



# State of Human Rights in the District of Columbia as a Human Rights City

2017 Update

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# Introduction

In 2008, at the urging of a broad range of DC grassroots organizations led by the American Friends Service Committee, the District of Columbia was declared a Human Rights City by a City Council Resolution (CER 17-461), the first in the United States. The Resolution noted the importance of ongoing discussions among residents and local authorities to identify the issues and inform the actions that could lead to meaningful and positive economic and social change.

Consequently, a Human Rights City Steering Committee decided to grade the City's commitment to human rights values by issuing a regular report named "State of Human Rights in a Human Rights City".

The first report was published and hand delivered to the Mayor and the entire City Council in 2012.

In 2015, the AFSC again took a leadership role to convene the DC Human Rights Steering Committee with the purpose to update the report and bring in new expertise. That year, we teamed up with the American University's School of International Service to collect and analyze data, resulting in a second published report, again presented to the Mayor and City Council.

Given the many social and economic changes in the District of Columbia since 2015, the AFSC has reconvened the DC Human Rights Steering Committee to produce our third report on the status of human rights in the District of Columbia.

In this report, we update nine of the 15 key human rights practice areas covered by the previous two reports. We also add one key practice area not previously included: Service Workers at DC Universities. As before, we provide recommendations when applicable.

While no grading mechanism was applied to our analysis in this report, it remains clear that the District still has a long way to go in achieving the promise of its declaration as a Human Rights City. As before, we have submitted suggestions to how the District government can more effectively address human rights violations. We again encourage partner organizations as well as individuals to consider, improve and expand these recommendations and join together for a Peoples Agenda to advance human rights in DC.

In developing these reports, we strive not to simply catalogue the failures of our limited government, but to illustrate for our fellow D.C. residents what we should be striving to achieve. In this way, we hope to mobilize D.C. residents to effectively demand and secure their human rights and to hold our elected officials accountable for falling so far short of that goal.

# Human Rights City Report: A Brief History

The following measurement framework was utilized in both the 2012 and 2015 reports to highlight successes and failures in the District’s commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the 2008 Resolution. Utilizing criteria offered by human rights law and practice, we developed the following Human Rights Report Card for elected officials of the District of Columbia, as well as those in the private sector whose actions have a significant impact on public policy decisions. The grades were intended as both a measure of progress in different areas of human rights practice and as identification of areas where more must be accomplished before the District can be in any sense considered a Human Rights City.

A – Excellent – objectives achieved

B - Decent progress but one or more significant problems remain

C – Limited progress achieved

D – Barely passing

F – Failure to achieve even the most basic human rights standards

## Grades

	2012	2015
Federal Government (Executive & Congress)	F	C-
Promotion of Self-Determination and Elected Officials	B+	B
Poverty Reduction and Income Inequality	F	D-
Welfare of Children	F	F
Access to Affordable Housing and Ending Homelessness	F	D
Budgetary and Tax Priorities	D	F
Human Rights Education	C	C+
Public Education	D	D
DC Criminal Enforcement System	D	D
Health and Environmental Justice	C	C
Immigrants’ Rights	A-	A
Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation	A	A-
Discrimination Based on Race	D	D
Discrimination Against Women	D	D+
Discrimination Based on Religion	N/A	D

# Promotion of Self-Determination and Elected Officials

## The Struggle for DC Statehood

On October 18, 2016, the DC Council approved two amendments that required the convening of an elected delegated Constitutional Convention to create a Constitution for the state of Douglass Commonwealth by a real democratic process, to occur no later than two years after achieving statehood. Further, the new Constitution created by this process would be considered for ratification directly by the electorate by majority vote. On November 6, 2016, in an advisory referendum, 80% of the voters said yes to DC Statehood. Bills in the U.S. Senate and House now have a record number of co-endorsers, although no Republican has yet signed on.<sup>1</sup>

## Poverty Reduction and Income Inequality

The District of Columbia continues to have the highest income inequality compared to the 50 states as reflected by the ratio of average income for richest 20% to poorest 20% of households<sup>2</sup> and the Gini Coefficient.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further documentation, please reference Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-15-16sfp.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/income-inequality-dc-highest-country/>

# Welfare of Children

## Child Poverty

The level of income support for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the main cause of child poverty in DC. Given the high level of child poverty in DC, especially in Wards 7 and 8, and its lasting negative impact, boosting the TANF income benefit should be a high priority for the DC government to fulfill its human rights commitments.<sup>4</sup>

The scheduled increase in TANF income benefits in FY 2019 to 36% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)<sup>5</sup> is already budgeted according to Kate Coventry, DCFPI.

The income benefit as a percentage of the FPL in Maryland is now 38.1% and 46.4% in New York. New Hampshire has the highest in the nation at 60.0%.<sup>6</sup> Most TANF recipients in New Hampshire are white. In DC, Black children now receive only one-half the income benefit of white children in New Hampshire, demonstrating continued racial disparities perpetuated by institutional racist policies.

