

**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:** October 19, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Report on Bill 24-339, John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021”

The Committee of the Whole, to which Bill 24-339, “John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021” was referred, reports favorably thereon with technical amendments, and recommends approval by the Council.

CONTENTS

I.	Background and Need .....	1
II.	Legislative Chronology .....	4
III.	Position of the Executive.....	4
IV.	Comments of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions.....	4
V.	Summary of Testimony .....	4
VI.	Impact on Existing Law.....	5
VII.	Fiscal Impact.....	5
VIII.	Section-by-Section Analysis.....	6
IX.	Committee Action.....	6
X.	Attachments .....	6

**I. BACKGROUND AND NEED**

*“Freedom is not a state; it is an act. It is not some enchanted garden perched high on a distant plateau where we can finally sit down and rest. Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.”<sup>1</sup>*

On July 6, 2021, Bill 24-339, the “John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021” was introduced by Chairman Mendelson at the request of the Mayor to officially designate the school in Lot 814 in Square 2806, at 4300 13st NW as John Lewis Elementary School.

***John Lewis, a Civil Rights Leader***

There was perhaps no single figure whose own life and career embodied the promise, success, and continued challenges of civil rights for Black Americans than John Lewis<sup>2</sup>. Born on February 21, 1940 in Alabama, John Robert Lewis was an American civil rights leader and sat at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. He was a cofounder and chairman of the Student

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, John. Across that Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America. (2017)

<sup>2</sup> National Archives, African American History. <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/individuals/john-lewis>

Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and led and helped organize many of the pivotal moment in the Civil Rights movement, including the Freedom Rides, the 1963 March on Washington, and the Selma to Montgomery Marches. During the late 1960s through the 1980s, Lewis devoted his time to various community organizing and voter registration efforts to secure the legal victories of the civil rights era and continues to advocate for civil rights. In 1987, Lewis was elected to represent Georgia's 5<sup>th</sup> District in the House of Representatives, where he served as a legislator and was often referred to as the "conscience of the Congress" for his servant leadership and continuously uplifting the lessons learned from the movement and the experiences and realities of African American people in this country. He served in the United States House of Representatives for Georgia's 5<sup>th</sup> District for 17 terms until his death in 2020.

John Lewis was born to sharecroppers in rural Alabama. Lewis described his early education at a small school, walking distance from his home. "It was supported by the community, it was the only school we had. I had a wonderful teacher in elementary school, and she told me 'read my child, read!' And I tried to read everything. I loved books. I remember in 1956, when I was 16 years old, with some of my brothers and sisters and cousins, going down to the public library, trying to get a library card, and we were told the library was for whites only and not for coloreds."<sup>3</sup> Despite facing racial discrimination and segregation during the attainment of his education, Lewis graduated from the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee, and was ordained as a Baptist minister. He then earned a bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy from Fisk University, a historically black university.

During his time as a student is when John Lewis became an activist and an emerging leader in the civil rights movement. He organized sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in Nashville and took part in many other civil rights activities as part of the Nashville Student Movement. The Nashville sit-in movement was responsible for the desegregation of lunch counters in the city's downtown. Lewis was arrested and jailed many times during the nonviolent activities to desegregate the city's downtown businesses. He was also instrumental in organizing bus boycotts and other nonviolent protests to support voting rights and racial equality.<sup>4</sup> In 1964, SNCC opened Freedom Schools, launched the Mississippi Freedom Summer for voter education and registration. Lewis coordinated SNCC's efforts for Freedom Summer, a campaign to register black voters in Mississippi and to engage college student activists in aiding the campaign. Lewis traveled the country, encouraging students to spend their summer break trying to help people vote in Mississippi, which had the lowest number of black voters and strong resistance to the movement.<sup>5</sup>

At age 25, Lewis helped lead a march for voting rights on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, where he and other marchers were met by heavily armed state and local police who attacked them with clubs, fracturing Lewis' skull. Images from that "Bloody Sunday" shocked the nation and galvanized support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Despite the attack and other beatings, Lewis never lost his activist spirit, taking it from protests to politics. He was elected to the Atlanta city council in 1981, then to Congress six years later. Once in Washington, he focused

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<sup>3</sup> "[John Lewis: 'Read my child, read!'](#)". *Speakola.com*. 2016 National Book Award Winner. Retrieved March 10, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> "Congressman John R. Lewis Biography and Interview". [www.achievement.org](#). American Academy of Achievement. Archived from the original on February 20, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Hale, Jon N. (June 7, 2016). *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*. Columbia University Press. pp. 72–75. ISBN 978-0-231-54182-4.

on fighting against poverty and helping younger generations by improving education and health care. In 2011, after more than 50 years on the front lines of the civil rights movement, Lewis received the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, placed round his neck by the first Black president of the United States, Barack Obama.

