

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION



Public Hearing on
Teacher and Principal Retention and
Bill 24-355, the “Statewide Data Warehouse Amendment Act of 2021.”

Written Testimony of
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Submitted to the Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman

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Introduction

My name is Paul Kihn, and I am honored to serve as the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) for the District of Columbia. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the public hearing on Teacher and Principal Retention and Bill 24-355, the “Statewide Data Warehouse Amendment Act of 2021.”

As a former teacher, the topic of teacher recruitment and retention is close to my heart. Teaching remains the most fulfilling and the most challenging job I have ever had. As Deputy Mayor, visiting classrooms and talking to teachers on my weekly school visits are highlights of my role. This past month, I was honored to visit Friendship Blow Pierce and Hardy Middle School, and I am excited to visit Savoy and Moten Elementary Schools and Center City Public Charter School (PCS) - Congress Heights in the coming weeks. In all my visits, I am inspired by seeing teachers bring material alive and engage students in classrooms, and hearing directly from them.

In October, my office hosted a Community Conversation with recent DC Teachers of the Year, including Jermar Rountree from Center City PCS – Brightwood, Dominique Foster from Friendship Blow Pierce, and Alejandro Diasgranados from Whitlock Elementary School. Each of these outstanding educators shared insightful perspectives on how they build joyful learning environments for their students and how the District can do more to recruit and support educators. Mr. Diasgranados spoke to the importance of having teachers from backgrounds representative of the students they serve. He talked about how his middle school teacher was the first person to show him that someone who looked like him could command respect in a classroom, and how that teacher helped him apply to college and inspired him to enter the teaching profession. Ms. Foster shared ways in which educators can authentically engage their students, allowing room for student voice in the learning process, and how she infuses students’ interests, ideas, and work into her teaching. Coach Rountree emphasized the need to bring teachers together from across the District to learn from one another and exchange best practices.

Teaching is a critically important and challenging profession. Too often, teachers do not get the recognition and respect they deserve. During my tenure as Deputy Mayor, I have focused on finding ways to recognize and celebrate the work of our teachers and to continue to make the District of Columbia a desirable place for teachers to work and live.

Our Work to Date

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

I want to highlight some of the work the education sector has done to strengthen teacher recruitment and retention. In terms of building a talent pipeline, I am particularly excited about

the Grow Your Own programming we have launched. Through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), we are providing grants to local teacher preparation programs to develop alternate, affordable routes to teaching and to develop talent as early as high school. Through this grant, American University is serving DC high school students through free dual enrollment college courses and DC high school graduates through their Teacher Pipeline Project, which results in a bachelor's degree in education and a teaching license from OSSE. The Relay Graduate School of Education (GSE) is serving DC paraprofessionals currently employed by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools in the District through a two-year residency program resulting in a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and an OSSE license.

Based on my office's engagement with DC school personnel, OSSE targeted current paraprofessionals for DC Futures, a new scholarship opportunity that enables participants to access up to \$8,000 per year, alongside coaching supports, while earning their first associate's or bachelor's degree at three local institutions of higher education. Through DC Futures, paraprofessionals are pursuing fully licensed teaching roles. 38 out of 304 approved applicants in the DC Futures spring and summer 2022 cohorts were paraprofessionals.

Our Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) have invested significantly in professional development, support, and career ladders to increase teacher retention. I want to elevate in particular DCPS' innovative work around the LEarning together to Advance our Practice (LEAP) program, which centers on coaching and content-based, collaborative professional learning communities, and the Rigorous Instruction Supports Equity (RISE) program, which provides targeted professional development, support, and performance-based incentive awards at DCPS' 42 highest-need schools. Charter schools across the District have been innovative in developing flexible scheduling approaches. For example, Briya Public Charter School offers its teaching staff opportunities to pursue professional development while teaching on a reduced schedule.

