

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

**CHAIRPERSON ELISSA SILVERMAN
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

ANNOUNCES A BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING

Workforce Investment Council

Thursday, June 3, 2021, 3:00 p.m.

Virtual hearing via Zoom

**Broadcast on DC Cable Channel 13 and online at www.dccouncil.us
or Facebook Live <https://www.facebook.com/CMElissaSilverman>.**

AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. OPENING REMARKS

III. WITNESSES

Public Witnesses

1. Evette Banfield, Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development, VP, Economic Development Policy
2. Leicester Johnson, Academy of Hope Adult Public Charter School, Chief Executive Officer
3. Ray Bell, HOPE Project Training Academy, President and CEO
4. Yvette Scorse, Byte Back, Communications Director
5. Soukaena Gueye, Public Witness
6. Claudia Schlosberg, Castle Hill Consulting, LLC, Principal
7. Susan Sedgewick, Capitol Hill Village-Long Term Care Coalition, Volunteer
8. Salvatore Selvaggio, Senior Advocacy Coalition, Chair, Health Committee
9. Judith Levy, DC Coalition on Long Term Care, Coordinator
10. Marla Lahat, Home Care Partners, Inc., Executive Director

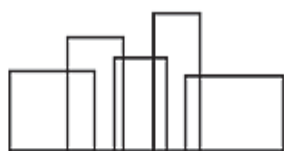
Government Witnesses

1. Ahnna Smith, Executive Director, DC Workforce Investment Council

Written Testimony

1. Hilary Jones Managing Director, On-Ramps to Careers
2. Monique LeNoir, National Director of Communications, UNCF
Board Chair, On-Ramps to Careers

IV. Adjourn



CNHED

Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development

**Testimony of Evette Banfield, VP, Economic Development Policy
Coalition for Nonprofit Housing & Economic Development
Before the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on Workforce Investment Council
Thursday, June 3, 2021
Virtual**

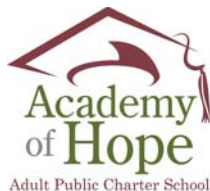
Good afternoon, Chairperson Silverman, and members of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. I'm Evette Banfield, Vice President of Economic Development Policy and Wealth Building Strategies at the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED). CNHED is an association of 140 members working to foster just and equitable community development solutions that address the needs and aspirations of low- and moderate-income District residents.

CNHED is looking to Council to ensure that the District's FY 2022 workforce development budget reflects the needs of thousands of low-income, unemployed and unskilled residents. The path forward to eradicating the persistent high unemployment rate and poverty associated with low-wage jobs is to train and upskill Black and Brown residents in the District's high demand sectors. Drastically moving the needle will require investment in and strategic engagement of community-based workforce development organizations partnering with the District as well as residents.

- In FY 2020-21, the District successfully launched the Healthcare Workforce Partnership, committing \$250K to fund this effort. We ask Council to make a second-year reoccurring allocation of \$250K to continue the support of this timely and innovative initiative.
- Create equity and access by investing and making digital literacy and occupational training an integral part of workforce development training and closing the digital divide. Digital occupational training should be expanded, and proficiency should be a workforce development requirement. CNHED is asking Council that the District's public libraries have sufficient funding for adult digital literacy training in FY 2022. Now is the time to advance bold and innovative ideas to provide a fair shot for the District's low-income, long-term and newly, unemployed Black and Brown residents, and those in entry-level skill jobs. CNHED is recommending that the Council fund in FY 2022 the exploration of the creation of an IT Workforce Partnership.

- It is essential that the District invest and figure out how to increase the reading and numeracy skills for District residents testing below the 6th grade reading and math. This is a significant impediment to upskilling and retraining residents relegated to entry-to-intermediate skill, low-wage jobs. We need to set an ambitious goal to close the gap in GED completions, and increase the CASAS testing levels from 6th to 9th grade reading and math if the District is committed to provide employment opportunities in high-demand industries.
- CNHED is asking Council to create a fund similar to the Career Pathways Innovation Fund (CPIF), supporting the capacity building of local adult charter schools and other qualified adult high school credentialing programs, to improve, scale-up and expand training offering of nonprofit community-based workforce training organizations. The District needs to be aggressive in its efforts to make the shift to a system-wide, phased adoption of an Integrated Education and Training Model. Capacity building grants will help to facilitate this change. The District should also continue investing in the Career Pathways Innovation Fund, and this model should be used to support the implementation of approaches and best practices that demonstrate positive results for nonprofit workforce training providers.
- In closing, CNHED wants to acknowledge the leadership and vision of the Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC), Ahnna Smith, and her team. The Mayor's budget priorities for jobs and economic opportunity are ambitious given the current capacity and outcomes of the District's workforce system. At this pivotal time, it is essential that the District increase the capacity of the WIC in FY 2022 for the challenging work ahead.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



Excellence in Adult Education Since 1985

**DC Council Committee on Labor and Workforce Development Public
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Workforce Investment Council**

Leicester Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
June 3, 2021

Thank you, Councilmember Silverman, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Leicester Johnson, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Academy of Hope Adult Public Charter School (AoH).

For more than 35 years, AoH has provided District adults high quality education, workforce training and supportive services. Learners at AoH are building their skills, preparing for a high school diploma through the GED or the National External Diploma Program (NEDP), earning industry-recognized certifications and transitioning to post-secondary education.

I know the members of this Committee are acutely aware that DC's workforce experienced a seismic shift over the last year. This is especially true for African Americans and other communities of color—the very communities that already suffered from the highest unemployment and school disengagement rates in the city.

I'm here today to highlight how AoH and our peers in the charter and CBO spaces are serving a critical role in ensuring a truly inclusive recovery and the ways next year's budget can bolster these efforts.

Workforce instruction continued through the pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, our academic, healthcare and office Administration programs—which are funded in part by a joint WIC/OSSE grant—continued to prepare learners for their high school credential and high-demand careers. Though lower than typical years, at the close of last school year in June, thirty-four (34) learners graduated with their high school credential by passing the GED or completing the NEDP program. This school year with remote GED testing and virtual instruction, we are currently at 19 graduates and projecting to end the school- year with 24 graduates. We are also seeing significant academic gains for learners at the lowest level.

The Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) program has met safely in person since the fall to continue building essential hands-on skills. After significant work with our partners, AoH's CNA students began their clinicals at Sibley Memorial Hospital earlier this year, and just last month, the first learners sat for their licensing exams. So far, 91% of the first cohort passed the exam and 9 more are completing clinicals and sitting for the licensing exam at the end of June/early July.

The CNA program is a vision realized—one in which an adult learner can enter one place, complete their high school credential, and prepare for a career at the same time. In fact, six of the first cohort of CNA graduates earned their high school diploma at Academy of Hope and three of those learners earned it at the same time as their CNA license.

We are now assisting graduates with securing employment with our partners at Ingleside, Livingston Place and Sibley Hospital. Three weeks after passing her exam, one graduate has already secured full-time employment.

I would like to underscore the role this Committee—particularly you, Councilmember Silverman—OSSE, and the WIC played in planting the seeds for this program. The Career Pathways Innovation Fund allowed AoH and the other OSSE/WIC grantees to pilot and scale integrated education and technology programs that equip adult learners with all of the skills and credentials they need to meet their educational and career goals at one time and in one place. We are grateful to see the Career Pathways Innovation Fund included in the FY22 budget. Thank you, Councilmember, for your continued support, and many thanks to the WIC for their partnership.

Meeting the needs right now

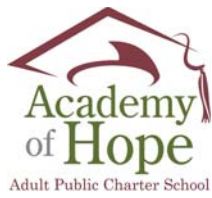
We were encouraged to see that Mayor Bowser made significant investments in workforce development and rapid reskilling in her FY22 budget. But we know that individuals without a high school credential will bear the brunt of this health/economic crisis even during the recovery phase. They will also need a longer on-ramp than the traditional 16-week workforce programs. Strategic investments in programs serving individuals with lower skills will ensure that no DC resident gets left behind and that there is a true inclusive recovery.

Adult charter schools and community-based organizations are ready to be partners in reaching all DC residents. Our education and workforce programs work with adults where they are and move them efficiently toward achieving a high school credential, improved skills and in-demand occupational certification that lead to employment. What is more, adult charters are perfectly positioned to ensure that even one-time investments are sustainable by leveraging per pupil funding to support long term success. This is critical considering that many of Mayor Bowser's new investments are sourced from one-time federal funds made available through the American Recovery Plan.

For example, our CNA and Phlebotomy classes both have significant waitlists for the coming fall, and only our Ward 5 site currently has the equipment to offer the CNA class. With additional upfront investments to build out a healthcare suite at Ward 8, hire more teachers and open additional seats/sections to accommodate waitlisted applicants. With the needed infrastructure in place, we can continue to support additional students for years to come through per pupil funding.

We are hopeful that this Committee will look carefully at the new investments being made in rapid reskilling and work with the adult education community to scale existing, successful programs to truly heed the call for an equitable and inclusive recovery.

Support for adult serving schools



Excellence in Adult Education Since 1985

Academy of Hope is ready to assist more DC residents to prepare for recovery through our high school credentialing and career training programs. We look forward to partnering with the Council, the WIC and DOES to best serve DC residents in the critical months and years ahead.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Performance Hearing - Committee on Labor – Workforce Investment Council

Committee Chair: Councilmember Elisa Silverman

Testimony from Yvette Scorse, communications director, Byte Back

June 3, 2021

My name is Yvette Scorse, communications director at Byte Back, headquartered in Washington, DC. For 24 years, we've provided a pathway of inclusive tech training that leads to living-wage careers. I'm also a proud Ward 6 resident.

DC's unemployed residents need reskilling and upskilling more than ever. Some residents need foundational digital skills even to search or apply for jobs. Others are looking for their next career in technology and the IT industry.

Over the last year of the pandemic, we've seen that digital literacy skills are essential to participation in society and work. In order to give residents a fair shot and help them move into living-wage careers, there needs to be a continuing pathway of tech training. In Byte Back's experience job placement is also most effective with invested hiring partners who can provide guidance to job candidates, internships, and jobs. Now is the time to train adults who are currently unemployed.

In 2021, we have not seen a proposal so far for technical job training and partnerships through the WIC, but we are hopeful to see opportunities like this in the future. We support the inclusion in the FY22 budget of skills training and career training partnerships through OSSE, DOES, and the WIC. We hope this will lead to more direct service and outcomes for unemployed residents. We would also look forward to increased referrals from the Eligible Trainers Provider List so we can effectively connect with residents who need Byte Back services most.

The IT sector has enormous potential for DC's workforce – while there is an IT talent shortage, there are also living-wage positions that residents can qualify for in about six months, instead of four years in college. Byte Back's IT Professional Track with CompTIA A+ certification opens career opportunities. In our last completed A+ class, every participant received a job offer. The proven effectiveness of Byte Back and other workforce development programs – before and during the pandemic – shows that investing in them is smart and worthwhile.

We look forward to reexploring partnerships with the WIC and sharing further input for digital inclusion solutions.

Testimony on the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) to the Committee on Labor & Workforce Development, Budget Hearing
Chair Elissa Silverman
Witness Soukaena Gueye
June 3, 2021

Good morning. My name is Soukaena Gueye, and I am a Ward 7 resident. I am a recent Byte Back graduate and completed the Computer Foundations 2 course.

I first heard about Byte Back from my mother, who completed a course there years ago. While I was unemployed, she told me it was the next step I should be taking to pursue my dreams of working in IT. I'm so glad I listened to her.

Without Byte Back, I wouldn't have access to a computer. And without computer skills, I wouldn't even know how to use a computer to apply for jobs or sign up for my COVID-19 vaccine. This is why we need digital equity in DC – we need to increase technology access for all DC residents, to take advantage of government provided resources as well as pursue new career opportunities.

As a DC native, I'm grateful programs like Byte Back exist to support individuals like me and my neighbors in our efforts to gain skills and employment. In my case, I'm grateful to my mom and word of mouth, but I believe that more DC residents could take advantage of Byte Back training if they found it through DC government. And even more students would get hired through increased employer partnership programs through the WIC.

After I completed my course at Byte Back, I felt comfortable with programs I did not have experience using and was able to apply for jobs I didn't feel qualified for before. Byte Back is a program that should remain free and be expanded. Serving underserved communities and making sure they have access to technology is crucial, and Byte Back does this by providing free technology courses for all levels, including those who have never picked up a computer before, and people like me who are looking to go further in their careers than they would have been able to go before.

Byte Back gave me the experience I needed to go further in my education – I now have the tech foundations I need to enroll at American University and continuing to pursue my education further! All individuals should have this opportunity, whether their goals are to eventually pursue a four-year degree or to better understand how to use the technology they have.

Without programs like Byte Back, DC residents wouldn't be able to access critical resources or find new avenues to new career paths like the highly in-demand tech industry. Putting tech within reach means putting opportunities within reach in our whole community, and I'm proud to support that.

Testimony before the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development

Regarding Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan

June 3, 2021

Submitted by:

Claudia Schlosberg, J.D.
Castle Hill Consulting, LLC

Good afternoon Chairperson Silverman and members of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. My name is Claudia Schlosberg. I am the Principal of Castle Hill Consulting, LLC, a resident-owned, Certified Business Enterprise that provides strategic advice and consulting services to non-profit organizations and for-profit business on Medicaid and other public health programs with emphasis on addressing the needs of seniors and people with disabilities. I also work closely with Judith Levy, the convenor of the DC Coalition on Long-Term Care and I sit on the Board of Directors of Leading Age DC and Iona Senior Services.

I am pleased to share that the companies that I represent are bringing major new programs and services to the District, specifically to serve low-income seniors in Wards 7 and 8. The grand opening of Livingston Place at Southern Avenue is tomorrow. Livingston Place is a new, beautifully-appointed, 155 unit assisted living community designed to serve low-income seniors who might otherwise have to live in a nursing home. The groundbreaking for a second Assisted Living Community, the Residences at Kenilworth Park was this morning. And a third client hopes to deliver the District's first Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and build a new PACE Center in Ward 7. Together, just these three projects will bring more than 300 new jobs to SE DC. These jobs will be in healthcare administration, finance, clinical services including nursing, social work, dietary, building maintenance, housing keeping and personal care.

The challenge however is that even before the doors of these new programs open, the District is facing a crisis due to the shortage of direct care workers. The DC Coalition on Long-Term Care

fielded two surveys within the past 13 months.¹ Prior to COVID, it was estimated that the ratio of District residents needing Long Term Care Services and Supports to available caregivers was 3 to 1, a ratio that was predicted to worsen based upon current demographic trends. The Public Health Emergency (PHE) caused by COVID accelerated the growing shortage of direct care workers and has made it much harder for current employers to find and keep qualified workers. The surveys showed over 50 percent of home health agency respondents did not have enough Home Health Aides to staff all of their clients on every shift. Across all sectors, the vast majority of existing employers were concerned or extremely concerned about meeting their future staffing needs. Just last week, I was informed that some Home Health Agencies are not taking new referrals unless the client already has an aide. Other employers tell me they are struggling daily to fill positions. Without sufficient numbers of high quality, direct care staff to care for older adults and people with disabilities, we cannot serve the needs of a growing senior population and family caregivers and our healthcare system, including acute care hospitals, will be overwhelmed.

Regrettably, despite the fact that the demand for direct care workers is growing and despite documented shortages, the District government, to date, has not invested in the kinds of strategies that we know are needed to recruit, train and retain sufficient workers to meet the needs of seniors and the employers who serve them. We are aware that the Mayor's proposed budget contains millions in new funding for workforce development and we are urging that a portion of those funds get earmarked to support our recommendations. These recommendations are shared broadly within the LTC stakeholder community, are based upon consultations with national experts and discussions with employers and are informed by the work of other States. Specifically:

1. We must raise reimbursement rates to increase the wages paid to direct care workers. The DC Medicaid program does require providers to pay the living wage which will be \$15.20 effective July 1, 2021. However, at that rate, a worker working 40 hours a week and taking no unpaid time off would only be earning \$31,616 per year before taxes. This is not enough to live in Washington, DC. Moreover, such wages are not competitive with jobs that do not require taking a Board of Nursing approved training program that includes both classroom and clinical hours and pass a certification exam. For example, Amazon is offering starting wages of \$17.00/hour to work in a warehouse.
2. We must create stackable credentials so that Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and Home Health Aides (HHAs) can go back to school and receive additional training and we need to ensure that wages increase with additional certifications and responsibilities. For example, in 2019, the Board of Nursing approved a new certification for a Certified Medication Aide (MA-C). This is a HHA or CNA who takes an additional 100 hours of training and passes a certification

¹ The Long Term Care Coalition, Covid-19 Impact on Home Health Aides Survey Results, <https://www.dclongtermcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-19-Impact-on-HHAs-Survey-Results.pdf>; CNA Needs Assessment Survey, <https://www.dclongtermcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CNA-Survey-12.21.2020-FINAL-.pdf>.

exam allowing them to administer medications. There are employers today who would hire aides with these credentials but no training academy is yet approved to provide the training and DC Medicaid has not yet factored in a higher wage rate for these positions. If we want to support the direct care workforce and give workers the opportunity to advance their careers and earn more money, we need to get this program fully implemented.

3. We must fund or waive all training costs, increase the availability of training slots, provide more funding to the training academies so that they can hire more nurses and increase their capacity to offer basic training courses and create necessary additional bridge programs that will allow current HHAs and CNAs to expand their capacity to work in both institutional and home settings. Current training for CNA or HHA certification runs from \$1200 to \$1600 and that does not even include the cost of taking the exam or other license fees. These costs are too high and while there are a few approved schools that offer free tuition to DC residents, there are not enough slots to meet demand. For example, during the Fall of 2020, Age Friendly DC, DC-OIC and other partners worked together and recruited 122 residents who expressed interest in becoming Home Health Aides. Fifty-six were public housing residents; 47 were from Ward 8 and 31 were from Ward 7. Yet, due to the limited number of free tuition slots available, only five have been able to enroll in training. Six of these recruits have completed the CASAS exam, which is a required academic assessment in reading and math that applicants must pass to be accepted into training and another 14 are waiting to take the CASAs test, but cannot get tested due to lack of available slots. Notwithstanding the delays in being able to access a training program, fifty percent of the initial recruits remain interested in training to become a home health aide and are waiting for available slots. In the meantime, seniors are not being served and employers are desperate for workers. We have both federal and District dollars that can be used to pay training costs and support training programs. We need to better fund training academies and make training free for anyone who wants to become an HHA or CNA.

