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PROGRESS



The Eviction Crisis



Kate Coventry,
Senior Policy Analyst

Evictions are extremely harmful to individuals and families, often leading them into a downward spiral and setting them back for years. As Matthew Desmond documents in his book "Evicted," eviction often increases material hardship,

decreases residential financial security, and causes prolonged periods of homelessness. Families lose not only their home, school, and neighborhood, but also their possessions. It takes a good amount of money and time to establish a home. Eviction can erase all that.

Evictions are preventable.

COVID-19 is exacerbating the District's affordable housing crisis. Prior to the pandemic, nearly 60 percent of DC's lowest income households (those earning less than \$20,000 annually) were severely cost-burdened, meaning they spent more than 50 percent of their income on rent. This far exceeds the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's recommended 30 percent threshold.

These conditions disproportionately wreak havoc on residents of color. Nearly 30 percent of Black renters in the District—more than 20,000 households—are severely cost-

burdened, and another 20 percent are cost-burdened, meaning they spend between 30 and 50 percent of their income on rent. Nearly 50 percent of Latinx renters are cost-burdened, compared to about one-third of non-Latinx or Hispanic white renters.

And the loss of employment due to COVID-19 has put many of these residents in an even more financially strained place.

DC's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is meant to help residents struggling to make ends meet, but as it is currently funded and structured, the program fails to meet the rising need for rental assistance to protect residents from a looming eviction crisis. The fiscal year (FY) 2021 ERAP budget is just over \$14 million, which will fund less than a month and a half of rental arrears for households earning up to \$40,000, according to analysis by The Brookings Institute.

Now is the time for bold solutions. We ask you to join DCFPI in contacting the Mayor and your Councilmembers to urge them to dedicate any FY 2020 surplus to ERAP and to find additional funding in the FY 2021 budget. To quote Matthew Desmond, "evidence strongly indicates that eviction is not just a condition of poverty, it is a cause of it." As a city, we need to reject throwing more families into poverty and into the streets.

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Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

In September, DCFPI released our first **inclusive economy** budget toolkit, a broad portfolio that seeks to ensure that DC's economic model delivers widely shared prosperity to all residents and workers. The toolkit details FY 2021 investments in Black-owned and women-owned businesses, a disparity study that will help DC pursue more equitable procurement opportunities for Black businesses, a new Certified Business Enterprise designation that takes into consideration unique barriers that Black businessowners face—and that should provide

more opportunities for them—and several other investments that will benefit people most vulnerable to the recession and good job opportunities.

We are also launching a **multi-year revenue campaign** in partnership with our allies in the #JustRecoveryDC movement to build a more inclusive economy and stronger DC. During the worst recession in modern times and amidst a once-in-a lifetime global health crisis, we cannot tolerate a budget that fails to adequately invest in programs that help people who are struggling to get by, facing hunger, and falling behind on rent. DC is a prosperous city, and we have the resources to reverse deeply entrenched income and racial disparities. It is time to ask those who can to pay a fairer share in taxes, and to close costly, unfair, and ineffective tax loopholes that benefit corporations.

These steps we are taking are essential to ensure DC is moving in the right direction to put the needs of Black and brown Washingtonians front and center in our public policies and in our budgets. The challenges they have faced under the COVID-19 outbreak underscore years of public policy neglect and institutionalized racism, and we simply can't wait any longer to make change.

We look forward to working alongside you to provide sustained relief during the pandemic, and to build a more inclusive economy and a stronger DC for all members of our community.

Thank you for your support,



Jacquelyn L. Lendsey
Interim Executive Director

Shaping the Debate

Your support makes it possible for DCFPI to deliver credible analysis directly to residents through community presentations, public testimony, media interviews, and other outreach. Here's how you've helped shape the public conversation this year:



- 21 print and digital media hits
- 37 reports
- 37 testimonies
- 49 presentations
- 10 op-eds
- 2 television interviews
- 1 TV town hall

Analyst Q&A: Education Policy Analyst Qubilah Huddleston, Strengthening Families Through Behavioral Health Coalition



What is the Strengthening Families Through Behavioral Health Coalition?

The vision of the coalition is to ensure DC has a fully integrated behavioral healthcare system in which all District students, children, youth, and families have access to consistent, affordable, culturally responsive care.

The coalition brings together a diverse group of advocates focused on education, juvenile justice, child welfare, and health, as well as representatives of the provider community and community-based organizations. Together, we aim to:

- engage with legislators, policymakers, and other stakeholders regarding DC's behavioral health system;
- advance legislation, public policies, and practices that improve DC's behavioral health system for children and families; and,
- advocate for effective, adequate, and equitable spending on all aspects of DC's behavioral health system.

