



The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Suite 504
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

The Healthy Youth and Schools Commission (HYSC) is pleased to submit to the Council of the District of Columbia its report on the health, wellness, and nutrition of youth and schools in the District pursuant to the Health Schools Act of 2010 (HSA), DC Official Code § 38–827.01

The report includes an overview of our work throughout 2023, including focus areas, meetings hosted, potential recommendations, and areas worth further exploration. The report also includes a list of current HYSC commissioners.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss any questions you may have regarding this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KM=C", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

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Annual Report to the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia

November 2023

The purpose of the Healthy Youth and Schools Commission (HYSC) is to inform the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia on the health, wellness and nutritional issues concerning youth and schools in the District.

In March 2023, commissioners of the HYSC voted on focus areas for 2023. As a result of this vote, two focus areas were selected: **school meal quality, and mental and behavioral health**, which was shared in our first 2023 meeting on March 22, 2023.

The purpose of this report is to share findings from our meetings and recommendations based on these findings, relevant research, and commissioners' expertise. These recommendations are informed by the commission's preliminary findings but they are not exhaustive; the commission will further investigate these focus areas in 2024 through additional stakeholder engagement.

School Meal Quality

Commissioners met on May 24, 2023 to discuss school meal quality. Given the recently introduced legislation for *Universal School Meals*, the commission intentionally focused efforts on quality rather than access. Two groups presented at our May meeting: DC Central Kitchen (DCCK) and Bertrand Weber, Director of Culinary and Wellness Services at Minneapolis Public Schools. Both DCCK and Mr. Weber came highly recommended from school food advocates.

The following were identified as potential recommendations and should be further researched:

1. Adopt the metrics of the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) for school meals to encourage procurement that supports the local economy, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition.
2. With the guidance of the Food Policy Council, identify quality metrics for all school food vendors that increase consumption and student satisfaction, and decreases food waste.
3. Investigate current contracts of school meal vendors and opportunities for feedback.
4. Provide consistent opportunities for student feedback on school meals.

Mental and Behavioral Health

Commissioners met twice to discuss mental and behavioral health, July 12, 2023 and July 26 2023, given the increased need for this focus after the COVID-19 public health emergency. During the first meeting, commissioners heard a presentation from Dr. Charneta Scott, Project Manager within Department of Behavioral Health's Prevention and Early Intervention Division. The purpose of this presentation was to get a baseline understanding of the mental and behavioral health services currently being offered to students across the District.

In the second July meeting, commissioners heard a presentation from Aimee McLaughlin, Manager of Data and Strategic Initiatives at OSSE, as well as three current students to learn their perspectives of services offered. The presentation from OSSE provided a high-level overview of the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data findings related to student

mental and behavioral health. The full YRBS will be shared with commissioners upon its release, and we anticipate that this will also be a focus area for 2024. Additionally, three students provided their experience and recommendations to improve awareness, access and engagement of mental health services provided in schools.

The following were identified as potential recommendations and should be further researched:

1. Identify current utilization rates of mental health services (specifically, peer support programs and non-clinician services) and opportunities for growth.
2. Identify opportunities to increase visibility of mental health clinicians in schools, ideas include: ensuring that all mental health clinicians are introduced to students in the classroom, allowing time for one-on-one engagement with students and clinicians, adding more dedicated instructional time for social and emotional learning
3. Investigate current distribution of mental health resources and any need for redistribution.

The Healthy Youth and Schools Commission will continue its research and engagement in these topic areas in 2024.

Healthy Youth and Schools Commissioners

Name	Appointing Organization	Affiliated Organizations	Appointment Dates	Ward of Residence
VACANT	Mayoral Appointee			
Kristy McCarron	Chairperson, Appointed by the Chairman of the Council	YMCA	May 2021 - May 2024	Maryland resident
Jenn Mampara	Appointed by the Chairperson of the Council Committee with oversight of education	FRESHFarm	October 2021 – May 2024	Ward 6
Audrey Williams	Appointed by the Chair of the Public Charter School Board	DC Public Charter School Board	May 2021 - May 2024	Maryland Resident
Tia Brumsted	Designee Representative of OSSE, Mayoral Appointee	OSSE	January 2023 – January 2027	Maryland Resident
Marierose Mbinack	Designee Representative of DCPS, Mayoral Appointee	DC Public Schools	July 2022 – January 2027	Maryland Resident
Charneta Scott	Designee Representative of DBH, Mayoral Appointee	Dept. of Behavioral Health	January 2019 - January 2027	Ward 4
Kafui Doe	Designee Representative of DOH, Mayoral Appointee	Dept. of Health	January 2019 - January 2027	Maryland Resident
Diana Bruce	Public Member, Mayoral Appointee	Diana Bruce and Associates LLC	October 2022 – May 2024	Ward 6
VACANT	Public Member, Mayoral Appointee			
Taryn Morrissey	Public Member, Mayoral Appointee	American University, School of Public Affairs	May 2021 - May 2024	Ward 4
Danielle Dooley	Public Member, Mayoral Appointee	Children's National Health System	May 2021 - May 2024	Ward 2
Noemie Durand	Student Member, Mayoral Appointee	BASIS DC Public Charter School	October 2022 – November 2023	Ward 3

