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October 22, 2018

Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Board of Directors  
341 S. Bellefield Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

***Re: Education Law Center Public Testimony***

On behalf of the Education Law Center, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this evening.

The Education Law Center is a non-profit, legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all Pennsylvania children, from birth through 21, have access to a free, quality public education. Our work focuses on ensuring that the students, families, and communities most impacted are centered in the decision-making process and part of co-constructing solutions.

1. **English Learners Work Group**: I want to start by recognizing and appreciating the District's work over the past year to listen to the needs of English learners and their families. On your legislative agenda this week is a Resolution to ensure that English learners and their families are equitably and appropriately served in the District.

We urge you to adopt the English Learners Resolution, so that the recommendations can be implemented as tangible policies and practices that students and families actually experience in school. This was an important partnership where the district and community worked together to have honest conversations and recommend specific strategies for change.

2. **Vote No on Arming School Police**: The Education Law Center urges you to be a collaborative partner again tonight – and listen to the parents and students who are unequivocally saying NO to guns in schools.

We join their call – and urge you to instead invest in practices that are shown to promote positive school climate and keep students safe – including counselors, trauma-informed practices, and positive behavior interventions.

In many ways, the District is already on that path – with community schools and the new suspension policy. We must stay focused on ending the disproportionate school removal, pushout, and arrest of Black students and students with disabilities. The District's own data tells us that they are already overpoliced in school. Please don't take this huge step backwards. Don't authorize guns in schools.

3. **You are responsible and accountable:** In addition to being collaborative partners, we are also civil rights attorneys ready to hold you accountable. The recent legal settlements in Woodland Hills should give you pause – and an idea of how much you could pay – if you give school police even more power over students.

Until Black children don't need to fear being shot by police in the street, whether they comply or run, they will be shot in school. It's not hyperbole, it's not a fear tactic – it's the foreseeable and inevitable consequence of your decision. The real and ultimate price will be children's lives.

Please vote no on the proposed policy to arm school police. Thank you to those Directors that have already indicated your intention to do so. We see you and we thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Kleiman  
Staff Attorney  
Education Law Center