How was the coalition conceived?

Advocates, providers, and community members have been pushing for greater investments and supports in the District's current School-Based Mental Health program through the Department of Behavioral Health. The program aims to place mental health professionals in every public school. In recognizing that families, not just students, also need greater mental health support, we wanted to form an advocacy space that merges these two realities together. DC's behavioral healthcare system is fragmented, lacks a robust pipeline of professionals, and is largely underfunded to meet the growing mental health needs of residents. The coalition aims to change this.

Consistent mental health support is vital in the District, where one-fifth of school children live with an adverse childhood experience, such as having a parent who is incarcerated, or witnessing violence in their community or home. The coalition represents community organizations that have mobilized in response to the need for stronger mental health support during the pandemic, when families are facing unprecedented mental, physical, and financial pressures. Too many residents were going without proper mental health support before the pandemic. Now more than ever, DC policymakers must make the investments needed to have a more robust, effective, and coordinated system of mental healthcare.

How is the coalition getting off the ground?

We are grounding our strategy in the COVID-19 reality. As advocates, we are asking how the current moment brings to bear the need for stronger mental health and how that impacts our advocacy goals and fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget asks. We know that children and families experiencing housing insecurity, food insecurity, and income security—all conditions exacerbated by the pandemic—are more likely to struggle with mental health. It's important for us to make this connection for policymakers and the public, with the goal of improving policies and increasing public investments in behavioral healthcare.

How is DCFPI engaging in this work to support the coalition?

As a co-chair, I will engage in the coalition with an eye towards income and racial equity. This framework is vital given that low-income families—most of whom are Black and brown—deal with a disproportionate share of mental health challenges and disproportionately do not have access to regular, quality, or culturally competent care. I will leverage my and DCFPI's budget expertise to carefully analyze policy and budget proposals. Additionally, I intend to leverage the relationships I've developed with policymakers and community advocates to help the coalition develop proposals that are equitable and rooted in the lived experiences of people who are in need the most but have the least access to resources.

As a student mental health advocate, what is giving you hope now? Where do you see opportunities for growth?

In the FY 2021 budget season, the District funded school-based mental health nearly in its entirety. At the beginning of the budget season, the program was promised zero new funding; we successfully advocated to add \$3.3 million to the program. The Council also redirected funds from the Metropolitan Police Department contract with DC Public Schools to fund additional socio-emotional learning resources for students. These wins signal that there's a sense of urgency to address student mental health concerns and that policymakers understand the connection between students' mental well-being and academic performance.

I am hopeful that we are moving forward in building a culture that places value on mental health. With this momentum, we need to seize the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of directing mental health resources to families, not just schools. If DC is to close the deep and persisting racial and income opportunity gaps, policymakers and advocates must work together to improve supports for low-income communities and communities of color that we know have less access to support, yet experience higher rates of trauma.

We're Hiring!

Executive Director

DCFPI is seeking a visionary executive leader with expertise in developing bold policies that address economic and racial inequities. The ideal candidate will bring a proven record of success in an executive leadership role, creating and implementing organizational and policy strategies, providing day-to-day organizational oversight, building strong funding and stakeholder relationships, leading a talented team, and serving as an organization's public spokesperson. In addition, the top candidate must bring a sophisticated understanding of racial equity and structural racism, a collaborative and inclusive approach to team-building, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Apply at: http://bit.ly/DCFPI_ExecutiveDirector

Just Recovery Revenue Campaign Organizer

DCFPI is seeking a talented and dedicated Revenue Organizer to support a District-level campaign, "Just Recovery DC," to raise revenue to advance racial justice, meet a spike in human and community needs, and build an inclusive economic recovery. This position will work with DCFPI colleagues and external Just Recovery partners to mount a proactive campaign that includes Council advocacy, base building (outreach, recruitment and engagement) among individuals and organizations, and strategic communications. The ideal candidate has some experience working on an issue campaign and is a coalition builder, strategist, and deep believer in the importance of tax justice and fair budgets.

Apply at: http://bit.ly/DCFPI_RevenueOrganizer

Communications and Advocacy Intern

DCFPI is accepting applications for our Winter/Spring 2021 internship to focus on communications and advocacy work, including drafting and scheduling content for social media, tracking DCFPI media mentions, developing materials for public engagement and legislative advocacy, and more. Applicants should have a strong commitment to social, economic, and racial justice.

Apply at: http://bit.ly/DCFPI_Intern

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Questions? Contact Danielle Hamer at dhamer@dcfpi.org or (202) 886-5180.

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