

Dear Candidate,

We are writing to invite you to complete the following questionnaire of the Washington Teachers' Union's Committee on Political Education (COPE).

You will also be invited to be interviewed in person by WTU members in March.

Please send the completed questionnaire by close of business **March 2<sup>nd</sup>** to [cope@wtulocal6.net](mailto:cope@wtulocal6.net)

Respectfully,

Laura Fuchs, Committee Chair of the Committee on Political Education (COPE)

cc: Elizabeth Davis, President and Executive Board, Washington Teachers' Union

**Candidate Information:**

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**Important Note on completion of the questionnaire:** The best way to complete this questionnaire is to fill it out in Microsoft Word and type your responses in to the boxes below the question (they will expand as you go).

**Please call COPE Chair Laura Fuchs** at 202/683-7981 if you have any questions or concerns.

## 1. Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education in the District of Columbia

A high-quality public education for all children is an economic necessity, an anchor of democracy, and a moral imperative and fundamental civil right, without which none of our rights can be realized fully.

### What steps will you take to ensure that:

- Neighborhood schools are in walking distance from the homes of students.

I believe in neighborhood schools and think that having a strong connection between the school and neighborhood ultimately helps strengthen both. We really need them to be centers of community engagement and learning, not just school buildings. This is how schools worked when I was a child, and from kindergarten through high school I walked to school -- which included four schools in different parts of town. I would like to see a better alignment between DCPS schools and DC Charter schools, especially when it comes to location. While DCPS schools inherently serve neighborhoods first by having boundaries, Charter Schools don't function this way. Understanding that Charter Schools have a certain level of independence, they still provide public education with public money. Therefore there should be public input into the location of future charter schools and as a policy, proposed school locations should be reviewed so that they are opened in neighborhoods that do not have schools within walking distance.

- Teachers are well-prepared, supported, have manageable class sizes and have time to collaborate so they can meet the individual needs of every child;

Having grown up in a family that included three generations of educators, I understand the importance of supporting teachers and the value we get when they are well-paid and have the resources necessary to teach. Today, the city puts a lot of attention on school modernization projects, and these are important. Equally important is having a teachers contract with fair salaries, and putting money in the budget to pay for school supplies, library books, teacher's aides and nurses, and everything else that will lead to success. We also need to decouple teacher evaluations from student test scores. Where we have crowded classrooms, we need to explore building additions or new schools, or hiring additional teachers. The District talks a good game when it comes to education, but I've yet to see the same commitment when decisions are made related to education funding in the budget.

- Our children have an engaging curriculum that includes art, music social studies the sciences and vocational education;

Here again I can't agree more. Not every child is college bound and many trades provide interesting, well paying jobs. For success, children need art, music, social studies, and physical education. We need well-rounded experiences if we are to achieve successful outcomes. I myself was in chorus and madrigals in high school as well as art and shop classes. It taught me that there is a lot in the world that you can not learn from a book. Many of the skills I learned in those classes I used later in life, and they've helped me maintain an open mind to new people and ways of thinking -- and a path to being a lifelong learner. One goal I will advocate for is to have an emphasis on vocational education, one idea I've had is to create a program whereby high school students partner with the District government and local trade unions to renovate District-owned vacant properties over the summer. This would teach the skills of carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, etc., so that students would be able to pursue any of those trades for a future career. Also, by fixing up vacant properties we could get these properties off the District inventory and back into productive use serving families in need of housing.

- Children have access to wraparound services to meet their social, emotional and health needs.

Access to wraparound services is essential for student achievement in many communities, but in the District of Columbia where poverty, violence, and a seemingly growing achievement gap are all too real for many students, it is a necessity. More importantly, we need to strengthen the connections between agencies like the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the Department of Health's School Health Services and our schools so that those who are trained and experienced in providing for the social, emotional, and health needs of students can do so. I am a strong advocate of the services DBH and DOH provide, but know that they are underfunded and understaffed.

In 2016 the DOH planned to change the way nurses were assigned to city schools. While I believe DOH's stated intention was to create a more holistic approach to providing healthcare for children that focused on preventive measures, the stricter policy would have resulted in many schools losing their full-time nurse. DOH's proposal, in reality, likely had more to do with funding salaries for nurses. This is a clear case where the DC Council should be providing Oversight during the annual budget process to ensure that we have full funding for school nurses.

