

Testimony for Jennifer C. Niles
Darren Woodruff, Ph.D.

Good afternoon Chairman Grosso, Councilmembers Alexander, Bonds, and Allen. My name is Darren Woodruff and I am the Vice Chair of the DC Public Charter School Board. In addition, I work as the Senior Director of Education for the DeBruce Foundation, and *most importantly* – I am an E. L. Haynes Public Charter School parent.

It's my genuine pleasure to be here today to share my enthusiastic support for Jennifer Niles as the Deputy Mayor of Education.

As you know, Jennie has served for more than 10 years as the founder and head of school of E.L Haynes PCS, which serves more than 1,100 pre-kindergarten through 12 graders at 2 locations in Wards 1 and 4. Since the school's opening in 2004, E.L. Haynes has played an important role in establishing charter schools as a quality educational option for families in every neighborhood in the city through its consistently strong academic performance, availability to students at every grade level, and use of positive behavioral and learning supports to ensure that every student has the opportunity to be successful in a nurturing environment.

E.L. Haynes reflects the diversity of our city, with a student body that is 52% African-American, 28% Latino, 12% White and 8% Asian or Native American. Sixty-six percent of E.L. Haynes students are economically disadvantaged and 21% are English language learners. E.L. Haynes, under Jennie's leadership, has embraced the rich diversity of the District of Columbia and remains one of the

Board's most successful and highly sought after schools, with a year round program that provides students with more than 1000 additional hours of instruction. In fact, many of the students attending the high school will be the first in their family to go to college. With Jennie at the helm, we'd do well to see a similar level of achievement for all of our students throughout the city.

On a personal note, I have many fond memories of Jennie greeting my children and other students as they arrived at school and also of her participating in student award ceremonies, athletic events, holiday celebrations, marimba and choir performances, and other activities that play an important role in creating a school culture where students are engaged and motivated to do their best. I also remember the many parent meetings where Jennie explained the academic priorities of the school, celebrated student achievements and discussed ongoing challenges, along with the school's plan to meet them. Jennie successfully established a school culture that focuses on academic success that is reflected in the school's many awards, including the CityBridge Breakthrough Schools and Strong School award, Fight for Children's Quality School Initiative award, and the New Leaders for New Schools Effective Practices Incentive Community grant, which is awarded to schools that achieve strong gains in student performance.

In addition, under Jennie's leadership, EL Haynes created the Capital Teaching Residency Program, which works in partnership with KIPP DC public charter schools to increase the pipeline of high quality teachers in DC for both DCPS and other public charter schools. This initiative, which was part of the city's successful Race to the Top application, helped to increase collaboration between public

charter and district school teachers, families, and leadership. Finally, Jennie helped to develop the DC Common Core Collaborative and the PARCC Readiness Project, which is helping to ensure that all of our public schools are prepared for the ongoing changes to student learning standards and standardized assessments.

In summary, each of the qualities and accomplishments I have highlighted here are precisely what we need in a deputy mayor for education:

- The ability to work effectively with students and families from diverse backgrounds
- An ability to identify, secure, and implement the needed resources to put all students on the road to success; and
- A rich understanding and commitment to all the components of a quality education program in DC -- including academic rigor, purposeful analysis of performance data, positive behavioral supports, and the maintenance of a positive, engaging educational climate that is responsive to the varied needs, interests, and strengths of our students.

Jennie Niles has demonstrated each of these qualities over the past decade and we are privileged to have access to her skills on behalf of all of the children of Washington DC, regardless of what school they attend or what neighborhood they live in. I will miss her leadership at E.L. Haynes but I am excited for the educational advances we will experience during her tenure as deputy mayor of education.

I strongly encourage you to support her confirmation. THANK YOU.