

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



Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Oversight Hearing  
on  
The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

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, members, staff, and members of the community. My name is Paul Kihn, and I am the Deputy Mayor for Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Just under two weeks ago, Mayor Bowser presented *A Fair Shot*, the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Budget and Financial Plan. Alongside her Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) supplemental budget and federal stimulus spend plans, I am excited that the Mayor has delivered a budget that will lead the District into our first year of recovery, and it is my pleasure to share the details of those investments with you today.

It is impossible to discuss this budget and its formulation without acknowledging the context of the global pandemic. COVID-19 presented us with entirely new challenges to address, but it also revealed the stark, existing inequities within the District. With a deep sense of urgency to confront those realities, I charged agency directors in the education cluster to craft innovative, bold solutions in their budgets to tackle these complex problems. Even after the extraordinary work of our agencies' budget teams to complete that task in a very tight fiscal environment, it became clear in the fall that we would need a more comprehensive, whole-city approach to fully review the District's investment opportunities. Through the leadership of the Mayor and City Administrator, this idea gave rise to a series of thematic, cross-agency proposals in areas as varied and interconnected as school readiness, learning acceleration, and inclusive jobs recovery. These cross-agency investments will be the focus of my testimony this afternoon.

### **School Readiness**

The centerpiece of our education recovery efforts focuses on school reopening. Getting students back into the classroom for full-time, in-person instruction is the most important step we can take to accelerate learning. With increased vaccine availability, decreased community spread, and the enhanced health precautions we have in place, it is safe for us to fully reopen schools. Thousands of teachers, leaders, and school staff have worked around the clock to prepare schools for a safe hybrid model over the last ten months and we are grateful that more than 28,000 students are now receiving in-person instruction. My office has worked closely with leaders throughout the city to provide a number of resources to support this effort. We have issued strong health and safety guidance, convened weekly health and safety calls, made available health experts at PCSB for on-call support, implemented a city-wide COVID school testing program for students and staff, prioritized access to vaccinations for educators, coordinated more than 80 informative, cross-sector LEA leader calls, established a \$10 million charter reopening grant and assistance, and proposed 3.6% increase to the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) foundation level.

In addition to these more immediate, baseline reopening supports, my office has also long championed the set of supports that ensure students are ready to learn, particularly with respect to their safety and mental well-being. In this budget, I am proud to say that we have invested in a larger scale suite of these resources than ever before, all of which have the potential to save students' lives, promote healthy lifestyles, and encourage youth empowerment and leadership.

The centerpiece investment of our recovery youth safety work is the establishment of a Safe Passage program across seven Safe Passage areas, providing over \$15 million over the next three school years to get students safely to and from school and afterschool. Deeply informed by my office's work with community members, government agencies, and other stakeholders, this investment will impact students at an estimated 44 schools, with the goals of stationing positive, trusted adults with students

as they travel to and from school and school-related activities, providing after-school mediation services to resolve and prevent conflicts, and reducing violent incidents involving students. In addition to this Safe Passage program, my office will invest \$1.5 million over three years to provide additional training to 500 public safety personnel, including school security, School Resource Officers (SROs), and the MPD/MTPD Youth Division, on training topics such as restorative justice, identifying and addressing implicit bias, crisis response, and working with students with special education needs and severely disabled young people.

Addressing youth safety is not just about intervention. It also includes prevention work that is best implemented through the proactive offering of a variety of out-of-school opportunities for young people. In addition to maintaining the Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST) office's recurring local grants amount, this budget includes a \$1 million annual expansion to summer grants over three years, for a total of \$3 million additional summer dollars, starting right away this summer. Further, we are excited to announce a brand new \$1 million OST Youth Scholarship Fund, which will provide up to \$10,000 in individual scholarships to 50 at-risk youth per year to cover the cost of out-of-school time opportunities that may be cost-prohibitive.

As we shift the momentum back to in-person learning, we know that schools will need comprehensive supports to re-engage their students, maintain their regular attendance, and better address the mental health needs of their students, their families, and school staff. On the re-engagement front, this recovery budget includes a number of Every Day Counts! attendance investments that I am excited to run out of my office, for a total investment of \$2.7 million over the next two school years. First is our Every Day Counts! "Back to School" media campaign, which we will launch this summer to remind families how to enroll and share expectations for in-person instruction in the upcoming school year. Second is the scaling of two successful attendance intervention pilots – attendance letters and communication technology platforms – to address and prevent chronic absenteeism. Finally, DME will welcome aboard an attendance analyst to manage these resources, support the Every Day Counts! Task Force and provide critical analysis capacity to our efforts to engage students on the importance of regular school attendance.

While student re-engagement will help bring in-person instruction to life once again, we also know that students will need mental health supports and intentional social-emotional learning (SEL) programming to positively reconnect and combat the social isolation, anxiety, grief, and other challenges resulting from the pandemic. Through the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), this budget includes the expansion of the school-based mental health program to cohorts three and four, for an \$8 million investment in FY22 and \$24 million through FY24. Additionally, this budget addresses needs for immediate support for students in crisis, as well as professional development and resources to support mental health teams with the implementation of research-based programs to support suicide prevention and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. Finally, families and educators have cited stress and mental health as a top concern during the pandemic, and we know that adult well-being is central to effective education and care for youth. This budget dedicates nearly \$2 million in federal resources to support DBH's educator mental health and family wellness programming, helping the adults in students' lives to feel supported in their mental well-being needs, too.

