

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
COMMITTEE REPORT**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

DRAFT

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**TO:** All Councilmembers

**FROM:** Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Committee of the Whole

**DATE:** September 22, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Report on Bill 23-263, the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2020”

The Committee of the Whole, to which Bill 23-263, the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2020” was referred, reports favorably thereon with technical amendments, and recommends approval by the Council.

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**I. BACKGROUND AND NEED**

On April 23, 2020, Bill 23-263, the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2020”<sup>1</sup> was introduced by Councilmember Vincent C. Gray Councilmember Trayon White to officially designate the school in Lot 808 in Square 5146, bounded by 48<sup>th</sup> Place, N.E., Fitch Place, N.E., and 49<sup>th</sup> Street, N.E. as “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School, in Ward 7, as Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School.

Lorraine Hall Whitlock was born on January 28, 1920 in Washington, DC to parents William and Estelle Hall. She graduated Dunbar High School in 1935 and attended Miner Teacher’s College – now part of the University of the District of Columbia – before receiving a Master’s Degree from Columbia University. Upon returning to the District, Ms. Whitlock began a long and distinguished career as an educator in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS).

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<sup>1</sup> Originally introduced as the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019.”

She started as a teacher at Charles Young Elementary and rose to Head of the Spingarn Instructional Unit before her retirement.<sup>2</sup> She was also a trustee at the University of the District of Columbia. Ms. Whitlock married William Baldwin Whitlock who she met while attending Dunbar. Mr. Whitlock was the District's first black motorcycle police officer.<sup>3</sup>

Even after her retirement, Lorraine H. Whitlock remained active as a civic leader and political activist. She was well known to District leaders and policy makers for her commitment and passion for civic responsibility, especially in the Ward 7 Deanwood neighborhood where she lived for over 60 years.<sup>4</sup> She served as President of the Deanwood Gardens Alliance and a leader in the Far Northeast/Southeast Council.<sup>5</sup> Ms. Whitlock also provided leadership in the construction of the new Kelly Miller Middle School in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood near Deanwood.

Ms. Whitlock died suddenly and tragically on April 10, 2003 at her home. She had been set to be honored at a luncheon of the National Congress of Community and Economic Development on April 23, 2003. She was survived by her husband and her three children.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, Ms. Whitlock was posthumously honored with the naming of the Benning Road bridge – one of the gateways into Ward 7.

In 2019, Councilmember Vincent C. Gray introduced the Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019 which would rename the current Aiton Elementary School Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary. Maude E. Aiton was a kindergarten teacher in DC schools before becoming the Principal of the Americanization School in the District of Columbia from its opening in 1918 until her retirement in 1945. She also served as President of the DC Grade School Teachers Union and was President of the National Education Association (NEA) Department of Adult Education.<sup>7</sup> Based on the idea of renaming the school, DCPS committed to a public engagement process to gauge the Aiton community and stakeholders opinions on the proposal, including facilitating discussions at meetings of the Deanwood Civic Association and ANC 7C. DCPS shared with the Committee that there is community support for this proposal and DCPS recommends moving forward with the renaming beginning in the 2021-2022 School Year when the current Aiton Elementary is scheduled to move into swing space to facilitate a building modernization.

Under the District's public space naming law, only one public space – including streets and buildings – may be officially named for a person.<sup>8</sup> Given this, the Committee also recommends un-designating the Lorraine H. Whitlock Bridge to comply with the spirit of the law. Just as removing Maude Aiton's name from the current school building is not a reflection on her legacy, removing Lorraine Whitlock's name from the bridge is no reflection on her legacy. The

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<sup>2</sup> ACR15-063, "Lorraine Hall Whitlock Memorial Resolution of 2003, approved May 6, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Washington Post

<sup>4</sup> L17-0011, Lorraine H. Whitlock Memorial Bridge Designation Act of 2007, Effective from Jul 12, 2007

<sup>5</sup> CER

<sup>6</sup> CER

<sup>7</sup> DCPS Engagement Page <https://publicinput.com/dcpsaiton> August 7, 2020

<sup>8</sup> D.C. Official Code § 9-204.04.

