



**District of Columbia City Council
Committee of the Whole on
The “Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools
Kaya K. Henderson Confirmation Resolution of 2011”
Kwame Brown, Chairman**

**Thursday, June 16, 2011
11:00 a.m.**

**Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004**

**Washington Teachers’ Union
President Nathan Saunders**

Good afternoon DC Council Chairman Brown and other members of the District of Columbia City Council. I am Nathan A. Saunders, President of the Washington Teachers’ Union (WTU). Thank you for the public testimony opportunity on the confirmation of Chancellor Kaya K. Henderson. Checks and balances are an integral part of our American government. Public testimony at this hearing ensures an opportunity for all District of Columbia citizens to be heard.

The Public Schools affect not only teachers, students, and parents, but also real estate values, crime, and poverty. It has been the number one public interest issue for residents and was a major determinant in the last election. Mayor Gray's selection to become the next chancellor is his choice and right. I have been on record about my reservations in regard to his selection. I choose not to rehash those issues today. I have spoken to Chancellor Henderson in detail about what Washington Teachers’ Union and District of Columbia Public Schools can accomplish together moving forward. My opinion here in no way abridges the

plight of teachers whose careers have been cut short prematurely. I remain concerned and committed today, as ever to the 266 wrongfully terminated (2009 RIF), the 75 probationary teachers who won at arbitration, and sensible modifications to the IMPACT teacher evaluation system whereby 50 percent of teacher effectiveness ratings are based directly on student test scores.

Recently, Chancellor Henderson and I met to discuss the future of public education. I think it is important that this Council, the Mayor, and the public continue to engage in an open dialogue on issues like progress, values, educational rigor, and creating a less stressed-out public school system. Chancellor Henderson understands her assets and liabilities and so does the union. Teachers want progress more than any other stakeholder but cannot compromise justice and equity. The public education future can be bright. It can hold a sense of compassion and compromise simultaneously while jobs and economic justice for teachers work hand-in-hand. The Mayor's choice has no sworn enemies in the union. Our membership remains committed to educational progress for all students. We remain positive that the future can be bright while we diligently work to resolve the transgressions of the past.

At the end of the day, Mayor Gray is responsible for his decision and the impact it will have on our students. WTU will respect his decision to appoint Kaya K. Henderson and moving forward will make every effort to successfully collaborate with the new Chancellor for the best interest of our teachers and students.