

Chairman Kwame R. Brown  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 504  
Washington, DC 20004



May 9, 2012

Dear Chairman Brown,

We are writing as members of Defeat Poverty DC, a coalition of nearly 100 business, faith and civic leaders from across the District, who believe poverty undermines the strength and stability of our city's businesses, neighborhoods and families. We thank you for your leadership and support of investments that support low-income residents and – despite the difficult decisions that we all must make regarding funding for vital programs across our city – ask that you prioritize funding for **affordable housing** and **adult literacy** in the District's FY2013 budget.

Research clearly demonstrates that the development and construction of affordable housing is one of the most effective means to help low income families and generate significant economic and social benefits for our communities. Yet, in the District, we have severely underfunded the Housing Production Trust Fund – DC's main source for affordable housing construction and renovation – failing to support nearly 100,000 District residents who spend more than one-third of their income on housing.

The Housing Production Trust Fund is meant to preserve low- and moderate-income families' ability to stay in their community and has done this successfully all over the city. In fact, in its ten year history, the Trust Fund has created over 7,000 homes and 1,000 more are in development. ***However, without restoring \$18 million in proposed cuts to the Housing Production Trust Fund, the District will continue to face a critical shortage of affordable units, especially in our most vibrant neighborhoods.***

The ability to read and comprehend written text and carry out basic mathematical functions is essential to success in today's global economy and evidence strongly shows that the failure to invest in improving adult literacy inhibits our success as a city, limits our workforce and impacts our children's academic achievement. In fact, low literacy is closely correlated with low earnings and irregular employment, and individuals who struggle with basic literacy are more likely to experience longer and more consistent periods of poverty.

Today, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), nearly 20% of adults living in the District today have "below basic" literacy skills. Nearly every one of these individuals would benefit from adult education and most will struggle to find or remain in secure, sustainable employment without improved literacy skills. Yet, the District has failed to adequately invest in and support adult learners. ***By restoring \$1.2 million that has been cut in recent years from adult education and literacy programs, the District would be able to provide instruction to more than 400 additional residents, helping them gain the skills they need to gain meaningful employment.***

We recognize the continuing, unprecedented challenge you face in balancing our city's budget and value the work you have done on behalf of children and families. We also recognize the impact of poverty on our city and encourage you to take these small, but concrete, steps towards reducing poverty. By supporting affordable housing and adult learning, we will take a first step towards cutting poverty in half in the District and put residents on the path to economic independence.

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We look forward to working with you to Make Work Possible, Make Work Pay and Make Basic Needs Accessible for all District residents. Should you have any questions, please contact Joe Weedon, Defeat Poverty DC's director, at 202-266-0050 or joe@defeatpovertydc.org.

Sincerely,

Mustafa Abdul- Salaam  
Ward 8 Workforce Council

Eric Angel, *Executive Director*  
Legal Aid Society DC

Alexandra Ashbrook, *Director*  
DC Hunger Solutions

Valarie Ashley, *Director*  
Southeast Ministry

Chuck Bean, *Executive Director*  
The Non Profit Roundtable of Greater  
Washington

*sig to be added*

Raymond Bell, *Founder*  
The H.O.P.E Project

Dr. Lynn Bergfalk, *Director*  
CityGate DC

Jane Brown, *Director*  
University Legal Services

Jeff Carter, *Executive Director*  
DC Learns

Margie Chalofsky, *Director*  
Foster and Adoptive Parent  
Advocacy Center

Ronald Childs, *Owner*  
Lead Inspection Services

Maurice Cook, *Executive Director*  
Serve Your City

Dr. Kendrick Curry, *Pastor*  
Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church

*sig to be added*

Jeanne Ellinport, *Principle*  
Ellinport Consulting

Gerald Elston, *Pastor*  
Brightwood Park United Methodist

Mark Evans, *CEO*  
Share Tech Solutions

Jacob Feinspan, *Director*  
Jews United for Justice

Eddie Ferrer, *Executive Director*  
DC Lawyers for Youth

Melissa Fox, *Director*  
Capital Bookshare

Rev. Ruth Hamilton, *Director*  
Near SE/SW Community Benefits  
Coordinating Council

Delese Harvey, *Director*  
Metro Area Family Economic Security  
Programs Wider Opportunities for Women

Alan Houseman, *Director*  
CLASP

*sig to be added*

Tom Howarth, *Director*  
Father McKenna Center

Ashley Johnson, *Executive Director*  
The Literacy Lab

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Latin American Youth Center

Jamila Larson, *Executive Director*  
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DC Fiscal Policy Institute

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Mercedes Lemp, *Director*  
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Washington, DC

Paul McElligott, *Director*  
Perry School Community Services

Rabbi Jessica Oleon  
Temple Sinai

Liz Petcot, *Commissioner 7D05*

Judith Sandalow, *Director*  
Children's Law Center

Walter Smith, *Executive Director*  
DC Appleseed

Marina Streznewski, *Director*  
DC Jobs Council

Lawrence Taylor

Claudia Thorne, *Executive Director*  
Community Family Life Services

Carrie Thornhill, *Managing Director*  
Israel Manor Inc.

Herb Tillery, *Director*  
DC College Success Foundation

Ari Weisbard, *Advocacy Manager*  
Employment Justice Center

Rev. Michael Wilker, *Pastor*  
Lutheran Church of the Reformation

CC: Members of City Council



**about defeat poverty dc**

*Defeat Poverty DC is leading a ten-year campaign to cut poverty in half. Our campaign promotes policies to Make Work Possible, Make Work Pay, and Make Basic Needs Accessible for all District residents.*

*Our campaign is supported by a coalition of business, faith and civic leaders from across the District that believes poverty and inequality undermines the strength and stability of our city's businesses, neighborhoods and families.*

*Defeat Poverty DC works in collaboration with advocates, service providers and District residents to build the support needed to implement comprehensive anti-poverty measures and support the safety net in the District.*