4. We seek \$2.8 million in funding over three years for the Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program (See attached). This is a proposal that builds upon the work of Dr. William Leahy and other states that is designed to support the development of the direct care workforce and a pathway to career development for those who seek to move forward. This program is designed initially to provide high school and young adult learners individuals with the training and support needed to become a certified direct care worker (HHA or CNA) while exposing them more broadly to careers in geriatrics and business opportunities. It can be expanded to include others as well. The proposal enjoys support from a broad spectrum of employers in long term care, academics, advocates and consumers (see letter of support to Leyal Sarigol, DHCF), and we are having productive discussions with the Department of Employment Services regarding how to get this program registered under DOL rules. However, funding is needed now to support the initial development work that can get this program up and running within the next eight to 12 months.

Finally, let's think about who makes up the direct care workforce. Direct care workers are predominantly female (87%) and people of color (59%), just over a quarter (27%) are immigrants, and educational attainment is fairly low across the workforce (53% have a high

school education or less).² To not invest in this workforce not only has dire consequences for meeting the needs of seniors but it perpetuates racial and gender disparities that economically disadvantage a workforce that is largely composed of women of color. If we are serious about promoting equity and economic opportunity, we must address this crisis and support direct care workers now.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

² Scales, K., It is Time to Resolve the Direct Care Workforce Crisis in Long-Term Care, *The Gerontologist*, August 27, 2020, <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/advance-article/doi/10.1093/geront/gnaa116/5898205>.

May 28, 2021

Leyla Sarigol, Project Manager
DHCF Long Term Care Administration
Department of Health Care Finance
441 4th Street, N. W.
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Priority Areas for Capacity Building

Dear Ms. Sarigol:

On May 12, 2021, you attended the meeting of the DC Coalition for Long-term Care and shared information regarding the Money Follows the Person Capacity Building Grant opportunity being offered to States by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The grant provides up to \$5 million in funding over five years to increase access to home and community-based services, improve access and eliminate barriers. The Department of Health Care Finance's (DHCF) proposal to CMS is due on June 30, 2021. In your slides, you identified several emerging priority areas for consideration including the need to focus on workforce development. You also requested feedback regarding priority areas and asked that interested parties get back to you no later than May 31.

The undersigned organizations represent a broad spectrum of advocates, consumers and providers of long-term care services and supports. We are writing to collectively endorse funding proposals that address the current crisis in the direct care workforce. Like many other jurisdictions, the District of Columbia is facing the challenge of providing high-quality and affordable, person-centered long-term care services and supports to a population that is aging. Prior to COVID, it was estimated that the ratio of District residents needing Long Term Care Services and Supports to available caregivers was 3 to 1, a ratio that was predicted to worsen based upon current demographic trends. The Public Health Emergency (PHE) caused by COVID accelerated the growing shortage of direct care workers and has made it much harder for current employers to find and keep qualified workers. Based upon surveys conducted last year,¹ over 50 percent of home health agency respondents stated they did not have enough Home Health Aides to staff all of their clients on every shifts. Across all sectors, the vast

¹ The Long Term Care Coalition, Covid-19 Impact on Home Health Aides Survey Results, <https://www.dclongtermcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-19-Impact-on-HHAs-Survey-Results.pdf>; CNA Needs Assessment Survey, <https://www.dclongtermcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CNA-Survey-12.21.2020-FINAL-.pdf>.

majority of existing employers were concerned or extremely concerned about meeting their future staffing needs.

We believe the District must develop and implement focused strategies to address the current crisis or the needs of thousands of District seniors will go unmet. Of critical importance is raising provider reimbursement rates to increase the wages paid to direct care workers. However, because the MFP Capacity Building Grant funds are federal dollars and cannot be used to draw down additional federal match, we do not believe these grant funds should be used to pay for services that are otherwise reimbursable as Medicaid expenditures.

Accordingly, we are requesting that DHCF prioritize those proposals that focus on increasing the pipeline of high quality direct care staff. Specifically, we are asking DHCF to provide funding for a Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program. This program is designed to provide individuals with the training and support needed to become a certified direct care worker (HHA or CNA) while exposing them more broadly to geriatric careers and business opportunities. Borrowing from successful workforce development programs developed by other States, this program is a proven strategy to recruit and train individuals who might otherwise never consider a career as a direct care worker.

We thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Claudia Schlosberg at CastleHConsulting@gmail.com or 202-486-0822.

Best regards,

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Copies to: Melisa Byrd, Medicaid Director
Katherine Rogers, Director, LTC Administration

Proposal - The Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program

June 1, 2021

For more information contact: Claudia Schlosberg, Castle Hill Consulting, LLC
CastleHConsulting@gmail.com
202-486-0822

I. Statement of Need

According to the District of Columbia State Plan on Aging, 2019-2022, the District of Columbia has an estimated total population of 618,170 residents. The older population, age 60 and older, is 113,644 or 16.5%. This represents an increase of 12.75% since 2010 or an additional 12,855 seniors. The District's senior population is projected to continue grow to 17.4% of the total population by 2030. More than half of seniors live alone (56.7%). And, according to DCOA's Needs Assessment (2016), one-third of DC's older residents are disabled.

Like many other jurisdictions, the District of Columbia is facing the challenge of providing high-quality and affordable, person-centered long-term care services and supports to a population that is aging. Nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and home care agencies have always faced challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified Direct Care and nursing staff to care for older adults. Prior to COVID, it was estimated that the ratio of District residents needing Long Term Care Services and Supports to available caregivers was 3 to 1, a ratio that was predicted to worsen based upon current demographic trends. The Public Health Emergency (PHE) caused by COVID accelerated the growing shortage of direct care workers and has made it much harder for current employers to find and keep qualified workers.

Last year, following the declaration of the PHE, the DC Long Term Care Coalition working with LeadingAgeDC, the DC Health Care Association, the DC Home Health Association, Capitol Hill Village, Home Care Partners and DC Appleseed fielded two surveys, one for home health agencies and another for nursing facilities, assisted living and life span communities and adult day health providers to better understand the workforce needs of employers serving seniors who need long term care. Notably,

- Over 50 percent of home health agency respondents stated they did not have enough Home Health Aides to staff all of their clients on every shift.
- Institutional providers reported that approximately 1/5 of CNA positions are vacant.
- Virtual schooling and childcare issues are contributing to staff recruitment and retention challenges.
- Across all care settings, providers reported that direct care staff are leaving the workforce or not reporting to work.
- An important finding from the survey showed that the vast majority of CNAs who care for District residents do not live in DC.
- Sixteen (16) home health agency respondents reported an average of 10 months retention. Two agencies, by contrast reported an average of 5-year retention.

Employers across all sectors reported that COVID was making it harder for them to hire new staff and retain existing workers. Across all sectors, the vast majority of existing employers were concerned or extremely concerned about meeting their future staffing needs. Unless the District develops and implements focused strategies to address the current crisis, the needs of thousands of District seniors will go unmet.

2. Current Challenges

Implementation of Existing Regulatory Framework - A current challenge for the direct care workforce in DC is the varying requirements for training and certification for direct care positions. An individual contemplating direct care work must choose a pathway before they have any real exposure to working with older adults. Individuals seeking to become a Certified Nursing Assistant must enroll in an approved training program for certified nursing assistants and take a nurse aide certification exam. Once certified, they are not qualified to work in home care unless they enroll in a bridge course. There is only one school offering this course so in most instances, a CNA would have to enroll in a new school and pay additional fees. Likewise, although the core competencies needed for a home health aide are similar to those of a CNA, an individual who enrolls in a home health training program and takes a home health aide certification exam is only qualified to work in home care. They may qualify to take the CNA exam, but again, they must enroll in and take a bridge course. Aides who wish to move within the healthcare system and work in varying settings are limited because of these rules.

Developing core competencies that are consistent across settings is important for giving direct care workers more freedom to fluidly move from setting to setting and creates a larger pool of workers. We must also create stackable credentials so that CNAs and HHAs can go back to school and receive additional training and acquire new skills. And when they do, we need to ensure that wages are increased to recognize the additional certifications and responsibilities. These approaches are critical to increasing the number of qualified workers in the workforce and reducing turnover rates.

Costs – The DC Board of Nursing is responsible for approving training programs for direct care workers. Private training schools charge tuition that can range \$1200 to \$1600. There are also additional fees that can run over \$200. DC Residents can enroll in several schools for free but

these schools have limited capacity and cannot enroll all the students interested in taking classes. Eliminating tuition and fees for direct care worker training or at least significantly increasing the number of free tuition slots and offering transportation and childcare subsidies would greatly increase the number of students entering this career pathway.

Pay and Benefits - In the District of Columbia, most direct care workers are paid at least the Living Wage which is now \$15.00 per hour and the same as the minimum wage. Wage levels fail to take into consideration the training and certification required to be a direct care worker and under-value the importance of the work being performed. Even at \$15.00/per hour, a direct care worker working full time does not earn enough to meet the cost of living in the DMV. Uncompetitive wages combined with the difficulty of the job, result in very high turnover among home health aides and certified nursing assistants. High turnover rates increase costs and reduce quality of care. DC Medicaid does not recognize different rates for different levels of experience and new rates have not been established for CNAs and HHAs that secure additional training and are certified as Medication Aides (MA-Cs) .

Failure to Recognize Career Ladders and Opportunities for Advancement – Speak to anyone working in geriatrics today, including nurses, physicians, nursing home and other program administrators, home health agency directors and IT innovators and quite often you hear they had experience in their youth as a paid or unpaid caregiver. Yet, many people in workforce development fail to see the connection between direct care and professional careers and entrepreneurial opportunities. As a result, many workforce investment programs fail to invest in the direct care workforce perpetuating the perception that direct care is low value work and dampening the ability of the direct care workforce, the vast majority of whom are women of color, to secure higher wages and pursue a career path. This program is designed to challenge this narrative by demonstrating the intrinsic value of providing quality, direct care to our most vulnerable and cherished members of our community, our elders, supporting better wages and benefits for workers and providing a pathway to career development.

3. A Vision for the Future

To address the current workforce shortage in long-term care, educators, regulators and employers must work together to build a workforce pipeline of qualified and trained individuals to serve our current and future needs. One proven strategy is to develop a Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program. This program is designed to provide individuals with the training and support needed to become a certified direct care worker while exposing them more broadly to geriatric careers and business opportunities. Borrowing from workforce development programs developed by other States and programs developed by William Leahy, M.D. implemented in Utah, Maryland and shortly to be launched at Coolidge High School in Washington, DC, a geriatric-careers focused apprenticeship program will have capacity to:

- (1) Attract sufficient numbers of new workers including those just entering the workforce, displaced workers, older adults returning to the workforce, returning citizen and others.

(2). Partner with public or public charter schools to allow younger students the ability to earn credits toward their High School Diploma for course work associated with the apprenticeship curriculum or other career pathways. Preference is to initially partner with schools located in Wards 7 and 8 and expand the program across the District based upon interest and demand.

(3) Offer high quality, competency-based training that prepares trainees to meet certification standards for direct care and work in a variety of healthcare settings while meeting the job requirements of employers in rapidly evolving and emerging care delivery settings.

(4) Expose trainees broadly to the needs of older adults, innovative service delivery models and various career pathways such as (but not limited to) nursing, medicine, counseling, social work, OT, PT, speech and respiratory therapy, nutrition counseling, activity coordination, fitness, pharmacology and medication management, case management, human resources, accounting and financial management, technology, architecture, transportation and business entrepreneurship.

(5) Partner with the community college and other colleges and universities to provide seamless academic and career pathways for workers to enter the industry and progress in their careers through additional training and education.

(6) Provide tuition and other financial assistance, mentoring, career counseling, job-placement and referrals to other needed supports to help trainees in the apprenticeship program meet and advance their career goals.

(7)) Foster engagement with employers and work to identify strategies that will contribute to higher retention in direct care jobs.

Proposal to Fund a Pilot Program

We are seeking an award of \$2.8 million dollars over three years to fund the establishment of a pilot Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program services program. The funding should be awarded to a not-for-profit entity that has the following qualifications:

1). Has at least 3 years of experience in developing and implementing workforce development programs or other educational programs within the District of Columbia and has a track record of diversity and inclusion.

2) Is certified by the DC Board of Nursing to provide CNA or HHA training and has a track record of successfully preparing trainees to pass the relevant certification exams or can partner or affiliate with such an entity.

3) Has established relationships with employers who provide long-term care services and supports to seniors and people with disabilities including in economically disadvantaged areas of the District of Columbia or demonstrates the ability to develop those relationships.

The entity shall, within six (6) months of the grant award, be responsible for:

1) Convening an Advisory Panel composed of educators, employers and others knowledgeable of workforce development strategies and the needs of older adults. The workgroup shall inform curriculum development and put forth recommendations regarding regulatory and reimbursement reforms needed to support the recruitment, training and retention of direct care workers.

2) With input from the Advisory Panel, develop or adopt a curriculum that focuses on core competencies for direct care workers, stackable coursework that allows those who wish to advance their careers to do so with as few barriers as possible and provides exposure to both career and business opportunities focused on caring for older adults.

3) Identifying one or more public or public charter high schools in Wards 7 or 8 to offer and support the apprenticeship program .

4). Entering into partnership or affiliation agreements with certified training academies, adult education schools, community colleges and universities to provide required training for CNAs and HHAs and additional course offerings that allow apprenticeship participants to continue to advance their careers.

5) Developing a program budget and a financial plan that includes public and private sources of funding.

6). Working with the Department of Employment Services, the Workforce Investment Council and others to identify and secure federal and local funds to support the Apprenticeship Program and training costs including but not limited to exploring approval as a Registered Apprenticeship Program (if appropriate).

7). Developing an outreach and recruitment strategy

8). With input from employers, develop criteria for employer participation and obtain employer sponsorship.

The goal is to launch the program within 12 months of the date of the award and enroll at least 30 high school and young adult learners in the first cohort. As the program matures, the goal is to increase the number of students in the program by 30 each year until enrollment reaches 90 high school and young adult students.

Additionally, the program will expand to offering mentoring and job placement to older workers, displaced workers, returning citizens and others who seek to enter the direct care workforce.

The program will be staffed by one full-time Program Manager who will be responsible for overall management, budget development, fundraising, curriculum development, etc. Additional staff will include: (1) a full-time Program Developer who primarily will be responsible for recruiting employers, managing employer relations and fostering positive mentoring for program participants; and (2) a Student Coordinator who will be responsible for outreach and student recruitment and support.

4. Evaluation

A critical component of the Geriatric Career Builder's Program will be provision for on-going evaluation to help identify and refine the best approaches to recruiting, training and employing direct care workers and supporting them in their career development and advancement.

The multi-year evaluation will use the logic model approach which provides tools for planning, describing, managing, communicating and evaluating a program or intervention. A logic model outlines the relationships between a program's activities and its intended effects, states the assumptions that underlie expectations that a program will work, and frames the context in which the program operates. Logic models are not static documents. It is recommended that they are being revised periodically to reflect new evidence, lessons learned, and changes in context, resources, activities, or expectations.¹

Guided by the logic model approach, the evaluation design will include a process and outcome evaluation. Planning for the evaluation will begin in advance of program launch to ensure that data points needed are collected from the inception of the program. Data collection for the process evaluation will start when the project start-up is complete and a sufficient number of participants have been recruited into the program to allow tracking of program activities.

The Process Evaluation

During the project implementation phase, the process evaluation will provide answers to the following questions:

(1) Is the apprenticeship program being implemented as planned?

(2) Were all of the activities carried out as expected?

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2004). Evaluation guide: Developing and using a logic model. Atlanta, GA: Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention.

(3) What were implementation issues or problems with implementation and how were they resolved?

In addition to keeping track of the program's activities, the team will conduct qualitative interviews with cohorts of trainees and other important stakeholders (e.g. employers/providers) to ascertain their views and experiences of the apprenticeship program, including the training, on-the-job training, and supports. During the implementation phase as part of the process evaluation efforts we will also assess efficiency in determining how much output is produced for a given level of inputs/resources. Indicators of efficiency will include (but are not limited to): the number of training sites established, number of employers who participated in the program, number of trainees recruited, and characteristics of trainees recruited including prior work history and industry (to answer the question: who did we reach?).

The Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation effort will study the apprenticeship program's effectiveness by assessing its intended short-, intermediate-, and/or long-term effects (non-process-related outcomes). Relevant indicators of program success will be tracked and interviews with trainees and other key stakeholders will be conducted at appropriate intervals.

Short-term outcomes represent the immediate effects of the program or intervention activities. The short-term outcomes to be assessed are the following: number of trainees finishing the apprenticeship program, number and description of trainees who drop out, number of trainees who find work in the intended field of employment, trainees' and employers' opinion and value of the training, and knowledge and skills gained from the various training components (via interviews)

Intermediate outcomes are behavior, normative, and policy changes. The evaluation effort will assess the impact of the program on the trainee and the system for recruiting, training and retaining direct care professionals. Examples of indicators can include: career interests, preparation of the workforce, career lattice or ladder development, trainees' work experience, job satisfaction, job confidence, and value of line of work, impact of job on improvement in financial status/security and family life, and job retention of trainees.

Long-term outcomes refer to the desired results of the program. A major indicator will be if numbers of employees in the profession has increased. Hence, to determine if the program has made a difference in addressing the worker shortage by improvements in the pipeline of workers and retention of the workforce in the field. Further, one could determine the impact of increased numbers of workers on their community.

The Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will consist of two researchers with experience in evaluation design, as well as experience in workforce issues, specifically in direct care professionals employed in the aging field.

5. Proposed Annual Budget:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Salaried Employees			
One FTE Program Manager -	\$135,000	\$140,000	\$145,000
Program Developer (Employer Relations)	\$100,000	\$105,000	\$110,000
Student Coordinator/Recruiter	<u>\$85,000</u>	<u>\$90,000</u>	<u>\$95,000</u>
Sub -Total	\$320,000	\$335,000	350,000
Contracts			
Consultant -	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Evaluation	<u>\$65,000</u>	<u>\$65,000</u>	<u>\$65,000</u>
Sub- Total	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Tuition Assistance/Program Support (Tuition, fees, Stipends)			
\$3,000/student or young adult students*/year	\$90,000	\$186,000	\$288,000
\$2000/student x 30 Adult Learners	\$60,000	\$126,000	\$198,000
Overhead	<u>\$150,000</u>	<u>\$155,000</u>	<u>\$160,000</u>
Sub- Total	\$300,000	\$467,000	\$646,000
*These students are earning their HS diploma or Equivalency			
<u>GRAND TOTAL - \$2,793,000</u>	<u>\$745,000</u>	<u>\$927,000</u>	<u>\$1,121,000</u>

Testimony before Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Regarding Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan

June 3, 2021

Submitted by:

Susan Sedgewick
Capitol Hill Village

I am Susan Sedgewick, a 40 plus year DC resident who hopes to continue to live in my own home as I age. My husband and I joined Capitol Hill Village, a neighborhood-based organization created to help older adults age in community, for that specific purpose. CHV provides opportunities for volunteers, which we love as it keeps us older adults engaged in meaningful activities. One of these activities is CHV's advocacy program to identify and encourage the services we older adults need to have in place for us to successfully age at home.

