

**Written Testimony for the April 5, 2023
DC Council Committee of the Whole - Education Cluster
Budget Oversight Hearing
(sent to cow@dccouncil.gov)
Regarding
Funding for programs in the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act**

**James Sandman, Esq.
Former Managing Partner, Arnold & Porter**

(These comments reflect my personal opinion and do not represent any of my current or past affiliations.)

I'm Jim Sandman, a long-time DC resident of Ward 6. Among other roles, I have been Managing Partner of Arnold & Porter, President of the Legal Services Corporation, President of the District of Columbia Bar, chairman of the board of the Meyer Foundation, chairman of the board of Whitman-Walker Clinic, and chairman of the board of DC Campaign to End Teen Pregnancy. I currently serve as Vice Chair of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board and as Vice Chair of the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission.

Both as a business person and as an active citizen, I applaud the Mayor for including child care in the DC Comeback Plan and her 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. I urge you to continue investing in our youngest children through the programs supported through the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act. And we need to change the existing policy to include child care directors in the early educator wage enhancements, to keep the leaders who will make the whole system run well.

When I was at Arnold & Porter, we created a full-time, onsite child care center because we knew our employees - as all working parents do - needed a safe, nurturing, educational place for their children.

I last provided testimony on this issue in 2021, when we were in the midst of the pandemic. We saw early educators staying on the job, so that *other* essential workers could save lives, keep stores open, and maintain civic functions. Many child care businesses closed, as their employees found better-paying jobs at retail stores or similar businesses. This has only worsened the enormous discrepancy between supply and demand for quality care.

Now we are entering a new stage in the District's life, when people are going back to work - in office, home or hybrid settings. Parents and employers no longer can or want to juggle young children on their laps during Zoom meetings. We are imagining the city of the future, in which people live and work downtown. That city include quality early education and care that helps working parents, young children, and the essential professionals who educate and nurture them.

From professional and personal experience, I understand that reliable, quality care is as important to our productivity as a reliable transportation system. I believe the research that says during the first three years of life children's brains build the scaffolding on which they learn academics, as well as social and emotional skills. I know that attracting and keeping well-trained, motivated employees requires paying them wages commensurate with their value and skill. We need to invest in the programs that help young families afford early education, and that pay educators a wage that will stabilize and improve the quality of care.

I am proud that the District is poised to become a model for the nation in giving its youngest learners and future workforce a good start in life. I urge you to stay the course, for the benefit of our community now and in the decades to come.