

PARENTS URGE CITY TO ADDRESS CRITICAL ISSUES RE LEARNING IN A PANDEMIC:

Dear Mayor Muriel Bowser and the Reopen DC Committee: Education and Child Care,

We, the undersigned parents, community members and concerned residents ask that you consider the perspective of parents and students as you make decisions regarding how learning will continue until there are effective and accessible vaccines for COVID-19. We were disappointed to learn that original members of the committee are there in official capacities to represent certain constituencies, but those constituencies excluded current parents in their caregiver capacity. Further, we note that only one current teacher and no students were named to the committee. Decisions regarding the safety and health of our students, families and communities should not be made without current parent and teacher voices front and center.

We urge you to adopt the following critical guiding principles and address the following questions in your deliberations and planning.

CRITICAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We urge the Mayor and the Committee to uphold these *guiding principles* in every discussion and decision that is made:

- The **health and safety** of every student, family, educator and staff person is our top priority;
- Coordination with economic, health, transportation and child care experts is critical as this is **not an education-only decision**;
- Until there are effective and accessible vaccines, nothing is business as usual. We must think differently, create flexibility, and use all of our resources to help students and families in every part of the city stay healthy and access **Learning During a Pandemic**;
- We must plan for a healthy learning environment with **equity as the core principle**;
- Until there are effective and accessible vaccines, **compelling in-person learning is high risk**; policies must support and trust families to make decisions about the format of learning in a safe way and resist punitive measures to compel in-school learning without a vaccine;
- We will embrace **transparency** during our process and in our recommendations for how the city delivers its plan for Learning During a Pandemic.

QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED

We ask you to answer, and publicly articulate, the following two questions to frame your decision-making and help the public understand the “why” of your decisions before you answer any other questions:

1. ***WHAT DO WE VALUE in DC about life and learning in a pandemic crisis?***
2. ***How will we design a plan to advance equity -- and not exacerbate inequities -- that centers on the voices of those most impacted?***

Then, as you develop your recommendations for a plan for learning going forward, please answer the following questions and concerns:

Make Equity a Central Goal in All Decisions.

We know that the pandemic and our city’s response has and will continue to affect our community in inequitable ways and that a response that treats all students and schools equally will further exacerbate inequity. Specifically:

- Black families are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 in the District and across the country. We must ensure that our Learning During a Pandemic plan is responsive and reparative to this harm and does not exacerbate that inequity.
 - We know, for example, that students East of the River have the highest asthma rates in the District, substantially higher than the national average. Therefore, our Learning During a Pandemic plan must specifically address these needs with a plan and resources for students with health issues informed by families and health care providers.
- How will we communicate with and solicit the views of families, particularly Spanish-speaking families, families with limited English proficiency and families with limited technology access, regarding changes that DC will have to make to enable inclusive distance learning and English language learning programs for their children as well as those who may have already had their schooling interrupted or need help with enrollment or immunization paperwork?
- What can we do better to facilitate and support whole-child Learning During a Pandemic including mental health, social emotional, physical and academic supports for students most in need? What have we learned about what works, what doesn't?
- How are we leveraging our community-based partners and supporting them to help underserved students get the support they need? Our community-based organizations are often trusted lifelines to families and have expertise where our school districts have gaps in knowledge, skills and capacity.
- How is the District, each LEA, school, and classroom planning for and targeting resources to students most in need, in particular students with special needs, English Language Learners, homeless students, and students in trauma or more generally, students considered at-risk? How does District guidance to LEAs and schools reflect this targeting of resources?
 - Is this plan equitable, transparent, and evidence-based?
 - How will we ensure that grades, tests, attendance and other system-wide policies are fair and equitable? If they are not, how will the District ensure that students are not unfairly held accountable?
- What outcomes are we trying to accomplish and for whom are trying to accomplish them? How are we ensuring that resources are equitably and effectively targeted to generate those outcomes?
- At the school budget level, how will LSAT and other parent and teacher groups be included in the decision-making particularly in the most impacted schools and LEAs? How will the proposed budgets and related increases or cuts be equitable and transparent to school communities?
- In response to the economic downturn, how are we planning for likely increases in public school enrollment and increases in numbers of at-risk students both in terms of capacity and resources?
- How do we develop and provide sustainable on-line, digital options particularly for families without reliable access?
- How will the District ensure that students have safe passage, including health-protected passage, to school if needed? And how will this plan be focused on students who need the most support in getting to school?
 - In particular, how will the District plan for homeless students to get to school safely in Learning During a Pandemic?
- What have we learned about meal delivery during a pandemic? How will we make the system and data on its use transparent? How will we ensure that families that need meals receive them while Learning During a Pandemic?