Several years ago, we were shocked to learn from our advocacy research, that experts were projecting a serious shortfall in the numbers of direct care workers, especially Home Health Care Aides, to meet the growing need. Covid made the shortfall in this workforce an immediate issue--we are hearing from licensed agencies they are having a difficult time recruiting certified workers. These are the very people I am counting on hiring to help me when I become disabled. With each passing birthday, this advocacy work becomes more personal.

Our CHV team of retired college professors, policy analysts, managers went to work meeting with and listening to knowledgeable and experienced professionals. We identified barriers to entry to these jobs that requires the attention from several silo-ed city agencies which do not seem to work together. By joining with the Long Term Care Coalition, we learned about possible solutions for breaking down these barriers. As a part of the Long Term Care Coalition's special working

group, we are standing with professionals who understand how the direct care workforce is trained, credentialed, and employed in DC.

A key barrier to entry has been the high cost and limited availability of training opportunities for both Home Health Care Aides and Certified Nursing Assistants.

I understand the Department of Employment Services and the Workforce Investment Council have the responsibility to identify needed careers and jobs and then, develop the workforce to meet the needs. I also understand these agencies have access to Federal funding for this purpose.

We urge the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development to fund and direct DOES and WIC to

- Provide funding to the Department of Health-approved training academies to increase their capacity both by hiring appropriate staff and expanding their offerings.
- Provide funding to make the training of direct care workers tuition free.

The Long Term Care Coalition is ready to assist DOES and WIC in developing programs to provide sufficient numbers of trained direct care workers.

In addition, I, on behalf of Capitol Hill Village, urge the committee's support to fund the development of the Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program. (See attached proposal). This program has been developed with input from experts and employers. It has garnered tremendous support and we know it can work to identify a health profession career ladder that can help with the recruitment and retention of direct care workers.

Thank you.

Susan Sedgewick

jssedgewick@gmail.com

202-546-0160

223 8th St SE

Proposal - The Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program

June 1, 2021

Prepared by Claudia Schlosberg, Castle Hill Consulting, LLC

Contact: CastleHConsulting@gmail.com
202-486-0822

I. Statement of Need

According to the District of Columbia State Plan on Aging, 2019-2022, the District of Columbia has an estimated total population of 618,170 residents. The older population, age 60 and older, is 113,644 or 16.5%. This represents an increase of 12.75% since 2010 or an additional 12,855 seniors. The District's senior population is projected to continue grow to 17.4% of the total population by 2030. More than half of seniors live alone (56.7%). And, according to DCOA's Needs Assessment (2016), one-third of DC's older residents are disabled.

Like many other jurisdictions, the District of Columbia is facing the challenge of providing high-quality and affordable, person-centered long-term care services and supports to a population that is aging. Nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and home care agencies have always faced challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified Direct Care and nursing staff to care for older adults. Prior to COVID, it was estimated that the ratio of District residents needing Long Term Care Services and Supports to available caregivers was 3 to 1, a ratio that was predicted to worsen based upon current demographic trends. The Public Health Emergency (PHE) caused by COVID accelerated the growing shortage of direct care workers and has made it much harder for current employers to find and keep qualified workers.

Last year, following the declaration of the PHE, the DC Long Term Care Coalition working with LeadingAgeDC, the DC Health Care Association, the DC Home Health Association, Capitol Hill Village, Home Care Partners and DC Appleseed fielded two surveys, [one](#) for home health agencies and [another](#) for nursing facilities, assisted living and life span communities and adult day health providers to better understand the workforce needs of employers serving seniors who need long term care. Notably,

- Over 50 percent of home health agency respondents stated they did not have enough Home Health Aides to staff all of their clients on every shift.
- Institutional providers reported that approximately 1/5 of CNA positions are vacant.
- Virtual schooling and childcare issues are contributing to staff recruitment and retention challenges.
- Across all care settings, providers reported that direct care staff are leaving the workforce or not reporting to work.
- An important finding from the survey showed that the vast majority of CNAs who care for District residents do not live in DC.

- Sixteen (16) home health agency respondents reported an average of 10 months retention. Two agencies, by contrast reported an average of 5-year retention.

Employers across all sectors reported that COVID was making it harder for them to hire new staff and retain existing workers. Across all sectors, the vast majority of existing employers were concerned or extremely concerned about meeting their future staffing needs. Unless the District develops and implements focused strategies to address the current crisis, the needs of thousands of District seniors will go unmet.

2. Current Challenges

Implementation of Existing Regulatory Framework - A current challenge for the direct care workforce in DC is the varying requirements for training and certification for direct care positions. An individual contemplating direct care work must choose a pathway before they have any real exposure to working with older adults. Individuals seeking to become a Certified Nursing Assistant must enroll in an approved training program for certified nursing assistants and take a nurse aide certification exam. Once certified, they are not qualified to work in home care unless they enroll in a bridge course. There is only one school offering this course so in most instances, a CNA would have to enroll in a new school and pay additional fees. Likewise, although the core competencies needed for a home health aide are similar to those of a CNA, an individual who enrolls in a home health training program and takes a home health aide certification exam is only qualified to work in home care. They may qualify to take the CNA exam, but again, they must enroll in and take a bridge course. Aides who wish to move within the healthcare system and work in varying settings are limited because of these rules. Developing core competencies that are consistent across settings is important for giving direct care workers more freedom to fluidly move from setting to setting and creates a larger pool of workers. We must also create stackable credentials so that CNAs and HHAs can go back to school and receive additional training and acquire new skills. And when they do, we need to ensure that wages are increased to recognize the additional certifications and responsibilities. These approaches are critical to increasing the number of qualified workers in the workforce and reducing turnover rates.

Costs – The DC Board of Nursing is responsible for approving training programs for direct care workers. Private training schools charge tuition that can range \$1200 to \$1600. There are also additional fees that can run over \$200. DC Residents can enroll in several schools for free but these schools have limited capacity and cannot enroll all the students interested in taking classes. Eliminating tuition and fees for direct care worker training or at least significantly increasing the number of free tuition slots and offering transportation and childcare subsidies would greatly increase the number of students entering this career pathway.

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(1) Attract sufficient numbers of new workers including those just entering the workforce, displaced workers, older adults returning to the workforce, returning citizen and others.

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(4) Expose trainees broadly to the needs of older adults, innovative service delivery models and various career pathways such as (but not limited to) nursing, medicine, counseling, social work, OT, PT, speech and respiratory therapy, nutrition counseling, activity coordination, fitness, pharmacology and medication management, case management, human resources, accounting and financial management, technology, architecture, transportation and business entrepreneurship.

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Proposal to Fund a Pilot Program

We are seeking an award of \$2.8 million dollars over three years to fund the establishment of a pilot Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program services program. The funding should be awarded to a not-for-profit entity that has the following qualifications:

1). Has at least 3 years of experience in developing and implementing workforce development programs or other educational programs within the District of Columbia and has a track record of diversity and inclusion.

2) Is certified by the DC Board of Nursing to provide CNA or HHA training and has a track record of successfully preparing trainees to pass the relevant certification exams or can partner or affiliate with such an entity.

3) Has established relationships with employers who provide long-term care services and supports to seniors and people with disabilities including in economically disadvantaged areas of the District of Columbia or demonstrates the ability to develop those relationships.

The entity shall, within six (6) months of the grant award, be responsible for:

1) Convening an Advisory Panel composed of educators, employers and others knowledgeable of workforce development strategies and the needs of older adults. The

workgroup shall inform curriculum development and put forth recommendations regarding regulatory and reimbursement reforms needed to support the recruitment, training and retention of direct care workers.

2) With input from the Advisory Panel, develop or adopt a curriculum that focuses on core competencies for direct care workers, stackable coursework that allows those who wish to advance their careers to do so with as few barriers as possible and provides exposure to both career and business opportunities focused on caring for older adults.

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4). Entering into partnership or affiliation agreements with certified training academies, adult education schools, community colleges and universities to provide required training for CNAs and HHAs and additional course offerings that allow apprenticeship participants to continue to advance their careers.

5) Developing a program budget and a financial plan that includes public and private sources of funding.

6). Working with the Department of Employment Services, the Workforce Investment Council and others to identify and secure federal and local funds to support the Apprenticeship Program and training costs including but not limited to exploring approval as a Registered Apprenticeship Program (if appropriate).

7). Developing an outreach and recruitment strategy

8). With input from employers, develop criteria for employer participation and obtain employer sponsorship.

The goal is to launch the program within 12 months of the date of the award and enroll at least 30 high school and young adult learners in the first cohort. As the program matures, the goal is to increase the number of students in the program by 30 each year until enrollment reaches 90 high school and young adult students.

Additionally, the program will expand to offering mentoring and job placement to older workers, displaced workers, returning citizens and others who seek to enter the direct care workforce.

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mentoring for program participants; and (2) a Student Coordinator who will be responsible for outreach and student recruitment and support.

4. Evaluation

A critical component of the Geriatric Career Builder's Program will be provision for on-going evaluation to help identify and refine the best approaches to recruiting, training and employing direct care workers and supporting them in their career development and advancement.

The multi-year evaluation will use the logic model approach which provides tools for planning, describing, managing, communicating and evaluating a program or intervention. A logic model outlines the relationships between a program's activities and its intended effects, states the assumptions that underlie expectations that a program will work, and frames the context in which the program operates. Logic models are not static documents. It is recommended that they are being revised periodically to reflect new evidence, lessons learned, and changes in context, resources, activities, or expectations.¹

Guided by the logic model approach, the evaluation design will include a process and outcome evaluation. Planning for the evaluation will begin in advance of program launch to ensure that data points needed are collected from the inception of the program. Data collection for the process evaluation will start when the project start-up is complete and a sufficient number of participants have been recruited into the program to allow tracking of program activities.

The Process Evaluation

During the project implementation phase, the process evaluation will provide answers to the following questions:

- (1) Is the apprenticeship program being implemented as planned?
- (2) Were all of the activities carried out as expected?
- (3) What were implementation issues or problems with implementation and how were they resolved?

In addition to keeping track of the program's activities, the team will conduct qualitative interviews with cohorts of trainees and other important stakeholders (e.g. employers/providers) to ascertain their views and experiences of the apprenticeship program, including the training, on-the-job training, and supports. During the implementation phase as part of the process evaluation efforts we will also assess efficiency in determining how much

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output is produced for a given level of inputs/resources. Indicators of efficiency will include (but are not limited to): the number of training sites established, number of employers who participated in the program, number of trainees recruited, and characteristics of trainees recruited including prior work history and industry (to answer the question: who did we reach?).

The Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation effort will study the apprenticeship program's effectiveness by assessing its intended short-, intermediate-, and/or long-term effects (non-process-related outcomes). Relevant indicators of program success will be tracked and interviews with trainees and other key stakeholders will be conducted at appropriate intervals.

Short-term outcomes represent the immediate effects of the program or intervention activities. The short-term outcomes to be assessed are the following: number of trainees finishing the apprenticeship program, number and description of trainees who drop out, number of trainees who find work in the intended field of employment, trainees' and employers' opinion and value of the training, and knowledge and skills gained from the various training components (via interviews)

Intermediate outcomes are behavior, normative, and policy changes. The evaluation effort will assess the impact of the program on the trainee and the system for recruiting, training and retaining direct care professionals. Examples of indicators can include: career interests, preparation of the workforce, career lattice or ladder development, trainees' work experience, job satisfaction, job confidence, and value of line of work, impact of job on improvement in financial status/security and family life, and job retention of trainees.

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The Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will consist of two researchers with experience in evaluation design, as well as experience in workforce issues, specifically in direct care professionals employed in the aging field.

5. Proposed Annual Budget:	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
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Sub -Total	\$320,000	\$335,000	350,000

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Consultant -	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Evaluation	<u>\$65,000</u>	<u>\$65,000</u>	<u>\$65,000</u>
Sub- Total	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000

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\$3,000/student or young adult students*/year	\$90,000	\$186,000	\$288,000
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Sub- Total	\$300,000	\$467,000	\$646,000

*These students are earning their HS diploma or Equivalency

<u>GRAND TOTAL - \$2,793,000</u>	<u>\$745,000</u>	<u>\$927,000</u>	<u>\$1,121,000</u>
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Testimony before the Committee on Labor and Workforce
Development

Regarding Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget and Financial
Plan

June 3, 2021

Submitted by:

Sal Selvaggio, D.D.S.

Good afternoon Councilmember Silverman and Committee members, and thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony before you on the important issue of the current, and increasing, shortage of healthcare workers. My name is Sal Selvaggio, and I'm a member of the DC Coalition on Long Term Care, the Senior Advocacy Coalition or SAC, and the Iona Senior Services Citizen Advisory Group.

My testimony will center on the need for healthcare aides as witnessed during my 35 years as a practicing dentist in D.C. Patients who were middle aged or older at the beginning of my practice were, by and large, healthy and independent individuals, able to take care of their own needs.

As the decades passed, I saw the the inevitable changes that affect us all if we are fortunate enough to live into old

age. However, along with the joys that a long life can bring, is the physical and cognitive decline that often accompanies it. I was distressed to see these longtime patients arriving, accompanied by their adult children, with infections and other dental and oral problems, indicating a lack of care. These patients needed help by individuals trained in the care of people who have a diminished capacity to maintain their health on all levels.

When I spoke to their children, they often told me of the stress of having to care for an elderly parent while holding down a full time job and caring for their own children and other family members. They were unsure of how to monitor their parents for health problems, how to safely transport them to appointments, and how to effectively attend to their activities of daily living.

This scenario is upon us, and will be an increasing problem. As has been testified to you, and has been submitted to you in writing, we simply do not have the capacity to provide the needed healthcare workers for institutional and private care settings right now, and this is a situation which is worsening as our District population ages.

As a fairly recent member of the Long Term Care Coalition, I have come to know the decade long effort these citizen volunteers have mounted in tackling this complex and vital issue. The avenues for addressing our

healthcare worker shortage have been provided to you by them, so I won't take time to repeat them, except to say that they represent many hours of consulting experts, polling healthcare providers both institutional and private, and surveying healthcare workers, to determine practical and realistic solutions.

I urge you to take advantage of their research and dedication, and to coalesce the resources of the government. As evidenced by our recent pandemic, the failure to address an impending crisis has a high cost, both in monetary and human terms.

**Testimony
Before the District of Columbia City Council
Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Chairperson Alyssa Silverman
Fiscal Year Proposed Budget and Financial Plan
June 3, 2021**

**Presented by Judith Levy, MHSA, BSN, RN
Coordinator
District of Columbia Coalition on Long Term Care**

My name is Judith Levy, Coordinator of the District of Columbia Long Term Care Coalition. This submission will focus on the critical need to on direct care workforce shortages also known as Nursing Assistive Personnel including Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) and Home Health Aides (HHA). I will summarize my written testimony.

The DC Coalition on Long Term Care has worked with the DC government for over 25 years to develop and implement home and community care options for low-income DC residents with chronic care needs. Its consumers, advocates and health care providers have assisted in the development and implementation of expanded Medicaid home care, the regulations of assisted living residences and home care agencies and the improvement of the workforce essential to these programs. To improve and expand the health care workforce, the Coalition has concentrated on increasing wages, health care benefits, training and monitoring. The testimony today will focus on the need for DC Government agencies to coordinate and finance this effort. Over the years we have testified to multiple Council committees regarding regulations, wage, benefits and training. Simply put we need to see a coordinated effort as opposed to what we see as a piecemeal approach and delays in implementing and financing important regulations.

Legislation enacted in 2009 authorized the DC Board of Nursing to register and regulate the standards for education and experience --including supervision and performance of -- nursing assistive personnel (NAP). NAPs are defined as persons who provide hands-on care in all health care settings. These settings include, but are not limited to, hospitals, nursing homes, home care, dialysis centers and supportive community housing.

My colleagues have or will have given you testimony both at a personal perspective as well as an accounting of the technical and financial issues concerning this workforce. Today I want to talk about a different issue which I think has been the main cause of the lack of funding for both education and salaries for this workforce. I have, off and on, been working in the healthcare field as a provider starting in 1969 as a nursing professional. Truthfully it has taken many years for nurses to get the type of respect and salaries commensurate with their role in providing healthcare to the public. That attitude of not understanding the value of the direct care workers in society, I believe is a factor in not fully financing the education programs mentioned by my colleagues. It is an attitude that is pervasive. When the US goes to war, the military gets the funding it needs. We are in a battle to adequately take care of our senior citizens but because of this attitude of disrespect for these positions we are not providing the resources. For years I have been hearing how these jobs don't pay well and are dead end positions. This has always been the basis in DC for not funding educational programs for direct care workers. Emphasis has been on hospitality and construction.

We know this is not true by the many professionals who have worked their way up the professional healthcare career ladder starting as direct care workers. On a short-term basis, the District of Columbia has done a commendable job of quickly addressing some of the short-term impacts of COVID on the workforce. For example, DC Health and the Department of Health Care Finance issued a number of waivers to reduce regulatory barriers, and DHCF temporarily increased payment rates to providers. However, at a time when the District is creating jobs for direct care workers to serve the growing needs of seniors (i.e., at least three new assisted living communities and a new PACE program will bring 300-400 new jobs to Anacostia), we are finally seeing an effort by OSSE, DOES and the WIC to promote the value and importance of the direct care workforce to potential job seekers. This should include displaced hospitality and retail workers who lost their jobs due to COVID.

PHI, the national organization focused on this workforce, lists Five Pillars of Direct Care Job Quality:

1. Quality Training
2. Fair Compensation
3. Quality Supervision and Support
4. Respect and Recognition
5. Real Opportunities

Yes, none of this will be successful without the adequate funding of educational programming opportunities along with the change in attitude that these jobs are valuable and should be respected.

Thank-you for the opportunity to testify today.

