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2 Chairman Phil Mendelson  
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Councilmember Christina Henderson

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6 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau  
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Councilmember Mary M. Cheh

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10 Councilmember Elissa Silverman  
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Councilmember Charles Allen

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14 Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.  
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20 A PROPOSED RESOLUTION  
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25 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
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30 To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to require school-level funding  
31 for all District of Columbia Public Schools in School Year 2021-2022 be in amounts equal  
32 to or greater than those provided in School Year 2020-2021.  
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34 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
35 resolution may be cited as the “District of Columbia Public Schools 2021-2022 Funding  
36 Stabilization Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2021”.

37 Sec. 2. (a) Despite great progress in treating and preventing the spread of the COVID-19  
38 virus, the 2020-2021 school year was severely disrupted by the ongoing need for remote education.  
39 District public schools have only recently invited a limited number of students back to school  
40 buildings for in-person instruction.

41 (b) For the second year in a row, the U.S. Department of Education granted the District's  
42 request for a waiver of federally mandated annual standardized testing. In addition to continuing  
43 school building closures, the need to dedicate all available school and staff resources to instruction  
44 time were cited as reasons for waiving standardized assessments.

45 (c) Most experts believe that, once assessments can be done, there will be evidence of  
46 significant learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. These losses are expected to  
47 disproportionately impact students of color. For example, researchers from McKinsey & Co.  
48 estimate that at the beginning of the next school year, learning loss in math may total seven to  
49 eight months for White students and up to 12 months for students of color. In the District, findings  
50 from EmpowerK12 indicate that as of December 2020, at-risk students had already lost 5 months  
51 of learning in math and 4 months of learning in English language arts. All students experienced  
52 at least a 4-month slip in math and one-month slip in English language arts.

53 (d) The District continues to struggle with a digital divide which will continue to exacerbate  
54 the disparities in learning loss through the end of this school year. The State of D.C. Schools 2019-  
55 2020 report from the D.C. Policy Center found that approximately one in eight District residents  
56 did not have access to a computer or tablet in their household before the pandemic and 24% of  
57 children in D.C. lacked access to broadband internet. Although DCPS distributed some 20,000  
58 tablets and computers to students in need at the beginning of the 2020 school year, many Black  
59 and Brown students lacked access to high-speed internet needed to successfully engage in  
60 bandwidth intensive computer-based learning.

61 (e) Additional remote learning challenges arose for students in homes lacking quiet spaces  
62 and for students whose families experienced homelessness. Data from the Office of the State

63 Superintendent of Schools indicates over 7,000 District students experienced homelessness at  
64 some point during the 2019-2020 school year.

65 (f) During virtual instruction, attendance and enrollment were down at DCPS schools,  
66 reflecting pandemic impacts on at-risk students and family migration driven by economic  
67 upheaval. In February 2021, DCPS noted that 22,979 students had accrued three days of excused  
68 or unexcused absences this school year. Further, 7,322 students were referred to student support  
69 teams because of five or more unexcused absences.

70 (g) Further, when students return to in-person instruction after nearly 1.5 years away, they  
71 will have a unique range of social and emotional needs. As a result of not being in school, most  
72 children have not had regular access to mental health services. Children's National Hospital  
73 recently reported that a greater number of children are coming to the emergency room with self-  
74 harm, the percentage of those children needing to be admitted has doubled, and 60% of these  
75 children reported suicidal ideation.

76 (h) Mental health services at DCPS schools were under-resourced pre-pandemic. The State  
77 of D.C. Schools report also showed that in the school year 2019-2020, there was only one mental  
78 health professional for every 206 pre-kindergarten to grade 12 students across the city.

79 (i) According to a fall 2018 report commissioned by the State Board of Education, pre-  
80 pandemic the District had among the highest teacher turnover rates in the country. A quarter of  
81 our teachers leave our school system every year. Over half of DCPS teachers leave within five  
82 years. In a subsequent report dated March 15, 2021, the Board released teacher survey results  
83 indicating up to 43% of DCPS teachers considered leaving their positions this school year.

