



February 3, 2022

The Honorable Mayor Muriel Bowser
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

We, the undersigned members of the Under 3 DC coalition, urge you to deepen public investments in the District's early childhood system in your upcoming FY 2023 budget and in the FY 2022 supplemental budget. As you are well aware, a robust early childhood community is vital for the District's economic well being, but COVID-19 continues to pose challenges in the lives of children and families across our city. We are grateful for your administration's allocation of federal child care relief funds throughout the pandemic, and the steps you have taken to help the community rebuild and keep its doors open.

In this pivotal moment of our city's recovery, we ask that you continue to respond to the urgent needs of this vital sector by deepening local investments for programs that have kept families healthy throughout these challenging times, ensure that fair compensation reaches our talented workforce so they can continue to care for their families as they continue to care for ours, and direct local funds to support thousands of families facing the possibility of eviction.

DC families need a FY 2022 supplemental and FY 2023 budget that demonstrates DC's leadership and commitment to the wellbeing of our infants and toddlers, and those who care for them.

We urge you to develop the budgets the District needs **by making the following choices:**

**Ensure Early Education Compensation Funds Reach Teachers' Pockets in
FY 2022 and Each Year of the FY 2023-2026 Financial Plan**

The District's historic investment in raising teacher pay for our city's early childhood workforce represents a strong first step in strengthening our system. In total, the funds for early educator compensation in FY 2022 and across the FY 2023-2026 financial plan amount to more than \$275 million. The next steps should be to:

- Make sure that \$53.9 million in the Early Educator Compensation Fund gets into the hands of educators as soon as possible this fiscal year, according to the

recommendations of the Early Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force. These recommendations include:

- Minimize loss of public benefits for early educators accessing supplemental pay (including by partnering with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF), where needed)
 - Conduct extensive and effective outreach to early educators to inform them of pay supplements
 - Provide ample technical assistance to help educators apply for and understand the impact of pay supplements on their benefits
 - Ensure that all applications, communications, outreach, and technical assistance occur in teachers' preferred languages.
- Develop the necessary infrastructure to implement recommendations from the Early Educator Compensation Task Force to ensure our workforce reaches pay and benefits parity with their DCPS counterparts in FY 2023 and beyond.
 - Ensure the \$72.9 million dedicated to raising teacher compensation in FY 2023 is implemented in accordance with the recommendations put forth by the Early Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force.
 - Protect the \$12.8 million dedicated to child care from the Sports Wagering Lottery Amendment Act of 2018 to ensure it goes to the child care sector beginning in FY 2024.

DC's early childhood educators overwhelmingly earn low wages, with many living near the poverty line.¹ However, the District's capacity to grow the supply of and improve access to high-quality child care is heavily dependent on our ability to attract and retain highly qualified early educators who can respond to the unique needs and challenges children face. As families return to work, our city depends on child care programs that can pay their educators more fair and equitable salaries commensurate with their background and experiences and reflecting the real value of the important work they perform.

Allocate at Least \$700,000 to Expand Behavioral Health Supports in Child Care Development Settings

Increase Public Investments in Healthy Futures

Increasing funding for the [Healthy Futures](#) program by at least \$700,000 will enable the Department of Behavioral Health to make much needed updates to the program's infrastructure, hire personnel, and increase the program's capacity to expand by 25 to 35 additional child development facilities next fiscal year. These steps will significantly advance our efforts to reach

¹ Julia Isaacs et. al, "Early Childhood Educator Compensation in the Washington Region," the Urban Institute, See Table 6; wages in 2016 dollars. April 2018.
https://www.urban.org/research/publication/early-childhood-educator-compensation-washington-region/view/full_report.

all subsidy-participating child care development programs in the District. The funds could be used to hire three to five new consultants and more supervisors, with additional funds to cover overhead costs associated with the additional professionals and implementation of the program. We urge DBH to provide equitable support to all eligible family child care homes and centers throughout its expansion to new early learning programs in FY 2022, 2023, and beyond, so that all programs can equally benefit from the capacity-building support Healthy Futures provides.

Throughout the pandemic, DBH has pivoted significantly to support child care programs and families by adapting to virtual communication platforms and offering programming designed around families' current needs. In addition to providing workshops, webinars, and consultations, program staff have deepened their impact in early learning programs by continuing to facilitate needs assessments and implementation plans with program directors, both new and existing. Much of the work done by the Healthy Futures staff includes building the capacity of early educators and family members, preventing escalation of challenging behaviors, and referring students to outside support all in service of improving outcomes for children, families, and the entire educational community.

