



March 19, 2021

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Oversight & Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney,

As members of the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board), we write to express our strong support for the Washington, D.C. Admission Act (H.R. 51). The Act would correct an historic injustice by admitting the District of Columbia to the Union as the Douglass Commonwealth. As H.R. 51 is the subject of a hearing before your committee on March 22, we would be remiss not to raise the prospects D.C. statehood would bring to our students, families, and teachers. Statehood serves as an important symbol of our constitutional democracy, but importantly, it would also provide equality and voice to residents in federal decisions that affect our students.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and national demonstration for civil rights highlighted for our students the importance of elevating voices for public engagement and civic action. Students across D.C. are learning about history and civics and are taught the importance of voting in a democracy, while at the same time there are currently 712,816 D.C. residents without a congressional vote—a number that is only rising. This underscores the importance of statehood as a civil rights issue—D.C. is a historically Black city, with Black residents making up 47 percent of the population. Statehood serves as a signal to the thousands of students within the District that their voices are as important as any other Americans. Several education organizations, institutions and stakeholders also support D.C. statehood, including but not limited to the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers (the parent organization of the Washington Teachers Union), American University, Georgetown University, Students for D.C. Statehood, and the National Black Law Students Association.

District residents, including our dedicated teachers and school support staff, pay the *highest* federal taxes per capita compared to residents of every other state, yet they do not enjoy full representation in Congress as their counterparts from other states. Further, the District is a net giver in terms of federal spending, providing the federal government millions more in tax revenue than it receives.

Congress has sometimes treated Washington, D.C. in the same manner as the states when it comes to federal financial assistance, such as federal grants, funding for highways, money for education, food assistance, and Medicaid reimbursement, although this treatment can be changed without



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recourse as in the case of funding for the Coronavirus Relief Fund (Title VI, Sec. 601(a)(2)(A)), approved on March 27, 2020, wherein D.C. was treated as a *territory* rather than a state. This meant the District was shortchanged by \$750 million that would have gone to ensuring District students had the necessary supports to engage safely in hybrid learning during the ongoing pandemic. Instead, funds in the bill had to be split between D.C. and five other U.S. territories, despite D.C. having a much larger population density and large numbers of daily out-of-state visitors.

Statehood would allow the D.C. government the same authorities as any other state government to provide laws for its residents developed by the representatives of those residents. The violent insurrection on January 6, 2021, demonstrated the failure of the federal government to appropriately protect the health and safety of our students, parents, and families. This is the Nation's Capital, but it is also our home.

Opponents of statehood have mentioned a number of programs that are currently funded by the federal government that may cease if D.C. becomes an equal to other states. For example, the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant Program (DCTAG) that is managed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and serves to defray the costs for students to attend colleges, including community colleges and private Historically Black Colleges and Universities, that are considered out-of-state. DCTAG is an important program for our residents that we would hope would continue with federal funding considering that the reason it exists is testament to the unspoken understanding in Congress that the historic treatment of the District is unfair. As we noted earlier, the District is a net giver in terms of federal spending despite a small number of programs like DCTAG.

After more than 200 years, it is time to write a new chapter in American history that brings the nation closer to equality for all. D.C. statehood means the enfranchisement for hundreds of thousands of tax-paying residents and voters-to-be. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on H.R. 51 and the impact of statehood for our students, teachers and families. We urge you and the Committee to take immediate action to approve H.R. 51.

Sincerely,

Zachary Parker, President and Ward 5 Representative  
 Emily Gasoi, Vice President and Ward 1 Representative  
 Allister Chang, Ward 2 Representative  
 Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Representative  
 Frazier O'Leary, Ward 4 Representative  
 Jessica Sutter, Ward 6 Representative  
 Eboni-Rose Thompson, Ward 7 Representative  
 Carlene Reid, Ward 7 Representative



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Jacque Patterson, At-Large Representative  
Alex O'Sullivan, Student Representative  
Shayla Dell, Student Representative

cc: Members of the House Committee on Oversight & Reform



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