



Advancing Transparency in DC Schools

A Comparison of Two Bills Before the DC Council

Currently, DC Public Schools is subject to all transparency regulations that apply to publicly funded institutions- principally the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). While the Public Charter School Board is subject to these laws, individual charter schools are not. DCPS voluntarily makes meetings of school’s Local School Accountability Teams (LSATs) open to the public and includes students and teacher representation in that group. Charter school boards include parents, but not teachers or students. While there are great transparency challenges that go beyond complying with these laws, Charles Allen’s Public School Transparency Amendment Act would level the playing field of transparency for all schools who accept public dollars. EmpowerEd advocates for more transparency for *all public schools*. See a complete [comparison of transparency across both sectors](#) and more on our advocacy on this topic- see [this page](#).

Council Member Charles Allen’s Public School Transparency Amendment Act of 2019	Council Member David Grosso’s School Based Budgeting and Transparency Act of 2019
Overall Purpose: “require every DC Public School and Public Charter School be subject to the same transparency and open government laws, something 39 other states around the country already have in place.”	Overall Purpose: “to improve how education investments in D.C. Public Schools serve students and provide the public with greater information on how taxpayer dollars are expended in both traditional public and public charter schools in the District of Columbia.”
Direct Transparency Provisions	Direct Transparency Provisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires both the Public Charter School Board and individual charter schools to comply with the Open Meetings Act (DCPS is already subject) • Requires both the Public Charter School Board and individual charter schools to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (and requires PCSB to assist schools in this compliance) • Public Charter Schools would be required to report all contracts in their annual reports • Public Charter Schools would be required to disclose all employee’s names and salaries (DCPS must do this already) • Does not address the consistency of language in school budgeting across sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires both the Public Charter School Board and individual charter schools to comply with the Open Meetings Act • Does not ask charter schools to comply with the Freedom of Information Act • Does not require charter schools to list all contracts (would stay at contracts over 25 k) • Does not require charter schools to report employee salaries • WOULD urge all public schools to use similar definitions and line-items in their budgeting
Other Measures	Other Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives school communities a voice in decisions by requiring two teachers and for high schools and adult schools- a student representative on charter school’s board of trustees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not ask charter schools to include community voices by adding teacher and student representatives to their boards • The summary suggests it will move from funding schools based on the per pupil formula to a School-Based Budgeting Model* *In our consultation with legal experts, it’s not clear how the text of the legislation would accomplish this.