### ***Naming the District's Schools***

When we name schools in the District, it is an opportunity to honor someone or something, or an opportunity to inspire. More broadly, the name of a public building, space, or street should: (1) be one that the community supports; (2) honors a person, event, or place for a clearly articulated reason, and (3) may be inspirational, such as to the students of a school. In the District, monuments, memorials, statues and parks are named after national figures and in District-owned facilities – students attend schools, senior citizens receive services, families reside in housing complexes, residents conduct business and visitors enjoy parks and libraries named after some of these same figures. In July, Mayor Muriel Bowser formed the working group District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) to ensure that the individuals for which government buildings are named after reflect contemporary DC values.<sup>6</sup> Through this process, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) engaged with parents, students, West alumni, and community members through conversations, surveys, and petitions. They received overwhelming support for the “John Lewis Elementary School” designation.

### ***History of West Elementary School***

The current West Education Campus (West Elementary School) is a Pre-K3 through eighth grade DCPS school with a mission of educating students to embrace challenges with joy and purpose because they know they have the power and ability to choose their own path to success. West is one of only six DC public schools with an advanced-learner program (Schoolwide Enrichment Model). West's students continue to excel academically – 70% of second graders are on or above grade level in reading, 81% of fourth graders met their math goals, and West has seen a 38% increase in My School DC lottery applications, highlighting the appeal of the school for families across the District.

Joseph R. West, the school's namesake, was a United States Senator from Louisiana, a Union general in the United States Army during and after the American Civil War and the chief executive of the District of Columbia. As a commander of militia, he gave the order to torture and murder Apache chief Mangas Coloradas, who had come to meet with him under a flag of truce to discuss terms of peace.

With the excellence that it exudes, West Elementary School deserves to be named after a person whose work inspires students and whose life was committed to justice and equality for all. The late Congressman John Lewis is certainly an inspiration to many. Officially designating the school located at 4300 13<sup>th</sup> Street NW, as John Lewis Elementary School will honor John Lewis, who was highly regarded nationwide for his multi-decade career fighting for the rights of African Americans across the nation and in the District. For these reasons, the Committee of the Whole recommends the approval of Bill 24-339, the “John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021.”

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<sup>6</sup> DC FACES Working Group Report. Government of the District of Columbia.

## II. LEGISLATIVE CHRONOLOGY

- July 6, 2021 Bill 24-339, the “John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021” is introduced by Chairman Mendelson at the request of the Mayor.
- July 13, 2021 Bill 24-339 is referred to the Committee of the Whole.
- July 16, 2021 Notice of Intent to Act on Bill 24-339 is published in the *Register*.
- September 17, 2021 Notice of Public Hearing on Bill 24-339 is published in the *Register*.
- February 16, 2018 Revised Notice of Public Hearing on Bill 22-664 is published in the *DC Register*.
- October 6, 2021 A Public Hearing is held on Bill 24-339 by the Committee of the Whole.
- October 19, 2021 The Committee of the Whole marks up Bill 24-339.

## III. POSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Shanita Burney, Engagement and Partnerships Officer at the District of Columbia Public Schools, testified on behalf of the Executive in support of the “John Lewis Elementary School” designation under Bill 24-339. Her testimony is summarized below.

## IV. COMMENTS OF ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS

The committee received no comments from Advisory Neighborhood Commissions.

## V. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

The Committee of the Whole held a public hearing on Bill 24-339 on Wednesday, October 6, 2021. The testimony summarized below is from that hearing. Copies of written testimony are attached to this report.

***Shanita Burney, Government Witness*** testified in support of the “John Lewis Elementary School” designation. She noted that “Lewis’ extraordinary life provides lessons for activists today on how to confront racial violence, forge productive alliances, and transform American democracy.”

***Abeo Venzor, Public Witness*** testified in support of the “John Lewis Elementary School” designation, stating that leaders like John Lewis encouraged her to keep succeeding in life and was a significant inspiration on her life. She described being indebted to John Lewis’ strong legacy of freedom fighting.