Committee agrees that the designation of a DCPS school building for a locally born and raised educator who devoted her life to the community in which the school sits is a more fitting tribute.

### ***Legal Background***

The Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 *et seq.*) (“Act”) establishes procedures for closing streets and alleys, opening new streets and alleys, naming public spaces, and other procedures related to streets and alleys. Specifically, the Act authorizes Council to designate or change the name of any public space in the District of Columbia.<sup>9</sup> Public spaces include “any public street, alley, circle, bridge, building, park, other public place or property owned by or under the administrative control or jurisdiction of the District of Columbia.”<sup>10</sup>

The Act establishes a notice requirement for the official designation of public spaces including parks; at least 30 days prior to the scheduled public hearing, the initiator of the proposed designation shall submit a copy of the legislation for review and comment to each Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC”) in which the public space is located. Regarding Bill 23-263, the notice requirements have been met. ANC 7C was put on notice of the legislation and June 26, 2019 hearing by the the Office of Councilmember Vincent C. Gray on May 27, 2019. In a letter dated June 13, 2019, ANC 7C expressed its support for the designation (a copy of the letter is attached to this report).

The Act also promulgates requirements that the Mayor must meet prior to consideration of a public space designation by the Council. First, the Mayor shall provide the Council with comments on the proposed designation submitted by any District agency with jurisdiction over the public space to be designated.<sup>11</sup> The District Department of Public Schools (“DCPS”), which has jurisdiction over the school at issue, attended the June 27, 2019 hearing on Bill 23-263 and submitted comments (supporting Bill 23-263) as part of their testimony at that time, thus meeting this requirement. Second, prior to consideration of a designation by the Council, the Mayor shall provide to the Council a surveyor’s plat showing the public space to be designated, including any adjacent and abutting squares to the designation.<sup>12</sup> The Office of the Surveyor provided the Council with a plat of the designation prior to mark up by the Committee of the Whole. The plat is attached to this report.

After the official public space designation legislation becomes law and all conditions required by the Council and the Act have been satisfied, the Mayor will install signage denoting the public space name.<sup>13</sup> The signage shall conform to the policies of the agency with jurisdiction

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<sup>9</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 *et seq.*

<sup>10</sup> D.C. Official Code § 9-204.11(2)(A).

<sup>11</sup> D.C. Official Code § 9-204.22(b).

<sup>12</sup> D.C. Official Code § 9-204.22(c)(1)-(3).

<sup>13</sup> D.C. Official Code § 9-204.24(b).

over the public space, in this case DCPS.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the Surveyor of the District of Columbia shall record a copy of the act and the Surveyor's plat in the Office of the Surveyor.<sup>15</sup>

Officially re-designating the Maude Aiton Elementary School building, as Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School will honor Ms. Whitlock, who was highly regarded in the community and devoted her life to education and advocacy. For these reasons, the Committee of the Whole recommends the approval of Bill 23-263, the "Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2020."

## II. LEGISLATIVE CHRONOLOGY

April 23, 2019	Bill 23-263, the "Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2020" is introduced by Councilmember Vincent C. Gray with Councilmembers Bonds and Silverman and referred to the Committee of the Whole.
April 26, 2019	Notice of Intent to Act on Bill 23-263 is published in the <i>Register</i> .
June 7, 2019	Notice of Public Hearing on Bill 23-263 is published in the <i>Register</i> .
June 27, 2019	A Public Hearing is held on Bill 23-263 by the Committee of the Whole.
September 22, 2020	The Committee of the Whole marks up Bill 23-263.

## III. POSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Shanita Burney, Chief of the Office of Family and Public Engagement, District of Columbia Public Schools, testified on behalf of the Executive in support of the intent of the "Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School" designation under Bill 23-263. Her testimony is summarized below.

## IV. COMMENTS OF ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS

On June 13, 2020, ANC 7C, in which the proposed official designation is located, voted 3-2 (2 absent), in support of renaming the Maude Aiton Elementary School to Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School. A copy of ANC 7C's letter in support is attached to this report.

