



UNDER 3 DC

Establishing A
New Normal For
Early Education

2021 - 2022 Impact Report

Our Values

All children deserve a strong beginning and a limitless future. Our work will be successful because we lead with our values, stand in our convictions, and engage in innovative strategies.





Racial Justice:

Addressing racism is central to Under 3 DC.



Economic Mobility:

Being poor is not a character flaw. Not being able to afford more doesn't mean you don't deserve better.



True Diversity:

There is power in a coalition consisting of different economic, gender, generational, institutional, and professional voices.



Real Ownership:

People closest to the pain should be closest to the power, driving and informing the work.



Structural Equity:

Our near-term wins should also serve the long-term District vision that remedies systemic disparities.



Leverage Strengths:

We are all experts in our own areas. So, we honor and build on the strengths, knowledge, and skills of our communities.

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Letter from the Interim Director

Letter from Interim Under 3 DC Director, Kimberly Perry, and Director of Early Childhood, Ruqiyah Anbar-Shaheen (2021-22 Under 3 DC Director)

Are we the only ones still pinching ourselves? In 2017, as Councilmember Vince Gray introduced the Birth-to-Three Act, we remember wondering how we would get to the finish line: a fully funded and implemented law that would improve the lives of infants and toddlers and their families. When the law passed, we started to celebrate so loudly that we were asked to leave the Wilson Building hearing room- only to celebrate loudly in the hallway. At the same time, the advocacy and people power we knew we would need to push the District to fund and implement the law, guided by shared equity goals, weighed heavily on us through the joy. Thinking back on those moments of excitement and uncertainty, where we are today, has us in awe. 2021 was incredible: a historic budget win (\$75 million for pay equity!) and a stronger, more united, and inclusive community. In 2022, we saw the first round of early educator pay supplements and health insurance become a reality.

The heroes of this story are people and relationships. A quote of Audre Lorde's that I often come back to is:

“Without community, there is no liberation.”

Our community grew in numbers and depth

because our staff and coalition members dedicated themselves to learning about each other and building consensus, partnership, and trust. These relationships made it possible for us to pivot in the face of the unexpected, lean into each other when things seemed impossible, and believe in our own strength and power.

A moment that we will remember for a long time is setting our budget request in 2021. Some lawmakers warned that we should tread carefully in the pandemic economy and that one-time federal funds should satisfy us. Yet, we did not retreat. Our team assembled the data to assure us that a bold request was reasonable. Providers and teachers confidently put their flag in the ground, saying, “We know what we need, and it is long overdue, so let's not shy away from asking for it: \$60 million.” When we are uncertain and worn down, we will remember and take strength from the clarity of purpose that our community showed that day and in the months following, even as the challenges intensified and evolved.

Our final note is of gratitude to the teachers and families of young children who are at the core of everything we do: Thank you. You bore a heavy weight this year, and we see you. If you haven't yet, join us. Let's continue transforming our city.

**Onward,
Kimberly and Ruqiyah**



Evolution Of Early Learning in the District of Columbia

From the DC Early Learning Collaborative

Early educator compensation parity is a major game-changer as the District seeks to provide high-quality programs and services for children from birth to age three. However, while essential to improving the quality of early care and education, salary parity is only one piece of the birth-to-three quality improvement puzzle. If we really want to ensure that ALL young children in the District of Columbia reach their full potential, we must put the following pieces into play:

- 1** Develop a comprehensive plan that includes the systematic training and credentialing of a cadre of early care and education practitioners and leaders fully steeped in high-quality infant and toddler development theory and practice.
- 2** Develop champions of infants and toddlers, including in government, philanthropy, and business.
- 3** Develop a ward-by-ward strategy that engages and educates stakeholders regarding the developmental and economic benefits of high-quality infant and toddler programs, with a special focus on parents and families.

Member Logos



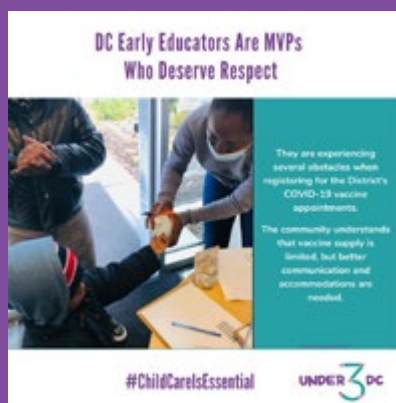
Under 3 DC Campaign Advances Despite the Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic placed extraordinary pressure on the early learning community. The public health crisis necessitated that Under 3 DC pivot the first-year campaign plan to address safety, prevent program closures, and advocate for federal relief.