*Cathy Reilly, Public Witness* testified in support of the “John Lewis Elementary School” designation. Mrs. Reilly shared that it is an honor and a responsibility for the current West Elementary School to carry the name of John Lewis.

*Jonah Cherkis, Public Witness* testified in support of the “John Lewis Elementary School” designation. Jonah is a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student at the current West Elementary School and testified that “John Lewis would be a great person to name his school after because he was the youngest speaker at the March on Washington and he never gave up and tried to be the best person he could be.”

The Committee additional written testimony in support of the John Lewis Elementary School designation. Copies of the written testimony are attached to this report. The Committee received no comments in opposition to Bill 24-339.

## VI. IMPACT ON EXISTING LAW

Bill 24-339, as it pertains to John Lewis 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>7</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>8</sup> Rep. Lewis passed away on July 17, 2020, however, as a former Member of Congress, the naming is exempt from the two-year requirement.

## VII. FISCAL IMPACT

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2022 through fiscal year 2025 budget and financial plan to implement the provisions of the proposed legislation. The school was recently modernized by the Department of General Services. A name change was anticipated, so the budget for renovation included the cost of signage for the new school name. A copy of the June 3, 2021 Fiscal Impact Statement is attached to this report.

## VIII. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

<u>Section 1</u>	States the short title of Bill 23-339.
<u>Section 2</u>	Officially designates the school in Lot 814 in Square 2806, at 4300 13 <sup>th</sup> St. NW, as “John Lewis Elementary School.”
<u>Section 3</u>	Transmits a copy of this Act to the Mayor
<u>Section 4</u>	Adopts the Fiscal Impact Statement

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<sup>7</sup> Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201).

<sup>8</sup> See D.C. Code § 9-204.05.

Section 5 Establishes the effective date by stating the standard 30-day Congressional review language.

## **IX. COMMITTEE ACTION**

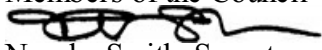
## **X. ATTACHMENTS**

1. Bill 23-339 as introduced
2. Written Testimony and Letters
3. Surveyor's Plat
4. Fiscal Impact Statement for Bill 24-339
5. Legal Sufficiency Determination for Bill 24-339
6. Committee Print for Bill 24-339

**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 : Monday, July 12, 2021  
Subject : Referral of Proposed Legislation

Notice is given that the attached proposed legislation was introduced in the Office of the Secretary on Tuesday, July 06, 2021. Copies are available in Room 10, the Legislative Services Division.

TITLE: "John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021", B24-0339

INTRODUCED BY: Chairman Mendelson, at the request of Mayor

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

Attachment  
cc: General Counsel  
Budget Director  
Legislative Services



**MURIEL BOWSER**  
MAYOR

July 06, 2021

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W. Suite 504  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

Pursuant to the Public Space Naming Amendment Act of 2016 (D.C. Law 21-161; D.C. Official Code §9-204.01), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is requesting the DC Council officially designate the school in square 2806 0814 bounded by 14th Street NW, Gallatin St NW, and Farragut St NW as John Lewis Elementary School to honor John Lewis, the American politician, statesman, and civil rights leader and activist.

John Lewis fulfilled many key roles in the civil rights movement. In 1961, Lewis was one of 13 original Freedom Riders who challenged segregated facilities at interstate bus terminals in the South, facing horrific violence and bringing international attention to the civil rights movement. In 1963, Lewis was elected chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). That same year, Lewis was one of the "Big Six" leaders who helped organize the March on Washington, where he was the youngest speaker. In 1965, Lewis led the first of three Selma to Montgomery marches across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In an incident known as Bloody Sunday, state troopers and police attacked the marchers. Lewis and several others were severely injured at the hands of police. Lewis was elected to Congress in 1986 and served 17 terms in U.S. House of Representatives.

In September 2020, the District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) working group published its recommendations as to what District assets, including schools, should be removed, renamed, or contextualized. Among the group's recommendations, was that West Education Campus be renamed. Joseph Rodman West was a United States Senator, Union general in the United States Army, and chief executive of the District of Columbia. As a commander, he gave the order to torture and murder Apache chief Mangas Coloradas, who had come to meet with him to discuss terms of peace.

