

**Council of the District of Columbia
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC RECOVERY
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
NOTICE OF JOINT PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004**

**COUNCILMEMBER CHARLES ALLEN, CO-CHAIRPERSON
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC RECOVERY**

**COUNCILMEMBER VINCENT C. GRAY, CO-CHAIRPERSON
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC RECOVERY**

AND

**CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON, CHAIRPERSON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

ANNOUNCE A JOINT PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING ON

THE DISTRICT’S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2021, 9 A.M.

Virtual Hearing via Zoom

To Watch Live:

STREAMED LIVE ON YOUTUBE AT [TINYURL.COM/COHPUBLIC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COHPUBLIC).

On Wednesday, May 26, 2021, Councilmembers Charles Allen and Vincent C. Gray, Co-Chairpersons of the Special Committee on COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery, and Chairman Phil Mendelson, Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole will convene a joint public oversight hearing on “The District’s Public Education System After the COVID-19 Pandemic.” The hearing will be held virtually at 9:00 a.m. via the Zoom platform.

On March 11, 2020, Mayor Muriel Bowser declared a public health emergency due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. All District public schools and childcare facilities closed for in-person learning at the beginning of the public health emergency, and students began distance learning shortly thereafter. Childcare providers began to resume expanded in-person care in the fall of 2020. After several false starts, the District of Columbia Public Schools (“DCPS”) allowed a small subset of students to return to in-person learning on February 1, 2021—nearly one year after distance learning began. Many of the District’s public charter schools, following guidance from the District Department of Health (“DOH”), also began allowing some students back into their buildings. Following evolving DOH guidance, since February 1, schools have allowed more

and more students to join in-person classes. However, many students in DCPS and public charter schools remain in distance learning, and many parents are not yet comfortable sending their children to attend school in person. Further, the future remains unclear, and some schools are preparing for the possibility that at least some distance learning will continue when the 2021-2022 school year begins in the fall.

The widespread reliance on distance learning during the pandemic has only served to further exacerbate inequitable access to educational opportunities. Some advocates estimate that half of households in Wards 7 and 8 lack an internet connection, and in many areas of the District, internet service providers simply do not offer the same speeds as are available in wealthier areas of the District. District schools did eventually provide devices for distance learning and hotspots for those without reliable internet access, but the rollout was delayed and uneven. Eventually a small percentage of students were able to engage in distance learning from school buildings, but uptake was similarly uneven, as many residents were afraid to send their children. There is no doubt that once schools are able to reliably measure student achievement during the pandemic, which will remain a challenge until all parents and students feel safe attending school in person, the achievement gaps that already existed between Black and Brown students and their White counterparts will be further exacerbated.

The purpose of this hearing will be to focus on pandemic recovery in the realm of education in furtherance of the Special Committee on COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery's charge to deliver a report on recovery. In particular, the Committees hope to answer the following questions:

- How can public schools in the District best measure educational attainment during the pandemic and the learning gaps that the pandemic has created?
- How can public schools in the District best address learning gaps that existed before, but were certainly exacerbated by, the pandemic?
- How can public schools in the District ensure safe transportation to and from school once in-person learning begins for all students?
- How can the District ensure digital equity in public schools, and is there a place for distance learning post-pandemic?
- How can the District ensure that students' mental and physical health needs are adequately met, in particular for students who experienced severe trauma and delayed necessary health visits during the pandemic?

During the hearing, the Committees will hear testimony from invited witnesses and the public. Oral testimony from public witnesses will be strictly limited to three minutes to allow everyone an opportunity to testify. Persons wishing to provide oral testimony on May 26th should contact Malcolm Cameron, Legislative Analyst of the Committee on Health by e-mail at mcameron@dccouncil.us or by phone at (202) 341-4425 before 6:00 p.m. on Monday, May 24, 2021. When sending an e-mail or leaving a voicemail, please provide Mr. Cameron with the following information:

- Your first and last name;
- The name of the organization you are representing (if any);
- Your title with the organization;

- Your e-mail address; and
- Your phone number.

Mr. Cameron will e-mail a confirmation of your attendance with an agenda, witness list, and attached instructions for accessing the virtual roundtable on the evening of May 25th. Additional witnesses may provide written statements to the Committees, which will be made part of the official record. Public witnesses at the hearing should limit their oral testimony to 3 minutes. The Committees encourage witnesses to submit a copy of any written testimony electronically in advance to mcameron@dccouncil.us.

For accommodation requests, including spoken language or sign language interpretation, please inform the Committee office of the need as soon as possible but no later than five (5) business days before the proceeding. The Council will make every effort to fulfill timely requests, however requests received in less than five (5) business days may not be fulfilled and alternatives may be offered.

Persons wishing to provide written testimony should e-mail their written testimony to Malcolm Cameron, Legislative Analyst of the Committee on Health at mcameron@dccouncil.us before 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 9, 2021. Please indicate that you are submitting testimony for this roundtable in the subject line of the e-mail.