In this, our second campaign year, we faced similar tension. However, the growing public presence of the early learning community—and our success in making the argument that child care is essential to the District’s economic recovery—advanced our coalition in the advocacy space, enabling Under 3 DC to move beyond asking just for stabilization funds. Through the collective work of our coalition, we pressed policymakers for \$60 million to stabilize the sector, keep child care centers and family child care homes in business, and help parents get back to work.

We brought attention to the economic devastation felt by many educators and providers who answered the call to return to work early in the crisis, risking the health of their families and themselves as the public health emergency continued. For example, the District’s introduction of COVID vaccines excluded infant and toddler educators and other early learning staff from priority access to the vaccine in favor of educators in PreK-12 settings. This inequity threatened the health of educators, young children, and the stability of the early learning workforce who were already overwhelmed and historically underpaid.

Vaccine Access Rapid Response Effort Leads to Policy Reversal

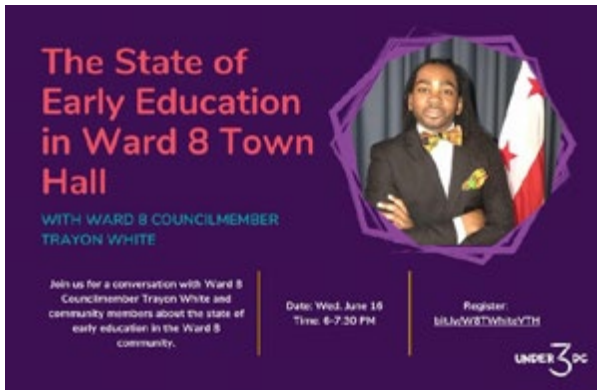


In an attempt to reverse Mayor Bowser’s COVID vaccine policy, Under 3 DC led a tightly coordinated rapid response effort. This included a series of nearly 30 media appearances by early educators, providers, and advocates. Hundreds of social media posts proved popular, with some reaching more than 10,000 engagements. The weight of public pressure convinced Mayor Bowser to extend infant-toddler teachers the same vaccine access as public and charter school teachers!

Photo courtesy of EducareDC

Listening and Learning to Construct an Effective Strategy

To assess and successfully address immediate challenges facing early education, DC Action conducted an in-depth [survey](#) of early learning programs in advance of the budget session to learn how the pandemic continued to impact the sector. The survey asked questions about day-to-day operations (e.g. budget, subsidy reimbursement payments, attendance, program offerings, and staffing) and about their business' likelihood of survival as the pandemic continued. The findings revealed that one-third of child care businesses remained closed as 2020 was nearing an end. The disturbing data from the survey motivated the coalition to host a series of virtual forums and town halls for early learning program staff to share their pandemic survival stories.



Under 3 DC organizers worked to boost attendance at the town halls and engage participants using a variety of outreach tools, including one-on-one and community meetings, and digital texting campaigns. Our legislative staff worked around the clock ensuring DC Councilmembers and staff were invited and included in the forum and town hall discussions. We shared the alarming survey findings, knowing they understood how essential child care is to the District economy. Councilmembers, including Trayon White (D-Ward 8), Charles Allen (D-Ward 6), and Council Chair Phil Mendelson (D) accepted invitations to listen and learn from their constituents.

The Under 3 DC Campaign Effectively Responds to the Looming Workforce Crisis

Next up was sounding the alarm to bring attention to the growing workforce crisis. Pandemic-related job furloughs, layoffs, and child care business closures pushed many educators and early learning staff to seek employment elsewhere. Citing chronically low compensation and impending credential requirement deadlines looming, some made the career change permanent, with program directors scrambling to find and hire new teachers.

As all of this advocacy work was happening, the federal budget landscape was shifting beneath our feet. Waiting for federal agency guidance on incoming relief dollars forced the District's lawmakers to push the start of the annual budget session—twice. The long year brought new challenges, but also expanded our campaign to include new voices determined to create an equitable early learning system for all children.



Enough Is Enough: Early Educators Join Under 3 DC to Raise Their Voices

After a year during which early educators joined the front lines of those working to support the District's first responders during a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, many saw their work hours reduced or lost their jobs altogether. Their dedication to educating and caring for the District's youngest children did not prevent them from joining the ranks of those unemployed because of COVID-19.

The public health emergency proved to be a tipping point. Educators risking their health and the health of their families only to earn barely enough money to get by was the last straw for many who [exited the early childhood space](#) for employment elsewhere. After first hearing policymakers discuss the possibility of a compensation increase in 2018 around the time of Birth-to-Three's unanimous passage by the DC Council, they were done feeling undervalued for their specialized work.