We also need to strengthen and broaden the services of school mental health care providers as well, especially with the violence that exists in our community and in schools nationwide. While DC has been fortunate to not have violence on the scale of Parkland, the violence that can find a child in DC is not limited to schools, yet it does impact the school community. In May 2014 a 6 year-old student who lives in public housing was struck by a stray bullet while playing on a playground. While she physically recovered, it was the kindness of the teachers, faculty, and staff at the Bruce-Monroe @ Park View School that really helped address some of her emotional needs by organizing a neighborhood parade with her as the grand marshal the following month. Not every child receives this level of emotional support, but it makes a difference and we need to be committed to having staff and professionals in our schools on a regular basis to provide this type of support.

Lastly, and more tangentially related, I would like to strengthen the relationships between schools and recreation centers. Where possible, we need to co-locate recreation centers with schools so that we have more integrated programming between the two, efficiently and effectively expanding the hours, services, and programming available to our children. We not only need to exercise the mind, but also the body and provide opportunities for children to develop socially, thus strengthening the relationships between students, teachers, and the greater neighborhood.

- How will you ensure that there is funding for these policies?

Much of this is budget related, and I will solidly advocate for the funding to be in the budget. If the Mayor fails to include money in the budget, I will work with my fellow councilmembers to find adequate funding in the budget for these items. Through oversight, I will also make sure that money that each school is allocated based on enrollment numbers and student needs will be in the budget for each school and not used in lieu of regularly dedicated school funding. I would also like to see the establishment of an Enrollment Contingency Fund, so schools that receive additional students after the October enrollment count will have the necessary funds to accommodate mid-year student enrollments and transfers. To address mid-year student transfers, I will also advocate for there to be a mid-school year count day in addition to the current October count so that the money each school gets per student follows students when they change schools.

Areas where I will support greater funding are in the Office and Commission on Out of School Time (OST) Grants and Youth Outcomes and for First Steps and the CDA training and scholarships. Increased OST funding allows us to better serve the diverse and high-need student through new and better programming. First Steps and the CDA training and scholarships create opportunities and development of our local workforce, but additional funding is needed for the programs because early care and learning workers are some of the most poorly paid workers in education.

- How will you ensure that the mayor enforces these policies in an equitable manner?

Oversight, sustained advocacy, collaboration, and the bully pulpit. Supporting educators, and everything they need to succeed, is key to a good educational system in the District of Columbia. The way to ensure the mayor enforces policies in an equitable manner is by oversight during budget and performance oversight hearings, advocating for budgets that provide for the needs of the school system, collaborating with other Councilmembers, and when all else fails by talking to parents, teachers, and members of the Press directly. If we truly value teachers, students, and our communities; we must work together to achieve success. I believe in success and that Ward 1 needs a leader who is inclusive, engaged, and responsive.

## 2. Closing the Achievement Gap

Currently, more than 100,000 students attend our city's public schools. The teachers, paraprofessionals and other school employees who work with these students each day care deeply about the quality of public schools and the education their students receive. But the fact remains that the city's achievement gap remains at an unacceptably high level.

In your opinion, why do you believe the achievement gap persists in Washington, DC?

Factors leading to achievement gaps include hunger, testing and teaching methods that may not be culturally aligned to students, do not take into account socio-economic factors, and a reliance on technology and computers for testing when children from lower income families don't have access to these tools on a regular basis. Given the constraints of the IMPACT evaluation, teachers are further hindered from providing holistic, hands-on and interactive teaching opportunities. Without the ability to meet students' social and emotional needs through emotionally safe learning communities, the achievement gap will continue to widen rather than narrow.

Truancy is still too high in the District, and this has a significant impact on achievement -- but truancy is often a symptom, not the cause. Reasons leading to truancy can range from parents who are unengaged to children who need to help care for siblings or are caught by delayed public transportation. Additionally, some of our high schools lock their doors once school begins and do not allow late students to attend classes for the entire day. This has a significant demoralizing impact on students who are taught that the school does not care about them or their success. This can lead to students who later decide to just not try. We must not punish children by stripping away their civil right to education due to circumstances beyond their control.

What policies will you support to close the achievement gap?

I will support any policy that is evidence-based and has demonstrated a real and sustainable reduction in

the District's achievement gap. Specifically, we need policies that empower teachers to provide holistic teaching approaches and find ways to meet the emotional needs of our students. We also need to stop the practice of locking schools and denying children who are late from attending classes. Lastly, we need to find ways to ensure that all students have regular and sustained access to computers and technology -- even outside the classroom.

