

Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #195

I would like to provide: * Written Public Comments

My public comments are related to: Virtual+ Plus Learning

Topic * Virtual Plus and Plan for Reopening ACPS

Full Name * Bridget Shea Westfall

What is your relationship to ACPS? * Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

**Enter your comments here OR
upload below:**

Public education is an equity issue. I'm pro-teachers, I've worked in human services and public health for 18 years. I don't want anyone to be unsafe in a pandemic.

I started my professional career at legal aid advocating for children experiencing homelessness and students with different learning abilities who weren't receiving the services they needed get the resources they deserved from public school districts. I managed an afterschool program, researched interventions for schools and was a deputy juvenile officer in St. Louis county public schools. I've spent my entire career advocating for children and families.

Never did I think I'd have to advocate for mine...he's an upper middle-class white boy with two parents who has every resource available to him. "He will be okay", they say. But he's not...so I advocate for him and all the other children who deserve a healthy, safe return to school and their education to be viewed as a priority by the ACPS School Board and Dr. Hutchings.

For my son to have a chance at education...For my family where one parent does not have the option to work from home and was recalled to work, no exceptions...Where another parent is expected to be in person regularly at work...Where I seriously contemplated resigning from my job I love because I was not giving my son the attention he deserved or the education I work so hard for others to have access in public education.

This is not just about me and my family. This is about his classmates who don't have the ability to afford \$1200 a month Virtual Plus! proctor and child care or an education pod or a helper from Baroody or Steve and Kate. Who might not think there is a sliding scale...Who doesn't have transportation or the ability to navigate the incredibly confusing ACPS Virtual Plus Plan...

It's for his classmates whose parents work 3-4 jobs just to get by. It's for his classmates with different learning styles, be it kids who are in Talented and Gifted, have an IEP or social and emotional needs not being addressed. It's for the classmates whose parents can't work from home, are essential workers. It's for the classmates whose health means the safest choice is to remain virtual. It's for the kids who need social interaction with peers. It's fir his classmates without enough food to eat. It's for his classmates who can't access the free food from ACPS due to parents working, taking care of children or without transportation to a food distribution site.

It's for his classmates where home might not be a good learning environment or a safe space. It's for his classmates with more than one student at home. It's for his classmates who might not have access to the internet or have unreliable internet at home.

It's for his classmates who are English language learners. It's for our Title I schools, who were promised a return to the classroom for being the most under resourced in a pandemic or the cringeworthy deficit centered phrase ACPS uses "vulnerable". It's for families to have options, because currently there is not a plan just a lot of "we can'ts".

This is about the food service workers and janitors and maintenance staff and paraprofessionals. The bus drivers and crossing guards. This is about the part-time after care workers who are currently unemployed.

This is about the taxpayers. This is about our small businesses. This is about families moving from our district or unenrolling or opting out. This is about making our community our "village".

We have all the resources. We have data and subject matter experts. ACPS identified the barriers, but they don't have a plan. Not now, not for next year.

They have demonstrated absolutely zero confidence that they've engaged the teachers for input or the teachers unions in a collaborative plan for a safe return to the classroom.

ACPS needs a plan.

Public education is equity. #openACPS