

Birth-to-Three Policy Alliance

The Birth to Three Policy Alliance urges the DC Council to vote YES on B22-0203, Birth-to-Three DC, on June 26 to Advance Early Childhood Health & Education in the District

Key provisions of the bill that will transform early childhood development in the District:

- Improve school readiness by reimbursing providers enough to cover the costs of providing a high quality education for infants and toddlers
- Stabilize the workforce by offering sensible salaries for early childhood educators, and providing more support for teachers to attain credentials
- Support District families by expanding home visiting & Help Me Grow
- Provide better mental health services for young children & caregivers
- Leverage well-child visits to connect families with wrap-around services
- Improve the quality of early education in the District
- Make child care more affordable for all families, with progressive co-payments

The Birth- to-Three DC legislation charts the path for a comprehensive system of supports for children's healthy growth and development, including full funding of the child care subsidy program, competitive compensation for early educators, and better access to health services and family supports. By passing this bill, the District continues national leadership in supporting our youngest children. This builds on the success of universal pre-K. There is no better investment for DC than growing healthy children.

Advance Early Health & Education by Supporting 'Birth-to-Three in DC'!

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Improve School Readiness by Reimbursing Providers Enough to Cover the Costs of a High Quality Education for Infants and Toddlers in Low-Income Families

- **The problem:** Child care providers who educate children in low-income families are not paid enough to fully cover the cost of providing high quality early care and education, including decent salaries for teachers. That's because the District does not ensure that payments to providers are linked to those costs, leaving many providers struggling to make ends meet.
- **Why it matters:** Every child in the District deserves a high-quality education and a strong start in life. Birth to three are critical years of social, emotional and cognitive development that ready children for school and beyond. Underinvestment in early childhood education creates barriers to school success, has damaging life-long effects, and intensifies racial and economic inequities in DC.
- **The solution:** This legislation identifies the true cost of high-quality early education, and ensures child care subsidy payments for low-income children rise to cover those costs in the next few years.

Offer Sensible Salaries for Early Educators That Are Connected to Subsidies, & More Support for Attaining Early Childhood Credentials

- **The problem:** Early educators in DC's community-based organizations, who care for most infants and toddlers in the District, earn an average salary of only \$29,000—far less than they deserve and far less than their peers in DC Public Schools or public charter preschools.¹ Yet many child care directors are already struggling to make ends meet, in part because the city's child care subsidy rates for low-income children do not cover the high costs of quality care.
- **Why it matters:** The Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) seeks to raise the quality of early education in DC in part by increasing educational requirements for teachers. Without deliberate policy strategies to also increase compensation and benefits, teachers who meet these new standards are likely to leave birth-to-three for older grades in public schools, or other fields where they can earn more. Higher pay will likely attract and retain better qualified teachers and help ensure the supply of early childhood teachers meets the demand.
- **The solution:** This legislation creates a fair, competitive teacher salary scale with adjustments for the rising cost of living. It builds that salary scale into our model of the cost of care, and then uses that cost model to determine how much the city must pay child care providers serving children in low-income families. Enabling child care providers to raise wages allows them to attract and retain quality educators. The legislation also includes increased funding for more multilingual, on-site classes for early educators earning higher credentials.

Support District Families by Expanding Home Visiting & Help Me Grow

- **The problem:** Families of young children in the District must navigate complex systems and periods of transition that can be overwhelming. Many families need help to understand and support their children's health and development. Existing home visiting services do not reach all of the families who could most benefit from them, and the District's local investment in home visiting is too low to adequately support home visiting programs and their workforce.
- **Why it matters:** Home visiting is a proven strategy to help pregnant women, young children, and their families achieve the best possible outcomes. Home visitors are uniquely positioned to support families experiencing big transitions, including pregnancy, child birth, social isolation, housing changes, developmental delays, and transitions into center-based programs and schooling. These programs also connect families to essential supports and promote improved health care utilization.
- **The solution:** This legislation includes provisions that work together to improve and expand the District's support of families of young children through home visiting programs. This legislation also invests in Help Me Grow, a phone-based care coordination system that helps families navigate the District's child development and family support services.