DRAFT

District of Columbia City Council
Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
FY 22 Budget Hearing

Chairperson Elissa Silverman
June 3, 2021

Comments by: Marla Lahat, Executive Director
Home Care Partners
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202 559-9830 mlahat@homecarepartners.org

Good morning Chairperson Silverman and members of the Committee. My name is Marla Lahat and I am Executive Director of Home Care Partners. Home Care Partners is a nonprofit organization that provides certified home health aides to DC seniors and adults with disabilities, who are primarily low-income and cannot afford to pay for services. We accomplish this through generous funding from the D.C. Department on Aging and Community Living. With the support of DACL, we also run a Caregivers' Institute that supports unpaid family caregivers and the Safe at Home program that provides Occupational Therapy assessments and home modifications to older residents and adults with disabilities. I'm here today to testify about the critical shortage in the home health aide workforce – and the actions from the Council that are urgently needed.

It is clear that there are not enough certified direct care workers to meet the current and future needs of District seniors and the providers who serve them. The pandemic has only exacerbated the worker shortage. We are at a crisis point – in our more than 60-year history, we have never had this much difficulty hiring Home Health Aides. Home Care Partners offers a starting wage of \$15.20 per hour and offers benefits like health insurance and retirement plan to all of our aides working at least 20 hours per week. Many of our aides have worked for us for 10, 20, even 30 years. However, there just aren't enough new applicants entering the field to keep up with retirements or individuals leaving to move up the health career ladder, significantly limiting the number of clients we can serve. This issue is not unique to Home Care Partners – its impacting Medicaid funded agencies and private home care companies too. Just the other day, I received an emergency request from a lead senior agency asking us to staff a low-income client who had been waiting over 6 months for a Medicaid funded aide – a request I sadly could not accommodate due to the workforce shortage.

The high cost of tuition and the limited availability of free tuition for HHA and CNA programs is a major barrier to increasing the number of qualified workers. The Council must provide funding to eliminate all tuition, testing, and other fees for DC residents seeking training to enter the direct care workforce.

Getting certified as a Home Health Aide costs around \$1500, a considerable barrier to entry. Of the 7 approved HHA training programs in DC, only 1 is currently able to offer tuition-free spots for DC residents. Additionally, many potential workers cannot afford to cut back on their current job to attend the 125 hours of required training. Providing a minimum-wage stipend for students during the hours they are in class would enable significantly more people to enter this profession. Funding must also be provided to expand the capacity of training programs to be able to educate more workers. One avenue may be the Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship program but the program needs to be structured to cover both the certification training costs AND salaries for the participants. We must invest in building the direct care pipeline now, or we will only fall further behind. The District's seniors are projected to make up 17.4% of our population by 2030, with more than half of those seniors living alone and at least one-third being disabled.

Additionally, providers who serve seniors and people with disabilities in the home are competing with other industries that pay more for less skilled work. Funding and reimbursement structures must change in order to enable providers like Home Care Partners to meaningfully increase the wages of home health aides and other direct care workers. The vast majority of direct care workers are

minority and immigrant women. Their jobs are intrinsically important and valuable because they are taking care of vulnerable members of our community, and the jobs themselves require training and skill. Yet, their jobs are not seen as "good jobs" and are often excluded from workforce investment initiatives. Over the past year, the COVID-19 Public Health emergency demonstrated just how critical it is for the home care workforce to be well-trained AND well compensated. While they may not have received the media attention of other essential workers, Home Health Aides implemented rapidly changing protocols to keep vulnerable clients safe and healthy, all while navigating childcare restrictions, transportation shutdowns, and other significant hurdles. The wages of these workers must match the skill they possess and the incredible service they provide to the District.

In closing, I ask this Committee and the Workforce Investment Council to consider how District and Federal funds can be maximized to address the significant workforce challenges we are facing. By funding free training and providing stipends, the District can dramatically increase the pipeline of direct care workers. Home Health Aides and other direct care professionals are skilled, essential workers – we must shift the false perceptions of these jobs that leads to low wages. If the District fails to invest in this workforce, Seniors and individuals

with disabilities will not receive the care that they desperately need. Thank you for your attention to these important issues and I am happy to answer any questions.

June 11, 2021

Elissa Silverman, Chairperson
Committee on Labor and Workforce Investment
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Meeting the Needs of Seniors who Rely on Direct Care Workers – Letter submitted for the Public Record on Mayor Bowser's FY'22 Budget

Dear Chairperson Silverman:

On behalf of the Long-term Care Coalition, DCHCA, LeadingAge DC, Capitol Hill Senior Village and other employers and advocates who have signed this letter representing thousands of District residents who rely on direct care workers for support and assistance, we want to thank you for your leadership on workforce issues affecting seniors and people with disabilities and the providers who serve them.

Since we appeared before you at the June 3 budget hearing, we had the opportunity to meet with Ahnna Smith, Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) who shared her vision regarding the sector partnerships that are included in the Mayor's budget request. She explained that the sector partnerships are based upon LEAP, a workforce development program in Tennessee. We have taken a look at the background material on LEAP that she shared. Our apologies in advance for the length of this letter, but we thought it would be useful to provide you with our assessment of the LEAP program and to summarize our recommendations.

From the materials, we understand that the goal of LEAP is to create long-term relationships between employers, secondary education partners and area community colleges or Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATS) to address job candidate "skills gaps" in the local workforce pool. Within various regions throughout the state, Community Colleges and TCATS work together with industry partners, high schools and workforce development programs to bridge silos and develop local training solutions. The Collaboratives then fund various projects to support initiatives that establish workforce pathways.

According to the LEAP Annual report (attached), engagement of the partners is the most important element of each project. Notably, in Tennessee, the Community Colleges and TCATS "serve as the foundation for LEAP training pathways," while workforce development partners serve as the lead entity and assume the role as project coordinator, facilitating and mediating educational and employer partnerships, helping partners identify target work sectors and ushing project deliverables throughout the grant lifecycle.

Of 12 funded Leap 1.0 projects, only one, Qualified Healthcare in Middle Tennessee, was related to healthcare. This project used \$568,426 in LEAP funding as seed money to establish two new healthcare programs at Columbia State Community College: a Medical Lab Technology Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) program and an Anesthesia Technology A.A.S. program. 44 students enrolled. Enrollment was deliberately limited to meet strict accreditation guidelines by the TN Medical Laboratory Board. in TN Med Lab Board. We did not see a list of projects funded with 2.0 funds.

Based upon our review of the LEAP Program, we do have some concerns regarding how effective this program can be in the District of Columbia, particularly to address immediate, pressing workforce needs. Unlike Tennessee, which has numerous community colleges and TCAT programs, the District's Community College currently lacks capacity to support workforce development in the healthcare sector. UDC only recently regained its ability to train nurses and does not offer training for Home Health Aides. In the absence of a strong community college program, DC relies upon small private, mostly for-profit training schools that are certified and overseen by the Board of Nursing. We know from talking with these schools that they have very limited capacity and cannot scale up because they do not have the funds needed to hire more nurse instructors. We also know that tuition is cost prohibitive and while some free training is available, slots are very limited. Training slots funded through federal programs administered by DOES are difficult to access due to the need to navigate a cumbersome eligibility process.

We agree that community colleges can and should play a significant role in workforce development and that building capacity within UDC Community College is essential to connect DC residents to skills-based training and to address the long-term needs of employers, particularly in the health care sector. However, given UDC's current capacity, can the LEAP model be successfully implemented without first investing in and building UDC's capacity?

While none of us doubt the long-term benefit of investing in capacity-building for our community college, the more critical issue for employers in the long-term care sector (which includes home health care and home support agencies, assisted living communities, adult day health and nursing facilities) is the need for immediate assistance to help resolve the current crisis. **We do not have two to three years to wait.** Our experience and our surveys show that providers currently are unable to meet their staffing needs and some seniors are going without care. In short, while creating and funding a Health Care Partnership modeled on LEAP in Tennessee likely will have benefits in the middle to long term, the healthcare sector that serves our most vulnerable and most expensive patients, namely, seniors, needs relief now. This is why we continue to urge that the Mayor and the Council make some strategic investments in this budget cycle and for the WIC, DOES and others to focus on resolving identified barriers that are preventing District residents from getting the training needed to fill current job vacancies. Specifically:

1. **Provide additional funding to currently approved training academies** such as Academy of Hope, Carlos Rosario, OIC-DC and Healthwrite Training Center so that they can expand their capacity to offer more classes. These schools need funds to be able to offer competitive salaries so that they can hire nurses to teach and to pay for additional overhead. Ballpark, we estimate it would take between \$600,000 and \$950,000 to add four additional nurse instructors, depending on needed overhead including capital costs for additional classroom space. We are working to refine these numbers.

2. **Use local dollars to pay tuition for HHA and CNA training.** Until we are able to re-engineer the application process for WIOA-funded training slots through DOES, use local dollars to fund

scholarships for DC residents who want to train as home health aides and certified nursing assistants. Last Fall, Age-Friendly DC and OIC-DC recruited over 120 DC residents who wanted to start training but could not access classes due to the costs and lack of available “free” slots. The majority still want to be trained!

3. Provide funding so that the CNA to HHA bridge class is free to DC residents. Currently if a CNA wants to work as a home health aide, they must take an additional 32 hours of training. Note, this class currently is only offered by Healthwrite.

4. Provide funding for the additional training needed to become a Certified Medication Aide (MA-C - a new credential). It has been two years since the Board of Nursing finalized regulations to establish this new “stackable” credential, but no schools have yet to be approved to offer the 100-hour, approved training curriculum. There are employers who want to hire MA-Cs but we need funding both to support the training and to pay MA-Cs a higher wage commensurate with their skills and increased responsibility.

5. Offer greater assistance to residents to apply for WIOA supported training through DOES and streamline the process so that more residents can access federal training dollars. We understand that applying for WIOA funded training is cumbersome. While the rules are dictated by federal requirements, we can and must do more to help residents access this program. First, train and hire assisters. Second, make business process improvements starting with an analysis of the current application process workflow. It is possible that we might be able to find volunteers, particularly within the Age-Friendly Villages who could help with this task.

6. Support the Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program. We were very pleased to read that LEAP embraces apprenticeship programs as a best practice and that our proposed Geriatric Career Builders Apprenticeship Program fits squarely within the Partnership model. While this program does not address the immediate crisis within the industry, our ability to get this launched within the next year is a critical component of our longer-term strategy to build a pipeline of direct care workers, expose them broadly to careers and business opportunities in geriatrics and provide support and mentorship to help them advance their careers. Our program was designed based upon highly successful models implemented in other states. It already enjoys support from sector employers, academics and consumers but we need your help to connect with LEA partners, particular high schools in SE, where we hope to focus our efforts.

7. Increase the wages paid to direct care workers. The vast majority of home health aides and certified nursing assistants work for providers who are reimbursed by Medicaid. The DC Medicaid program does require providers to pay the living wage which will be \$15.20 effective July 1, 2021. However, at that rate, a worker working 40 hours a week and taking no unpaid time off would only be earning \$31,616 per year before taxes. This is not enough to live in Washington, DC. Moreover, such wages are not competitive with jobs that do not require taking a Board of Nursing approved training program that includes both classroom and clinical hours and pass a certification exam. For example, Amazon is offering starting wages of \$17.00/hour to work in a warehouse.

8. Ensure full participation and representation in the DC Healthcare Workforce Partnership Finally, assuming the Mayor’s budget request for Sector Partnership funding is approved, we ask for language in the authorization that ensures that the long-term care sector of the health care industry is adequately represented in any healthcare partnership established with those funds and that funds are distributed equitably across the healthcare continuum. Although these partnerships are supposed to be employer-driven, the Health Care Partnership funded by the WIC last year includes

only one-hospital-affiliated nursing home facility. There are no employer representatives of home care agencies, home support agencies, assisted living, adult day health, or non-affiliated nursing facilities.

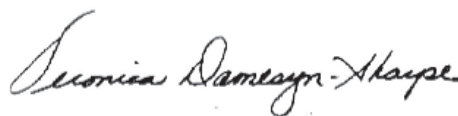
In closing, as we have noted previously, caring for seniors is a significant cost-driver in our health care system. In Medicaid, for example, seniors are only 20% of the covered population but they are 60% of the cost. If we fail to invest in and support the direct care workforce, we create gaps in care for seniors that diminish quality of life and lead to more serious health issues, put greater stress on families and caregivers and ultimately, drive our costs higher.

Copies of this letter have been sent to members of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development and the Committee on Health and we ask that it be incorporated into the public record for hearings on the Mayor's FY' 2022 Budget. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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**Testimony for the DC Council's Committee on
Labor and Workforce Development**

Committee Public Hearings on the
"Fiscal Year 2022 Local Budget Act of 2021."

Hilary Jones, Managing Director, On-Ramps to Careers
&
Monique LeNoir, National Director of Communications, UNCF

Good afternoon Chairperson Silverman and members of the committee. My name is Hilary Jones, the Managing Director of On-Ramps to Careers (On-Ramps). I am joined in providing this testimony with our Board Chair, Monique LeNoir, National Director of Communications at UNCF and other On-Ramps' board members representing companies like AT&T, Accenture, Amazon Web Services, and Pepco. We are writing on behalf of the On-Ramps to Careers staff, 30 employer partners, and the hundreds of talented technology STEM students who have participated and hope to participate in our impactful employment program.

On-Ramps makes promising technology career paths more attainable for underserved students in Washington DC. We empower future leaders and employers to grow a more diverse, inclusive and prosperous talent pipeline for regional economic development and impact. We do this through:

- Internships that inspire students to hone their STEM skills and create valuable relationships with STEM professionals
- STEM career training, work-based learning and placement
- Crucial partnerships with employers and community, education and training institutions

Since 2013, On-Ramps has provided over 700 technology internships to students across the city - particularly young people in greatest need at 18 DCPS and DC Public Charter schools. The organization has also provided entry level technology training to another 100 youth and adult students in partnership with DCPS, OCTO, and the Department of Employment Services (DOES). On-Ramps offers crucial services, expertise, and relationships to help students access our city's abundant potential STEM career opportunities. On-Ramps is emerging from the challenges of COVID-19 as a leading STEM workforce development program that has built a strong foundation, is technologically agile and innovative, and poised for growth.

Several months ago, at the peak of COVID-19, Mayor Muriel Bowser acknowledged On-Ramps and the need for increasing resources for its impact and growth. "Coming into 2020, we already knew how important it is to prepare our young people for careers in tech. Now, with so much of our life going online, it is critical that we connect our young people to new and existing opportunities," said Mayor Bowser. "We have exceptionally talented students in DC, and through partnerships like this one, we are thrilled that they will have more opportunities to learn, grow, and change the world."

We know firsthand the challenges that our young professionals and employment partners have been facing this past year. Every student worked with their employers remotely. All of the On-Ramp's trainings

and support were provided virtually. Plus, employers had to adjust resources to support an all-digital infrastructure and had to reimagine what a meaningful technology work experience could look like for our youth.

What we have learned through this period is that our city's youth are resilient, talented and ready to get to work. The 30 employer partners that On-Ramps recruits and supports see the value of our students both in-person and virtually and are willing to work with us because it's good for our students and good for their businesses. But we can't do this without the necessary resources from the city to recover, re-engage, and reimagine what's possible when we work together.

On-Ramps to Careers has a clear path to support the city's goals to open back up even better than before the pandemic. This path requires:

1. Recovery of funding for the MBSYEP program – particularly focusing on the Human Care Agreement funding that our organization and others need to make STEM careers accessible to DC youth. On-Ramps and other organizations' funding for this was reduced and does not meet the full youth employment resources and capacity that our organization needs. This gap is compounded by the increase of student placements at 30 STEM employer host sites.
2. For our organization to scale the impact that we have demonstrated, financial support for capacity building to support

our youth and employer partners is a necessity. Organizations like On-Ramps have had to tighten their belts for the past year and make sacrifices in resources for those we serve AND our staff who ensure that the program is successful. We are requesting capacity building funding to ensure that we, and other organizations building the economic vitality of the city, need to meet and exceed pre-COVID standards of excellence.

3. Similarly, On-Ramps has learned valuable lessons related to virtual student engagement, remote partnership building with employers, and have a larger cohort of alumni seeking ways to leverage their experience for long-term post-secondary and career success. We believe that now is the time to recognize the challenges from the past year as lessons to inform new strategic growth. We are requesting that funding be considered to support both the aforementioned re-commitment of resources AND an investment for innovation that will help create more opportunities for our youth and business partners.

On-Ramps' 5-year goal is to provide 2,000 more underrepresented and low-income Washington DC students with inspiring technology career opportunities. Internship requests from employers in 2021 have doubled since 2019, even during this public health crisis, and we will have 250 young people this summer participating in technology internships. We are also expanding our service to alumni and piloting virtual technology apprenticeships to create more pathways for our students to join employers after their internships and graduation. We

plan to quadruple our impact over 5 years (from 200 students in 2020 to 900 in 2024) making a tangible impact on the inclusiveness and diversity of our region's tech economy.

We recognize that our work has never been a singular endeavor and we are fortunate to be seen as a voice for so many other organizations supporting the youth workforce development movement in our city. Our past successes, resiliency during the pandemic, and a shared spirit of hope for the years ahead are a case to illuminate the opportunity in front of all of us. We thank Councilmember Silverman for the opportunity to share more about this opportunity.

Hilary Jones

Managing Director, On-Ramps to Careers

Monique LeNoir

National Director of Communications, UNCF

Board Chair, On-Ramps to Careers

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT COUNCIL**



Fiscal Year 2022
Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Ahnna Smith
Executive Director

Submitted to the
Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Elissa Silverman, Chairperson

June 3, 2021
3:00 PM
Virtual Meeting Platform
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairperson Silverman, members, and staff of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. I am Ahnna Smith, Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC), and I am pleased to testify today on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget and Financial Plan.

Last week, Mayor Bowser presented her Fiscal Year 2022 (FY2022) Budget and Financial Plan, entitled a #FairShot. The Mayor's budget reflects our commitment to providing all Washingtonians with a pathway to prosperity, and to making Washington, DC a place where people of all backgrounds are able to live and thrive. This budget includes important investments in infrastructure, education, affordable housing, health and human services, economic opportunity, seniors, and public safety. These investments will support our community as we seek to accelerate an equitable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency. Mayor Bower's budget will ensure that our agency, and the entire government, have the necessary staff and resources to help meet our ambitious goals.

In this extraordinary time, as our community recovers and builds back stronger, the investments we make in our workforce are more important than ever before. In FY2022 and beyond, the WIC will work to organize and reinforce the infrastructure necessary to deliver a world-class workforce system that builds resiliency in the residents and employers of Washington, D.C. It is our responsibility and commitment to ensure that the workforce system—our business community, training and support services providers, educational institutions, and agency partners—is able to meet challenges we have never before encountered and seize opportunities that improve the lives and outcomes of our residents and businesses. Through our work, we will achieve Mayor Bowser's vision of creating pathways to the middle class for all District residents and ensuring those most impacted by the pandemic and economic shutdown are not left behind in our community's recovery.

