

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DAVID GROSSO, CHAIRPERSON

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

To: Ruth Wattenberg, President, DC State Board of Education
From: Councilmember David Grosso
Date: May 22, 2020
RE: FY21 Budget Oversight Questions

1. What are the agency's performance goals and targeted outcomes for FY21? How will the proposed FY21 budget serve to achieve those goals

The D.C. State Board of Education adopted a list of priorities in July 2019 (SR19-7, attached) for pursuit in Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021 in the following areas:

- Understanding the causes of DC's very low Teacher Retention rate; and pursuing a statewide policy for collecting and reporting data on the topic.
- Revising Social Studies Standards.
- Reviewing the current system for measuring School quality and other options.
- Researching the extent to which students are exposed to broad, rich curriculum and to comparable grade-level State Education Standards.

These priorities were developed with strong public involvement through our State Board members, who, as elected representatives from all eight wards of DC, have unique connections to their constituents, which is beneficial for statewide education policy development.

Since that time, the State Board has made substantial progress surveying former teachers in traditional and public charter schools to further explore the causes of teacher turnover; drafting and submitting legislation to expand the collection, and reporting of data related to teacher turnover at the state level; reviewing the STAR Framework; designing and beginning to execute a an ambitious review of our social studies standards. Our efforts to understand the extent to which students across the city are exposed to a comparably rich, broad curriculum and to rigorous, grade-level assignments and student work across the city were underway—and then cut short by the school shutdown and the pullback of funding due to projected revenue losses.

The Need for Appropriations submitted by the State Board will assist the State Board by allowing us to continue our ambitious policy and research agenda. The State Board approved a FY2021 Need for Appropriations first in July 2019, which was then updated in April 2020 to substantially reduce the request in response to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mayor's Proposed FY2021 budget reduces the request even further. These reductions were done without consultation with the State Board on their impact to the agency and we urge the Council to reject them.

We are very proud of the accomplishments we have made since our establishment and are pleased that the Council continues to be a strong supporter of the State Board's independent voice in statewide education policy development.

2. Will the proposed FY21 budget allow SBOE to meet all of its statutory mandates?

Unfortunately, the Mayor's FY2021 Proposed Budget does not align with the State Board's approved Need for Appropriations. The Mayor's budget of \$2,007,000 reduced the Need for Appropriations approved by the State Board in April 2020 by \$258,154.

We believe the proposed Need for Appropriations of \$2,133,902 will meet the basic statutory mandates of the agency, but it does not allow for full compliance with all requirements, including the translation of all materials into languages other than English. In addition, we have yet to receive projected expenditures required to be paid from the SBOE to other agencies for services they provide. These include human resources, information technology, building security, and others. We have made projections based on previous service but are unable to fully confirm that the Need for Appropriations will fully cover these costs without requiring the agency to reprogram funds from program activities.

If enacted as proposed, the Mayor's budget would eliminate the agency's ability to continue its active research portfolio that has brought many important items like teacher retention to the policy debate. We urge restoration of this important funding.

- 3. Regarding the agency's organizational structure:**
 - a. Provide current organizational structure and proposed organizational structure for FY21.**
 - b. Provide an explanation of any changes and how the structure will support the agency's statutory mandate; and**
 - c. Provide crosswalk between organizational structure and SBOE budget as submitted to the DC Council.**

The organization chart for the agency, including the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and Office of the Student Advocate, is attached. No changes have been made to the chart this fiscal year.

- 4. Provide a detailed crosswalk between the SBOE FY20 Budget and the SBOE FY21 Budget. The crosswalk should clearly identify how budget levels have changed for each SBOE function.**

The State Board's Need for Appropriations does not make major changes to any budget level with the exception of our regular practice to include funding for cost of living and performance-based increase potential for our employees. As the Committee is aware, the employees of the State Board of Education are required to be part of the Excepted Service. This classification prevents regular step-based salary increases. Recognizing the sacrifice that other District employees are making through the Mayor's proposed budget in terms of salary adjustments, the State Board will also forgo performance-based increases in FY2021.

- 5. Provide a breakdown of all facilities and fixed costs within the proposed FY21 budget, including the following: location of any office space, square footage, leased/owned designation, rent and other fixed costs that are included in the cost of**

rent (utilities, security, etc.). Please indicate whether the proposed FY21 budget encompasses all funding necessary for facilities and fixed costs.

The State Board does not maintain or control any facilities or fixed costs.

6. Provide an update on any change in FTEs in the proposed FY21 budget. Please identify each position and the source of funding for the position.

The Need for Appropriations contains no changes to the FTEs in FY2021. As mentioned previously, our original enhancement request did include requests for additional staffing in the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, Office of the Student Advocate, and in the State Board.

Our previous enhancement requests from the State Board included two full-time employees. First, an employee tasked with reviewing and updating education standards. The District's statewide education standards are woefully out of date (Embedded Technology, 2009; World Languages, 2008; Arts Education, 2008; Early Learning, 2013, Common Core, 2010; Next Generation Science, 2013). For instance, our Social Studies Standards were adopted prior to the existence of the State Board and end prior to the election of President Barack Obama. This is unacceptable for the nation's capital. As noted above, the State Board has begun a process, in partnership with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), to review and update our statewide Social Studies Standards, but neither agency has a dedicated staff member who can oversee this work in an on-going basis. This is important because regular reviews of standards are essential to ensuring that our students and their teachers have access to the best possible education standards.