Provide Better Mental Health Services for Young Children & Caregivers

- **The problem:** The District underinvests in child and family-centered behavioral health services, like Healthy Futures, that support healthy social-emotional development.
- **Why it matters:** For infants and toddlers, social-emotional health is as important to learning as cognitive development. Healthy Futures builds capacities in children by building capacities in adults. Trauma-informed care helps families and educators prevent adverse early childhood experiences, and build resiliency.
- **The solution:** This legislation expands the number of child development centers participating in Healthy Futures and other evidence-based programs to provide behavioral health care services in all child care development centers.

Leverage Well-Child Visits to Connect Families with Wrap-Around Services

- **The problem:** Pediatricians aren't always able to connect families with needed services.
- **Why it matters:** Because most young children visit the pediatrician, well-child visits present an important opportunity to ensure that families are equipped to address children's needs. HealthySteps embeds a child development expert within the pediatric primary care setting to assist families during well-child visits. These professionals provide vital guidance to parents of young children.
- **The solution:** This legislation invests local funds to expand the HealthySteps model and make it more sustainable.

Improve the Quality of Early Education in the District

- **The problem:** The current number of high-quality early education slots is too low compared to the number of children who need them. Most child care facilities in the District are too small and under-resourced to provide all of the supports and services that children and their families need.
- **Why it matters:** High quality early care and education is essential for school readiness and closing the opportunity gaps between children in low-income families and their peers. Every child deserves a high quality early education, and Early Head Start is the national standard for high quality. The Quality Improvement Network (QIN) is a strategy to help current child care providers share costs and best practices and raise their quality level to Early Head Start levels in order to best serve DC's infants and toddlers.
- **The solution:** This legislation sets out clear goals for improving the quality of early education in DC: it ensures high quality infant and toddler seats are available in communities with concentrated poverty in Ward 7 and 8 by 2022, and for all eligible infants and toddlers living in concentrated poverty by 2025. Expanding the QIN is an important way to accomplish these goals. The original Fiscal Impact Study mistakenly showed a large cost to this component of the legislation in the outyears, but the other investments in the bill (such as the expansion of health services and child care subsidies) will create most of the resources needed to meet these higher quality standards. The goals in the bill keep us accountable and work to ensure that more children can access a high quality education.

Make Child Care More Affordable for All Families With Progressive Co-Payments

- **The problem:** Too many DC families struggle to afford child care, especially low and middle-income families. Center-based care for an infant costs DC families an average of \$23,000 a year.² A single mother of two making just over \$63,000 does not qualify for child care subsidies, but quality care still takes up an enormous share of her income. Yet giving all families free child care, regardless of income, would be extremely costly, and jeopardize other vital supports low-income families and their children need to thrive.
- **Why it matters:** We can make child care more affordable for all families *and* combat income inequality by expanding the child care subsidy program and setting child care co-payments for all parents that rise with one's income. As more families join the child care subsidy program, more providers will participate too, increasing educational access for children in low-income families across the city.
- **The solution:** This legislation prioritizes the dollars first for low-income families. It invests in solutions for current problems, like subsidies not covering the cost of care. Then, it slowly expands eligibility for child care subsidies up the income scale. According to national studies and proposals, all families should pay no more than 10 percent of their income in child care expenses, as a standard for "affordability."³ By gradually increasing the share of income families pay as a co-payment, this policy avoids any sharp "cliffs" that punish families for small gains in their income. Expanding child care subsidies invests all District families in the same system of high-quality early education. Expanding child care subsidies for more families also provides a strong mechanism to improve quality in ways other affordability strategies, like tax credits, do not.

The Progressive Child Care Co-Payments for Parents in the Legislation:

A Family With a Gross Household Income of This Percent of the Federal Poverty Line for That Family Size	Shall Pay a Maximum of this Share of Gross Income for Co-Payment
0 - 100%	0%
More than 100% - 133%	1%
More than 133% - 167%	2%
More than 167% - 200%	3%
More than 200% - 233%	4%
More than 233% - 267%	5%
More than 267% - 300%	6%
More than 300% - 333%	7%
More than 333% - 367%	8%
More than 367% - 400%	9%
More than 400%	10%

*The federal poverty line for a family of three is \$20,780.

DC COUNCIL SHOULD UNANIMOUSLY VOTE YES ON B22-0203 ON JUNE 26

¹ Child Care Aware, “[2017 State Child Care Facts in the District of Columbia](#)”

² Economic Policy Institute, “[The Cost of Child Care in Washington DC](#)”

³ National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, Medicine, “[Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education](#)”,