

Release: Silverman Introduces Revised DCPS Reopening Bill

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WASHINGTON, D.C., December 14, 2020 – Recognizing that returning students to in-person classroom learning requires collaboration and trust among all those involved with DC Public Schools (DCPS), Councilmember Elissa Silverman (I-At-Large) released a revised version of the “[Pandemic Learning Emergency Act of 2020](#)” for consideration at tomorrow’s D.C. Council legislative meeting. The goal of the bill is to shift the DCPS reopening process from one that has been disjointed, chaotic, and confusing to a process that is cooperative and transparent.

“We know that students learn best in the classroom,” said Silverman. “To do that safely requires all DCPS partners to work together and trust each other. This bill addresses criticisms of the process so far in an effort to restore confidence of the adults and students in coming back to DCPS buildings.”

Silverman added: “I also want to be very clear about what this bill doesn’t do: It does not slow down or create roadblocks to reopening. Finger-pointing, miscommunication, and disagreement has slowed down reopening so far, and that’s what this bill attempts to eliminate.”

The revised Pandemic Learning Emergency Act of 2020 has four main components:

- Creates a Pandemic Advisory Learning Council (PALC), composed of parents, teachers, staff, and agency officials, to advise DCPS on the return to in-person learning. The PALC fosters coordination and communication among the key stakeholders, including teachers, nurses, and the Chancellor. The PALC will discuss changes in system-wide safety and in-person teaching guidelines, how DCPS communicates with schools, COVID vaccination plans, opportunities for outdoor learning, and other concerns raised by parents or staff.
- Requires transparency in specific education and public health data related to in-person learning, including COVID test results by school.
- Directs the Mayor and Chancellor to create in-person learning risk levels to provide notice before closing in-person learning on the classroom, school, or system-wide level.
- Expands the current asymptomatic COVID testing plan.

Taken together, these provisions would ensure that parents, staff, and the administration are all at the table together, discussing the best way to bring students back into the classroom. It would also provide the transparency necessary to show the reopening is safe and equitable.

The full text of the bill can be found [here](#).

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