



**D.C. POLICY**  
**CENTER**

**FY2024 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING**  
**EDUCATION AGENCIES**  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Virtual platform**

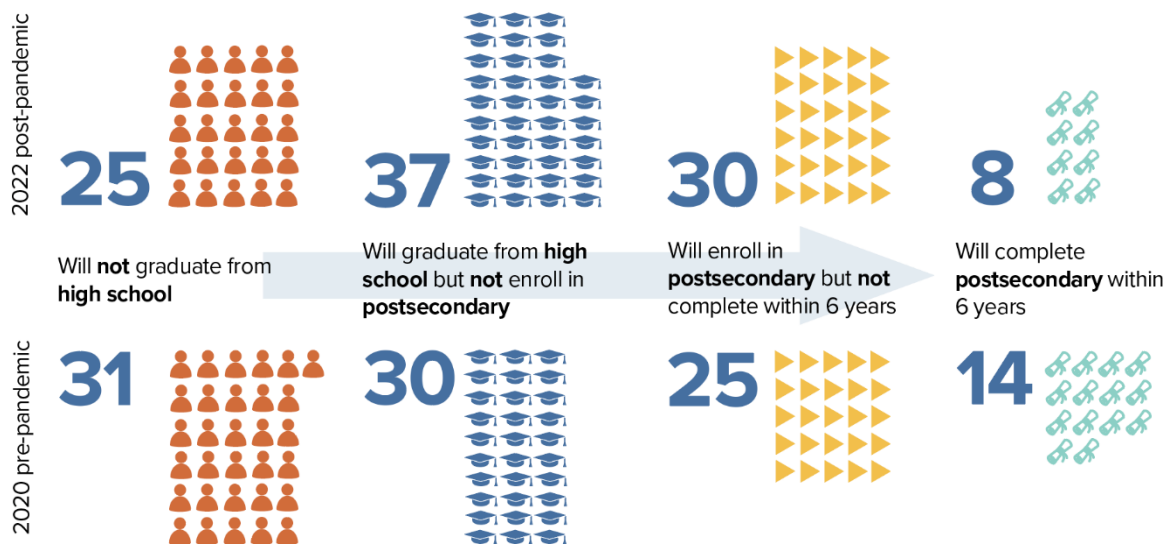
**Testimony of Chelsea Coffin**  
**Director, Education Policy Initiative**  
**D.C. Policy Center**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Chelsea Coffin and I am the Director of the Education Policy Initiative at the D.C. Policy Center, an independent think tank focused on advancing policies for a growing and vibrant economy in D.C. I will focus my testimony on the critical importance of knowing what happens to D.C.’s high school alumni that will now be possible with the creation of the Education to Employment Data System (or P20W System) in the FY 2024 Budget. My testimony is based on the D.C. Policy Center report, [Measuring early career outcomes in D.C.](#)

D.C.’s public and public charter schools serving students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 strive to prepare students to succeed as young adults through college and in the workplace. While the city monitors key outcomes such as high school graduation rates and enrollment in postsecondary degree programs, we know very little about early career outcomes for D.C.’s public school alumni.

What we do know about outcomes after high school is sobering. Based on the most recent high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and postsecondary completion rates, the D.C. Policy Center estimates that out of every 100 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 8 will complete a postsecondary degree within six years of graduating high school (down from 14 out of every 100 pre-pandemic.)<sup>i</sup> This is happening in a city where 58 percent of jobs require a postsecondary degree.<sup>ii</sup>

