



The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF GIVING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Craig Demchak, 410-294-0994, cdemchak@hjweinberg.org

Weinberg Foundation Announces Additional \$5 Million to Expand and Strengthen Baltimore Library Project

Total Foundation Commitment to Initiative Grows to \$15 Million

Baltimore (December 10, 2020) – The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation today announced an additional \$5 million in funding to support the Baltimore Elementary and Middle School Library Project, also known as the Library Project. This grant brings the Foundation’s total commitment to this initiative to \$15 million. The new funding will provide operating support for the existing 15 libraries, as well as capital funds for the development of four new libraries through 2023.

The Baltimore Library Project is a multi-year collaborative effort among the Weinberg Foundation, the State of Maryland, Baltimore City Public Schools, and more than 30 community and government partners. In its ninth year, this initiative designs, builds, equips, and staffs new or renovated elementary/middle school libraries in neighborhoods where many students face academic and economic challenges. To learn more about the Library Project’s history and growth please click [here](#).

“The Library Project was the Foundation’s first signature initiative when it launched in 2011,” said Ambassador Fay Hartog-Levin (Ret.), Weinberg Foundation Chair and Trustee. “By 2024, the Library Project will have leveraged more than \$30 million in additional federal, state, and local funds. The Foundation is extremely pleased with the growth and impact of this project, the tangible difference it is making in the first 15 schools, and the collaboration that has driven this initiative.”

“The Library Project exemplifies the potential and power of partnership,” noted Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises, Chief Executive Officer, Baltimore City Public Schools. “The value and impact of our educators and curricula are multiplied when other sectors join and support our work in such meaningful ways—not only academically, but also by providing critical services that contribute to each student’s personal well-being, enhancing their ability to learn.”

Partnerships are integral to the success of the Library Project. Some Library Project partners are involved with library design, construction, and operation, while others provide support intended to meet a range of personal needs for students, including nutritious food, winter coats, and family engagement services. Many Library Project libraries also host SummerREADS, a drop-in literacy program that combines reading activities, free meals, and hands-on workshops with the goal of preventing learning loss over the

summer months. By the spring of 2021, 7,700 children—more than 13 percent of all Baltimore City Public School elementary and middle school students—will have directly benefited from this initiative.

"Access to books, to a school library, and to professional library staff has been shown to increase the reading scores of children," noted Heidi M. Daniel, Chief Executive Officer, Enoch Pratt Free Library. "When we have discussions on how to build equity, trust, and a future for our city, libraries should always be part of the conversation. Enoch Pratt Free Library is proud to partner with the Weinberg Foundation on the Library Project, which we view as a critical investment in Baltimore's future."

"As we have said since the beginning, the Library Project is a statement made to the entire community that our children in Baltimore City deserve the best," said Rachel Garbow Monroe, Weinberg Foundation President and CEO. "It has been documented that a well-equipped, well-staffed, well-resourced library can help to override the negative impacts of poverty on student achievement. While the final chapter of the Library Project has not yet been written, the story so far is most encouraging."

Wanting to ensure that the Library Project was using a successful model, the Weinberg Foundation has completed two separate evaluations in recent years, which included the following findings:

- Book checkouts at the first nine schools increased by 400 percent over a four-year period.
- In a review of the first three schools, reading fluency scores among third grade students in two of the first three Library Project schools rose from 33 percent of students at benchmark (the term for an acceptable level of proficiency based on standards) to 64 percent at benchmark (a 94 percent increase). Note: The third school utilized a different assessment tool, making a comparison unfeasible.
- Library Project students in the third grade were almost three times as likely to meet reading fluency proficiency standards as students in comparison schools.

The Weinberg Foundation is now working with Baltimore City Public Schools to engage with a nationally recognized evaluator, who will conduct a final study of the Library Project. The proposed evaluation would focus on established criteria for success, as well as identification of replicable best practices—possibly including a case study in how school systems can work with philanthropic and other community partners to create unique, high-quality buildings in the education sector.

###

About The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation: *The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, one of the largest private charitable foundations in the United States, is dedicated to meeting the basic needs of people experiencing poverty. In 2020, the Foundation will provide approximately \$130 million in total grant activity supporting nonprofits that provide direct services in the areas of Housing, Health, Jobs, Education, and Community Services. The Foundation's priority communities include Baltimore, Chicago, Hawai'i, Israel, New York City, Northeastern Pennsylvania, San Francisco, and Rural Communities (primarily rural areas within proximity to priority communities). The Foundation's trustees are Ambassador Fay Hartog-Levin (Ret.), Chair; Robert T. Kelly, Jr.; Paula B. Pretlow; Gordon Berlin; and Nimrod Goor. Rachel Garbow Monroe serves as President and CEO. For more information, please visit www.hjweinbergfoundation.org.*