DC TANF income benefit has declined 21.5% since 1996 (corrected for inflation). The present TANF income benefit plus Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit is 56.4% of the FPL. Assuming the SNAP benefit stays constant, with the scheduled TANF income increase for FY 2019 the combined benefit will increase to roughly 60% FPL. In New York the combined benefit is now 74% FPL; in New Hampshire it is 77%.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, boosting income security is necessary but not sufficient. Complementary funding is imperative for universal childcare, adult literacy, mental health and substance abuse, and of course job opportunities at living wages.

Note, even with TANF income benefit at the FPL plus the SNAP benefit, overall income level would be significantly below the necessary family income to reach self-sufficiency in DC: roughly two to three times the FPL, given the high cost of living.

## District of Columbia Fails to Protect its Children from Sexual Exploitation

Child prostitution in the District of Columbia continues to be a worrisome trend. The Declaration of the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (1996) defined child sexual exploitation as a form of slavery (The Declaration of World Congress, 1996). While child prostitution is common among poor American youth living in urban cities, the District of Columbia's child prostitution rate is among the highest in the country. In fact, the FBI has cited the city as a hub for sexual exploitation of children and youth.

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<sup>4</sup> Please reference the below:

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/43-children-in-poverty-100-percent-poverty?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/870,573,869,36,868/any/321,322> <https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/housing-complex/blog/20835238/poverty-in-dc-is-getting-worse-east-of-the-anacostia-river-study-finds>

<https://www.dcfpi.org/all/when-every-dollar-counts-child-poverty-has-lasting-negative-effects-but-even-small-income-boosts-can-help/>

Greg Duncan and Katherine Magnuson "The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty", *Pathways*, Winter 2011.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/TANF-Toolkit-FY-2018-Approved.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-cash-benefits-have-fallen-by-more-than-20-percent-in-most-states>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-cash-benefits-have-fallen-by-more-than-20-percent-in-most-states>

While city legislators passed "The Prohibition Against Human Trafficking Bill" (2009), which included language prohibiting adults from engaging or facilitating consensual sex with a minor in exchange for goods or services (District of Columbia Council Bill 18-70, 2009), it has yet to curb this distressing phenomenon. Additionally, District of Columbia legislators failed to address the factors that induce young people to engage in child prostitution, especially when considering that prostitution is a commercial necessity (a form of employment) among young vulnerable populations. Meanwhile, child sexual abuse has continued to plague the city, confounding residents and child advocates (King, 2017, Washington Post).

Most distressing, predators find it easy to be employed at various city agencies, exposing the city's youth to undue hardships that are directly related to the city's negligence. Furthermore, despite high rates of sexually exploited children, legislators have yet to initiate thoughtful policies to stem its growth or design a public campaign to educate young people on how to avoid it, report it, or educate them on the harms of child prostitution.<sup>8</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- Amend: District of Columbia Council Bill 18-70, 2009 to include specific language and guidelines for public agencies to protect young people from sexual exploitation.
- Direct city agencies to vet employees to ensure none who have sexually exploited young people are hired in any public agency that serves young people, or any public program that interacts with young children and youth.
- Design and fund a public campaign to educate young children on the harms of child prostitution and how to avoid and report predators.

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<sup>8</sup> Please reference below:

King, C. (2017, April 14). Multiple D.C. police officers have abused underage girls: Where's the accountability? *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/multiple-dc-police-officers-have-abused-underage-girls-where-the-accountability/2017/04/14/4589957a-2081-11e7-ad74-3a742a6e93a7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.4444bc5d1ec0](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/multiple-dc-police-officers-have-abused-underage-girls-where-the-accountability/2017/04/14/4589957a-2081-11e7-ad74-3a742a6e93a7_story.html?utm_term=.4444bc5d1ec0).



# Access to Affordable Housing and Ending Homelessness

New legislation, the Homeless Services Reform Amendment Act, was passed in December 2017; however, the Washington Legal Clinic, “is among dozens of organizations and community leaders that opposed this bill because it erodes the safety net for people experiencing homelessness and does nothing to improve services or end homelessness.”<sup>9</sup>

## Homeless Youth

Although school districts are required to conduct an annual count of their homeless students, the DCPS homeless student count is rarely current. Nevertheless, in 2015, DCPS reported 3,551 homeless students, including 139 stand alone, unaccompanied homeless youth. These numbers suggest that in 2015, homeless students represented 7.46% of the city’s public student population. Meanwhile, according to the U.S. Department of Education, during the 2016 school year, the number of homeless students enrolled in DCPS increased by 75% to 6,222, including 232 stand alone, unaccompanied homeless students (approximately 66% more than the previous year). Based on the U.S. Department of Education’s homeless count and DCPS’s 2016 enrollment data, homeless students (sheltered, unsheltered, and stand alone) represented 13% of the entire DCPS student population (48,439), meaning at least one of each ten publicly funded students is identified as homeless.

Researchers have consistently asserted the number of reported homeless students and youth is understated, and schools fail to reflect the actual number of homeless students enrolled, especially when considering that 78% of DCPS students live below the poverty line or near poor. It is safe to assume most of these homeless students are black, as blacks represent 92% of the city’s homeless population (7689 black homeless individuals of 8350 total). These numbers include 2,722 children younger than 18 years, approximately 33% of the homeless individuals counted. These numbers are staggering and require serious public and legislative attention.

