

**Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin
Committee of the Whole
Teacher and Principal Retention
Tuesday, November 28th 2023**

Good Afternoon Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and DC Council staff.

My name is Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin. I am the mother of two girls, 1 at Eagle Academy Public Charter School Capitol Riverfront and the other at Dunbar Sr. High School. I am a product of DCPS, Ward 8 resident, 4th Grade Reading teacher in PGCPs, and the granddaughter of the late Lawrence E. Boone, who was a hard working dedicated Washingtonian, DCPS Principal that now has a school named after him due to his decades of hardwork in the community. I serve on the Citywide and Ward 8 PAVE PLE Board and am ready to see my city live up to its promise of a great education for all families and a great place for all educators to work and stay in schools.

I just recently spoke with a DCPS teacher about teacher shortage and safety in the classrooms she stated...

“The biggest piece is getting a contract done, we have a major teacher shortage, teachers are covering multiple classes a week and the few of us still left are not being valued by the city.”

Teachers are tired of failing kids because of the “stay on the curriculum” policy. It’s like no one cares if the kids learn or catch on to the topic of learning. Some teachers even feel that more high schools need to cater the students towards a career in modern life. Society has changed technology and careers. A lot of subjects the teachers are trying to teach, you won’t see them or use them again in life. Woodshop mechanics, home economics, early childhood classes, cursive writing, and learning to write resumes - to name a few - are missing out of school.

Being from an educational family background of principals, VP, chairpersons, crisis intervention specialists, general and special education teachers, on every educational levels from elementary to college professors, let it be known that Teachers felt that they are not being supported when items are needed in the classrooms. Working in schools is a tough job - one of the toughest there is, but it's also one of the most important and rewarding. Student behaviors in the classroom and in schools have so many teachers leaving and will continue to leave DCPS

because of the constant threats and attacks from students. It's not safe physically, emotionally, or mentally to deal with that. We need to make it attractive and sustainable for people who look like and come from the same community as our kids and families to come and stay here.

It makes such a difference as a teacher if you can “grow up” in one school district - and there are simple yet effective steps DC can take to recruit teachers to come to and stay in our schools. DC has some “grow your own” programs, but we need to make sure they are competitive so our Native Washingtonians stay in our schools. I believe DCPS should adopt a universal curriculum and a teacher led evaluation system similar to PGCPs, which has shown a positive response from staff. Also looking at other unions to see how they have strengthen and successfully fought for and won contracts.

In summary, Teacher transfers, quitting, early retirement, or early forced retirements because of the in and out of school policies and curriculums are not fun for them to teach any more. They change very often and it just doesn't make sense. My mom was let go after 25 years as a Highly Effective teacher with DCPS in Spring 2009, under the Michelle Rhee era. She was Highly Effective in the Fall until the new evaluation system kicked in, then it falsely stated she and 200 other teachers with 25 plus years of service, were considered no longer effective.) This is not how we are to treat our “seasoned” teachers and another reason why a lot of our surrounding area teachers, who have 10 plus years experience would not dare to transfer to DCPS among other things. Not having a contract but expecting for teachers to continue to give there all is

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin

Ward 8 and Citywide PAVE PLE Board Member