

**Testimony at the DC Council Committee of the Whole
Budget Oversight Hearing on Funding for Programs in the
Birth-to-Three for All DC Act
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(These comments reflect my personal opinion and do not represent any of my current or past affiliations.)

I'm Jim Sandman, a long-time DC resident. Among my roles has been Managing Partner of Arnold & Porter, President of the Legal Services Corporation, President of the District of Columbia Bar, chairman of the board of the Meyer Foundation, and chairman of the board of DC Campaign to End Teen Pregnancy. I care a great deal about the quality of life of all DC residents. Both as a business person and as an active citizen, I believe in the importance of investing in our youngest children through the programs supported through the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act. I ask for your support in fulfilling the promise of this law.

I believe that success requires both a good education and the social-emotional skills to be flexible, adaptable, resilient, and persistent. Research that shows the foundation for those skills is laid in the earliest years of life. A long-term study examined the social-emotional skills of 800 kindergarteners and followed them until age 25. Children with higher social-emotional skills in kindergarten were 54 percent more likely to earn a high school diploma, twice as likely to attain a college degree, and 46 percent more likely to have a full-time job at age 25.¹ And we can't wait until kindergarten: children build the brain architecture for those skills much earlier, starting even during pregnancy.

When I was at Arnold & Porter, we created a full-time, onsite child care center because we knew our employees needed a safe, nurturing, educational place for their children. Every working parent has that need, but the District's child care sector has been hard-hit recently. Our elected leaders have started to shore up the child care sector, in recognition of the value it brings to the District. I appreciate the emergency federal funding for this year that will plug some of the worst holes.

¹ Jones, D. E., Greenberg, M., & Crowley, M. (2015). Early social-emotional functioning and public health: The relationship between kindergarten social competence and future wellness. *American Journal of Public Health*, 195, 2283-2290. Retrieved from: <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302630>

But we're not yet giving our youngest children, especially our Black and Brown children, the start in life that will fulfill their potential. In the District, 21% of children under age five and 37% of Black children live in families below the poverty line, making it impossible to afford quality early education. Child care for infants and toddlers costs an average of \$2020 per month in the District- the highest cost in the country. This figure is three times public college tuition and more than a third higher than the average monthly rent. A typical family in the District would have to spend *more than half its income* on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old.² This is not realistic if we are to have a healthy community.

We already have several elements of the system necessary to support our current and future workforce, including our nation-leading prekindergarten for all 3- and 4-year olds. But especially for Black and Latinx children and parents significant gaps remain, which have worsened dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to fill those gaps through quality early education and care and other proven programs for families, such as home visiting and health care.

There are many demands on public resources. But the foundation for a successful, vibrant DC lies in a workforce that can be productive on the job now and in the future. If we're investing to support hotels, restaurants and retail, then surely we should be moving heaven and earth to save the child care businesses that make it possible for DC residents to work in the service industry - and other sectors. Investing the requested recurring \$60 million in FY 2022 to take an important step towards fulfilling the promise of the Birth-to-Three law lays the foundation for the rest of our recovery and our ability to thrive in the future.

² Economic Policy Institute. "The cost of child care in Washington, D.C." October 2020. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/DC>