

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**District of Columbia Public Schools**



Public Hearing on

**DC Public Schools' Procurement System**

Testimony of  
**Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee**  
**Chancellor**  
**DC Public Schools**

Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
Chairman Phil Mendelson

May 31, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.  
Council Room 412

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Council, and staff. I am Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee, Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with an update on DCPS' progress in restructuring our procurement system.

DCPS fully respects the role of Council in approving contracts under the Home Rule Act, and on behalf of the agency, I apologize for the unacceptable noncompliance that took place. I want to emphasize that I take this issue very seriously and we are addressing underlying issues to prevent any recurrence.

I appreciate the Council's approval of the contracts for Tamah and Milestone – vendors which provide critical services for students with disabilities, including our Medical Education Support classrooms – and the contracts for Security Assistance Management security guards and DC Central Kitchen food services. Each of these vendors are important service providers for our students, teachers, and administrators.

We understand that the Council's role in contract oversight makes certain we meet our commitment to being good stewards of taxpayer funds and delivering services our students and families need. As I shared last week, our ongoing investigation has resulted in staff disciplinary measures, and I will take any additional steps necessary upon the conclusion of our review.

During the public health emergency, DCPS was understaffed and overwhelmed as an agency tasked with completely rethinking school in a virtual environment, while working to keep our community safe and supported. This situational context is not an excuse, but it is important to note that our preliminary review has revealed a system in which there was good intent with a priority placed on serving our students.

While we continue to work closely with the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP), the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and the Attorney General's office on prior fiscal year retroactive contracts actions, we are rebuilding our system and filling critical vacancies to ensure DCPS is in full compliance with the law as we prepare for the upcoming school year.

Additionally, as I shared last week, I have created a new Office of Fiscal Strategy to oversee the district's finance and budget divisions as well as our contracting and procurement work. The Office of Fiscal Strategy will be led by DCPS' new Chief of Fiscal Strategy, Patrick Ashley, who will join the team next month and report directly to me as a member of the DCPS Leadership Cabinet. Mr. Ashley played a particularly significant role at DC Health during the District's response to the pandemic, overseeing an enormous logistical mobilization. As an innovative management leader, I'm confident that Patrick's skills developing systems and implementing organizational change will improve our financial workstreams and provide these areas the dedicated support and oversight they require.

This summer, we will go before the Mayor's Procurement Accountability Review Board again to provide an update on the corrective actions we have taken and our rebuilt contract management system. We will receive additional feedback at that session, and OCP will issue a public report.

We also look forward to benefiting from a third-party audit led by the Deputy Mayor for Education's office, which we anticipate being completed this fall. The audit will review the DCPS contracting cycle, related internal controls, and the pre-award procedures for executed contracts.

I want to close by reiterating that DCPS is fully committed to rebuilding our procurement processes in alignment with District law.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer your questions.