

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To declare the existence of an emergency concerning the rise of violence against particular school personnel within schools in the District of Columbia by implementing enhanced penalties imposed for certain crimes against school teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as “School Teacher, Administrator, and Mental Health Professional Protection (STAMP) Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2024”.

Sec. 2. (a) The purpose of the underlying emergency measure is to enhance penalties for certain crimes against school teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals to help foster a safer school community.

(c) As classrooms returned to in-person instruction after the COVID-19 pandemic, more instances of violence became prevalent within school communities. A significant number of teachers in the District have been physically assaulted and threatened with physical violence within their profession, impacting the quality of educational instruction and teacher retention. Between May 25 and June 24, 2023, the Washington Teachers Union surveyed their membership on school violence and mental health within D.C. Public Schools. The survey captured the responses of more than 750 teachers in more than 100 schools. In those findings,

28 42% of teachers who responded felt that workplace violence in their schools within the past year
29 increased. Principally, 30% of teachers experienced assaults, 49% experienced physical threats,
30 42% were slapped, punched, or kicked, and 13% experienced groping or inappropriate touching
31 as a result of student-on-staff violence. In-school violence has negatively contributed to teachers'
32 mental well-being and work. Due to school violence, a total of 49% of survey respondents noted
33 experiencing adverse feelings such as depression, and 74% increased their vigilance, felt anxious,
34 or fearful. The data also revealed that 45% of teachers considered leaving the profession, and 29%
35 took time off or reduced work. These figures demonstrate the need to ensure school teachers can
36 perform their responsibilities effectively and that students have educational environments that are
37 free from violent disruptions.

38 (c) In 2023, the American Federation of School Administrators, conducted a member
39 survey that encapsulated data reflecting the responses of 997 school leaders, and of the
40 respondents, 645 were school-based personnel and 257 were district-based personnel. The data
41 suggests that violence and threats of violence against school administrators within school
42 communities are prevalent. A substantial number of school administrators have experienced
43 threats of physical violence by students and their parents. Data demonstrates that about 52% of
44 school administrators were threatened by students, about 46% were threatened by parents, and
45 about 30% experienced an assault.

46 (d) In a national study conducted by the American Psychological Association, data
47 revealed that once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade school
48 psychologists, social workers, and counselors experienced similar violence at equal or greater
49 levels before the pandemic began.

50 (d) This measure will protect school teachers, administrators, and mental health
51 professionals by increasing the penalties for violent crimes committed against them as they carry
52 out their duties. Moreover, this legislation would serve as a constructive instrument for
53 prosecuting cases involving violent crimes against school teachers, administrators, and mental
54 health professionals. This legislation will also diminish turnover within the school system by
55 helping school staff feel safer in the workplace. Prevailing law currently enhances penalties for
56 violent crimes committed against certain persons in the District. Such protections extend to senior
57 citizens, citizen patrol members, individuals located at a Department of Parks and Recreation
58 property, vulnerable adults, and election workers and officials.

59 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances in
60 section 2 constitute emergency circumstances, making it necessary that the " School Teacher,
61 Administrator, and Mental Health Professional (STAMP) Emergency Declaration Resolution of
62 2024" be adopted on an emergency basis.

63 Sec. 4. The resolution shall take effect immediately.