



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004**

Director Sam Abed
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
1100 4th St SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Re: Educational Services at Youth Services Center

Via Email

November 18, 2025

Dear Director Abed,

We are writing to follow up on our recent conversations regarding educational programming services at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Youth Services Center (YSC). We remain deeply concerned about the educational service gaps and operational deficiencies that continue to take place within YSC.

As the Local Education Agency or "LEA" responsible for providing educational services to youth at YSC, DYRS must take the appropriate measures and be responsive to adapting educational needs within its facilities. This includes ensuring adequate staffing levels and offering sufficient educational instruction hours, whether through a contracted provider or directly staffing the educational setting with DYRS instructional personnel.

Earlier this year, the Committee on Youth Affairs visited YSC as one of several routine oversight inspections. The Committee was alarmed by what was observed and brought these concerns to you and your team directly. Youth held in overflow units were provided severely reduced educational programming, which largely amounted to classroom packets which could be completed independently in exchange for snacks.

On Thursday, October 16, the Committee on Youth Affairs held a public roundtable to discuss overcrowding at YSC. During this hearing, the Committee heard clearly that overcrowding issues continue to have a deleterious effect on educational programming at YSC. In particular, there remains a lack of sufficient staffing to ensure children can safely go to and from class. The severity of the staffing shortages has forced contracted instructional and administrative staff to indirectly cover these security responsibilities.

Additional conversations with advocates, lawyers, and the contracted educational provider at YSC confirm that the disturbing outcomes encountered were the result of a number of factors, including overcrowding conditions in the 98-bed facility where population counts have

consistently hovered between 115 and 130, severe staffing shortages, and, importantly, an unwillingness to invest additional resources to address critical gaps in the existing education services contract. This unwillingness is particularly concerning, given that it is DYRS's responsibility to provide students with an appropriate education regardless of shifting student needs or other administrative obstacles.

During the joint hearing conducted by the Committee on Youth Affairs and the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety on November 13, 2025, you suggested that the reliance on classroom packets was a result of students being processed through intake in their first five days of detention. You may recall, however, that the Committee on Youth Affairs visited the overflow unit, which at the time was occupied by girls, some of whom had been housed on the unit for months.

If packets are truly only being given to students in the first five days of their detention, then there must be an alternative explanation for what the Committee observed and the lack of direct instruction provided to youth. Whatever the case, the quality of educational programming must be drastically improved. While we understand that justice facilities encounter unique challenges and complexities, no school within the District of Columbia would be allowed to operate at such low standards. Furthermore, education is a foundational element of successful rehabilitation, and without providing quality education to each child at DYRS, the Agency will be unable to meet its rehabilitative mandate.

In response to this growing educational service gap, the Council, in good faith, included in its FY26 appropriations an additional \$500,000 for DYRS to hire three more teachers, provide pay equity, and retrofit a classroom space with necessary educational technology and equipment. This investment was made with clear intent to alleviate ongoing educational staffing pressures and ensure that all youth within YSC received an appropriate level of educational programming and direct instruction. There is no ambiguity in the Council's legislative intent as included in the Local Budget Act of 2025 and as described in the Committee's FY26 budget report.

Regardless of whether DYRS continues its contract with its current educational provider or engages in a re-bidding process to select a new one, it is incumbent upon the agency to use these allocated funds as they were intended by the Council during this school year. To be clear, there is no expectation that these funds be used specifically for Maya Angelou Public Charter School, but DYRS must use these funds to fulfill their legislative purpose.

To date, DYRS has yet to disperse these allocated funds to supplement educational programming at YSC for this academic year despite repeated inquiries. In light of the information the Committee has gathered, and to follow up on its inquiries during its recent overcrowding hearing, the Committee is requesting written answers to the following questions:

- What is the current status of contract negotiations with the current education service provider?

- How much daily time are young people receiving educational programming and direct instruction at YSC?
- How does DYRS plan to account for changes in student-teacher ratios during negotiations for educational contracts?
- What measures will the Agency put in place to ensure that exceeding student-teacher ratios does not hinder the successful fulfillment of the contract?
- The Committee allocated \$500,000 FY26 budget dollars in order to hire more teachers, establish teacher pay equity, and purchase educational instruction technology. How will DYRS ensure that these funds will be used appropriately to provide for students at DYRS schools during the current school year?
- If funds have already been used by DYRS in any way, please include these by line item and include a description of how these funds were utilized. If DYRS does not intend to use the funds for their originally designated purpose, please explain the reasoning and indicate how the funds are planned to be used instead.
- In addition to the allocated funds, what alternative strategies will DYRS implement to address the Agency's educational priorities?

Please submit written responses to these oversight question no later than COB on November 25, 2025 by email to youthaffairs@dccouncil.gov and to amcneely@dccouncil.gov.

Sincerely,



Zachary Parker
Chair, Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia



Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia

Cc:

Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education

Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice