

April 12, 2022

Dear Members of the DC Council,

We, the undersigned District of Columbia concerned citizens, community leaders, advocacy organizations, journalists, lawyers, and others urge you to ensure the DC Ombudsperson for Children is fully funded today and in the future.

The “Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020” (“the Act”) became law, over the Mayor’s veto, on April 5, 2021, and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (the “Office”) was funded with \$935,000 of local funds in DC’s FY 2022 Local Budget Act. Regrettably, the Mayor omitted funding for the position in her FY 2023 budget, and went even further to defund the moneys already allocated to the position for FY 2022, even though the Council has already invested time and funds to attract the best talent to fill this critical Office.

The DC Ombudsperson for Children (the “Ombudsperson”) is “tasked with improving outcomes for CFSA children by holding agencies accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities under the law.” The importance of this position for DC’s children and families is particularly critical now, as the *LaShawn* class action litigation is coming to a close along with the Court Monitor’s oversight of the Child and Family Services Agency’s (CFSA’s) operations. Indeed, there are many day-to-day operational as well as systemic issues that were not resolved by that litigation and require an independent arbiter to ensure the wellbeing of our children and families. As the Child and Family Services Agency (“CFSA”) often describes, DC child welfare is a system that encompasses many agencies, organizations, and individuals. Specifically, children and families involved with the child welfare system often intersect with many other agencies and programs, including the juvenile justice system, DC Public Schools, domestic violence programs, health and mental health services, and many others. Accordingly, the work of the Ombudsperson will be broad in scope to ensure the success, safety, and security of our young people across all these agencies and government-funded programs.

Mayor Bowser is attempting an end-run around the DC Council’s decision to establish an Ombudsperson for Children. What the Mayor could not stop with a veto, she now seeks to undercut with an overreach of her authority. We implore you not to allow this, but rather to move swiftly together to identify and reallocate funds to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.

Please send a message to Mayor Bowser: In the District of Columbia, we prioritize the safety of our children and the well-being of our families, and we will not allow the Mayor to undermine the oversight of District agencies.

Sincerely,

1. Amara Legal Center
2. CARECEN

3. CASA for Children of DC
4. Children's Law Center
5. Child Welfare Monitor
6. Council for Court Excellence
7. DC Fiscal Policy Institute
8. DC KinCare Alliance
9. DC KinCare Alliance Relative Caregiver Community Board
10. DC Volunteer Lawyers Project
11. Eclectic DC
12. Family & Youth Initiative
13. First Focus Campaign for Children
14. JCADA
15. Law Office of Matthew T. Famiglietti, PLLC
16. Lions VisionGift
17. Mother's Outreach Network/DC Guaranteed Income Coalition
18. Parent Watch
19. RCM of Washington
20. SOME, Inc.
21. SPACES In Action
22. Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
23. Whistleblowers of America
24. Magdalena Acevedo
25. Tamera Adams
26. Susan Alexander
27. Milka Amanios
28. Christian Anderson
29. Eric Atilano
30. Katherine B Coventry
31. Demel Baber
32. Erika Bailey
33. Olivia Baker

34. Rick Bardach
35. Carl Bergman
36. Joshua Berry
37. Paula Blue
38. Victoria Bonilla
39. Aisha Bonner Cozad
40. Jenny Brody
41. Peter Brody
42. Nancy Broers
43. Stacey Brown
44. Elizabeth A. Buchanan
45. Herman Buckman
46. Howard Buckman
47. Maartje Bulhuis
48. Linn Bumpers
49. Lashawn Burton
50. L. Lee Butler
51. William Butler
52. Margie Chalofsky
53. Donisha Clayborne
54. Carole Clem
55. Stacey Corcoran
56. Scott Cozad
57. Arynne Crane
58. Charneice Curington
59. Margaret Curtis
60. Tyler Curtis
61. Zaira Curtis
62. Elizabeth Demeusy
63. Juliet Denton
64. Rebecca G Dirks

