

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**on**  
**Agency Performance Oversight:**  
**DME**  
**on**  
**Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.**

Hello 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.

My testimony will speak to the performance of the Deputy Mayor for Education and is based in large part on issues that have come to me as representative of Ward 5 residents and school communities.

One of the three “major functions” of the DME is providing oversight and support for several education-related agencies, including DCPS and the Public Charter School Board. As such, I request the DME’s attention to the issues I raised last week in the oversight hearing for those agencies, including improved services for students with disabilities and the responsiveness and accountability of charter school boards.

A second of the three major functions of the DME is managing interagency and cross-sector coordination.

In the aftermath of the snow and ice storm in January, DCPS schools seemed to receive support in clearing school grounds and parking lots from DGS, so credit to DME for any role in that coordination. I take it that public charter schools are responsible for contracting snow clearance for their schools, presumably with their facilities funds (I don’t know if that is correct?). Ward 5 school communities in both sectors, however, struggled with delayed clearance of adjacent streets, making access difficult, even as schools were reopened. I am happy to advocate for school communities, and I requested help in any way that I could think of from 311 requests to social media messages but do so with limited to no efficacy. The DME’s help in coordinating communication and service delivery from city agencies to school communities could go a long way in addressing such challenges.

Over the past year, parents, teachers, and staff from Ward 5 schools of both sectors and school leaders in the charter sector have been pleading for information, guidance, and support from the executive regarding immigration enforcement and local-federal agency coordination. Parents have organized and written to the executive and received no

response. On behalf of our constituents, the State Board has requested a meeting with the DME to learn how we could support our school communities with the best guidance and information at the start of the school year. That request was declined. Later, we made recommendations for protecting students while maintaining instruction and learning. Those recommendations received no response or follow-through. School leaders and families have been left to navigate incredibly difficult circumstances largely on their own. They have persevered courageously and admirably to protect and support their school communities. Clear guidance, communication, support, and answers would mean a lot to these leaders, educators, and families. I think they deserve it.

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

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education