



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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WASHINGTON, DC 20004

Mary M. Cheh

Councilmember, Ward 3
Chair, Committee on Transportation & the Environment

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June 14, 2018

Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

This past Monday, I joined a group of parents, teachers, and community members in Ward 3 to discuss the selection of the new DCPS Chancellor. It has been nearly four months since Chancellor Wilson resigned, and many in the District are eager for the search to be underway. It is my understanding that you have said the Chancellor search will not officially commence until after the primary next Tuesday. A number of parents have expressed concerns to me about this delay, worried that the candidates are being vetted behind closed doors, and that a new Chancellor will be announced without any community input. With the start of the 2018-19 school year just two months away, I urge you to begin the search process as soon as possible, so that the permanent Chancellor will be in place for the first day of school.

At the June 11th open forum, those in attendance shared concerns that went beyond the slow pace of the search process. As you know, reports from over the last twelve months have shaken the trust that parents have in our public schools. Many parents shared that they feel that they cannot trust our school data to be accurate, policies to be fair, and leadership to be honest. One way to begin regaining that trust would be to meaningfully involve students, parents, and school staff in the selection of their new Chancellor.

Toward that end, I asked the parents, teachers, and community members in attendance to share the qualities that they'd like to see in the new Chancellor, and what an ideal search process would look like. I also asked them to share what issues they'd like the new Chancellor address in his or her first few

months on the job. I have summarized those recommendations below, which I hope will guide the work you and your team do over the summer to identify candidates and select the new Chancellor.

The Process

Attendees shared that an ideal search process would:

- Engage with students, parents, teachers, and community members in neighborhoods throughout all eight wards through community meetings and open forums; and
- Provide the Council, State Board of Education, and District residents with information on the qualifications for nominees as determined by your search committee, the list of questions asked of candidates and answers provided by the chosen candidate, and any other information about candidates or the selection process that would better allow District residents to assess the qualifications of the chosen nominee;
- Adhere to the statutory requirements under §38-174(b), which requires the Mayor to convene a panel of teachers, parents, and students to aid in the selection of the new Chancellor, and consider the opinions and recommendations of the panel in making her nomination. Although a panel was convened during the search that resulted in the selection of Chancellor Wilson, that panel did not receive information on any candidates, and consequently was unable to provide recommendations.

Qualities of a Nominee

Attendees would like the new Chancellor to possess the following qualities:

- Be a champion for DCPS and public schools generally;
- Have a history of being responsive to parents and schools, including providing timely and substantive information to the community;
- Have the skills and experience to provide multi-cultural outreach to families in the District, so as to ensure that all families are kept informed and feel welcome in our schools; and
- Work closely with the Executive Director of the Education Research Collaborative, and actively use research and recommendations from the Collaborative to inform needed school reforms.

First Steps

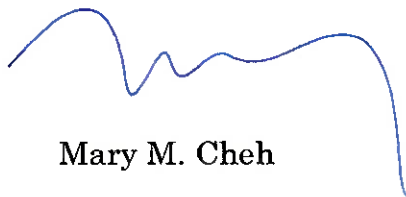
Attendees called on the new Chancellor to do the following in his or her first months on the job:

- Issue a comprehensive plan for his or her time at DCPS, outlining major short and long-term goals;
- Reform the school budget process to increase transparency and consistency in school budgets from year to year;
- Develop a plan to address enrollment and capacity concerns throughout the District, including ensuring the availability of universal pre-K;
- Reduce Central Office bureaucracy, and provide needed flexibility to principals and teachers to set policies and rules that are appropriate for their students and school; and
- Hire a Chief of Special Education, and invest additional funding and staffing resources into ensuring schools can meet the needs of students with special needs and comply with special education mandates under District and federal law.

As noted above, §38-174(b) requires the Mayor to convene a panel of teachers, parents, and students to provide guidance on the selection of the next Chancellor. I believe this panel plays a particularly important role in this search. As such, please provide me with the names of the individuals who you have chosen to sit on this panel, a description of their role in the search process, and when you anticipate the panel will first meet. If you have not yet selected members of the panel, please announce the date by which you anticipate making that decision.

As you know, residents throughout the District are eager to be involved in the Chancellor selection process, and they (and I) are ready to provide you and your team with support and guidance as you work to identify the best candidate. I look forward to learning more about your plans for that process, and how you and your team will be engaging with the Council and District residents in the search for the new Chancellor. Thanks very much.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary M. Cheh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mary M. Cheh

Cc: Councilmember David Grosso

Cc: State Board of Education Member for Ward 3 Ruth Wattenberg