



December 7, 2022

Dear Mayor Bowser,

We applaud your commitment to the earliest years of a child's life. You have long recognized that early childhood is a critical time of rapid development. Importantly, it is a time to ensure parents get the support and services they need as early as conception to ultimately set their children on the best possible trajectory for their future. As the pandemic continues and we look to address the growing behavioral health crisis in the District, we must not forget the critical need for investment in the District's youngest residents and their families. Providing prevention and early intervention services in the District, especially in accessible settings, is critical to this work.

You have been a strong advocate for DC's infants, toddlers, and caregivers, making significant investments in this population. As we reflect on where we have come from and where we are going, we ask that you **maintain and deepen public investments in key prevention and early intervention programs and services in your upcoming FY 2024 budget**. Specifically, we ask you to:

- **Maintain funding in two of DC's successful prevention and early intervention programs, HealthySteps and Healthy Futures.**
- **Increase funding for CFSA and DC Health home visiting programs**

A strong FY 2024 budget will reflect a commitment to the wellbeing of DC's infants and toddlers, and those who care for them. Below, we describe how and why these investments can make a difference for the families of young children.

Maintain funding in two of DC's successful prevention and early intervention programs, HealthySteps and Healthy Futures.

Over the past five years, the District has significantly invested in expanding HealthySteps and Healthy Futures. These investments have allowed DC infants and toddlers and their caregivers to connect more quickly with the support, services, and resources they need to have a strong beginning to life. The expansion of these programs has been vital to the District's prevention and early intervention efforts in settings that children and families already access.

The HealthySteps model has numerous positive outcomes for child and family health. HealthySteps is a critical investment in ensuring young children and families in Wards 7 and 8, where the sites currently are located, more easily have access to a variety of physical and behavioral health supports and services. Now, HealthySteps, through local funds, is fully operating at three pediatric sites, is being implemented at two more, and is funded for another location to be set up in FY 2023, bringing the total to six locally funded sites in DC.

Similarly, Healthy Futures has expanded across the District over the last five years. Despite some challenges due to the ongoing pandemic and its impact on child development centers and home providers, Healthy Futures has persevered, been adaptive, and risen to the challenges in the past few years. Healthy Futures works in 87 child development centers and home providers across the District. 5,484 District children ages birth to five in the city have access to a program that provides upstream prevention services and connections to early intervention services, which can help alleviate the need for acute clinical care later in the child's life. Additionally, Healthy Futures is preparing for an evaluation of the program. It will be an opportunity to collect data and gain knowledge to guide critical decisions regarding Healthy Futures.

In times of expansion, programs must maintain fidelity to the models they are executing. Both HealthySteps and Healthy Futures have worked to ensure the quality of their programs. While maintaining fidelity, these programs have also had impressive expansions, especially in the context of numerous challenges, including a workforce shortage. While growth is critical, FY2024 will be a vital time for focusing on continued strong implementation, and program reflection and assessment to ensure continued success. **In FY 2024, we ask that you maintain the funding so these programs may stabilize, strengthen, and, most importantly, continue to serve DC's infants and toddlers and their families.**

Increase funding for CFSA and DC Health home visiting programs

We strongly support **an overall \$1 million increase to existing home visiting grants at DC Health and CFSA** to adjust for inflation since 2019, fund higher wages for home visiting staff, and to enable programs to adapt to the increased demands on their workforce and provide resources to support families during this pandemic. We also request **that the \$500,000 for DC Health home visiting programs** that DC Health recently removed from one program's FY 2023 budget continue to be invested into home visiting services in the District.

With increased funding, home visiting programs will better be able to resolve the current workforce retention challenges they face and ultimately provide families with more stable, high-quality support. Home visitors are leaving their roles due to low pay and seeking other opportunities. This turnover disrupts the care and relationship between the home visitor and the families they support. Additionally, some programs do not have the capacity to serve the expected amount of families because of these constant vacancies. But often, funding agencies still penalize these understaffed organizations for failing to reach the full utilization of the program. Therefore, District home visiting programs are often in a vicious cycle, which is difficult to rebound from without more investment in workers' wages. Additional funding would allow programs to lift themselves out of the cycle. With this increased investments, programs will be able to increase compensation for their staff for better retention, ensure families continue to receive uninterrupted care from their home visitors, and focus on operating at their optimal capacity without concerns about unstable funding.

Moreover, increasing funding for the home visiting programs - many of which have received flat funding since 2019 or earlier - is critical to District families' well-being. 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.

Thank you for considering these FY 2024 budget requests. We look to you as a partner in this vital work, helping to ensure early on that infants, toddlers, and caregivers have the support, resources, and services that best meet their needs and future successes. 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
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Parents Amplifying Voices in Education
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Point of Care Childcare
SPACEs in Action
United Planning Organization
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