Homelessness exposes young people to a way of life that is radically different from that of their housed peers. A wealth of statistical data and studies offer compelling evidence of the devastating effects of intermittent and chronic homelessness on young people. However, while some youth are homeless with their families, and a considerable number are homeless on their own, there may be many more who are unidentified. Furthermore, homeless youth are without the political clout to advocate for their needs, but depend on legislators, schools, and service providers to address their immediate needs and education. Meanwhile, the multiple operational definitions the District of Columbia’s various agencies employ to capture the homeless population are not uniform or effective. Each agency applies its own criteria and estimates that vary, and none collect data on the age of homeless youth, other under 18, or disclose their racial makeup. These decisions may be related to political reasons, but without accurate data and uniform definitions that articulate who, at what age, and how many times these youths have been homeless, the various reports issued will not help the city’s legislators, agencies, or homeless service providers meaningfully address their needs or arrest the growth of the homeless student population crisis that continues unabated. In the absence of clear definitions and up-to-date, clean data sets that fully capture the city’s homeless youth population, meeting their needs will remain an elusive exercise.

In addition, homeless youth research has built an undisputed consensus on the important role schools

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.legalclinic.org/the-final-homeless-services-reform-amendment-act-where-we-stand/>

play in advancing the positive development and education of homeless youth. However, DCPS has yet to resolve the procedural and structural obstacles that homeless students encounter or build and institutionalize responsive programs to meet the needs of homeless students. In order for homeless-directed programs to meet their objectives, deliberate efforts must be expanded to assess how and where state and federal homeless youth funds are being spent. Otherwise, the commendable aim of the numerous homeless youth programs DCPS and OSSE showcase on their respective websites cannot be substantiated. For homeless students in particular, well-developed school support structures will substantially improve their academic outcomes and future prospects. Additionally, while still imperfect, DCPS has made some efforts to address the needs of its IDEA students. The institutional capacities that are routinely employed by school teachers, counselors, and administrators to identify, serve, and meet the needs of various categories of IDEA students can also be employed help address the needs of homeless students. These responsive in-house structures could be modified and employed to meet the needs of DCPS homeless youth.

Without an accurate homeless student count, homeless students remain hidden from the sight of teachers and staff. Regardless, DCPS is legally obligated to meet the academic needs of homeless students. Ignoring the needs of this large youth population is contributing to the District of Columbia's cyclical poverty and intergenerational homelessness. If measures are not immediately put in place to ensure DCPS fulfills its legal obligation towards these most marginalized youth, it has become complicit in the rising number of poor and homeless city residents. DCPS is uniquely positioned to improve the educational experience and future prospects of its most marginalized students. If not, DCPS is responsible for burdening the city with the long-term costs of serving these youth as homeless adults.

Meanwhile, District of Columbia legislators continue to neglect to address the needs of the city's large homeless youth population. For example, recently, the city saw an increase in revenue, yet its legislators did not choose to expand funding to meet the needs of the city's homeless youth. Consequently, the city's homeless student population continued to grow. Bearing in mind the cost of poverty and homelessness to the District of Columbia's coffers, policy makers would be wise to shift focus from short-term solutions to well-funded and sustainable initiatives. For homeless students in particular, well-developed supportive structures will substantially reduce intergenerational poverty and cyclical homelessness.<sup>10</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- Submit biannual accurate, unfiltered and timely homeless student counts.
- Institutionalize in-school homeless student programs to meet the academic and social needs of DCPS's large homeless student population.
- Establish structural, external support systems to ensure homeless students' needs for shelter, food, and health are met.
- Commit to proper legislative oversight to ensure DCPS fulfills its legal obligation towards meeting the academic and social needs of its homeless students.

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<sup>10</sup> Please reference reports below:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). District of Columbia Point in Time Count:

[https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC\\_PopSub\\_State\\_DC\\_2016.pdf](https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_State_DC_2016.pdf)

Abdul Rahman, M. (2015). The Education of District of Columbia black homeless youth: Limits and possibilities. *Negro Journal of Education*, 84(3), 379-400.

Abdul Rahman, M. (2015). Factors that influence the education of District of Columbia black homeless youth: Racial inequality, poverty and consecutive educational reform

# Budgetary and Tax Priorities

There has been little change in DC tax burden by family income with tax triggers fully implemented.<sup>11</sup>

## Human Rights Education

Human rights education consists of education, training and information designed to promote “a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and molding of attitudes to prompt action directed at strengthening respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, tolerance, equality and peace, among individuals, within societies and among nations.” The UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training affirms that, “everyone has the right to know, seek and receive information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should have access to human rights education”.<sup>12</sup> The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) issued a Position Statement entitled “Human Rights Education: A Necessity for Effective Social and Civic Learning”, which states that “Human Rights Education, in both its civil and its humanitarian aspects, is a necessary element of social studies programs and should be integrated throughout the educational experience of all learners from early childhood through advanced education and lifelong learning.”

Despite the official designation of DC as a Human Rights City in 2008, leadership has not institutionalized the city’s commitment to a culture of human rights to educate citizens about human rights and to create courses on human rights issues.<sup>13</sup> The clearest example of the lack of commitment to human rights is that human rights principles and standards have not been incorporated in the school curriculum or school culture.

