

Testimony to the Committee on Education**For the Performance Oversight Hearing on District of Columbia Public Schools**

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Good morning Councilmember Grosso and members of the Committee on Education. My name is Rochelle Polanco and I am a 12th grader at Roosevelt Senior High School. I work at Young Women's Project, where I educate the youth on safe sex and reproductive health through classroom and lunch room presentations. I also distribute condoms and refer people to places they can and should go when they come to me with problems.

Today I am here to testify on the state of my education and school conditions.

I've chosen to come forward with this topic because many teens, including myself, are being academically crippled. We are being sent into college and career unprepared, if we even make it that far. We enter college with lack of knowledge due to poor school curriculum, easily finding ourselves falling behind in college classes. We enter career with poor work ethic due to lack of a challenging material in high school.

The standards are so low. We barely ever get homework. We get work that is too easy and that does not challenge us. AP classes are offered, but anyone can be placed there. If it fits in your schedule, you will be placed there. Everything is "dumbed down" it seems. A typical day in class could consist of coming in, reading something then answering some simple questions. The answers of the questions are clearly stated in the text. The problem with this is if you ask me to summarize what I've learned I wouldn't be able to respond. The curriculum is bad. I have friends from other schools, charter schools in my same ward, who are ahead of me.

During junior year there was a substitute for the first entire quarter and a half in my math class. We should not have to go that long without a trained and qualified teacher, especially in such an important and core class like math.

This year my school offered SAT classes for the first year. The only downfall was that this class only covered the math portion of the SAT. There was no vocabulary or writing involved in this class.

Schools can create their learning environment with their physical environment. Many schools have bad

buildings, and poor sanitary conditions. Often I find toilet paper everywhere on the floor, and then there's no clean paper to actually use. I can't even say: "Okay we are in a old building but it's always clean". Even though Roosevelt is being updated and will be new next year, I think it's unfair to ask students to deal with a bad and unclean environment, for any length of time. I feel like you have to create a good learning environment, since there are a lot of teens who don't want to come to school. If you are lacking things like extracurricular activities, a good clean building, and solid education, then students will keep staying out of school, and keep being truant.

With all of these problems, here are my recommendations to make these situations better:

- Do not allow a substitute to teach a class for more than 2 weeks. DCPS should have a plan in place, once a teacher needs to take an extended break, then they should have other qualified teachers ready to be hired.
- We need better curricula, and better ways to catch students up to what they should be learning at their grades. One way we could catch up is through more extracurricular activities.
- We need to take care of our facilities more. Students won't take care of the bathrooms or other parts of the building, if the facilities are not there for us. We need to have more bathroom supplies, and a just cleaner space.
- Have strict guidelines on what teachers should teach. And students should know what they must absolutely know by the end of the year.