



**Testimony of Sandra Moscoso – sandramoscosomills@gmail.com
DC Council CoW Performance Oversight Hearing - All Education Agencies
March 2, 2022**

Good morning Chairman and Councilmembers. I am Sandra Moscoso, a DC Public Schools (DCPS) parent and today I am providing testimony as a Board Member of the [DC Open Government Coalition](#) (DCOGC).

First, the Coalition asks that the Council insist on transparency around the DCPS budget process, in particular how “one-time” stability funds and ESSER funds have been allocated. DCPS rolled out a new budget framework, changing the way schools are funded. DCPS [touts transparency as a key principle](#), but the process was vague, information sessions provided no details and multiple requests by community members and [even requests by DC Council](#) asking for school level mock budgets went unanswered.

Budgets were suddenly released late on February 7 and principals were given 1 week to digest the numbers, learn to use a new system, and try to engage school communities. You’ll hear more today from experts like Dr. Mary Levy, the DC Fiscal Policy Institute and activists, but now that the dust has settled, we are learning that the new budget model will mean schools get less, not more. Most schools will avoid cuts in FY23 thanks to an array of stability funds allocated via an opaque process. What is clear about these stability funds is that they are a one-time allocation and schools feel more uncertain than ever about their ability to fund basic programming and educate the children of this city.

Secondly, the Coalition asks that the DC Council schedule a hearing to help families, educators, and the public understand the protocols followed by DC Public Schools, DC Health, and the Executive Office of the Mayor in identifying, reporting, and communicating cases to families and staff, and in how decisions to transition to temporary virtual instruction are made.

In the weeks before winter break, the system became overwhelmed and failed to keep up with positive cases identified at the school level. This effectively suppressed case numbers, causing some [students](#) to express alarm, and parent groups [to report cases](#) informally or [petition for transition to temporary virtual instruction](#).

On December 22, two days before winter break, DCPS Chancellor Ferebee [announced a change to the Covid response protocol](#), expediting the notification process.

On December 23, the last day of school before break, [887 cases](#) were dumped on the [DCPS case notifications website](#), revealing positive cases had ballooned within schools for weeks while families and staff were kept in the dark. By then, 25 schools had moved to virtual



instruction and to date, there is no transparency over how the [decisions to close a classroom or a school](#) are made.

On January 25, at a Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators (SHAPPE) meeting, high school principals and representatives shared that families were still experiencing the ongoing aftershock of the December school infections, as the virus made its way through families. School representatives agreed to pursue transparency into how the outbreaks were communicated and into how decisions were made around transition to virtual learning.

While the Omicron outbreak has subsided and may feel like a distant past, it revealed that there was no plan within DCPS for how to manage a spike in cases within our schools.

We all deserve transparency into what went wrong. Not to pound on the system we're all here to support, but to ensure schools have the resources they need and processes in place to prevent what happened in December 2021 from happening again when another spike hits. Especially in light of the fact that as of February 23, only [34 out of 116](#) schools have been assigned a Covid Response Coordinator.

We look forward to Council oversight and action on the above.

Thank you for your time.