Teachers who managed to stick around were ready for a fight, tired of the status quo, but committed to educating and caring for our infants and toddlers. Some even proposed a strike. A change was inevitable for an industry with a majority Black-and brown-woman workforce and remnants of a racist past.

Covid Vaccine Equity Fight Laid Groundwork for Budget Season

Our policy win that led to the Bowser administration's inclusion of early childhood educators in its early COVID vaccine policy grew the base of support among DC residents ready to increase early educator compensation and increased the engagement of educators in our coalition. Teachers and providers previously hesitant to get involved in the campaign began to show up at coalition meetings and town halls to learn more about our plan to advance Birth-to-Three. They

participated in advocacy and storytelling sessions and meetings to understand the components of the law.

Child care teachers, program directors, and providers were ready to go once the budget season began, testifying at record numbers at DC Council hearings, participating in meetings with councilmembers, sending emails and making phone calls, and participating in in-person actions like the Child Care-A-Van.



Child care providers greet At-Large Councilmember Christina Henderson as part of the Child-Care-A-Van Action

The engagement and participation of the early learning community were critical to policy and budget wins this year. Without their leadership, impactful storytelling, and refusal to accept the status quo, it is doubtful that a majority of DC Councilmembers would vote to raise revenue for the sector with a tax increase.



“

Like so many child care businesses throughout the District of Columbia, I am experiencing business instability.”

Alethea Etinoff, Home-Based Early Educator

After expenses, my proposed personal income due to family size would be considered low-income. This is the reason so many early childhood educators qualify for Medicaid. For me, savings is a wish because (as a business owner) I must keep up with the District’s many strict regulations. I do not own a car because the cost associated with car ownership is a luxury I can not currently afford without overextending my finances. The only way for me to currently afford life insurance for myself and my family is to live a life of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

We are living in a time where credit is king. How do I build and maintain the average DC credit score of 713 if I don’t have a stable income to make my business more appealing to creditors?

A lot of the city’s focus is on quality child care. However, the implementation for achieving that appears to be turning all child care facilities into cookie-cutter businesses established by the District without the benefit of them compensating us well enough to become employee-based facilities. Providing benefits such as quality health insurance would ensure I am a healthy, quality educator running a quality business.



