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## **WTU to City Council: Fund Our Future** *Proposed DCPS Budget Worse Than It Appears*

**WASHINGTON**—The proposed budget for District of Columbia Public Schools is worse than it appears, with hidden costs and many schools—especially those with the most needs—losing significantly more funding than the mayor and DCPS reveal, the Washington Teachers’ Union said today.

“We can’t make progress on student achievement, enrollment and attendance without the necessary funding to accomplish that. We won’t accept twisted school budget explanations that create the impression the budget strengthens our schools when the truth is that DCPS schools would be losing massive amounts of funding,” said WTU President Elizabeth Davis at a news conference before testifying before the D.C. Council’s Education Committee. “Instead of starving our schools, we have to fund our future.”

Underfunding public education is a national crisis, with Washington, D.C., a microcosm of what is happening around the country, Davis said. The strikes and teacher walkouts throughout the country over the past year were a prominent display of the problem and of the public’s support for improved funding.

WTU’s “Fund Our Future” campaign is part of a national effort by the American Federation of Teachers to urge lawmakers to approve budgets that accurately reflect the needs of students and what they require to succeed in school, college and career.

AFT President Randi Weingarten said public education has been shortchanged for years. “Parents, students and communities like Washington, D.C., are demanding teaching and learning conditions that all kids deserve. We need to make public

education a priority and the D.C. Council needs to take the public's demands very seriously."

Davis said the proposed budget by Mayor Muriel Bowser and DCPS uses two ways to take a huge chunk of money away from instructional needs:

- Individual school budgets would have to absorb costly security expenses, rather than continue to be covered by the DCPS central office.
- The budget greatly increases the charges to individual schools for all categories of school staff, though none of them are scheduled to receive pay raises. Schools are charged, for instance, 4.3 percent more for teachers, counselors, librarians and social workers. The cost of aides is up 7.2 percent; principals, 3.7 percent; and office staff, about 3.5 percent.

Dominique Foster, parent of a Ballou High School student, spoke out against the proposed budget. "We are fed up with lip service about the importance of making sure our kids get a great public education, but then the city doesn't follow through with a budget that adequately meets the needs of our kids," she said.

Anna Parra-Jordan, a junior at Wilson High School, said her school desperately needs more lab supplies, smaller class sizes and infrastructure work to repair bathrooms and holes in walls. "It's unacceptable that schools aren't getting enough funding to be able to have decent-sized classes, bathrooms with working sinks and toilets, and ceilings that don't leak," she said.

The Rev. Graylan Hagler, of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and founder of Faith Strategies, said: "One of the official goals of DCPS is equitable support and resources across the school system, but this budget fails to keep that promise. That's irresponsible."

Laura Fuchs, an H.D. Woodson High School teacher, said: "This pulls the rug out from under us and will really hurt our students. It's yet another obstacle put in the path of success for our kids."

Many of the DCPS schools with the highest percentage of at-risk students would lose funding and staff. Two-thirds of the schools with more than \$200,000 in real dollar cuts are located within Wards 7 and 8. Real dollar cuts are the loss of funding stated in the budget, plus the hidden security costs and increased personnel and other costs. Likewise, two-thirds of the schools with significant staff losses are east of the Anacostia River. Three high school examples:

- Anacostia High School, with 95 percent of its students considered at-risk, would lose \$319,685 on paper but suffer a real loss of \$1.2 million. It is losing more than 12 staff positions.

- Ballou High School, with 91 percent at-risk students, would lose \$165,089 on paper but suffer a real loss of \$1.3 million. It is losing nearly 13 staff positions.
- H.D. Woodson High School, with 81 percent at-risk students, would lose \$36,438 on paper but suffer a real loss of \$896,588. It is losing nearly seven staff positions.

Other examples of schools with a significant number of at-risk students:

- Excel Academy, a preK-8 school with 71 percent at-risk students, would lose \$1 million on paper but suffer a real loss of \$1.4 million. It is losing 13 staff positions.
- Hendley Elementary School, with 98 percent at-risk students, would lose \$985,067 on paper but suffer a real loss of \$1.3 million. It is losing five staff positions.
- Martin Luther King Elementary School, with 91 percent at-risk students, would lose \$1 million on paper but suffer a real loss of \$1.2 million. It is losing nearly seven staff positions
- Moten Elementary School, with 90 percent at-risk students, would lose \$237,695 on paper but suffer a real loss of \$477,738. It is losing nearly five staff positions.
- Plummer Elementary School, with 82 percent at-risk students, would lose \$235,937 on paper but suffer a real loss of \$481,374. It is losing 7.5 staff positions.

The Washington Teachers' Union is launching a Fund Our Future petition drive. Go to <http://bit.ly/WTUFOFPetition>

The petition calls for:

- Adequate staffing levels to carry out each school's Comprehensive School Plan.
- Funding that addresses each school's most pressing concerns as identified by the principal and Local School Advisory Team members.
- Scheduling and staffing that avoids assigning teachers to teach outside their certification.
- Adequate funding to make computer labs, libraries and other resources available when students need them.
- School security costs that are funded without diminishing educational resources.
- Funding for classroom, custodial and other supplies necessary to maintain healthy and safe learning environments.

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