



Government of the District of Columbia
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

By Electronic Mail

March 24, 2024

Dr. Lewis Ferebee, Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dr. Michelle Walker-Davis, Executive Director
DC Public Charter School Board
100 M Street SE, STE 400
Washington DC 20003

RE: Immigration enforcement guidance

Chancellor Ferebee, Dr. Walker-Davis:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, at a duly noticed public meeting, with a quorum being the “majority of the total number of commissioner positions currently filled in Commission 4B,” at its March 24, 2025, meeting voted with _ Yeas, _ Nays, and _ Abstentions to send this letter expressing concerns regarding the lack of guidance at both DC Public Schools (DCPS) and DC Public Charter Schools (DCPCS) on fostering safe, welcoming, inclusive learning environments for all students regardless of immigration status.

Our DCPS and DCPCS educational institutions provide academic instruction to a diverse group of students, including immigrants and migrants, many of whom face unique challenges in accessing education of their rights and community resources.

Children need safety to learn, therefore, the Commission urges both DCPS¹ and DCPCSB² to protect all students to the fullest extent of local and federal law, consistent with [D.C. Code §§ 2-1401.01 – 2-1404.04](#) (codifying the DC Human Rights Act of 1977), [D.C. Code § 24–211.07](#) (codifying [D.C. Act 23-207](#), Sanctuary Values Congressional Review Emergency Amendment Act of 2020), and policies, including the 2021 DCPS [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#) and [2017 DCPCSB Sanctuary Schools guidance](#). All children, regardless of immigration status, have the right to a public education, per longstanding case law. See *Plyler v. Doe* (457 U.S. 202 (1982)), and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*, 348 F. Supp. 866 (D.D.C. 1972).

The Commission is concerned immigrant and migrant students may not be fully aware of their legal rights, available support services, and protections from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). To date we have seen no uniform DCPS or DCPCSB policy or communications to schools and families affirming their commitment to protect students at risk of federal immigration enforcement. Education policy experts nationwide have released relevant guidance and sample language, including the [U.S. Department of Education](#), [National Education Association](#), and [Intercultural Development Research Association](#). Other major school districts, including [Montgomery County Public Schools](#) and [Los Angeles Unified School District](#), have already circulated public statements on this matter. Many community-based organizations and legal service providers offer resources that can assist students in understanding their rights and accessing necessary services, including D.C.'s [Office of the Attorney General \(OAG\) guidance](#) dated January 24, 2025.

Unfortunately, the Commission is unaware of any DCPS or DCPCSB coordination with OAG to disseminate the OAG guidance to schools. Schools have the discretion to transmit guidance to students and families, per OAG: “DC Schools can distribute “know your rights” materials to students and their families but should obtain permission from the school administration before doing so” (Guidance on Immigration, Sec. II.2). However, this ad hoc approach is contingent on school administrators possessing both knowledge and willingness to provide accurate, timely information on legal protections and available resources. Consequently, 4B caregivers, families, students, and community members report that knowledge and distribution of either the OAG guidance or applicable legal resources appears uneven across school systems.

The Commission encourages DCPS and DCPCS to collaborate with OAG and community organizations that specialize in immigrant rights, legal aid, and social services to ensure students and families receive accurate and timely information. We ask your offices to promote a safe and welcoming learning environment by sending all

¹ DC Code § 38-174(a)(c)(10) provides that the DCPS Chancellor “[m]aintain...safe school facilities....”

² DC Code § 38–1802.04(c)(4)(A) provides that “a public charter school shall maintain the...safety of all students attending such school.”

schools clear guidance on providing accurate, accessible, and culturally competent information about immigrant student rights. Quality education enables Washingtonians of all ages to participate fully in civic life and society, and now more than ever we need educational leaders to model courage and compassion for our young scholars.

The Commission requests both DCPS and DCPCSB respond to the following questions by April 1, 2025:

1. What policies do DCPS and DCPCSB respectively follow regarding protections for immigrant students?
2. Have DCPS and/or DCPCSB schools received the January 24, 2025 OAG guidance?
 - a. If so, please provide a distribution list of recipients, date(s) of transmission, and a list of languages in which the information was provided, compliant with [D.C. Code §§ 2-1931 – 2-1937](#) (codifying the Language Access Act of 2004).
 - b. If not, what guidance on rights of immigrant students have your respective offices disseminated to schools since January 20, 2025? Please provide full, unredacted copies in all languages that were distributed.
 - c. If no guidance was disseminated, what guidance do your offices plan to send schools, and when? Will guidance outline best practices for informing immigrant and migrant students about their rights, and unequivocally state DCPS and DCPCS will protect them from ICE interference during school hours? In which languages will the guidance be translated?
3. Has DCPS or DCPCS student, administration, and/or staff absenteeism increased since January 20, 2025? Please provide disaggregated monthly absenteeism data for both SY23-24 and SY24-25 to date.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has voted with _ Yeas, _ Nays, and _ Abstentions to appoint the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B05, Sophia Tekola; the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B06, Tiffani Nichole Johnson; the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B07, Michael Cohen; and the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B03, Keenan Courtland, to be authorized to communicate this letter and represent Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B in communication with you or any D.C. government entity regarding this matter. We thank you for your service to all learners in our educational community.

Sincerely,

Danielle Geong, ANC 4B09 Commissioner

cc: Ms. Quinne Harris-Lindsey, General Counsel, DCPS
Ms. Sarah Hampton Cheatham, General Counsel, DCPCSB
Dr. Antoinette Mitchell, Interim State Superintendent of Education

Ms. Carol Epstein, General Counsel, Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Mr. Brian Schwalb, Attorney General of the District of Columbia

Dr. Michelle Colson, Ward 4 State Board of Education

Chairman Phil Mendelson, DC Council

Councilmember Janeese Lewis George (Ward 4)

Ms. Emily Cassometus, Senior Counsel, Office of Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

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