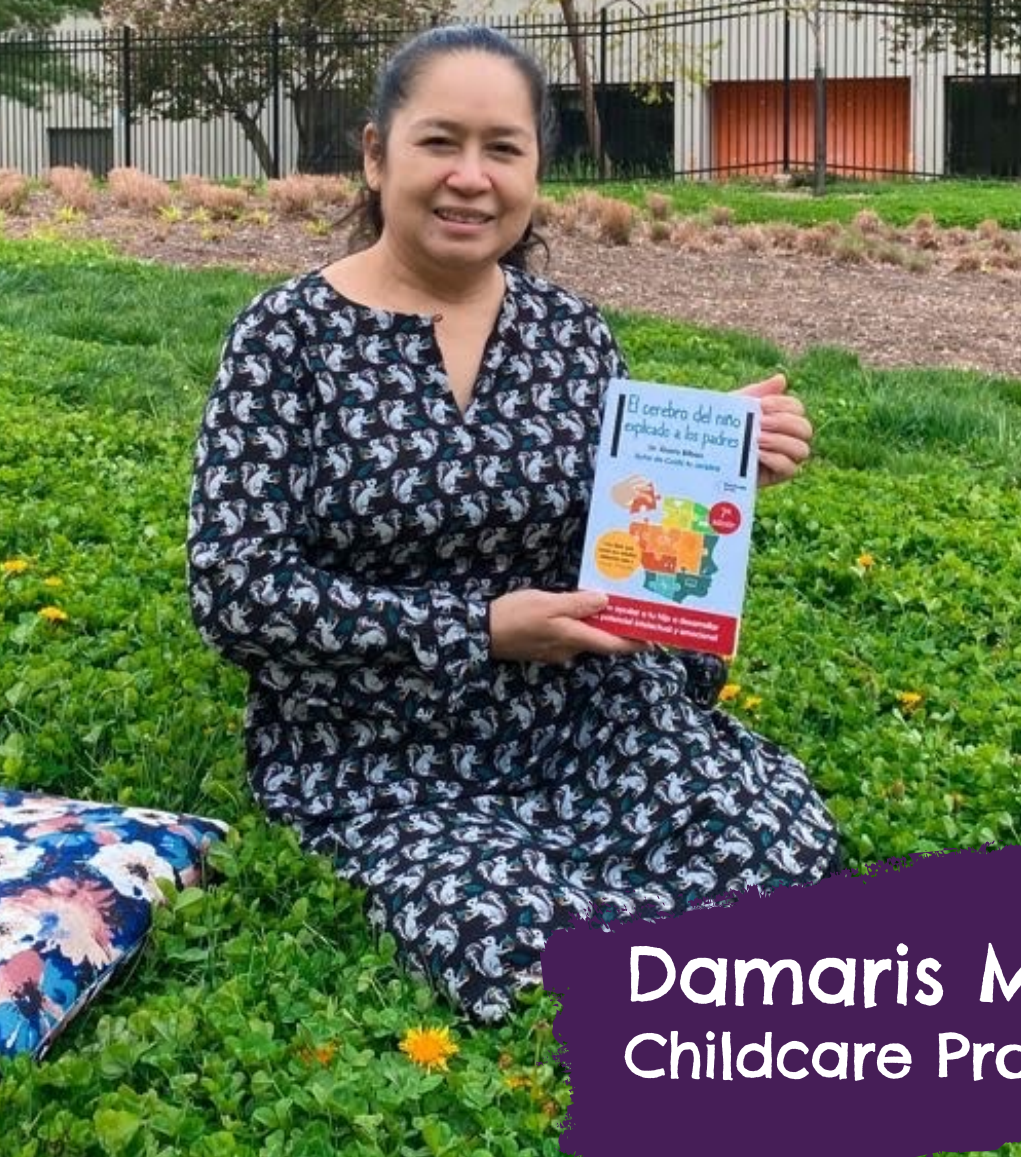
Jamal Berry,

Vice President of Programs at Educare DC,
President of the DC Head Start Association,
and Co-chair of the Under 3 DC Program
Funding and Compensation Committee.

“
I have spent my career in early childhood education. I have worked as a master teacher, school director, and more. In each of these roles, I have seen firsthand the power of investing in the workforce.”

At Educare, we provide embedded professional development that supports high-quality teaching practices, and through private fundraising, we can pay teachers a competitive wage, health insurance, and retirement benefits. As a result, we retain 93% of staff.

One of our teachers started working at Educare DC in May 2014 as a teacher aide. At the time, she had a bachelor's degree and was qualified to be in a higher-level position. However, we worked together to create a professional development plan. We agreed she should learn more about developmentally appropriate teaching practices aligned with children's age, developmental status, individual needs, and be responsive to social and cultural contexts. I had the honor of supporting her as she developed and grew into an assistant teacher in 2015 and a lead teacher in 2016,. She is now a senior lead teacher.



“

I have been working in the early childhood field for 15 years and I am very happy to be a part of this very important stage in a child's life.”

Damaris Mejia, Childcare Provider

I have not been able to work with children in the subsidy program as of yet. I am worried that many low-income children cannot access a high-quality program like mine because the system that DC currently has is not inclusive, both for families and for providers who are non-English proficient. I would like the process of applying for subsidies to be easier to manage and accessible to Spanish speakers.

As people who work to care for children, our earnings are very low. In 2019, my income was \$11,000 after I paid all my expenses. Our occupancy capacity is very limited. DC has a very high demand for programs like mine, and as a provider, I understand the importance of economic support to lift families up and support them. Latino families should not have to move outside the city because they cannot afford rent and cannot afford to pay for the care of their children.



Our Impact in 2021

In a year of continuing emotional and financial challenges for the early learning community, both in the District and in states and cities across the country, Under 3 DC mobilized early learning leaders, educators, and advocates to achieve an unprecedented, landmark win. We are the first in the country to raise local revenue to publicly fund early educator compensation. The DC Council's Homes and Hearts Amendment, which increases income taxes on the District's highest earners yields an annual allocation of \$75 million to finance early educator compensation (by 2025) and puts the District on the road to advancing our goal of creating a truly equitable early learning system for all.

Growing leadership across the early learning community and more joint learning about effective organizing, policy, and storytelling moved our multi-year campaign forward this year, far beyond our original child care budget request. Strong advocacy to address immediate needs in the early childhood community strengthened our policy muscles and increased our media savvy.

Community Support Proved Critical to the Public Financing Win

Under 3 DC has been studying public financing options for Birth-to-Three since the passage of the legislation. Before COVID, we knew there would be strong headwinds working against us in our fight toward full funding. Once it became clear that Mayor Bowser and the DC Council would not prioritize funding for an equitable early childhood system, we knew a multi-year revenue-raising campaign was a must. When the pandemic hit, we joined a newly minted, local collaboration called Just Recovery DC.

Thank you for being a **child care champion** and supporting working families!



Just Recovery DC’s purpose was to push an advocacy agenda that demanded more pandemic recovery relief and long-term investment for communities of color heavily impacted by the crisis--including a severely underpaid—earning less than \$32,000 per year on average—early childhood workforce.

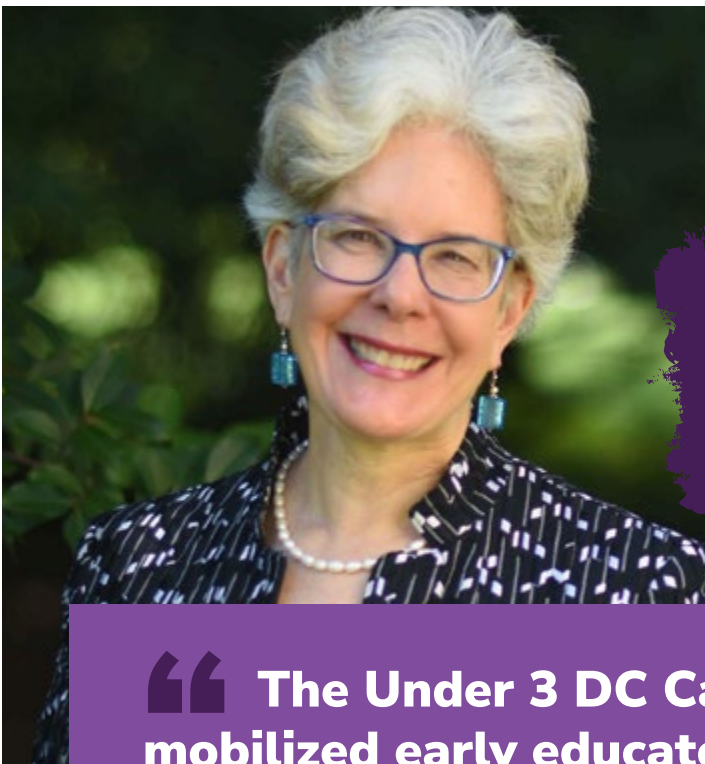
We felt the ground shifting in our favor once we saw the results of a poll commissioned by Under 3 DC coalition members DC Fiscal Policy Institute and DC Action. The poll responses revealed overwhelming support for asking residents earning more than \$250,000 to pay slightly higher taxes to fund child care and other public investments. Our increasingly strong relationships with several DC Councilmembers proved essential. Three Council allies, Councilmembers Charles Allen, Janeese Lewis George, and Brianne Nadeau, introduced legislation to raise the critical revenue, using the poll results as a guide.

Our clear messaging and storytelling engaged the broader community and built our base of supporters. Strategic earned media placements, including opinion pieces and feature news stories in the Washington Post and the Washington Informer, also proved essential to this shift. The stories moved many supporters to loudly articulate their horror that a majority of child care teachers make only slightly more than DC’s minimum wage. Residents found it hard to fathom trying to live in a place where the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment exceeds their average annual salary, forcing many to rely on SNAP and other safety-net programs to feed their families. The Under 3 DC Twitter feed was on fire during budget season, with residents frequently tagging the DC Council and Mayor Bowser. Many residents far removed from the early learning community testified at DC Council hearings, saying, “Raise my taxes!”

Much to our delight, the groundswell of community support, the poll results, and a consistent, well-organized effort from Under 3 DC and our friends and partners shifted policymaker support in our favor. The DC Council approved the tax increase legislation 8-5 with their first budget vote.

Once Again, DC is a National Early Childhood Trailblazer

Our coalition's work to organize and communicate clearly and powerfully enough to shape policy and catapult the District forward to be a national leader once again in early education was impossible to deny. DC Council Chair Phil Mendelson recited significant portions of our messaging that he heard throughout the budget season in his pre-budget vote press conference. We are now one of only three states in the nation, joining California and New Mexico, in prioritizing early education and its workforce. The \$75 million that will fund early educator compensation increases by 2025 (\$53 million in 2022) is a significant downpayment on Birth-to-Three. In fall of 2021, Chairman Mendelson established an Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force, which began work to shape recommendations for a compensation scale and pay equity program for early educators. The task force completed its work and issued a final report in April 2022.



