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2 Councilmember David Grosso

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Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

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11 A PROPOSED RESOLUTION  
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16 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
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21 To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to ensure that District of  
22 Columbia Public Schools students who have received a passing grade, notwithstanding  
23 unexcused absences, are promoted to the next grade or allowed to graduate by the end of  
24 the 2017-2018 school year.

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26 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
27 resolution may be cited as the "School Promotion and Graduation Fairness Emergency  
28 Declaration Resolution of 2018".  
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30 Sec. 2. (a) There exists an immediate need to to ensure academically-qualified students  
31 are promoted to the next grade or are able to graduate by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

32 (b) In the 2015-2016 school year, District of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS") rolled  
33 out a new Secondary School Grading Policy that linked attendance in a course to a student's final  
34 grade.

35 (c) In November 2017, local and national media outlets published several stories alleging  
36 that DCPS had improperly graduated many students.

37 (d) In response to these reports, Mayor Muriel Bowser directed the Office of the State  
38 Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”) to analyze student-level attendance and graduation  
39 outcomes at all public high schools.

40 (e) On January 16, 2018, OSSE released a report that found that in 2014-2015 through  
41 2016-2017 school years, seniors graduated despite their attendance.

42 (f) OSSE also contracted with performance-improvement firm Alvarez & Marsal to  
43 conduct an audit and investigation of DCPS high schools’ graduation policy adherence during  
44 2016-2017 school year.

45 (g) On January 26, 2018, Alvarez & Marsal released the “Final Report: District of  
46 Columbia Public Schools Audit and Investigation” (“Report”), which found many  
47 inconsistencies with DCPS’ policies and processes, including the misuse of credit recovery,  
48 failure to follow attendance-related grading policies, and a lack of training, support, and  
49 oversight from DCPS across all high schools.

50 (h) The Report also noted that the D.C. Municipal Regulations do not clearly outline the  
51 standards for grade reduction and failure due to absences or the operation of credit recovery  
52 programs.

53 (i) Additionally, the Report noted that high school administrators and staff misinterpreted  
54 a clause in the Washington Teacher’s Union Collective Bargaining Agreement to mean that  
55 teachers have complete autonomy over how they grade their students and that the attendance-  
56 related grading policy was an optional guideline rather than a mandate.

57 (l) On February 28, 2018, DCPS sent a response to Councilmember David Grosso’s  
58 February 12, 2018, letter stating that all scheduled in-person training sessions to review

59 attendance and grading policies with high school teams concluded on March 13, 2018, in the  
60 middle of the third term of the 2017-2018 school year, which ended on April 6, 2018.

61 (m) From the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year through March 13, 2018, students  
62 relied on their teachers' understanding of the discretionary application of DCPS attendance and  
63 grading policies.

64 (n) Therefore, Council approval is necessary to ensure that students who received  
65 passing grade, notwithstanding unexcused absences, and relied on the previously communicated  
66 attendance and grading policies will be promoted to the next grade or graduate by June 15, 2018,  
67 the last day of the 2017-2018 school year.

68 Sec. 3. The Council determines that the circumstances enumerated in section 2 constitute  
69 emergency circumstances making it necessary that the School Promotion and Graduation  
70 Fairness Emergency Amendment Act of 2018 be adopted after a single reading.

71 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.