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## **Media Advisory**

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## **WASHINGTON TEACHERS' UNION HOLDS RALLY TO DEMAND RESPECT FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

**WASHINGTON**—Thousands of Washington, D.C., students, parents and teachers gathered today at a rally at Freedom Plaza to denounce the layoff of 388 D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) employees six weeks into the school year.

Community members concerned about the effects of the layoffs on D.C.'s public school students joined the rally, which was organized by the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU), along with the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

The layoffs are taking place at a time of year when schools in full swing, causing major disruptions in the lives and academic careers of students. Rally organizers are calling into question this latest DCPS action, which has had such a profound and negative impact on schoolchildren.

“There is no question that firing teachers at this point in the school year has disrupted the teaching and learning process. These cuts have led to increased class sizes and affected the quality of instruction,” said WTU President George Parker. “Teachers are the most important in-school factor in the quality of our children’s education and, therefore, teachers should be the last to be cut.”

The WTU is demanding that DCPS reinstate the teachers and school staff affected by the layoffs, pending the results of a public review of the process in which DCPS hired 936 new educators two months before laying off almost 400.

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“I’ve heard the chancellor call the cuts she has made ‘right-sizing.’ Let me tell you: There is nothing right about this situation, because these cuts are hurting kids,” said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Glenda Smith, a guidance counselor who was laid off from her assignment at Spingarn High School, said staffing cuts at her school will force some students to repeat classes. “They laid off the English 4 teacher, so seniors will be retaking English 3,” said Smith. “They’ll get the credit for English 4, but now they won’t be learning any new material. How can that be called a quality education?”

Attorneys for the WTU have filed a lawsuit on behalf of teachers who received a “reduction in force” (RIF) notice from DCPS. The WTU also has filed a class action grievance on behalf of all affected RIF teachers, and has requested expedited arbitration on the grievance.

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