### Out of every 100 students in D.C.’s ninth grade cohort...

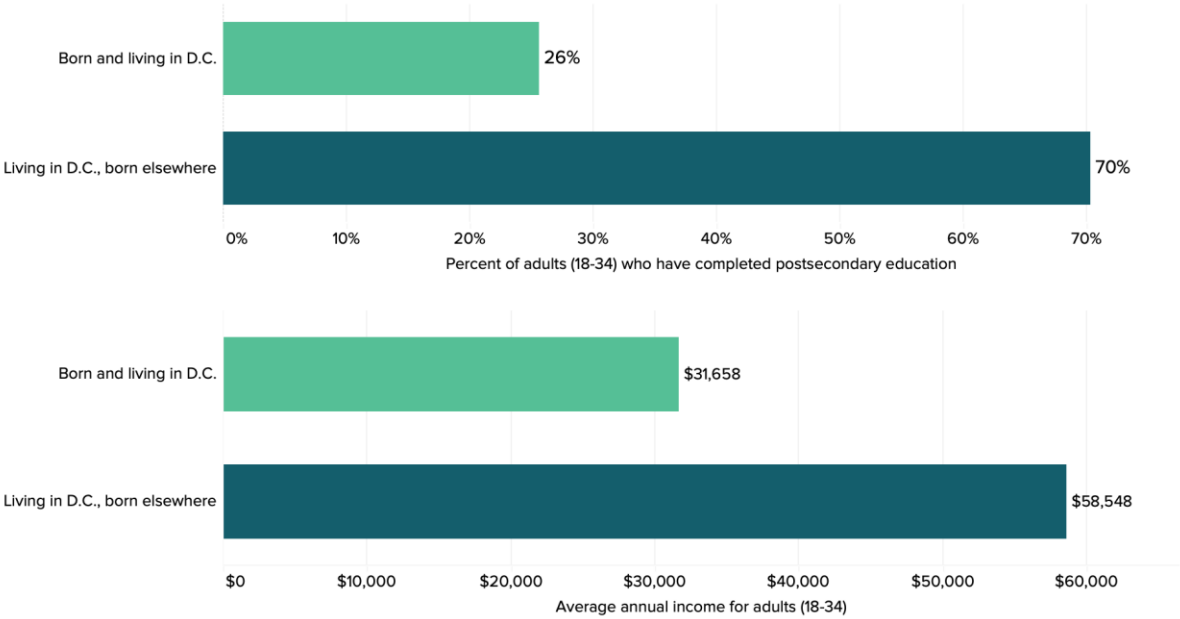


Credit: Adapted from a graphic by Wenxin Zhao

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For the other 92 out of 100 in this 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort without a college degree, D.C. doesn't have information on their employment or earnings – important indicators of whether alumni are able to lead choice-filled lives. As a proxy, young adults (ages 18 to 34) who were born and live in D.C. earned an average annual income of \$31,658, a little more than half of the \$58,548 earned by their peers who are living in D.C. but were born elsewhere.

**In a job market where over half of jobs (58%) require a postsecondary degree, there are stark differences between longtime D.C. residents and newcomers when they are young adults.**



Source: American Community Survey (ACS). 2019. "2015-2019 ACS 5-year PUMS." Available at census.gov  
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Understanding more about District graduates' experiences in their early careers will inform practices and investments to support current students and future graduates on a path to success. Other jurisdictions, like neighboring Maryland and Virginia, already do this in a few ways, including creating strong linkages between statewide longitudinal data systems for high school students and wage data reported for unemployment insurance administration from workforce agencies as proposed in the Education to Employment Data System of the FY 2024 Budget.

In recent years, D.C. has provided significant funding for high schoolers and their connections to college and career, including work-based learning, the Marion Barry

Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP), College Rising mentorship, DC Futures tuition assistance, and so much more. Investing in the Education to Employment Data System will connect the dots between high school and workforce for alumni, allowing stakeholders (including Council, OSSE, LEAs, service providers, and the DC Education Research Collaborative, to name a few) to find out what is working in these programs and maximize these investments.<sup>iii</sup>

**While improving data on early career outcomes would require commitment and resources, it is important because it can:**

- ✓ Pinpoint what types of opportunities students have after K-12 and postsecondary education and workforce training.
- ✓ Expose the barriers that exist in the labor market, postsecondary attainment, or other training completion for former public school students to achieve successful early career outcomes.
- ✓ Change practices across public schools, postsecondary, and workforce development programs to maximize future success for D.C.'s youth.

Examining early career outcomes, including earnings and employment for alumni, deserves to be a focus point in education recovery after the pandemic. In addition to the decline in postsecondary completion now estimated at 8 out of every 100 9<sup>th</sup> graders, D.C. is seeing a mismatch between college and career readiness and college enrollment. For example, among Black students who represent 69 percent of high school students, 9 percent meet or exceed expectations for college and career readiness in math and 20 percent do so in ELA, but a much higher share—49 percent—of high school graduates who are Black enroll in postsecondary six months after graduation. D.C. needs a better understanding of what happens on the career side for alumni.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> D.C. Policy Center. 2023. *State of D.C. Schools, 2021-22: In-Person Learning, Measuring Outcomes, and Work on Recovery*. D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/schools-21-22/>

<sup>ii</sup> Coffin, C. and Rubin, J. 2021. *Measuring early career outcomes in D.C.* D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/measuring-outcomes/>

<sup>iii</sup> Coffin, C. and Rubin, J. 2021. *Measuring early career outcomes in D.C.* D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/measuring-outcomes/>