



News Release

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AFT and WTU Presidents Review Health Protections for DC Students and Teachers

Call on D.C. Public Schools to Reverse Decision to Cut Staffing in at Least 36 Schools

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The presidents of the American Federation of Teachers and the Washington Teachers' Union toured McKinley Technology High School today with District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor Lewis Ferebee and McKinley parent leaders to showcase the work accomplished to reopen safely to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The leaders also expressed dismay over proposed budget and staff cuts.

"Trust is built through hard work and I know that many across D.C. can learn from the hard work that the McKinley Tech and other communities have put in by working together to make our school buildings safe for teachers and students," WTU President Jacqueline Pogue Lyons said. "We must recognize that we are still in a pandemic and that many, including nearly all of our students, will not be vaccinated when our schools are fully open. We must continue our work to ensure our facilities are safe."

In the coming days, Mayor Bowser is expected to release her FY2022 (School Year 2021-22) budget. While the Mayor is expected to increase education spending by 3.6% per student, at least 36 schools are facing staffing cuts as students return to in-person learning.

"I hope Mayor Bowser and Chancellor Ferebee are working to close the gaps in our school budgets," Pogue Lyons added. "Our city has persistent and growing achievement gaps. It is not enough to do more of the same. We must tackle the structural inequities in our system. No student should be returning to a school that has less after the pandemic."

AFT President Randi Weingarten urged investment in schools over cuts.

"As we continue to expand in-person learning in the District during this pandemic, it's important to lift up examples of places that are getting all aspects and complexities right, including student engagement, collaboration and the safety guardrails, like McKinley Tech," Weingarten said. "It comes down to relationships and resources and while the District has worked with the union in constructive ways to make in-person learning a reality, talk of budget cuts is deeply alarming. We'll need more staff to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of kids, not less. After this difficult year, we need to keep working together on solutions, not cuts."

Today's facility tour was a part of the WTU's efforts to ensure the continued safety of our school buildings for students and staff. The WTU and DCPS have established a "Situation Room" to address any concerns raised by educators or community members. The WTU asks anyone who believes a school building is out of compliance with established safety protocols to complete our Reporting Form at: <http://bit.ly/WTUSafeOpenings>.

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.