The second full-time employee previously requested by the State Board would create a dedicated community outreach and engagement staff member. Currently, the State Board relies entirely on a single public affairs staff member to assist the nine members of the State Board. The requested position would extend the abilities of the State Board to ensure that the voice of historically marginalized communities is brought forward in the education policy development process. The addition of a new employee would help the State Board formalize a community involvement process whereby members would serve as a conduit for information flow to and from their constituents.

7. Provide a narrative update on the agency's state-level policy initiatives, including the agency's plans for coordination with OSSE to establish and implement such measures. Provide planned spending in FY20 and FY21, including the source of funds and any FTEs allocated to support these measures.

As noted above, the State Board has worked diligently over the course of its history on a variety of policy discussions including education standards and our state accountability system. Everything that the State Board does from our public hearings and working sessions to community town halls and outreach, research and surveys to drafting resolutions and legislation are tied

directly to our pursuit of better, more responsive, and more equitable education policies in the District.

In line with our statute, one of the State Board's primary responsibilities is to advise the State Superintendent on education issues. We do that through our research, our coordination, and presentation of discussion by experts and residents and consideration of resolutions that suggest actions for OSSE and other agencies.

8. Describe any other programmatic expansions, initiatives or anticipated reductions for FY20 and FY21. Provide a breakdown by program and provide a detailed description, including FY20 and FY21 spending plans, the target population to be served, and the name and title of the SBOE employee responsible for the initiative.

Provided that the Need for Appropriations is fully funded, the State Board does not anticipate any reductions of services or programs in FY2020 or FY2021. If the Mayor's Proposed Budget is adopted, the State Board will need to eliminate its research portfolio. Elimination of the State Board's research proposal means that we will not be able to provide updated annual data related to teacher retention and we will be unable to continue or complete our efforts to understand—via classroom and school-based observations, analysis, and survey—the extent to which students around our city have comparable access to well-rounded education and/or to grade-level instruction. Both of these areas will be even more important to understand and research given the current health emergency and its effects on the District's public education system.

Homicide Reduction

1. Please describe three initiatives, programs, or projects currently underway within your agency directed at preventing homicide in the District of Columbia. If you currently do not have any initiatives, programs, or projects currently underway directed at homicide prevention, please describe three ways in which your agency could play a role in reducing homicides in the District of Columbia.

The State Board appreciates the Council's focus on reducing homicides in the District of Columbia. According to FBI crime data explorer, from 2015–18 there were 65 juvenile homicides (ages 0–19) in the District. We must do more to reduce the causes of violence, including ensuring equitable housing and education to every resident. A number of studies have noted the “school-to-prison pipeline” that links use of punitive discipline techniques to involvement in the criminal justice system. The State Board is committed to its work ensuring equity in education to eliminate this pipeline.

Safe passage to and from schools is vital for students. Many of our members are involved in safe passage work in their wards directly and through ward-based community safety coalitions. Further, the Office of the Student Advocate (OSA) has been a leading voice in this work for years and we appreciate the partnership the OSA has with individual members in hosting events across the city to bring information to our communities. Reduction of crime and violence that created traumatic barriers for our students is an all too often overlooked mission.

The State Board has also been an active participant on the Every Day Counts! Task Force and its subcommittees. As we return to a new reality in SY2020–21, the State Board, OSSE, and other education agencies must reassess statewide attendance policies. The State Board looks forward to beginning this important work.

Similarly, the State Board has been active in the expansion of community schools in the District. Our Executive Director was appointed by the Mayor as chair of the Community Schools Advisory Committee earlier this year and we are proud of his work to bring visibility to the idea that a school must support more than a student's academics. Community schools remove barriers for students so that they are able to learn including providing mental health services, after-school programming, health and dental care, and a myriad of other supports.

Studies show that students do better in their classes if they have teachers that connect to them as individuals. These personal connections can change the life of every student, leading to more positive outcomes. This is one of the reasons that the State Board has focused its attention on attracting and retaining a high-quality teacher workforce.

Finally, we are very proud of the work done by the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and the Office of the Student Advocate to assist families in the District that are facing barriers or challenges in the education system—some of which we've noted above. Without their work, families would have little resource in solving these issues. It is the belief of the State Board that this work has had a demonstrable impact on the education landscape in the District, including saving many students from being denied their education rights.

- a. Please describe the resources currently allocated to these initiatives, program, or projects, and describe what additional resources you would need to improve the efficacy or scale of these efforts. (Or resources you would need to implement the ideas detailed in response to the above question.)**

The State Board previously urged the Council to fund additional positions in the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, Office of the Student Advocate, and the State Board; however, given the current health emergency, we understand this is very challenging. Nevertheless, it is important to note that each piece of our agency serves a vital need that attempts to remove barriers for equitable education.

- 2. Please describe how your agency works (or would work) collaboratively with other DC agencies toward the goal of reducing homicides.**
 - a. Please also describe how your agency engages (or would engage) non-governmental organizations and the community at large on the issue of homicide prevention.**

We would be happy to work with any DC agency to engage the community on these important issues.

- 3. Please describe how you currently measure (or would measure) the efficacy of the aforementioned initiatives, programs, or projects. Additionally, if three metrics**

related to homicide prevention were added to your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), what should those metrics be?

The State Board would be interested in discussing how to implement KPIs for its programming but is uncertain if the model could be appropriately applied to our work.