How are you going to ensure transparency in the budgeting process and make certain school funds (like Title I, Special Education, English Language Learners, and At-Risk Funding) are being spent where they are legally required, most needed and where those funds will provide the most benefit to students?

I would like to see the creation of an online portal that tracks school funding, by school, for all funding streams -- from At-Risk Funding to English Language Learners to school modernization projects, etc. For money to be moved from one school to another, I would advocate for the system to require an explanation/purpose statement when funding is moved so that there is a trail that can be followed including the decision tree.

Would you support forensic accounting by the DC Auditor of DC Public Schools and DC Public Charter Schools budgets to ensure the money is being spent in direct service to students? Why or why not?

Yes, I would support this. The District spends a lot of money on education, yet it seems like many needs are still unmet and underfunded. Before we can dedicate more money to schools and students, we need to understand how the current funding is being used, what its paying for, and if there is waste in the spending stream. As this is public money, it is fiscally responsible to review if it is being spent where it is needed and effectively. Knowing this helps make the argument for additional funding where needed.

DC Public and DC Public Charter Schools take on many large-scale initiatives in an attempt to address the achievement gap. One example is introducing models of computer-based "personalized learning" that include the purchasing and disbursement of large amounts of computer technology and purchasing expensive computer program licenses like Edgenuity.

How do you propose overseeing these funds and guaranteeing that they are being spent in an effective and equitable manner?

By working with the other Councilmembers during the oversight hearings, and in the case of an online portal by introducing legislation directing its creation and effectively working with the executive and DCPS to get it built and implemented.

DC Public Schools also takes on a large number of initiatives in the local schools that require a lot of resources without providing additional funding. An example of this type of unfunded mandate is "LEAP," a program that requires teachers to collaborate and engage in weekly professional development. On its surface, a program like this sounds good, but it has large time requirements, removes teachers from classrooms and led to higher class sizes for the remaining teachers without additional funding. Despite repeated requests DCPS has yet to provide additional funds for this program and is leading to teacher

burnout and increased churn.

How will you oversee the implementation of DCPS initiatives and make sure that local schools are being adequately staffed and resourced to carry them out?

I do not support creating additional requirements for education when the funding necessary to implement them is not also included. This is irresponsible. Any effort that is aimed at improving education and teacher professional development must also have the funding necessary for implementation. My position on any efforts that have potential, such as “LEAP,” would be to vote for the mandate with the condition that enforcement of the mandate would not occur until necessary funding was dedicated. I also believe that enforcement of past mandates should not occur until funding is identified.

### 3. Testing and Accountability

Since *No Child Left Behind* was passed, and now under the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, annual standardized tests have been used to determine student proficiency levels. This testing data has been used primarily for making high-stakes decisions—reconstituting or closing schools and terminating staff. Proficiency levels have been criticized as providing inaccurate measures of the effectiveness of schools that serve students who are behind academically. For example, a school that helped all of their students learn one year of material still would have a low proficiency rating if those students had started a year or more behind grade-level.

Alternately, student growth models have been developed to determine how many years of academic growth students have made each year. Such models require that the school system has accurate measures of each student’s skill mastery. This data then can be used to inform and adapt instruction. Acquiring this level of data requires tests that are adaptive — those designed to capture what a student knows, rather than simply whether they are performing at grade level.

#### **What do you believe is the primary purpose of standardized testing?**

The current purpose of standardized testing does not strike me as an instrument design to measure learning or educational success. It appears to be used to make decisions on school operations, whether schools should remain open, and even which teachers should get raises, be retained or terminated. This does not create an environment where education can thrive and has, at times, lead to a higher emphasis on getting students to pass the tests or event altering the test scores to make the schools have a false appearance of success. Testing is necessary, and tests should be as standardized as possible, but testing should not be linked to anything other than measuring the individual progress of each student. The purpose of education is to teach students 1) the basic information they need to to be successful in life, and 2) the ability to be a critical thinker. A successful education teaches students how to teach themselves when they encounter a subject and want to learn more. We need to instill curiosity, and how to feed that curiosity whether in the classroom or in the home.

Who do you believe benefits from standardized testing, and how do they benefit?

