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Building Support for Public Funding for Comprehensive Birth-to-Three Supports in the District of Columbia

All children deserve a fair start in life — and to grow up in a family and a society with resources to nurture and support them. But today, the District is a tale of two cities, where race and place largely determine whether infants and toddlers in the District of Columbia can reach their potential. Wide disparities exist between neighborhoods in terms of support for healthy births, quality child development and school readiness.

For the past 50 years, the Bainum Family Foundation has worked to improve the quality and availability of resources for children living in poverty — and in alignment with these efforts, the Foundation is committed to improving the availability of high-quality early learning and wrap-around supports for infants, toddlers and their families. These developmental supports can mitigate harm and improve the odds for young children. With leadership from public policymakers, the District can take these support systems to scale and shape a brighter future for our community's next generation. In 2019, we are proud to announce a new initiative that will help break down the barriers holding back our city's children and parents.

Background

In December 2015, the Bainum Family Foundation released a powerful report, "[Infants and Toddlers in the District of Columbia: A Statistical Look at Needs and Disparities](#)." This research found that young children living in the District's Ward 7 and Ward 8 — who are overwhelmingly children of color — face disproportionate obstacles that impede their educational and developmental potential and overall well-being.

To ensure that early childhood needs in the District are identified and addressed in a collaborative and cohesive manner, in early 2016, the Foundation launched the [Birth-to-Three Policy Alliance](#) with leading children's policy, advocacy and service organizations. The Policy Alliance focuses on increasing access to quality, comprehensive early childhood services and other supports for infants and toddlers and their families in D.C. — ensuring that health, education, early learning and human services systems work in a coordinated fashion to improve outcomes for young children.

Some members of the Policy Alliance played a critical role in educating community leaders and elected officials about needs and priorities in the District. They helped create the context that led the



DC Council to pass the Birth-to-Three for All D.C. Act of 2018 in June of that year. This groundbreaking legislation, when implemented, will make the District of Columbia a national leader in providing comprehensive supports for all children beginning before birth and up to age 3. This legislation will start to address the stark disparities that exist in young children's opportunity to thrive.

The Act will:

- Give families better access to health services and family supports, including prenatal and maternal care, home visiting, mental health services and other wrap-around supports
- Support early childhood educators with fair compensation and help in attaining required professional credentials
- Fully fund the District's child care subsidy program to make care more affordable for all families

However, for the Act to fulfill its promise, substantial funding is needed. The legislation includes seed funding of \$1.3 million for the District's 2019 fiscal year that addresses development of the salary scale for early educators, expansion of the Healthy Steps pediatric model, additional home visiting services and on-site classes for early educators earning higher credentials. Full implementation will require a much greater investment, and so the attention of many organizations and the Bainum Family Foundation has now turned to educating policymakers about the need for substantial and sustained public funding.

The Next Step

Three local organizations will lead the campaign to raise the visibility of the need for funding for full and sustained implementation of the Birth-to-Three for All D.C. Act of 2018. They will work with a broad coalition of groups, including many members of the Birth-to-Three Policy Alliance.

- [Jews United for Justice](#) - a grassroots community that seeks to repair the world by working locally for social, racial and economic justice
- [DC Working Families](#) - a progressive organization that fights for an economy that works for all of us and a democracy in which every voice matters
- [SPACEs in Action](#) – an organization that works to engage community residents in the pursuit of social and economic justice in D.C. and Montgomery County, Maryland

These three organizations will direct the campaign, working in partnership with a variety of local groups and leaders in a coalition that will grow over time. The coalition is working to engage parents,



childcare providers, educators, grassroots organizations and communities across the District. The coalition will support them and raise their voices and needs in order to convey support for ensuring children and families in D.C. receive the services and supports outlined in the 2018 legislation. Planning, strategy, preliminary research and initial grassroots outreach are underway now, and these lead organizations are eager to connect with potential partners, allies and colleagues. To learn more about the new Birth-to-Three campaign, contact Mat Hanson at DC Working Families, mhanson@workingfamilies.org. To learn more about the Foundation's role, contact Sara Watson, Senior Director, Policy at the Bainum Family Foundation, at swatson@bainumfdn.org.

The Bainum Family Foundation continues to play an integral role by funding and publicly disseminating critical research (including its recently released report "[Early Learning Supply & Demand in the District of Columbia: Using Data to Identify Critical Gaps](#)"), providing expert technical assistance, providing some funding to participating coalition organizations and working to engage other funders in the effort.

In addition, the Foundation will continue to support other work of Policy Alliance members outside of the campaign, as well as the Foundation's broader efforts to improve early childhood in the District through its early learning, food security and school mental health efforts.

The Bainum Family Foundation looks forward to working with longtime and new partners towards a future in which every child's dreams are within reach.