

**Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education**  
**John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 307 | Washington, DC 20004**

December 21, 2020

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:

Pursuant to section 104(b) of the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“UPSFF Act”), effective March 26, 1999 (D.C. Law 12-207; D.C. Official Code § 38-2903(b)), the Mayor is to transmit to the Council each year “the algorithm that will be used to determine the next fiscal year’s [Uniform Per Student Funding] Formula foundation level.” Please find our response below.

The Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) is comprised of two elements: a foundation level of funding that each Local Education Agency (LEA) receives for each student, and a set of “supplemental weights” that are added to that foundation level for students with particular characteristics requiring more funding (e.g. students with disabilities, at-risk students). Supplemental weights are determined as a percentage of the foundation amount and accumulate for each student characteristic. For example, LEAs receive a supplement of 49% of the foundation amount for each English Language Learner (ELL) student (i.e., an LEA would receive the foundation amount multiplied by 1.49 for a 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELL student). The appendix at the end of this letter provides more detail on the foundation levels, formula weights, and funding amounts over the last several fiscal years.

The original UPSFF (the foundation level and supplemental weights), designed in 1996, was based upon analysis conducted by District education officials, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), the Mayor’s office, the Council of the District of Columbia, and local education experts and advocates to calculate the costs of a market basket of educational goods and services. The market basket included nine general categories of expenses: classroom staff, school administration, direct services to students, operations support, central management, schoolwide staff, nonpersonal services and programs (e.g., supplies, field trips, career and technical education), instructional support, and other school-based costs (e.g., technology and food service). Both the foundation level and supplemental weights and their corresponding amounts were calculated and set using an algorithm which included the factors from this market basket of goods.

Currently, the UPSFF foundation level and supplemental weight amounts are not determined each year by using a mathematical algorithm that recalculates the original basket of goods (that type of calculation would include “cost of teachers and other classroom-based personnel and for both school-based and non-school-based administrative personnel,” as referenced in the statutory provision). Instead, each new fiscal year’s UPSFF rates are determined during the annual

budgeting process by using the current fiscal year's rates as a base and building upon that by considering a variety of factors. First, the prior year's foundation amount is taken into account. Next, the impact of expected cost increases, including District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) personnel costs associated with union contracts and non-personnel DCPS costs like energy, are taken into account. Then, an enrollment projection analysis is completed for both DCPS and the charter sector to determine the anticipated enrollment for each local education agency. Finally, revenue estimates from the OCFO's Office of Revenue Analysis (ORA) are also considered, along with the overall budget for the District government. This annual process has resulted in the foundation level increasing most fiscal years. The supplemental weights typically stay constant year to year, with moments of intentional change.

In 2013, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) commissioned the Cost of Student Achievement: Report of the DC Education Adequacy Study ("Adequacy Study"), which reassessed the costs included in the UPSFF formula including its market basket of factors. The study also took into account costs for academic performance and made recommendations to increase several UPSFF supplemental weights along with the foundation level. While valuable as a guidepost for education budgeting in the District, the study simply did not account for citywide costs of operating government, budgeting for all agencies, tax triggers, revenue estimates, etc., which both the Executive and the Council have to consider each year. In response to the proposed recommendations, the foundation and several supplemental UPSFF weights were updated in Fiscal Year 2015, and subsequently Mayor Bowser's budgets have included UPSFF foundation increases for most fiscal years thereafter, and select increases to the residential and non-residential facilities allotments and the special education compliance weight.

In addition to the annual review by the Mayor's office and education agencies, pursuant to section 112(a)(2) of the UPSFF Act (D.C. Official Code § 38-2911(a)(2)) the Mayor submits to the Council a report every two years that reviews the UPSFF and includes the UPSFF Working Group's recommendations for revisions to the formula (foundation and supplemental weights) based upon a study of actual costs of education in the District of Columbia, research in education and education finance, and public comment. In 2020, DME released the 2020 UPSFF Study, an in-depth analysis of the students covered by the at-risk weight, the consideration of school-level at-risk concentration funding, the structure of the ELL weight, and the cost drivers of the formula's foundation level.<sup>1</sup> The 2020 UPSFF Study's findings and options for formula revisions are currently under consideration by the 2020 UPSFF Working Group, and the report will be submitted to the Council in the coming weeks.

Pursuant to the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Submission Requirements Resolution of 2020, approved December 01 2020, the Mayor shall submit to the Council, and make available to the public, not later than March 31, 2021, the proposed budget for the District government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022. The Mayor's FY22 budget submission will include the FY22 UPSFF foundation level, as determined through the careful consideration of the factors listed above.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education will publish this text on its website.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2020 UPSFF Study can be accessed at [dme.dc.gov/publication/2020-upsff-study](https://dme.dc.gov/publication/2020-upsff-study).



I look forward to continuing to work with the Council to provide further information regarding the UPSFF formulation process. Please feel free to reach out to my office with any other questions on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Kihn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Kihn" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Kihn  
Deputy Mayor for Education



**Appendix: Foundation levels, formula weights, and funding amounts, FY19–FY21**

	FY19		FY20		FY21	
	Foundation:	\$10,658	Foundation:	\$10,980	Foundation:	\$11,310
General Education	Weights:		Weights:		Weights:	
PK3	1.34	\$14,282	1.34	\$14,713	1.34	\$15,155
PK4-Kindergarten	1.30	\$13,855	1.30	\$14,274	1.30	\$14,703
Grades 1-5	1.00	\$10,658	1.00	\$10,980	1.00	\$11,310
Grades 6-8	1.08	\$11,511	1.08	\$11,858	1.08	\$12,215
Grades 9-12	1.22	\$13,003	1.22	\$13,396	1.22	\$13,798
Alternative	1.44	\$15,348	1.44	\$15,811	1.445	\$16,343
Special Education Schools	1.17	\$12,470	1.17	\$12,847	1.17	\$13,233
Adult	0.89	\$9,486	0.89	\$9,772	0.89	\$10,066
Special Education						
Level 1	0.97	\$10,338	0.97	\$10,651	0.97	\$10,971
Level 2	1.20	\$12,790	1.20	\$13,176	1.20	\$13,572
Level 3	1.97	\$20,996	1.97	\$21,631	1.97	\$22,281
Level 4	3.49	\$37,196	3.49	\$38,320	3.49	\$39,472
Special Education Compliance						
Special Ed Compliance	0.099	\$1,055	0.099	\$1,087	0.099	\$1,120
Attorney’s Fees Supplement	0.089	\$949	0.089	\$977	0.089	\$1,007
English Language Learners (ELL)						
ELL	0.49	\$5,222	0.49	\$5,380	0.49	\$5,542
At-Risk Students						
At-Risk	0.224	\$2,387	0.225	\$2,471	0.2256	\$2,552

