



Testimony for  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
By Joan Yengo  
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Presented to  
Committee of the Whole  
Chairman Vincent C. Gray  
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Good Morning Chairman Gray and members of the committee of the whole. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Joan Yengo and I am the Vice President for Programs representing Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care. I want to acknowledge the work of the Early Care and Education Administration, now operating under the umbrella of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, for its long standing recognition of the need to support families with children ages 0- 3 in preparing their children for school readiness. Over the past several years they have supported several home visiting models and I am here today to discuss one of those models, Healthy Families America, implemented through Mary's Center in all 8 wards of the city over the past 11 years.

This model, with rigorous practice standards, is designed to allow each community to develop their home visiting program based upon the needs of that community. Our experience over the years has led us to develop a program that includes Family Support Workers, a Registered Nurse, an outreach and assessment team, an in-home mental health provider, and a program supervisor. Parents are enrolled in the program prenatally to ensure engagement and support attachment at the birth of their child. We are all aware of the importance of attachment in the development of the brain during that first year of life; a bigger and well developed brain can learn better-- it is that elementary. In addition to connecting families to

their neighbors and community resources to reduce natural stress that comes with parenting our staff is trained to implement the *Parents As Teachers* curriculum. The activities in this curriculum engage parents in their child's development and provide skills to support their child's success in school. We also strongly believe in collaboration and work with the city collaboratives for short-term support for families in crisis situations.

Additional components of the Healthy Families model include quality assurance mechanisms that mandate that all services are:

- **Intensive:** Meeting with participating families on a regular basis.
- **Comprehensive:** Address a range of issues related to parenting and other stressors.
- **Long-Term:** Over a three-to-five year period.
- **Flexible:** In response to families' needs and availability.
- **Culturally Appropriate:** Understanding and working within a family's cultural norms.
- **Accountable:**
  - Must meet standards for best practice and service delivery and obtain a Credential every 4 years.
- **Implement Quality Assurance Protocols:**
  - Comprehensive Initial and on-going Training

- Technical Assistance provided to sites to ensure ability to implement model
- **Collaborating with Community Partners:**
  - Partner with outreach and medical providers to identify families
  - Partner with other community resources to support families' based upon their needs
  - Recognize that no one program can do it all!

In sum, our interdisciplinary team works together with families, building on their strengths that have proven to support their children to be healthy, stable and ready for school.

Our Family Support Workers often come to us from the community, with a Bachelor's Degree, CDA, or Associates, and through the training and support they receive within this program, are able to advance their education into positions within the city; often in social services or public health. Thus, the model allows each community to build on its human capital and strengthen not only the families but the employability opportunities for its members.

Mary's Center evaluation consistently achieves the following outcomes:

- 88% of children complete childhood immunizations
- 98% of mothers space their pregnancies by at least 2 years
- 97% of children developing target as identified with the ASQ

- 98% of children do not have substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect
- 96% of children are enrolled in health insurance
- 100% of children have a medical home

The cost of the program is approximately \$3,500 - \$4,000 per family per year. It is estimated that about 20% of the District's families would benefit from such a program because of vulnerable factors such as lack of knowledge in parenting, being abused or neglected as a child, substance or mental health concerns, or other indicators that could lead to poor childhood outcomes

In closing, I appreciate the efforts of the city to strengthen resources to our families who so much want their children to succeed in school and in life. I offer that we continue to invest in this model, that has proved successful in support of children, beyond health, but to those social and emotional needs that support their school readiness. Healthy Families America is the model that has proved so successful these past 11 years and that is the model that we hope will continue to be invested in to meet the needs of our families and community. Thank you.