



Public Oversight Hearing on DCPS Technology Equity Act of 2021 Committee of the Whole

To: Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole members

From: Marcia Huff

Date: November 18, 2021

Greetings Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Marcia Huff and I am a proud parent of two children that attend Two Rivers PCS located in Ward 5. We live in the Marshall Heights community located in Ward 7. I serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Ward 7 PLE board and I also have the honor of serving as the Ward 7 Policy Captain. In addition to my work with PAVE, I serve as the Deputy Director of the Young Women's Project (YWP) a DC nonprofit that builds the leadership and power of young people so that they can shape DC policies and institutions to expand rights and opportunities.

Thank you for this opportunity to engage in discussion about the DCPS Technology Equity Act of 2021.

I am testifying today because I want to see students all over the city have access to the technology that they need to thrive and succeed in school and life. At YWP, we work with high school interns from all DCPS schools and a number of charter schools and student access to technology varies greatly. Overall, our interns from schools located west of the river such as Wilson, School Without Walls, and Banneker have their own Chromebooks or laptops that they use in their classes and they are able to take their devices home but many of our interns from east of the river lack devices. Many of these students say that they rarely use computers in their classes or for their work. This is troubling for many reasons. One--we are a technology driven world. Most of the jobs students will have require computer literacy and familiarity with technology. The same

for college or other post-secondary training programs. This is putting students at a disadvantage compared to their peers who have access. I also notice that students lacking access are less comfortable with computer programs, email, and online research.

This legislation is important for my family because we have two elementary school children who regularly use technology to learn and grow. We are fortunate to have multiple tablets, an Ipad, laptops, and Chromebooks in our home. We also have reliable internet service. Our children are able to read books online, view educational (and pleasure) videos, and use technology to explore the world. We are able to travel around DC and visit different locations from Zanzibar to San Juan from our Marshall Heights home. At school our son's class has been using Google Maps to learn about DC history and geography and at home he continued this work. He learned the walking directions from his school to our home and explored Kingman Island while sitting on his bed. He learns about history and researches topics that come up in books that he is reading. Our home technology allows him to go deeper on subjects that he learns at school and receive help in math, writing, and reading.

In the words of our 8 year old son Sebastian (3rd grade) on why he likes to have internet access and a computer at home--"I can really look at things at home online on my own without having teachers to tell me what to look up. I like when I can go to the internet and find the information on the things I want to write to say. I learn about a lot of stuff like how to play my video games, how to do a front flip, or how to create science stuff like purple water." I am also amazed that our son is able to use Google Drive, create presentations, and navigate technology independently and with confidence. At his school there isn't 1:1 ratio or frequent access therefore his home access was essential. A friend also hosts weekly yoga and math sessions on Sunday morning and without his Chromebook he wouldn't be able to participate in these awesome sessions.

Our 4 year old daughter (PK4) uses her tablet and the Chromebook to listen to books on YouTube or through the DCPL website. Technology has helped with learning her letters, numbers, rhyming, and other important skills. While it is fun to work with mom and dad she also enjoys learning assistance from Elmo or Jack Hartman. Many kids love technology and we should tap into this to engage them with the learning process.

Students also need access to a computer and the internet to access services and resources for enrichment, career and college planning, and mental health (behavioral health). Schools should use their websites more intentionally so that students and families can access critical information and services.

I like that the DCPS Technology Equity Act of 2021 seeks to ensure that there is a 1:1 student and teacher device ratio and that the Act seeks to ensure access both at home and in school. This is critical! Students need the space to use computers to learn and research. Their parents need this access as well. This is an issue we need to act on right now! Our students, especially those east of the river need immediate access therefore I hope that the implementation timelines are accelerated.

I would love to see students and parents actively involved in the development of the technology plans. I recommend creation of student and parent task forces so that there is a formal method for meaningful input and contribution to the decisions that are being made. These plans should be driven by the needs of students and their families to be most effective.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our District.