Sara Watson, PhD
Early Childhood Policy Expert

“ The Under 3 DC Campaign smartly mobilized early educators, parents, business and civic leaders across the District, helping them convey a strong message about the importance of investments in DC’s future. Their leadership showed the power of making the case for supporting working parents and their children. DC’s current and future economic success depends on it. ”



Language Access is Essential to Building an Equitable Early Learning System

One of the pillars of the Birth-to-Three law is to expand access to high-quality child care, especially for low-income families who participate in the child care subsidy program. Limited-English Proficient (LEP) child care professionals have consistently faced significant challenges accessing resources in their native language. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the giant crack in the foundation of our social services and the District's lack of proper language access resources—especially for early childhood education and health programs.

Whether it's a family applying for child care assistance or a provider interested in accepting subsidies, the lack of bilingual staff at OSSE and a lack of implementation in language access institutionally means translated written materials and interpreters are not consistently accessible. As a result, many families are not finding affordable, quality care, and providers and educators are not receiving crucial licensing, accreditation, and degree requirement information to help them provide a high-quality learning environment.

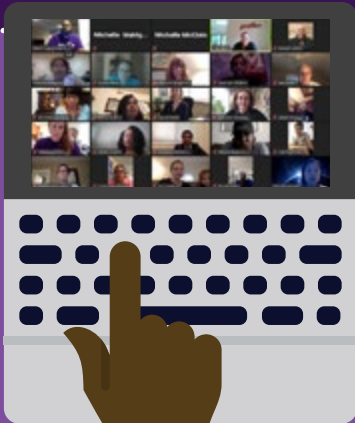
When LEP early learning professionals and families miss out on this information, they stay out of the system altogether. Instead, families find alternative settings such as leaving their children with older siblings, extended family, or neighbors. Educators and providers decide not to seek higher accreditation or degrees, or they choose to stay out of the subsidy program.

Spanish is the District's second most spoken language. The Spanish-speaking community told us that barriers in language accessibility permeate several areas of early education, and we responded by making the campaign more accessible. Interpreters are now at our coalition meetings and public events, and all of our written materials are translated, including fact sheets, policy briefs, and our monthly coalition newsletter.

Equity Means More Access

We realize it will be impossible to achieve the vision of Birth-to-Three without also addressing the lack of language access resources. As Under 3 DC continues, we will work to expand our umbrella to include other non-English speaking communities. Without meaningful investments in making early education available to all, the impact of our work will fall short of its intended goal.

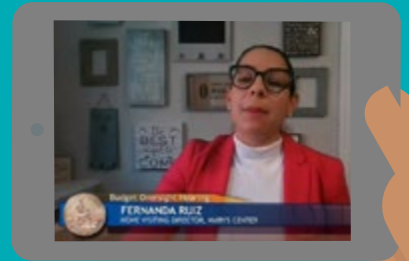
We Mobilized Communities To Speak Truth To Power



Organizing

Hosted 4 virtual town halls

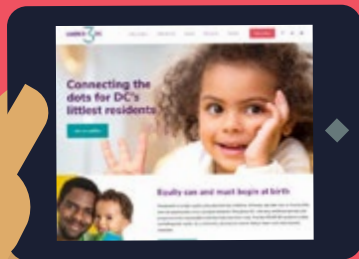
We brought together **150+** early learning professionals, parents, community leaders, and early childhood experts to meet with DC Council members, staff, and agency leaders. Coordinated and participated in **5 in-person events**, including a community baby shower, an early educator victory party celebrating our historic win, and the Build Back Better Capitol Hill Rally.



DC Budget Hearings

89 coalition members testified during hearings

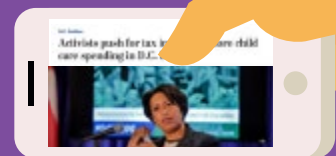
Our coalition's first year of providing live and written **Spanish-language testimony**.



Research and Policy

40+ meetings with DC Councilmembers

We shared the results of **4 surveys** from early educators and child care providers, **6 policy briefs**, and new Under 3 DC fact sheets about Birth-to-Three programs. **689 messages** from our Action Alerts were sent to Mayor Bowser and the DC Council.



Earned Media

35+ news stories and op-eds pushed our coalition forward

Among them were pieces in the Washington Post, Washington Informer, and DC Line, and on NBC4 and WAMU.

Owned Media

Our monthly bilingual newsletter **is a year old**. We grew our **Twitter presence** to include follows by many more elected officials, including DC Councilmembers, ANC Commissioners, and Bowser administration staff.