Put Safety and Health First in Planning For Learning.

Options for in-person, online and hybrid learning models will be deliberated as options. As you discuss them, please consider the questions that will be top of mind for parents:

- If small groups are considered, what is the difference between 10 and 25 students in a classroom when it comes to sharing germs, keeping hands off learning tools and constantly cleaning? Is this a safe, healthy option?
- If we have small groups in school and parents have the option to execute home learning or go to school, will we have educator capacity for that scenario? For example, what does it look like for a 4th grade teacher to teach 1/3 of students in person in the AM, 1/3 students in the PM and 1/3 kids in home learning at some other time of the day?
- If there is not one solution for all students (i.e. options for home learning or small group, in-school learning), how will the city ensure and communicate intentional equity?
- How can we learn from the experiences of families and educators across the many schools that have already implemented different school schedules such as extended day or year? Are LEAs sharing lessons learned with families in a transparent way and are those lessons learned informed by true family and student voice?
- What are parent and teacher rights to opt out of in-school learning if they are concerned about health and safety related to the pandemic? What are the plans to ensure Learning During a Pandemic is equitable and consistent in every community if in-person attendance cannot be compelled?
- If there is any in-person learning, how will the public school system have one set of policies and procedures to ensure that immunizations requirements are upheld to ensure that other health issues are not exacerbated? How will those policies take into account that doctor visits for routine exams are limited or non-existent?

Ensure Safe, Healthy Facilities.

If in-person, in-school options are considered, it is critical that facilities foster clean, sanitary, and safe conditions as recommended by the public health experts. Please address:

- Do we have the capacity *in every school* to keep surfaces and air clean and safe including adequate cleaning and PPE resources (i.e. if students will need to wear masks, will schools have enough masks on hand for every child every day)?
- Do we have the space *in every school* for keeping students in safe distances while learning in person?
- Do we have the capacity to train, support and monitor *maintenance and custodial staff in every school* to adequately support clean and healthy environments?
- How will our teacher and staff workforce be protected? Will they have opt-out options if they are in a high-risk or compromised category?

Ensure a Targeted Focus on Students Nearing the End of Their K-12 Career.

High school students at risk of disengaging are especially vulnerable and require additional, targeted support during their final years in public school. We do not want any students left without the necessary support they need to graduate from high school while Learning During a Pandemic.

- How do we target resources to ensure more students do not become disengaged from school in their final years? How do we ensure that this targeted response is informed by evidence, transparent and equitable, and includes mental health as well as academic supports?
- For high school students, how do we coordinate with higher education to keep our policies aligned with postsecondary access and opportunity? How will families and students be informed about how changes to their course-taking or enrollment may affect postsecondary access? How can we ensure that all LEAs and schools communicate these critical pieces of information in a common, transparent way?
- What remote learning opportunities for high school students have increased during this time and how are we ensuring equitable access?(e.g., remote community college courses or other LEA -

offered course, or workforce opportunities for credit, etc.) How can we connect students to postsecondary institutions before high school graduation in ways we haven't done in the past? Are there local community colleges that can connect with high school students across all LEAs, for example, in an accessible way?

- What guidance covering the topics above is the District providing to all relevant LEAs and schools serving high school students so that we can ensure our school leaders have the information needed to support students?

Ensure Clear, System-Wide Communications and Rules.

Parents and students are part of school communities across our 65 school districts in DC. It has been frustrating, confusing and unsafe during this unprecedented and stressful time to have different dates, rules and messages coming from each school district. There should be systemwide rules and communications while Learning During a Pandemic.

- Develop a process for guiding ongoing decision-making and system-wide communications that is grounded in expert recommendations, stakeholder input and the developing knowledge base around COVID-19 and Learning During a Pandemic. Resist efforts to make this Committee the only input moment into the decision-making process about Learning During a Pandemic. While we have learned a lot, we still know so little. Data and information about COVID-19 and Learning During a Pandemic will continue to grow and deepen. Ensure that ongoing decision-making involves parents and educators and benefits from that growing knowledge base.
- Ensure that there is a transparent process, protocol and mechanism for deciding and communicating about when in-person learning will take place or not across the entire public school system now, in summer and throughout the next school year.
- Ensure that the District provides transparent guidance to all LEAs and schools on each of the topics raised above.

Finally, plan for the unexpected. Learning During a Pandemic requires disruptions and changes. Plan ahead for contingencies and anticipate resurgences and significant home learning needs. Ensure that those contingencies take into account equity and potentially uneven impact of COVID-19 and related issues on certain communities. Most importantly, be champions for parents, students and educators who have compromised or high-risk health; for those who are already experiencing deep inequities; for the health and safety of every student, family and educator; and for embracing transparency at every turn. Thank you.

