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**Testimony of Alyssa Noth at the DC State Board of Education  
December 18, 2019  
Public Meeting**

Good evening State Board Representatives. My name is Alyssa Noth, and I am an Education Policy Analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute (DCFPI). DCFPI engages in research and public education on the fiscal and economic health of the District of Columbia, with a particular emphasis on policies that affect low- and moderate-income residents.

DCFPI is part of the Under 3 DC coalition of individuals and organizations committed to the full funding of the Birth-to-Three for All DC Act of 2018 (Birth-to-Three Act), which would ensure all DC families are supported through the critical prenatal period and first years of a child's life.

Thank you for considering a resolution in support of full funding for the Birth-to-Three Act. Today I'll focus my testimony on the section of the Act that addresses the urgent need to raise extremely low early childhood education (ECE) salaries. Sadly, these teachers, who are almost exclusively women of color, only see a median income of less than \$31,000 a year—less than *half* of what it takes to afford fair market rent in DC—and less than *half* of what new DCPS teachers earn.<sup>ii</sup>

If fully funded, the Birth-to-Three Act would stabilize the ECE workforce by gradually raising reimbursement rates for providers to cover the cost of care and implementation of a new salary scale on par with DCPS.

Early childhood educators deserve to be fairly compensated for the complex knowledge and skills required to support vital development in young children. Higher wages for ECE workers are correlated with better-quality education for young children, according to research spanning several decades.<sup>iii</sup> Access to high-quality, affordable early learning can reduce the difference in school readiness between low-income toddlers and their higher income peers.

Economic instability is linked to the “chronically low rate of retention” in the ECE workforce, according to a 2011 report.<sup>iv</sup> Many early childhood educators who leave the field do so because of the low wages and limited access to benefits. In fact, 8 in 10 early educators expressed anxiety about their ability to pay monthly bills, according to a recent survey of the ECE workforce in the District.

I know from personal experience that it's hard to teach when you are financially stressed or forced to work multiple jobs. This is no way to treat any worker, including the educators who are responsible for our children in their first 1,000 days, time that is essential for preventing future academic achievement gaps by race and socioeconomic status.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to entertain any questions you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> “Out of Reach 2019: District of Columbia,” National Low Income Housing Coalition, <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/district-columbia>.

<sup>ii</sup> “ET-15 FY 19 Pay Schedule,” District of Columbia Public Schools, December 14, 2017, <https://dcps.dc.gov/publication/et-15-fy-19-pay-schedule>.

<sup>iii</sup> <sup>sii</sup> For a summary of the original report, see: Marcy Whitebook et.al, “Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study,” Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2014, page 3, <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2014/ReportFINAL.pdf>; For the original report, see: Marcy Whitebook et. al, “Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and the Quality of Care in America. Final Report, National Child Care Staffing Study,” Child Care Employment Project, 1989, <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/1990/Who-Cares-full-report.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> DC Commission on Early Childhood Teacher Compensation, Office of the State Superintendent for Education, 2011, [https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/DC\\_Compensation\\_Report\\_Printer\\_Final-1.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/DC_Compensation_Report_Printer_Final-1.pdf).