DCPS finds that John Lewis, a lifelong champion for justice, is a far superior role model for students in the nation's capital. Despite numerous attacks, injuries, and arrests, Lewis remained a devoted advocate of the civil rights movement and nonviolence. His legacy paved the way for the rich diversity of our school district. Therefore, I urge the Council to take prompt and favorable action on this legislation.

I am available to discuss any questions you may have regarding this matter. In order to facilitate a response to your questions, please have your staff contact Alyssa Noth, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, DC Public Schools, at [alyssa.noth@k12.dc.gov](mailto:alyssa.noth@k12.dc.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Muriel Bowser". The signature is stylized and written over the word "Sincerely,".

Muriel Bowser

Enclosure



  
Chairman Phil Mendelson  
at the request of the Mayor

AN ACT

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this act may be cited as the "John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021."

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) ("Act"), and notwithstanding section 422(a) of the Act (D.C. Official Code § 9-204.22(a)), the Council officially designates the school in Square 2806, Lot 0814, at 4300 13th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011 as John Lewis Elementary School.

Sec. 3. Transmittal.

The Council shall transmit a copy of this act, upon its effective date, to the Mayor, the District of Columbia Public Schools, and the Office of the Surveyor.

Sec. 4. 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. 5. Effective date.

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

**Testimony of Jonah Cherkis in support of Bill 24-339,  
John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Phil Mendelson, members of the Council, and all other distinguished guests. My name is Jonah Miles Cherkis. I am a 5th grade student here in Washington, D.C. and I am here today to testify in favor of renaming my school.

I think you should vote to change my school's name to John Lewis Elementary School and here are some reasons why. The first reason is because John Lewis was a man of peace and would not act in violence towards others, even if they were violent towards him, like when he was beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The second reason he would be a great person to name our school after is because, as a young man he organized many lunch counter sit-ins, and was the youngest speaker at the March on Washington. The third reason is he never gave up and tried to be the best person he could be, and he even joined the city council in Atlanta and served in the U.S. House of Representatives as a congressperson. Those are some of the many reasons why you should consider changing our school's name to John Lewis Elementary School. I think it would inspire a new generation of young people to get into Good Trouble, like John Lewis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**DC Council Committee of the Whole Consideration of Bill24-339**

**October 6, 2021**

**Testimony of Cathy Reilly of the Ward 4 Education Alliance**

I am here to testify in favor of Bill 24-339 changing the name of the current Joseph Rodman West School located in the 1300 block between Gallatin and Farragut Streets NW to DCPS John Lewis Elementary School. This school is my neighborhood school ; students can go from here to MacFarland Middle School and on to Theodore Roosevelt High School.

It is a jewel of a school and as they note on their website a compassionate community of critical thinkers and global citizens with more than 100 years of excellence in education.

John Lewis served in Congress for 17 consecutive terms living here in DC for a good part of every year since January of 1987.

I am grateful that the District has undertaken this effort to rename our public buildings to reflect our values. I also appreciate this process where we as a city through our elected representatives take this very seriously and consider the decision in this forum.

It is an honor and a responsibility for this school to carry the name of John Lewis. I believe they are up to it. These quotes from his recent book *Carry On* epitomizes why his name and legacy are an excellent choice for one of our DCPS public school and in particular for this school that welcomes all and works to expand the horizons of each child. The staff and parents have been compassionate and active members of our Ward 4 Education Alliance, always with a wider view of the needs of other schools and the wider community.

Quotes from John Lewis: I say to Immigrants: *Welcome home America wants and needs you. What makes America special is that we respect our differences- and we are better when we listen to and grow with one another.*

*Art softens the heart and mind so that you can appeal to the better angels of those who are reading, listening, and watching your work. Art brings us together because it is a reminder of our common humanity. We need artists and writers now to help create more empathy in the world. To teach us what we may not yet know, to take us on adventures, to share points of view; to learn about history and read our stories – so that we can never forget. To make us laugh and to bring us to tears, WE need books available to children so they can easily learn about the world, and they can follow their imaginations. Children who read maintain their sense of wonder and ask questions- necessary questions- that make us examine why things are the way they are. Page 128*

The new building is beautiful and teeming with child energy and enthusiasm. I Hope the new name can go up quickly

## **COW Hearing: School Renamings (Wilson and Lewis) Testimony**

By Abeo Folade Venzor

October 6, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the DC Council on why my 6th grade West Elementary School, where my two young children ages 5 and 7 now enjoy a modern learning environment with state of the art technologies, should be renamed in honor of John Lewis.

