

## **EDUCATION ADVOCATES DEMAND DCPS CHANCELLOR AND DC STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION IMMEDIATELY PROVIDE APPROPRIATE EDUCATION TO DETAINED YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

*Students with disabilities at the DC Jail and Youth Services Center have only been provided rudimentary education packets distributed by correctional staff since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 20, 2020

Contact:

Gregg Kelley, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs,  
[Gregg\\_Kelley@washlaw.org](mailto:Gregg_Kelley@washlaw.org), 202-319-1070

WASHINGTON, DC – D.C. students with disabilities detained at the Youth Services Center (“YSC”) and the D.C. Jail are being denied, in wholesale fashion, a free appropriate public education (“FAPE”) to which they are entitled under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (“IDEA”) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, DCPS has failed to provide students with disabilities at the YSC and the Inspiring Youth Program (“IYP”) with FAPE and has not issued any plan to ensure that students at YSC and IYP will receive a FAPE during the 2020-21 school year. Today, a several education advocacy organizations have presented a letter to Dr. Lewis Ferebee, Chancellor of the DC Public Schools, and Hanseul Kang, State Superintendent of Education, urging them to create a comprehensive plan to educate these children appropriately.

For the last six months, students at YSC and IYP have not received any appropriate specialized instruction or related services on their Individualized Education Plans (“IEPs”). They have had no access- virtual or otherwise- to teaching professionals. They have not received any direct instruction and there has been no communication with teachers. Instead, the students have only received generic work packets distributed and collected by correctional staff. Equally troubling, these work packets are not differentiated according to individual students’ needs. When students have submitted their assignments, they have not received any feedback from their teachers. And, four students who graduated from IYP were denied an opportunity to participate in their virtual graduation ceremony. What this troubling narrative depicts is a complete cessation of special educational services to perhaps the most vulnerable student population DCPS serves.

**Margaret Hart, Counsel for the Washington Lawyers’ Committee, says,** “It is inexcusable that the District is failing to provide these young people with a basic education. The District’s students are entitled to special education and related services tailored to meet their individual needs. Failing to provide an appropriate education, virtual or otherwise, while giving them generic packets that don’t even provide basic education and instruction is unacceptable. The message we are giving these citizens of the District is that their education is not a priority, or worse, that they don’t matter. The District Leadership responsible for the oversight of education of detained, disabled young people must address this crisis immediately.”

The coalition includes the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, School Justice Project, Georgetown’s Juvenile Justice Initiative, Advocates for Justice and Education, and the

public interest law firm of Terris, Pravlik & Millian, LLP, as well as other education advocacy organizations.

A copy of the demand letter can be viewed [here]

###

**ABOUT THE WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE:** Founded in 1968, The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs works to create legal, economic and social equity through litigation, client and public education and public policy advocacy. While we fight discrimination against all people, we recognize the central role that current and historic race discrimination plays in sustaining inequity and recognize the critical importance of identifying, exposing, combatting and dismantling the systems that sustain racial oppression. For more information, please visit [www.washlaw.org](http://www.washlaw.org) or call 202.319.1000. Follow us on Twitter at @WashLaw4CR.