

Comment of Elizabeth Davis, President

Washington Teachers' Union, AFT Local 6

February 24, 2019

Re: Notice of Petition to Amend Charter: Campus Closure and Consolidation – Cesar Chavez PCS

My name is Elizabeth Davis I'm the president of the Washington Teachers Union. I represent more than 5,000 active and retired teachers in Washington D.C. I am also a DC teacher and DC resident. I am writing to urge the DC Public Charter School Board to **VOTE NO** on a charter amendment for Cesar Chavez PCS until every Chavez Prep student, family, and staff member receive the respect and support they deserve.

The DC PCSB's mission is to provide quality public charter school options for DC students, families, and communities. This involves effective oversight. The DC PCSB must ensure that charter schools operate in a manner that is best for DC students and responsible with respect to the expenditure of DC taxpayer dollars. Cesar Chavez PCS's decision to close Chavez Prep Middle School is neither. The DC PCSB should not ratify this decision by voting to allow the charter amendment.

Cesar Chavez PCS did not have to close Chavez Prep Middle School, a school with one of the highest increases in test scores this past year. Instead, as Cesar Chavez PCS explained to their bondholders--they closed Chavez Prep Middle School so that they could "monetize the asset" [their current lease on the Kenyon Street property]. Decisions regarding whether schools remain open to serve the communities that rely on them should not be based on what is in the financial interest of charter operators and their for-profit consultants. They should be made based on what is best for students and DC taxpayers.

Cesar Chavez PCS planned the closure in secret and without the participation of students, parents, or school staff. They implemented the announcement of the closure irresponsibly and disrespectfully. Chavez Prep staff found out about the closure announcement through a call from the Washington Post. Parents found out about the closure through an email—which left many families scrambling with just ten days to find a new school for their kids.

Cesar Chavez PCS continues to exhibit disrespect at the bargaining table with Chavez Prep staff, who have advocated for increased resources for students and staff to assist them during this disruptive period that Cesar Chavez PCS has unnecessarily created. They have refused to provide a copy of the lease for the building site and to engage in any productive discussion about what will happen to the school site next year. They also rejected a union proposal to

provide additional social work support to students and advocacy for students' families during the remainder of the school year. Finally, their most recent response to the union's proposal around support for staff was woefully inadequate, and deeply disrespectful to staff members, who have given so much to the students and the school.

The DC PCSB has the power and the responsibility to stop this and to ensure that Cesar Chavez PCS provides the respect and support that every Chavez Prep student, every family, and every staff member deserves. Until that happens, the DC PCSB should not facilitate Cesar Chavez PCS's harmful and disruptive behavior by voting to allow their requested amendment to their charter.