### **MAJOR BARRIERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN DC**

Although there are great HRE programs in DC, like the ones mentioned later in this report, we have a long way to go in order to realize universal human rights education. There is great potential for implementation of human rights education and institutionalization of human rights-friendly school models to reengage students in DC.

The most basic barrier to HRE in DC is awareness of human rights in general and the benefits of HRE. The solution is awareness raising about HRE and incremental institutional changes that will infuse HRE into school culture, staff training, as well as the curriculum. A good starting point for this incremental change is the integration of human rights principles into subject standards and curriculum.

### **DC’s Social Studies Standards Should be Revised to Reflect Human Rights Principles**

A well-rounded understanding of human rights can be instrumental in mastering most of the principal disciplines in the DCPS social studies standards and the C-3 Framework recommended by the National

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.dcctj.org/> For further documentation please reference Appendix 2

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, 2011. Available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/467/04/PDF/N1146704.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>13</sup> DC Council 2008. Human Rights City Resolution <https://www.afsc.org/resource/washington-dc-human-rights-city-resolution>

Council for the Social Studies (NCSS): politics and government, economics, the characteristics of religious thoughts and ideas, the social impacts of events, and intellectual thought.

DC's Social Studies Standards were last reviewed and revised in 2006, eleven years ago. There does not appear to be a mechanism or process set up to trigger the review of standards.

DC's 2006 standards already mention "human rights" four times: 1) Grade 10 - causes of genocide 2) Grade 11 - Soviet Union's systematic human rights violations prior to and during WWI; 3) Grade 11 - UDHR and International Organizations; 4) Grade 12 - human rights practices in the context of the development of different political systems. This is a start, but there are many more areas where human rights principles can be integrated into social studies standards. In addition, human rights principles should be mainstreamed into the standards for all other subjects as they are revised.

### **Policies and Academic Requirements Are Not in Place to Ensure All DC Students are Competent in Human Rights**

Human rights through education ensures that all parts of the learning process, from curricula, materials, teaching methods and training, contribute to human rights education. On the other hand, human rights in education promotes a culture of human rights within schools by "ensuring the respect of the human rights of all actors, and the practice of rights, within the education system." As part of a rights-based approach, the human rights principles of equality, dignity, inclusion, accountability, participation, empowerment, and non-discrimination are integrated into all aspects of education including the learning environment, teaching methods, learning processes, textbooks, extracurricular activities, and education policy.

Incorporation of human rights studies as an elective will 1) increase participating DCPS students' human rights knowledge; 2) foster students' critical thinking; and 3) empower youth to become agents for peace and productive social change. The institution of this elective would also reflect NCSS's recognition of human rights education as an essential part of social studies education for all students.

If human rights principles were mainstreamed as part of the standard curriculum taught in schools, the long-term effects on society could be transformative, impacting individual behavior in the short-term, and US culture and US foreign policy in the long-term. Human rights education has the potential to transform the debate from equal education to education for equity. Teaching human rights to young people during their formative years has a ripple and catalytic effect.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

More than sixty years after the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and nine years after the Human Rights City Resolution, the concept of human rights is not familiar to most students in Washington, D.C. However, there are nonprofits in DC that have been working informally to provide HRE to DC students or to advocate for HRE in schools. Information about a few of these programs is listed below.

#### **American Friends Service Committee – Human Rights Learning Program**

The AFSC's goal is to ensure the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be understood and exercised by D.C. youth, providing them with the tools to identify and overcome cultural

practices and beliefs that do not support human rights while also empowering them to engage policy-makers and community leaders in human rights learning.

Currently, the American Friends Service Committee is working in both public and private DC schools. Each week, AFSC staff and volunteers, from local colleges and law schools, teach workshops that have been developed as part of AFSC's Human Rights Learning Curriculum. We refer to our model as one of human rights learning because it goes beyond imparting knowledge about human rights, as is most often the objective of human rights education.

Through the learning process, participants become engaged in defining and shaping their experience according to human rights, including: enhancing knowledge, developing critical thinking, promoting values clarification, building solidarity and changing attitudes and behavior. Most importantly, human rights learning should lead to action.

AFSC and HRE USA petitioned the DCPS Chancellor, Mr. Antwan Wilson, requesting that DCPS create a human rights elective in middle schools and high schools. In his response, he acknowledged the importance of human rights education. He informed us that he passed our request on to the Teaching & Learning team for consideration.

### **Human Rights Educators USA**

Human Rights Educators USA (HRE USA) is a national network of educators, practitioners, and organizations committed to building a culture of human rights through 1) advocacy for the inclusion of Human Rights Education (HRE) in national and state education standards and curricula; 2) promotion of national and regional policies that support HRE; 3) developing and sharing HRE resources; and, 4) providing HRE training for educators.

HRE USA's Collaborative Action, Policy and Advocacy Committee (CAPAC) is assisting several other states in incorporating human rights and humanitarian law principles into social studies standards. HRE USA's website contains a database of free curriculum resources for teachers and schools.

In September 2017, HRE USA's Regional Representative for the DC Metro Area testified before the DC Council Education Committee to urge the Council to revise social studies standards and to create a human rights elective for high school and middle school students. The testimony offered many recommendations for how these initiatives could be implemented and how community resources could be harnessed to train existing and prospective teachers on HRE and provide curriculum. Following the testimony, the representative was invited to meet with a Councilmember White to further discuss HRE in DC schools.

