



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Chancellor

June 14, 2021

Council of the District of Columbia
The John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmember Allen,

I am writing to share more about the District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) policy for drug screening volunteers and partner organization employees as DC Council considers the "DCPS Drug Testing Clarification Emergency Amendment Act of 2021" and the "DCPS Drug Testing Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2021."

DCPS fosters a safe and secure educational environment for over 50,000 of the District's public school children. Parents entrust us with their children, and we take steps to ensure that adults who will be alone with children are fit to do so by requiring a pre-service background and drug test. Currently, DCPS does not require a pre-service drug test for individuals who volunteer to attend a school trip, assist a teacher, or tutor after school. As such, we are not opposed to removing this requirement for volunteers as proposed in the legislation.

However, we are opposed to removing marijuana positivity as a disqualifier for partner organization employees. These adults are paid to be in schools and are more likely to be alone with children without supervision from DCPS personnel. Given their specific roles and time spent with children, we believe that continuing to require pre-service drug screening, including for marijuana, is an appropriate level of review for partner organization employees.

DCPS is open to further discussion in a process that allows appropriate time for input from families and educators whose views cannot be expressed through emergency legislation.

I thank the Council for their ongoing partnership and collaboration in providing a safe and transformative educational experience for all DCPS students.

Sincerely,

Lewis D. Ferebee, Ed.D.
Chancellor, DC Public Schools

CC: Chairman Phil Mendelson
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Councilmember Anita Bonds
Councilmember Elissa Silverman
Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.
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