

COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PUBLIC HEARING

ON B25-0190,

THE “DISTRICT CHILD TAX CREDIT AMENDMENT ACT OF 2023”

January 24, 2024

Thank you, Chairperson McDuffie, for convening this hearing on the District Child Tax Credit Amendment Act and thank you, Councilmember Parker, for introducing it. My name is Robert Henderson. I am the Ward 5 member of the State Board of Education. These views are my own and do not represent the views of the Board as a whole.

First, I would like to say that getting more money to those who do not have enough of it is a worthy goal in and of itself. I believe that our city is stronger, safer, and more humane when the basic needs of all our residents are met, and this bill takes an important step in that direction.

But I would like to focus the remainder of my testimony on education. When I testify on education issues, from student attendance to absenteeism and more, I often argue that the most important levers for improving outcomes are structural. Students learn best when their basic needs are met — food security, income security, healthcare, and housing stability. Socioeconomic comfort affords all sorts of benefits and freedom from stressors that negatively impact the academic achievement of those living in poverty and economic insecurity. The District Child Tax Credit is a tangible step in helping families to meet their needs and place their kids in a better position to succeed. I do not think that it is a stretch to say that if you care about improving student achievement, attendance, and safety, then you should support the child tax credit.

The proposition that economic security is conducive to better education outcomes is largely intuitive, but there is also ample evidence to support it.¹ And the evidence also shows that families use tax credit benefits for necessities such as childcare, food, and housing.²

¹ See for example, https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102704/aligning-housing-and-education_0.pdf; https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Colleen-Heflin/publication/346810142_Exposure_to_Food_Insecurity_during_Adolescence_and_Educational_Attainment/links/605ca0f6299bf173676b8e3a/Exposure-to-Food-Insecurity-during-Adolescence-and-Educational-Attainment.pdf.

² <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/child-tax-credit-overview>.

We've seen the positive impact that child tax credits can have to alleviate poverty. I hope that we can make this sustained commitment, and even build on it, to give our lowest-income neighbors greater stability and security, from which they can pursue greater prosperity. I hope too that we will find some partners to study the wider impacts, including educational outcomes, of this investment so that we can see the extent of its value to the city and its residents.

Thank you.

Robert Henderson