HRE USA's Regional Representative for the DC Metro Area also testified at a public meeting before DC's State Board of Education urging them to begin the process of revising DC's social studies standards, with particular emphasis on the incorporation of human rights and humanitarian law principles. This has garnered support from at least one Board Member. At the Board's request, HRE USA is gathering other organizations, teachers and students to testify on this issue during the next public meeting.

This year HRE USA's Regional Representative for the DC Metro Area has written to the DC Council Education Committee, Office of the State Superintendent for Education, and the State Board of Education urging them to begin the process of revising DC's social studies standards, with emphasis on the incorporation of human rights and humanitarian law principles into the social studies core.

HRE USA's regional representative is also submitting comments to the DC Graduation Requirements Task Force, suggesting that DC should make competency in HRE a requirement for all DC students.

Administrators at the University of the District of Columbia are working with HRE USA to support faculty and academic programs that already focus on human rights and to find new ways to incorporate human rights in other programs across the university.

### **D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice**

D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice is a network of educators who seek to strengthen and deepen social justice teaching. They are community of mutual support for educators to collaborate on curriculum, professional learning, and activism. They challenge systems of oppression through anti-bias, anti-racist, and multicultural education. They work with students, families, and other educators in and outside the classroom to create a more just and equitable world. Some activities include field testing new social justice lessons and mobilization in response to issues affecting DC area students like police brutality, gentrification and LGBTQIA.

### **Georgetown Street Law Clinic Mock Trial and DC Human Rights Act Exhibition**

DC Street Law's primary purpose is to provide legal education to laypersons. In the fall and spring courses, law students teach a semester-long elective course in practical law to students in public and charter high schools throughout the District of Columbia.

During the fall semester, students prepare projects for a multimedia contest centering on the theme of the DC Human Rights Act. Contestants submit poetry, rap, visual art, music, comics, sculpture, and other demonstratives to show their unique and thorough understanding and interpretation of the statute and how it applies to their lives in the District. A team of evaluators considers each project carefully and judges each submission. The projects are displayed at Georgetown University Law Center, where prizes are awarded during a celebration of human rights. Finalists in each category attend a reception sponsored by the D.C. Human Rights Commission. In 2017, over 200 high school students participated in the competition.

During the spring semester, high school students prepare over a six-week period to be lawyers and witnesses in a complex and controversial case as part of a mock trial competition. The first two rounds of the mock trial competition are held at the Superior Court in the District of Columbia. Approximately 300 students in up to 30 teams from all Street Law classes participate in the tournament. Over 200 parents, teachers, principals, and friends observe the trials each night. In the end, two teams participate in the final round of the tournament, which takes place at the Georgetown University Law Center and is presided over by a sitting judge.

### **United Nations Association of the National Capital Area Global Classrooms DC and Model UN**

Serving the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia, of the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) strives to increase public understanding and support of the United Nations; encourage constructive US leadership in strengthening the United Nations; and prepare present and future leaders to work for a better world, both globally and locally. UNA-NCA staff

organizes the Global Classrooms DC (GCDC) and Model UN<sup>14</sup> programs that serve DC students and schools.

GCDC helps prepare globally aware citizens and educates students in grades 5-12 on international issues and the work of the United Nations, while strengthening key skills including public speaking, negotiation, and writing. GCDC also organizes professional development workshops and two Model UN Conferences including the Annual Spring Model UN Conference at the U.S. Department of State and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in Washington DC.

As participants in the Model United Nations, students role-play as country delegates in the UN, learning their country's stance on issues, history, culture, and other important/interesting facts. Students prepare and give speeches to other delegates, negotiate and resolve policy issues with other countries, and prepare draft resolutions (*solutions*) to encourage international peace, security, and cooperation.

### **Recommendations:**

DC has an abundance of organizational partners already doing this work. Human rights organizations, academic institutions, professional associations, individual teachers, and nonprofit organizations would be able to provide DC with a wealth of knowledge to scale up HRE and create formalized programs in DC schools. Below are some recommendations.

- We urge the City Council, the Office of the Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the State Board of Education (SBOE) and DC Public Schools (DCPS) to incorporate a human rights elective and start the revision process of the social studies standards, which have not been revised or reviewed since their inception in 2006.
- We urge DCPS to consider the city's commitment to a culture of human rights when it implements its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. The DCPS Strategic Plan's priorities consist in the promotion of equity, the empowerment of people, the increase of excellent schools, the education of the whole child (academic, social and emotional learning), and the engagement of families. The incorporation of human rights education would facilitate the implementation and realization of all five strategic priorities.
- Social Studies Standards should be reviewed every 5 years, or another regular interval. Reviews should include participation and comments from teachers, parents, and community groups so the content supports deep and active learning that will help students succeed in schools, communities, colleges and careers.
- Make DC schools Human Rights-Friendly Schools,<sup>15</sup> which integrate human rights principles and values into all areas of school life.
- Incorporate human rights education into teacher certification program curricula in the District. New teacher training programs should include training on HRE.
- Partner with human rights organizations and/or local universities to develop continuing education credits and professional development opportunities for teachers.
- Offer annual teacher training on human rights education and/or continuing education programs. DC should capitalize on its high concentration of colleges and universities to do so or create online coursework.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://unanca.org/what-we-do/global-classrooms-dc>