John Lewis, one of the leaders of the civil rights movement and a member of congress for more than 33 years died in July 2020 at the age of 80 from pancreatic cancer. In 1986, Lewis was elected to the House of Representatives from the district that includes much of Atlanta Georgia, becoming only the second African-American to represent Georgia in Congress since the post Civil Rights Reconstruction era.

I remember this famous quote by Lewis: "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just: say something, do something. Get in trouble, good trouble, necessary trouble."

Lewis continued to stand up and cause the good trouble he advocated throughout his life. Lewis started his civil rights journey as the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) from 1963 to 1966. At age 23, Lewis was also the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington where Dr. King gave his "I Have A Dream" speech. Even when Lewis was diagnosed with stage four cancer, he continued to work, to vote in the House of Representatives and to speak out as the Black Lives Matter movement and protests began in spring of 2019.

Reflecting on my first year as a 6th grade student at West Elementary after transferring from Oyster bilingual school, I remember being called "white" because I enunciated my words and I knew this was not right, not fair. I was labeled "white" for being intelligent essentially. As a 12 year old, I was confused by this brainwashing of African American children and stood up to it getting in good trouble, by letting my light shine. I went from struggling with D's and F's in a bilingual school not knowing the language, to earning straight A's at West. Even though my peers in 6th grade were slow to accept me as one of their own and "black enough" to meet the bar, I kept excelling at West smiling bright next to my award certificates. I also was raised from birth and through 3rd grade in a Afro-centric educational environment at Watoto Nationhouse School in DC where we didn't see the color of one's skin because essentially we ALL came from Africa.

Leaders like John Lewis encouraged me to keep succeeding in life, and I knew doing well academically was my best opportunity for advancement. I went on to excel at Benjamin Banneker High as class Salutatorian in the class of 1998 and then graduate magna cum laude from Stanford University in California with an international relations major and Latin American Studies and Spanish double minors. It all started from humble roots in a "Black brady bunch"

9-member family where our DC native parents instilled in each of us the importance of getting a good education and giving back to our community.

Growing up in DC at my coming of age in the 1990s, I was exposed to the good, bad and ugly of urban life. Yes, even in uptown NW DC, I saw poverty, crime, drugs, and dilapidated houses in my neighborhood. And in the old, dark, and open floor plan at the former West Elementary, I could clearly hear other students being disciplined and interrupting my lessons. I tried hard to ignore the disrespect from my peers. Fast forward, I was overjoyed to hear that my old 6th grade school was finally being renovated; it was long overdue. The new school is beautiful and naming it a new name seemed only fitting. The community's election of Congressman John Lewis as the new name for my old 6th grade elementary school brought tears to my eyes.

Here is a man, who like Martin (Luther King Jr), Malcolm (X) and Marcus (Garvey), spoke up against injustices in America and made a positive difference on all humanity. I am indebted to John Lewis' strong legacy of freedom fighting. Back in 2011, President Barack Obama awarded John Lewis the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, writing that "He [Lewis] loved this country so much that he risked his life and his blood so that it might live up to its promise. And through the decades, he not only gave all of himself to the cause of freedom and justice but inspired generations that followed to try to live up to his example." Lewis gave me a "voice" and inspiration so I can speak up to you all this morning.

Respectfully,

Abeo F. Venzor

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DCPS)**



Public Hearing  
on

Bill 24-286, August Wilson High School Designation Act of 2021  
Bill 24-339, John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021

Testimony of  
Shanita Burney  
Engagement and Partnerships Officer of DC Public Schools

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and staff. I am Shanita Burney, Engagement and Partnerships Officer of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). I am proud to share that I'm in my 13<sup>th</sup> year at DCPS, a District resident, and have a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Roosevelt High School. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today and thank you for your interest in and support for our work.

DC Public Schools operates over 100 schools, and our mission requires us to deliver education in a school environment that provides the conditions for student success, close the achievement gap, and ensure schools are community anchors that reflect the communities they serve. Schools are named after people, places, or services provided at that location. School names serve to identify the school community, establish a legacy, and develop a sense of pride among students and families in their schools and the traditions of DCPS. Some of these names, however, have perpetuated a history that is not reflective of the values of our school communities and city at large. In summer 2020, Mayor Bowser formed the District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions ([DCFACES](#)) Working Group. She charged the group with evaluating named DC government-owned facilities and making recommendations as to what, if any, actions need to be taken if the person the facility is named for is inconsistent with DC values and in some way encouraged the oppression of African Americans and other communities of color or contributed to our long history of systemic racism. In the group's [executive summary](#), released in early September 2020, they recommended renaming 21 DCPS schools and school buildings, including Woodrow Wilson High School and West Elementary School.

