

Ward Snapshots Highlight Persistent Challenge of Child Poverty Amid District's Baby Boom

Washington, DC – April 18, 2017 – The new Ward Snapshots released today by DC Action for Children reveal growing prosperity throughout the District for a number of families, but not all. The data presented in these Snapshots share improvements while also highlighting resource disparities and barriers to opportunity that many DC children and their families continue to face.

With the Fiscal Year 2018 Budget discussions underway, we want to make sure that young children have the services and supports needed to become healthy young adults. Since 2010, the **number of young children in the District has increased by 23%**. Furthermore, children under 5 account for almost 40% of the child population (under 18). Notably, the wards that are home to the largest number of young children, Wards 5, 7 and 8, also have the lowest median family incomes in the District. Child poverty rates also fluctuate by Ward: though they have declined District-wide by 3%, decreasing most significantly in Ward 6 (15.3%), there have been slight increase in Wards 3, 4 and 8.

This influx of children under 5 must be accompanied by equitable early child care policies and programs that will benefit this growing population. The dearth of affordable, high-quality early care and education program presents a challenge for both families and the early childhood workforce alike. Child care costs in the District are some of the most expensive in the country, and many families in need of child care cannot afford it. The Ward Snapshots highlight the necessity for additional child care centers that service the Wards where the number of young children are increasing – however, expanding or creating new, high-quality centers is difficult without the further professionalization of the District's early care and education industry, which includes higher wages for teachers, robust professional development opportunities, innovative strategies to support business practice and increases to the subsidy rates.

“Amid this baby boom, leaders must think about long-term strategies that make the District an ideal place for families to raise children,” says Shana Bartley, Acting Executive Director of DC Action for Children, “Ensuring that early childhood supports and opportunities are accessible is more important than ever.” She continues, “A child's experiences in the first years of their life are critical, and experiences in high-quality, nurturing environments set the foundation for later life success. With this knowledge, we must continue to focus on and invest in early learning programs and policies that will provide the opportunity for all children in the District to flourish, regardless of their Ward or zip code”.

DC Action for Children provides three recommendations to support all DC children and families:

- Improve access to quality and affordable early care and education programs to ensure that all children enter school healthy and ready to learn.
- Build the capacity of home visiting programs to empower families and support maternal and child health.
- Leverage the most current and critical data reported by both the census and local DC agencies to inform budget decisions and resource allocation in FY18 Budget to obtain equitable results.

Additional highlights from the Snapshots include:

- The number of children enrolled in Medicaid grew by 21%, with large increases in Wards 3, 4 and 8.
- Over 40% of all DC residents spend more than a 1/3rd of their monthly income on costs related to rent, mortgages, taxes and other related expenses.
- The teen birth rate, District-wide, has declined significantly, from 45.4 in 2010 to 27.6 in 2014.
- School enrollment for DCPS and PCS has continued to increase throughout the District over the last several years.

DC Action for Children's annual Ward Snapshots present key demographic, economic, health and education indicators across the city's eight wards. DC Action publishes the Ward Snapshots annually to provide decision-makers and community members alike with a more nuanced picture of child and family well-being so they may advocate for solutions that address the needs of children in their communities.

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About DC Action for Children

DC Action for Children (www.dcactionforchildren.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children in the District of Columbia have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Through its DC KIDS COUNT project, DC Action is the primary source of data on conditions and outcomes for child well-being in DC.