<sup>15</sup> A Human Rights Friendly School places human rights at the heart of the learning experience and makes human rights an integral part of everyday school life. From the way decisions are made in schools, to the way people treat each other, to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities on offer, right down to the very surroundings in which students are taught, the school becomes an exemplary model for human rights education. Amnesty International, Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/human-rights-friendly-schools/>

- Entities that provide funding and support for school programs should make funding available to new and existing HRE programs offered during and after-school by adding it to their budget as a line item, providing incentives for schools or teachers that participate in HRE programs, or allocate funds for grants specifically for HRE.
- Capitalize on low-cost or no cost ways DC can incorporate HRE into existing programs and initiatives.
  - Partner with programs already operating in DC schools to promote and expand the number of students they are reaching.
  - Ensure teachers know about opportunities to attend professional development courses or conferences with existing professional development funds or offer incentives for them to do so.
  - Seek out after-school providers that incorporate HRE elements into their programs and offer them existing funding, or make incorporation of HRE a requirement to receive funding for programs.

## Conclusion

Embracing human rights education in DC schools is an opportunity for DC to innovate and lead as a Human Rights City. By requiring students to learn about Human Rights principles prior to graduation, DC students will be better equipped to maximize their rights and responsibilities as global citizens.

## Public Education

While school funding is no longer an issue of concern for DCPS, nonetheless, its student outcomes remain dismal. DCPS's per pupil expenditure is more than twice the national average at \$27,039. In the meantime, DCPS was ranked bottom (112/112) with the least efficient spending on education (Bernardo, 2016). Funding on its own merit is not a factor that can provide a possible justification for DCPS's poor student outcomes. Rather, how DCPS chooses to allocate its funds and how these funds are used at the school level and in the classroom are the questions that merit considerations.

Several reasons have been cited as the cause of DCPS's failure to improve student proficiency and graduation rates. The District of Columbia's sweeping school reform initiatives failed to include an independent evaluation plan to track DCPS's successes or failures (Abdul Rahman, 2015). Also, in 2007, city legislators created several redundant educational agencies without a clear mandate or well-defined role (GAO, 2008).

Meanwhile, DCPS's hyper focus on testing, which requires DCPS teachers to dedicate considerable instructional time (21%) towards students' test taking skills, is problematic. DCPS teachers and students spend more than sixty instructional days of the school's calendar to improve students' test scores, rather than teaching and learning, which proved useless. In 2017, DCPS was ranked as the worst (50/51) performing school district and highest dropout rates (51/51) in the nation (Bernardo, 2017). In 2015, DCPS was noted as one of the worst IDEA compliant school districts in the nation (USDE. 2015a).

Regrettably, the absence of quality K-12 education is taxing the city's black communities and its young. DCPS is in the domain of every city legislator and none claim responsibility for it. Since 2007, the Committee of the Whole that comprises the entire District of Columbia Council and the Committee of



Education have shared the joint responsibility of monitoring DCPS. State Board of Education members are politically appointees who are without influence to monitor the school system they are entrusted with. Unfortunately for DCPS students, researchers have identified poor quality schools is a primary factor that contributes to risk of academic failure and cyclical poverty.<sup>16</sup>

## Recommendations:

- Improve legislative oversight of DCPS with clear mandates for each responsible committee that intersects with DCPS and DCPS's student populations.
- Audit DCPS's financial allocations, management costs, and procedures, i.e. where and how the money is spent.
- Decrease the number of instructional days DCPS dedicates to test taking skills.
- Provide parents and the public with much more granular information about the reading and writing experiences of DCPS students. For example, in addition to history textbooks, what else is assigned for students to read in social studies classes in high school? Do students with below grade level reading skills have alternatives to the standard history texts, or are their classes just discussions and work sheets? Finally, what is the number of writing assignments during a semester and are these assignments available for parents to review?
- Provide parents with information about how much is spent on books per student each year at each school, and descriptions of how faculty are building reading experiences into the curriculum in every grade.

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<sup>16</sup> Please reference reports below:

Abdul Rahman, M. (2015). The Education of District of Columbia black homeless youth: Limits and possibilities. *Negro Journal of Education*, 84(3), 379-400.

Bernardo, R. (2016). *2016's cities with the most and least efficient spending on education*. Retrieved from <https://wallethub.com/edu/cities-with-the-most-least-efficient-spending-on-education/9390/>.

Bernardo, R. (2017). *2017's states with the best & worst school systems*. Retrieved from <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-the-best-schools/5335/#>.

