



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Advocates for Justice and Education Files a Complaint Against the District of Columbia for Implementing Discriminatory Practices Against Children with Disabilities in the School Enrollment Process

[Washington, D.C.] – On November 14, 2025 – On behalf of a 5-year-old student and his grandmother, who is his legal guardian, Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE) and Steptoe LLP filed a civil complaint against the District of Columbia (DC) in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The complaint describes the District of Columbia Public Schools’ (DCPS) failure to allow the student, and others like him, to meaningfully participate in the My School DC (MSDC) Lottery program. The complaint alleges that DCPS’s actions violate the District of Columbia Human Rights Act.

According to the [complaint](#), the student’s grandmother applied to participate in the MSDC lottery, and in a timely manner, she provided the required information and entered the school rankings in the MSDC system. Her school rankings were based on research that she conducted to determine the best school environment for her grandson, who required a self-contained classroom. In March 2025, the student’s grandmother received notice that her grandson was matched to the school she ranked number one. She attempted to enroll her grandson at the matched school but was unlawfully denied the opportunity to do so by DCPS. Specifically, DCPS refused to honor the family’s lottery match by denying the student an available seat in the matched school’s self-contained classroom.

The DC Human Rights Act, D.C. Code § 2-1402.41, mandates that students with disabilities not be denied access to an educational institution’s services or programs. Unfortunately, this grandmother, like other DCPS caregivers of students with disabilities who require self-contained classrooms, was denied equal access to this publicly funded school choice program.

“The purpose of the MSDC Lottery is to encourage school choice, but with this DCPS policy, school choice is severely diminished for students with disabilities, who require self-contained classrooms. In practice, this policy is discriminatory,” said Nadiya Pope, the Education Justice Attorney at AJE and co-counsel for the case.

Students with special education needs and disabilities have long been marginalized within the education realm. This DCPS policy is further proof of that marginalization. “DCPS is pushing disabled children out of schools that actually have the programming and space necessary to provide them with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), all under the guise of discretion,” said Akela Crawford, the Director of Legal Services at AJE and co-counsel for this

case. This is unacceptable, and DCPS should be required to change its policies to prevent further harm to students with disabilities.

AJE and Steptoe are hopeful that by filing a complaint with the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, DCPS will be compelled to stop its destructive and discriminatory practices. It is AJE's position that school choice is important and should be made available to all students in the District of Columbia.

About Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

[Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.](#) (AJE) seeks to empower families, youth, and the community to be effective advocates to ensure that children and youth, particularly those who have special needs, receive access to appropriate education and health services. We promote school and agency accountability to ensure that all children, youth, and families receive proper services and supports to succeed.

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