**Committee of the Whole Public Roundtable on DCPS Initial School Level Budgets**

**Ward 4 Education Alliance**

**April 2, 2021, 9:30am**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the DCPS local school budgets.  My name is Cathy Reilly and I am here testifying on behalf of the Ward 4 Education Alliance and  the Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principles and Educators SHAPPE.  I am a member of C4DC.

We are strong proponents of stable staffing and equity always but especially now.

Along with inflation and the supplanting of at risk dollars: enrollment projections affect the local school budgets. For FY22, they were difficult to make and DCPS was conservative. The harm in being understaffed when additional students arrive is great, being short social workers and teachers for students coming back to school or arriving in this country is just irresponsible. Hiring strong staff in the fall is almost impossible.  The gain is exponentially positive, if there are more staff than the student/teacher ratios require. This  could result in having smaller class sizes or being able to pivot to serving some in person and some virtually.

Ward 4 DCPS schools have a high number of ELL families and the projections are down at most of the schools. Our schools will not be adequately prepared to provide the educational opportunities these students, potentially coming to our schools, deserve.  All toll 20 ELL teachers have been cut from the Ward 4 school budgets as well as 14 general ed positions.

The number of children and families at the border verifies the need to plan. While many have been able to keep these individuals at some cost to other areas, this is an example of the staffing cuts in the local school budgets that are not sustainable.  The schools primarily in wards 4 and 1 serving a high proportion of these students have actually needed more bilingual staff throughout the pandemic to be able to meet the needs of these students. The skill sets of these staff members are incredibly difficult to replace.

Powell, MacFarland, Roosevelt, CHEC, Cardozo, Cleveland and Bruce Monroe have the challenge of staffing bilingual programs.  Takoma also saw cuts which affect its ability to provide the integrated arts program they have been building. CHEC has basically maintained its enrollment but is seeing a cut in its budget, it serves the highest number of at risk students as well as a high number of ELL.

Whittier, Takoma, Brightwood and LaSalle are transitioning to elementary as Ida B Wells takes in a full middle school. These schools received stabilization funds but also saw cuts that will make it difficult to sustain the services to their PreK-3-5th graders.  For Dorothy Height moving to swing space and losing close to 400 million, the stabilization funding was woefully inadequate.

West is pleased and excited to enter their new building in the fall.  However as they welcome two new self contained special education classrooms, they are also projected to lose ELL students and staff. They are only projected to gain 11 students, which from past experience seems too low for a modernized school.  West is actually losing funds for the coming year.

The funds for 6 extended day programs were moved to stimulus funds limiting them; they had been part of the budget. These funds and funds for enrichment should be built into the budgets as students return. Truesdell has expressed the need many feel for expanded outdoor learning, and more opportunities for enrichment not fewer.

**For the DCPS high schools:**

These will be highlighted as part of the ward testimonies. To maintain our DCPS infrastructure we have to invest in and grow the neighborhood feeder patterns.  Woodson and Cardozo received stabilization funds, these absolutely  need to be continued and expanded with long term planning in those areas.  While the balance between large and small schools is tough to strike, DCPS has to do better.  Wilson and CHEC each saw significant cuts, losing crucial and long term staff.  The American Rescue Plan funds are for three years.  This is an opportunity to build for DCPS. It is crucial.

The capital issues in Ward 4 are acute and have to be noted as part of your budget deliberations. They will have a definite impact on any return to school plans:

1 The crowding at Roosevelt where Roosevelt STAY is co-located needs a solution.  STAY is a strong and vital opportunity academy, especially as DCPS closed Wash Met.  It needs its own building in this part of town.

2 The crowding at Ida B  Wells and Coolidge also needs a solution in next year’s budget. The capacity of the shared cafeteria as noted on a plaque on the wall is 167.  The projected enrollment which they will meet is 1250. It is impossible to have enough lunch periods to accommodate this in the 6 hour school day. The Spanish, Enrichment teachers at Ida B Wells will lose their classroom space next year and 3 PE classes will share the gym and 1 Health classroom.

3 The issues at the phase 1 elementary schools have only grown. Whittier has made a compelling case for a full modernization soon.  Truesdell and Whittier are not ADA compliant and have not been for years.   Powell is scheduled for HVAC work this summer.  All of our schools including LaSalle in this group have had significant quality control issues with the work of DGS.

The restoration of the funding for the positions that were cut is a modest request given these times.  Thank you.