Cc:

Chairman Mendelson
Councilmember Bonds
Councilmember Grosso
Councilmember Silverman
Councilmember R. White
Councilmember Nadeau
Councilmember Cheh
Councilmember Todd
Councilmember McDuffie
Councilmember Allen
Councilmember Gray
Councilmember T. White

Sincerely,

Danica Petroshius	Ward 6	Parent, Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan
Iris Bond Gill	Ward 6	Parent
Suzanne Wells	Ward 6	Ward 6 Public Schools Parent Organization
Bianca carr	Ward 7	Capitol Hill Montessori School
Kelli Davis	Ward 7	School & Neighborhood
Torrey Rice	Ward 2	School
Ceara Richardson	Ward 8	Boone Elementary & Tiny Findings Childcare
Mary Levy	Ward 2	DCPS families and school staff
Elizabeth Festa	Ward 6	ANC6A
Claire Croft	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori
Sheila Strain Clark	Ward 5	Ward 5
Christian Herr	Ward 1	MacFarland Middle School
Andrea Long	Ward 7	Parent
Sherri R. Jones	Ward 7	Deanwood
Nithya Joseph	Ward 5	Ward 5
Marion Babcock	Ward 5	SchoolWithout Walls LSAT parent conference-chair
Alex Nock	Ward 6	Barracks Row
Carlene Reid	Ward 8	Anacostia Resident and Educator
Kelly Alexander	Ward 6	
Elsa Falkenburger	Ward 6	Tyler Elementary PTA
Catrina M. Jones	Ward 8	Congress Heights
Carletta Allen	Ward 6	Jefferson Academy PTO
Min Batstone	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan
Jennifer Galloway	Ward 1	Parent
Yanna Lambrinidou	Ward 4	Campaign for Lead Free Water
Nathan Luecking	Ward 5	Anacostia HS
Tiffany L Brown	Ward 7	LSAT Chair- CHML, ANC Commissioner 7B02, Parent of 2, DCPS Teacher,
Dionne Bryant	Ward 8	Hillsdale
Stephanie Majkut	Ward 6	CHCS parent
Adrian Daniels	Ward 7	Eliot Hine Middle School
Maggie Adams	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Cluster School
Valerie Jablow	Ward 6	DCPS parent
Erika Hoppes	Ward 6	Neighborhood
Allison Harvey	Ward 6	Parent of Amidon-Bowen student
Brian Kirrane	Ward 6	Brent Elementary School (former LSAT chair)
Shelley Carr-Brown	Ward 7	Capital Hill Montessori at Meyers
Julie Muir	Ward 6	Miner ES
John Muir	Ward 6	Miner Elementary
Betsy Wolf	Ward 6	
Chris Deutsch	Ward 6	Miner Elementary School/Rosedale
Danielle Drissel	Ward 6	Parent of 2 DCPS students at Brent Elementary
Joe Weedon	Ward 6	School Without Walls HS, Eastern HS, Eliot-Hine MS
Grace Hu	Ward 6	Amidon-Bowen Elementary, Southwest DC
Matt Epstein	Ward 6	Government Employee and Ward 6 resident
LaVonne Taliaferro-Bunch	Ward 4	School, neighborhood
Erin Duncan	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori
Patricia Berg	Ward 6	Capitol Hill and Ludlow Taylor
Laura Fuchs	Ward 5	Teacher, DC Public Schools

Amber Gove	Ward 6	ANC6A Chair, DCPS parent and education researcher
Betsy Wolf	Ward 6	Amidon-Bowen Elementary PTA & LSAT
Todd Wendel	Ward 6	
Bruce DarConte	Ward 6	CCP
Erin Palmer	Ward 4	ANC 4B02 Commissioner
Mark Smith	Ward 6	Stuart Hobson and Duke Ellington parent
Sade Thomas	Ward 7	Miner elementary school
Rebecca Reina	Ward 1	Ward 1 Education Council
Irene Cuyun	Ward 2	The Story of Our Schools
Talia Brock	Ward 5	
Christopher O'Shea	Ward 3	Palisades
Karla Reid-Witt	Ward 7	DC Family Council
Michael Godec	Ward 6	Capitol Hill
Heather Schoell	Ward 6	Eastern High School
Jamie Milhous	Ward 6	Miner Elementary
Ayeola Brodie	Ward 8	Eastern PTO
Frank Nickerson	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori (DCPS)
Doreen Gabbidon	Ward 5	John Burroughs ES.
K. Unger	Ward 6	School
Kyle Walton	Ward 3	Glover Park
Terkeyshia Thomas	Ward 5	Brookland
Patricia Anduha Stamper	Ward 7	Deanwood Citizens Association
Pete Jaguar Stamper	Ward 7	Deanwood Citizens Association
Shauna Eisenberg	Ward 6	Miner ES
Julie Scofield	Ward 6	CHML & McKinley Tech, Capitol Hill
Neelam Patel	Ward 6	Capitol Hill/H St NE
Shailen Bhatt	Ward 6	Capitol Hill East
Molly Sloss	Ward 1	Capitol Hill Montessori School
Todd Cochran	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori and BASIS DC parent
Christine Cochran	Ward 6	CHML
Cynthia Belmonte	Ward 6	J.O. Wilson Elementary School Parent
Elizabeth A. Davis	Ward 5	Washington Teachers' Union
Ashley Brooks	Ward 5	School
Vicki Bullock	Ward 4	Riggs Park, Brookland, John Burroughs ES
Anise Walker	Ward 8	Friendship Public Charter School
Tracy Davis	Ward 5	Ft. Lincoln, Banneker HS, Capitol Hill Montessori
Kit Sena	Ward 6	Miner Elementary
John Rohrbach	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan/Meyer
Maryam Nock	Ward 6	DCPS and charter school parent
Terkeyshia Thomas	Ward 5	Brookland
Kathleen Coughlin	Ward 1	Columbia Heights resident, DCPS elementary teacher
Tucker Croft	Ward 6	Capitol Hill
Krislynn Perry	Ward 8	Capital Hill Montessori
Trilby Hillenbrand	Ward 6	Kingman Park
Anne Seymour	Ward 6	ANC 6c
Jolie Schwarz	Ward 5	Capitol Hill Montessori @Logan
Kristin Garri	Ward 8	CHML
Caryn Ernst	Ward 6	DCPS parent
Rabiah Harris	Ward 7	Randle Highland Neighborhood, SWS and Jefferson MS
Nzinga Tull	Ward 7	DCPS Aunt (Watkins ES); Ward 7 Education Council Corr. Secretary, Teaching for Change Board Chair T
Rick Bardach	Ward 6	SW community - Amidon-Bowen & Jefferson schools

Mossi K. Tull	Ward 5	Watkins Elementary
Ayanna Smith	Ward 7	Penn Branch; Anne Beers Elementary School
Lisa Gail Rucker	Ward 1	Ward 1 Meridian Hill
Jeanne contardo	Ward 7	Hillcrest, Anne Beers
		Rocketship Legacy Prep Parent Action Committee VP and Treasure
Angel Curry	Ward 7	Coolidge
Isoke Baptiste	Ward 7	
Mary Short-Davis	Ward 4	Ward 4 and neighborhood
Cristi Purnell	Ward 7	Capitol Hill Logan
Raven Freeman	Ward 8	Anacostia
Alicia Robinsob	Ward 4	
Anna Sumpter	Ward 6	Capitol Hill
Stephanie Beggs	Ward 6	Capitol Hill community and Capitol Hill Montessori
Greg Whitsell	Ward 6	parent CHML
Erin Roth	Ward 6	Ward 6 Public School Parents Org
Morgan Brown	Ward 6	Amidon-Bowen LSAT
Venola Rolle	Ward 7	Ward 7 Education Council
Hawa Coulibaly	Ward 3	
Tim Finklea	Ward 6	#The6
Kate Hindle	Ward 6	Tyler
Sara Gopalkrishna	Ward 6	southwest dc
Rachel E. Cononi	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Cluster Schools
Hannah Williams	Ward 6	Miner Elementary School
Rachel Usdan	Ward 6	
Lucy Rojansky	Ward 6	Amidon-Bowen parent
bernadette wittschen	Ward 6	school, neighborhood, parent, social worker
Lisa Carlton	Ward 5	DCPS and DCPCS parent
Alexandra Simbana	Ward 4	Head of Family Decisions, Simbana Leistikow Family
I agree to all the circumstan	Ward 8	
		School Without Walls High School HSA Board, Capitol Hill Montessori @ Logan Parent
Sandra Moscoso	Ward 6	
Stefany Thangavelu	Ward 6	ANC6A, Maury Elementary, Eliot-Hine Middle & Eastern High
Andrea Erdmann	Ward 4	Takoma
Yesica Alcocer-Nava	Ward 5	Cleveland Elementary School
Luis Diego RojasBarrios	Ward 4	School
		Takoma DC resident, Charter School parent, DCPS
Megan Barrios	Ward 4	teacher
Ashley	Ward 3	Hearst
Jaime Goldman	Ward 4	Sela PCS
Sirraya Gant	Ward 7	
Manon P. Matchett	Ward 8	Ward 8 Education Council, Hillsdale, Two Rivers PCS
Ebonique Tasker	Ward 6	Cleveland Elementary
Rebecca Slatin	Ward 4	Takoma DC and Bancroft elementary school.
Katy Thomas	Ward 6	
Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan	Ward 4	Takoma Education Campus
Joseph Harris	Ward 6	SWS @ Goding
Beth Abdella	Ward 6	Capitol Hill montessori @ Meyer
Stephanie Hoehn	Ward 4	Brightwood
Larissa Horn	Ward 6	JO Wilson
Victoria Ann Salamon	Ward 4	DCPS Teacher
Aparna Kumar	Ward 6	Cleveland Elementary, Oyster-Adams Elementary
Evan Yeats	Ward 4	Thomson Elementary School
Emily Stone	Ward 7	Marshall Heights

