



7735 Old Georgetown Road
Suite 1000
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: 240.450.0000
bainumfdn.org

September 27, 2017

**Testimony by Sara Mickelson, Bainum Family Foundation Senior Manager of Early Learning Policy to DC Council Committees on Finance & Revenue, Education, and Health
Public Hearing: B22-203, the Infant and Toddler Developmental Health Services Act of 2017 and B22-355, the Bolstering Early Growth Investment Amendment Act of 2017**

Good morning, Chairpersons Gray, Grosso and Evans. My name is Sara Mickelson and I am a resident of the District, as well as the Senior Manager of Early Learning Policy at the Bainum Family Foundation. The Foundation's early learning investment has doubled since our initial five-year, \$10 million commitment to increase the number of high-quality infant and toddler seats in Wards 7 and 8 by 750 and increase the quality of early childhood services in the city. I would be remiss not to note that our investment depends on a strong partnership with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), which has made strides to improve quality of early learning in the District in several ways (including through enhancing their Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), establishing a Shared Services Business Alliance, and expanding the Quality Improvement Network (QIN)).

The Foundation's investment focuses on policy, practice and research. Our policy work happens through the Birth-to-Three Policy Alliance, which builds the policy and advocacy capacity of key organizations in the city, many of whom are here today. We are here to offer our support for these two bills (the Infant and Toddler Developmental Services Act of 2017 and the Bolstering Early Growth Investment Act of 2017) and to thank the Council for your leadership on this issue.

Yesterday the Washington Post ran an article entitled, "By age 3, inequality is clear." This is painfully accurate; the inequity black and brown children and children from low-income families face in the first 1,000 days of life is significant and has lifelong impacts, affecting the very architecture of the brain and, consequently, all future learning, behavior and health. This inequity stems from a complicated confluence of factors, and solutions that are overly simple will not help. It takes a systems approach. Thus, we commend that these bills seek to address the capacity and increase the quality of both the health and early learning systems and ensure that, by age 3, inequity is **not** clear.



These bills complement each other, and we encourage the Council to merge these bills where possible to both model systems-building and collaboration and to eliminate the inefficiency and confusion of implementing two similar laws.

Your vision is bold, comprehensive and complex. Therefore, I can't address it all today, but I will address four key issues (increasing the capacity of our health system, addressing reimbursement rates, building parity for our workforce, and expanding high-quality early learning programs):

First, increasing the capacity of the health system to ensure that our providers can meet the health needs of children and address social determinants of health is key. We applaud the expansion of Help Me Grow in order to ensure families are connected to key services and create a single entry point to home visiting, public funding of HealthySteps, and expansion of mental health consultation in child care facilities. We suggest expanding the language of the bill to include any high-quality mental health consultation model to ensure OSSE has room to select the most appropriate model.

Second, aligning child care subsidy reimbursement rates with the cost of care will greatly increase providers' capacity to meet high-quality standards and to keep their doors open. OSSE has already embarked on this work in a 2015 cost of care study, which shows reimbursement rates are currently insufficient. We support the legislation's approach to aligning rates to the cost of care. We also ask that the Council build on the increases it has made to subsidy funds and make a down-payment toward higher rates by providing \$10 million in additional funding in Fiscal Year 2019.

Third, we must address compensation parity for our early childhood workforce to ensure teachers receive better wages and benefits as they increase their qualifications. We support a well-researched salary scale that allows infant and toddler teachers to receive the same pay as other educators and ask you to ensure this scale is attached to increased funding to programs. We also support the expansion of UDC's infant and toddler associate's degree program to ensure our current workforce has access to the necessary coursework and supports.

Finally, we know that we must build the supply of high-quality early learning seats. The Bainum Family Foundation is making an over \$4 million investment in a facilities fund aimed at increasing the quality of current centers and homes and includes a supply and demand study to better understand the landscape of child care District-wide. In addition, the city's Fiscal Year 2018 budget contains facilities



supports for programs. We ask the Council to ensure any additional investments in this area are aligned to these existing efforts.

We also know that the Quality Improvement Network (QIN) is a promising strategy to expand high-quality care by expanding Early Head Start. That's why we are partnering with OSSE to fund the expansion of the QIN in Wards 7 and 8 in the coming year. We know we are serving only a fraction of Early Head Start-eligible children, and welcome the Council's support in further expanding the QIN.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. My final ask is for you to build on the momentum these bills create and find the political will to allocate funding to address this work and ensure all children in the city have the chance to thrive. We look forward to working with your committees to put forward the best solutions for infants and toddlers and their families.