The FY2022 budget includes numerous investments that will help more individuals and families get back on their feet and thrive in the District, including supports for housing, transportation, and childcare; resources that we know are critical to helping residents connect to and sustain family-supporting careers. Mayor Bowser's budget also includes investments to help the tens of thousands of residents separated from their jobs due to the pandemic, connect with education, training, and employment. This budget includes a significant investment of \$49 million to expand Earn and Learn training—otherwise known as On The Job (OTJ) Training—and employment programs at DOES, including \$6.59 million to enable the WIC to launch a workforce partnership grant program that will fund partnerships between employers, educational institutions, and training providers, and to help residents earn credentials and build work experience in high-demand occupations and industries. This strategy ensures that workforce training in the District is directly informed by employers' needs, and that residents who complete the program are competitive for local jobs.

We have also heard firsthand from residents that they not only need assistance connecting to education and training, but to information and resources to help them make decisions about how to move into new careers or progress in their current career. Based on the WIC's unemployed workers survey, which received responses from more than 3,000 members of the local workforce, 27 percent identified access to a professional career advisor as a key service needed to pursue employment. With an investment of \$4.56 million, the WIC, in partnership with our workforce system partners and community based providers, we will establish a cohort of trained Career Coaches, and provide training to other case managers and those supporting job-seekers, to expand our ability to guide residents into high-demand, high-wage employment opportunities.

Mayor Bowser's FY2022 budget also includes \$4.95 million in local and federal funds to support the WIC's staff, operations, and core work. The funding allocated in the budget, in addition to the federal \$1.5 million in funding we receive under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), will allow the agency to continue the coordination, alignment, and convening of public and private-sector partners that we expanded in the past year; and conduct research and develop policies and resources to guide investments and deliver best practices throughout the workforce system.

While the WIC's FY2021 budget was reduced in response to the local budget shortfalls resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, the WIC, to date, has delivered important work that will inform and serve as the foundation for our FY2022 budget priorities. With the selection of a new One Stop Operator, implementation of the Data Vault, a cross-agency customer referral tool, and establishment of a Business Engagement team within the WIC, we have expanded our capacity to convene, connect, and support agency partners and customers. Our leadership has helped conduct analyses of the workforce landscape, survey impacted workers, and deliver Back to Work DC, a multi-agency initiative to connect jobseekers with employers—our last career fair leading to more than 350 interviews and numerous job offers. Finally, the WIC launched a healthcare workforce partnership, an employer-led intermediary bringing together some of our largest healthcare employers and educational partners, to identify opportunities and make recommendations to help us connect even more residents into the healthcare sector, ensuring our trauma centers, hospitals, home care providers, and other healthcare employers have the frontline workers who keep our community healthy. We look forward to continuing to support expanded virtual and in-person career connection opportunities in the remainder of this year and next.

In the remainder of FY2021, and in FY2022, the WIC will continue to engage employers and partners to update our resources and training to meet the changing needs of the community as we emerge from the current public health emergency. We are partnering with the Federal City Council and DC Chamber in support of a

Hire Local DC coalition, elevating the importance of, and reducing barriers to employers seeking to hire talented District residents. The WIC, through the American Job Center (AJC) One Stop Operator, will continue to ensure that the workforce training and career and support services provided to job-seekers meet residents' needs, comply with the guidance of local health officials, and connect the many thousands of DC residents in need to sustained employment and meaningful careers. These are unprecedented times, and it is critical that our system can be agile and responsive—the frameworks and resources we have delivered this year will serve as foundational resources upon which we will continue to build.

Conclusion

In closing, the resources allocated to the WIC will ensure we are positioned to bring together stakeholders and ensure that the workforce development system in the District is able to deliver on Mayor Bowser's vision of providing pathways to the middle class for all DC residents. I am proud to support her vision and work in collaboration with the Council, this Committee, and the many government, business, and community leaders committed to providing a fair shot at opportunity to the residents of the District of Columbia. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

**CHAIRPERSON ELISSA SILVERMAN
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

ANNOUNCES A BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING

Department of Employment Services

Wednesday, June 9, 2021, 9:00 a.m. (public witnesses)

Virtual hearing via Zoom

**Broadcast on DC Cable Channel 13 and online at www.dccouncil.us
or Facebook Live <https://www.facebook.com/CMElissaSilverman>.**

AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. OPENING REMARKS**
- III. WITNESSES**

Public Witnesses

- 1. Marcia Huff, Deputy Director, Young Women's Project
- 2. Imania Sheikh, Youth Advocate, Young Women's Project
- 3. Kendall Shields, Youth Advocate, Young Women's Project
- 4. Abdur-Raqeeb Umrani, Youth Advocate, Young Women's Project
- 5. Marie Tata, Youth Advocate, Young Women's Project
- 6. Dior Jackson, Youth advocate, Young Women's Project
- 7. Daya George, Youth Advocate, Young Women's Project
- 8. Hilary Klein, Interim DC Legislative Director, Jews United for Justice
- 9. Nikola Nable-Juris, Staff Attorney, First Shift Justice Project
- 10. Carol Joyner, Labor Project Director, Family Values@Work
- 11. Alexis Stoumbelis, Executive Director, CISPES Education Fund
- 12. Carol Rosenblatt, Executive Director (retired), Coalition of Labor Union Women
- 13. Elliott Becker, Public Witness
- 14. Doug Foote, Public Witness
- 15. Daniel Michelson-Horowitz, Public Witness
- 16. Jessica Champagne, Public Witness
- 17. Ed Lazere, Senior Fellow, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- 18. Drake Hagner, Supervising Attorney, Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
- 19. Zachary Hoffman, Commissioner, ANC 5D06
- 20. Benjy Cannon, Communications Director, UNITE HERE Local 25
- 21. Nikko Bilitza, Organizer, DC Jobs with Justice
- 22. Clayton Sinyai, Executive Director, Catholic Labor Network

23. Trupti Patel, Lead DMV Organizer, One Fair Wage
24. James Vollman, Board Member, On-Ramps to Careers
25. Erik Latimer, Alumni Leadership Member, On-Ramps to Careers
26. Jackie Carter, Executive Director, Children's Legacy Theatre, Inc.
27. Reginald Black, Advocacy Director, People for Fairness Coalition
28. Mukta Ghorpadey, Associate Director of Post-Secondary Success, ANC 1A07
Commissioner, DC Prep
29. Charlie Whitaker, CEO, Career Path DC
30. DeShola Dawkins, Executive Chair, Next Level Vision
31. Jean-Michel Giraud, Executive Director, Friendship Place
32. William Shelton, President/CEO, Hire From DC
33. Yvette Scorse, Communications Director, Byte Back
34. Regina Welch, Public Witness
35. Raymond Bell, President/CEO, HOPE Project Training Academy
36. Matthew Simon, Technical Director Cloud Center of Excellence, Octo

Written Testimony

1. Pete Isberg, President, National Payroll Reporting Consortium
2. Sarah Brafman, Senior Policy Counsel and Cassandra Gomez, Staff Attorney, A Better Balance
3. Robert Hollingsworth, Executive Director, AFSCME District Council 20
4. Allana D'Amico, Public Witness
5. Community Of Hope
6. Angela Franco, President & CEO, DC Chamber of Commerce
7. Elinor Bacon, President of ER Bacon Development
8. Fair Budget Coalition
9. Gail Lelyveld, Advocate, Jews United for Justice
10. Jaime Contreras, Vice President and Director, Capital Area District, 32BJ SEIU
11. Kevin Pryor, Owner, Community Tech, LLC
12. Lori Kaplan, Chair, Coalition for NonProfit Equity
13. Rebecca Barson, Leader, Jews United for Justice

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing
Department of Employment Services**

**Marcia N. Huff
Deputy Director, Young Women's Project
6.9.21**

Good afternoon Chairperson Silverman, members of the committee, and staff. My name is Marcia Huff, and I am the Deputy Director of the Young Women's Project (YWP). I am also a ward 7 resident. YWP is a DC-based nonprofit organization that builds the leadership and power of young people so that they can shape DC policies and institutions to expand rights and opportunities. Since 1994, YWP has developed thousands of youth leaders and has worked in partnership with several DC agencies to develop policy and implement programs in sexual health education and services, foster care rights and opportunities, youth employment, and other issues. YWP programs cover a broad range of interventions -- from after school leadership programming to youth employment, peer education, youth-led research, and policy development. YWP programs engage under-resourced youth of color, ages 14-24, with a focus on teen women; more than half of our young people live or go to school in wards 7 and 8. YWP has a full-time staff of 6 adults, a part time youth staff of 150 youth, and a budget of \$750,000. YWP is working toward a city where youth are engaged in the leadership and decision making of the institutions and processes that affect their lives. Since the COVID-19 pandemic YWP youth employment training has transitioned online. Youth work has transitioned online with youth staff using social media to educate their peers and advocate on an array of issues related to youth voice, health, employment, and education. Our youth staff's lives have been turned upside down. Our organization has had to support our youth staff by providing Chromebooks and laptops so that they can participate in distance learning, connected them with mental health resources, and assisting them with basic needs such as food.

I am here today for three reasons. First, I urge this Committee to fund the High School Internship Pilot in the amount of \$910,905 in the FY22 budget. Second, I am asking for increased transparency from the DOES-Office of Youth Programs through mandatory reporting and an online dashboard. Lastly, I urge this Committee to support the development of a DC youth workforce system.

YWP's model engages youth on three levels -- as peer educators, employees, and advocates. Youth come into our organization as peer health educators through the Youth Health Educator Program (YHEP), which hires more than 150 youth each year from 24 DC public high schools who work in their schools and communities educating their peers, distributing condoms, and referring youth to clinics, working in partnership with DC Public Schools and the Department of Health (DOH). Youth work 5 hours a week, receive extensive training in

sexual health & peer education method and build their skills in self-advocacy, work readiness, and health education. Youth work on teams and with a manager, apply their skills, develop professional behavior, and put together a portfolio of work products.

Launched in the fall of 2019 the Youth Justice Campaign (YJC) develops youth leaders as system change agents who mobilize and advocate for rights, resources, and accountability for DC youth. Our 2020-21 Team includes 40 youth staff from 17 schools, organized into three campaigns: School Safety, Mental Health, and Workforce. Campaign teams meet weekly for 2 hours of capacity building and issue teamwork. Youth Advocates receive extensive training on campaign development, public policy, data collection, government and electoral systems, communications, and social media. Youth leaders completed 10 hours of an Introduction to Advocacy training during the summer and as a result selected an issue in their community, developed an elevator pitch and presented data and solutions for the issue. The youth speaking today are members of the YJC-Workforce Campaign. Through the Workforce Campaign, Youth Leaders work to ensure that DC youth have the work-based learning opportunities, academic foundation, rights, and resources for a successful transition into adulthood. The Campaign is creating a robust network of youth serving agencies and organization, public and private, working together to build a school to career pipeline of capacity building, youth jobs, and support.

YWP has been employing youth for 25 years -- working side by side to develop them as trainers, educators, and advocates. Teaching them problem solving, communication and decision-making skills and at the same time writing, reading, research, teamwork, how to show up on time, and skills that should have been mastered in school but were not. We work with youth on three levels. First -- we develop them as workers, educators, trainers, advocates who have specific skill sets and issue expertise. Next -- they use these skills and expertise out in the community to solve problems.

An attorney by training, I am a youth advocate with more than a decade working side by side with DC youth. During my time with YWP I have had the honor of supervising nearly 100 youth and young adults. These youth faced significant challenges as many were justice involved, foster youth or experiencing homelessness. From 2017 to 2019 I worked with over 100 young adults who emancipated from the foster care system. Most of the young adults in the program spent a significant time in their teens and early 20s on their own and engaging with peers and street economies. They developed a set of skills and coping mechanisms that got them through care and allowed them to survive --but those same sets of skills and inexperience with formal institutions placed them at a significant disadvantage in completing their education and finding employment. At times I was haunted with the thought of whether it was too late to turn things around and interrupt the cycle of poverty and

despair. I cannot communicate enough the importance of early interventions, training, and support of DC youth. Workforce readiness training and quality job experiences are an essential part of the solution.

Large numbers of youth and their families are living in poverty. Nationally, 68% (2018) of youth ages 16-19 were unemployed. In DC, the number is 81% (2016). The issue is especially urgent for youth living in wards 7 and 8 where nearly half of the families are living in poverty and the unemployment rates (2018--ward 7-9.6%, ward 8 12.5%) are double other parts of the city. In 2016, 81% of youth 16-19 were unemployed with approximately 2000 totally disconnected from school and work.

High school students not only need early work experiences for development and training, but they also need paid work to help their families. Many of the youth on our staff have financial responsibilities within their families. Many of the youth on our staff who will testify today will talk about the need to pay for school items, household bills (internet, rent, utilities) and life essentials such as food, clothing (including school uniforms), their cell phone, and toiletries. At a young age they feel the squeeze of their family's stretched budgets.

Youth are not ready to be employed. Youth need quality training and work experiences, but most are not ready for a full-time job or even the responsibility of an official internship. They need supportive environments where they can build and develop their workforce readiness skills. Even students who regularly attend school and are accustomed to structured environments lack many of the essential workforce skills because they are simply not reinforced in school environments. An example of this is how students report absences—schools require a note, email, or call after the absence but there is not an expectation that students provide advanced notice. While working, communicating anticipated absences is crucial, and a lack in doing so can cause termination from a position. Also, many students, including seniors, have full day schedules rendering them ineligible for most traditional internship programs (such as Urban Alliance's flagship program) that require at least 12 hours a week. Many students are simply not prepared to take on the responsibility of an internship nor do they have the work practice skills to succeed in an internship or part-time job and need a program /job hybrid to get them on the right track. There is a robust summer program but during the school year there are significantly less opportunities for high school students.

There are 29,919 youth ages 14-18 living in DC with 17,584 attending DCPS and charter high school. DCPS has 20 high schools, in all Wards, offering Career and Technical Education with 3,287 youth participating (2019-20). DCPS also has 14 Career Academies (Engineering, Health Sciences, Hospitality& Tourism, and Information Technology) with 1,599 students enrolled (2019-20). DCPS has a career readiness curriculum called Tenacity that helps students prepare for career success. There are two DCPS internship programs—the Career Bridge program and Career Ready. Career Bridge is a spring internship program started in 2017

enrolled approximately 120 students from 12 schools in 2019. Career Ready is a summer internship program, started in 2016 that is coordinated through a partnership with DOES. Approximately 600 students participated during the summer of 2019. Both internship programs target students who want to start work or enter training programs after graduation and target students who have significant barriers to employment. These programs include students at DC's Opportunity Academies. The Career Bridge internships seeks internship sites where there is a strong possibility for a post-graduation apprenticeship or employment opportunity. These are two awesome programs but only one offers school year opportunities for students.

Classroom work and training are not enough because students need opportunities where they can grow their skills and take on increasing responsibility. National experts have found promise in youth programs that combine education and work-related experience because education and technical skills are not enough to prepare youth for future career success. Youth need to develop the ability to get along with others, communicate assertively, think critically and problem solve, as well as self-regulate. Small investments can go a long way. Even working a few hours (less than 10 hours) a week can have a positive effect on future employment, earnings, and net worth.

The DMV economy continues to grow and create new jobs in information technology, health science, hospitality, education, construction, transportation, and other priority industries but most of the youth will graduate without the training or skills to be employed. Many young people coming out of the public-school system are not proficient in reading or math— skills that you need to succeed in any job. A quarter of the students are chronically absent and some schools report numbers closer to 75%. Many of the youth we work with, even those who are high achieving lack skills in communication, problem solving, reading, writing, and other basic work-readiness skills, and at least 10% are in need of basic supports (like transportation, food, clothing) that will enable them to participate in the workforce.

High school is the ideal time to engage youth and we are missing the mark. From 2017 to 2019 YWP served as the Child and Family Service Agency's (CFSA) main contractor for aftercare services. Through this program, called the Center for Young Adults (CYA), we worked with over 100 youth age 21-23 to meet rigorous benchmarks for employment, education, housing, health, and community engagement. Our goal was to help participants make significant progress toward independence. Through this work we clearly saw the devastating repercussions of the lack of investment in early workforce readiness programming. Most of these youth participated in SYEP but few had any work experience outside of that or if they did it was only a part-time work that lasted 1-3 months. Those who lacked early work experiences never developed the discipline, teamwork orientation, or soft skills to be functional in workplace settings. Unemployed youth are more likely to become part of the street economies, more likely to be in the criminal justice system, and more

likely to experience chronic unemployment. Our current system's focus on out of school youth perpetuates this problem. What I saw through our work with former foster youth was the dark future for more youth if we continue the current path. If something is not done and fast, we will continue to push thousands of youth through the high school pipeline without solid prospects for living wage employment.

Youth employment needs are even more acute as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic because many youth and their families are more financially stressed than before the crisis. In December 2020, nearly half of adults living in households with children reported losing employment income since March 2020 (DC Action Kids Count data). Many families face housing instability and food insecurity, and youth are feeling the stress. We will emerge to a different workforce landscape and many industries will be forever changed and DC youth need to be prepared for their transition to college and career. Workforce engagement, even virtually, will reduce the likelihood for disconnection, provide valuable work-based learning experiences, and connect students to invested adults. We owe it to them to provide numerous opportunities to learn, develop, and grow as young workers.

Youth Workforce System

I was happy to see in the Mayor's budget nearly \$29 million "to reimagine work-based learning in our high schools." The budget overview indicated that this includes an expansion of early career awareness and exploration for high school students, funding to launch a new training center for high demand fields, funding for career fairs, and wages for senior year internships. I look forward to hearing about the plan to bring all these items into action. What DC needs is an actual youth workforce system. One that has leadership within a government agency but partners with schools, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, and the business community to create employment pathways, opportunities, and resources for DC youth. This work must be approached strategically to ensure that we are serving a maximum number of youth.

With the announcement of the Mayor's investments in youth workforce we are in an ideal moment for the creation of such a youth system. We are working on a plan for the part of the system that will serve high school students and eventually provide at least 13,000 9th-12th graders with year-round opportunities including internships, apprenticeships, technical training, and career exploration. This plan will increase the number of students graduating with certificates and credentials and ultimately increase the number of youth who are prepared for college and career. I am examining models across the country, and I look forward to working with this Committee, youth, and other stakeholders to move this work forward. I hear a lot of talk about addressing income inequity and this is an opportunity to put some action into the talk. Let us ensure that DC youth, especially black and brown youth, have pathways to successful and financially prosperous futures.