### **Community Engagement**

DCPS intends to carry out the 21 name changes over the next four to five years for schools whose namesakes are not reflective of current DCPS values. Any individual for whom a DC Public School is to be named must have made a significant contribution to society and must exemplify DCPS' mission, vision and values. The individual must not have enslaved other humans, supported the institution of slavery, furthered systemic racism, supported the oppression of persons of color and/or women, been a member of any supremacist organization, or committed any acts that violate the DC Human Rights Act. In this process, DCPS understands that community engagement is crucial at every step.

Thus, there were similar public engagement processes for both Wilson and West. These processes follow the public engagement strategy that DCPS employs for school renaming. The public engagement included an online nomination form for the new school names, which was shared with school staff, students, families, alumni, community groups, citywide listservs, and via social media. DCPS representatives also attended several stakeholder meetings, including Parent Teacher Student Organization meetings (PTSO) and Local School Advisory Team Meeting (LSAT), and met with Student Government Association (SGA) members to discuss the name change process, share the nomination form, and answer questions. A group of DCPS and school stakeholders were selected to vet the nominated names and decided on a short list to be published for final public input. The public input form was shared through the same channels as the nominations form and directly with individuals who submitted a nomination. Both forms received substantial amount of community input. Through this process, DCPS supported and engaged these schools' community members and considered their input in the decision-making process. At the same time, this process empowered all members of the community – but especially students – to look closely at their school's history and community identity.



## **Woodrow Wilson**

Wilson's situation was unique because there had been ongoing public discussion about changing the name, which had broad support among stakeholders, including current students and families, staff members, alumni, the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC), and the broader DC community. Woodrow Wilson's racist legacy and policies of segregation acutely carried out against Black federal employees in the District, and particularly Black residents of Reno City, where the school now sits, make him an unseemly, continued namesake for the school and do not reflect our city's values. There were over 2,000 nomination submissions and feedback from over 6,000 individuals on the Public Input survey in Fall 2020. From the seven finalists, August Wilson received the most votes of those who indicated a preference – 29%. The proposed rename from Woodrow Wilson High School to August Wilson High School honors the Pulitzer and Tony award-winning playwright who chronicled the African American experience in the 20th Century.

August Wilson's ten plays, together entitled The American Century Cycle, have graced the stages of Washington, D.C. for decades. His work is part of DCPS' high school curriculum, allowing our scholars to explore the timeless themes represented in his words and characters. The August Wilson Legacy strongly holds Mr. Wilson's words as an important instrument in the affirmation of our humanity, in this changing, and often challenging world.

## **West**

In the case of West, Joseph R. West, the school's namesake, is found to have ordered the torture and murder of an Apache chief, prompting the decision to change the school's name. There were 140 nomination submissions and feedback from over 600 individuals on the public input survey in spring 2021. DCPS and school stakeholders met multiple times in March 2020 after the public survey was launched to decide on six final names for additional public input. From the six finalists, John Lewis received the most votes of those who indicated a preference – 31%. Survey results indicated John Lewis Elementary School as the overall preferred name and the most popular among almost all respondent subgroups. The proposed rename from West Elementary School to John Lewis Elementary School honors the legacy of a longtime Georgia congressman and champion of civil and human rights and civic engagement. Congressman Lewis was a leader of the civil rights movement, during which time he suffered arrest and police brutality, and he helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington. Throughout his long career in public service, Congressman Lewis was also a staunch supporter of DC statehood, cosponsoring legislation to make Washington, DC the fifty-first state every term he served in Congress. Known for powerful speeches, he advocated for getting into "good trouble" all his life. Congressman Lewis was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011. Lewis's extraordinary life provides lessons for activists today on how to confront racial violence, forge productive alliances and transform American democracy.