Allocate at least \$300,000 to expand the District's HealthySteps program

Increase Developmental Support for Infants and Toddlers in Pediatric Primary Care Settings

We strongly support the expansion of the HealthySteps program to reach more District families in need of parent- and child-focused health support services. The funds allocated in DC Health's FY 2022 budget are sufficient to expand the HealthySteps program to at least one additional site, and we applaud DC Health's efforts to reach communities where these resources are limited. Increasing public investments in the District's HealthySteps program by at least \$300,000 (recurring) in the FY 2023 budget will fund an additional [HealthySteps](#) site and further the Birth-to-Three for All DC expansion of the family health support program, effectively deepening our investments in communities where we know enhanced pediatric primary care services are needed the most.

As a central place to address child health needs, pediatricians' offices are the ideal sites to place developmental specialists who can provide children and parents with additional attention, resources, and strategies for supporting infants' and toddlers' development, including helping to address barriers caused by the pandemic. By deepening investments in the HealthySteps program, we can ensure that more children and families get the life changing services they need to thrive.

Increase funding for CFSA and DC Health home visiting programs to reflect their important work, and make funds recurring

Fund Home Visiting Programs in Line with Caseloads, Workforce Shortages, and Inflation

We strongly support a 15% increase to existing home visiting grants at CFSA and DC Health—totaling about \$369,000 - to adjust for inflation since 2019 and to enable programs to adapt to the increased demands on their workforce and resources to support families during this

pandemic. We also request that you restore, on a recurring basis, \$310,000 for CFSA home visiting programs, which support important populations but have depended on unstable one-time dollars for too long. Increasing funding amounts for the home visiting programs - many of which have received flat funding since 2019 or earlier - is critical to the well-being of District families they serve.

DC's home visiting programs have been a vital touchpoint for families to receive long-term personalized support and stay connected to city-wide programs and services they otherwise may face barriers to accessing. Home visitors help build confidence in parents and families during the early years of their child's life and tailor their services to each family's individual needs.

While home visiting programs have successfully pivoted to a virtual setting since 2020, the pandemic has put intense pressure on the programs and family participants. Participants are facing more severe needs, and as a result, home visitors are now focusing on time-consuming but needed crisis-intervention support, in addition to their standard services. Programs are seeing an increase in the need for resources and connections to other systems to accommodate the everyday challenges that the pandemic has created for families. Without increasing demands on programs, additional investments would help programs meet the higher demand for resources for families and allow programs also to address workforce needs, including increased workloads for home visitors during a staff shortage and difficulty hiring at current pay rates.

Provide families with full and immediate rental relief to prevent an eviction crisis

Support Families Facing Possible Eviction

The Under 3 DC coalition works to strengthen the District's early childhood system. We know that parents, children, and educators are among the over 40,000 families facing the possibility of eviction due to rental arrears. For this reason, we support the DC Fiscal Policy Institute's request that you use a portion of the FY 2021 surplus, the District's reserves, or other local funds available to provide full and immediate rental and utility assistance in order to prevent an eviction and utility cut off crisis. Being evicted causes trauma, disruption of education and employment, and poorer health outcomes for those impacted. We urge you to do everything you can to keep families in their homes.

Many families with young children have struggled to make ends meet long before the pandemic. Public data show that the pandemic has exacerbated DC families' ability to access health, education, and financial security. While the federally-sourced financial relief your administration has provided to the early learning community, which is primarily led by Black women, has helped keep their businesses open, they are clear that sustained long-term investments are still needed. We hope you will do everything in your power to help the District's children, families, and educators thrive.

Sincerely,
Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.
Bright Beginnings, Inc
CentroNía
Children's Law Center
Children's National Hospital
Community Educational Research Group
Community of Hope
DC Action
DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
DC Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
DC Early Learning Collaborative (DCELC)
DC Family Child Care Association
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
DC for Democracy
DC Head Start Association
DC Hunger Solutions
DC Jobs with Justice
Directors Exchange
District of Columbia Association for the Education of Young Children (DCAEYC)
Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN)
Easterseals DC MD VA
Educare DC
EmpowerED
Greater DC Diaper Bank
Happy Faces ELA
Jews United for Justice
Jubilee Housing
Low Income Investment Fund
Many Languages One Voice (MLOV)
Martha's Table
Mary's Center
MomsRising/MamásConPoder
Multicultural Spanish Speaking Providers Association (MSSPA)
National Children's Center
Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)
Point of Care Childcare
SPACeS in Action
Washington Area Women's Foundation

cc:

Barbara J. Bazron, Director, Department of the Behavioral Health
Christina Grant, State Superintendent for Education
Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education
Robert Matthews, Director, Child and Family Services Agency
Jenny Reed, Director, Office of Budget and Performance Management
Wayne Turnage, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and Director, Department of Health Care Finance
Laura Zeilinger, Director, Department of Human Services
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Councilmember Brooke Pinto
Councilmember Mary Cheh
Councilmember Janeese Lewis George
Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie
Councilmember Charles Allen
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Councilmember Christina Henderson
Councilmember Elissa Silverman
Councilmember Robert White