Chris Dragisic	Ward 4	Parent
Megan Siekkinen	Ward 7	Ward 7 Resident
Darniece Shirley	Ward 7	Concerned citizen
Margot Berkey	Ward 1	Parent of DCPS Alumna
Ava Millstone	Ward 6	Midon-Bowen elementary school (DCPS)
Barbara Schwabauer	Ward 4	Parent at Takoma Education Campus
Rev. Dr. Shawn Jegede	Ward 7	Marshall Heights
Kimberley Robinson	Ward 8	Capitol Hill Montessori at Meyer
Devon Myers	Ward 7	ANC 7F Fort DuPont
		Bass Circle Apartments/Community Center and
Caprice Casson	Ward 7	Parent
Denise Forte	Ward 6	parent
Mary Cue	Ward 7	School
Kirby York	Ward 8	CAPITOL HILL MONTESSORI @ LOGAN
Jean Ndzana	Ward 8	CAPITOL HILL MONTESSORI @ LOGAN
Rachael Friedlander	Ward 4	Petworth
Carlene Thompson	Ward 7	Eastern, chavez
Brooke Rosenblatt	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori
Karen Wooten	Ward 6	Capitol Hill Montessori
Allyson Criner Brown	Ward 8	DCPS Parent, Teaching for Change
Laura Chalmers	Ward 7	Capitol Hill Montessori
Phillip McKissick	Ward 7	Kingman Park
Yohanness Ayechew	Ward 6	Kingman Park
Jennifer Loss, M.Ed M.Ed.	Ward 2	Key Elementary
Rachel Davis	Ward 4	Petworth & Parkview
Meredith Perry	Ward 1	Tubman Elementary
Denise Tee	Ward 1	
Judith Barrow	Ward 1	Shaw Neighborhood school Cleveland Elementary
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs		
Marion Bright	Ward 4	
Michelle Cain	Ward 6	Ludlow Taylor
S Carr	Ward 7	Eastern
Staci Smith	Ward 5	ELHaynes PCS-Elementary
Jen Harris	Ward 6	Hill East
Stephanie Do	Ward 6	
Lucy Hynes	Ward 6	Brent Elementary
Andrew Plemmons Pratt	Ward 6	Brent Elementary parent, PAVE Ward 6 PLE Board member
Charrise Robinson	Ward 8	east of the river and Brent elementary
Molley Kaiyoorawongs	Ward 7	ANC 7E
Piper Campbell	Ward 6	Brent Elementary School
Fernanda G. Nicola	Ward 3	Hardy Middle School
Jan McGlennon	Ward 3	Teachers and students of DCPS
Katherine Ferry	Ward 6	ANC 6A01
Melanie Anderson	Ward 6	
Perique Wimes	Ward 5	Brookland
Mackenzie Jordan Johnson	Ward 4	Brightwood community, Mary McCloud Bethune day academy 16th St
Li Hou	Ward 6	
Clare Stevens	Ward 4	Cleveland Elementary School
Ryan Wolf	Ward 6	Midon Bowen parent
Michael Upright	Ward 6	ANC 6C
Hai Ho	Ward 6	Midon-Bowen Elementary School parent
Allison Harvey	Ward 6	6D, Southwest, Midon-Bowen

Mercedez Mitchell	Ward 1	My residential community is Ward 8. My children and I are in the Ward 1 community for school and work.
Kristine Gazlay	Ward 6	Amidon Bowen
Sylvia Cabus	Ward 6	Amidon-Bowen ES