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Good morning. I'm Danica Petroschius, parent of two at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan (CHML), LSAT member, and member of our Ward 6 education council, Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization (CHPSPO).

Our community welcomes Chancellor Wilson and we are hopeful that he leads a significant improvement in critical areas in our system. Our city suffers from too many inadequate school facilities. We have a one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum and professional development even though we tout neighborhood and citywide schools that can meet unique needs of the communities. We have a history of giving low priority or no consideration to parent engagement. We have a history of sharing only data and information that the district chooses to share – and not always making it easy to get or understand. We see the hard work of parents in keeping our children in and supporting DCPS schools, yet the city keeps adding policies to favor charters over DCPS schools.

For all of these reasons, parents and teachers are skeptical about seeing significant change. But we are perennial optimists – it just can't stay this bad for that long – and we are very committed to our public school system. It can improve. So with that optimism in mind, I offer the new Chancellor some thoughts on a vision that would appeal to our school communities and help the system succeed while accelerating growth in DCPS school enrollment:

- 1) *Prioritize Effective Parent Engagement.* We, and our school leaders and teachers, are the most knowledgeable people about the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and the system. And the more information we have the more we can help. The less we know, the less confidence and trust we have. Don't guess at how to do it well – ask us. We are great partners when invited to the table.
- 2) *Be Transparent.* Share information and data and make it accessible, clear and full. We have had so many instances – whether lead in the water data or building assessments that never happened – where the information is incomplete, not shared or inaccurate. We know that with transparency comes challenges; more questions get asked and initiatives are criticized. But with transparency also comes trust and confidence. With trust and confidence, we can all overcome challenges to work together to succeed.
- 3) *Support Appropriate Building Autonomy.* Each neighborhood and citywide school is unique and deserves a chance to leverage the expertise of their leaders and teachers to educate students. We want all schools to deliver an education based on the same high standards for all and to be held accountable for progress. But we don't want cookie-cutter, factory model approaches to that success. We have too many unnecessary mandates from the District that are forced on schools. Schools should be able to opt into District-supported curriculum and professional development. But they should also be able to opt out if they have a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to the DCPS standards and approved by the District and still get necessary financial support. This is especially important in schools like ours that are trying to implement a Montessori curriculum. Parents are choosing the school because it is Montessori. But this year, parents are seeing less Montessori and more District-mandated curriculum such as Eureka math

and professional development like LEAP that is in conflict with the high-quality Montessori approach. Our teachers are now being asked to do two jobs in one day – a Montessori education and the District one. And our parents feel like they are being misled by a District that gave us the chance to open and grow a *Montessori* school. We want to be in the public system and realize that there are some parts of the system that must be standardized. But the entire curriculum and professional development a school chooses does not have to be standardized.

4) *Advocate for a Robust Accountability System.* I hope the Chancellor's vision includes a request to OSSE to wait until September to finalize a plan for accountability. The Chancellor has said that he will visit every school, and I hope in doing so that he actively and fully listens to each school's needs, challenges, desires and progress. I hope he will then use that knowledge to help shape his vision for accountability and work with OSSE to reflect that vision. Parents will hold Chancellor Wilson accountable for success – we hope he will help shape how schools will be judged.

5) *Embed Modernization for All in the DCPS Vision.* We need a vision and plan that recognizes the close connection that state of the buildings has on morale, safety and health, and the success of educational programming. We have too many buildings that have never been modernized or are in a state of disrepair. We are all doing our best with work-arounds and band-aids to be able to make it work. But when the building is safe, healthy and has enough space – and the right kind of space – for the wide range of teaching and learning that happens in a school day, then we can really soar. We should rush to fix these inequities so that we can get on a manageable, affordable track of maintenance and repair.

Finally, we hope that our new Chancellor will be an ever-present and vocal advocate for a better DCPS system – whether in the Mayor's office, in the media, in front of Council or across the country. We want full confidence that our new Chancellor is fighting alongside us to help us be our best DCPS.