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2 Chairman Phil Mendelson


Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

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6 A PROPOSED RESOLUTION
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11 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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16 To declare the existence of an emergency related to ensuring our public schools are prepared for
17 the full return to in-person learning in August 2022, during the upcoming Council recess,
18 including the readiness of school facilities, compliance with routine pediatric
19 immunization requirements, and DCPS' clearance process for staff, volunteers, and
20 contractors.
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22 RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
23 resolution may be cited as the "Back-to-School Safely Emergency Declaration Resolution of
24 2022".

25 Sec. 2.

26 (a) The Department of General Services (DGS) is responsible for maintaining DC Public
27 Schools (DCPS) buildings and ensuring students and teachers enjoy a safe learning environment.
28 Public charter school Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are responsible for maintaining their own
29 facilities and receive a generous facilities allowance of over \$3,400 per pupil to pay for capital and
30 maintenance costs. Unfortunately, several public schools were not ready for the full return to in-
31 person learning in August 2021. Councilmembers and community members touring public school
32 facilities observed broken HVAC systems, holes in the wall, and leaky roofs as well as supplies
33 shortages and missing or broken technology. Leaders cited supply chain concerns as reasons for
34 delays in parts and work.

35 (b) Ensuring adequate indoor air circulation is one of the most important preventative
36 measures to stop the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, responsible for infecting people with
37 COVID-19. It is imperative that all public schools have fully functioning HVAC systems, HEPA
38 filters and indoor air quality monitors to ensure students remain safe from the virus.

39 (c) Students also need comfortable learning environments, so indoor air temperature is also
40 important to ensure each school is adequately prepared for the start of school. August and
41 September often include average temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit – pushing our buildings’
42 electrical and cooling systems to the brink.

43 (d) School facilities must also be safe from other external threats. All public schools should
44 already have exterior locking doors that fully function to prevent uninvited entry. School facilities
45 should also have interior doors that lock to prevent intruders from entering classrooms without
46 permission. Given recent school shootings from around the country, the District must be confident
47 that its public school facilities have the security infrastructure in place to keep all students safe.
48 This also includes a fire alarm system and security systems which help link alarms to appropriate
49 emergency responders and protect valuable school property during nights and weekends.

50 (e) Technology remains an essential part of learning in the 21st century, whether in-person
51 or at home during situational distance learning. Students need personal devices like laptops and
52 tablets to engage with the material and extend their digital literacy skills. Many teachers use
53 interactive whiteboards to deepen engagement with their lessons. The District should be able to
54 report on the status of its learning technology and where there may be gaps.

55 (f) As evidenced in the Council’s recent roundtable on the District’s “No Shots, No School”
56 immunization attendance policy, there are significant gaps in compliance with routine pediatric
57 immunization requirements. According to data shared by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for

58 Education (DME) approximately 25% of DCPS and public charter school students are not in
59 compliance as of June 14, 2022. The Mayor and the Council have committed to fully enforcing
60 the immunization attendance policy in school year 2022-23, which includes requirements to not
61 allow students to attend if they are out of compliance after 20 school days. The Council needs
62 more reporting and information on students' compliance with requirements to better track the
63 status of this important initiative at the start of this school year.

64 (g) Dozens of teachers and out-of-school-time (OST) staff were prevented from starting
65 their work on time during school year 2021-22 because of delays in the DCPS clearance process.
66 Adjustments were made, including using a different contractor, but delays remain a concern and
67 something that could negatively impact students' learning environment if they remain an issue
68 through August 2022. Further, because the process remains in flux, the Council and the public
69 have no visibility into the status of applicants and whether this remains an issue for the fall.

70 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances
71 enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the Back-
72 to-School Safely Emergency Amendment Act of 2022 be adopted after a single reading.

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