

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



Public Roundtable  
on  
“No Shots, No School” for School Year 2022-2023  
Testimony of Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education

Before the  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee of the Whole  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman

Wednesday, June 29, 2022  
Live via the Zoom Platform

Good morning Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, staff, and members of the public. 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 testify at today's public roundtable on "No Shots, No School" for upcoming school year.

While this hearing is focused on school year 2022-23, I want to start by recognizing the heroic work of our school leaders and staff throughout this challenging and atypical year, as they navigated the mercurial course of the pandemic, and to applaud the incredible progress we have made thanks to our collective efforts and partnership. As vaccines have become widely available and the pandemic has transitioned to an endemic phase, we have been able to keep schools open and keep children and staff protected from serious illness.

As we settle into a new normal, we know that vaccines are critical for keeping our city's children and communities healthy, as vaccines are the most effective prevention strategy against outbreaks of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. We have seen all too well how harmful outbreaks and subsequent school closures are for our students, schools, and communities, and we must do everything possible to prevent that situation in the future. This is why we are committed to putting the full weight of the District's resources towards ensuring that our youth are immunized and, as part of that effort, enforcing immunization requirements for school attendance. Our immunization attendance policy, commonly known as No Shots, No School, requires that school-age students in the District receive routine pediatric immunizations, and that age eligible students (currently 16 and above) receive the COVID-19 vaccine. States across the country and in the region require immunizations for school attendance, and doing so is crucial for protecting the health of our students and our school communities. Therefore, as Mayor Bowser emphasized in a press conference earlier this month, DC will enforce No Shots, No School for school year 2022-23.

In our work on the No Shots, No School initiative, the DME coordinates closely with our public health partners and across the education cluster, including with OSSE, DCPS, charter LEAs, and CFSA - agencies whom you will hear from today. Our work on No Shots, No School is a prime example of the coordination that is so critical for government to be effective in delivering results for residents. In this case, while DC Health establishes the District's public health guidance and policies, provides expanded access to immunizations for District residents, and oversees outreach and communication campaigns, OSSE develops policies for the education sector specifically and leads the work to support LEAs and schools in implementation. DCPS and charter LEAs, in turn, develop and implement plans that meet the needs of their communities. Our government agencies are working closely together, with clear roles and responsibilities. This collaboration also allows for learning and adaptation across sectors. For example, we are drawing from the experience of LEAs like KIPP DC that led the way on enforcement of No Shots, No School this school year. The presentation we have submitted to Council outlines our initiatives and strategies in more detail, and we look forward to sharing more information at today's roundtable. We take this work extremely seriously and encourage all students and families to take full advantage of the available resources, including significant expansion of access to immunizations.

This is challenging work. We don't want any child to miss school, which is why we are focused on proactive, coordinated efforts to provide information and education about vaccines, facilitate

easy access to immunizations, and work closely with families through the compliance window. We believe the combination of the enforcement of No Shots, No School and our coordinated efforts around immunization outreach, access, and support will yield the results we all want. However, every one of us has a role to play in encouraging unvaccinated residents and especially children to get their shots, to support our collective public health and the health of our school communities.

Thank you for your engagement on this issue, and I look forward to taking your questions.