



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, Hawthorne

5601 Connecticut Avenue N.W. P.O. Box 6252 Washington, D.C. 20015

3G@anc.dc.gov | <http://www.anc3g.org> | YouTube: ANC3G | Office: 202.363.5803

COMMISSIONERS

3/4G-01 - Lisa R. Gore, Chair

3/4G-02 - Bruce Sherman, Secretary

3/4G-03 - James Nash

3/4G-04 - Michael Zeldin

3/4G-05 - Peter Lynch

3/4G-06 - Peter Gosselin, Vice Chair

3/4G-07 - Zachary Ferguson, Treasurer

**ANC 3/4G Testimony Before the
Committee of the Whole
FY 2024 Budget Hearing on the
District of Columbia Public Schools
April 11, 2024**

Chairperson Mendelson and Councilmembers, I am Lisa Gore, Chair of ANC 3/4G (Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, and Hawthorne). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the FY 2025 budget for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). I am testifying on behalf of our Commission, which authorized this testimony at its April 8, 2024, properly noticed regular public meeting by a vote of 5-0 (a quorum being 4). While this testimony principally focuses on the proposed budget for DCPS Lafayette Elementary School because it resides in our ANC, we note that Murch Elementary, a school where a portion of our ANC's elementary school students attend, faces the prospect of similar cuts. Indeed, our ANC wants to be on record in strong support of school budget restoration and growth city-wide.

We offer this testimony to express our deep concerns regarding the proposed DCPS Budget. It is our understanding that the proposed DCSP budget likely will result in the loss of teachers, teachers' aides, and school staff at Lafayette Elementary School which resides in our ANC, and Murch Elementary School, although is not within our ANC's boundary, but which a significant portion of our constituent's young children attend.

A review of the proposed budget city-wide would appear to indicate that approximately two-thirds of DC public schools will not receive funding sufficient to maintain the current year's operating costs. We find this alarming.

While we appreciate that funding across DCPS has to be rebalanced annually and that there is a need to increase funding to schools with the most at-risk students, especially to close the education gap created during the pandemic, the present proposed budget leaves too many children at risk city-wide and at Lafayette in particular.

We note too that there are possible budget implications of the Deputy Mayor for Education's (DME) Boundary and Student Assignment Study. Final recommendations are due by the end of the month. Those could impose additional costs, disproportionately.

LAFAYETTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

As we understand it, Lafayette received an initial allocation of \$10,973,647 - \$241,109 less than the previous fiscal year and representing a 2% decrease. While the Commission understands that the to-be submitted budget from the mayor may restore

some, if not all, of these cuts, the Commission offers this testimony on the basis of the initial budget numbers. It is the understanding of the ANC that the mayor will release her budget on April 3rd and the numbers will need to be verified at that time.

Under the terms of the initial budget, the funding reduction could force reductions in critical school staff. The education of our children is of paramount importance. While many of our children are still struggling to catch up after the devastation of the pandemic, any such cuts would seem inappropriate. Indeed, funding increases should be the objective.

The ANC also believes that it bears emphasis that priority should be given to additional teacher and other support positions over school administrative positions. While school administrators play an important role in the management of a school if tradeoffs have to be made, our request that teachers and teacher resource positions be last on the list.

Another issue of concern is the lack of clarity surrounding DCPS's plans for Out of Boundary (OOB) students. The Boundary and Student Assignment Study nearing completion by the Deputy Mayor for Education has identified Lafayette as a primary candidate to accept more at-risk, OOB students, given the school's current at-risk population is only 8%. We support the goal to enhance equity across the District and recognize Lafayette must do its part. To do so, a budget increase will be necessary to allow Lafayette to obtain the resources necessary to meet the educational needs of these students. Yet the local population of elementary school children continues to grow. With current enrollment at 933 students, Lafayette is already near capacity. Indeed, we understand school capacity has increased over the last year only by identifying previously unused rooms in the basement that have been converted to

classrooms. This “expansion” cannot continue indefinitely. DCPS must be more transparent with the Lafayette community as to the number of OOB students Lafayette is to receive and how this will affect total enrollment.¹

MURCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Last year Murch Elementary experienced a mid-year spike in enrollment of nearly 50 students and ANC 3/4G unanimously passed a resolution in April 2023 seeking two additional teachers to deal with overcrowding, particularly in lower grades.