The chief beneficiary from standardized testing seems to be the school system and bureaucracy. By taking the human element out of education through standardization, the school system and government attempts to make the act of education easy to quantify, measure, and count. This is then used to determine “success” and “progress”, though I argue that true education and learning isn’t accurately measured by this process.

There are teachers who do not have access to their current students detailed PARCC Score breakdowns in math and English, which are important to informing instruction and students mastering the material. How will you help get teachers access to this data?

Not allowing teachers access to PARCC Scores is akin to not allowing surgeons to use scalpels. Teachers must have access to all the resources they need to succeed and education their pupils. If access to PARCC scores is being denied due to a policy decision, the Council's oversight role could provide the leverage to change such a policy. If this fails, then the next action would be to consider legislation to require that this basic information be available for review when necessary.

**Do you believe teachers should be rated using test scores? Why or why not?**

No, teachers should not be rated using test scores. I previously stated that we need to decouple teacher evaluations from student test scores and I would support removing test scores as part of the evaluation process. There are a number of factors that lead to success, and not all of them are within the control of teachers. Teachers should be rated on their ability to educate and inspire young minds. To achieve the best educational outcomes, teachers need the flexibility to adapt their methods to the individual needs of each student. Test scores should be used to inform instructional practice and to see if current instructional methods are working or need to change.

Will you advocate with the Mayor and OSSE to switch to Common Core-aligned adaptive tests over non-adaptive tests? Why or why not?

Yes. To excel in education we must accept that not every student learns the same way, and similarly not all students test the same way. Some students do not naturally learn or test the way our education system is set up. If our goal is truly to teach and educate, we must embrace adaptive methods when we know it will increase success and lead to a more accurate measure of student progress.

#### **4. Governance of our Public Schools**

In 2007 the majority of the City Council supported the mayor in changing the governance structure of DC Public Schools. The School Board no longer would be in charge of hiring and overseeing a school Superintendent, putting all of that authority under the mayor. The mayor was also given the authority to hire a position titled "Chancellor." In most jurisdictions, School Superintendents have to pass rigorous coursework in educational leadership, receive state certification and have experience in leading. Chancellors, on the other hand, do not have the same level of requirements. The WTU believes that under the system of Mayoral Control there are no longer adequate systems of checks and balances when it comes to the governance of our public schools.

Will you introduce and/or support legislation that returns the power of oversight and hiring of a superintendent for DC Public Schools to a duly elected school board? Why or why not?

Over the past year, and in particular during the past few weeks, I've come to the position that the State Board of Education and/or some version of the former School Board needs to be empowered to guide education, make decisions related to a school superintendent, and even play a role in school principals and achievement. Restoring a DCPS Superintendent, someone who is accredited with a background in education would be a significant step in the right direction. The strongest tool we have in any situation is

oversight and a system of checks and balances. I do not believe that a School Board needs to manage facilities and facility maintenance. This works well and rightly belongs under the District Government as it has a direct link to the annual budget and neighborhood infrastructure needs.

One of the strongest reasons I can think of for having responsibility shared between a School Board and District government comes down to advocacy. In the current structure (where teachers ultimately report to a Chancellor and fall under the purview of the Deputy Mayor for Education) teachers are largely silenced from open advocacy and council testimony to bring to light the challenges their schools face. This is wrong. Teachers need to be free to participate in any public forum where their experience adds so much to the dialogue. Currently, teachers are largely denied this right and may face disciplinary action if they publicly engage. This leaves them with no choice but to rely on parents and allies, who may not always fully understand an issue or have the same priorities as educators.

Local School Advisory Teams (LSATs) are required civic bodies within our schools that include is a group of elected and appointed members. The team (formerly the Local School Restructuring Teams) consists of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff, a community member, and in some cases students, to advise the principal on matters that promote high expectations and high achievement for all students. The current implementation of LSATs has been wildly uneven throughout the District, with some schools having regular meetings and a principal who works with them, and others where the principal does not authentically engage. Under the current framework communities facing the latter are unable to do much about it, the “Advisory” being treated as such.

Will you introduce and/or support legislation that increases the power of the LSATs to empower parents, teachers and community within our local public schools? Why or why not?

