

March 30, 2023

**Written Testimony for the April 10, 2023, Budget Oversight Hearing of the
Committee on Business & Economic Development
(sent to businesseconomicdevelopment@dccouncil.gov)
Funding for programs in the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act**

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I have a 37-year career in creating buildings that contribute to a prosperous District of Columbia, including CityCenter DC. I have also served in a variety of leadership roles in organizations such as the Federal City Council, DC Chamber of Commerce, and DC Building Industry Association. I mention these because they have given me a broad view of the District - however, these remarks are my own opinion.

Over the past few years, I have come to understand the critical importance of early care and education in building the foundation for a thriving District. I support continuing to build a cost-effective system to give our youngest children a good start in life. This enables working parents to focus on their jobs, and it lays the groundwork for well-educated residents to fill the jobs of the future.

Recently, my colleague Gregory McCarthy and I wrote to Mayor Bowser and her staff, congratulating them on including child care in her DC [Comeback Plan](#). This supports her goal of adding 15,000 downtown residents in the next five years. I applaud the Mayor for including funds in her budget to raise the income level for child care support from 250% to 300% of poverty.

I also support continuing to implement the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act, including wages for early educators commensurate with their contributions to a thriving society, and proven health programs that round out our support for young children and their families, such as HealthySteps, Healthy Futures and home visiting, to provide mentors to new parents.

The District needs to include early care and education as part of creating the mixed-use communities that are hallmarks of thriving urban areas. This is vital not only for the residents whom we want to attract, but the front-line workers necessary to provide essential services.

Quality early education and care is essential for working parents. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says that "turnover as a result of a lack of child care costs businesses 20% of an hourly employee's salary and up to 150% of a manager's salary." For this reason, early educators are as essential to businesses' daily operations as their IT, HR, or sales staff. We need to treat them as such.

The Mayor and Council took a huge leap forward by enacting the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act in 2018, and then starting to implement its crucial compensation increases. I ask you to stay the course and continue to provide meaningful compensation increases that will reduce turnover, attract educators back to the field, and entice new talented professionals to join this field. This includes not only teachers, but the child care program directors whose skill and leadership are essential for programs to run well.

All of these changes will create a more stable, higher-quality learning environment for children, and a more reliable child care situation for working families.

Thank you for your attention.