



# **D.C. POLICY CENTER**

Education Policy Initiative

**FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 at 9am**

**Hearing Room 412 (Track B)**

**John A. Wilson Building**

**Testimony of Chelsea Coffin**

**Deputy 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 Deputy Director of the D.C. Policy Center, an independent think tank focused on advancing policies for a growing, vibrant, and compelling District of Columbia. I will focus today on two Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) investments related to the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education's (DME's) Compact 2043—the Advanced Technical Centers and the Education Through Employment Pathways (ETEP) data system. These are critical to ensuring students not only graduate but succeed in college and early careers. At the same time, it is important to preserve resources that connect older learners to the workforce through Adult and Family Education (AFE) funding.

**D.C.'s outcomes underscore the need for stronger college and career pathways.**

Only about 18 out of 100 ninth graders ultimately earn a postsecondary credential.<sup>i</sup> Young adults born in and living in D.C. earn roughly \$34,000 annually—less than half the \$71,000 earned by peers who moved to the city.<sup>ii</sup>

**Findings from the Office of Education Through Employment Pathways reinforce**

**this picture.** Among surveyed alumni, 65 percent of those with a bachelor's degree reported earning a living wage, compared to 17 percent with only a high school diploma.<sup>iii</sup> Just as important, these data point to what works: alumni who completed career education or apprenticeships—and those who had career-oriented experiences in high school—report stronger earnings and better preparation.<sup>iv</sup>

**The proposed FY27 investment of \$0.2 million will allow ETEP to continue building a longitudinal data system linking education, workforce, and social services.**<sup>v</sup> This infrastructure is essential for moving beyond tracking participation to

understanding which career asset building opportunities lead to living wages and economic mobility.

**The proposed \$2.4 million in FY27 for Advanced Technical Centers, included as a programmatic weight in the funding formula, is a strong example of investing in proven programs.** ATCs provide hands-on training in high-demand, high-wage fields while students earn college credit. In 2024, 60 percent of graduates earned an industry credential, and 70 percent completed a full pathway (or four college credits in their chosen field of study).<sup>vi</sup> ATC students also attend school more consistently than their peers, averaging 13 additional days per year.<sup>vii</sup>

**Finally, adult learners must remain part of this strategy.** About 40,000 D.C. adults lack a high school diploma,<sup>viii</sup> and roughly 22 percent read at or below a basic level.<sup>ix</sup> Adult public charter schools play a critical role by combining academics with workforce training. The proposed \$2.5 million reduction to Adult and Family Education (AFE) grants would limit access to these programs—despite strong outcomes, including 39 percent of participants securing employment and even higher combined rates of employment or postsecondary enrollment in adult charter programs (79 percent).<sup>x</sup>

**Investments in ETEP and ATCs strengthen early career pathways, but maintaining support for adult learners is equally important to building an inclusive workforce.** Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you have.

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<sup>i</sup> This calculation is based on the SY2024-25 high school graduation rate of 78.7 percent and an FY23 postsecondary completion rate within six years of graduation of 23 percent, as reported in the Office of the

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City Administrator's FY 2024 Performance Accountability Report for OSSE

(<https://oca.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/oca/FY24%20PAR%20-%20OSSE.pdf>).

<sup>ii</sup> Ruggles, S., Flood, S., Sobek, M., Backman, D., Chen, A., Cooper, G., Richards, S., Rodgers, R., and Schouweiler, M. IPUMS USA: Version 15.0 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2018-2022. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V15.0>

<sup>iii</sup> Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME). 2025. *DC Alumni Early Career Outcomes Survey: Brief 1— Understanding Alumni Employment, Finances, and Well-Being*. Office of Education Through Employment Pathways. Retrieved from

[https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/page\\_content/attachments/DC%20Alumni%20Early%20Career%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Brief%201.pdf](https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/page_content/attachments/DC%20Alumni%20Early%20Career%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Brief%201.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME). 2025. *DC Alumni Early Career Outcomes Survey: Brief 3— Insights on the Impact of High School College and Career Programming (One-Pager)*. Office of Education Through Employment Pathways. Retrieved from

[https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/page\\_content/attachments/FINAL\\_Brief%203%20Alumni%20Early%20Career%20Outcomes%20Survey%20One-Pager%20%282%29.pdf](https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/page_content/attachments/FINAL_Brief%203%20Alumni%20Early%20Career%20Outcomes%20Survey%20One-Pager%20%282%29.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME). 2025. *Office of Education Through Employment Pathways*. For more information, visit <https://dme.dc.gov/etep>

<sup>vi</sup> Lumpkin, Lauren. 2025. "A D.C. school promises to put kids on track for jobs. For most, it's working." The Washington Post, October 10, 2025. Retrieved from:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/10/10/advanced-technical-center-medical-training/>

<sup>vii</sup> Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). 2023. *District of Columbia Attendance Report, 2022-23 School Year*. OSSE. Retrieved

from [https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2022-23%20Attendance%20Report\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2022-23%20Attendance%20Report_FINAL_0.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2026. S1501|Educational Attainment. 2024 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1501?q=S1501&g=040XX00US11>

<sup>ix</sup> In 2017, an estimated 22 percent of adults ages 16-74 read at or below a level 1 on the PIACC scale which means reading using basic vocabulary, determining meaning of sentences, and reading paragraphs. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), 2012/2014/2017. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/src/PDF/STATE.pdf>

<sup>x</sup> DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB). 2026. *ASPIRE Results*. DC PCSB. For more information, visit <https://aspireresults.dcpsb.org/>