U.S. Census Bureau (2016) *Public Education Finances: 2014*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Student achievement and school accountability programs*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html>

U. S. Department of Education. (2014). *Consolidated state performance reports*. Retrieved From <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html#fed>.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (2015a). *2015 SPP/APR and state determination letters*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/2015/dc-acc-apr1tr-2015b.pdf>

# Health and Environmental Justice

## Health

Since the 2015 Report, Georgetown University has published a key study entitled, “The Health of the African American Community in the District of Columbia: Disparities and Recommendations.” This study found that, “While life expectancy has improved for all populations in the city, Black residents do not fare as well as other racial groups. For example, White males in the District are expected to live almost 15 years longer than Black males (83.2, 68.8, respectively). White females in the District are expected to live approximately 9 years longer than Black females (85.2, 76.2, respectively).”<sup>17</sup>

## Environment

WMATA’s policy of raising fares and cutting service will discourage Metrorail and bus ridership, shifting reliance for commuting to cars -- precisely the opposite of what is needed to reduce regional air pollution and its negative health impacts, as well as carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. This policy is a climate denialist assault on the health and well-being of our residents. Moreover, this outcome is directly opposite to the self-declared objectives of the District government through its Sustainable DC initiative. WMATA should be concerned with the needs of low-income and working-class riders, particularly those of color and the impact of its unfair fare system.<sup>18</sup>

# Discrimination Based on Religion

## Discrimination of Muslims

American Muslims are under attack. Many, including a recent report by the U.S. Justice Department, have substantiated the surge in hate crimes against Muslim Americans. While efforts have been made by DC legislators to involve and engage the D.C. Muslim community, no legislation so far has been proposed to identify Islamophobic speech as hate speech, protect Muslim community centers or mosques from hostile groups and individuals, or allow Muslim worshipers to use public streets during Friday prayers and special holidays, as is the case with other religious communities. Such efforts would reduce the harm and harassment endured by the historically large Muslim community, the substantial number of Muslim diplomats who reside and work in the District of Columbia, and those who frequent the District of Columbia mosques. Without such clearly delineated laws, DC's Muslim community will continue to face bigotry, hate, and unequal treatment under the law.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Health of the African American Community in the District of Columbia: Disparities and Recommendations, 2016 (Georgetown University, Prepared for the DC Commission on African American Affairs).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.savemetro.org/> For further documentation, please reference Appendix 3

<sup>19</sup> Please reference reports below:

Pew Research Data: <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>

Islamophobia in America: <http://www.newsweek.com/islamophobia-america-rise-hate-crimes-against-muslims-proves-what-politicians-640184>

## **Recommendations:**

- Issue clearly articulated laws against hate speech of Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and any other group that has been targeted by extremists and Xenophobes.
- Direct the DC Metropolitan Police and other agencies to stop issuing tickets against Muslim worshipers attending local mosques for their weekly Friday noon prayer, and the two annual morning Eid prayers.
- Foster better understanding among faith and non-faith DC communities.
- Highlight the historical presence and contributions of District of Columbia Muslims that extends beyond 1862.

# **Service Workers at DC Universities**

## **Educational Benefits Available to Service Workers in Universities in the District of Columbia**

At a time when many consider free access to higher education to be a human right, it is time to examine how universities in the District of Columbia distribute free access to education to their own workers. Free tuition for the dependents of faculty and staff is a long-standing tradition but is this benefit available to everyone working on campuses in D.C.? And what is being done for the dependents of workers who want higher education but do not have the academic records needed for admission to the city's most selective universities?

### **Background**

When privatization of service workers began in the 1980s, benefits such as free tuition and retirement contributions were sharply reduced in the universities of the District of Columbia. For some workers, the free tuition available at universities is one of the most valuable benefits an employee could enjoy. For a middle manager, free tuition (valued at \$50,000) for a child at one of the area's private universities such as Georgetown or George Washington would add as much as 50% to an annual salary.

This benefit may now be influencing where people work. For example, a manager in Aramark in the area recently left Aramark to manage food services as an employee of American University. After two years at the University, he would qualify for free tuition for his dependents. This manager would then gain a tax-free benefit of \$46,980 a year per child.

### **Educational Benefits Today**

As the reader will see in the following tables, educational benefits vary tremendously from campus to campus. Benefits usually depend on who employs the service workers.

- The employer matters a great deal. Service workers such the custodians at Catholic University and Gallaudet University were never privatized and thus have the same educational benefits as faculty and white-collar staff.

- Employees of food service vendors such as Aramark, Bon Appétit, and Sodexo on campuses across the city receive nothing. Workers who have been privatized, such as food service workers, receive NO educational benefits on any campus in the city.
- The age of the dependent also matters. On some campuses, dependents lose benefits after age 24. For other workers, such as some of the cleaners at Georgetown University, the age limit is 30.<sup>20</sup>
- Policies on providing benefits for students not admitted to universities across campuses. American University restored free tuition to dependents of all service workers on campus in Fall 2017. However, it does not yet provide any tuition assistance to dependents unable to gain admission to the university.
- Georgetown provides a model in tuition assistance to students not able to gain admission to the university. With its tuition assistance program (TAP), Georgetown funds the tuition bills of dependents enrolled elsewhere until age 30.<sup>21</sup>

**Food Service Workers:**

University	Employer on campus	Free credit classes for workers at the university	Financial support for education of workers elsewhere (e.g. at a community college)	Free credit classes for dependents of workers	Financial support for education of dependents elsewhere
American University	Aramark	No	No	Yes	No
Catholic University	Aramark	No	No	No	No
Gallaudet University	Bon Appétit	No	No	No	No
Georgetown University	Aramark and Epicurean & Company	No	No	No	No
George Washington University	Aramark	No	No	No	No
Howard University	Sodexo	No	No	No	No
Trinity University	Metz	No	No	No	No
University of the District of Columbia	Perkins Hospitality	No	No	No	No

