

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**



Public Hearing on  
Teacher and Principal Retention

Testimony of  
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Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

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4:00 PM



Good evening, Chairman Mendelson, Councilmembers, staff, and members of the public. I am Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee, Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the topic of teacher and principal retention. Joining me is Dr. Drewana Bey, DCPS' Deputy Chancellor for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development or SEAD.

I want to acknowledge the educators who testified today and the hard work that DCPS and the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) have done over the past year to reach a tentative five-year contract. Thank you to all our government partners who have helped us reach this point. WTU members voted last week to ratify the contract, and we look forward to finalizing this deal soon. This tentative contract includes a 4% bonus, raises for the next four years, and additional improvements to working conditions. This contract comes on the heels of a contract providing historic pay increases and will benefit teachers and students, helping DCPS maintain its regional and national competitiveness as a great place to teach, work, and learn.

We know that an effective teacher can be the game-changer in a student's life, imparting invaluable skills and knowledge, nurturing an interest, or guiding a young person on a pathway to a career and post-secondary success. DCPS closely analyzes recruitment, hiring, performance, and retention data so that we can continue to retain effective teachers and provide all teachers with the support they need to develop and improve their craft.

I am pleased to share that this fall, the overwhelming majority of DCPS teachers chose to continue working at DCPS. The number returning to the same school continues to grow. I am particularly proud of our diverse workforce, our retention of our most effective



teachers, and the fact that DCPS retains effective teachers at schools regardless of Title I status. During my testimony today, I want to make sure you better understand the DCPS teacher workforce, areas of strength regarding retention, and two areas where we want to see further improvement. During this presentation, I will be focusing my testimony on data about teachers and principals and their retention within schools and DCPS this fall.

**First, DCPS Employs and Retains a Diverse Workforce.** *As shown in Slide #2*, about half of teachers at DCPS identify as Black, 30% identify as White, 10% as Hispanic / Latino, and 4% Asian. 6% do not report their race and less than 1% identify as Native American, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian. Our workforce is significantly more diverse than the national average. Our teacher workforce is about three quarters female and one quarter male. Two ways we are supporting the recruitment of a diverse workforce are through (1) our teacher education CTE pathway, which is just beginning at three schools and (2) through our collaboration with OSSE on their Apprenticeship in Teaching program, which is underway at 17 schools. We know that a diverse workforce is key to supporting a diverse student body. Students deserve and benefit from having teachers of the same race during their academic careers. Our principal workforce is composed differently but also reflects the diversity of our teachers and students.

**DCPS' Retention of Teachers and Principals Continues to Improve.** DCPS has improved the retention of educators over the last decade, while increasing the size of the teacher workforce. *As you can see on Slide #3*, a decade ago, DCPS retained 76% of teachers within their same school and 83% within DCPS. This fall, 82% of teachers returned to their school and 89% returned to work at DCPS. We are pleased to report similar trends among our principals, *which you can see in more detail on Slide #4*. Four years ago, nine principals



left DCPS. This year, that number is down to four principals out of 114, meaning DCPS retained 96% of principals this fall.

**DCPS Continues to Retain the Most Effective Teachers.** *You can see detail on this on Slide #5.* At DCPS, we know that teachers are the biggest factor within the school building that influences student success. That is why we are proud that we retain our most effective educators at the highest rates. For example, for our teachers rated highly effective, 96% of those teachers returned to work at DCPS. DCPS supports all teachers with coaching, instructional resources, and professional development to help teachers improve their practice. However, not everyone we hire at DCPS will be retained in the long-run and that is okay. Our goal is to continue to refine our evaluation and support systems to help teachers improve and strategically retain our teachers in service of student success. We are proud that DCPS retains highly effective educators at similar rates (91%) regardless of Title I status. Schools that educate economically disadvantaged students often have challenges related to teacher turnover. That is why we continue to incentivize teachers to teach in our Title I schools and why we provide larger bonuses to the highly effective teachers who do.

**DCPS Retains Educators at Similar Rates Regardless of Race or Gender.** At DCPS, we take our equity imperative seriously. As part of our strategic plan, we are committed to eliminating barriers to academic and social success for our students furthest from opportunity. This means that we need to provide targeted support to our Black and Latino / Hispanic Students. While this support can take many forms, one way is to ensure our teachers workforce continues to be diverse and that Black and Hispanic or Latino teachers continue to choose DCPS. *As you can see in Slide #6,* our Black and Hispanic or Latino teachers returned to work at DCPS at rates **above** the DCPS average.



**At DCPS we are committed to continuous improvement.** It is in that spirit that I want to share with you two areas where we believe we have more work to do with respect to teacher retention. While a common trend among LEAs within DC and among school districts across the country, teachers who are newest to DCPS returned to DCPS at lower rates compared to their more experienced peers, *as you can see on Slide #7*. While our retention rate for experienced teachers is quite high, we see more work to do to ensure that teachers newer to DCPS remain within the school system. We also want to see improved retention for specific Wards. While we have seen some Wards improve or remain steady with respect to retention, *as you can see on Slide #8*, within-school retention in Ward 8 for example is four percentage points lower than the DCPS average. My team and I will be closely reviewing the testimony shared today by teachers and principals and looking for areas where we can improve in response to feedback.

Earlier today, DCPS released its first-ever *Educator Exit Survey Report*, which provides policymakers and the public with a detailed look at the retention of educators within DCPS, including teachers, principals, educational aides, and other roles. This report provides information as to why educators leave the system or their school. We have shared some of the data that is included in this report at today's hearing. We hope that this report will be helpful to the public by providing more information about DCPS' workforce.

At DCPS, teachers earn excellent compensation. They work in schools that foster and reward collaboration. And they can pursue professional growth and learning while working as a teacher. For these reasons and many more, we continue to see retention of teachers and principals grow and we are proud of those results. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering your questions.