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**Qubilah Huddleston, Education Policy Analyst  
At the Public Meeting of the DC State Board of Education  
February 26, 2020**

President Ruth Wattenburg, Vice President Markus Batchelor, and the entire State Board of Education, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the ways District leaders can put the public education budget on a path to adequacy and equity.

My name is Qubilah Huddleston, and I am a Policy Analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute (DCFPI). DCFPI is a non-profit organization that promotes budget choices to reduce DC’s economic and racial inequities through independent research and policy recommendations.

Over the last several weeks, I have testified before the Committee on Education on the importance of funding DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools adequately. I have also testified about the need for policymakers to ensure that children facing the largest opportunity gaps have the resources they need to thrive in the classroom and beyond. I will reemphasize these points in my testimony today.

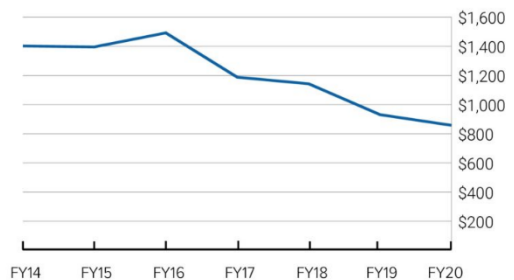
**DC’s Children Deserve to Attend Schools that Are Funded Adequately**

As you all know, the Mayor recently announced her plan to increase the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) for fiscal year (FY) 2021 by four percent—one of the largest increases in recent years. DCFPI applauds the Mayor for this strong investment, yet this increase will not be enough to keep up with inflation and adequately fund our schools. We estimate that a **six percent increase** in the UPSFF base would put the District on a path to closing the adequacy gap within two years.

Since the release of the Deputy Mayor for Education’s (DME) DC Adequacy Study in 2013 (Adequacy Study), policymakers have never funded the UPSFF at the level recommended by school finance experts (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> These budget choices have created the adequacy gap.

The consequences of this inadequacy are clear: the District has shortchanged our schools hundreds of millions of dollars over the last seven years, often forcing school leaders to choose between funding the basics for all students or providing extra resources to support students who face challenges such as poverty or homelessness.<sup>2</sup> Policymakers should not be forcing school leaders to make these types of tough decisions.

**DC Lawmakers Have Never Funded the UPSFF to Meet the Adequacy Study Recommendation, Shortchanging Students**  
*Difference Between Recommendation and UPSFF Level, Adjusted for Inflation*



Source: Author’s calculation based on base UPSFF adequacy gap, adjusted for inflation by year and the annual audited public school enrollment for SY 2013-14 through SY 2018-19 and preliminary SY 2019-20 enrollment.

## The District Can Boost Equity by Making Greater Investments in Students Facing the Largest Opportunity Gaps

When policymakers fail to pass an adequate budget, that decision harms all students, especially low-income and otherwise vulnerable students who are at risk of academic failure due to disparities in access to high quality educational resources and opportunities.

Inequities in access to resources and the resulting racial and income disparities in student outcomes are unacceptable, and they do not have to be our city's reality. In addition to fully funding the public education budget, policymakers should **increase the at-risk UPSFF weight** to the level recommended in the Adequacy Study and should acknowledge that schools with large percentages of at-risk students need additional support.

Currently, the District provides an additional \$2,470 per at-risk student in DC's public education budget, but it isn't enough. School finance experts in the Adequacy Study recommended that policymakers set the at-risk UPSFF weight at .37, which would amount to \$4,200 to \$4,300 per at-risk student in FY 2021, depending on the approved UPSFF base.

Increasing the at-risk weight is a necessary, immediate step that District leaders should take, but doing so is only half the battle to promoting equity in our public schools.

The DME is currently examining the adequacy of the current design of the at-risk UPSFF weight and whether the UPSFF should provide additional funding to schools with high concentrations of at-risk students.<sup>3</sup> Councilmember Trayon White introduced a bill last year, the Critical Risk Rate School Funding Designation Act of 2019, which would require the UPSFF to provide additional resources to schools—both DCPS and public charters—where at least 70 percent of students are considered at risk.

High-poverty schools in DC face higher rates of enrollment declines and student mobility, according to a new report by the DC Auditor.<sup>4</sup> Both phenomena can lead to decreases in school resources, disrupting students' learning experiences and potentially leading to poorer outcomes.

For example, when students change schools in the middle of the year, the District does not provide DCPS additional funding to accommodate new students. This forces school leaders to stretch their budgets to serve more students, which can become even more difficult if the students they receive mid-year have more intensive needs—such as English learners—and require funding beyond the standard per-pupil amount.

DCFPI looks forward to reading the DME's study and hopes that the report's finding will help improve the way the District equitably funds the education of at-risk students.

## Policymakers Should Expand Out-of-School Time Opportunities to Keep Students Safe and Engaged in the Hours Before and After School and During the Summer

Students' success in school and life is about what they experience outside of the classroom as much as it is about what they do in the classroom.

This budget season, policymakers should invest \$25 million in Out-of-School Time (OST) programming, which includes \$19 million for Learn 24's Office of Youth Grants and Opportunities—a \$5.1 million increase over the current funding level—and \$5.9 million for programs funded through the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Ninety percent of parents strongly support OST programs, yet not every parent is able to provide their children with these enriching experiences.<sup>5</sup> OST programs—before and after school, and in summer—have been proven to increase student engagement, foster positive social-emotional development, and boost self-esteem.<sup>6</sup> These are factors that help students succeed in and out of the classroom.

In recent years, the District has made historic investments in OST programs. However, further increases are needed to enable low-income students and other students who need support to have access to the same enriching OST opportunities as their more well-off peers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Alyssa Noth, “Educational Equity Requires an Adequate School Budget,” DC Fiscal Policy Institute, December 2, 2019, <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/educational-equity-requires-an-adequate-school-budget/>; Qubilah Huddleston, “Raising the Bar: Better Budgeting for a Strong Public Education System,” DC Fiscal Policy Institute, December 17, 2019, <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/raising-the-bar/>.

<sup>2</sup> Noth, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, “FY20 Request for Applications: 2020 Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) Study,” <https://dme.dc.gov/page/fy20-request-applications-2020-uniform-student-funding-formula-upsff-study>.

<sup>4</sup> Office of the DC Auditor (ODCA), “Enrollment Projections in D.C. Public Schools: Controls Needed to Ensure Funding Equity: A Report for ODCA by the Center for Research and Reform in Education,” January 9, 2020, <http://dcauditor.org/report/enrollment-projections-in-d-c-public-schools-controls-needed-to-ensure-funding-equity/>.

<sup>5</sup> All Data From: DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA) via LIMS, Afterschool Alliance Policy State Fact Sheets, After School Alliance Time of Risk to Time of Opportunity, and LEARN 24.

<sup>6</sup> DC Alliance of Youth Advocates, “Expanded Learning Issue Brief,” October 2016, <https://dc-aya.org/dcaya-expanded-learning-issue-brief/>.