Impressions: **393,869**

Engagement: **1.4%**

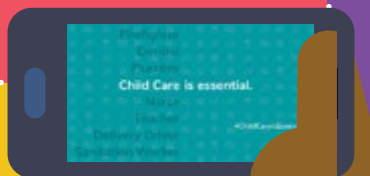
Followers: **162 new followers**

Retweets: **1,063**

Likes: **2,203**

Link Clicks: **816**

Mention: **223**



In 2022, Birth-to-Three Health and Education Programs Prove Their Value

In a year of high stress and continuing uncertainty, support for the District's early childhood health programs either maintained current funding or grew. The DC budget increased the number of sites where families can access child care and pediatric services through the HealthySteps and Healthy Futures. The budget also restores funding for the Lactation Certification Preparatory program. Help Me Grow and Home Visiting maintained consistent funding.



The effort to increase workforce compensation was the major attention-getter this year. The successful attempt to raise revenue will allocate \$53 million to fund compensation increases during the 2022 fiscal year. We anticipate that the work of the Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force will inform updates to Birth-to-Three education programs, including Child Care Subsidies, Early Care and Education Workforce Development, and Early Learning Quality Improvement Network (QIN).

Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

“ We must invest \$700 billion to fix our broken childcare system and ensure that women and families are not left behind in our recovery. Our legislation would guarantee all parents affordable access to safe and nurturing childcare and early learning opportunities for their kids ”

Said in the [statement](#) announcing the reintroduction of the [Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act](#) on April 27, 2021

From April 2021 Blog: Federal Relief to Save DC Child Care Push

Before the American Rescue Plan (which was passed by Congress in March 2021), the District of Columbia received two federal relief packages that contained dedicated funds for stabilizing the child care sector. The first package was part of the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) (\$6 million). Mayor Bowser used it to provide child care for essential workers, help stabilize the child care sector, and support providers in meeting new costs. This

money included the DC Child Care Provider Relief Fund grant program, and paying programs set subsidy reimbursement rates based on pre-COVID payments. The second federal relief package, the Coronavirus Relief and Recovery Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSA), passed in December of 2020 and provides an additional \$16.7 million in child care relief funding to help preserve and sustain this essential public need in the District.

<https://under3dc.org/federalrelief-savedcchildcare/>



July 2020 early learning community rally in front of the District's John A. Wilson Building.

Federal Relief Saves DC Child Care

In March, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that provided nearly \$65 million in relief funding to support the District's child care community. Of this \$65 million, \$40 million was used to stabilize the child care sector by making financial support available to all early education programs. The other \$25 million was set aside to fund long-term system improvements through the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Upon the legislation's passage, Under 3 DC member organizations submitted a letter to Mayor Bowser asking her to use the federal funds as part of a strategy to make long-term improvements to the District's early learning system. Unfortunately, Mayor Bowser did not accept our recommendations.



Our Impact in 2022

Much like the rest of the nation, the District remained in a child care crisis without enough seats to meet the needs of families and an increasingly frustrated and undercompensated corps of early educators looking for the exit. Once the early learning community learned of the DC Council's Early Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force recommendations, Under 3 DC organized and prepared educators and providers for OSSE's implementation of the pay equity fund. The coalition's work did not stop with planning for the compensation increases. Budget season advocacy to raise the remaining \$400 million to fund Birth-to-Three programs continued.

It was a successful year of budget advocacy for all but one program included in the law. The coalition's requests for Healthy Futures, Healthy Steps, Help Me Grow, and the Lactation Certification Preparatory Program were all met. The financial support for Home Visiting was mixed, with only one-time funding approved for the FY2023 for DC Health-funded programs. But as the coalition has learned since its forming, to capture the lesson and build on it for next year. Home visiting learned a lot from the campaign to increase early educator compensation. Next year will bring a much stronger effort to gain greater support for this critical program which saw more need during the pandemic than ever before.

From May 2022 Blog: Home Visiting Programs are Laying the Groundwork for More Funding in the Future

Despite a strong presence from the home visiting workforce and participants throughout the FY23 budget season and, most recently, in person at the Wilson Building, the DC Council will not include the \$369,150 increase to DC Health's home visiting programs this year as Under 3 DC requested. Fortunately, we did secure a \$70,500 recurring enhancement to DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) home visiting programs and \$150,000 of one-time funding to DC Health's First Time

Mother's Home Visiting Program. We also secured recurring funding of \$310,000 for CFSA home visiting programs that have been unsustainably funded on a one-time basis for years. While we are thrilled to see several home visiting wins, our goal remains to ensure adequate investment across all home visiting programs across agencies.

<https://under3dc.org/despite-falling-short-home-visiting-programs-lay-groundwork-for-more-funding-in-the-future/>



Members of the DC Home Visiting Council in the halls of the Wilson building in between meetings with DC Councilmembers

The Early Childhood Educator Compensation Increase Takes Center Stage

The Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force understood that their work to develop recommendations for implementing the compensation increase was an arduous job with national implications. They agreed that they should split work into two buckets, a suggested plan for distributing pay supplements to educators in 2022 (\$53 million) and 2023 (\$75 million) and implementing a new, permanent compensation scale in 2024 (\$75 million). The Task Force was also clear that they needed more time to accomplish these goals, and asked the DC Council Chair for an extension of their time together to finish their work.

