

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
on  
Agency Performance Oversight:  
District of Columbia Public Schools  
on  
Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Robert Henderson. I am here in my individual capacity as Ward 5 member of the State Board of Education, and I am not representing the views of the Board as a whole.

I want to acknowledge and celebrate the incredibly difficult work done by DCPS teachers, staff, and administrators and the successes and progress they have made. However, I do not think that progress justifies a “we’re on the right track, therefore stay the course” approach.

I will begin with two “big picture” areas for performance improvement and close with some more specific asks.

**Supporting Teachers**

A year ago, my testimony for DCPS oversight included a push to negotiate a contract with the Washington Teachers Union. I am glad that has been accomplished. I would hope that the contract not be allowed to lapse again in the future. I now call on DCPS to begin working with teachers to develop a fair, constructive, growth-oriented evaluation system to replace IMPACT. I also ask DCPS to consider more robust teacher induction and mentoring.

**Special Education**

DCPS, along with other LEAs and education agencies, simply must do better to serve students with disabilities. As I testified last fall, the all-too-common story of families of students with special needs is that they had to fight for every service they got for their student, often succeeding only after engaging an advocate or lawyer, and they have to continue to fight for follow-through on the student’s IEP. I ask DCPS to give serious consideration to the recommendations contained in the report of the D.C. Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued in December.

Additionally, based on testimony before the State Board as well as concerns raised directly to me by constituents, I ask DCPS to:

- Assess and revise where appropriate the policies and protocols that prevented a more robust and thorough response to the discovery of ammunition at Ludlow Taylor last fall.
- Recommission the air quality monitors already installed in DCPS schools and warehoused air filtration devices. Work with DGS to improve HVAC systems and indoor

air quality. Air quality is not only a health issue, but also an attendance and achievement issue.

- Commit to digital equity by keeping devices on lifecycle at one-to-one ratio for grades 3-12 and ensuring high-speed internet access in all DCPS facilities.

I recognize both that some of these asks that I am making of DCPS require funding and that some must be done in collaboration with or supported by other agencies. I look forward to advocating for budgetary and interagency support in subsequent hearings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education