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<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> D.C. Official Code § 9-204.24(c).

## V. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

The Committee of the Whole held a public hearing on Bill 23-263 on Thursday, June 17, 2019. The testimony summarized below is from that hearing. Copies of written testimony are attached to this report.

***Barbara Morgan, Public Witness***, testified in support of the proposed designation. She spoke of Ms. Whitlock's involvement in the Deanwood community and her devotion to the District and its residents. She also discussed Ms. Whitlock's career as an educational leader and her unwavering commitment to young people. She also indicated that the community would not be opposed to removing the Whitlock designation from the current Whitlock Bridge.

***Shanita Burney, Chief of the Office of Family and Public Engagement, District of Columbia Public Schools***, testified that the Executive supports the intent of the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School” designation, but also that DCPS wanted to engage the community and stakeholders before moving forward on any renaming. She emphasized that proposing name changes can lead to community unease or concerns from stakeholders.

The Committee received no comments in opposition to Bill 23-263.

## VI. IMPACT ON EXISTING LAW

Bill 23-263, as it pertains to the Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation, has no impact on existing law. D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 authorizes the Council to designate any public space, including parks.<sup>16</sup> Further, the Act provides that, with limited exception, no public space shall be named in honor of any living person or in honor of any person who has been deceased less than two years.<sup>17</sup> Ms. Whitlock passed away on April 10, 2003, more than two years ago.

## VII. FISCAL IMPACT

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2024 budget and financial plan to implement the provisions of the proposed legislation. The school is currently being renovated by the Department of General Services. A name change was anticipated, so the budget for renovation includes the cost of signage for the new school name. A copy of the March 19, 2018 Fiscal Impact Statement is attached to this report.

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<sup>16</sup> Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201).

<sup>17</sup> See D.C. Code § 9-204.05.

## **VIII. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS**

<u>Section 1</u>	States the short title of Bill 23-263.
<u>Section 2</u>	Officially designates the school in Lot 808 in Square 5146, bounded by 48 <sup>th</sup> Place, N.E., Fitch Place, N.E., and 49 <sup>th</sup> Street, N.E. as “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School.”
<u>Section 3</u>	Adopts the Fiscal Impact Statement.
<u>Section 4</u>	Establishes the effective date by stating the standard 30-day Congressional review language.

## **IX. COMMITTEE ACTION**

## **X. ATTACHMENTS**

1. Bill 23-263 as introduced
2. Written Testimony
3. ANC 7C Letter
4. Surveyor’s Plat
5. Fiscal Impact Statement for Bill 23-263
6. Legal Sufficiency Determination for Bill 23-263
7. Committee Print for Bill 23-263

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.**  
**Washington D.C. 20004**

Memorandum

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To : Members of the Council

From :   
Nyasha Smith, Secretary to the Council

Date : April 23, 2019

Subject : Referral of Proposed Legislation

Notice is given that the attached proposed legislation was introduced in the Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, April 23, 2019. Copies are available in Room 10, the Legislative Services Division.

TITLE: "Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019", B23-0263

INTRODUCED BY: Councilmembers Gray, Bonds, and Silverman

CO-SPONSORED BY: Councilmembers Allen and Grosso

The Chairman is referring this legislation to the Committee of the Whole.

Attachment

cc: General Counsel  
Budget Director  
Legislative Services

1   
2 Councilmember Anita Bonds

3   
4 Councilmember Elissa Silverman

  
Councilmember Vincent C. Gray

5  
6 A BILL  
7 \_\_\_\_\_

8 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
9 \_\_\_\_\_

10 To designate the school in Lot 808 in Square 5146, bounded by 48th Place, N.E., Fitch Place,  
11 N.E., and 49th Street, N.E. in Ward 7, as the Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School.  
12

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
14 act may be cited as the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019”.