Once the DC Council approved the extension, the Task Force rolled up their sleeves to complete its assignment, consulting with the DC early learning community along the way. The coalition centered the work on its outreach to educators, members and partners to build engagement and momentum for implementing the recommendations once the DC Council approved them.

A joyous celebration happened in the District's early learning community and across the nation when the DC Council unanimously agreed to invest the revenue from a modest tax increase on the District's highest earners in increasing compensation for early childhood educators. Members of the DC Council also weighed in on the importance of the legislation, with even those who voted against the tax increase realizing the essentiality of child care to local economic recovery from the pandemic.

“ Early care educators ... play a critical role in the lives of our young people, making it possible for parents to work and provide for their families, and for so long have been paid at a level that does not represent the value that they contribute to our community ”

said At-Large Councilmember Christina Henderson to the Washington City Paper.

As CBS News reported: “Ruqiyah Anbar-Shaheen, who led the efforts to increase day-care workers’ pay in D.C., said investing in teachers is the first step in expanding high-quality child care alternatives.

“ We have to invest in the teachers so they are able to make ends meet on their own and are able to come to work every day and dedicate their days to caring for young children,” she told CBS MoneyWatch. “For a long time we’ve ignored the needs of the teachers, and if we want programs to be high quality and available and affordable, we have to publicly invest so they can see this as a career rather than a stop along the way in their career. ”

Bonus checks! One year free! How states are trying to fix a broken child care system



July 13, 2022

By Jennifer Ludden

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Child care provider Damaris Mejia is about to get the biggest pay raise of her life, starting this summer: the District of Columbia will send her and her co-teachers each a big check, between \$10,000 and \$14,000.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/07/13/1110468664/from-pay-care-states-pandemic-aid-childcare>



As the early learning community celebrated the legislative win, the coalition's wheels continued to turn, listening to early educators and providers and thinking about how to best implement plans for 2022 and 2023. Coalition members held sessions for educators to help them think about and plan for the tax implications and benefits cliffs likely to impact them with one-time pay supplements of up to \$14,000. Under 3 DC also pushed OSSE to move its plans forward as expeditiously as possible, sharing some of the concerns gleaned from educators and providers to help avoid potential delays and hiccups along the way.

Soon after OSSE released its implementation plans for the 2022 educator pay supplements during the late summer, educators flooded the agency with applications. There were anticipated hiccups, with some seemingly qualified applicants denied. The coalition's organizers stepped in to assist with problem solving, hoping to help secure supplements in advance of OSSE's stated goal to pay all 2022 supplements by the end of the fiscal year. Within a week of the September application deadline, OSSE had approved 2,600 of 3,700 applications.

The landscape continues to shift for the District's early learning community. Early childhood educators now have agency in a sector that has disregarded their voices for generations. District lawmakers made this possible and its agencies are following suit. OSSE is on deck to manage distribution of pay supplements and implement the permanent compensation increase. In January 2023, the District's Health Benefits Exchange will begin providing free, quality employer-sponsored health insurance coverage to the child care workforce paid for by the Pay Equity Fund.

Blog from September 2022: DC Announces Free Health Insurance for Child Care Workers and their Families

The District will take another significant step in advancing equitable compensation for child care workers in January 2023. Educators and all eligible employees of licensed early learning facilities will be able to access free, quality, publicly-financed health insurance coverage. This is the first public child care workforce program in the District that supports child care staff in every role, allowing the critical workers with roles outside of the classroom to benefit.

This new program is coming in addition to the long-awaited launch of a permanent, publicly-funded compensation program designed to ensure that early educators are paid salaries comparable to educators of older children. Both programs are funded by DC's [Pay Equity Fund](#), a permanent, dedicated funding source for compensation initiatives in early childhood education.

<https://under3dc.org/healthcareforchildcareworkers/>

Under 3 DC reached another milestone in 2022, with educators receiving their first pay supplements and the free health insurance announcement. As the country continues to wait for federal engagement on child care, states across the nation are calling on Under 3 DC to share its coalition successes. Young children and their families deserve an early learning system that meets their needs.

Strong Voices of Under 3 DC

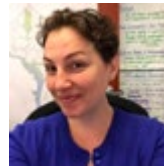
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Endnotes

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Equity can—and must—start at birth.



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