

November 2, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Muriel E. Bowser
Mayor, City of Washington
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
District of Columbia
Washington, D.C. 20004
eom@dc.gov

Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee
Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 First Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002
lewis.ferebee@k12.dc.gov

RE: The DCPS LSAT Assembly Stands in Solidarity with School Administrators, Principals, Faculty, Teachers and Students

Mayor Bowser and Chancellor Ferebee,

Thank you! We acknowledge and thank you, Mayor Bowser, and Chancellor Ferebee for making the right decision to not open elementary schools and to facilitate virtual learning on Nov. 9. We, the LSAT Assembly, consisting of Local School Advisory Teams (LSAT), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) and Parent Teacher Student Organizations (PTSO), throughout the District of Columbia continues to stand in solidarity with, and in support of our school administrators, principals, faculty, teachers, and students who have cogently expressed a myriad of concerns relating to the composition of the Reopen Strong School Plan. We sustain our call upon you to postpone this plan until at least Term 3. We empathize with providing the option of in-person learning to the most vulnerable population of students throughout the District of Columbia. However, the severity of flaws in this plan grossly undermines reopening the schools safely and responsibly. Only when it is safe is not a mere slogan, it is the **vital prerequisite** to reopening schools.

Do be reminded the purpose and function of the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) *are a key lever to increasing transparency at DCPS and ensuring decisions affecting school communities are made collaboratively with the help of a diverse group of school stakeholders. As such, every District of Columbia public school must have a functioning LSAT that is constituted according to the LSAT Guidelines, and that conducts the business outlined therein.* [DCPS website] The meaningful involvement of LSATs and PTAs/PTOs/PTSOs will help in shifting fear, anxiety, and apprehension to parental engagement, understanding, buy-in and support. It would eradicate the contention and discord to garner cohesion and resolution. This is what we are offering and hope to get started immediately. It is incumbent upon us to use every resource at our disposal to make this plan a solid one.

In analysis of the Reopen Schools Plan, here are some salient issues that require adjusting:

- **Inadequate Facilities Readiness Plan-** Before COVID ravished the city, there were numerous schools throughout the District of Columbia where the HVAC system was inoperable and in dire need of repair. There are schools with windows that do not open and are inaccessible. The issue of HVAC remediation is essential and must be addressed. Principals' and school administrators cannot continue to be ignored and silenced regarding the very facilities in which they work. Where in-person learning takes place must be safe with adequate ventilation.
- **Major disruption of middle and high school staffing-** According to your letter dated Nov. 2, to DCPS parents, "*We have heard feedback from many in our community... and will begin by opening CARE classrooms as soon as staffing plans are confirmed.*" We are ready to help with the staffing plans as not to disrupt and cripple our middle and high schools. The current plan is convoluted and not sustainable nor complementary to the entire DCPS system.
- **Elusive COVID-testing protocols-** COVID testing, protocols must be reliable, effective, clearly defined and stringently executed as a routine to ensure safety. It is incumbent that we establish comprehensive school building safety standards with the same specificity as fire codes, occupancy standards for housing, and sanitation standards for restaurants. Anything less, is unacceptable.

Since April, DC Health and other experts have predicted and recommended the city prepare for a second surge of COVID-19 spread in the District of Columbia. We are deeply concerned that the Reopen School Plan, in its current state, will make our schools COVID hot spots and contribute to setting back the efforts of flattening the curve. According to the city's [reopening metrics](#), if cases spike >1.2% transmission pushes us back to Phase 1, where school cannot reopen. **We want to thwart such a setback.**

By shifting this reopen effort to Term 3, postponement would empower each LSAT and PTA/PTO/PTSO to work to strengthen the proposed Facility Checklist to ensure a solid completion prior to school's reopening. We would work with WTU to ensure adequate health and safety guidelines and work to publicize metrics and documentation of evidence for reopening schools for the duration of in-person learning and when necessary to close schools. Health and safety protocols that are clearly understood prior to reopening are critical to full implementation of adequate protection of all affected.

We are concerned parents, elected, but more importantly vested to ensure safety, equity, and quality of the DCPS education experience of our children. We hope that you will listen, engage, and work with us to carry out our duties as LSATs and PTAs/PTOs/PTSOs throughout the District of Columbia.

Respectfully,

The LSAT Assembly