

## **Howard Student aims to give back through Social Work**

**By Robel Bruk**

For Brianna Balfon, a Senior Sociology major and Psychology minor at Howard University, social work isn't just a career path—it's a calling.

When asked why she chose Howard University, Balfon explains, "The legacy. Everyone that I've witnessed walk through Howard has been successful, and I saw that success in my life and decided to pursue it."

That legacy of service and excellence has shaped her passion for working with youth, particularly in school social work. Growing up as an only child in a Caribbean household, Balfon witnessed the struggles of underserved communities and was deeply inspired by her mother, a social worker who dedicated her life to helping children in need.

Social work is a profession centered around helping individuals, families, and communities navigate challenges such as poverty, abuse, and mental health struggles. School social workers play a vital role in providing emotional and psychological support to children facing adversity at home or in their communities. Balfon, who volunteers at a preschool every week, sees firsthand the importance of this work.

"Working at this preschool allows me to work on something aligned with my major and helps me prepare for what I want to do in the future," she says. "I've always had a passion for working with youth ... the minds of children are extremely interesting ... they're always learning, they're innocent, and vulnerable."

Balfon's motivation runs deep, shaped by stories she's heard and experiences she's had.

"My mom would tell me about girls in group homes, how mentally traumatized they were because their parents weren't ready to be parents. Many were kicked out, left to navigate life alone," Balfon recalls. "That made me more aware of what kids go through daily."

One experience that has stayed with her involved a mother on her block.

"She had about three or four kids, and in a moment of anger, she told one, 'I wish I never had you.' That stuck with me. How do you even say that to your child? Words like that can leave trauma for years to come."

For Balfon, social work is about being the person children can turn to when they have no one else.

"It's very important for me to be that person in a school setting that kids can come and talk to, whether they're dealing with things emotionally or mentally. Kids don't always have that support, and I think that's extremely important."

As she prepares for her future, Balfon is determined to be an advocate for children who need a voice. Through her dedication and empathy, she hopes to make a lasting impact, ensuring that every child feels seen, heard, and supported.