

Testimony of Danica Petroshius
OSSE Oversight Hearing in the Committee on Education
February 14, 2017

Thank you for holding this important hearing. I'm Danica Petroshius, parent of two at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan (CHML), LSAT committee member, and a Ward 6 resident.

As you all know, OSSE has an important opportunity to shape a stronger, more modern accountability and support system through the new federal ESSA law.

The risk is that the new plan will define and drive our school accountability and support system for the next 10 years, at least. We know that major federal education laws take ten years or more on average to overhaul. While the federal Department of Education may allow some adjustments and changes to DC's plan during the next 10 years, the bulk of the plan will stay the same until the ESSA law changes.

To ensure that the ESSA opportunity outweighs the risk, we should not rush into a final plan by April 3rd; we should wait until the second submission window in September for three critical reasons:

- 1) *Take the time to gain maximum engagement from parents, educators and other stakeholders.* Parents in my community are just beginning to understand the draft plan and its impact. They want to attend the outreach sessions and then go back again for more discussion and input because this plan is complicated and has direct impact on our kids, teachers and schools.
- 2) *Take the time to work with a variety of experts* on various aspects of the plan from what is best for English language learners (ELs) and students with disabilities to what are the best indicators of school success, in addition to testing, that are valid, reliable and can be disaggregated and differentiated.
- 3) *Give Chancellor Wilson an authentic, community-based opportunity to weigh in.* It is unreasonable that Chancellor Wilson will not have time to get to know our school communities and use that new information to help shape a plan that he will implement for all 49,000 students. OSSE released its draft plan just as the Chancellor came on board and it will be final just two months later. Chancellor Wilson needs more time to understand and hear from DCPS's 109 school leaders and educators, 8 ward education councils, numerous nonprofit partners, and tens of thousands of parents. We parents will hold the Chancellor accountable for DCPS's success; he should have time to work with us before weighing in. DC charter school leaders have had time to engage their stakeholders, gather experts and weigh in with OSSE since ESSA was signed in December 2015 – over a year ago. To argue that our new DCPS Chancellor has to make the same commitments to a new system and a new community in only two months is wrong.

OSSE may argue that by waiting until September, we are delaying a better system for kids. The reality is that whether a state applies in April or September, the 17-18 school year is a planning and transition year. Either way, the 18-19 school year is when the new plans begin to really take hold.

We as a city must give ourselves time to get this right and ensure stakeholder buy-in so that there is widespread commitment to its success. This is a plan that will drive how my children and many others are educated and supported, their teachers valued and their schools judged through their high school graduation day. We should be willing to wait a few months to make sure the next 10 years are the best they can be.