I am definitely interested in finding a way to solve this problem and make LSATs more than “advisory”. As an elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC) for 8 years, I have personally encountered the same uneven responsiveness that LSATs face. Some District agencies work with with ANCs and are true partners with us. Other are dismissive of our input and brush it off as being merely “advisory”. I have found that when an ANC functions in a professional level and sticks to the merits of each issue, we tend to get a lot more respect and develop much stronger relationships leading to better outcomes. ANCs that don’t operate in this way are far less successful.

Where I would start is by requiring school principals, and others, that disagree with LSAT recommendations to explain why they disagree so that there can be a dialogue and an open process. We should also look at the selection process for the members of LSATs, and if some LSATs are underperforming, we should consider orientation and training for new LSAT members so that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their role successfully.

In order to ensure accountability for our schools, will you support higher protections and additional oversight for whistleblowers who are then subject to retaliation?

Absolutely, I believe I answered this in part above. We need to empower everyone who has the best interests of our schools, teachers, students, and education system to be fully engaged and able to participate without fear of retaliation. We are stronger when we work together to solve our most

difficult challenges.

Washington DC is one of the few jurisdictions where public school teachers are not allowed to run for public office. In 2012 President Obama signed a law that removed District Government employees from following the Federal Hatch Act, but the DC Council enacted a law to maintain the same principles.

Will you be willing to introduce and/or support an update to the 2010 Local Hatch Act that allows teachers to run for public office?

Yes, I believe school teachers in the District of Columbia should have the same rights and privileges as any other jurisdiction in the United States. I feel even more strongly about this for DC since we are a small jurisdiction with an incredible number of talented residents and teachers. We want our brightest and most capable residents to be engaged civically, including serving in public office.

Like teachers, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners were once limited by the Hatch Act, but that changed in 2012. So, having personally served in a position that has been impacted by both sides of Hatch Act restrictions I believe that public school teachers should have the same opportunities that others have been given. Lastly, I think it would be incredibly powerful to have a former teacher as a member of the DC Council.

## **5. Cultivating Labor-Management Collaboration**

In order to fulfill the promise of public education, the WTU believes the input of teachers and school employees is critical to the successful implementation of sustainable school reform. The collective bargaining process is the best way to guarantee that educators have a meaningful role in developing and implementing strategies to help students reach high academic standards. This includes the WTU having a meaningful voice in designing and implementing professional development, curricula and evaluation systems.

Specifically, how will you support the WTU in being more included in the process?

I want teachers and educators to be full participants in our public process. Currently, those with practical day-to-day classroom experience are denied the opportunity to add their voices to the dialogue on education. This weakens the discussion and is not leading us to superior solutions. Drawing from the questions above, the actions I would take and/or support include:

- Updating the Local Hatch Act to empower educators to participate in public office;
- Protecting teachers from whistleblowing retaliation, with legislation if needed;
- Working to empower the State Board of Education (or school board), to have more power;
- Replacing the school chancellor with a school superintendent; and,
- Permitting teachers/educators to advocate and participate in public discourse, including DC Council oversight hearings without fear of retaliation.

## **6. Serving Exceptional Students**

The District has an obligation to provide students with special needs access to educational opportunities that

are developmentally and emotionally appropriate. Due to lack of adequate staffing, oversight and targeted funding, students are not receiving their documented instructional (IEP) services — costing us millions in unnecessary lawsuits.

What structures and plans do you have to ensure students with special needs are receiving the services they need to succeed in school?

I find that many elected officials support education -- at least when they have the bully pulpit. However, I have not found that this results in the funding required to meet our educational needs. The winning approach here is a fiscally responsible one. It can be successfully argued that while providing our schools with the funding they need for success sounds expensive, it is cheaper than the cost of being out of compliance and the resulting lawsuits.

Three federal laws protect the rights of people with disabilities, which can include people with learning and attention issues. These laws are the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. I have personally leveraged these laws to get the District government to install an elevator at the Bruce-Monroe @ Park View Elementary School.

We also need to strengthen local laws, oversight, and penalties when District agencies fail to do their job. For example, when the Department of Human Services fails to provide required services time after time, the Office of Human Rights needs to have the oversight and tools necessary to effect change and compliance by DHS over time.

English Language Learners (ELL) require additional support in order to thrive in our schools. Currently too many of our schools are facing challenges adequately staffing these positions.

How will you ensure that our ELL students receive more robust and flexible resources and support?

