

**GREAT EXPECTATIONS: ASSESSMENT,
ASSURANCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE
MAYOR'S PROPOSAL TO REFORM THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**THE HONORABLE DANIEL K. AKAKA, CHAIRMAN
THE HONORABLE GEORGE V. VOINOVICH, RANKING MEMBER**



**TESTIMONY OF ADRIAN M. FENTY
MAYOR
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2007

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today about the future of the District of Columbia Public Schools.

My name is Adrian M. Fenty, and I am the fifth elected Mayor of the District of Columbia. I took office on a pledge to improve the lives of all residents of the nation's capital, but especially the children.

As a society, we have an obligation make sure our children have the tools they need to succeed as adults. Our children deserve the best environment we can give them for learning, and our teachers deserve the best environment we can give them for teaching. But, as you know, our public education system in the District has not done right by its 75,000 students for quite some time.

The situation is urgent because more than two-thirds of our fourth graders are reading below grade level. Fewer than half graduate from high school in 5 years. This means the vast majority of students in the DC Public Schools don't stand a good chance of having what has been vital to the success of nearly every person in this room - a college education.

I took office in January knowing it was time to do something radically different in the schools. Why? Because we've had study after study, dating almost back to when I was a DC Public Schools student, documenting how the schools are failing our children. This will end on my watch.

Securing control over the schools was the first priority of my administration. After several months of careful consideration, including some 70 hours of public hearings, the Council of the District of Columbia approved my school governance reform plan April 19 of this year. As you know, the bill was then approved by Congress and signed into law by President Bush on June 1. Let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, to Senator Voinovich, and to all of the members of the Subcommittee for moving that legislation through the Senate so quickly.

Today, I'd like to introduce you to my team -- the architects of a new future for the District of Columbia Public Schools. For the record, each of these individuals has a long track record of service either to the city, to young people, or to both. Each also has my complete confidence.

To start, I am very happy to introduce Michelle Rhee, our new Chancellor. She was confirmed by the Council just last week and she has hit the ground running. She's already identified some of the key problems that need to be resolved before school starts in the fall, and she and her team are already developing ways to fix them

On the budget front, Victor Reinoso, my Deputy Mayor for Education, has hired a team of auditors to take a close look at the school system's finances, so we can redirect more of our money to the classroom. He will also harness resources from across the government to address obstacles to success in school for our kids.



Deborah Gist, my new State Superintendent, will head a State Education Agency for the District that is truly independent, addressing a long standing concern of some school activists.

Finally, Allen Lew, former head of the DC Sports and Entertainment Commission, will be in charge of facilities. He's sending construction professionals into every classroom in the DCPS system to make much-needed repairs, right away. They're going to fix the roofs, the ceilings and the toilets. Then, he will turn to a full-scale effort to modernize buildings throughout the system.

Across the board, we're going to set clear performance goals, improve the way we measure progress toward them, and demand results. The District Government uses a program called CapStat to measure performance by the numbers. With CapStat, we're able to look objectively at response times, expenditures and results. We plan to implement the same system for the school system and call it SchoolStat. Our residents deserve the same accountability from their schools that they have come to expect from the rest of their government.

As an aside, I recognize that our responsibility for educating our children doesn't end when they graduate from high school. So I want to thank the Subcommittee and especially Senator Voinovich for your work in re-authorizing the DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program. With the help of Congress and private-sector donors such as the Gates Foundation, we plan to triple the rate of our students who finish college - beginning with the class of 2014. Many of these young people are the first in their families to attend college. Just imagine the long-term impact this program will have on our city.

Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan once said, "If you can't get education right, nothing else matters." I agree with him. We're in the process of getting education right.

And in the process of getting education right, we'll be giving our young people the skills they need to get ahead in today's world. I see a future where the District's children leave school prepared to take on the challenges of tomorrow, and where they set an example for the rest of the world as a result.

Chairman Akaka, this concludes my prepared remarks. I'd like to thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I am more than happy to answer any questions.

