



# First Steps, Strong Start Hearing

**Presentation to the Baltimore City Council's Education, Youth, & Older Adults Committee**

**March 19, 2026**

# Blueprint Pre-K Expansion

## Pillar One of the Blueprint = Early childhood education

- An expansion of full-day Pre-K to four-year-olds and income-eligible 3-year-olds through a mixed delivery model
- Funded through a sliding scale based on income level

## Mixed-Delivery = high-quality Pre-K is available in multiple settings

- More options for families to find a setting that best meets their needs
- Utilizes existing facility space
- Childcare programs rely on 3- and 4-year-olds to remain financially viable

# Growth in Community-based Pre-K Providers + Seats

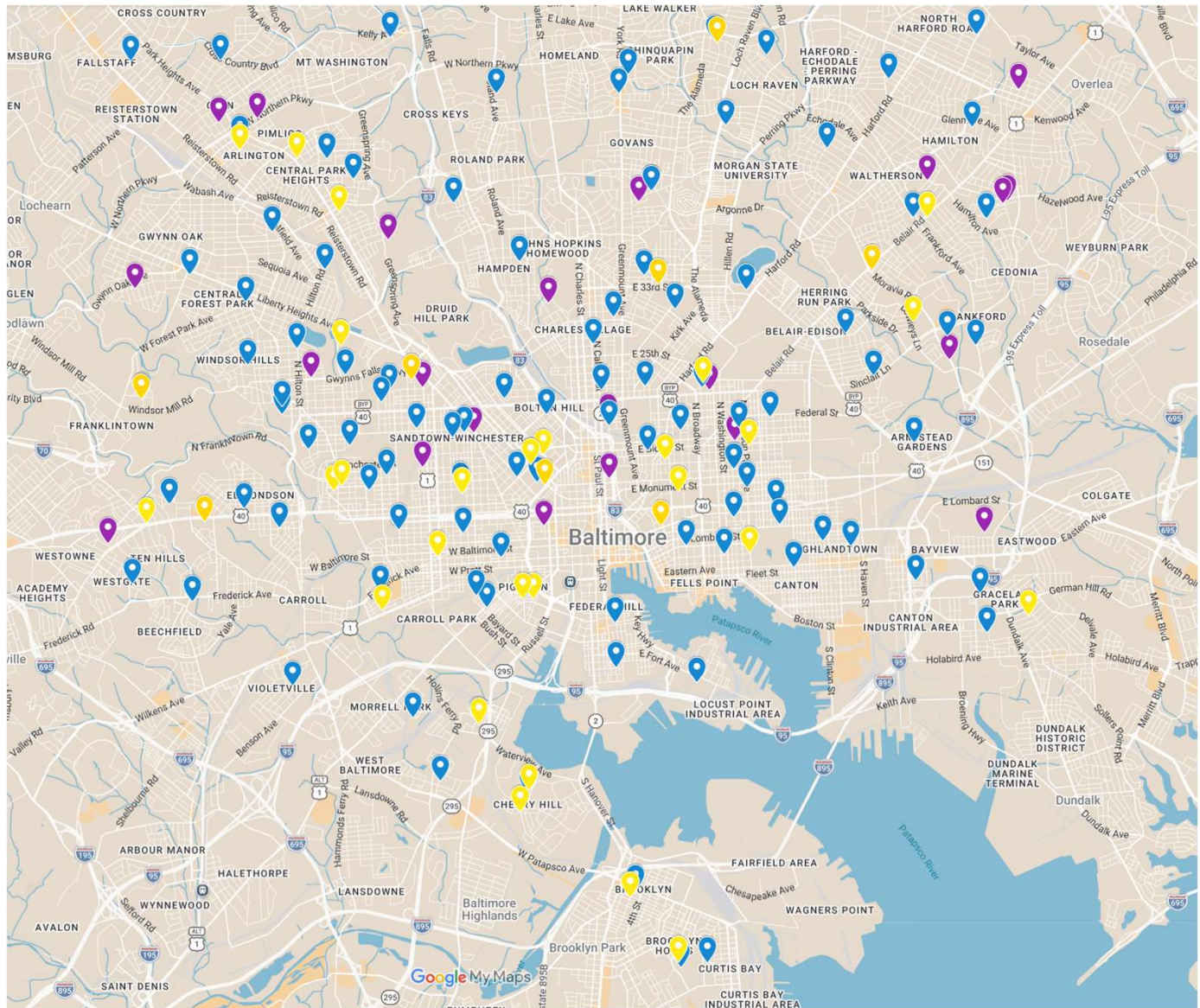
	<b>SY 22-23</b>	<b>SY 23-24</b>	<b>SY 24-25</b>	<b>SY 25-26</b>
<b># of providers</b>	6	11	12	18
<b># of seats</b>	221	305	382	515

# Map of publicly-funded Pre-K sites

Blue = Baltimore City Public Schools

Yellow = Head Start

Purple = Community-based Child Care Providers



# Increased Support = Strong Returns

\$175,000 of philanthropic investments created a wraparound hub of support for child care providers over the past two years:

- **\$2.6 million** in state funding secured
- **190** new free Pre-K seats created
- **9** child care providers supported
- **100% retention** among programs receiving first-year implementation support
- **6** new private Pre-K providers added in Baltimore City in FY26, including **5** from The Fund's cohort
- **5** programs improved their EXCELS rating
- **8** new providers submitted FY27 Pre-K Expansion applications



# Strengthening Enrollment



We need to grow supply **and** maximize enrollment in existing seats

Families face real barriers to enrollment

Forthcoming research will guide targeted outreach

The City has invested \$150,000 in a Pre-K enrollment campaign through the Mayor's ECE Initiative

# Building a More Coordinated Pre-K Enrollment System

- Families need clear information about publicly funded Pre-K **across all settings**
- Many not aware options exist outside City Schools, including for 3-year-olds
- Ready, Set, Pre-K! event launched this year's enrollment season
- [www.BaltimorePreK.com](http://www.BaltimorePreK.com) provides one place for families to explore options and enrollment steps

# Next Steps to Strengthen Baltimore's Early Education System

Create a **local child care subsidy** to help families afford care, including wraparound care beyond the Pre-K day

Sustain **state Pre-K investments** and continue advocating for Baltimore's share of Blueprint funding

Establish a **city roadmap for universal Pre-K** that expands access while strengthening, not replacing, child care providers

Invest in **child care providers and workforce supports**, including training, technical assistance, and compensation

Make enrollment a **citywide priority** by equipping family-facing agencies and community leaders to connect families to programs