

**Testimony of Abe Clayman**

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**Committee of the Whole**

Chairman Phil Mendelson

**Budget Oversight Hearing: Education Agencies**

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The Federal City Council (FC2) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization dedicated to the advancement of civic life in the nation's capital. For more than 20 years, FC2 trustees have served as trusted partners for education improvement, working closely with local and federal stakeholders to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating from high school prepared for college, career, and life.

Today I'm going to discuss five investments that the Council should protect in this year's education budget. Resources for public education do not belong to one type of school or another. They exist to ensure that all students can reach their full potential, regardless of their zip code, income, or ability level. Ensuring that public schools have equitable funding allows them to hire talented teachers, provide high-quality materials, and build modern facilities.

**Increasing the UPSFF by 5%**

The Mayor's budget includes a 5% increase in the base funding level of the UPSFF, which provides an additional \$145 million to District schools. The Council should preserve the base funding increase and continue to advocate for annual UPSFF adjustments to support the increasing cost of school operation.

**Increasing the Facilities Allotment by 3.1%**

The Council should also preserve continued investments in facilities for DC students attending public charter schools. The budget includes a 3.1% increase to the annual facilities allotment and we urge the Council to protect this investment as well. All students deserve a school building that is safe, promotes learning, and helps students stay healthy. That's why, in 2021, the Federal City Council started an education facilities center to help schools develop solutions to facilities challenges. For public charter schools, finding, renting, buying, and maintaining facilities is a major investment of time and dollars.

Some Councilmembers have asked whether charter schools need this money. I can assure you they do. We ran the numbers. The facilities allotment is an essential investment that the District makes in high-quality facilities for students who attend public charter schools.

The data are clear. We analyzed five years of financial data at public charter schools. We reviewed their annual submissions to DC PCSB. We read their audits and the tax forms they submitted to the IRS. We watched Board meetings, and we compiled all of the available data on facilities expenditures at public charter schools. We are sharing preliminary findings with you today and expect to release an in-depth analysis later this spring. In FY21, the most recent year available, the median charter received \$1.4 million via the facilities allotment and spent \$2.3 million, \$900,000 more than they received. And the trend over the last five years demonstrates a similar level of need. Between FY17 and FY21, charters spent approximately \$1.3 billion on facilities, nearly \$600 million more than they received in the allotment. Please see the included tables in my written testimony for more information on facilities expenditures in recent years.

**Total Facility Expense for District LEAs**

	<b>2017 (64)</b>	<b>2018 (60)</b>	<b>2019 (59)</b>	<b>2020 (60)</b>	<b>2021 (66)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Allotment</b>	\$127,447,200	\$126,758,907	\$125,348,145	\$142,904,750	\$150,711,984	\$673,170,986
<b>Total Expense</b>	\$190,824,527	\$203,285,911	\$222,007,057	\$291,682,270	\$351,484,580	\$1,259,284,345
<b>Difference</b>	(\$63,377,327)	(\$76,527,004)	(\$96,658,912)	(\$142,835,506)	(\$200,772,596)	(\$580,171,345)

**Median Facility Expense for District LEAs**

	<b>2017 (64)</b>	<b>2018 (60)</b>	<b>2019 (59)</b>	<b>2020 (60)</b>	<b>2021 (66)</b>
<b>Allotment</b>	\$1,210,550	\$1,398,534	\$1,347,619	\$1,492,413	\$1,371,720
<b>Total Expense</b>	\$1,640,012	\$1,885,740	\$1,833,108	\$2,267,161	\$2,277,522
<b>Difference</b>	(\$429,462)	(\$487,206)	(\$485,489)	(\$567,660)	(\$905,802)

*Note: The (#) indicates the number of LEAs for which data is currently available for a given fiscal year.*

**Increasing Teacher Pay**

The District’s civic community cares deeply about the ability for all schools to attract high-performing teachers and compensate them accordingly. That’s why we applauded the recent agreement on a new contract between the Washington Teacher’s Union and the District. The FY24 budget includes \$59 million in retroactive and future pay for public charter schools. While this payment is not equivalent to the funds that teachers at DCPS will receive, it’s a move in the right direction. The Council should preserve this investment and consider methods for providing equal pay to charter teachers. If it’s not possible to increase the funds going to educators, we urge the Council to—at a minimum—ensure that the funds are distributed swiftly, that future funding flows through the UPSFF, and that charter schools have the flexibility to use the funds to provide raises to educators besides teachers - like social workers or counselors.

**Launching a New Education to Employment Data System**

The FY24 budget includes an investment of \$1.6 million to launch an education to employment data system that will, for the first time, connect existing government databases on employment and income to graduation and other educational data. This system will allow the government to better measure outcomes for public school students and determine which investments are having the greatest impact. With this new system, the District will be in a better position to know how well we are preparing students for their careers. The Council should wholeheartedly support this investment.

**Increasing the Accessibility and Number of After School Programs**

Finally, the FY24 budget includes \$5 million to expand after school programming and build a new website for families to more easily access after school, morning, or summer programming. We know that young people need productive activities outside of school. This investment means more kids will have additional, accessible activities once the school day ends. We urge the Council to preserve this investment as well.

We urge the Council to preserve these five investments in our education system: an increase to the UPSFF, more money for high-quality facilities, increased teacher pay, a new education to employment data system, and improvements to afterschool programming. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I’m happy to answer any questions.