



Maggie Riden, DC Alliance of Youth Advocates  
Testimony to the Committee of the Committee on Human Services  
2012 Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation Budget Hearing  
May 5, 2011

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Good Afternoon Chairman Graham and fellow Councilmembers, my name is Maggie Riden and I am here today to testify on behalf of the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates, a coalition of over 100 youth serving organizations here in DC, to articulate our strong support of the Trust.

Since its inception the Trust has evolved to play a critical role in the provision of meaningful enrichment opportunities for the children and youth of DC. You have also heard my colleagues describe the immediate impact that the proposed reduction in Trust funding will not only have on the children and youth, but also on the families who rely on the services and supports provided by local community based organizations with the help of the Trust.

During the budget gap closure debates last fall, leadership at CYITC recognized the risk of diminished local investment and reinvigorated efforts to bolster external funding so that services were not completely lost. The Trust has worked to identify and coordinate local funds with partner agencies including DPR and MPD. Furthermore, the Trust has made a concerted effort to engage the business community as evidenced by Ms. London's recent letter to the Washington Post. However, without robust local investment and clear commitment to the Trust, its capacity to obtain these funds will be limited.

First, the District must make every effort to sustain Trust funding at the level required to maintain its three year grant commitments. To enhance fund raising capacity, DCAYA recommends that the Council continue to make strategic appointments to the Trust's Board, but also consider modest structural adjustments. A number of Trust board positions will be opening up in the near future, and the Council still has two ex-officio slots to fill. Ex-officio appointees should have name recognition as experts in the realm of positive youth development and the capacity to provide meaningful representation and guidance. Doing so will help to more clearly signal the District's commitment to ensuring an effective institution. Mayor Gray's appointments of both Deputy Mayor BB Otero and the Neil Stanley of DYRS as ex-officio representatives is an excellent first step.

In addition, DCAYA recommends that future board appointees to the Trust expand the composition of the Trust's Board to reflect the diversity of necessary stakeholders. Representatives from the private funding community, business community and provider community will support the capacity of the Trust to engage with a broader network of potential funders and supporters. A final recommendation would be that Council and Trust consider expanding the structure of the Board beyond political appointees.

Although anecdotal, it has been suggested that because the Board has been comprised solely of political appointees, it is often perceived as an entity that is subject to the changing winds of politics. Altering the Board to include standing members without a political affiliation will combat this perception and likely enhance the capacity of the Trust to pursue, capture and sustain private funding streams.

The bottom line is this: We know that the Children Youth Investment Trust, community based organizations and DC Public Schools have worked hard to develop a system that provides over 20 hours of additional academic and enrichment programming a week during the school year, and close to 40 hours in the summer to our city's most at risk children and youth. Divesting from the Trust will negatively impact this collaborative system, undermine the investments that we have made and disrupt the gains we are starting to see.