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**HOPES Community Action Partnership, Inc. on Panel to Discuss Preschool
Expansion in Somerset County.**

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Somerset, New Jersey - On February 27, 2018, Barbara Panas, Education Manager, represented **HOPES Community Action Partnership (CAP), Inc.** on a panel to discuss Preschool Expansion in Somerset County, hosted by **Community Child Care Solutions** at the Department of Human Services Building in Somerville, New Jersey. Ms. Panas, who holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from New Jersey City University, is a well-respected expert in her field, and has served 17 years at **HOPES CAP, Inc.**, since she started as a preschool teacher at the Connors school in Hoboken.

The audience included private child care providers, providers contracted through the school districts, and staff from Head Start programs. Representatives from agencies in New Jersey that work closely with the preschool providers and school districts took part in the panel, which was facilitated by Mary Jane DiPaolo, Policy Specialist for **Community Child Care Solutions**. The panel consisted of Erika Kelley, Education Program Development Specialist for the **NJ Department of Education**, Melissa Parisi, Director of Early Childhood for the **New Brunswick Public Schools**, Cynthia Rice, Senior Policy Analyst for **Advocates for Children in New Jersey**, Maryanne Preztunik, **PreK Our Way** Representative, and Barbara Panas, Education Manager for **HOPES**.

Ms. Panas talked about HOPES' Head Start experience contracting with former Abbott Districts in Hoboken and Plainfield. **HOPES** serves over 1,000 children in New Jersey through a combination of Early Head Start/Head Start and State Preschool funding. **HOPES** Early Childhood Program in Somerset serves almost 200 children, birth to 5 years old. Ms. Panas focused her talking points to the lessons learned through the collaborations and how these can help guide partnerships in districts expected to receive Preschool Expansion funding in the near future. Ms. Panas also discussed how the collaborations have been instrumental in the integration of Federal Regulations for Head Start programs and State Funded Preschool requirements.

It was the goal of the panel to inform Child Care Providers in Somerset County about collaborating with their local districts, once the funding becomes available for Preschool Expansion in their service areas.

About HOPES Community Action Partnership, Inc.

HOPES CAP, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a member of the national network of Community Action Partnerships designated under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, with locations in Hoboken, Plainfield, and Somerset, New Jersey. HOPES has been serving primarily low-income individuals and families for over 53 years. The mission of HOPES is to provide services that respond to the social, educational and training needs of individuals in an effort to overcome barriers and fight the causes of poverty. HOPES empowers people of all ages: more than 1,000 children from birth to 5 years old for school readiness, and over 3,000 youth, adults, and seniors towards economic self-sufficiency.

For more information about HOPES' preschool, please visit <https://www.hopes.org/preschooler>. Follow HOPES on Facebook and Twitter @HOPESCAPInc.



Left to right: Erika Kelley, Education Program Development Specialist for **NJ Department of Education**, Melissa Parisi, Director of Early Childhood for the **New Brunswick Public Schools**, Barbara Panas, Education Manager for **HOPES CAP, Inc.** and Mary Jane DiPaolo, Policy Specialist for **Community Child Care Solutions**.

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