

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**on**

**Deputy Mayor of Education**

**Office of the State Superintendent of Education**

**District of Columbia Public Schools**

**on**

**Thursday April 4, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson. 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.

We ask a lot of our schools. And by that, I mean we ask a lot of the people who work there. The teachers, janitors, food service workers, principals, behavior techs, and more. We are asking them to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy, make students safer, make big gains in math and reading test scores, in many ways we are asking them to end poverty.

And with this proposed budget, we are asking them to do all these things and more, with less. And we will hold them no less accountable for the results.

I simply do not think that we can expect our schools to achieve all that we are asking of them if we don't provide them with more resources with which to do so.

We've been told that it is a tight budget year; but we, or at least you, still have choices to make. With all due recognition of the difficulty of the choices before you, I humbly ask that you make public education for the city's youth a top priority.

For the remainder of my time, I will comment on a few aspects of each agency's budget and highlight Ward 5 needs.

*Office of the State Superintendent of Education*

I appreciate the budgeting of \$500,000 for Educator Wellness grants to support wellness and retention. I join my Ward 2 colleague Allister Chang in appreciation for the \$2 million for high-quality literacy instruction materials and ask the council to fund the remainder of the literacy task force's recommendations, including stipends for teacher literacy training, and literacy coaches.

I ask why OSSE would eliminate the Community Schools Program. And I ask how OSSE will improve student transportation service and communication with their proposed budget.

*Deputy Mayor of Education*

I appreciate continued investment in Out of School Time grants.

I ask that as we seek to safely engage students after school that we expand this investment and create pathways to support student-led OST organizations.

*District of Columbia Public Schools*

I ask for HVAC upgrades at Langdon, McKinley, Noyes, and Phelps; cafeteria renovation at Langdon; roof replacements at Luke C. Moore, Noyes, and Wheatley; and renovation of the broadcast building at McKinley for use as an engineering lab.

*Ward 5*

In Ward 5, we have education campuses that share resources across elementary schools that elsewhere are funded individually.

In Ward 5, we have a school that has taken in more than 100 multilingual learners in the course of the school year without additional resources to serve them.

In Ward 5, we have early childcare workers who provide invaluable care and early learning opportunities. These workers deserve equitable wages. Please reject the raiding of the pay equity fund.

In Ward 5, we have children and families who rely on these caretakers to provide a foundation for academic success.

In Ward 5, we have families that rely on the specific services offered at St. Coletta. Please fund St. Coletta's operational budget gap.

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

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education