### **Learning Acceleration**

While I and my education cluster colleagues have been happy to share our learning acceleration plans with the Council over the last several months, I appreciate the opportunity to highlight some of the

Mayor's learning acceleration investments at this hearing, as well. First, we must consider the broad scope of the problem at hand: an earlier study indicated that at-risk students had fallen as many as five months behind in math and four months behind in reading during the first nine months of the pandemic. We also know that rates of high school credit attainment in the first term of this school year indicated a greater need for intervention. The stark fall learning loss data propelled our planning and pushed us to think boldly about the scale of interventions needed to support our students. As we prepare for the start of next school year, we know that there will be persistent challenges that we will need to address through a variety of strategic investments to accelerate students' learning following more than a year of remote and hybrid learning.

The Mayor's signature investment to accelerate learning in this budget is \$41 million in centralized resources for high-impact tutoring. While LEAs will leverage their own federal stimulus resources to implement tutoring programs for their students at the school level, this centralized four-year investment will provide scaling grants to CBO partners with a proven track record of academic impact; build the infrastructure needed in operations, coordination, and evaluation for a program of this size; and provide some additional direct grant funding to LEAs and high-demand non-school sites to implement this evidence-based approach to learning acceleration.

It is no secret that the pandemic exposed inequities across our educational system. High school students, in particular, have emerged as a group who need additional supports, and the Mayor's budget approaches equitable programming for high school students in a number of different ways. First, in addition to a 3.6% increase to the UPSFF's foundation level, the Mayor both increased the existing at-risk weight and created a structural change in the formula via a supplemental weight for students who are over-age in high school. This new supplemental weight will infuse approximately \$3 million in new, recurring at-risk dollars for this student group, found to be furthest behind their at-risk and not at-risk peers in the 2020 UPSFF Study, on top of the nearly \$13 million resulting from the increase to the overall at-risk weight. Second, the Mayor's budget includes a nearly \$6 million investment in dual enrollment expansion, which will provide 250 new dual enrollment opportunities and a "to and through" mentorship program for low-income high school students and first-time college goers. Third, we are investing \$29 million over the next three years to reimagine work-based learning through the expansion of middle school career exploration courses, the creation of a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) training center focused on nursing and cybersecurity careers, and the launch of 12<sup>th</sup> grade school-year internships for 1,200 students. Through this multi-faceted set of strategies, this budget will help ensure that our high school students are college and career-ready when they graduate from our DCPS and public charter schools.

Finally, across all investments, we know that families are key partners in their student's learning. As a result, my office will launch a two-year, nearly \$3 million DC Family Coach Program to provide part- and full-time family coaches in up to 30 public schools. Family Coaches are family-centered partners who strengthen trust between parents and school staff, conduct outreach with parents who may have disconnected from the school, help families access the available resources in and outside of the school building and create safe peer to peer communities. We look forward to working closely with school communities to place these family-facing team members, and to ensure more robust family engagement and outreach from my office.

### **Inclusive Jobs Recovery**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated economic inequities in the District, and we know that Black and Brown communities along with District residents without college degrees have experienced disproportionately high rates of unemployment. With recovery as a catalyst, the District is investing \$49 million in FY22 focused on two critical shifts to reimagine our workforce system.

The first is expanding paid opportunities for youth and adults to learn at work because we know the best place to learn how to succeed in the workforce is through training on the job. Through an expansion of apprenticeships, including DC government apprenticeships, subsidized employment through Project Empowerment, and On-the-Job Training programming, more DC residents will have an opportunity to engage in paid workforce programs and learn the skills they need to succeed through employment. In addition to the work-based learning middle and high school investments I previously mentioned, we are also expanding our youth apprenticeship programming so that young people have multiple pathways to compete in the District's workforce.

The second major area of focus in reimagining our workforce system is prioritizing an employer-driven training system. Through an expansion of the DC Infrastructure Academy, which has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach through successful partnerships with Washington Gas and Pepco, along with the launch of employer-led training partnership grants, the District will invest in training opportunities that are driven by employer demand. This approach will ensure that the residents who graduate from these programs have the necessary skills and experiences for DC's high-demand, high-wage jobs of the future. Across all of these investments, the District will provide paid workforce and training opportunities for more than 3,300 unemployed and underemployed residents in FY22.

Due to the unprecedented rates of unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among residents without college degrees, we are also focused on driving a surge in high-impact credentialing. Through a \$13 million investment, the District will provide funding for residents to earn high-demand associate's or bachelor's degrees at local colleges and universities, along with support in persisting to complete their degree. The District will also launch the Rapid Reskilling Fund, a \$6 million initiative to provide more than 700 residents without a bachelor's degree the opportunity to pursue free training that results in workforce credentials in high-demand occupations, and through a grant to a partner organization, prioritize engaging and recruiting new high-quality training providers.

Finally, it is essential to strengthen responsive employer-job seeker connections. We are investing \$4.6 million for Career Coaches to connect DC residents to the programs and employment opportunities that best meet their skill set and experience. Through this investment, unemployed DC residents will have an advisor in their corner to help them understand their transferable skills and navigate employment and workforce opportunities. Across all of these workforce investments, I again want to emphasize that programming and support is focused on supporting the communities that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, particularly residents without college degrees and communities of color.

As I close my testimony, it is important to reflect on where we were just a year ago, as we presented the Mayor's FY21 budget to the Council. We still faced considerable uncertainty last June as we wrapped our immediate emergency response efforts, ended the 2019-2020 school year virtually, and looked tentatively ahead to some modified phased reopening activities for parks, libraries, and other education cluster agencies' services. We could not have known then that widely available life-saving COVID-19 vaccines would be a reality in the spring of 2021, or that that the District would receive significant

federal support via additional COVID relief packages in December 2020 and March 2021. And while we still face a tight local revenue picture, there are some early forecast indicators that we are heading in the right direction.

The Mayor's budget and financial plan represents the collective effort of the entire Bowser Administration to ensure that we continue on that pathway to recovery together. The Council is an important ally in this effort, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and the community to achieve our shared recovery vision for the District. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.