



**Public Hearing on
B22-26, Early Learning Equity in Funding Amendment Act of 2017
B22-50, Child Development Facilities Regulations Amendment Act of 2017
B22-76, District of Columbia Child Development Facilities Expansion Amendment Act of 2017
B22-103, Non-Traditional Child Care Needs Evaluation Act of 2017**

**Testimony of
Hanseul Kang
State Superintendent**

Before the

Committee on Education
The Honorable David Grosso, Chairman

Council of the District of Columbia

March 30, 2017
John A. Wilson Building
Room 412
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Good morning, Chairman Grosso, members, and staff of the Committee on Education. My name is Hanseul Kang, and I am the State Superintendent at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). I am pleased to testify before you today on four bills related to early learning and child development facilities.

I would like to thank the organizations and individuals who provided testimony today. OSSE is committed to ensuring District residents have access to high quality early childhood education, in partnership with many stakeholders, including those who testified today. Today, I will share some of the work OSSE has done to help meet the growing demand for quality early learning programs in the District, as well as OSSE's general support of and questions about the four bills before the Committee.

State of Pre-K and the Early Learning Equity in Funding Act

As the state education agency for the District of Columbia, one of our key priorities is to ensure that all District children enter Kindergarten ready to succeed. . Research shows that quality pre-K programs can help children, especially vulnerable children, get off to a strong start. The District leads the nation in providing all three and four-year olds with access to full-day, free pre-K. The passage of the "Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act of 2008," codified a three sector approach, with seats available in District public schools, public charter schools, and high-quality community based organizations (CBOs). Currently, over 77% of the District's three-year olds and four-year olds are enrolled in one of the District's 156 pre-K sites.

OSSE is fully committed to expanding access to high-quality pre-K programs in CBOs. As provided by the Pre-K Act, OSSE's Pre-K Expansion and Enhancement program allocates funding in an amount consistent with the Uniform per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) rate to eligible CBOs to provide and maintain high-quality pre-K education services. Over the last two years, OSSE increased access to pre-K funds for more students across high-quality early learning programs by maximizing the utilization of multiple funding sources. In FY14, OSSE funded a total of 571 three- and four- year old children in Pre-K Enhancement CBOs, and in FY17, that number increased to a total of 659.

The Early Learning Equity in Funding Act aims to further this progress by expanding the definition of "at-risk" students to include pre-K aged children enrolled in high quality pre-K CBOs and by establishing a competitive pilot program that provides a facility allowance of \$1000 per enrolled child to high-quality child development centers and homes that meet certain requirements.

OSSE is supportive of the spirit of the Early Learning Equity in Funding Act. OSSE recognizes the need to explore new resources and supports for at-risk students and to provide high-quality facilities with additional financial support. However, OSSE believes there may be other means to support these high quality providers. Additionally, OSSE is concerned that the facility allowance pilot could be difficult to assess as the impact of the facility allowance would vary greatly based on how or where a facility operates. Accordingly, OSSE would advocate for additional robust discussion before moving forward with such a targeted investment.

Cost of Caring for Infants and Toddlers and the Child Development Facilities Expansion Amendment Act of 2017 (Facilities Expansion Act)

I will now turn to the Facilities Expansion Amendment Act. OSSE is extremely proud of the progress the District has made in its goal of universal pre-K. However, as you have heard today, providing quality

infant and toddler care presents many challenges for providers resulting in a lack of supply for families at all income levels.

Currently, there are 476 licensed child development facilities - 350 centers, 115 homes, and 11 expanded homes throughout the District. In 2016, OSSE published a federally mandated report, "Modeling the Cost of Child Care in the District of Columbia," which demonstrated that the financial situation for providers varies greatly based on age of the children served, program size and setting, enrollment and business practices, and access to multiple revenue streams.

OSSE is supportive of the spirit of the Facilities Expansion Act, which is seeking to address rent and mortgage, one of the primary drivers of child care costs in DC. There are several provisions in the bill that assign OSSE with specific responsibilities that are within the scope of our regulatory authority. For example, in Section 202, OSSE is required to determine whether a child care facility is eligible to compete in the leasing program by verifying certain elements of its current delivery of service. OSSE can also make a determination for eligibility for three of the four criteria in the bill, with the exception of the requirement that OSSE ensure child development staff have the ability to serve children with special needs. OSSE licenses a facility not the staff, however, our regulations do require facilities to provide services to all children.

OSSE is concerned, however, with the provisions in the bill that create potential conflicts of interest and go beyond the scope of OSSE's role as the licensor and regulator of the District's child care facilities. For example, the bill calls for OSSE to assist in marketing facilities located in District government buildings. Requiring that OSSE assist in marketing any child care facility, regardless of its location, would present a conflict of interest as OSSE would essentially be promoting one facility over another.

Another example is found in section 206, which requires OSSE to assist in the design and build out of child care space within a District building. As the licensing entity, OSSE inspects physical space when reviewing a license application and therefore should not participate in designing and building the space. Additionally, building and design are outside the scope of OSSE's expertise and would be better implemented by another agency. DGS is present today to explain their role in the process of lease solicitations for District facilities and the approval of design and build outs for District facilities that we lease to 3rd parties.

Finally, while OSSE is supportive of preferences for child care that benefit D.C. residents, section 204 presents a complicated and challenging order of preferences for child care seats that would be difficult to track and enforce, and perhaps even more difficult for the facility to maintain full enrollment at all times. .

Child Development Facilities Regulations Amendment Act of 2017 and the Non-Traditional Child Care Needs Evaluation Act of 2017

Turning to the last two bills before the committee today.

OSSE is in support of the Child Development Facilities Regulations Amendment Act. We recognize that this bill was introduced to address stakeholders' concerns regarding OSSE's recent rulemaking which was required to bring the District into compliance with the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. We remain committed to public engagement during the rulemaking process and to continue to enhance our communications and outreach efforts.

Finally, OSSE is supportive of the Non-Traditional Child Care Needs Evaluation Act. Non-traditional is defined as care provided between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m. on weekdays, and for six to 11 hours on the weekend, regardless of the time of day. OSSE believes that this study would allow the District to target resources to meet the needs of working families. Additional funding will be required as OSSE would rely on expert consultants to conduct the study.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. OSSE commends the Council for its interest and commitment in addressing the complexity of providing high-quality early childhood development opportunities in the District. OSSE looks forward to working with the Mayor, the Council and our stakeholders to create innovative solutions that support our child development providers, and our children and families. I am happy to answer any questions you and the Committee may have for me.