<sup>20</sup> <https://benefits.georgetown.edu/tap/tapchildren>

<sup>21</sup> <https://benefits.georgetown.edu/tap>

**Custodians/ Cleaning Service Workers:**

University	Employer on campus	Free credit classes for workers at the university	Financial support for education of workers elsewhere (e.g. at a community college)	Free credit classes for dependents of workers	Financial support for education of dependents elsewhere
American University	Aramark	No	No	Yes	No
Catholic University	University	Yes	No	Yes	No
Gallaudet University	University	Yes	No	Yes	No
Georgetown University	Some custodians are employed by P&R Enterprises and some by the university	No for employees of P&R Enterprises Yes for GU employees	No for employees of P&R Enterprises Yes for GU employees	No for employees of P&R Enterprises Yes for GU employees	No for employees of P&R Enterprises Yes for GU employees
George Washington University	Aramark	No	No	No	No
Howard University	Thompson Hospitality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trinity University	Aramark	No	No	No	No
University of the District of Columbia	Motir	No	No	No	No

**Recommendation:**

Working through the Education Committee, the D.C. City Council could ask each non-profit university for a report on the number of service workers on campus, the vendors involved, and the educational benefits and the retirement benefits available to these workers. With this information in hand, hearings could be held, and a report issued to be shared with the public. If this request for information was met with silence from the non-profits, the silence could be reported.

## Retirement Benefits

The information below is a snapshot, not a formal survey. It was obtained through conversations with workers, calls to Aramark's employee benefit hotline, and review of UniteHere Local 23 contracts online.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, many online contracts are out of date, but the reader will see that UniteHere does not have a standard contract in place, and that some workers, such as the Sodexo workers at Howard University, have no hope of retirement based on their work at Howard.

University	Vendor	Contract years	Vendor Retirement Contribution	Role
Howard	Sodexo	2012-2016 found online	\$20 per hour worked	Worker
American	Aramark	Current 2017 contract effective 6/1/2016	\$1.05 per hour worked. (Assume 1520 hours for two 19-week semesters)	Worker
Georgetown	Aramark	Current 2017 Source: Aramark hotline	6% match to 401(k)	Worker
Georgetown	Aramark	Current 2017 Source: Aramark hotline	62.5% match up to the first \$35,000 per year to 401(k)	Manager

Disparities in benefits exist for workers represented by the same union. Disparities also exist based on role in the company. Managers on the same campus (Georgetown) and from the same vendor (Aramark) receive a 401(k) match more than 10x the match available to workers.

## Financial Information

Workers interviewed on campuses knew little about how much was in their retirement account and would like to know more. It seems that financial education has not been a priority of the vendors or the unions.

There is proposed legislation at the federal level to require "employer sponsored retirement plans to provide participants with a projection of monthly income based on their savings."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.unitehere23.org/contracts/>

<sup>23</sup> See Wall Street Journal, "You Choose: \$1 Million Vs. \$5,000 Every Month?" by Shilomo Benartzi and Hal. E. Hershfield.

# Conclusion

This report does not provide a comprehensive analysis of all human rights violations or progress in the District of Columbia since 2015. There remain huge deficits in District policies addressing human rights violations in key practice areas not covered by this report.

Poverty rates east of the Anacostia River are more than 3 times greater than those found elsewhere in DC.<sup>24</sup> The DC Department of Human Services has delayed distribution of SNAP benefits to hundreds of eligible families in DC since the October 2016 adoption of the D.C. Access System.<sup>25</sup> Unemployment rates in DC have not returned to pre-recession levels, while the black/white unemployment gap has grown.<sup>26</sup> And affordable housing shortfalls remain a persistent problem.<sup>27</sup>

Despite all this, there were two important victories in advancing human rights in DC. \$200,000 was budgeted for a feasibility study for a DC Public Bank in FY 2018<sup>28</sup>, and the City Council passed the NEAR Act (Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Act) following District-wide conversations around policing and public safety.<sup>29</sup>

We strongly encourage DC residents, local authorities and organizations committed to human rights to use this report and its recommendations and join together to ensure that our community lives up to the ideal of a Human Rights City for meaningful positive economic and social change.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/housing-complex/blog/20835238/poverty-in-dc-is-getting-worse-east-of-the-anacostia-river-study-finds>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.streetsensemedia.org/article/d-c-department-of-human-services-told-people-to-wait-on-food-stamps-now-it-is-being-sued/#.WjgU2t-nGUm>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Still-Looking-for-Work-Unemployment-2017\\_fnl.pdf](https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Still-Looking-for-Work-Unemployment-2017_fnl.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Housing-Toolkit-FY-2018-Approved-FNL.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> [http://dccouncil.us/files/user\\_uploads/event\\_testimony/DRAFT\\_-\\_Committee\\_on\\_Business\\_and\\_Economic\\_Development\\_FY18\\_Budget\\_Report.pdf](http://dccouncil.us/files/user_uploads/event_testimony/DRAFT_-_Committee_on_Business_and_Economic_Development_FY18_Budget_Report.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B21-0360>

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