

April 24, 2006

The Honorable Linda Cropp
Chair, Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Madam Chair:

DC Action for Children, as you know, has long been involved with monitoring, evaluating and recommending changes to and for the early care and education system in the District of Columbia. Our most public work is on the budget and it is on this subject I am writing today.

At the recent COW hearing on the budget support act, a number of advocates appeared before you requesting that the \$5.12 million "opportunity enhancement" be funded out of the base budget in FY 2007. As they told you and other members of the Council, this is the **only** Local funding for quality improvement work in the early care and education system as managed by the DHS Early Care and Education Administration.

You correctly asked the tough questions and I hope that I can answer two of them. First, the sole reason why the Early Care and Education Administration has spent just under half of the supplemental funding is because the money was not loaded until March 9, 2006. Even with the OBP delay in loading the funding, the money was not available until late February owing to Congressional review of the mayor's letter about the supplemental budget. Second, ECEA will not be able to spend the \$5 million unless the day care improvement act, which allows grants not to exceed \$500,000, is moved immediately. ECEA has solid and aggressive plans to allocate the funds in a responsible manner, but is hindered by current law which limits grant authority to \$10,000. We ask, therefore, that you immediately move an emergency version of Bill 16-415.

Finally, we strongly recommend that you support the advocates' position that the \$5.12 million be continued in FY 2007 and that this funding be embedded in the FY 2007 base budget. Our understanding of last year's action was that it was to be an on-going expenditure. More importantly, the children of the District of Columbia need every opportunity to learn –

and providing a top quality early care and education system is the proven way to accomplish this goal.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to be in touch - my phone is 234-9404 and my e-mail is scambria@dckids.org.

Sincerely,

Suzanne E. Cambria, MSW
Deputy Director/Public Policy