



Washington Teachers' Union

Amplifying the Voice of DC Teachers

Elizabeth A. Davis, President

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The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable David Grosso
Chairman, Education Committee
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

July 17, 2020

WTU Statement on Re-envisioning Safety in School Communities

Dear Chairman Mendelson & Chairman Grosso,

Our schools provide vital nutrition, physical safety, mental health, and critical developmental supports to tens of thousands of students across the District every day. In light of the continued unrest in our country and calls to reform policing practices, it is evident that it is time our city embraces change to, as DCPS' mission states, ensure that every school guarantees students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.

The Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) supports maintaining direct DCPS authority over contract security and school resource officer contracts. We further believe DCPS needs to reduce these contracts and reallocate funding to invest in the social-emotional health of our school communities. Our goal as a city should be to reducing policing and to create school environments that incorporate a spectrum of strategies to promote safety and reduce harm within our school communities. WTU teachers are asking that we re-envision school safety measures and that funds be reinvested into schools in the following ways:

- Invest in additional school-based positions focused on student wellbeing including counselors, social workers, and psychologists, meeting or exceeding ratios for national best practices
- Expand and improve in-school programming to support students' mental health
- Build staff and teacher capacity by providing professional development opportunities with leave coverage and wellness resources; Implement restorative justice and trauma-informed practice trainings for all stakeholders
- Ensure national best practices are implemented and followed for the selection, training and deployment of School Resource Officers (SROs) and security

personnel until DCPS has reimagined the support and protection of our students and school communities.

- Invest in violence interrupter programs
- Provide high-quality community engagement and community-building events based on school community needs
- Expand and improve after-school programs

We look forward to working with you and DCPS leadership to reimagine the ways that we support students and staff in our schools while ensuring the safety of our community.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Davis, *President*
Washington Teachers' Union

CC: Members of the DC Council