

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of Contracting and Procurement



Public Hearing on

B25-0069 – “District of Columbia Public Schools Procurement Authority Amendment Act of
2023”

Testimony of
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Interim Director and Chief Procurement Officer

Before the
Committee on Public Works and Operations
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Brianne K. Nadeau, Chairwoman

May 25, 2023
10:00 AM
Virtual Meeting Platform
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good morning Chairperson Nadeau and members of the Committee on Public Works and Operations. I am Nancy Hapeman, Interim Chief Procurement Officer of the District of Columbia and Director of the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP). I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify on Bill 25-0069, the “District of Columbia Public Schools Procurement Authority Amendment Act of 2023”.

I respect the Council’s review and approval role in the contract review process. However, I firmly contend that revoking DC Public Schools’ (DCPS) independent procurement authority, as proposed by this bill, has the potential to undermine the ability of DCPS to provide educational and related goods and services in a timely manner to meet operational needs.

DCPS, comprising 117 schools and additional administrative units, is a multifaceted organization with diverse needs. Beyond broad system-wide requirements, each school harbors unique programming and activities, essentially approximating DCPS as a composite of 117 client agencies. The current procurement model allows DCPS to adapt to these variances. DCPS needs the ability to maintain a procurement team that understands the needs of each client, has expertise in the educational market, and can design and implement procurement solutions that fulfill the specific needs of each school and the system as a whole.

As Chancellor Ferebee has expressed in his testimony, DCPS is thoroughly evaluating and steadfastly addressing the circumstances that contributed to its noncompliance with Council contract review requirements. To aid in these improvements, my team at OCP and I have been regularly collaborating with DCPS to strengthen their procurement processes. We have observed their dedication and progress in the past months, and I am confident that DCPS is fully committed to strengthening the DCPS procurement structure, as well as the oversight of the procurement process.

Given these strides, I strongly advocate for DCPS to retain its independent contracting authority. The current model is best suited to accommodate the nimble, specialized responses required to meet the educational needs of those served by DCPS. The nature of DCPS procurements is distinct from other agencies OCP serves, requiring specific expertise and internal connections

which are already embedded within DCPS. It's important to recognize that potential legislative changes may inadvertently disrupt DCPS's ability to swiftly address schools' unique needs.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that with support and collaboration from OCP, and the demonstrated dedication by the Chancellor to the procurement system, DCPS can develop a robust contract management system. The current model of independent authority not only fosters a deep understanding of the unique needs of schools and students but also allows for the rapid response to any procurement needs of the 117 schools and administrative offices.

This concludes my prepared testimony. I am ready to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration.