



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

David Grosso
Councilmember At-Large
Chairperson, Committee on Education

Committee Member
Government Operations
Health
Human Services
Labor and Workforce Development

February 5, 2019

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

Deputy Mayor for Education Kihn:

Thank you for testifying at the Committee of the Whole and the Committee on Education's joint public oversight roundtable on the following matter: Improving School Attendance: Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism, and the Implementation of Reform Initiatives. Please provide a response to my follow-up questions:

1. Poor transportation options are directly related to chronic absenteeism. This reality was highlighted in the District of Columbia Attendance Report for School Year 2017-2018. Students, particularly from Wards 7 and 8, have voiced concern to me about long wait times and commutes on WMATA buses and trains. As a result of their concerns, the Education Committee's FY2019 budget report recommended that the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and the District Department of Transportation analyze student transportation times, options, and routes for chronically absent students. During the roundtable, you said that the study was not initiated due to costs restraints. How much would a study like this cost?
2. Is it possible to survey students to enhance our understanding of their transportation options or to use students' home addresses combined with the Kids Ride Free SmarTrip pass to analyze how long students are traveling by public transportation?
 - a. If not, please indicate any restraints or limitations to doing this type of study.
3. The steady increase of students missing school due to fear of their safety is problematic in many ways, and chronic absenteeism has become a symptom of this issue. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey ("YRBS") is a survey of youth-risk behaviors conducted in middle and high schools every year. In 2017, 16% of middle School students did not go to school because they felt unsafe on their way to and from school. In high schools, 10%

of students reported missing school for this reason. The percentage of middle school students in D.C who did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to school increased from 13.3% in 2012 to 16.1% in 2017. For high school students, that number rose from 9.0% in 2012 to 10.0% in 2017. Please provide me a comprehensive update on the District of Columbia's Safe Passage Work.

- a. How much money is being spent on Safe Passage?
 - b. It is my understanding that the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education is sharing this work with the Office of the Chief Student Advocate. Please explain how this partnership works and who is ultimately responsible for its success?
4. How do we measure the success of the Safe Passage Community Workers Pilot and the Safe Passage Community Engagement Pilots? These pilots don't have significant funding and they are only for half a year.
 5. I am increasingly hearing from community members that they would like to volunteer with Safe Passage efforts, but their criminal record will not allow them to do so. Have we given any more thought to how we treat returning citizens and ways we can get them involved in this critical work?
 6. At the Roundtable, Chairman Mendelson asked you to sketch out a transportation pilot for chronically absent students attending a public charter school and traditional public school. Please provide both myself and Chairman Mendelson with an update on what a pilot would look like.

Please submit your written responses to me no later than close of business on **March 1, 2019**. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Akeem Anderson, my Committee Director, at aanderson@dccouncil.us.

Sincerely,



David Grosso
Council of the District of Columbia (At-Large)
Chairperson, Committee on Education

Cc: Chairman Phil Mendelson
Members of the Committee on Education