

**TESTIMONY**

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON PR21-1040 – DCPS Chancellor Antwan Wilson Confirmation Resolution of 2016**

**Thursday, December 8, 2016**

**Presented by:**

**Sally Schwartz, Globalize DC**

Good morning.

My name is Sally Schwartz. I'm speaking on behalf of Globalize DC, a local nonprofit that works to increase access for DC public school students and educators to global education and world language programs, resources, and opportunities. We work with partner organizations in both the public and private sectors that share our interest in bringing global knowledge and exposure to our city's young people. Because we are here in Washington, DC, a culturally diverse, international city, with a unique concentration of global assets – government agencies, embassies, business, universities, NGOs, museums and cultural institutions – we can do things here that no one else can.

My purpose here today is to argue that with the transition to a new Chancellor we need to keep moving forward and avoid any reversal of the recent progress that's been made by DCPS in the area of global education and language learning. I'm going to share a little history.

In the seventies, eighties, and nineties, DCPS was in the forefront among urban public school systems nationally in providing global education and study abroad opportunities for its students, largely because of the incredible international resources so close at hand. DCPS's Embassy Adoption Program, for instance, which matches embassies to schools, has been around for over 40 years. Oyster Bilingual was started in the early 70s - a national model for dual language immersion. Students traveled all over the world, at a time when international travel was still associated with privilege.

I came into the picture as head of DCPS's Office of International Programs in 1999, and for nine years I had the privilege of working to push this global education agenda forward. This was at a time, especially after 9/11, when national leaders in business, government, and education began to argue for the necessity of equipping K-12 students with the global competencies they would need to operate

successfully in a rapidly globalizing economy and to become informed citizens in an interconnected and often dangerous world. We made real progress in that time (such as the start-up of our Chinese language programs, through a partnership with Embassy of China). But frankly, other states and cities were embracing global education and languages with more conviction, and in spite of our “home field advantage” (as one of our Superintendents called it), we missed out on a lot of opportunities. Our biggest challenge was the constant turnover in leadership at that time (I had seven Superintendents in nine years). Newcomers didn’t necessarily understand the global education imperative or the opportunities here in DC until several years into their tenures, and then they were gone.

This is what happened in the Michelle Rhee/Kaya Henderson years. Global education and languages were not a priority in the beginning. The International Programs office was ultimately dismantled in 2008 and its functions dispersed. This was a real blow not only to the schools but also to the external partners who try to work with schools.

The good news is that in 2014, after a six-year hiatus, Chancellor Henderson created a new and more robust Global Education Office. It has been leading the work to globalize the curriculum, build world language capacity, and implement a huge new study abroad program for DCPS students. What is most significant is that this renewed effort has the support of DCPS leadership. It is no longer seen as tangential to the core mission of the school system. I believe that DCPS now sees that global education and language learning can be part of the solution for engaging and empowering kids, increasing student achievement, creating pathways to college and careers, and frankly, attracting new students to DCPS. This is a good starting point, but there is much work to be done, particularly in addressing huge inequities and barriers to access across the city. We cannot go backwards again.

So we ask:

1. That you seek Mr. Wilson’s views and experience with global education and world language teaching.
2. That you encourage the Mayor to make progress on global education and world language learning part of any performance review for the new Chancellor and DCPS going forward.

If this recent election has taught us anything, it is that we need to do a better job of educating our young people to be critical thinkers; to respect and understand diversity of viewpoints; to be comfortable with cultural, religious, and racial difference; to be able to communicate across linguistic barriers; and to see themselves as part of and connected to a larger world community with whom they share the planet.

This is why we need global education more than ever.

Thank you. We look forward to working with you, Chairman Grosso, as well as the new Chancellor to advance this agenda.

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