

UPDATE ON A RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**Statement of
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**before the
Committee of the Whole & Committee on Education
Council of the District of Columbia**

**PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE ON BILL 22-776, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
EDUCATION RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD AND COLLABORATIVE
ESTABLISHMENT AMENDMENT ACT OF 2018**

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*The views expressed are my own and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Grosso, and members of the Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Urban Institute's efforts to create an independent research-practice partnership with the District's education agencies.

At the hearing on July 13, I spoke about the proposal to create a research-practice partnership that my Urban colleagues and I have shared and discussed with education agencies and other stakeholders over the past several months. This proposal builds on conversations that we initiated over a year ago, first with DCPS and eventually with PCSB, OSSE, and DME as well.

This proposal has three core elements, which I believe are critical to a successful research-practice partnership:

- First, the research must be conducted independently. We are not seeking to create a research partnership at the behest of the mayor, the council, or anyone else. Instead, we are working to create a hub where Urban and other research institutions collaborate on research aimed at improving outcomes for DC students.
- Second, the research must meet high standards of research integrity and quality. This requires ensuring that data are high quality, research methods are appropriate and transparent, and findings are communicated clearly and even-handedly.
- Third, the work must be conducted in collaboration with education policymakers and practitioners in the District so findings are relevant to and actionable for local decisionmakers. This will require building lasting relationships with administrators and practitioners at all levels of the education agencies.

What remains to be decided is how to turn these core principles into a formal structure and operational plan for a research-practice partnership. No decisions have been made, but the kinds of questions we have been discussing with the education agencies since July include

- how do we ensure that the research agenda reflects robust stakeholder input and engagement?
- what mechanisms should we put in place to guarantee that the research meets high standards of technical quality? and
- how do we foster research that is conducted independently but addresses questions that policymakers and practitioners care about?

Once we have worked out these kinds of details, the next step would be to sign legal agreements, such as data-sharing agreements and memorandums of understanding, among all the relevant parties. We have not yet started that process, which based on prior experience I expect will take several months.

Launching an effective research partnership sooner rather than later is critical because the challenges facing our education system are both daunting and urgent. The PARCC data that came out last month showed that two out of three DC students did not meet expectations in math and reading, and that enormous disparities by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status persist.

Research will not fix our education system on its own, but it can play an important role in describing problems, identifying solutions, and contributing to an ethos of transparency and continuous improvement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering any questions.