While in D.C., I was fortunate enough to intern at the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), a nonprofit that advocates and helps create policy centered around adoption. Although it was a smaller organization than I had expected, I really enjoyed getting to personally know all the people I worked with. Their obvious passion for wanting to improve the lives of children who had no families was inspiring and really motivated me to learn more about a topic I had no previous exposure to. Interning at CCAI broadened my knowledge and helped me further define my future career goals to work in maternal and child health.

One of the most challenging and yet rewarding experiences while in D.C. was being so far away from family for such an extended period of time. However, I soon formed close relationships with fellow UCDC interns and other interns at my work, and I learned how to step out of my comfort zone. Through these newfound friendships, I was able to experience the Women’s March, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, the Cherry Blossom Kite Festival, soup kitchens, and a few too many boba tea runs. Through this experience, I developed a strong sense of independence and learned to fully immerse myself in a new environment head-on, with a couple of new friends right by my side.

One of the most memorable experiences of my time in D.C. was attending a hearing on the Hill discussing the future of child welfare and accessing services aimed to aid parents in having a better relationship with their children. Although it was interesting and thought-provoking hearing from experts about how the environment and various social determinants can greatly impact the adult outcomes of children, it was even more impactful hearing a first-hand account from a mom who had benefited from community resources. Witnessing people that have
been given a platform to advocate for themselves at the highest form of government was incredibly inspiring especially since it is everyday stories told by everyday people that create some of the most effective changes. My biggest takeaway from this experience was that although advocating for others is crucial, it is just as crucial to actively involve those that are being affected directly.

Prior to my time spent in D.C. and the UCDC program, I had never been to the east coast. Although I had always wanted to go, I never had the financial means to make it happen. I cannot thank Berkeley enough for providing me with the opportunity to intern in D.C. and to the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement for providing me with the added funds that allowed me to fully experience the beauty of D.C. and the east coast in general. After this experience, I hope to be able to go back to live and work in D.C. to continue my passion of advocating for children and mothers.