



Washington Teachers' Union

Amplifying the Voice of DC Teachers

Elizabeth A. Davis, President

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Washington DC Teachers' Release Statement on Reports of an Agreement to Reopen Schools to In-Person Learning *Calls on Council of the District of Columbia to Open Upcoming Hearing to Public Witnesses.*

WASHINGTON — The Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) President Elizabeth Davis released the following statement regarding today following reports that the Union had agreed to a framework for reopening schools to in-person learning.

"It has been reported that after weeks of intense negotiations with DC Public Schools (DCPS) representatives, the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) agreed to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with DCPS concerning the reopening of our schools. The report was premature.

"The WTU has been negotiating with DCPS on a memorandum to spell out the conditions for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year or through the end of the COVID-19 pandemic health emergency. However, a full agreement is not yet in place.

"The MOA is a framework for a path forward to reopen our schools. Teachers recognized that many individual students, especially those furthest from opportunity, need additional supports and that distance learning, despite the growth teachers have shown in its implementation, does not work for all students. We hope to return to our schools in a smart, data-driven manner that protects our students, teachers and communities from COVID-19. However, we can only do so when adequate protections are in place.

"The WTU and DCPS are not in agreement on a proposed school building readiness checklist of items that need to be in place for our schools to be safe before students and teachers are required to return to in-person learning. Further, we believe that the public must have a voice in determining whether the precautions called for in the school building readiness checklist are in place, that there shall be public reporting of violations, and a clear process for the community to ensure that any violations of the facility checklist are immediately corrected. In the absence of immediate corrections to shortcomings in our school environments, it is our belief that school buildings should be closed in order to protect our community.

"The MOA also does not signal that the Washington Teachers' Union believes it is safe to reopen our schools to in-person learning at this time nor does it signal our agreement with the plan DCPS has presented to reopen to in-person learning for 7,000 students while opening our school buildings to a total of 21,000 students in November. The WTU continues to pursue resolution on its Unfair Labor Practice complaint filed on July 8, 2020 with the Public Employee Relations Board challenging DCPS's failure to bargain over the reopening of schools, including its implementation of the "Staffing Priority Assignment Options" teachers were sent on September 29th.

"The WTU will continue to work in good faith to facilitate a safe return to our in-person learning. We will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our city's students, school staff, and communities as we do so.

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“The WTU is pleased that the Council of the District of Columbia, Committee of the Whole and the Committee on Education, have scheduled a joint Public Roundtable on DCPS’s plans to reopen schools. However, we are greatly disappointed to learn that only representatives from the Deputy Mayor for Education and DC Public Schools will be invited to speak. We believe that those most impacted by this decision must be heard and call for the Council to open the October 23rd Public Roundtable to public witnesses.”

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The 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.