



**Testimony to the Health Budget Oversight Committee and the Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services (Chairs, David Catania and Jim Graham)**

**Susannah Plocher, Patients Relations Coordinator at Mary's Center**

Good afternoon Chairman Catania and members of the committee. My name is Susannah Plocher, Patient Relations Coordinator at Mary's Center. Today I want to speak on the impact that the work of the Deputy Mayor's Office is having on the delivery of public services to the community in partnership with the community based agencies. To illustrate allow me to share a daily encounter at Mary's Center.

When we see an expecting couple at the center, most often, the least of their concern is the pregnancy. Instead, they are worried about losing their apartment because soon there are too many people according to their lease, second, the expecting mother loses her job as soon as the pregnancy is evident but often it cannot be proven and third, their school-age child starts to have behavior problems due to the increased stress expressed by the parents. As you can see, if all these social hardships are not addressed simultaneously with prenatal care the outcome of that pregnancy could be an unwanted, neglected or abuse infant and for the school-age child potentially dropping out of school as early as 9th grade.

I reveal this one daily occurrence to stress to you how important it is to have the coordination and continuum of care from the following agencies: Health, Mental Health, Human Services, Health Care Finance, OSSE and DCPS. We see concrete steps of this coordination and system integration under the leadership of the Deputy Mayor and her staff. Community members are often consulted by the Deputy Mayor's staff as to what we see are the needs of the community, what we consider to be some of the best practices that are both cost-effective and we are solicited for our feedback on how the public systems should be integrated to move efficiently in meeting the needs of the family I just described before we have to refer an abused child to the already overburden Child and Families Services Agency.

The Mayor's announcement of the Early Success Framework is another illustration of systems integration of all the above agencies. This framework will guarantee that parents will be supported starting in pregnancy towards their child's educational success and that success starts with a healthy child who is eager and ready to learn. This framework coordinates the public and private agencies to work with the child, the family, the community and the educators that surround that child.



I urge the committee to please support the work of systems integration by the Deputy Mayor's office. In a short time I know that we will see savings, increase capacity at these public agencies by streamlining services and ultimately build greater quality and accountability of services throughout the health and human service agencies in partnership with the private sector.

In addition, we urge the committee to be vigilant so that as additional revenue streams start to come in for 2013, that the DC Health Care Alliance be restored and kept in its present structure, and that the other funding priorities such as the Housing Production Trust Fund, Homeless Services and the TANF employment program get restored immediately upon additional dollars.

In summary, we urge you to look at housing, jobs and healthcare benefits as one safety net package that supports families to permanently lift out of poverty. We at Mary's Center and my colleagues in the private sector are ready to further strengthen our partnership with you and the Deputy Mayors Office to ensure that we truly are a ONE CITY! Thank you very much for your time and consideration.