

MADELEINE DEAN
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May 10, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1306 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for the Challenger Learning Center at Montco Pottstown in fiscal year 2025. The entity to receive funding for this project is Montgomery County Community College, located at 340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA, 19422.

The funding would be used to provide access and remove barriers to the region's students to the Challenger Learning Center's experience, support the incorporation and installation of a Voyage Mark II Solar System Exhibit, and allow MCCC to expand its Discovery Programs with "STEM-powered" adventures through hands-on challenges in virtual reality, coding, and AI further creating a regional hub for experiential STEM education. Expansion of Discovery Programs would also provide for multiple classes to participate simultaneously in full- academic day STEM-immersion activities. Federal funding will enable CLC to fully develop all proposed Discovery Programs that incorporate Virtual Reality hardware & software, increase presence, achievement, and persistence of historically excluded communities in STEM fields, and remove barriers for Title I districts.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because it serves all school districts within southeastern Pennsylvania and 7-county region that includes Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. Within southeastern Pennsylvania there are over 150,000 students in grades 5 to 8, with over 35,000 students in Montgomery County. This provides a substantial number of students who can be served by Challenger at Montco Pottstown's innovative approach. Research demonstrates that some of the highest-poverty middle schools have significantly less access to computer & science labs than their peers. Challenger believes all students deserve equal access to STEM disciplines, as all students can do STEM literacy. By serving middle schools, of which ~50% are from Title I schools, Challenger provides accessible STEM learning experiences, filling a gap where historically under-resourced schools lack this important infrastructure.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by section 20102 of title 51, United States Code.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Madeleine Dean". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "M".

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress