

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DCPS)**



Public Hearing on

**Bill 25-350, MacArthur High School Designation Act of 2023
Bill 25-473, School Facilities Sponsorship and Naming Amendment Act of 2023
Bill 25-539, Shirley Chisholm Elementary School Redesignation Act of 2023**

**Testimony of
Sarah Parker
Officer, Engagement and Partnerships**

**Before the
Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman**

November 28th, 2023
11:00 AM

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Councilmembers, staff, and members of the public. I am Sarah Parker and I lead the District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS's) Engagement and Partnerships Office. Our office leads DCPS's strategy for partnering with families, communities, partners, and staff at the district and school level to improve outcomes for every student by fostering collaborative and authentic relationships between schools and the greater DC community. DCPS takes the engagement around school names seriously. It is such an important part of a school's identity, culture, and place in the community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on three bills under consideration by the Council of DC – Bill 25-539, the "Shirley Chisholm Elementary School Redesignation Act of 2023," Bill 25-350, the "MacArthur High School Designation Act of 2023," and Bill 25-473, the "School Facilities Sponsorship and Naming Amendment Act of 2023."

First, Bill 25-539, the "Shirley Chisholm Elementary School Redesignation Act of 2023." DCPS wholeheartedly supports this legislation and the renaming of Tyler Elementary School to Shirley Chisholm Elementary School. I want to express my profound gratitude to Principal Brann, the students, staff, and parents who have engaged in the lengthy process to rename their school for someone who better reflects their values. I know Principal Brann and the school community have shared this work already, so I am here to emphasize the care in which they engaged on this issue. They provided surveys, evaluated submissions based on criteria established by the community, and ultimately held an election for the four highest scoring candidates.¹ The final choice – Shirley Chisholm Elementary School – is before you today and we urge you to pass this legislation. I would like to thank Councilmember Allen for introducing this legislation and ANC 6B for supporting it.

Next, Bill 25-350, the "MacArthur High School Designation Act of 2023." DCPS wholeheartedly supports this legislation formally naming our newest high school. In the spring of 2021, we began the community engagement and outreach for what would become MacArthur High School. Through that process, DCPS engaged with over 2,000 stakeholders to ensure we created a school of which the community could be proud. As a part of that engagement, DCPS conducted a public online survey to solicit school name nominations. More than 540 community members participated, and the name "MacArthur High School" received the most support.² Many respondents emphasized the desire for continuity by maintaining the name that DCPS and the community had been using for more than a year, as well as their preference for designating a name based on a location, not a person: as you know, the high school is located on MacArthur Boulevard. Thank you to Councilmember Frumin for introducing this legislation.

Finally, Bill 25-473, the "School Facilities Sponsorship and Naming Amendment Act of 2023." Thank you, Chairman, for introducing this legislation that would clarify DCPS's role when naming interior and exterior spaces on school grounds. We agree that DCPS should be able to decide how such spaces are named. There is a fine line between sponsorship, donation, and advertising and we appreciate the Committee's attention to this important distinction by including legislative language on the size of any logos DCPS would display. We support the intent of the bill and request one change. Like the Committee, we do not want to give the impression that an organization or person is paying DCPS to advertise. As this legislation moves through the legislative process, we request that the legislation be revised to state that DCPS is authorized to name indoor and outdoor spaces without that naming being initiated by an organization or individual. This change would clarify that organizations and individuals would not be required to donate or sponsor namings initiated by DCPS.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these bills today and I look forward to answering your questions.

¹ For more information on the process and pictures of the election, please see <https://www.smores.com/e48ph>.

² The presentation discussing the survey is available here -

https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/page_content/attachments/MacArthur%20CWG%20Meeting%20%20-%20Presentation%202022.08.08.pdf. The naming section begins on page 33. Subsequent meeting information is also available here - <https://dcps.dc.gov/macarthur>.