

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

**Mr. Corey Griffin, President and CEO,
Global Government and Industry Partners, LLC;
Chairman of the Board,
Greater Washington Black Chamber of Commerce;
Ms. Aisha Bond, Esq., President and CEO,
Greater Washington Black Chamber of Commerce**

We come to you with more than 50 years of combined experience in making the District of Columbia a great place to live and work. Among other roles, Corey Griffin has served on the board of directors for the Greater Washington Urban League and currently serves on the board of the St Elizabeth East Advisory Board for the District of Columbia. Griffin was named by the Washington Business Journal as one of the region's top minority business leaders of the year for 2008. Aisha Bond is an attorney, former Executive Director of North Capitol Main Street, and a board member of the Washington, DC Women's Business Center. We are currently the Board Chairman and President/CEO of the Greater Washington Black Chamber of Commerce (GWBCC), which is the leading voice for Black business in the greater Washington area. However, these are our personal opinions and not those of our current or former organizations.

We are also District residents and business leaders who care deeply about the vitality of the region, but especially about the health and prosperity of our Black and Brown families and businesses. Our message to you today is to continue on the path of providing a great start to our next generation workforce, ensure quality care so working parents can focus on their jobs, and support the early educators vital to this success, most of whom are Black and Brown women. To quote a [report](#) from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation,

"By laying the crucial groundwork for tomorrow's workforce and promoting a strong workforce today, high-quality childcare provides a powerful two-generation approach to building the human capital that a prosperous and sustainable America requires. "

We applaud including support for child care in the Mayor's DC Comeback Plan and budget. Her proposal to expand eligibility from 250% to 300% of poverty will provide subsidies for

an additional 4,600 children 0-13, of which 2,100 are 0-5. We are also delighted to see all child care employees - teachers and others - are now eligible for free or affordable health care coverage - an essential benefit that will improve the lives of educators and encourage people to join the field. More than 600 employees and dependents are now enrolled.

We ask that you continue to implement the model reforms embodied in the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act. This issue is especially important to the Greater Washington Black Chamber of Commerce because most child care businesses in the District are run by women of color, particularly Black and Latinx women. Without the supplements provided in the Act, the pay would be dramatically insufficient for the critical work they do everyday. We are also concerned that the current program does not address adequate pay for child care center directors, whose leadership is essential for a successful program. It will not work to substantially raise teacher salaries without also raising the pay up the career ladder. This contributes to high turnover, which makes it much harder to build the kind of deep, nurturing relationships young children need. And, while all children need a good start, our Black and Brown children are most likely to not have access to the highest quality programs.

We 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. 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.

In addition, we support funding increases for the proven health care programs that are vital complements to early education, including Healthy Futures (expanding behavioral health), HealthySteps (improving pediatric primary care) and home visiting (parent mentoring) programs. Our children's and families' health is especially fragile now, and we support expanding these programs that have strong evidence of their impacts on children and parents.

We are excited to be part of a District that is leading the nation in its policies for young children and their families, especially people of color. We are also pleased to be part of a [network of business leaders](#) who understand that these supports are essential infrastructure to provide an attractive business environment for the District's employers, employees and our youngest learners. Thank you for your attention.