



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

January 9, 2021

Dr. Lewis Ferebee, Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chancellor Ferebee,

In late November, DCPS reached out to the principal and Local School Advisory Team for Lafayette Elementary with a proposal to mitigate growing over-enrollment at the school. We appreciate these efforts to proactively address overcrowding, as the vast majority of schools serving Upper Northwest, including Lafayette, are currently at or over capacity. As you know, where enrollment exceeds building capacity, schools are often forced to convert preschool classrooms to serve older grades. Consequently, DCPS does not offer a single pre-k 3 seat west of the park, and, although all elementary programs offer some form of pre-k 4, that number of seats falls far short of demand. As such, we strongly support your work to increase preschool capacity in Wards 3 and 4.

That said, we are writing today to express our concerns about DCPS's current proposal, which would permanently relocate Lafayette Elementary's preschool program to the recently acquired Military Road campus. The Military Road school is located in Ward 4, more than two miles from Lafayette. With the new campus at such a distance (and on a route served by only one bus line), families have raised legitimate concerns about getting their preschool-age students to and from school, and how before and after-care programs would work. Many of Lafayette's preschool parents also have upper-grade students, and, under this plan, would be shuttling back and forth for two drop-offs and two pick-ups each day. In addition, with the campuses so far apart, there will be few opportunities for the preschool program to interact with the greater school community; the two campuses would essentially function as separate schools. Lastly, the new Military Road school is located on the same block as Brightwood Education Campus, which has a long waitlist for its own preschool program; it would seem fairer and make more sense for DCPS to use this newly acquired facility to address needs there before offering the space to a school over two miles away.

There are a number of alternatives to relocating Lafayette’s preschool program to Military Road that we believe would better serve the families at both Lafayette and Brightwood Education Campus. DCPS could identify facility space in the Upper Chevy Chase neighborhood for Lafayette, such as by leasing space in the nearby Episcopal Center for Children, or modernizing District-owned properties, such as the Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center. DCPS should also fully explore how the building could be reconfigured to provide additional classroom space, and consider where demountable trailers could be installed at the Lafayette campus. ANC 3G, which represents the area that includes Lafayette Elementary, has developed a survey for families of Lafayette students that lays out a number of these options.¹ We ask that you postpone making any decision on relocation of Lafayette’s preschool program until you and the staff at DCPS—in coordination and communication with the school principal, LSAT, ANC, and affected families—have fully assessed each of these proposals.

Again, we thank you for your work to mitigate the effects of overcrowding on Lafayette’s preschool program. As you consider these various proposals, we want to underscore: the school community that we heard from strongly opposes relocating Lafayette Elementary’s preschool students to the Military Road campus. Therefore, in addition to our request that you explore other proposals for Lafayette’s preschool program, we also ask that you commit to not move forward with relocating Lafayette’s preschool students to Military Road. Making this commitment will not only best serve students and families but provide important peace of mind to parents as they plan for next school year and beyond.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Mary M. Cheh
Ward 3
Council of the District of Columbia



Councilmember Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4
Council of the District of Columbia

cc: Mayor Muriel Bowser
cc: Deputy Mayor Paul Kihn
cc: President Ruth Wattenberg, State Board of Education
cc: Dr. Carrie Broquard, Principal, Lafayette Elementary

¹ You can access that survey here: <https://www.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=Ulr7AxoNFn4%3D>.