



Washington Teachers' Union

Amplifying the Voice of DC Teachers

Elizabeth A. Davis, President

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Washington DC Teachers Union Releases Statement on Mayor Bowser's Plan to Reopen Schools to In-person Learning

Reiterates Union calls for transparency and public engagement

WASHINGTON — Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) President Elizabeth Davis the following statement on the Mayor's decision to reopen schools to in-person learning on November 9:

"While our teachers want to return to our classrooms and resume in-person learning, we can only do so when it is safe and when the Mayor and Chancellor have come to the table to work with us and other Union leaders to ensure the safety of our students, school-based staff, and communities.

"The Mayor and Chancellor Ferebee have failed to share the details of what COVID 19 safety measures have been instituted in *each* school. Their secrecy is a major part of our concern. In a survey of teachers the WTU conducted last week, less than 3% believed our schools will be safe to reopen for in-person learning on or before November 9. Fewer said that DCPS has shared detailed information on proposed schedules and staffing plans. Nothing announced today will change these numbers.

On our brief tour on Friday of schools that are currently open to students, I saw no evidence of progress being made to ready the buildings for in-person teaching and learning before our group was asked to leave the school. Signage was virtually non-existent and needed upgrades to restrooms and installation of hand sanitizing equipment were not complete. Teachers, rightly, feel as if they are playing Hunger Games with the Mayor and Chancellor. If our schools are truly ready or in-person learning, as the Mayor and Chancellor suggest, then why would they not want parents and school workers to see the evidence for themselves?

"In recent days, we've seen how quickly a public gathering can turn into a 'super-spreader' event. Research and news articles continue to document growing concerns around student exposure to this virus and its spread in school setting. We ask that the Mayor and Chancellor work with us to accomplish the following before they move forward with plans to reopen our schools to in-person learning:

- Agree to a safety checklist for school facilities. The WTU has adopted [this checklist](#) from national best practices to ensure our school buildings are equipped and safe for students, teachers, and school staff. We also want to ensure public reporting of any deficiencies and a public process for ensuring conditions are corrected. In partnership with Local School Advisory Teams (LSATs) and all Unions represented in our schools, tours shall be scheduled and approval of conditions for reopening must be agreed upon by all partners;
- Agree to a Memorandum of Agreement that covers school operations and develop specific staffing plans and guidance for teachers at each school, without compromising teacher privacy. While we appreciate the decision to extend the deadline for staff to respond to the DCPS staff survey, we believe the survey should be rescinded due to technical issues and concerns with provisions requiring teachers to share personal health information;
- Work in partnership with the Union to establish clear and specific protocols for cleaning and sharing information on COVID exposure in school communities. Multiple school –based staff have entered buildings since the school year began, yet school communities have not been notified; and
- Provide details on the purchase and distribution of PPE for school communities and clear, agreed upon, protocols for their uses in a school facility.

“The WTU will stay the course on ensuring that teachers, parents and other education stakeholders are provided the evidence that the schools are ready for safe return. Teachers, students, other school workers and our students are not disposable pawns to be used as a part of an experiment.”

Last Friday, President Davis joined Council of School Officers (CSO) President Richard Jackson, and Walakewon Blegay from the DC Nurses Association (DCNA) in visiting a school. During their visit to Cardozo Education Campus, school officials asked them to leave because the school was “unsafe.” The Union leaders, who represent the majority of school-based staff, were not allowed to enter the other schools, Noyes ES and Phelps ACE HS, they’d planned to visit. On their visit, the Union leaders saw limited evidence of an investment in signage and improvements to the physical school plan designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our school system.

The WTU has created a [CHECKLIST FOR SAFELY REOPENING SCHOOLS](#) outlining the protections that need to be in-place before opening our buildings to students. We encourage school communities to [REPORT UNSAFE CONDITIONS HERE.](#)

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The Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) represents more than 5,000 active and retired teachers. It is dedicated to social and educational justice for the students of the District of Columbia and to improving the quality of support, resources, compensation and working conditions for the public servants and proud teachers who educate our students in D.C. Public Schools.