The biggest problem I have learned around this issue is that DCPS has yet to properly invest in recruiting, hiring and providing evidence-based professional development and curriculum for ELL staff. On this issue, and similar issues, I am committed to working with the WTU to fully understand why we are having difficult staffing these positions. We should consider hiring bonuses or other incentives to attract the needed talent. Overall, we need to identify the barriers and remove them.

Will you support guaranteeing that heritage language speakers be given priority for dual language programs? Why or why not?

While the United States does not have an official language, I think we all agree that English functions as such by default, and many in the country act as if it were an official language. Because of this, we must do more for heritage language speakers to be fluent in multiple languages so that they are successful in life. It makes sense that as the US is biased toward English, especially in business, that the higher priority in dual language programs needs to be for heritage language speakers -- though there is value for all children to be in these programs. Language is a key to understanding cultures and people. There is tremendous value for all students to be in these programs.

Will you support the pending Language Access Bill and ensure that DCPS and Charter Schools enforce it? Why or why not?

I fully support the markup and passage of B22-0075, the Language Access for Education Amendment Act of 2017 (carried over from Council period 21), which requires public schools, including public charter schools, to provide essential language translation services; and expand the number of District Government agencies that are covered by the law -- provided that the necessary funding accompanies implementation of the act.

The oversight role is especially important for this issue. The current Chair of the Council's Committee on Human Services, Councilmember Brianna K. Nadeau, has not provided the adequate oversight on this issue and failed to attend the April 24, 2017, Public Hearing on B22-0075, in which testimony was shared that Bread for the City has filed more than 10 language access complaints with the Office of Human Rights against the Department of Human Services for failure to provide necessary services. In all cases, the Department of Human Services has been found to be in violation, yet the Office of Human Rights has no authority to fine or penalize the Department of Human Services or make them comply with the law. Because of the lack of enforcement authority of OHR rulings, Bread for the City has had to file a lawsuit under the D.C. Human Rights Act to seek corrective action by the Department of Human Services and secure just compensation for their clients whose rights were violated under D.C. Law. The failure of oversight on this issue is clear, and a troubling indicator that passage of the Language Access for Education bill will not be enough to make language access a reality. Legislation, no matter how well-meaning, requires constant oversight, follow-up, and follow through to ensure desired outcomes are achieved.

When schools receive a large amount of funds that are directed towards specific student populations (i.e., Special Education, English Language Learner, At-Risk) they are often finding that these funds are being used to *supplant* their general education funds instead of *supplementing* them. On the surface, it appears these schools are getting additional funding compared with schools that do not serve high levels of these populations. But, when broken down it is often apparent that these schools are receiving less general education funds than those other schools.

How will you ensure that specialty funds are not used to supplant local school budgets and our students get the fair funding they deserve?

This is largely an oversight and transparency issue. A councilmember would be able to make the biggest impact by 1) advocating for the appropriate funding levels for each school to begin with, so that the funds directed towards specific student populations is truly *supplemental* with every penny going to the students in need, and 2) advocating for the creation of a school funding portal, so that budget line items and funding streams are publically available and transparent. This will empower parents and education advocates to provide additional transparency and make it difficult for funds to be misdirected to begin with.

## **7. Holding All Schools Accountable**

What is the role of charter schools in D.C.? Do you believe they are adequately fulfilling that role?

As charter schools have a fair degree of independence, many believe they can be more innovative or have a different focus than the traditional public school. Enrollment data shows that nearly half of the children attending D.C. schools are enrolled in public charter schools with enrollment numbers trending upward. While I would prefer that Washington have a single, robust, and well performing public school system, it is clear we are going to have a mix of public and public charter schools for the foreseeable future. Because of this, we need to find a balanced way for DCPS and charter schools to coexist in a mutually beneficial way that does not harm or further erode our efforts to have outstanding traditional public schools, but rather allows traditional public schools to grow, thrive, and flourish.

We need to find a way for charter schools to be more closely aligned and held to the same standards as traditional public schools. Strategically locating charter schools to neighborhoods or areas where we currently have a lack of educational facilities would greatly increase their benefit to DC, and result in them being better able to serve as neighborhood schools. Similarly, we need to do more to ensure that charter schools are not competing with neighborhood public schools for resources like playgrounds and parks that traditional public schools historically rely on and use.

How will you ensure that charter schools are meeting the same requirements as traditional public schools, particularly as they relate to access for all students (i.e., special education and ELL)?