15 Sec. 2. Pursuant to sections 401 and 422 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition  
16 Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code §§ 9-  
17 204.01 and 9-204.22) (“Act”), and notwithstanding section 404 of the Act (D.C. Official Code §  
18 9-204.04), the Council designates the school in Lot 808 in Square 5146, bounded by 48th Place,  
19 N.E., Fitch Place, N.E., and 49th Street, N.E. in Ward 7, as the “Lorraine H. Whitlock  
20 Elementary School”.

21 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

22 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal



23 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,  
24 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

25       Sec. 4. Effective date.

26       This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the  
27 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as  
28 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December  
29 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of  
30 Columbia Register.

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DC Public Schools (DCPS)**



**Public Hearing on  
Bill 23-216, the “Wells Middle School Designation Act of 2019”  
&  
Bill 23-263, the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of  
2019”**

**Testimony of  
Shanita Burney**  
Chief of the Office of Family and Public Engagement

Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
Chairman Phil Mendelson

June 27, 2019  
Room 412  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, members, and staff. I am Shanita Burney, Chief of the Office of Family and Public Engagement for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Beginning in August, I will lead the Communications and Engagement Office, which will oversee DCPS' commitment to transparent communications and meaningful public engagement. I am pleased to testify before you today on Bill 23-216, the "Wells Middle School Designation Act of 2019" and Bill 23-263, the "Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019."

School names help to identify the school community, establish a legacy, and develop a sense of pride in the traditions of DCPS and our schools. After a several months-long community engagement process that the DCPS School Planning team led in collaboration with the Office of Family and Public Engagement, DC Public Schools is pleased to support Bill 23-216, the "Wells Middle School Designation Act of 2019" to honor Ida B. Wells, an iconic investigative journalist, feminist, civil rights activist, educator, and researcher.

### **Legacy of Ida B. Wells**

Born into slavery in 1862, Ida B. Wells was a tireless advocate for the underserved and brought to light injustices against African Americans. At the age of sixteen, Wells became a teacher to support her family and began her career in the classroom. During this time, she also reported on the disgraceful conditions of black-only schools. Through her writing, she fought against discriminatory hiring and was an advocate for women's suffrage.

Wells dedicated much of her career as an investigative journalist, reporting the truth about the brutality of lynching in the United States after three of her friends were lynched by an angry white mob. She began documenting and compiling statistics on the widespread practice of lynching in the United States. Her writing and activism quickly made her the foremost leader in the crusade against lynching. She was a radical activist at time when being both radical and a woman was unheard of in our country. As a lifelong fighter for justice, DC Public Schools believes that honoring the life of Ida B. Wells will serve as a constant reminder that our students have the opportunity to be leaders and change agents who positively influence their community and the world each and every day.

### **School Naming Process**

The school planning team launched the process to name New North Middle School in June 2018. The school, which will open at 405 Sheridan Street NW in August 2019, will be a neighborhood middle school available to all 6<sup>th</sup> grade families currently living in the boundaries of Brightwood Education Campus, LaSalle-Backus Education Campus, Takoma Education Campus, and Whittier Education Campus. The process was shaped by DCPS' School Naming Policy.<sup>1</sup> Nominations collected from the general public were carefully reviewed by parents, teachers, students, Coolidge HS alumni, and community members to help determine the finalists. Over the summer and into the fall, DCPS engaged with over 450 members of the community. The nomination to name the school after Ida B. Wells received positive feedback and input from current teachers, parents, and students alike.

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<sup>1</sup> [School Naming Policy](#)



### **The New Wells Campus**

Ida B. Wells MS will open in a fully modernized building in the fall of school year 2019-2020. The new facility will have dedicated classrooms for each subject, including rooms for art, choir, band, health, and a science lab. The building will have dedicated spaces for the middle school such as a gymnasium, locker rooms, and a multipurpose space. The colocated campus will provide students with access to many resources, including the Frank Williams Activity Center, a community health clinic and a day care center to promote student success. The main building, modernized stadium, and field will all be complete before the first day of school in August.

The inaugural 6th grade class at Wells will enjoy electives and clubs designed to prepare each student to positively influence society and thrive in life. An education at Wells will provide pathways to the Early College, Mass Media & Health Sciences Academies at Coolidge High Schools, and will allow students to reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment. Each year a new grade will join the campus until it is a 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school in School Year 2021-2022.

