



December 7, 2022

Dear Mayor Bowser,

Thank you for your work to ensure that DC leads the nation in securing better futures for infants and toddlers. From your use of ARPA funds to stabilize the child care sector to your implementation of pay supplements for early childhood educators, your administration has made important strides in rebuilding child care for the children and families of the District during complex and uncertain times for the child care industry both locally and nationally.

As you identify your budget priorities for FY 2024, please consider deepening your essential work in **early childhood education**. You can do this by improving access to and quality in early childhood education by ensuring that directors of early learning programs receive pay commensurate with the credentials required by OSSE licensing beginning in December of this year. We estimate that increasing salaries for this workforce would require an annual investment of about **\$14.7 million**.¹

Much like school principals, early learning program directors [set the educational tone of the program, train and support educators, and manage their facilities' administrative and financial well-being](#). In 2016, your administration, as part of OSSE's commitment to "increasing access to quality, affordable child care in the District of Columbia," raised "the minimum education requirements for the early childhood workforce in DC," including for program directors. By mandating that directors attain a minimum of a Bachelor's degree, your administration has acknowledged that what early learning program directors know and do has a significant bearing on the quality of education young children receive. We ask you to deepen this acknowledgment by pairing OSSE's credentialing requirements for directors with the resources to pay directors commensurate with those credentials.

Better pay for program directors is an investment in quality, sustainable early education leadership that could:

- Motivate more directors to stay in the field as they face growing wage compression and incentivize quality leadership in the childcare sector upon which the District's entire workforce depends;
- Encourage the stability and growth of the child care sector, so that more children and families have access to quality early childhood education opportunities, and we're building a more inclusive economic comeback;
- Ensure equity and fair pay for the long-undervalued workforce of primarily Black and brown women who lead early learning programs in the District; and,

¹ In an attempt to parallel the Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force's approach to early childhood educator salaries, our estimate is based on the cost of increasing salaries for 385 directors with a BA degree to 20 percent higher than teachers with a BA degree. We used OSSE's cost of care to estimate the current salaries of directors of subsidy programs and assumed that all other directors are paid similarly to the salary for directors of "progressing" rated centers.

- Ultimately, make it possible for more workers and families to continue affording to live in the District.

As you know, preserving and improving the quality, accessibility, and affordability of child care is an ongoing need of the system. OSSE needs all existing investments to continue addressing each of these dimensions of child care. As you consider funding early learning program director salary increases in your FY 2024 budget, we ask you to preserve all existing funding for child care. This includes local child care subsidy dollars, TANF funds for child care subsidy, the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, and dedicated funding from sports wagering.

Finally, we ask that salary increases for directors occur alongside effective implementation of the Pay Equity Fund early educator pay increases and health benefits. A strong design for the equity adjustment that ensures that children in families with the most significant barriers experience the greatest benefit. If effective implementation of the Pay Equity Fund requires additional funding, we hope you will make those resources available to OSSE.

We are grateful for your consideration of this request and believe it is an essential step toward our mutual goal of more high-quality, affordable child care seats for the children and families of the District. We welcome your questions and request a meeting soon to discuss this further.

Sincerely,
Under 3 DC

Advocates for Justice and Education
Bread for the City
Bright Beginnings
Centro Nia
Community Educational Research Group
Children's Law Center
Community of Hope
DC Action
DC American Academy of Pediatrics
DC Appleseed
DC Association for the Education of Young Children
DC Early Learning Collaborative
DC Family Child Care Association
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
DC for Democracy
DC Head Start Association
DC Hunger Solutions
DC Jobs With Justice
DC Directors Exchange

Early Childhood Innovation Network
Easterseals DC MD VA
Educare DC
EmpowerED
Fair Budget Coalition
Greater DC Diaper Bank
Happy Faces Early Learning Academy
Jews United for Justice
Jubilee Housing
Kiddie University
Lia's Rainbow
Low Income Investment Fund
Martha's Table
Mary's Center
MD/DC Hands & Voices
MLOV (Many Languages One Voice)
MomsRising/MamásConPoder
Mothers Outreach Network
National Children's Center
National Women's Law Center

NOVA Birth Partners
Nurse-Family Partnership National Service
Office
Parents Amplifying Voices in Education
(PAVE)

Point of Care Childcare
SPACEs in Action
United Planning Organization
Washington Area Women's Foundation