As both charter schools and DCPS public schools are supported by public funds, they both need to be held to the same general standards and should be part of a larger education network,

Do you believe that charter schools should be allowed to hire unlicensed teachers? Why or why not?

No. There may be exceptions on a case-by-case basis, but just as we test students to measure success we need to have similar standards for teachers, such as education and licensing.

Should charter school teachers have the right to organize and join a union? Why or why not?

Yes, any profession should have the right to organize and join a union or not. I would support the WTU opening up its membership to include charter school teachers provided that there was an understanding that by joining the union they would also be signing on to being part of the joint teacher's contract between WTU and DCPS. There would also need to be an understanding that all teachers in the union would need to have the same teaching credentials. Short of this, I would support charter school teachers being able to joining WTU with an associate membership. Ideally, I would like to see all teachers in the same union to amplify their voice. If this is not possible, charter school teachers can elected to form their own union, but I think that would be a lost opportunity.

If elected, will you introduce and/or support legislation requiring charter schools to follow the same FOIA request laws as DC Public Schools? Why or why not?

While Charter schools enjoy a certain level of autonomy, this should not be mistaken for complete independence. Access to high quality education is a fundamental civil right, and no child should be turned away from a school or encouraged to enroll elsewhere based upon special needs. All institutions supported in full or in part with District of Columbia tax dollars should be compliant with all D.C. Human Rights and FOIA laws. Recognizing the unique relationship that individual charters schools may require more assistance from the D.C. Public Charter School Board to comply with D.C. FOIA laws, I would support additional resources so that all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are fully compliant.

How will you pledge to solve the problem of misplaced and misdirected student allocations due to high student mobility from charter school to the traditional public school?

Requiring charter schools and DCPS to undergo annual audits, especially focusing on student allocations, would be where I would start. By doing these, we can both identify money that is not following students and get insight into the reasons why funds are not being transferred. This can lead to improving the reporting process and closing those gaps.

**8. Improving Early Childhood Education**

We know from research that high-quality early childhood education and care programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, preschool programs and full-day kindergarten increase the likelihood that young children, from birth to age five, will have the language and literacy foundation upon which later school success is built. Yet, as reflected in recent audit reports, universal pre-K has not been realized in the District, as too few children in our city—especially impoverished children—have access to quality early childhood programs.

How will you ensure all young learners have access to high-quality early childhood programs with appropriate funding in all parts of the city?

We need to fund these programs appropriately, but we also need to find partners to help us succeed as well. I would like to see a return and expansion of early childhood education centers located directly where they are most critically needed. For example, as poverty is a significant factor I would like to see classrooms for early childhood education set up in public housing and low-income communities. Head Start was often located in churches when I was growing up, not in schools. Such programs could also be located during the day in public housing complexes like Park Morton Apartments, Garfield Terrace, or Columbia Heights Village -- or even in recreation centers which are often located adjacent to public schools. We need to reduce and remove any and all barriers that make it difficult for parents to participate in these beneficial programs.

Achievement gaps begin before a student enters school in pre-K requiring extensive differentiation and scaffolding by the teacher to make sure all students are successful at mastering the material for their grade-level. How will you ensure that student-to-teacher ratios are low enough for our schools to be successful?

I think it is critically important for successful student-to-teacher ratios, and that ultimately requires that we have school facilities large enough to accomodate all the classrooms we need, and are able to employ enough teachers to fill those classrooms. Both require financial support which I am prepared to fight for, either higher pay for teachers with high student teacher ratios or providing a additional full-time instructional assistants in classrooms with high ratios

**9. Implementing Supportive Teacher Development and Evaluation Systems**

The best teacher evaluation systems are designed mutually with teacher unions to offer what most teachers are asking for nationwide: a system that supports the continual growth and development of teachers.

Punitive approaches to teacher evaluation systems produce a constant churn of teachers through mutual consent arrangements and cash buyout options. Studies show that students, schools and communities are

negatively affected by this lack of stability. Furthermore, every year nearly \$2 million of tax payer funds are spent by the district on early retirement and cash buyout options, leading to the perpetual separation of effective teachers and rehiring and training of new teachers.

Teachers in D.C. lost the right to bargain on teacher evaluation in 1997, and this loss means teachers' voices no longer matter in an area highly pivotal to their professional growth, career advancement and effectiveness.

As Councilmember, will you support the WTU in lobbying efforts with Congress to return the right to collectively bargain on teacher evaluation? If so, how?

I support the WTU's efforts to lobby for the return of collective bargaining and fairer teacher evaluations in any manner that is effective and fair. Whether this be to Congress for the right to collectively bargain, or to improve local policies in the District in lieu of Congressional action. Coming from a family of educators who devoted their entire professional careers to education, I know that having strong teachers with strong voices is good for education and our communities.

How will you advocate with the mayor to change the current teacher evaluation policy so that teachers are supported in improving their practice, and not simply terminated after a single year due to a sometimes flawed and highly subjective evaluation system?

It is never acceptable to terminate a teacher after a single year, or when they are just starting out and still learning their craft. Neither is it acceptable to terminate a long-term and effective teacher because their methods don't easily comply with an artificial standard. I believe the current IMPACT evaluation system has contributed to high teacher turnover rates, inflated test scores and graduation rates, and ultimately constrained teachers from practicing their craft. It is time to review the IMPACT tool and overhaul it. Just like any other job, we need to invest in the talent of our teachers as well as our students. I will strongly advocate that all teachers have a fair shot at success and a clear process to grow and thrive in their profession.

How will you help redress those who are evaluated and terminated wrongfully?

We need an ombudsman or advocate in the Office of Human Resources that is involved as a step between a poor evaluation and termination. This person should be familiar with education issues, ideally have an education background, and they need to be empowered to advocate for a teacher when they find a wrongful evaluation was conducted. Similarly, a poor evaluation needs to solidly identify where the performance has been poor and the teacher must have an opportunity to respond to this feedback and given an opportunity to improve in those areas prior to the next evaluation. When a wrongful termination has occurred, a clear legal process needs to exist so that the termination can be challenged.

Do you believe teacher churn is a problem? If so, how will you work to reduce teacher churn?

Yes, we have lost number of good teachers because we require them to perform in a tightly scripted format, giving them little to no room to adapt to the needs of their students. The focus needs to be on educating, not adhering to some rubric that isn't aligned with superior outcomes.

Churn in any profession is a problem, teacher churn is no different. We need to invest in teachers just as we are investing in children. We need a fair evaluation process, and one that provides opportunities to develop teachers where there is room to grow. No one regardless of where they are in their career can know everything and we shouldn't expect them to. What we should expect is for teachers to become more experience and proficient year-after-year, and give them the freedom and professional respect to adapt to the needs of their students. This will not happen if the teachers have no voice and are subject to capricious evaluations and reviews.

## 10. Summary

What are the three things the school district does well that you would continue to support and expand if elected?

I really struggle with finding three positive things the school district is doing well. While I am sure there are success stories, in considering education as a whole there are still so many significant challenges ahead of us to achieve the education system every child deserves.

What are the top three challenges facing public education in the District of Columbia, and how will you address them if you are elected?

It's hard to choose only three, but some of the challenges I see are the IMPACT evaluation system for assessing and rewarding the performance to teachers and other school-based staff, along with its linkage to standardized testing. Frankly, it is difficult to run an effective education system with IMPACT in place. Another significant challenge is the achievement gap, particularly between socio-economic levels, how our current system fails to adequately take into account cultural backgrounds and diversity as part of the challenge. This inequity impacts learning with regards to access to technology and the audience for whom standardized tests are written. Lastly, I think another serious challenge facing public education is poverty. As of 2017, 22% of children in the United States live in poverty. Similarly in DC, 26.7% of children live in poverty (down 3% from 2010), and in Ward 1 21% of children live in poverty. This is alarming, and I'm not sure we are really doing anything of any consequence to address it. The citywide drop of 3% from 2010 to 2017 likely has more to do with more affluent residents moving to the District than it does with providing pathways to the middle class. If we fail to truly address the effects of poverty, we are only going to see the achievement gap increase rather than diminish, which is a chilling thought.

If we endorse you and support your election, how will you work with us in the future?

I understand that effective leadership is inclusive, engaged, and responsive and have demonstrated this over the past 8 years as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, and Chair of the Commission for the past 5 years. My door will always be open and I will be ever willing to roll up my sleeves to work with representatives of the WTU to achieve a better education system -- one that respects and values teachers and is focused on education, not testing. I deeply respect the hard work teachers do every day and look forward to collaborating to amplify their voice effectively.