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**STATEMENT BY GEORGE PARKER, PRESIDENT,
WASHINGTON TEACHERS' UNION,
ON COUNCIL HEARING ON DCPS BUDGET AND TEACHER LAYOFFS**

During a public hearing today in D.C. Council chambers, D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee and officials from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer were questioned about the process that resulted in the termination of 388 school employees.

WASHINGTON—Anyone attending today's public hearing at the Wilson Building saw a demonstration of the lack of accountability and transparency that has been the hallmark of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) under chancellor Michelle Rhee. Members of the Council of the District of Columbia were just as frustrated as D.C.'s teachers, parents and students have been over the lack of clear answers and rationale for firing nearly 400 school employees—266 of them teachers—earlier this month.

In addition to calling into question the legality of DCPS's implementation of the reduction in force, the testimony made it clear that chancellor Rhee had been presented with several options for closing the budget gap without firing teachers. The questioning revealed that even when presented with alternatives, the chancellor elected to cut teachers and services, and disrupt the lives of D.C.'s students. We applaud Vincent Gray and the entire council for giving this matter the attention it deserves, and for asking the tough questions the chancellor has avoided for too long.

DCPS has created an atmosphere of mistrust, tension and toxicity that has negatively affected the ability of all stakeholders to collaborate for better schools. If the chancellor truly wants to work in the interest of our children, she should start by being a better example of how to work well with others.

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