84 (j) This combination of challenges will require a particularly robust level of investment in  
85 school staffing resources in school year 2021-2022. Full-time teaching and support staff levels

86 must be sufficient to address not only typical school year needs, but also to remedy pandemic  
87 learning loss and triage social and emotional needs at the start of the school year. Continuity and  
88 consistency in staffing may be more important than ever and DCPS must retain its experienced  
89 staff to meet the extraordinary challenges ahead.

90 (k) Against this backdrop, in early April DCPS schools began to receive their initial budget  
91 allocations for the 2021-2022 school year. Each year, before the full school budget is released,  
92 District public schools receive an individual budget detailing the amount of money the campus is  
93 expected to receive for the next school year. This begins the planning process for individual school  
94 staffing levels.

95 (l) While these figures are preliminary, a significant number of schools were informed of  
96 likely budget cuts relative to funding levels from school year 2020-2021. An additional group of  
97 schools will need to cut staff as a result of increased costs, even if individual school budgets  
98 approach previous levels.

99 (m) Press reports and analyses from education advocates indicate that DCPS could lose  
100 more than 90 teacher positions overall, including 57 teachers who instruct English language  
101 learners. Nearly 60 of the school system's 117 campuses could lose some staff. The number of  
102 mental health professionals in DCPS schools is expected to stay flat.

103 (n) In part, these initial budget allocations are predicated on anticipated enrollment declines  
104 at most DCPS schools. The District is anticipating 900 fewer English language learners, for  
105 example, a larger drop than any other student group.

106 (o) However, efforts continue to reach and re-enroll students from families that became  
107 disconnected from school during the pandemic. It remains difficult to predict with precision what  
108 enrollment figures will look like when schools reopen in August. Families for whom English is a

109 second language likely struggled to support virtual learning, yet may be more likely to re-enroll  
110 students with the return to in-person instruction.

111 (p) On April 8, Mayor Muriel Bowser and DCPS leadership announced plans for a full  
112 return to in-person instruction in District public schools, five days per week, in fall 2021. The  
113 Mayor simultaneously announced a 3.6% increase to the uniform per student funding formula  
114 (UPSFF) to serve an estimated 98,528 students in both DCPS and public charter schools.

115 (q) The Deputy Mayor for Education indicated in a presentation to the Council on April  
116 22, 2021 that this increase to the UPSFF was accounted for in the initial budget allocations  
117 presented to schools in early April.

118 (r) The Mayor is now not expected to release the FY2022 proposed budget for the  
119 upcoming fiscal year until May 27, 2021. Given the delay in the release of the budget, it will not  
120 be possible for the Council to make and finalize changes to school funding levels until just days  
121 prior to the start of the school year.

122 (s) The DCPS budget submission must follow guidelines and formulas codified in Title 38  
123 of the D.C. Official Code. This year, circumstances created by the public health emergency weigh  
124 against following the planned default formulaic approach to school budgeting, which will lead to  
125 staff reductions in a time of crisis. Further, using predicted enrollment numbers based on  
126 attendance during 2020-2021 virtual learning may produce underestimates of actual enrollment  
127 numbers, particularly if economic activity continues to grow and produce in-migration with  
128 improving pandemic conditions.

129 (t) Many advocates for schools and students believe that DCPS must adopt a “hold  
130 harmless” approach to school-level budgeting that starts with a minimum funding amount

131 equivalent to last year's funding levels. This would reduce many of the staffing cuts anticipated  
132 under the initial budget allocations released in April.

133 (u) Since the school system overall is expected to spend more for the 2021-2022 academic  
134 year than it did for the current school year, this can be accomplished within the parameters of the  
135 existing DCPS financial plan.

136 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances  
137 enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the District  
138 of Columbia 2021-2022 Funding Stabilization Emergency Amendment Act of 2021 be adopted  
139 after a single reading.

140 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

DRAFT