Our LEAs are also investing in financial and other incentives to retain talent. DCPS' IMPACT evaluation system, which includes performance incentives for effective teachers, has helped DCPS retain 92% of Highly Effective and Effective teachers over the past three years. DCPS has also retained teachers at Title I and non-Title I schools at a comparable rate – a notable achievement. These are statistics we are especially proud of, as we know that a good teacher is the key to a good education. Moreover, on a recent survey, 75% of Highly Effective teachers in DCPS' Title I schools indicated that IMPACT bonuses, which can be as high as \$25,000, contribute to their desire to continue teaching within DCPS. This demonstrates the positive effect of IMPACT on our efforts to ensure that our top talent is serving our highest need

students. IMPACT's positive effects have also been validated by external research.¹ Moreover, DCPS' annual Standing Ovation ceremony, a red carpet event for our school staff, is another example of DCPS' work to celebrate teachers. Charter LEAs offer similar financial incentives and recognitions. For example, DC Bilingual PCS offers staff bonuses of up to 3.5% of annual salaries and shows appreciation for teachers through access to meals on site and tokens of appreciation such as care packages.

Teacher Compensation

We are proud to be a leader in the nation on teacher compensation. I do want to correct the record on this point. DC teachers are the fourth highest paid in the nation, behind only New York, California, and Massachusetts, with starting salaries of \$56,313 and average salaries of \$80,659.² At DCPS, 2,155 teachers earn more than \$100,000. Adjusted for cost of living, DC teachers' salaries are still very competitive.

We know that teachers at DCPS are eager to have a new contract in place – a sentiment we share. Our teachers deserve an updated, competitive new contract. That is why DCPS has been negotiating in good faith for the past three years to finalize a new collective bargaining agreement for the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU). We are proud of the offer we have made, which includes robust compensation increases for educators. While arbitration is a confidential process and we are limited in what we can share, we feel confident that DCPS teachers are being offered one of the most competitive contracts in District history and among educators nationally. We, like the teachers who testified at the hearing, are eager to see the contract finalized as soon as possible.

Teacher Retention Rates in DC

Across the District, we are proud that our teacher retention numbers have improved in recent years and have remained high through the pandemic and recovery period. DC's teacher retention rate between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years was 85 percent. I am proud that we are retaining more than 90 percent of effective teachers in DCPS and 86 percent of effective teachers in DC Public Charter Schools. Approximately 78% of teachers remain employed as teachers at their same school.

We are able to understand our teacher landscape because of the robust work OSSE has done on data collection and reporting over the past few years in particular, through numerous reports, including the DC Teacher Workforce Report, the Educator Retention Data Snapshot, and the DC Educator Workforce Report. Because of OSSE's strong data collection efforts, we do not believe

¹ Study: DC Public School's Teacher Evaluation System Continues to Improve Teacher Workforce | Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy | University of Virginia.

² National Education Association (NEA) Research and Publications (2020-2021), <https://www.nea.org/research-publications>.

B24-355 is necessary. We value continued conversations with Council and other stakeholders on the data they would like to see reported.

Looking Forward

Despite strong retention rates, we are cognizant of the challenges faced by teachers, especially over the past few very difficult years, and we are eager to continue strengthening teacher recruitment and retention. Beyond compensation, we will continue to invest in ways to make teaching a sustainable profession. We seek to strengthen support for affordable housing and build on the teacher housing policies we have established. These policies include interest-free loans and down payment assistance through the District's Homeownership Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP) and the Employee Assisted Housing Program (EAHP), and subsidized housing for teachers and their families through The Wilhelmina at Malcolm X teacher housing project. To build a strong, diverse pipeline of teachers, our office and our partner agencies will continue to support the Grow Your Own initiative and other pipeline programs. And we continue to explore initiatives to improve working conditions in response to feedback from teachers. My office welcomes additional teacher and stakeholder input and ideas as we continue to invest in this critical work.

I appreciate the opportunity to share more about the Bowser Administration's work to recruit and retain teachers, and I welcome further dialogue on this important topic.

Sincerely,



Paul Kihn
Deputy Mayor for Education