

January 20, 2022

The Honorable Mayor Muriel Bowser  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Deputy Mayor Paul Kihn  
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 307  
Washington, DC 20004

**Dear Mayor Bowser and Deputy Mayor Kihn:**

The last few years have been among the most disruptive and devastating for students, families, teachers, staff, and school leaders because of the ongoing global pandemic and subsequent health and safety concerns. Nonetheless, I can attest to the public charter school community's tireless efforts to ensure that students continue to have access to a high-quality education.

The dozens of public charter school leaders serving nearly half of the District's students are grateful for your partnership over the years in investing in and improving our education system. But the work is not yet done. We must continue to weather the challenges from the ongoing pandemic and provide a high-quality education, and we must do so in a way that accelerates learning equitably—particularly for students most affected by pandemic-related hardships.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, COVID-19 hit communities of color the hardest. Today, Black residents account for nearly all COVID-19 deaths, and disparities in vaccination rates among Black residents continue to persist thanks to unequal healthcare access and vaccine misinformation.<sup>1</sup> Students have spent too much time apart from friends and social lives. A growing threat of violence in many of our communities has left many students fearful. And for many families, particularly in the hardest-hit parts of our city, the pandemic has created or exacerbated instabilities in finances, employment, housing, and food. These hardships have traumatized students, and they will make academic recovery even more challenging.

DC's public charter schools are nimble, responsive, and innovative. Each charter school has a different model to create unique and responsive learning environments for their students so every student can choose a high-quality public school and receive a great public education that prepares them for lifelong success. But to continue providing the opportunity for every student to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be successful and find fulfillment in their lives, we need District leaders to provide adequate funding, including to support special student populations and to ensure school-based behavioral health resources reach students.

As you prepare your proposed budget for FY 23, we ask you to support continued, increased, and equitable investments in public education in the following ways:

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<sup>1</sup> DCist (October 20, 2021), [49 Out Of The 50 People Who Died Of COVID-19 In D.C. Since June Were Black](#).

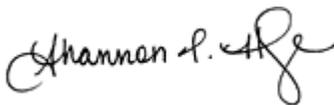
- **Increase the UPSFF foundation level by at least 3.6 percent** to partially close the gap between current funding levels and the recommended levels from the 2013 DC Education Adequacy Study and to keep up with rising costs in the city.
- **Increase the facilities allotment by 3.1 percent** to ensure that charter schools continue to receive funds needed to secure and maintain school buildings.
- **Fully fund the “at-risk” weight at .37**, the level recommended in the 2013 adequacy study, to direct critical funds to our students most in need of targeted interventions and support.
- **Increase funding for the Department of Behavioral Health’s School-Based Behavioral Health Program (SBBH) by \$2.4 million** to stabilize community-based organization grant funding, support the Community of Practice, and assist schools with effective implementation.
- **Increase adult school funding** to the level recommended in the 2013 adequacy study and provide funding support for at-risk adult students.

In addition to these continued and increased investments, we also recommend the following legislative actions so that our schools can better serve our most marginalized students:

- Create a statutory requirement for **review of the definition of “at-risk”** under the DC Code to ensure the definition appropriately captures the students in need of additional funding support.
- **Commission a comprehensive update to the 2013 Education Adequacy Study**<sup>2</sup> to develop a sound understanding of the funding needed to provide every District of Columbia student an adequate education and set a path for achieving this funding level.
- **Develop a feasibility plan for a citywide welcome center for immigrant students** that provides comprehensive school support and connections to other support services.
- **Create housing and tax incentives** as educator retention and recruitment tools.

As your administration and the Council begin to consider the critical questions and needs for DC residents in the upcoming fiscal year, we urge you to join us in thinking boldly about the future of public education in our city. We know that we all share the same goal – to build a truly equitable system that provides an education for all our students. The DC Charter School Alliance is ready to work alongside you and your team to make sure we are safely providing the education our students deserve.

Sincerely,



Shannon T. Hodge  
Founding Executive Director

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<sup>2</sup> The Finance Project (December 2013), [Cost of Student Achievement: Report of the DC Education Adequacy Study](#).