

**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 VICTOR REINOSO
DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION**

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2007

Good afternoon, Senator Akaka and Senator Voinovich, and other members of the subcommittee. I am Victor Reinoso, the acting Deputy Mayor for Education of the District of Columbia. Thank you for inviting us here today to discuss the exciting reform efforts underway in the District.

I am here to talk to you about our reform efforts from a broader perspective, and how, with the newly-created D.C. Department of Education, we are bringing all of the government's resources together to support public education in a comprehensive way that I believe will make us successful in raising student achievement.

The Mayor has made education the first priority of his administration. Recognizing that in order to truly reform and improve the delivery of educational services in the District, there must be coordination and alignment of resources, policies, strategies, and services at the cabinet level, the Mayor established the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and through the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 formalized this role by creating a D.C. Department of Education.

The Department of Education addresses a long-standing need in the District – the lack of central, coordinated, and aligned service delivery across all education levels, from birth into adulthood, pre-K through post-graduate work. In the District, we have over 50 local education agencies including DCPS and each public charter school, a public university, a public library system, and numerous providers of early childhood and adult education. Additionally, we have dozens of supplemental and out-of-school-time service providers, for services ranging from violence prevention training to college preparation and workforce training. Yet, in the past, these services have not been coordinated or focused on a single set of goals and there has been no District-wide

plan to bring these services together, ensure that they are effective, and strategically link them to better results for the children and families most in need. A similar lack of coordination has existed among other child- and youth-serving agencies and services of the District government, from health to juvenile justice.

Instead of providing direct services or replacing the work and efforts that are ongoing within agencies, the Department of Education works to ensure that the Mayor's vision for education and youth development in the District is implemented methodically and supported consistently across agencies and stakeholders, public and private. Since the beginning of the year, we have been working on several projects aligned with the Mayor's vision that will lay the groundwork for policy decisions and implementation by the State Superintendent and Chancellor. My staff completed a review of potential teacher incentive programs in place in other cities and states, initiatives directed by non-profit organizations, and innovations being implemented or planned by DCPS. We continue to build a strong working relationship with the Washington Teachers' Union, and we have reached out to leaders on this topic from across the country, including the New Teacher Center, the Teacher Advancement Program, the National Center on Performance Incentives, and the Broad Foundation. We have developed two school facilities initiatives to reduce the backlog of work orders in the school system and we have worked diligently on accelerating the process by which surplus school buildings are made available to public charter schools in need of space.

Strengthening the current system of early childhood care and education programs in the District has the potential to yield some of the best results for our long-term education reform efforts.

Whether we are working to ensure that children are prepared when they enter elementary school or identifying issues that can impede a child's education and implementing the appropriate

interventions, aligning efforts between early childhood and the k-12 system is an important focus of the Fenty administration. My office has completed a draft multi-year plan to enhance the quality and availability of early childhood education opportunities. The recommendations were reviewed on several occasions by a working group of experts representing numerous sectors.

In addition to this substantial education-related policy work, my staff is also coordinating and facilitating support from other District agencies in support of the needs of the public education system. We coordinated with the City Administrator and the Office of Property Management to provide additional technical manpower to address an overwhelming number of schools that were without heat during severe cold periods in January and February. In February, the Mayor learned of new concerns regarding potential lead contamination in the drinking water at schools. I immediately convened a working group comprised of staff from the EPA, DCPS, OCA, DCWASA, the D.C. departments of Environment and Health, and Serve DC to develop and implement an accelerated testing schedule that included providing bottled water to every DCPS school until each school could be tested and all fountains were determined to be safe or taken out of service for repair.

In preparation for the transition in governance and administration of the school system, we felt it was critical to conduct a comprehensive review of the school system's finances, operations, and management structure. With a generous contribution from the non-profit District of Columbia Education Compact, private firms were engaged to conduct these critical reviews which should be complete by the end of September. Rather than just doing another 'study' – we already have plenty of those in the District – we have structured the work to encompass key areas and produce actual deliverables that we can use to realign resources to support our main objective: high quality educational opportunity and increased student achievement. By providing the Chancellor

with an in-depth analysis of how the school system currently operates and spends its funds and recommendations for more efficient management and funding plans, we hope to give Ms. Rhee additional tools to enact reforms faster and more effectively. These consultants, at the direction of the Chancellor, have focused on three priority areas which will lay the foundation for her reform efforts:

- Opening of Schools – ensuring that schools open on August 27 fully-staffed and with the resources and materials teachers and students need in order to be successful.
- Building a culture of customer service – analyzing the weaknesses in the DCPS customer service model and creating mechanisms that will transform the school system, at both the central administration and the local school level, into a system that communicates effectively and responds efficiently to its customers and stakeholders.
- Establishing principal accountability – developing an accountability system for principals that is driven by student achievement, not compliance.

The District's public education system faces many challenges. It will take a collective strategic effort, along with the resources, human capital, and a strong system of accountability, to accomplish our goals. Under the leadership of the Mayor, we are acting aggressively to meet the urgency of the situation, but also deliberately to address the complexity of the problem. We firmly believe that our efforts over the past few months, including the planning, reviews, surveys, development, and implementation of policies provide a solid framework through which we can and will succeed.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak about the Mayor's education reform initiative. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.