As we understand it, Murch Elementary is slated to lose four critical positions, including a 1st Grade teacher. The Murch Home & School Association (HSA) and Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) letter attached for reference details the specific concerns of these cuts, their adverse impacts if allowed, and a request that Murch’s budget be increased by \$396,434 for the 2024-25 school year to maintain the school’s current staffing levels. The letter is signed onto by 426 Murch parents and caregivers, which includes concerned ANC 3/4G residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It appears that position costs are up anywhere from an estimated 16-22%, depending on the position. This is a result, in part, of negotiated teacher and administrator union contracts. (The ANC supports a teacher pay structure commensurate with the value teachers provide for the well-being of our children and to our democracy). However, DCPS appears to increase per-pupil costs by only 11%.

¹ Moreover, if a final decision is made to add affordable housing at the Chevy Chase Civic Core site, resources will be strained further. The ANC requests that DCPS meet with the community to discuss this situation and to advise what plans are being instituted to address the foreseeable impact on our area schools.)

Thus, our schools may have reduced buying power. This situation requires a remedy. The ANC requests that DCPS meet with the community to address this matter.

The ANC recognizes the boost of the city's per-pupil funding formula during a challenging year when significant federal education funding is ending. The reform to increase funding for schools with the most at-risk students is also important and is a welcomed effort to address inequities within our education system.

The ANC references and supports ANC 3/4G-05 Commissioner Peter Lynch's [open letter](#) signed by 450+ concerned DC residents. It reads in relevant part: "At a bare minimum, school budgets for SY24-25 should cover the staff that schools have in place for SY23-24. Fully fund each position at next school year's cost. No teacher or staff should be laid off. If they are, students will face larger classes, less individualized instruction, and teachers will have more classroom demands with less support."

The ANC echoes the sentiment articulated in the letter to highlight our commitment to prioritizing the needs of our students and educators. Cutting staff in our schools across the city, especially our elementary schools, will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the quality of education and the overall school experience for our children.

Thus, we ask that the city reevaluate the proposed budget and eliminate the projected budget cuts. Children are DC's most important asset, and it is our hope that our elected leaders can increase our investments in education further so that we avoid loss of critical staff and educators city-wide. To this end we request the following:

- Budget cuts should be a measure of last resort and our ANC opposes any such cuts. However, should DCPS deem it necessary to make any budget cuts, the

ANC expects that DCPS be required to provide a granular explanation and an opportunity for the community to be heard *before* any cuts are implemented. To this end, we invite the Chancellor to appear before our ANC to discuss the proposed cuts to Lafayette Elementary.

- Notwithstanding the overall budget crunch the city faces, it is the position of the ANC that the base level for school budgets for SY24-25 should not be less than SY23-24. Indeed, application of SY 23-24 budgets for SY 24-25 will result in cuts because of increased costs. Any cuts beyond this should not be undertaken unless and until the explanation suggested above has been justified.
- To offset proposed cuts to school operating budgets, it is suggested that substantial reductions first be made in the administrative ranks of the DCPS central office (and within individual schools). It is also suggested that any and all administrative positions not reduced be justified to the community especially if administrative positions are retained at the expense of teacher positions.
- The Washington Teachers' Union contract has to be renegotiated as soon as possible to ensure a pay structure equal in importance to the role educators play in shaping the lives of DC students city-wide.
- Students are still dealing with the fallout of the pandemic. Economically disadvantaged students may lose out the most under the proposed DCPS budget. This must be remedied.
- Mental health support positions, nurses, school libraries, enrichment programming, extracurricular activities, and the support staff that work in these areas are critical

to the educational ecosystem. Any cuts to these positions have severe up and downstream implications. In fact, post-pandemic, these programs, and support staff positions should be enhanced and ensured at every school. We request that any cuts to these positions be a measure of last resort.

We look forward to working with the city on these issues.

Thank you.