

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



Public Hearing on

**[PR24-0814](#), the “Sense of the Council on the Stoddert Elementary Addition
Resolution of 2022”**

**Testimony of
Ely S. Ross
Chief Operating Officer**

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

September 27, 2022
1:00 PM
Via Zoom teleconference



Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Council, and staff. I am Ely S. Ross, Chief Operating Officer for DC Public Schools (DCPS), and, on behalf of Mayor Bowser, I am honored to testify before you today on PR24-814, the “Sense of the Council on the Stoddert Elementary Addition Resolution of 2022” (“Stoddert Resolution”). I am also pleased to provide testimony on Ward 3 school enrollment and planning more broadly.

Stoddert Resolution

The purpose of the Stoddert Resolution, among other things, is to declare the sense of the Council that DCPS should work to ensure that the commuting patterns among Stoddert families are not disrupted with the addition of a new elementary school in the feeder pattern. DCPS appreciates the Council’s commitment, which we share, to alleviating the long-standing overcrowding in the Jackson-Reed feeder pattern. We also appreciate Council’s recognition that in February 2019, DCPS’ Wilson Feeder Pattern Community Working Group recommended that DCPS alleviate overcrowding by expanding physical capacity by acquiring new facilities and modernizing where possible. Mayor Bowser’s acquisition of the MacArthur building and construction of the new Foxhall Elementary School reflect these recommendations.

DCPS is proactively planning for expected changes in population and school enrollment figures. Plans for an elementary school at the Foxhall site, which were informed by the Foxhall and MacArthur Community Working Group, are based on School Year (SY) 2028-29 enrollment projections in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education’s (DME) 2018 Master Facilities Plan (MFP) and a 2019 supplement. Based on those enrollment projections, significant increased capacity is needed to ensure these schools can maintain 90% building utilization. Using those SY28-29 projections, DCPS determined that Key ES would be “over-enrolled” by 145 students and Stoddert ES would be “over-enrolled” by 142 students, even after their planned addition to achieve a building capacity of 523.

These projections were developed by DME in 2018 and 2019 using population forecasts from the DC Office of Planning, which predicted continued population increases. Since the 2018 MFP and 2019 supplement, we know that trends have shifted—specifically, we know that population growth slowed at the end of the decade and the pandemic had further negative impacts on enrollment. DME will update SY28-29 enrollment projections as part of the MFP 2023 refresh.

As you are aware, DME will conduct a school boundaries and student assignment policies study in 2023 that will take the Foxhall ES boundary into account. As previously noted, the boundary study will take travel times into consideration when adjusting or creating any new school boundaries. Notably, however, the language in the resolution of not allowing for a “longer commute” time is vague and may be overly restrictive and unfeasible. As the boundary process will look at boundaries and student assignment citywide, we do not recommend prescribing solutions ahead of that process or legislating requirements for one catchment area of the city.

Additionally, DCPS and our partners at DGS have committed to building the addition at Stoddert Elementary School to accommodate 184 more students, and to do so in a way to accommodate a third floor should the need arise.



Foxhall Elementary School

Ward 3 schools have seen significant growth in enrollment over the past 10 years, largely from increased in-boundary participation and increased enrollment from feeder schools. Since 2012, enrollment has grown as follows:

- Stoddert ES by 21% from 368 in SY 12-13 to 445 in SY21-22
- Mann ES by 28% from 286 in SY 12-13 to 366 in SY21-22;
- Deal MS by 20% from 1,165 in SY12-13 to 1,396 in SY21-22;
- Hardy MS by 31% from 404 in SY12-13 to 531 in SY21-22; and
- Jackson-Reed HS by 30% from 1,713 in SY12-13 to 2,062 in SY21-22.

Stoddert's enrollment also continues to rise and based on the enrollment projections we have currently from DME, even with the planned building addition, the new Foxhall school will still be needed. Stoddert's current capacity is 339, and the current addition will be able to accommodate 184 more students for a total permanent capacity of 523. Projected enrollment for the area based on SY28-29 projections is 554. A new school building allows DCPS to accommodate the growth in Ward 3 rather than waiting for enrollment to exceed space. The Foxhall school building will accommodate 484 students and projected enrollment is currently 450 students. The goal of Foxhall is to address help overcrowding and maintain DCPS' efforts to keep class sizes to a minimum to align with our negotiated teacher collective bargaining agreement and to enhance classroom learning with smaller teacher to student ratios.

In closing, DCPS is confident in our long-term planning to alleviate overcrowding in the Jackson-Reed feeder pattern, and we are committed to our principles of equity for all our students and families. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