## **Moving Forward**

DC Public Schools will continue our commitment to ensuring that the names of our schools reflect the mission and values of our community. We're proud to celebrate and honor the legacy of the late Congressman John Lewis and the legacy of the award-winning African American Playwright August Wilson. At DCPS, where a majority of our school leaders and students, and nearly half of our teachers, identify as Black, we are committed to ensuring that the names we

call our schools reflect our values, our community, and our commitment to social justice. DCPS is committed to diversity and recognizes the barriers faced by marginalized and underrepresented groups, and we will honor these groups throughout our renaming process.

I want to close by recognizing the contribution of our school communities through their advocacy and dialogue at this pivotal moment in the District's history. I'm happy to answer any questions you have at this time.

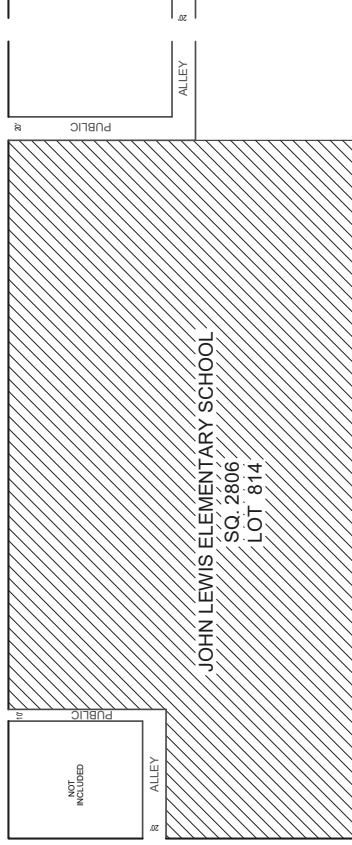
**NAMING OF A SCHOOL**  
**SQUARE 2806**  
**LOT 814**

PURSUANT TO D.C. LAW \_\_\_\_\_ EFFECTIVE \_\_\_\_\_,  
 THE AREA SHOWN THIS: [ZZZZ] IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AS  
 "JOHN LEWIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL".

OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR, D.C.  
 \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

I CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAT IS CORRECT AND IS RECORDED.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 SURVEYOR, D.C.

GALLATIN STREET, N.W.



FARRAGUT STREET, N.W.

**SURVEYOR'S OFFICE, D.C.**

Made for: DDOT  
 Drawn by: A.S. Checked by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Record and compilation by: B. MYERS  
 Recorded at: \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ SR-02-0000  
 Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet File No. 22-1111


Government of the District of Columbia  
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Fitzroy Lee  
Interim Chief Financial Officer

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Phil Mendelson  
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

**FROM:** Fitzroy Lee  
Interim Chief Financial Officer 

**DATE:** June 3, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Impact Statement – John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021

**REFERENCE:** Draft Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on May 24, 2021

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**Conclusion**

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2021 budget and proposed fiscal year 2022 budget through fiscal year 2025 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

**Background**

The District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) Working Group published recommendations<sup>1</sup> in August of 2020 on what District assets, including schools, should be renamed to align with the District's values. Included in those recommendations is renaming West Education Campus.<sup>2</sup> The bill officially redesignates West Education Campus as the John Lewis Elementary School.

**Financial Plan Impact**

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2021 budget and proposed fiscal year 2022 budget through fiscal year 2025 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://mayor.dc.gov/dcfaces>

<sup>2</sup> Located at 4300 13th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20011.

The Honorable Phil Mendelson

FIS: "John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021," Draft Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on May 24, 2021

West Education Campus is currently in the process of receiving a full modernization. The fiscal year 2021 capital budget includes \$35.9 million to perform this modernization. Costs associated with purchasing new signage at the school are already included in the project's capital budget.

7 A BILL  
8

9  
10 24-339  
11

12  
13 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
14  
15  
16

17 To officially designate the school in square 2806, Lot 0814, at 1335 Farragut Pl NW,  
18 Washington, DC 20011 as John Lewis Elementary School.

19 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
20 act may be cited as the “John Lewis Elementary School Designation Act of 2021”.

21 Sec. 2. Pursuant to sections 401 and 422 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition  
22 Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code §§ 9-  
23 204.01 and 9-204.22) (“Act”), and notwithstanding section 422(a) of the Act (D.C. Official Code  
24 § 9-204.22(a)), the Council officially designates the Square 2806, Lot 0814, at 1335 Farragut  
25 Place, NW, Washington, DC 20011 as “John Lewis Elementary School”.

26 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

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

30 Sec. 4. Effective date.

31 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the  
32 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as

33 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December  
34 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of  
35 Columbia Register.