



Washington Teachers' Union

Amplifying the Voice of DC Teachers

Elizabeth A. Davis, President

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February 9, 2021

Muriel Bowser, Mayor
District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW # 406
Washington, DC 20004

Dr. Lewis Ferebee, Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Mayor Bowser, Chancellor Ferebee -

Educators across our city are determined to help our students succeed and thrive. However, we remain in a global health pandemic. This reality was brought into stark reality with the loss of a DC teacher and WTU member, Ms. Helen Marie White this weekend, who taught cosmetology at Ballou STAY. Ms. White joined more than 950 of our friends and neighbors who have succumbed to this deadly disease.

We are educators and we believe that our schools can be safely reopened with the proper protections in place. Unfortunately, the number of cases in our schools over the past few weeks gives us great concern that the District is putting the health of our city's educators and students at risk. In the time since DCPS began its reopening with CARE Classrooms, the city has reported nearly 50 exposures in school settings. Last week, during the first days of our city's return to in-person learning, five classrooms were forced to convert to 100% distance learning due to COVID exposures.

While we are thankful for your efforts to invest in the safety of our facilities and to prioritize vaccinations for educators returning to in-person learning, including ensuring that educators will begin receiving their 2nd dose of the vaccine on February 15th, these efforts alone will not prevent the spread of this deadly disease in our schools if all safety protocols are not followed. As our educators and students have entered our school facilities, we've received numerous reports of violations of protocols outlined in the MOA and safety protocols, including an instance of an educator being ordered to remain at school despite self-reporting symptoms.

District teachers are ready to partner with you, to replace lost learning through expanded summer learning options and to ensure we can bring 100% of our students back into classroom settings for the 2021-2022 school year. However, we cannot replace the loss of a loved one and we respectfully ask you to:

1. Ensure all DC Health and CDC COVID-19 guidelines and all provisions of the December 2020 MOA between DC Public School and the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) are strictly adhered;
2. Establish a Situation Room to identify and respond to emergency issues requiring responses within 24 hours, WTU wants to work with DCPS jointly on this;
3. Establish clear metrics for the level of community spread that will result in a system-wide school closure;
4. Require any school setting where an exposure has been confirmed to close immediately for at least 24 hours to allow for a deep cleaning;
5. Establish and publish clear metrics for classroom and school closures which require schools to remain closed for more than 24 hours; and
6. Ensure all educators, families and community members are notified within 24 hours of any possible exposure to COVID-19.

To move forward, we need to rebuild trust and we ask that you partner with us on these efforts to put the health of our students and school communities first.

Sincerely,



Randi Weingarten, *President*
American Federation of Teachers



Elizabeth A. Davis, *President*
Washington Teachers' Union

CC: Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education
Shana Young, Interim Superintendent, Office of the State Superintendent of Education
Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, Director, Department of Health
Phil Mendelson, Chairman, DC Council
Anita Bonds, At-Large Representative, DC Council
Christina Henderson, At-Large Representative, DC Council
Elissa Silverman, At-Large Representative, DC Council
Robert White, At-Large Representative, DC Council
Brienne Nadeau, Ward 1 Representative, DC Council
Brooke Pinto, Ward 2 Representative, DC Council
Mary Cheh, Ward 3 Representative, DC Council
Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4 Representative, DC Council
Kenyan McDuffie, Ward 5 Representative, DC Council
Charles Allen, Ward 6 Representative, DC Council
Vincent Gray, Ward 7 Representative, DC Council
Trayon White, Ward 8 Representative, DC Council