DOES In-School Youth Programming

For the past 5 years our organization along with numerous others advocated for DOES to increase year-round programming for high school students and last year there was a breakthrough when the this committee allocated funding for the DOES High School Internship Pilot Program. This pilot funded year-round internship slots for 250 high school students. The youth application opened in December and interns started working in January. The program wraps up this Friday, June 11th.

Our organization is participating in the pilot with 23 youth staff enrolled. There have been issues but I will not dwell on them because the pilot has considerable potential, and most issues can be easily addressed through advanced planning and stakeholder engagement. We made numerous attempts to partner with DOES to assist with planning as well as host employer and youth outreach and education. I was encouraged to see that 884 youth aged 14-21 applied for the program. This was after little promotion and an extremely short application window. There is a clear need and interest in year-round programming for students and it is critical that this program becomes a permanent offering. Unfortunately, we do not have any official data on the program such as how many youth participated, what was the average number of hours work, and how many are completing the program.

We have the following recommendations:

Pilot Funding. We urge Council to permanently fund the High School Internship Pilot Program in DOES FY22 budget in the amount of \$910,905. This includes expanding the program by 100 slots for a total of 350. We believe that there are numerous ways to increase program capacity without significantly increasing the budget. One way is to cut DOES staff and use technology to run the program more efficiently. DOES did not use technology to run the program---timesheets were completed via Microsoft Word and computed by hand as were our monthly case notes. This was additional burden for host sites and DOES staff. Calculating time by hand increases administrative time and presents risks for mistakes. Also, the original budget included a \$166,000 line item for student laptops with Wi-Fi that can be transitioned to youth wages. To my knowledge none were purchased and offered to pilot participants or host sites. See the chart below for details.

	FY 2021 budget	FY22 Recommendations: Cut # Weeks from 36 to 32; Increase participants to 350; Reduce case management staff from 4 to 2 (Per Participant wages 32 weeks: \$1920)
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Program Analyst (1 FTE, Grade 12), DOES ¹	\$112,905	\$112,905
Recruitment and Case Management Staff (4 FTEs, Grade 9), DOES	\$253,293	\$126,000
Student Wages	~\$355k-\$559k	\$672,000
Student Laptops with WiFi	\$166,000	0
TOTAL		\$910,905

Pilot Improvements.

- **Intern and host employer portals.** There should be an online portal where students can track their time, download paystubs, and submit documents. Employers should have a portal where time and case notes are submitted.
- **Goals/Outcomes.** There should be a set of goals and outcomes that are used to evaluate youth and the program. While some hosts are youth development organizations and are used to working with students many others are not and need to more clearly understand how they should be building intern capacity. These outcomes should be used to evaluate how interns are progressing through the program. We want to ensure that interns are steadily making progress throughout their time in the program.
- **Enrollment & Pay Period Flexibility.** There should be more flexibility when it comes to intern hours. Interns are allowed to work up to 6 hours a week and we recommend that these hours be calculated by the month rather than the week to account for work fluctuations. It would also help if employers could onboard youth staff at various points during the program (in case one youth leave) so ensure that they are fully staffed.
- **Host Connections.** There should be ways for hosts to connect and share opportunities and resources. These connections will benefit both youth and employers. I attempted numerous times to obtain a list of Pilot host sites without luck.

Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration. We also urge DOES to collaborate with host employers, youth, and other stakeholders to address issues and improve operations for a more effective and impactful youth employment experience in FY22 and beyond. DOES continues to miss the mark because they are not engaging their stakeholders in a genuine and transparent manner.

Reporting & Data Transparency. DOES should be held accountable by the DC Council for following the reporting requirements that were put into place last year. Right now, we do not have any meaningful information regarding OYP operations this past year. We recommend that DOES be mandated to create an

online dashboard. This dashboard would be updated quarterly and would be on the DOES website. This dashboard would have information on program participation, spending, and a list of hosts and grantees with details on what type of programming or opportunities they provide.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions and serve as a resource for the committee.

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services**

Imania Sheikh
Youth Leader, The Young Women's Project
6.9.21

Hello council members. My Name is Imania Sheikh and I am a Ward 3 resident. I am currently a junior at Benjamin Banneker Academic High School. After high school, I plan to attend college and become a pediatrician. When I'm not focused on school I work as a Youth Advocate with the Young Women's Project Youth Justice Campaign. I'm an advocate because I believe firmly in standing up for what you believe in and I take pride in helping my community.

I am here to ask you to make a budget allocation in the amount of \$910,905 for a second year of the DOES High School Internship Pilot Program. This program is important because students need internship opportunities outside of the 6 week summer program.

I started my first job in 2019 as a Youth Health Educator with YWP. My job consisted of educating my peers on safer sex practices, referring them to clinics, and providing them with safe sex materials such as condoms, lubricant, and dental dams. While working with YWP I learned the importance of attending work regularly and getting there on time. I also learned that learning can be fun and it can be done in various ways.

In the summer of 2020, I was promoted to the position of Youth Advocate with the YWP Youth Justice Campaign. In this position, I work with my peer advocates to solve problems faced by DC youth. My team is focused on youth workforce issues. We are working to increase job opportunities for high school students, ensure that students are truly being prepared for college and career, and increase accessibility to youth work permits.

Since my school is fully focused on academics and college preparation there is not a focus on career success. They just want us to succeed in college. We have lots of college tours and many college representatives visit our school. Now that school is virtual all college visits are virtual as well. While I appreciate the focus on college I

would love for opportunities to explore careers and gain work experience through internships. Even career fairs would be awesome. I believe students should start exploring potential careers from an early age because starting in college is too late. There are so many jobs we don't even know about. Waiting too late sets students up for failure because they take the wrong major and have to switch and spend more time and tuition money. Or worse they might end up with a degree in a major they hate and it will all be useless.

Early work experience is important for teens because it prepares us for our future in numerous ways. One way is that it allows us to have income. This money helps us to save for college or pay for other personal endeavors. Also, we learn what it takes to get and keep a job. We can see how it works in challenging environments and how to get along with coworkers who are of different ages and have different backgrounds. Lastly, early work experience teaches us life-long skills such as saving and budgeting, time management, independence, and creativity. These are all things that can not be learned from a textbook but rather learned from experience.

Students need year-round work opportunities because these experiences help them learn important work skills that they'll use in the future that a 6-week program will be unable to provide. These are skills that students will need before graduating. Year-round work allows for students to provide for themselves and gives extra money since money from summer won't last the whole year. Lastly, year round employment has been proven to keep students focused in school leading to a reduced truancy rate and possibly even improving the students academic performance. With that being said we are asking for a \$910,905 dollar budget for the High school internship pilot program This will also include an increase of 100 student interns.

I have the additional recommendations:

1. DOES should also work closely with students, host sites, schools, and others to address program problems and make improvements. This collaboration should include improving all of DOES's youth programs, not just the Pilot.
2. DOES should start sharing information on their operations. Funds are limited and we need transparency and we need to understand how many programs they run, how many youth are participating, and how much money is being spent.

3. DOES should establish goals that students and employers should work toward when they are enrolled in the Pilot program and in other programs. Students need to make progress and employers need to know what they should be focusing on.

I hope that we can count on your support. Thanks for taking the time to listen to my testimony today.

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services**

*Kendall Shields
The Young Women's Project- Youth Advocate
6.9.21*

Greetings Councilmember Silverman and members of the committee. My name is Kendall Shields and I live in ward 7. I am a 17 year old junior at Benjamin Banneker High School and I am a Youth Advocate for the Young Women's Project (YWP). I am a Youth Advocate because I want to be the voice for youth who aren't able to be heard.

I am testifying today not only as a YWP Youth Advocate but also as a DOES Internship Pilot Program participant. I ask this Committee to support a \$910,905 budget allocation in the DOES FY22 budget for the DOES High school Pilot Program.

Many might wonder why we should prioritize spending on year-round youth programming when adults are in such a crisis but investments in students today will pay off in the future. We need a strong foundation as we work toward graduation and plan for college and our careers. We won't magically be prepared just because we had four years of high school but we need to make sure that we have all the necessary skills to succeed after high school. Sometimes it feels like because MBSYEP is so big that having any other significant programs is unnecessary but that just isn't true. We can't forget about students or put student needs on the backburner just because adults need help.

My first job was during the summer of 2019 when I worked as a Youth Fellow at the Department of Health. This was my MBSYEP job site. I communicated with other teens around my age and learned about health equity. I learned better communication skills because I had to email my supervisor and talk with my peers. I also learned to work with a team as we did many team-building activities.

My next job was when I was hired as a Peer Educator with the Young Women's Project in the fall of 2019. One of my friends recommended this job to me. As a Peer Educator, I would pass out condoms and other safe sex

materials and answer my peers' questions about sex, pregnancy, or relationships. I would also refer my peers to clinics as needed. I learned to step out of my comfort zone and to teach my peers to step out of their comfort zones by speaking about topics that we may have been hesitant to speak about. I also learned to talk to different types of people, write professional emails, get to work on time, and complete timesheets. I joined the YWP-Youth Justice Campaign as a Youth Advocate last summer (2020). We work to fix problems in our city and speak for the youth whose voices aren't heard.

My school, Benjamin Banneker, is preparing me for post-graduation career success. My school often sends emails about things that can help with career exploration and workforce development. They send scholarship opportunities, programs, community service opportunities etc. I haven't participated in much being that it can be hard to sign up for a lot of things because it will become stressful. However, I have participated in community service and scholarship opportunities. I would like to have career fairs and electives in subjects that would help prepare me for my future career and develop my workforce readiness skills.

There are so many ways that early work experience benefits teens. Having a job helps us to learn important skills that we will need to use in the future. With my work at YWP, I've learned a lot that would help me with future careers. I learned to work in a team, collect data, create emails, communicate with peers and supervisors, and manage my time. I've also learned about college and ways to prepare. Also, early experience helps us to step out of our comfort zone. It can give students the sense of independence that they've always wanted. I've learned to wake up for work, communicate with peers, send out emails, etc. Students should begin exploring careers as soon as they are able to. There's never a perfect time to start, but we should always be given the opportunity to start.

Youth programs should be prioritized when spending money and working on the budget. Youth deserve the opportunity to grow and gain experience in careers that they are interested in, throughout the year. They shouldn't have to wait until summertime to learn more about things that interest them. If youth programs are prioritized, it will lead to the growth of knowledge within DC youth, and knowledge is power. It will also lead to youth being more experienced and skillful, and having the ability to spread their knowledge and experience.

If the Pilot Program continues and makes improvements, more students would be able to get the opportunity to gain the year-round workforce experience. Summer work is awesome but that is just 6 weeks. It is hard to learn, build skills, and make connections in such a short time. I am participating in the DOES High School Internship Pilot

Program. This program gives students at least 6 months to work as an intern. Host sites such as YWP understand student realities unlike other jobs and we also can make mistakes and learn without being fired. This program should become a permanent DOES program so that future students can benefit as well.

My recommendations:

1. I strongly recommend that this Committee fund the DOES High School Internship Pilot program in the amount of \$910,905. This will not only allow the program to continue for a second year but it will allow 100 more youth to participate.
2. DOES should collaborate with stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, host sites, and others to make important program improvements. This collaboration should be for more than the Pilot but for all of DOES's youth programming. A part of this should be creating goals that will guide host site workforce readiness training with interns so that interns leave the program with a solid set of skills and information. We want interns to be in a position to thrive after their experiences.
3. DOES should share data on their youth program operations on their website. This information should be updated throughout the year and should be easy to read and understand.

Thank you for listening to my testimony today.

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services**

*Abdur-Raqeeb Umrani
YWP Youth Advocate
6.9.21*

Greeting Councilmembers. My name is Abdur-Raqeeb Umrani and I am a senior at McKinley Tech. I am a ward 8 resident and I plan to pursue a career in computers or engineering. I am graduating this year and attending the University of Maryland College Park in the fall. I will study mechanical engineering. I am also a Youth Advocate with the Young Women's project.

I am here today to urge you to make a \$910,905 budget allocation in the DOES FY22 budget for the DOES High School Internship Pilot program. I was a pilot participant this year and although I am graduating and will not be able to participate again I want to see this program continue for future students.

We want stakeholders to collaborate more fluidly with DOES to help conform the program to our requirements more effectively and efficiently. One of the most important benefits of stakeholder collaboration is that it helps early detection and resolution of issues. The whole operation will be quicker and higher in quality if stakeholders stay involved and DOES incorporate them within the project.

My first job experience was through MBSYEP during the summer of 2020 when I worked as an intern at Acquired Data Solutions, a design and marketing firm. This internship was through On-Ramps to Careers. I led my colleagues in creating a console design and my job was to supervise the process and present the ideas. I learned a lot about business and the importance of communication within a team to reach a shared goal faster.

My second job was my current position as a Youth Advocate with the Young Women's Project which I found out about from my school counselor. I became a Youth Advocate with YWP's Youth Justice Campaign and I use my voice to represent my peers and my community. My duties include writing and presenting testimony at the DC Council, State Board of Education, and at other hearings. I also started a social media campaign on youth issues and created a petition. I learned that anyone can make an impact on our city and sadly I saw how little voice the youth population has within decision-making bodies and processes. I also learned that advocacy is easier said than done and takes much more time and thought than expected.

Preparation for college and career should start early and I am fortunate that my school, McKinley Tech, is preparing me for post-graduation success but I know that is not the case for many DC students. The STEM training and certifications that I received will give me numerous opportunities for employment immediately out of high school even without a college degree. McKinley Tech holds its students to a particularly high academic expectation compared to other DCPS high schools and our advanced curriculum gives us an idea of the academic rigors of college.

My school holds career fairs, especially within the STEM field. All students, even freshmen, have access to these services. The fairs are often promoted as much as pep rallies or student games which is good because students become excited

about participating. I have had numerous opportunities to develop my soft and leadership skills. I've participated in many clubs at Tech such as Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), YMCA Youth in government, and book club. Internships at my school are required for all upperclassmen before they graduate but only pertain to their STEM which is unfortunate. I would love to participate in internships of more diverse fields and backgrounds such as health or politics. This is why I am glad I have the opportunity to work for YWP.

There are numerous benefits to working as a teen. Working a summer job prepared me for work by giving me the adequate experience I needed to get situated with attendance and expectations. I have networked with a lot of employers at work and gained numerous employment offers from previous employers in the future career-wise. Employers were amazed that I was only 17 but working with such dedication and prestige. I had a better work ethic than other much older employees and our team was producing more promising designs and ideas. Work experience is important for teens because they gain a good understanding of work-life, gain communication skills, and gain income to fuel their future. Students should start exploring careers once their school life is under control and they have time to focus on a career.

I am participating in the DOES High School Internship Pilot Program. I learned of the pilot program from my supervisor at YWP. I never received an email from DOES but I did receive a call from DOES after signing up online. The pilot so far has gone well. Not much has changed with my work at YWP although I now have to complete a timesheet every week and I receive two paychecks. I didn't receive many program details from DOES but my supervisor at YWP provided the information I needed. One thing I would change would be to increase the pilot pay to the DC minimum wage. This way I wouldn't have to receive two paychecks. YWP pays \$15 an hour and therefore they pay the additional \$5 an hour to make sure I did not lose pay.

Recommendations

- Pilot Funding-- Urge the members of the Committee to fund the DOES High School Internship Pilot program in the FY22 budget. We are asking for \$910,905 to pay for the program.
- Improvements to the Pilot program---DOES work with youth and hosts to improve the program and learn from this year's program, online portals for youth and host sites, professional development sessions for youth, etc.
- Increased transparency for DOES-Office of Youth Programs--Creation of a dashboard where at least quarterly (every 4 months) DOES will share information on youth programming and host employers they are working with.
- STEM Programming: DOES should offer STEM training and certification programs for high school students, especially Black and Latinx students. I am glad that my school offers this type of training but most students don't have access to these types of opportunities. Students should leave high school with more options than retail and food service for employment.

Thank you for your attention today.

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services**

**Marie Tata
Youth Advocate, The Young Women's Project**

06.09.21

Good afternoon Chairperson Silverman and members of the Committee. My name is Marie Tata and I live in ward 4. I am a junior at Woodrow Wilson High School and a Youth Advocate with the Young Women's Project (YWP). YWP "builds the leadership and power of young people so that they can transform DC institutions to expand rights and opportunities for DC youth."

I am testifying today as a YWP Advocate and a pilot participant asking this committee to support a \$910,905 budget allocation in the DOES FY22 budget for the DOES High School internship program.

My first job was a youth intern with Novel Teens at the UDC law building near van ness station. My next job and most recent MBSYEP position was virtual with Life Success Center during the summer of 2020. I have been working with YWP for 2 years. I was hired as a Peer Educator and now I am a Youth Advocate. In March of 2020, we started working virtually and we still work remotely. As an advocate, I learn about the issues that DC youth face and take advocacy action to address those issues. I am working on a team that is focused on youth employment.

I am currently participating in the DOES High School Internship Pilot Program and so far my experience has been okay. My site is with YWP and nothing has changed about my job duties. I just have to make sure my time is entered each week. This is the first year of the program and I started in January of this year. I learned about the pilot through the Young Women's Project and my school. The email I received from my school did not provide much information other than the basic requirements and the link to sign up. The information session that DOES hosted in December was informative but follow-up information was scarce. Updates and information were sent to my mother's email address instead of mine therefore there was a delay in my submitting the required documents and I almost missed the deadline. Some of my colleagues had the same issue.

There are many ways that early work experience is important for teenagers. Early work experience helps us to build our resume, work on our money management skills, and network. Our teen years are the ideal time to explore careers because most of us don't have a lot of responsibilities and we have a lot of time. I believe students should start exploring career choices as soon as possible, if students don't start exploring careers and planning while in high school they will graduate not knowing what they want to do.

DC youth don't have enough employment opportunities during the school year. In the summer there are plenty of opportunities to work through SYEP but the rest of the year there are only a few options for students. Once the summer ends, so does our employment. Not having a job as a teen hinders our ability to build workplace readiness skills such as teamwork, conflict resolution, and communication. The internship pilot program helps address this issue by giving teens a chance to work with skilled professionals while earning money during the school year. Research from eponline.org shows that "high school seniors who held a part-time job were employed an average 42 weeks per year after graduation, as compared to 37 weeks of employment per year for those who didn't hold a job." The internship pilot program is setting up this year's students for success but it

needs to continue so that future students can benefit as well. Despite its rocky rollout, the program is still great for gaining experience while being a student.

