



## **Testimony to the School Board of Philadelphia**

**January 27, 2023**

**Kate Fox, Behavioral Health Policy Director, Children First**

Hello, my name is Kate Fox, and I am leading the policy and advocacy work on mental health at Children First. I am here to testify in support of the proposal to contract with Dr. Ginwright and the Flourish Agenda to train District staff, parents and students in healing-centered engagement aimed at improving the mental health of students. Healing centered engagement is a paradigm shift that examines an individual's core beliefs and the way those values impact our relationship to systems, institutions, policies, and practices.

Dr. Ginwright and the Flourish Agenda will work with the District to equip schools to use a strengths-based lens in working with youth, enabling all youth, especially those of color, to thrive.

We specifically support this contract because the partnership with the Flourish Agenda will prepare district staff to address childhood trauma by implementing healing-centered practices that promote the social and emotional wellness of not only the students, but of their families and of District staff as well. While the Flourish Agenda has a demonstrated record of working with other school districts across the country, the proposed collaboration is unique in the inclusion of students and families. Philadelphia can be a leader in this comprehensive approach to healing-centered practices that support youth development.

In closing, let me share that Children First had the distinct honor of hosting Dr. Ginwright as the keynote speaker at our Summit last year, where he spoke to over 300 child serving leaders, including District staff. His words shifted our paradigm to one that focuses on resilience and the strength of youth as a core component of engagement with them – they have a strong foundation to build on and he knows how to do that. We are very hopeful about the breadth of his impact on the School District, and we are confident that it will be meaningful and profound.

Thank you for your time.