

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



Public Hearing on District of Columbia Auditor’s Report:
“Measuring What Matters: More and Better Data Needed to Improve DC Public
Schools”

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

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Live via Zoom Video Conference Broadcast

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. I am Paul Kihn, the Deputy Mayor for Education. I am joined today by Shana Young, who is the Interim State Superintendent of Education and Dr. Michelle Walker-Davis, the Executive Director of DC Public Charter School Board. We are pleased to testify before you today for this public round-table on the District of Columbia Auditor's Report: "Measuring What Matters: More and Better Data Needed to Improve DC Public Schools."

The Bowser Administration is committed to high-quality and actionable data on the performance of our schools for our stakeholders including parents, policymakers, advocates, and the broader public. Our commitment cannot be understated. We recognize the importance of making policy decisions transparently and based on evidence.

As we know, the District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership Establishment and Audit Act of 2018 authorized the District of Columbia Auditor to initiate an audit of data management and collection practices of public local education agencies (LEAs). After the Audit began in January 2019 and throughout the two-year process, my office along with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), cooperated fully with it, devoting considerable time and resources to its completion. Collectively, these agencies provided more than 1,000 documents to satisfy the Auditor's requests. We fulfilled 64 different data requests spanning the 2012-13 school year to the 2017-18 school year. The Audit took hundreds of hours of staff time required for the highly technical work of satisfying data requests, for participation in staff meetings to provide insight to the Auditor, as well as for individual staff level interviews. Additionally, we spent considerable time on detailed feedback on a draft of the report, which you can find in the final report's appendix, specifically aimed at contributing to accuracy and balance.

Understandably, we have been waiting in anticipation of the publication of this report, and we are pleased that this Audit has finally concluded. While this Audit persisted for two years, we have continued doing the important work of serving District students and families and providing the best education possible, all the while relying on the actionable, longitudinal data available through OSSE.

I want to be very clear about some foundational facts. The District of Columbia is in full compliance with grant requirements from the U.S. Department of Education to their satisfaction. We have a statewide longitudinal data system and comply with local laws pertaining to its authorization. We share data back and forth with LEAs to meet their needs. We share more data with the public on the performance of our public schools and provide unprecedented transparency. We satisfy research requests consistent with applicable laws governing student privacy. Furthermore, as a leader of our recovery efforts in the city, I can also share that I have full confidence in the data reporting and analysis we get from OSSE as essential to our collective work to ensure a comprehensive recovery and healing effort for all our students.

I would also like to be very clear that none of this means that our systems do not need to be continuously improved and updated. In fact, we have been very clear with this Council and others over the past several years where we are on OSSE's impressive data improvement journey. We consistently identify and invest in improvements to our data systems, so we can make more information available to stakeholders with the purpose of improving student outcomes.

We look forward to making additional advances to satisfy our commitment to accurate, accessible, and actionable data. These advances will further support our efforts to address student needs as we continue to fight this pandemic and recover.

Thank you for hosting this hearing and for the opportunity to share information with you today. We are pleased to be afforded the opportunity to describe the progress we have made to improve our data systems and supports. I will now turn it over to Shana Young, and will be available for questions.