



## WOODROW WILSON HIGH SCHOOL

3950 CHESAPEAKE STREET, NW - WASHINGTON, DC 20016-1855

202-282-0120 [www.wilsonhs.org](http://www.wilsonhs.org)

Kimberly Martin, Principal

*"Celebrating 82 Years of Excellence"*

Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committees, staff and DC community- thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Kim Martin, the principal of Wilson High School in Ward 3. This is my 18th year as a high school principal and my 6th year serving the families of Wilson High School.

I have spent the last few months trying to measure and respond to the loss that students are experiencing due to the necessary closing of schools. It is something that truly keeps me up at night and I am sure you share my deep concern.

I know firsthand that aside from the home, no setting has more influence on a child's health and well-being than school. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC have indicated a predicted increase in childhood trauma resulting from COVID school closures due to changes in students routines, breaks in continuity of learning, limited access to mental, speech, and occupational health services, grief of missing celebrations and milestone life events, lost security and safety from housing and food insecurity, increased exposure to violence and online harms, threat of physical illness and uncertainty for the future. The educational and social impact of school closures, there has been substantial impact on food security and physical activity, which disproportionately impact students living in poverty, African American, Latinx, and Indigenous students. As the country continues to be enthralled in a racial revolution, it is easy to see the importance of schooling in relation to understanding diversity, equity and inclusion. This is particularly true for LGBTQ students, who may be in homes where their choices and lifestyle are at odds with members of their family. I share all of this to say that when I try to measure students' loss during this time, academic loss is only one part of the equation.

Recently, on the first day of in-person programming, measuring what has been lost and taken away from students became clear to me in an emotional way. I watched 9th graders enter the school for the first time, their eyes and hearts full of anticipation and excitement as they looked up and saw the snow falling on the atrium glass and marveled at finally being a Wilson High School student. I saw a young girl with her head bowed low, walk slowly through the metal detectors and at once, she brightened, smiled and shouted out upon seeing her friends, who were seated socially distanced on the atrium floor and benches. I entered a classroom where one student told me, "I learned so much better today in a classroom than I do at home," and another classroom where a student had been in the US for only 8 months- anxiously waiting to practice English with peers his own age. Though our plan limits the time a student is able to be in school, and I feared students would not come because of that, we still have approximately 60 students a day, more than 200 each week, who make the choice to leave home and attend school in person for half a day of instructional time.

We have seen the role of schooling in society rapidly expand beyond the 3 R's to include identification of special needs, mental, sexual and physical health services, including vision, dental care and care for



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pregnant students. A priority must be providing adequately trained staff to schools to address the concerns I've described. The secondary trauma that school staff consistently face will only increase in light of the expanded responsibilities in life after COVID.

As we look to the future, I am thinking actively on how to build in supports for our students as part of DC's recovery from the pandemic. Our return to school plans must focus on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, robust Response to Intervention plans, a comprehensive social emotional curriculum and wrap around services. Many secondary schools sacrifice SEL strategies and Positive Behavior Intervention Support programs for robust, fast-paced, instructionally-focused environment. Post-pandemic, I see even the most rigorous schools will spend the requisite time nurturing the Whole Child, and prioritizing relationship and relevance over rigor and repetition. We have an unprecedented opportunity to meet students' needs in a new way. I am confident we will see schools rise to the occasion and do less, so that we can build stronger and more authentic relationships with families.

Thank you again for taking the opportunity to consider the impact of student learning loss and the need to solve this problem. I am happy to address any questions at this time.