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## D.C. Auditor Statement on At-Risk Funding Amendment

**WASHINGTON, May 10, 2022**—D.C. Auditor Kathy Patterson issued the following statement today on D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson’s proposal to increase direct funding to D.C. public schools with a high concentration of students considered “at-risk” based on income status, homelessness, foster care, and other factors:

The D.C. Council’s action today to boost funding directly to local and charter schools with a high concentration of the students most at-risk of academic failure directly addresses critical findings in two reports by the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA). Our reports highlighted the importance of at-risk funds—both the need to ensure they are truly supplemental as per DC law, and the need to ensure schools serving higher concentration of students considered at-risk are receiving the supplemental funding necessary to address increased school level needs. We have specifically recommended ensuring adequate at-risk funds for schools serving higher concentrations of students considered at-risk due to both higher student mobility and more mid-year incoming students.

In June 2019 we published the report, [District Schools Shortchange At-Risk Students](#), which found D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) with the highest proportion of at-risk students had their base funding cut and at-risk funds used for teacher and social worker pay instead of for added efforts to improve academic achievement. That report found that the at-risk funding stream created in 2013 had been used primarily to fill budget gaps the DCPS central office created by reducing formula funds for schools with high at-risk populations. The at-risk funding law requires that the add-on funds be supplemental and not supplant other District or federal funds.

A 2020 report for ODCA by the Johns Hopkins School of Education Center for Research and Reform in education (CRRE) [Enrollment Projections in D.C.’s Public Schools: Controls Are Needed to Ensure Funding Equity](#), found that District parents were choosing schools with fewer students who are considered at-risk when not attending their in-boundary schools, leaving schools serving the highest concentrations of needy students with ever-dwindling resources due to declining enrollments. This pattern has impacted schools with high levels of student poverty that subsequently face lower fall enrollment that then results in fewer resources. The report recommended equitable funding for schools serving higher concentrations of students deemed at-risk. Today’s action addresses the negative cycle of schools serving the most at-risk students facing ever lower rather than enhanced financial support.

Including additional funds begins to respond to the needs identified in our reports and we look forward to continued engagement from the D.C. Council in monitoring these supplemental funds and ensuring schools serving higher concentrations of students considered at-risk have the resources needed to support them.

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