

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman Phil Mendelson
From: Councilmember Charles Allen **CA**
Date: February 25, 2021
Subject: Request to Agendize measures for the March 2, 2021 Legislative Meeting

I request the following measures be agendized for the March 2, 2021 Legislative Meeting:

- “State Education Assessment Waiver Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2021”
- “State Education Assessment Waiver Emergency Act of 2021”
- “State Education Assessment Waiver Temporary Act of 2021”

Federal law requires states to administer academic assessments to students in specified grades, on specified subject matter, and to report data to the federal government. During the 2019-2020 school year, due to the tremendous disruption in education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education granted to the District—along with all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Indian Education—waivers of federal requirements to administer standardized assessment. Despite great progress in treating and preventing spread of the COVID-19 virus, the 2020-2021 school year has again been rife with disruption for students and school staff. District public schools have only recently invited a small number of students into the building for in-person instruction. Most experts believe that, once assessments can be done, there will be evidence of significant learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it important for schools and teachers to assess their students’ needs. Principals, teachers, and other school staff are quite capable of choosing or creating targeted assessments that will most accurately measure their students’ particular needs, allowing schools to target instruction and interventions as needed.

In a normal school year, administration of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (“PARCC”) assessment dominates a full week of instruction time, and some District of Columbia Public Schools staff have reported to Council offices plans to again devote a week of instruction time to PARCC testing. When a significant percentage of students are not attending school in person, the administrative burden on teachers and other school staff will be much more intense than in another year. The Department of Education (“DOE”) recently released guidance to states noting that DOE is unlikely to grant full waivers of standardized assessments, but DOE noted that it would consider requests for waivers of some federal requirements related to accountability for test scores and identifying schools in need of targeted supports based on the school’s test scores. DOE also encouraged states to exercise flexibility around the timing of testing, including delaying testing for the 2020-2021 school year until the fall of the 2021-2022 school year, when more students are likely to be attending school in person. To reduce the pressure school staff and students feel, the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (“OSSE”) can request waivers allowing as much flexibility as possible in testing, and OSSE should reduce the stakes of testing by ensuring that any testing that does take place during the 2020-2021 school year is not used for important decisions like promotion and retention, staff evaluations, and school ratings and rankings.

These measures require OSSE to seek a waiver of certain federal requirements related to assessments during the 2020-2021 school year, and they prohibit the use of the results of PARCC resting for the purposes of promotion or retention and ranking schools.

- “8th & O Streets, N.W. Extension of Disposition Authority Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2021”
- “8th & O Streets, N.W. Extension of Disposition Authority Emergency Amendment Act of 2021”

There exists an emergency with respect to the need to amend An Act Authorizing the sale of certain real estate in the District of Columbia no longer required for public purposes to extend the time allowed for the disposition of District-owned real property located at 1336 8th Street, N.W., formerly known for tax and assessment purposes as Lot 68 in Square 399 and now known for assessment and taxation purposes as Lots 844-848 and 7001-7006 in Square 399.

Drafts of the measures are attached. If you have any questions regarding these measures, please contact Chris Laskowski, Legislative Director, on 202-531-9912 or claskowski@dccouncil.us.

cc: Members, Council of the District of Columbia
Office of the Secretary