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PRESS RELEASE

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HopeWell Awarded Cummings Foundation Grant

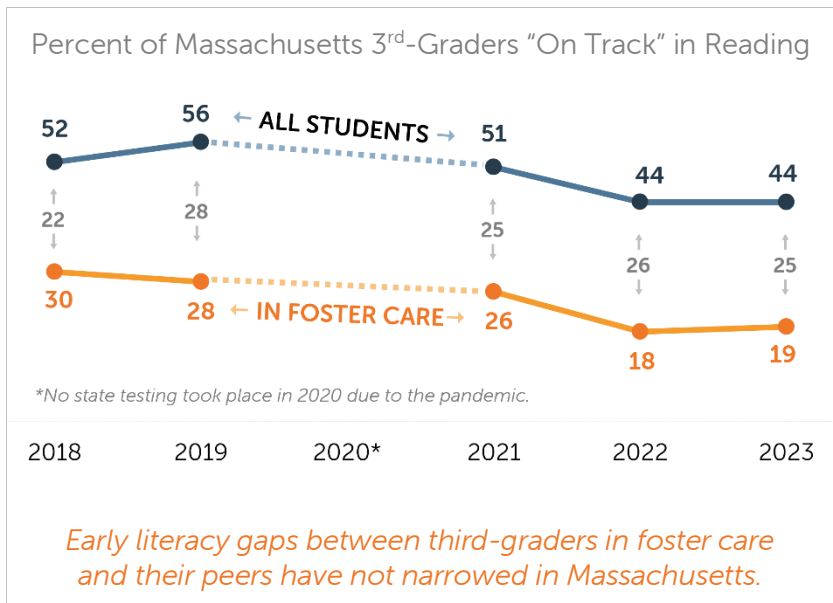
Funds to Support Early Literacy Among Elementary School Children Experiencing Foster Care in Greater Boston

(DEDHAM, MA) – Cummings Foundation has awarded HopeWell a three-year, \$100,000 grant to improve educational outcomes among children in grades K-3 who are experiencing foster care. The grant is part of the Foundation’s **\$30 Million Grant Program**, which supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and serve Middlesex, Essex, Suffolk, and parts of Norfolk County.

Two years ago, HopeWell launched an ambitious new initiative – to close early literacy gaps between children in foster care and their peers. As the largest nonprofit provider of comprehensive foster care services in Massachusetts, HopeWell saw up close how common it was for young adults “aging out” of the foster care system to struggle academically, and the immense obstacles they encountered as a result while working to reach their goals. To address these challenges, HopeWell created **RISE, a first-of-its-kind program** designed to “intervene upstream” for children in foster care by eliminating educational disparities when they first form.

RISE focuses on **early literacy** as a critical intervention point because it is a gateway skill. When children struggle to read early on, it can affect their cumulative learning across subject areas and grade-levels.

Yet, children in foster care face some of the largest educational gaps among any group of students in the state. Funds from Cummings Foundation’s grant will go directly toward HopeWell’s efforts to close these gaps.



“Cummings Foundation’s investment in our organization demonstrates their commitment to advancing equity in Boston by helping us fill unmet needs for one our state’s most marginalized groups of young people,” said **Shaheer Mustafa, HopeWell President and CEO**. “Not only will their support allow us to scale the breadth and depth of our RISE program over the next three years, it also improves the well-being of the Boston community as a whole by addressing the types of early opportunity gaps that have far-reaching, lifelong effects.”

RISE is currently based out of HopeWell’s Roxbury office. To meet the distinct learning needs of children in foster care, the program combines home-based tutoring, personalized caregiver supports, and coordination among families, schools, the Department of Children and Families, and other services providers.

Last year, RISE tutors spent nearly 800 hours working on early literacy skills with dozens of children and caregivers around Greater Boston.



HopeWell’s RISE program provides children experiencing foster care with the building blocks they need to become strong readers and writers.

“This funding will have an immediate, direct impact on the supports I’m able to provide kids. We’ll have engaging books and materials, as well as tools that can help me analyze data to best meet our kids’ needs,” shared Abigail Miedema, RISE Tutor. “During my time as a RISE tutor, I’ve seen so many special moments — from a pair of siblings who have begun reading aloud to each other before bed, to a child who got excited simply because she recognized her street name. Being a Cummings Grant recipient will help us create even more of these special moments!”

HopeWell is one of 150 nonprofits to receive funding from Cummings Foundation’s annual \$30 Million Grant Program. The program is a place-based initiative — Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the areas where it owns commercial property. Its buildings are all managed, at no cost to the Foundation, by its affiliate, **Cummings Properties**. The Woburn-based commercial real estate firm leases and manages 11 million square feet of debt-free space, the majority of which exclusively benefits the Foundation. HopeWell’s Andover office is located in one of these properties.

HopeWell was selected from a total of 715 applicants during a competitive review process. The majority of grant decisions were made by nearly 100 community volunteers.



HopeWell team members Lisa Crane (Senior Director of Development), Cristabel Corniel (Family Resource Social Worker), and Jane Foley (Andover and Greater Boston Program Director), share the news at HopeWell’s Andover office.

Among these community volunteers were business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, college presidents, and experts from a range of different fields. They worked across a variety of committees to review and discuss the grant proposals and determine which requests would be funded. This is HopeWell's first time receiving a grant from Cummings Foundation.

This year's Cummings Grant recipients represent a wide variety of causes, including housing and food insecurity, workforce development, immigrant services, social justice, education, and mental health services. The nonprofits are spread across 49 different cities and towns. Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$500 million to Greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year's winners, as well as more information about the \$30 Million Grant Program, is available at CummingsFoundation.org.

To learn more about HopeWell's RISE program, please visit hopewellinc.org/RISE.

About HopeWell

HopeWell's mission is to enrich the lives and expand the opportunities of children, adults, and families in need of love, support, and safe places to grow and thrive.

Founded in 1964, HopeWell is the largest nonprofit provider of comprehensive foster care services in Massachusetts. In addition to foster care, HopeWell provides a range of critical programs, including supports for: families involved in the child welfare system as they work to stay together; children experiencing foster care as they grow their early literacy skills; young adults "aging out" of the foster care system as they focus on their personal and professional goals; and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they pursue independence and engage as full members of their communities. HopeWell is headquartered in Dedham, with regional offices in Andover, Roxbury, Springfield, Taunton, and Worcester. For more information, visit hopewellinc.org.

About Cummings Foundation

Woburn-based Cummings Foundation, Inc. was established in 1986 by Joyce and Bill Cummings of Winchester, MA and has grown to be one of the largest private foundations in New England. The Foundation directly operates its own charitable subsidiaries, including New Horizons retirement communities, in Marlborough and Woburn, and Cummings Health Sciences, LLC. Additional information is available at CummingsFoundation.org.

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