I have the following recommendations:

- Allocate \$910,000 in the DOES FY22 budget for a second year of the DOES High School Internship Pilot program in the FY22 budget. We are asking for \$910,000 to pay for the program.
- Improvements to the Pilot program---DOES work with youth and hosts to improve the program and learn from this year's program, online portals for youth and host sites, professional development sessions for youth, etc.
- **The last** recommendation is Increased transparency for DOES-Office of Youth Programs and the creation of a dashboard where at least quarterly (every 4 months) DOES will share information on youth programming and host employers they are working with. Increased data transparency is important because it lets us know what's going on with the programs put in place. Without data transparency we don't know if the programs are actually working and if they need improvements before it's too late.

**Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services**

Dior Jackson
Youth Advocate, The Young Women's Project
6.9.21

Greetings Councilmembers. My name is Dior Jackson, I am 15 years old, and I am a 10th grader at Phelps ACE Highschool. After high school, I will pursue a nursing degree at Towson University and I also plan to attend Dudley Beauty School to become a licensed hairstylist. I am a Youth Advocate with the Young Women's Project (YWP). YWP employs teenagers and trains them to be advocates and peer educators. Being a Youth Advocate means trying to better our community and working to solve problems that DC youth are experiencing.

I am here to ask you to fund a second year of the DOES High School Internship Pilot Program in the FY22 budget. We recommend an allocation of \$910,905. There are also important program improvements that we would like to see put in place.

My first job was in 2019 when I was hired as a Peer Educator with the Young Women's Project. I worked 2-4 hours a week. As a Peer Educator I passed out condoms and other sex materials, referred my peers to clinics that provided free testing, and I also provided a safe space for my peers to come and ask many different questions. Being a peer educator taught me to be more outgoing and take more initiative to support others, it also taught me a lot about safe sex and reproductive health.

Last summer I transitioned from being a YWP Peer Educator to working as a Youth Advocate on the YWP Youth Justice Campaign. I work with a team of other high school students to advocate for more rights, resources, and opportunities for DC youth. I am on a campaign that is focused on the DC youth workforce system but there are two other campaigns that are working on school safety and mental health.

There are many benefits to working as a teenager. Here are some connections. As a Peer Educator we had to meet once a week after school to learn lessons on sexual health so that we could share it with our peers but also benefit ourselves. This helped me with being productive because some days after a long day of school it was hard to get to work because I felt mentally and physically drained but

I had to put in the effort to get there and be on time. I also improved my skills in navigating the unorganized and unpredictable public transportation system.

My high school is preparing students with post-graduation career success by making it mandatory to participate in CTE classes. All students have to take these classes in order to graduate and there are classes for engineering, coding, and cybersecurity. Once students get certified in their CTE class all students have the choice to go take their last certification test and start working but you have to be 18 to do so. You can make up to \$24 an hour.

DOES should develop a set of workforce readiness goals that their program participants are working toward. The goals might be different depending on the program type or age or grade of participants but students and employers would work toward the goals. DOES would use these goals to measure how participants are progressing and they would help employers know what they should focus on. Examples of goals are--participant understanding professional communication (verbal and written) or participants understanding the importance of arriving at work on time and communicating when they will be late or will miss work.

Other Recommendations:

1. Fund the DOES High School Internship Pilot program in the amount of \$910,905. This includes an increase of 100 student interns.
2. The Office of Youth Programs should work closely with students, parents, host sites, and other stakeholders to improve the program and address issues.
3. OYP should create an online dashboard, updated regularly throughout the year, that will have a full list of their programs, how many youth are participating, host sites, and how much is being spent. We deserve to have full access to this information.

Thanks for listening to my testimony today.

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Budget Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services**

**Daya George
Young Women's Project Youth Advocate
6.9.21**

Hello, Councilmembers! My name is Daya George, I'm a youth advocate from Ward 3 and I am a sophomore at School Without Walls High School. I plan to attend the University of Chicago in 2023 to study Political Science. I am a Youth Advocate with the Young Women's Project (YWP). The Young Women's Project guides DC youth to transform institutions and advocate for change. I'm passionate about advocacy work because having empathy costs nothing, and just observing the current world is enough to radicalize anyone. I also enjoy initiating conversations that make people recognize their complacency or question their beliefs.

I am testifying today to urge the Committee to make an important investment in DC youth by funding the DOES High School Internship Pilot program in the DOES FY22 budget in the amount of \$910,905. This program is important because high school students deserve year-round employment opportunities because early work experience is beneficial to the success of students after graduation.

According to a recent study by Career Builder, from 2001-2014, the number of jobs held by teenagers decreased by 33% because over 1.7 million jobs teens held were cut during that 13-year window. This statistic was disappointing because having a job is directly linked to an increase in the chances of youth graduating from high school and reducing the risk for involvement in criminal activity and the juvenile justice system.

I was previously employed as a cashier at CC Wok Chinese Cafe in Richmond, Virginia from 2018-2019. Along with operating the register, I also packaged to-go orders. I gained important time-management skills from balancing schoolwork and my job, which I learned to manage successfully. Even laborious tasks like scooping hot fried rice into buckets taught me to remain focused on one task for an extended period of time, a skill which proved beneficial in completing my schoolwork. This job also reinforced my correlation between time and money, because one hour of my time was valued at \$7.25, the minimum wage in Virginia.

My next and current job is working as a Youth Advocate for the Young Women's Project. Similar to my employment at CC Wok, I actively sought out my job at the Young Women's Project by emailing the contacts listed on their website which taught me that taking initiative can change my life. I feel angry about many issues facing youth today, which is a common sentiment among my peers, and this job provides me with the resources to take action. Managing work with my school assignments has prompted me to write a new to-do

list for every week, and granted me a sense of pride after crossing off each completed task. My salary at the Young Women's Project also helps me in feeling secure that my family is financially supported, which benefits my state of mind and subsequently my ability to succeed in school.

School Without Walls High School is effectively preparing me for post-graduation career success by extending opportunities such as the George Washington University Early College Program (GWECP), in which we can earn our associate's degree from George Washington University while simultaneously working towards our high school diploma. This results in GWECP students spending less than 2 years pursuing their undergraduate degree after high school and paying immensely less tuition.

Students at School Without Walls are required to complete an internship prior to graduation, typically during our eleventh or twelfth grade years. Students must complete at least 60 hours of internship work, along with coursework. Working as an intern, students can explore their personal fields of interest to gain experiences with networking, following deadlines, and improving professional communication. My current project in French class is creating a resume along with participating in a simulated interview. Unfortunately, this is not the experience of many DC high school students. Some schools do not require internships nor provide opportunities for students to explore careers, get work experience, or earn college credits while in high school.

I recommend that the DOES High School Internship Pilot Program be funded for a second year in the amount of \$910,905. A part of this is increasing the maximum number of students who can participate by 100 students bringing the total to 350 youth. I believe we can do this without significantly increasing the budget from this year by better use of technology through use of intern and host employer portals. This year interns nor host employers had access to an online portal to enter time, submit participant evaluations, or communicate with DOES staff. Employers calculated time on Microsoft Word documents and submitted by email. Interns did not have a way to view the time that was submitted or download their pay stubs. Every month employers completed case notes on Word documents and submitted by email. All of these tasks would have been easier and quicker had there been an online portal. Not only would it have been easier for interns and employers but also for DOES staff. If technology is used then DOES would not need as many staff to manage the pilot allowing for lower costs.

I also have these additional recommendations:

- DOES should work closely with students, parents, schools, and providers to make improvements to the Pilot program. A focus group was held in April but we would like to see more consistent collaboration between DOES and stakeholders to not only improve the Pilot but also all of OYP programming and services.

- DOES should work with stakeholders to create a set of outcomes that will guide work. We need a set of outcomes to guide the work. We want to make sure that students are consistently making progress and host sites have a guide for what workforce readiness skills they should be teaching and reinforcing.
- DOES should create a section on their website where the public can find information on their operations. It should be easy to understand and clear.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



**Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
FY22 Budget Oversight Hearing: Department of Employment Security, 6/9/2021**

**Testimony from Hilary Klein, DC Paid Family Leave Campaign &
Jews United for Justice**

Good afternoon, Chairman Silverman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Department of Employment Services's Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

My name is Hilary Klein, and I am here representing the DC Paid Family Leave Campaign. I also serve as the Interim DC Legislative Director for Jews United for Justice. I was born and raised in Washington, DC, and I'm a resident of Ward 1. I'm also a single mother of 5-year-old twins and a DCPS parent.

Over the past year, the DC Paid Family Leave program has enabled thousands of families to take desperately needed and life-changing paid leave.

We are outraged that the Mayor's budget cuts what she is calling a \$400 million surplus from the Paid Family and Medical Leave program – to implement a tax cut that would overwhelmingly benefit the largest corporations in the District, and to pay for a variety of other things, many of which have little to do with Paid Family and Medical Leave.

We are calling on the Council to:

- Use the surplus in the Paid Family and Medical Leave fund to support workers and expand paid leave benefits. We're calling for a one-year expansion of medical and family caregiving leave to 8 weeks, to match the 8 weeks currently given for parental leave.
- Make 4 important programmatic changes to ensure that everyone who's eligible can use the program.
- We support the proposed allocation of \$15 million for excluded workers in the FY21 supplemental budget.
- We oppose the Mayor's proposal to reallocate funds from the Paid Leave fund for unrelated purposes, including reducing the Paid Family Leave payroll tax, to pay for other tax cuts, and to cut business fees. We also oppose the redirection of funds from the Paid Leave Fund to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund - other solutions are available to solve this problem.

Any surplus in the Paid Family and Medical Leave program should be reinvested in what the program was designed to provide: leave benefits for workers.

As many of you remember, the original proposal for Paid Family Leave in DC would have provided 16 weeks of paid parental, family caregiving, and personal medical leave, which is far from the reduced benefits we now have. We have heard for years from national and local policy experts that - based on what other states' leave programs cost - the same payroll tax we have now could actually fund much higher paid leave benefits. We have also consistently heard from national experts that paid family leave programs in other states allow birth parents to use personal medical leave and parental leave back to back.

Any surplus should be reinvested immediately in increased benefits - starting this year with an increase from the 2 weeks of personal medical leave and 6 weeks of family caregiving leave to match the 8 weeks of parental leave currently available. Especially in a year where the effects of COVID are still being felt, it is critical that people affected by life-changing medical situations have the support and ability to care for themselves and their families without threatening their economic stability.

These leaves are particularly critical to advancing equity for Black and brown workers and families in our city. Based on the DOES January report, more than 80% of those who applied for medical and family caregiving leave identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian or multi-racial. Additionally, 40% of people applying for these leaves have incomes of less than \$50,000. And 35% of all DC residents that applied for medical leave live in Wards 7 and 8.

We also urge the Council to make 4 important changes to the current leave program to ensure that all eligible people can take advantage of the program:

1. Ensure that workers have job protection so that they can actually take paid family leave. DC should conform with federal FLMA guidelines to provide job protection, so that workers who were laid off and then hired back by the same company have job protection to take their paid leave.
2. Change the program so that people do NOT have to be currently employed in order to access paid leave.
3. Protect workers who lost jobs or income during the pandemic. The Paid Family Leave program should look back for a longer time period and base leave benefit amounts on earnings from the highest quarters. This would protect workers from losing their access to their paid family and medical leave benefits if - like so many - they had no or low income during the pandemic.
4. Make it easier for workers to receive paid leave by reducing the 7-day waiting period and apply for leave they have already taken.

Finally, as I said, the DC Paid Family Leave Campaign opposes the use of Paid Leave funds for other purposes, including reducing the Paid Family Leave payroll tax, to pay for other tax cuts, and to cut business fees. We also oppose the redirection of funds from the Paid Leave Fund to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund - other solutions are available to solve this problem.

There are many ways the city can help the small businesses that were hit hard by the pandemic. But the Mayor's proposed tax cut is not a meaningful source of assistance. The Paid Family and Medical Leave tax is very modest: it's a 0.62% payroll tax. That's just over one-half of one percent. And since it's based on payroll, many businesses that laid off employees during the pandemic have probably already paid less in taxes than they anticipated. Instead of helping small

businesses, this tax cut disproportionately benefits the largest corporations in the District - it is unnecessary and wasteful.

In summary, I strongly urge the Council to:

- Reject the Mayor's proposed tax cuts for businesses.
- Use the surplus in the Paid Family and Medical Leave fund to expand paid family leave benefits. We're calling for a one-year expansion of medical and family caregiving leave to 8 weeks, to match the 8 weeks currently given for parental leave.
- Make 4 important programmatic changes to ensure that everyone who's eligible can use the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



**Testimony regarding the
Department of Employment Services Proposed Budget**

**Labor & Workforce Development Committee
FY2022 Budget Hearing
June 9, 2021**

**Nikola Nable-Juris
Staff Attorney
First Shift Justice Project
705 8th St. SE
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 644-9043**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed FY2022 Budget. My name is Nikola Nable-Juris and I am a Staff Attorney at First Shift Justice Project, an organization providing legal services to pregnant, parenting, and caregiving workers in low-wage jobs in the District of Columbia. I am also a Ward 4 resident and my family is a beneficiary of the Paid Family Leave benefits program as my husband received bonding leave benefits after the birth of our youngest child.

As a D.C. resident, I am grateful for the Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) benefits program. As an advocate with First Shift Justice Project, I would like to highlight our **opposition** to Mayor Bowser's proposed FY2022 Budget with respect to the Department of Employment Services. Specifically, First Shift Justice Project opposes the transfer of \$241 million in funds out of the Universal Paid Family Medical Leave Fund (PFML Fund) and the one-time reduction in the Paid Family Leave tax from 0.62% to 0.27%.

The pandemic's economic impact has disproportionately harmed many low-wage workers, especially workers who are mothers and women of color.¹ The PFML benefits program provides critical financial support for low-wage workers, many of whom are less likely to have employer-paid leave due to system racism. Preserving the PFML Fund and improving access to PFML benefits are critical strategies to promote racial equity and justice during the District's Covid-19 recovery.

First Shift Justice Project opposes the reallocation of funds and the one-year reduced tax rate for the following reasons:

- 1) The first year of the PFML benefits program was atypical due to Covid-19;
- 2) Otherwise eligible workers face barriers to accessing paid family leave benefits when they experience qualifying leave events; and
- 3) PFML benefits should be expanded to meet Covid-19-specific needs and aid the community's recovery.

1) The first year of the PLF benefits program was atypical due to Covid-19; therefore, funding levels should remain stable.

First Shift applauds the Office of Paid Family Leave for launching the employee PFML benefits program in July 2020, during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is premature for the Mayor and the Council to reduce the PFML tax for the coming year, however, given that the PFML program has paid out benefits for less than one highly atypical year. It was known at the program's launch that pandemic unemployment and underemployment rates made many workers ineligible for PFML benefits or caused them to receive reduced benefit amounts compared to what they would have received in a traditional year. Therefore, cutting the tax rate, even for one year, is premature.

Maintaining and increasing the availability of PFML benefits and job-protected leave are key components of enabling low-wage workers to transition from unemployment insurance (UI) benefits to stable employment. Several of First Shift's clients have faced challenging decisions about transitioning back to work. For example, one client was improperly terminated when she

¹ See Coyle, Diane, "Working Women of Color Were Making Progress. Then the Coronavirus Hit," NY Times, January 14, 2021 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/14/opinion/minority-women-unemployment-covid.html>).

attempted to return to work, despite having the right to an adjusted schedule related to her children's school being closed. Another client faced the choice of receiving UI benefits or pursuing rehire with an employer that offered an unpredictable schedule and was previously unsupportive when she needed medical leave. Ongoing fear of illness from work and the unpredictability of job protection and monetary benefits when faced with limited childcare and the need to caregive for sick family members make returning to work a difficult choice. Access to PFML benefits would give D.C. workers more financial security when calculating the risks of returning to work.

For many returning workers, PFML benefits are not actually accessible until several months into work, and even then, are limited. Depending on when an individual returns to work, they may not yet have a "reported quarter" of wages-- and therefore are unable to get any meaningful benefit based on their current employment. For example, a worker who began a job in early April and had a qualifying event in June is technically eligible for benefits, but may receive a benefit amount of \$0 if their Quarter 2 wages have not yet been reported. In order to encourage hesitant workers to return to work, especially when Covid-19 still threatens the health of them and their family, it is critical for robust PFML benefits to be meaningfully available immediately upon return to work. Rather than reducing the PFML tax rate, acknowledging the unusual nature of this year and ensuring improved access to PFML benefits would better support economic recovery from the pandemic.

2) D.C. workers who are otherwise eligible for benefits face barriers to accessing paid family leave benefits when they experience qualifying leave events.

Many D.C. workers who are otherwise eligible for PFML benefits face barriers to accessing these benefits due to the current implementation of the PFML benefits program. Given that the program is in its first year, these are understandable lessons learned and provide one of many explanations of why fewer people have drawn benefits than originally projected. However, given how these barriers negatively and disproportionately impact low-wage workers, many of whom are women, mothers, and people of color, it is critical to use the lessons of this first year as an opportunity for correction to ensure benefits are accessible to all eligible D.C. workers. Rather than transferring the existing funds and reducing the tax, changes to the implementation of the PFML program would enable workers to better access these benefits.

- Ensure job-protection for workers who receive Paid Family Medical Leave benefits.

Many D.C. workers who are technically eligible for PFML benefits are unable to take time off work because they lack job protection or lack awareness about their rights under new emergency Covid-19 laws. When workers take time off work to recover and receive medical treatment for their own health condition, care for an ill loved one, or bond with a new baby, they need both *job protection* and *wage replacement*. *Job protection* ensures that an employer holds a worker's job for the duration of their leave, though the right to take this time off is often unpaid. *Wage replacement* ensures that a worker has a source of income to pay bills when they take time off work. While higher-wage workers may have access to employer-sponsored benefits like vacation days and short-term disability insurance, low-wage workers in D.C. rely exclusively on the protections of the D.C. Family Medical Leave Act, the Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act. D.C.'s PFML benefits program provides financial benefits when individuals take time off for up to 8 weeks in a 12-month period. However, it is

common for low-wage workers to be eligible for PFML benefits, yet the law fails to provide them job protection, so they are unable to take advantage of these PFML benefits. Without robust job protections within the Universal Paid Family Leave Amendment Act for the time during which workers receive PFML benefits, low-wage workers who most desperately need access to PFML benefits will be unable to access them, leaving behind cash benefits when their employers have already paid into the PFML Fund on their behalf. **First Shift encourages the Council to provide job protection through the Universal Paid Family Leave Amendment Act for all workers eligible for PFML benefits.**

- Conform the D.C. Family Medical Leave Act provision about the required duration of employment to the federal Family Medical Leave Act.

