



Public Hearing on DCPS Technology Equity Act of 2021

Committee of the Whole

Friday, November 5, 2021

To: Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole members

From: Yizel Romero

Date: November 5, 2021

Good morning Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Yizel Romero and I am a proud parent of 3 children. I am a student at Briya, my kids Henry and Daniella attend Mundo Verde and Kevin goes to DCI. I also serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Ward 7 PLE Board.

Thank you for welcoming me here to talk about the District of Columbia Public Schools Technology Equity Act of 2021:

I am testifying today because we can all see that the future is in Technology! And if we want to prepare our kids for this new world, we need to make sure that kids **AND** parents have access to quality technology devices and high speed internet that they know how to use.

The first thing I want to say is thank you to the Mayor and Council! Our family only has to pay \$9.99 for internet access each month because of the Connect DC program. This is good because it is how my kids do their homework and how we stay connected in the world. However, the internet isn't enough! We deserve *high quality, high speed internet*. When just one of my children is logged in, it works. But as soon as someone else tries, it freezes. This was okay earlier in the Pandemic, because during full-time virtual learning, the school was very flexible. The schools would allow the kids to hand in work a little late if they needed to. But now that we are

back in person, the kids are basically expected to be back to normal. It's not fair that they can't be connected at the same time! They're missing valuable opportunities for learning. I know our leaders are working hard to make sure that everyone has good internet access, which supports their education with this bill!

I hope that the multi-year technology plan and practical digital literacy training mentioned in this bill includes making sure that *all* parents can support their kids. As parents we need to know how to navigate the internet because the more we know, the more active we can be when we help our kids with homework.

Communication is important in this plan too! You have to remember that many parents want to be involved, but might not have the right tools. I am a part of the Latino community and many Spanish speaking parents are starting from different levels. Many have not graduated from university and don't have experience with technology. We are concerned about internet safety and what sites our young kids have access to. A lot of times, people in my community just block all the sites because they're scared. But if we support them with *how* to manage internet safety, parents will know more about it and about which platforms and sites can help their kids in school.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our District. I hope you will continue with this bill to make sure that all families have access to high speed high quality internet. And to make sure that we have access to information about *how* to get the help we need to learn more; this includes communication and outreach that is targeted to Latinos and other special communities.

Yizel Romero

Ward 7 PLE Board Member