the year (see below), except for federal and state holidays. In total, the GNHS Early Head Start program, offering 230 days of service, will provide 1840 of learning hours per infant/toddler, again exceeding the 1380-hour federal Head Start annual minimum requirement.

C. Classroom Organization and Staffing

Each Center location will have its own lead teacher. Each Head Start preschool class will be staffed by a classroom teacher, assistant teacher and classroom aide (who CIFC Head Start refers to as CDA Specialists). Early Head Start will have a teacher for each group of 4 children, resulting in two teachers per each classroom of 8 children, plus a classroom aid. For classroom staff, candidates undergo a multi-level vetting process that includes an initial phone screening conducted by CIFC HR, a site visit, the delivery of an observed sample lesson (either onsite or video), and an interview with the CIFC Education and Disabilities Service Specialist and an interviewing team. The interview teams will be comprised of members of the program’s leadership staff. Our goal will be to identify and recruit a highly-qualified classroom team of individuals who show a willingness and ability to implement a top-tier educational curriculum that meets the Head Start Early Learning Framework and State early learning standards. [A comparable process will be used for all other staff but adapted to their specific field of work (e.g. Family Advocates)]. Staff will be employed for 52 weeks per year, with one week devoted to in-service staff development, and one week off during the end-of-the-year holidays as part of staff annual paid time off. Current staff of the interim Head Start Program employed by CDI, which ends as of June 30, 2018, are encouraged to apply and will, if qualified, be given preference when all other aspects are deemed equivalent.
D. Required Classroom Staff Credentials

Our Head Start program for Greater Norwalk will require that at least 50% of teachers hold a bachelor's degree (100% strongly preferred) and all other staff to be qualified consistent with the applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards. For classroom teachers, we will require, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree or an associate's degree in early childhood education or related degree, with related experience. For pre-school assistant teachers, we will require at least a High School diploma and CDA credential (Associates Degree strongly preferred), and enrollment in a program leading to an associate or baccalaureate degree, and, if applicable, enrollment in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years. All center-based Early Head Start teachers will have specific Infant Toddler Child Development Associate credential and will have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development as required by Section 645A(h) of the Head Start Act.

In making the announcement, Mr. Maloney said: "All of us at CIFC are delighted that the Administration for Children and Families has made this award. As a very experienced Head Start/Early Head Start sponsor, CIFC will assure that our Greater Norwalk Head Start program delivers the high-quality services that the Head Start children and families of the Norwalk service area deserve."

"CIFC is grateful to all of the agencies and organizations that supported our application to operate the Head Start program in the Norwalk area (see the attached list). We are also very grateful to Norwalk Mayor Harry W. Rilling, who has been so welcoming to CIFC’s sponsorship of the Norwalk Head Start Program,” concluded Maloney.

U.S. Senators Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said, “There’s no better investment we can make in our kids than to get them started in pre-kindergarten education programs, like Head Start. We’ve fought hard over the years to expand quality early learning programs throughout Connecticut, and we’re so excited to see Connecticut Institute for Communities help over 150 kids from the greater Norwalk area - including 16 toddlers and infants in the Early Head Start program - benefit from these federal dollars.”

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For additional information, please contact Mr. Maloney, as follows:

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SUPPORT LIST OF COMMUNITY LEADERS, AGENCIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Hon. Chris Perone
State Representative
CT 137th District, Norwalk

Hon. L. Scott Frantz
State Senator
CT 36th District, New Canaan

Norwalk Community Health Center

Family & Children’s Agency, Norwalk

United Way of Coastal Fairfield County

Norwalk Community College

All About Kids, Norwalk - (Dental Services)

Star Rubino Agency, Norwalk – Lighting the Way

Malta House, Norwalk