



**Testimony for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Committee of the Whole
(Chair, Vincent C. Gray)**

Joan Yengo Vice President for Programs

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 3

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.