



**Testimony before the
Council of the District of Columbia**

Committee on Labor and Workforce Development

on

FY21 Budget Priorities

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Presented by

Justin J. Palmer, MPA

VP, Public Policy & External Affairs

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The District of Columbia Hospital Association is a unifying force working to advance hospitals and health systems in the District of Columbia by promoting policies and initiatives that strengthen our system of care, preserve access and promote better health outcomes for the patients and communities they serve.

Good Morning Chairperson Silverman and members of the Committee, my name is Justin Palmer, and I am the Vice President of Public Policy & External Affairs for the District of Columbia Hospital Association (DCHA). I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony on the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget.

DCHA has been the unifying voice of the District's hospitals for over 40 years. We represent the interests of our members who provide care to residents from all eight wards, our neighbors in Maryland & Virginia and patients from around the world and our members are committed to providing high-quality care to everyone that walks through their doors and ensuring access to care for every resident of the District of Columbia. Our hospitals' commitment to their missions and the dedication of

their staffs has always been strong but never more needed than today.

The work of the agencies under this committee's purview has also never been more critical. They provide a safety net for those who have lost employment and are also a driver to reemployment and training. DCHA and its members have long been partners with both the Department of Employment Services and the Workforce Investment Council as our industry seeks a pipeline of staff for both entry level positions as well as clinical and nursing staff. We believe that continued investments in on the job training and intermediary support programs offer a pathway to sustainable employment for District residents.

In the District of Columbia, the healthcare industry is the second largest non-governmental employer behind academia. Research shows that the local healthcare industry has a plethora

of career opportunities within the District with strong demand for nursing and medical assistants and other skilled technicians.

I can provide one example of an intermediary program that DCHA has designed. Recognizing the disconnect between the demand for skilled career positions and qualified employment of District residents for them, the Association created a market-driven workforce development program, *Pathways to Progress*, that seeks to address the social and structural barriers thereby paving the way to sustainable healthcare career pathways for chronically unemployed and underemployed populations. We plan on doing this through collaboration with partners and stakeholders such as, academia, healthcare employers, workforce intermediaries, social and support services, advocacy agencies, and public and private funding organizations.

Investments in these types of programs is critically important for achieving the District's goal of ensuring residents

are qualified and have the necessary skills to secure good paying jobs with a sustainable career path.

These programs also must be matched with training programs and curriculums that adapt to the changing needs of the workforce. For example, hospitals employ various specialized technicians and we have to ensure the pipeline for these jobs is sufficient to meet the need. This means that educational institutions have to assess the needs of the market and adapt their programs to the changing needs of the workforce. Additionally, any workforce development program must include the life and soft skill training that is essential for success in the health care sector and beyond.

Thank you again for allowing me to participate today and I am happy to answer any questions.