65. Katie Donnelly
66. Catherine Irene Eisenhower
67. Shelia Evans
68. Melissa Fajardo
69. Tokunbo Fashawe
70. Antoinéh Finesse
71. Kate Finman
72. Elaine L. Fitch
73. Ann Franke
74. Dominique Freeman
75. Carl Fuller
76. Kimberly Fuller
77. Mary Fuller
78. Lisa G
79. Justise Gans
80. Nakia Garland
81. Gardell Gefke
82. Betty Gentle
83. Chelsea Geyer
84. Laelia Gilborn, MSW, MPH, LICSW
85. Shayla Goldsborough
86. Vanessa N. Gonzalez.
87. Lisa Marie Gordon
88. Lois Gray
89. Kimberly Greco
90. Christian Greene
91. Jon Greene
92. Carol H
93. Shontel H
94. Kirk Hamilton
95. Amy Hammond

96. Elizabeth Harmon
97. Douglas Hartnett
98. Karen Hartridge
99. Shanee Hayman
100. Jawana Henderson
101. John Henderson
102. Pamela Henderson
103. Claudia Herrera
104. Christina Hoglebe
105. Kimberly Holmes
106. Kaneisha Howard
107. Tiwanda Jackson
108. Robert Jacobs
109. Marissa Jenkins
110. Heather Jones
111. Haywood Julian
112. Caylyn Keller
113. Damon King
114. Virginia Kling
115. Greg Kolakowski
116. Amy Kossoff
117. Laura L Bibbs
118. Katharine Landfield
119. Prentiss Lay
120. Sarah Leahy
121. Clara Lincoln
122. Adam Lindemulder
123. Kelsey Lombard
124. Tricia Long
125. Abeo Lucas
126. Desiree Magney

127. Gabrielle Majewski
128. Shameka Martin
129. Angelica Matera
130. Fasion Lorenzo Maxwell
131. Alex McClellan
132. Elizabeth McClellan
133. Stephanie McClellan
134. Katie McGervey
135. Crystal McIntosh
136. Kristina McNeff
137. Allison Stacey Medina
138. John Michael King
139. Gloria Mikelson
140. Sarah Miller
141. Manisha Modi
142. Marcia Moore
143. Amelia Naik
144. Paris Newman
145. Stuart Opsen
146. Andrea Ortiz
147. Kimberly Outlaw
148. Noreen Paul
149. Keri Piester
150. Megan Polanin
151. Rob Portman
152. Brooke Priestas
153. Michele Prince
154. Mabel Prine
155. Elizabeth Pyke
156. Jesse Rabinowitz, LGSW
157. Richard Renner

158. Samuel Rubin
159. Lindae Savoy
160. Josephine Anna Scott
161. Charles Sender
162. Taha Shabazz
163. Veronica Sherrard
164. Tonya Simpson
165. Annie Skipwith
166. James Skipwith
167. Sheila Slayton
168. Allenda Smith
169. Celestine Smith
170. Ethel Smith
171. Lonnell Smith
172. Michael Smith
173. Nancy Smith
174. Laurel Spindel
175. Marla Spindel
176. Rhoda Spindel
177. Elizabeth Spurgin
178. Beth Stekler
179. Barrie Lynn Tapia
180. Victoria Taplin
181. Cassandra Taylor
182. P Thompson
183. Shirley Thompson
184. Judy Tiger
185. Porsche Todd
186. Bill Trunk
187. Celeste Valente
188. Kye Vick

189. Patricia Wachs
190. Kirbi Walker
191. Michael Walker
192. Kim Watkins
193. Aaron Watson
194. Andrea Wein
195. LaWanda Wells
196. Mariah West
197. Jonah Westerlind
198. Marion White
199. Mariah Wildgen
200. Angie Wilen
201. Jasmyn Williams
202. Raven Williams
203. Joseph Wilson, Jr.
204. Joseph Wilson, Sr.
205. Jordan Windsor
206. Antonette Wise
207. Rachel Wolkinson
208. Raquel Wollaston
209. Ariel Xue
210. Kai Yi
211. Latasha Young
212. Gregorio Zimmerman