

INTRODUCED: May 12, 2025

AN ORDINANCE No. 2025-121

To amend Ord. No. 2024-099, adopted May 13, 2024, which adopted the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 General Fund Budget and made appropriations pursuant thereto, by (i) transferring \$96,250.00 from the Non-Departmental agency, The Literacy Lab line item, (ii) appropriating \$66,250.00 of such transferred funds to the Non-Departmental agency, Reserve for Children’s Fund (Early Childhood, Positive Youth Development, Postsecondary Success) line item, and (iii) appropriating \$30,000.00 of such transferred funds to the Challenge Discovery Projects, Inc. (Behavioral Health Clinic) line item in the Non-Departmental agency, all for the purpose of providing funds for emergent needs related to children.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patron – Mayor Avula  
\_\_\_\_\_

Approved as to form and legality  
by the City Attorney  
\_\_\_\_\_

PUBLIC HEARING: JUN 23 2025 AT 6 P.M.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. That Article I, Section 1 of Ordinance Number 2024-099, adopted May 13, 2024, which adopted a General Fund Budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025, and made appropriations pursuant thereto, is hereby amended by:

(a) Transferring funds in the amount of \$96,250.00 from the Non-Departmental agency The Literacy Lab line item;

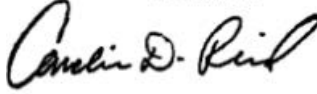
AYES:            8            NOES:            0            ABSTAIN: \_\_\_\_\_

ADOPTED:   JUN 23 2025   REJECTED: \_\_\_\_\_ STRICKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Appropriating \$66,250.00 of the funds transferred by subsection (a) of this section to the Reserve for Children's Fund (Early Childhood, Positive Youth Development, Postsecondary Success) line item in the Non-Departmental agency; and

(c) Appropriating \$30,000.00 of the funds transferred by subsection (a) of this section to the Challenge Discovery Projects, Inc. (Behavioral Health Clinic) line item in the Non-Departmental agency, all for the purpose of providing funds for emergent needs related to children.

§ 2. This ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.

**A TRUE COPY:**  
**TESTE:**  
  
**City Clerk**

# City of Richmond

## Intracity Correspondence

### O&R Transmittal

**DATE:** January 24, 2025

**TO:** The Honorable Members of City Council

**THROUGH:** The Honorable Dr. Danny Avula, Mayor

**THROUGH:** Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

**THROUGH:** Sheila White, Director of Finance

**THROUGH:** Meghan Brown, Director of Budget and Strategic Planning

**THROUGH:** Shunda Giles, Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Human Services

**THROUGH:** Tiffany Ford, Director, Neighborhood & Community Services

**FROM:** Eva Colen, Office of Children & Families

**RE:** Non-Departmental Reappropriations

**ORD. OR RES. No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**PURPOSE:** To amend Ord. No. 2024-099, adopted May 13, 2024, which adopted the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 General Fund and made appropriations pursuant thereto, by (i) reducing the “Literacy Lab” line item in the Non-Departmental agency budget by \$96,250.00, (ii) appropriating such transferred funds in the amount of \$66,250.00 to the “Reserve for Children’s Fund (Early Childhood, Positive Youth Development, Postsecondary Success)” line item in the Non-Departmental agency budget, and (iii) appropriating such transferred funds in the amount of \$30,000.00 to the “Challenge Discovery Projects, Inc.” line item in the Non-Departmental agency budget, all for the purpose of providing funds for emergent needs related to children.

**BACKGROUND:** The Literacy Lab, one of the charitable organizations that applied and was approved for an appropriation in the Fiscal Year 2025 Non-Departmental budget, has notified City administration and other stakeholders that they ceased operations. Funds appropriated to the Literacy Lab shall be reappropriated to (i) the Children’s Fund so that they are available for emergent needs related to children and youth, in alignment with the intent of the original appropriation that was to support both postsecondary success and early childhood development through the Literacy Lab’s Leading Men program and (ii) Challenge Discovery Projects for the

purpose of social-emotional learning and mental healthcare for youth residing in the East End of Richmond.

The “Reserve for Children’s Fund (Early Childhood, Positive Youth Development, Postsecondary Success)” (“Children’s Fund”) line item in the Non-Departmental agency budget was established in Fiscal Year 2022-2023 General Fund budget to set aside funds for emergent and urgent needs related to children that were unable to be anticipated in advance of and/or addressed by the City’s annual budget. Funds appropriated to this line item have supported the opening of new child care centers, mental and behavioral healthcare for middle school children who have experienced gun violence, out-of-school time programs, and maintenance of low and no-cost therapeutic preschool slots as well as other critical services to benefit children and their caregivers.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** N/A

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL:** Equity Agenda; Thriving Families (Where Every Child Succeeds)

**FISCAL IMPACT:** No cost. Transfer of \$96,250.00 from the "Literacy Lab" line item in the Fiscal Year 2025 Non-Departmental budget to the "Challenge Discovery Projects, Inc. (Behavioral Health Clinic)" (\$30,000.00) and the "Reserve for Children's Fund (Early Childhood, Positive Youth Development, Postsecondary Success)" (\$66,250.00) line items in the Fiscal Year 2025 Non-Departmental budget.

**DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon adoption

**REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE:** May 12, 2025

**CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE:** May 27, 2025

**REQUESTED AGENDA:** Consent

**RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE:** Education and Human Services Standing Committee

**AFFECTED AGENCIES:** Budget, Finance, Non-Departmental, Office of Children and Families/Neighborhood & Community Services

**RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.:** Ord. No. 2024-099; Ord. No. 2024-287

**ATTACHMENTS:** Letter from Literacy Lab

**STAFF:** Eva Colen, x5454, [Eva.Colen@rva.gov](mailto:Eva.Colen@rva.gov)



CELEBRATING  
**15** YEARS OF  
STORIES

*Please note: The following message from The Literacy Lab contains a significant update that impacts partnership service plans for the 2024-25 school year. Your attention to this important update is appreciated.*

The Literacy Lab  
400 16th St NW #410  
Washington, DC 20036

Monday, June 3, 2024

Dear Valued Partner,

From its inception, The Literacy Lab was founded as a direct response to the urgent literacy crisis facing America, aiming to tackle the profound gaps in reading skills experienced by our nation's children. Our journey began with a commitment to scalable solutions, carefully crafted to meet the unique needs of communities nationwide. This focus on adaptability and reach has allowed us to fill critical gaps in classrooms and schools, expanding our impact far beyond the initial vision of the organization's founders. As we look back over the years, it is clear that our ability to effectively scale our programs in partnership with dedicated staff, critical partners, and community support has been a cornerstone of our success, enabling us to enhance the lives of thousands of children through the power of literacy. As one of our valued partners, we thank you for your trust in us and your commitment to our work together.

This year, The Literacy Lab celebrates its 15th anniversary. We are taking this milestone as an opportunity to reinvigorate our mission and operations to embrace anti-racist values and methodologies more explicitly. Our mission must extend beyond teaching children to read—it is about fostering liberation through the transformative power of literacy. Our commitment to equity and liberation is integral to our identity, as we believe literacy is a skill and a human right.

## **EVOLVING OUR PROGRAMS**

Following an extensive evaluation of our initiatives, guided by data insights, direct feedback from our partners, and our on-the-ground experiences, our leadership team has resolved to strategically invest in programs that not only meet urgent needs but also resonate deeply with our foundational values. This deliberate focus has sharpened our commitment to the Leading Men Fellowship (LMF), a program that has made a significant impact by amplifying young men of color and equipping them to be leaders in their communities and schools. These fellows play a crucial role in preparing our most historically marginalized children for their educational futures.

We are committed to ensuring the sustainability and long-term success of LMF by channeling our resources into areas where there is a strong ecosystem of support and financial stability. However, it's important to acknowledge that in regions where LMF cannot be sustained financially, we will regrettably discontinue the program. This targeted approach allows us to concentrate our efforts where we can achieve the greatest impact and maintain the viability of LMF for years to come. Consequently, despite generous state support, the LMF program in Virginia will be discontinued after the 23-24 school year.

Furthermore, to direct our resources more effectively and ensure sustainable impact, we have also decided to sunset our partnerships with AmeriCorps and Ampact Early Learning Corps and Reading Corps programs across the country at the end of the 2023-24 school year. As a result of discontinuing both programs in Virginia, The Literacy Lab will cease to have a presence in the Commonwealth.

This was a difficult, strategic decision that was not made lightly. AmeriCorps and Ampact have been valuable partners, providing us with resources and passionate individuals dedicated to our cause. However, to prioritize innovation and investment in LMF, it became increasingly clear that these partnerships must be more sustainable for our organization. Challenges with recruitment, retention, and meaningful career pathways emerged and have persisted over the past few years despite increased organizational investment and best efforts from staff. As a result of these challenges, we have not been able to provide many of our school partners with the number of tutors they requested in recent years. We have heard from partners that while they regard our AmeriCorps programs as among the best offerings available to support their school's literacy needs, they have had to increasingly turn to other options and partnerships due to our recruitment challenges and inability to place as many tutors as are needed. We understand the difficult position in which this has placed school partners. It is of the utmost importance to our organization that we are in a position to deliver on our promises. Unfortunately, despite significant investment and attention, it has become clear that our AmeriCorps recruitment and retention challenges are not recovering at the needed rate. Additionally, the national funding outlook for AmeriCorps is discouraging. These factors have led Literacy Lab leadership to the very difficult decision to sunset our AmeriCorps programs.

While these changes will impact services in the 2024-25 school year, we are committed to finishing services in the 2023-24 school year as promised. We will continue to support our Tutors in their school service through the end of their contract terms, and school partners with current Tutor placements can expect all regular year-end program activities to continue. Looking ahead, we want to support schools in their efforts to minimize service disruption as much as possible. We intend to connect schools with our partners at Ampact and AmeriCorps to discuss future partnership possibilities.

This was a difficult, strategic decision that was not made lightly. The Literacy Lab has deeply valued the opportunity to serve the Virginia community through the Leading Men Fellowship program and the Reading Corps / Early Learning Corps program, and it is with genuine regret that we announce the conclusion of both. We are profoundly grateful for the relationships we've

built and the impact we've achieved together in Virginia, making this decision particularly difficult.

## **STAYING IN TOUCH**

As we look to the future, The Literacy Lab is committed to leading culturally responsive, community-co-created, and intergenerational literacy initiatives. We know students deserve literacy programming that meets them where they are, amplifies their innate genius, and celebrates their cultures and identities. The organization is poised to innovate within the educational space, aiming to disrupt harmful cycles and foster a collaborative ecosystem for collective impact. This vision for the future is grounded in the experiences and successes of past initiatives while also being boldly oriented towards innovative practices that align with the most pressing needs of the communities served.

We are grateful for the support of our donors and state and local government partners through these transitions and are excited about the opportunities ahead. We invite you to continue following The Literacy Lab as we embark on this transformative journey, redefining what it means to serve our communities effectively and compassionately.

If you would like to engage with us as a thought partner on future opportunities or discuss any questions related to this update, please schedule a meeting with our team by reaching out to our Director of Government Relations, Aamir Mansoor, at [amansoor@theliteracylab.org](mailto:amansoor@theliteracylab.org).

With our deepest gratitude,

The Literacy Lab