To receive DCFMLA job protection, an employer must have 20 or more workers in the District of Columbia and workers must have worked at least 1000 in the 12 months immediately prior to requesting leave. In the midst of a pandemic, many low-wage workers have been unemployed or underemployed in the last year, making this legal threshold far more challenging if not impossible to achieve. For workers who continue to have personal health and caregiving needs unrelated to Covid-19, such as new babies or chronic illness, their ability to access job-protected leave in order to take advantage of PFML benefits has been reduced or eliminated. The federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requirement for the duration of work explicitly permits an interruption in employment, as the 12 months of required employment need not be consecutive. Conforming the DCFMLA length of employment requirement with the federal FMLA would expand job protection for workers and allow more workers to access PFML benefits. **First Shift encourages the Council to make the DCFMLA required duration of employment parallel with the federal FMLA.**

- Permit workers to apply for PFML benefits for dates of missed work in the past.

The regulations of the Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act prohibit D.C. workers from applying for benefits for leave already taken, unless there are exigent circumstances. The regulations define “exigent circumstances” to be 1) when an employer fails to inform the worker about their rights to PFML benefits; 2) in case of physical or mental incapacity; or 3) if an employee lacks reasonable access to the means to submit the application in a timely way. This prohibition prevents many otherwise eligible workers who experience qualifying leave events to access paid family leave benefits.

While some instances of family or medical leave can be anticipated, such as an expected childbirth or scheduled surgery, often workers do not know when unforeseen medical or caregiving needs arise. When they do happen, workers are often managing the health of themselves and others, informing the employer of the situation, making stressful health and life decisions, and juggling childcare needs, all on a limited budget and in the midst of emotionally and physically exhausting circumstances. These circumstances may prevent them from applying for PFML benefits in a timely way, yet do not fit the definition of “exigent circumstances” in the regulations.

Additionally, to apply for benefits for time off related to medical and family caregiving, workers need to self-advocate for medical providers to complete the Medical Certification Form before they are able to submit the application. First Shift has found that for clients who have limited access to technology and transportation or may have limited English proficiency, this is even more complicated and time-consuming and leads to delay. In the meantime, the leave from work is already taken. **First Shift encourages the Council to clarify that the statute does not prohibit workers from applying for benefits for dates of missed work in the past.**

- Eliminate the one-week waiting period for PFML benefits.

The Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act prohibits workers from drawing benefits for the first week of eligibility, during a seven-day “waiting period,” with one waiting period per eligibility year. This waiting period often serves as a barrier for individuals to apply and receive benefits. For example, if a worker has an acute serious health condition with a one- to two-week duration, often the difficulty of securing medical certification and applying for benefits outweighs the value of the few days of benefits an individual may receive. Additionally, this one-week waiting period is triggered by the “qualifying leave event;” for many applicants, the “qualifying leave event” occurs on the same day as their first missed day of work, which means that they will not receive benefits for an entire week for which they are otherwise eligible. **First Shift encourages the Council to eliminate the waiting period so that more eligible workers who experience qualifying leave events can access benefits, even if they only need leave for a short period of time.**

- Eliminate the current employment requirement.

Based on existing regulations, workers are unable to apply for PFML benefits if they are not currently employed. Unfortunately, workers are most vulnerable to illegal termination when they are pregnant, caregiving, or experiencing medical conditions--exactly the times when PFML benefits are most critical to them and their families and with disproportionate impact on women, particularly women of color. If a worker is terminated, even if unlawfully, they are unable to apply for PFML benefits despite being otherwise eligible for benefits. **First Shift encourages the Council to clarify that any worker who experiences a qualifying leave event should be permitted to apply for PFML benefits, which are determined based on their reported quarters of wages.**

- Expansion of outreach and education about PFML benefits for workers.

Rather than transferring funds, money from the PFML Fund would be better spent educating low-wage workers about their rights. The Covid-19 emergency legislation expanded DCFMLA for workers with specific Covid-19-related situations, yet workers frequently lack knowledge about their rights and employers often fail to inform them. First Shift has worked with numerous low-wage workers who have been unable to access PFML benefits simply because their employers fail to inform them about their rights. D.C. workers need access to legal services providers who understand and can explain their rights under the variety of employment laws impacting them, including the D.C. Family Medical Leave Act, the Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act, the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act, and the Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and help these workers effectuate their rights. For example, information about

PFML benefits and DCFMLA Covid-19 leave could be provided at Covid-19 testing and vaccination sites and during notification of positive Covid-19 test results and contact tracing. Exploring partnerships between OPFL, the Department of Health, medical centers, community groups, and nonprofits organizations may improve access to this information for low-wage workers who most need it. **First Shift encourages the expansion of available funding for worker education and outreach, specifically to ensure that PFML is used for Covid-19-related serious health conditions.**

3) A surplus in the PFML Fund enables temporary, meaningful expansions of the PFML benefits program to support the most vulnerable D.C. workers through the Covid-19 recovery.

Low-wage workers, especially women, mothers, and people of color, have experienced the brunt of the pandemic's economic impact. First Shift strongly supports the following proposed temporary expansions of the PFML benefits program to support the equitable recovery of the hardest-hit workers.

- Conforming DCFMLA Covid-19-related job protections and PFML benefits to the federal American Rescue Plan.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the D.C. Council expanded the protections of the DCFMLA to provide job protection to workers who have been employed by any D.C. employer for at least 30 days when they needed time off work to quarantine or isolate as ordered by a medical provider, care for a family member who must quarantine or isolate, or care for a child when school or childcare is unavailable. The federal American Rescue Plan extends tax credits to employers who offer paid leave when workers are receiving a Covid-19 vaccine, experiencing vaccine side effects, and seeking a Covid-19 diagnostic test or waiting for results.² Job-protected leave with the opportunity to receive PFML benefits for these reasons would further incentivize D.C. workers to receive Covid-19 vaccines and avoid spreading the virus when potentially infectious. First Shift has supported D.C. workers seeking paid sick days when they have taken time off work due to vaccine side effects or have needed to quarantine with suspected Covid-19 infections, but for low-wage workers, limited paid sick time is often insufficient to cover missed work. An expansion of PFML benefits and job protection to those criteria covered by the American Rescue Plan would better incentivize D.C. workers to receive Covid-19 vaccinations and to stay home when they or their family members are ill. **First Shift encourages the expansion of the temporary Covid-19 job-protections to include the provisions in the federal American Rescue Plan and to permit PFML benefits for these reasons.**

- Expansion of the look-back period when calculating PFML benefits.

A worker's PFML benefit amount is calculated based on their past five quarters of reportable wages. For many workers, who are overwhelmingly women, mothers, and Black or people of color, they might have been laid off in the past year. This has been true of several First Shift clients who work in the childcare and restaurant industries. This has produced quarters with \$0 wages in an otherwise consistent work history, ultimately resulting in a severely reduced PFML benefit determination. In order to truly support an equitable recovery for the hardest hit

² See IRS.gov, "Under the American Rescue Plan, employers are entitled to tax credits for providing paid leave to employees who take time off related to COVID-19 vaccinations," (available at <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/employer-tax-credits-for-employee-paid-leave-due-to-covid-19>).

members of the community, OPFL can look back over the past 10 quarters for the 5 quarters with the highest wages. Given the length of the lookback period to calculate PFML benefits, this is necessary until at least a year after the pandemic has ended and the workforce has returned to pre-pandemic levels. **First Shift encourages the expansion of the look back period for the purpose of PFML benefit calculations to account for pandemic-related unemployment.**

- Expansion of medical and family leave benefits to 8 weeks.

The FY2022 Budget proposes well-intended but hollow expansions of the PFML benefits program to include prenatal medical leave. Prenatal medical leave is already a part of the existing PFML program, in which pregnant individuals can receive two weeks of benefits for time off work due to prenatal visits or pregnancy complications. Rather than creating a duplicative benefit, birthing parents should be permitted to access complete medical and bonding leave benefits within the same year. Additionally, based on the availability of funds and the clear need due to Covid-19, the existing 2 weeks of medical leave benefits and 6 weeks of family caregiving leave benefits should be expanded to 8 weeks for each type of benefit. **First Shift encourages the temporary expansion of the existing medical and family leave benefits to 8 weeks to account for increased medical recovery and family caregiving needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Closing

The brunt of the pandemic has disproportionately impacted many low-wage workers, especially those who are mothers and women of color. PFML benefits are a necessary lifeline when needing time off work for one's own health condition, to care for a family member, or to welcome a new child into their family. Rather than diverting funding away from this program, even on a temporary basis, these funds present an opportunity to support an equitable economic recovery of workers and their families who have borne the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic, with particular attention being paid to racial justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony about the Department of Employment Services FY2022 Budget. First Shift Justice Project opposes the transfer of funds from the Universal Paid Family Leave Fund because D.C. workers have ongoing needs for paid family leave benefits both during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. First Shift Justice Project looks forward to working with the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, the Office of Paid Family Leave, and the Mayor's Office to ensure low-wage workers disproportionately impacted by the pandemic have meaningful access to PFML benefits during the economic recovery when these benefits are most needed.

Date: June 9, 2021

To: Chairwoman Elissa Silverman and Members of the DC City Council
Committee on Labor and Workforce Development

From: Carol Joyner, Director, Labor Project for Working Families in partnership with
Family Values @ Work

Re: Testimony for DOES Budget and Oversight Hearing in Support of Maintaining DC
PFL Funding Levels and Program Expansion

Time: Organizational Testimony of Five Minutes

Chairwoman Elissa Silverman and Members of the DC City Council Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, as a Ward 4 resident and member of both the DC Paid Family Leave and Just Pay Coalitions, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the importance of both maintaining the DC PFL funding levels and expanding the program to increase access and remove the programmatic barriers for eligible workers. It is my belief that the District should refrain from reductions in the employer tax obligations that will undermine the DC PFL trust fund based upon utilization data drawn during a pandemic.

It is impossible to talk about the state of the PFL fund without the context of what we have all just been through, including the loss of lives of more than a thousand DC residents, largely black and brown people, to COVID. The pandemic was a once-in-a-century health and economic crisis that brought our community, workers, small businesses and city to their knees. Thankfully, as a result of work by many of you on the Council and some federal and local administrators, faith, advocacy and other community groups, we are seeing the light at the end of this long, painful tunnel.

This context sets the stage for the current discussion about the paid leave fund. By law, employers began contributing to the paid leave fund in July 2019. After a full year of contributions at .62%, workers became eligible to apply for benefits on July 1, 2021, during the height of the pandemic. By that time, layoffs were mounting and workers were forced to remain home for a myriad of reasons including caregiving and remote learning, often not covered by DC PFL.

Those who might have been eligible for paid leave for parental, family caregiving or medical reasons had several obstacles to deal with: Those recently unemployed due to quarantining, illness or caregiving, weren't eligible because the regulation requires applicants to be currently employed (a regulation in opposition to the statute). Low-wage earners not covered under DC FMLA were less likely to use paid leave and risk permanent job loss, because the program lacks job protection for all. Those who were

sick and took leave had only 2 weeks of medical leave for a virus that under many circumstances requires significantly more time for full recovery.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that the utilization rate was significantly lower than anticipated. The underutilization issues were compounded by fairly typical start-up issues and exacerbated by [significant job loss](#) where 15.6% of the District's Black workers were unemployed compared to 3.5% of white workers, as well as programmatic obstacles to full participation by potentially eligible workers.

Covid laid bare the need for these benefits more than ever, especially medical leave for people of color. In fact, according to a January 2021 Department of Employment Services report, more than 80 percent of those who applied for family caregiving leave identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian or multi-racial and 40 percent applying had incomes of less than \$50,000 per year. It's also important to note that 35 percent of all DC residents who applied live in wards 7 and 8. We should use this opportunity to enhance the benefit structure and meet the real needs that workers have during health emergencies and in ordinary times.

The [Urban Institute](#) published early pandemic utilization rates for both California and Rhode Island and found that initial claims surged in both states with established paid leave programs. In California, family care rates increased 43 percent from February 2020 to March 2020 and were 13 percent higher than in March of 2019. Similar results were found for disability claims: 37 percent from February 2020 to March 2020; and 17% more than in March of 2019. The more typical growth in California is illustrated by a 5 percent initial claim increase for family care and a 4% increase for medical from 2018-2019.

Similarly, Rhode Island, which reports weekly paid leave utilization rates, saw a 22% increase during the same period. The first pandemic claims made the week of March 8, 2020 had only 21 claims; by the following week, claims had jumped to 4,093. This is more a story about the Governor's early response. Rhode Island shut down the state early, expanded the paid leave program to include remote learning and had previously eliminated the paid leave waiting period. These proactive adjustments resulted in keeping families safe and secure in their homes, and keeping workers connected to their employers.

These examples are illustrative of the life-sustaining impact that established programs can have on health and economic outcomes for families during a health crisis, results needed also for post-pandemic times to address medical complications, childbirth and caretaking needs people face throughout a lifetime.

The following recommendations will allow DC to strengthen its program by removing the various obstacles to full participation for all workers covered under the DC PFL law, making it more equitable to those who need it most:

1. D.C. workers cannot use paid family leave benefits if they don't have job protection. The Universal Paid Leave Act promises wage replacement for time taken off from work for qualifying reasons, but does not provide a right to job-protected leave. Workers have a right to job-protected leave if they are covered by the D.C. Family Medical Leave Act (DCFMLA) or the D.C. Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PPWFA), but a high percentage of low-wage workers are not covered under these laws.

Council should extend job protection to workers for the weeks of paid leave benefits available to them through the paid family leave benefits program. In addition, we recommend that the continuous year requirement for worker eligibility under the DC FMLA be eliminated and brought into conformity with the federal Family Medical Leave Act, which allows the one year of employment requirement to be met despite an interruption in the worker's employment.

2. The 7-day waiting period for benefits prevents workers who are otherwise eligible from accessing paid family leave benefits.

The Universal Paid Leave Act prohibits workers from drawing benefits for the first week of eligibility, during a seven-day "waiting period," with one waiting period per eligibility year. This waiting period often serves as a barrier for individuals to apply and receive benefits.

The Council should eliminate the waiting period so that more eligible workers who experience qualifying leave events can access benefits, even if they only need a short period of time to recover or care for a loved one.

3. Remove the requirement that eligible employees are currently employed at the point of application for benefits.

The statute permits eligibility for applicants with employment over the previous 5 quarters. If a worker has been employed at any point during this time with contributions being paid on their behalf by an employer, they should be eligible for paid leave. If a person must leave their job due to illness, or is fired because they've taken off too many times for medical appointments, when the illness or condition is finally determined, they can't take the leave they have earned due to this provision.

The Council should require DOES to adhere to the statute and permit eligible workers to apply if they have been employed previously under the rules in the statute. Requiring a person to be employed at the point of application undermines the very essence of this program and the reality that employers often terminate sick employees who are seeking medical assistance.

4. Currently the DC PFL law permits 8 weeks for parental, 6 weeks for family caregiving leave and 2 weeks for medical leave. The medical and family leave allowances must be increased to equal the parental leave weeks. Despite the DC utilization rates during the pandemic, the general understanding nationwide and evidenced is that workers are more likely to use leave for medical and family caregiving reasons. It is important for the District to build a program that reflects the needs of its users.

The Council should provide 8 weeks for medical and family caregiving, and permit the parental leave benefit to stack on either of these assuming that a person who has had a child could also have medical and caregiving issues simultaneously.

These are a few of the recommendations that would remove key obstacles to utilization of the paid leave benefit. Other states like CA and NJ have learned the importance of these expansions and people of color across the District demonstrated their need for them. I encourage you to take a closer look at the obstacles to full access due to the pandemic and the inherent weakness in the program. Our city needs a comprehensive paid leave benefit for its workforce. It is the hope of many who work and live in DC that you will protect and expand this benefit.

Thank you.

Carol Joyner, Labor Project Director, Family Values@Work, Ward 4

My name is Alexis Stoumbelis and I am the Executive Director of the CISPES Education Fund, a small non-profit located here in Washington, DC. I am also a parent to Nico, who just turned 9 months old, and a beneficiary of the Paid Family Leave Policy.

I address you today to express first, my opposition to the Mayor's proposal to use Paid Family & Medical Leave Funds to provide tax cuts and second, my strong support for expanding all Paid Family & Medical Leave benefits to 8 weeks and ensuring it is accessible to as many people as possible.

Our organization is a small, grassroots non-profit. Through a lot of effort, and on a shoestring budget, I am proud that we currently employ five full-time staff here in DC.

We were excited when Paid Family & Medical Leave was created, and dutifully and happily paid our payroll tax every month for a year before the program went into effect. Without Paid Leave administered by the city and funded through a payroll tax, it would be exceedingly difficult for us to manage if one of our staff were to go on leave since we do not have the funds to replace them during their absence.

On the other hand, even as small as we are, the very slight increase in payroll taxes made no difference *whatsoever* to our daily operations. So Paid Family Leave to me is a wonderful example of how pooling our resources can result in a much bigger effect than our individual actions could.

It galls me that the mayor would consider using the funds we have contributed for this important employee benefit for other purposes, especially to give tax cuts to big businesses. If our organization can afford this and other payroll taxes, for example, to ensure robust unemployment benefits, so can they.

Additionally, I am happy to share that I got to take advantage of Paid Family Leave within the first months of the program getting off the ground after my baby, Nico, was born in August 2020. It was a huge help to my family, especially as I recovered from an unexpected surgery.

Both my partner and I had to take longer leaves than the 8 weeks allowed, which our organizations were thankfully able to cover, but I know I am one of the lucky ones. Rather than take funds away for the program, the city should extend the benefits offered. We were also fortunate to have had the financial cushion to weather a waiting period that seemed unnecessary, especially since the leave funds could not be applied retroactively. Reducing the waiting period and allowing for retroactive benefits would make a lot of sense.

As an employer, I can also speak to the realities that many of our employees have medical issues that extend beyond two weeks, whether that's COVID, cancer, or any other number of scenarios. We are often put in a difficult position because *of course* we do not want to fire people who are unable to work due to medical issues or family medical responsibilities, but at the same time, we do not have the resources to provide extended leave. Extending paid medical and family caregiving leave to 8 weeks would be an ideal solution, especially for small businesses like ours.

It is not just those of us who have been lucky to weather the storm over the past year, however, who deserve these benefits. Not everyone was able to transition to remote work like we were. People who have lost their jobs also deserve paid leave. I encourage the Council to take this opportunity to adopt changes to the rules in order to allow more people to access this essential resource, for example people who are unemployed or who were employed further back than the current rules allow.

Many thanks for your consideration of these perspectives. I encourage you to reject the Mayor's proposed tax cuts and instead to protect, strengthen and expand this wonderful program.