DCPS is dedicated to providing excellent schools and modern facilities that promote and support successful teaching and learning. By establishing the Ida B. Wells MS, we honor a fearless woman and mark an important milestone for our city and for DCPS. This name reflects our values of courage, equity, and excellence. Her legacy will help establish a precedent that DCPS is consistently focused on creating a safe, affirming, and empowering space for students of color, and all students, to build community, confidence, and leadership skills.

### **Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019**

I would now like to share DCPS' perspective on Bill 23-216, the "Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2019." While we support the intent of the bill, we do have concerns about the process for re-naming Aiton Elementary. Based on DCPS' experience with re-naming schools, we know that proposing a name change for a school frequently leads to community unease and concerns from stakeholders that were not initially aware of the proposal. Because of this, we feel it is important to commit to a deep-level of engagement, as we did with both Ida B. Well MS and Boone ES. Based on those prior examples, we recommend a pause on this proposal until appropriate, full community engagement and consideration is possible.

We recognize that students, parents, and community members may wish to propose a name for a school, and the opportunity it presents to establish new traditions; however, we support our established and thoughtful school naming process, which, in the case of Ida B. Wells MS, was based on six months of engagement, including alumni outreach, multiple feedback sessions, and a community survey. We are open to considering a new name for Aiton, after a similar, collaborative engagement process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic, today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.





Government of the District of Columbia  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7C  
4651 Nannie Helen Burroughs AVE NE, Suite 2  
Washington, DC 20019

June 13, 2019  
Committee of the Whole  
1350 Pennsylvania AVE NW  
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Proposed Official Building Name - Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School

Dear Members of the Committee of the Whole:

At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting on June 13, 2019, the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7C ("ANC7C" or "Commission") considered the above-referenced matter. With 5 of the 7 Commissioners in attendance, our Commission voted 3-2 to proposed legislation to officially designate a public building in the ANC (currently Maude Aiton Elementary School) as the Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School.

Thank you again for providing ANC7C an opportunity to exercise "Great Weight" on this matter.

Sincerely,

Antawan Holmes  
Chairperson

NAMING OF A SCHOOL  
SQUARE 5146  
LOT 808

PURSUANT TO D.C. LAW \_\_\_\_\_, EFFECTIVE \_\_\_\_\_,  
THE AREA SHOWN THUS: [Hatched Area] IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AS  
"LORRAINE H. WHITLOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL".

OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR, D.C.  
\_\_\_\_\_, 2019

I CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAT IS CORRECT AND IS RECORDED.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SURVEYOR, D.C.

FOOTE STREET, N.E.

N.E.

PLACE,

48th

SQ. 5146  
LOT 808  
LORRAINE H. WHITLOCK  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

N.E.

STREET,

49th

FITCH PLACE, N.E.

SURVEYOR'S OFFICE, D.C.	
Made for: DDOT	
Drawn by: AS	Checked by: _____
Record and computations by: B. MYERS	
Recorded at: _____	Page: _____
Recorded in Book: _____	SR 19-0000
Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet	File No. 19-1111

**DRAFT COMMITTEE PRINT**  
**Committee of the Whole**  
**September 22, 2020**

A BILL

23-263

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To officially designate the school in Lot 808 in Square 5146 as the Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School and to remove the designation of the Lorraine H. Whitlock Bridge.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School Designation Act of 2020”.

Sec. 2. Pursuant to sections 401 and 422 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code §§ 9-204.01 and 9-204.22), the Council officially designates the school in Lot 808 in Square 5146 as the “Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School”.

Sec. 3. The Lorraine H. Whitlock Memorial Bridge Designation Act of 2007, effective July 12, 2007 (D.C. Law 17-11; D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01, note), is repealed.

Sec. 4. Applicability.

This act shall apply as of July 1, 2022.

Sec. 5. Fiscal impact statement.

The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

Sec. 6. Effective date.

33           This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the  
34 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as  
35 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December  
36 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of  
37 Columbia Register.