



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

CHRISTINA HENDERSON

Councilmember, At-Large

Chairperson, Committee on Health

Committee Member

Hospital and Health Equity

Judiciary and Public Safety

Statement of Introduction

Middle School Career Exploration Pilot Amendment Act of 2023

June 28, 2023

Today, I am proud to introduce the Middle School Career Exploration Pilot Amendment Act of 2023, along with Councilmembers Charles Allen, Matthew Frumin, Janeese Lewis George, Robert C. White Jr., Brooke Pinto, and Zachary Parker. This legislation would establish a Middle School Career Exploration Pilot that would provide occupational skills, academic enrichment, life skills, career exploration, work readiness, and youth development trainings for youth between the ages of 9 and 13 years old.

The District's summer programming opportunities are robust, but not all students can nor do participate in opportunities. It is also important for continued engagement that programming offer a broad array of options across age groups so that students have options that accommodate their strengths and interests. The District's Out-of-School Time (OST), Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and Department of Employment Services (DOES) programs are popular, but there is a gap in summer opportunities for middle-school aged youth. Middle school is a critical time for children's exploration of and exposure to opportunities in their broader community, and it is critical that these youth have a broad array of hands-on experiences and opportunities to develop new and existing skills during the summer and beyond. Middle school is a time when youth typically first begin developing skills so that they can eventually earn money, but there are limited work opportunities for this age group due to federal employment laws. While DOES currently offers middle schoolers opportunities through the Middle School Exploration program, the program currently has only 3 providers and a total of 225 openings, and participants are neither compensated nor incentivized. Given that there are approximately 17,000 middle school students enrolled in both District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools in the District, a pilot to assess the impact of the program and a potential year-round expansion, is necessary.

The Middle School Career Exploration Pilot would provide an avenue for middle school youth to gain invaluable experiences through career exploration opportunities prior to high school, when they would be eligible to participate in the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment program. Research demonstrates that developing skills and participating in volunteer and career opportunities are incredibly important experiences that lead to the future success of middle school youth. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Labor created a curriculum named "Soft Skills to Pay the Bills," citing research that young people preparing to enter the workforce are



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significantly lacking in in the “soft” or applied skills — such as teamwork, decision-making, and communication — that will help them become effective employees and managers. ¹ These skills are especially important for Black and Hispanic teens. Research shows that teens who live in in high poverty neighborhoods have experienced the greatest difficulties in finding employment long-term.²

Participating in modified versions of successful teen employment programs has an invaluable impact for many middle schoolers and is shows to strengthen subsequent employment prospects. Evidence from youth employment programs across the country has shown a myriad of positive outcomes. Youth participating in Chicago’s One Summer Plus program decreased violent crime for youth in the treatment group by 43 percent over 16 months relative to the control group, with much of the decline occurring during the year after participation.³ Participating in the New York City Summer Youth Enrichment Program reduced youths’ probability of incarceration and mortality from “external causes,” including homicides, suicides, and accidents. The effects of reducing crime persisted beyond the summer months, suggesting that something beyond keeping youth “busy” during the summer led to these outcomes.⁴

This legislation will lay the foundation for the opportunities necessary to create these positive outcomes and help middle school youth in the District not only take actionable steps towards their future, but also help structure middle schoolers’ days during the summer, expose them to new experiences in their city, and put them in contact with adult mentors who serve District communities during the summer months.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Council to pass this legislation that would benefit a critical age group by expanding their horizons about possibilities in their city during the summer and year-round.

¹ Soft Skills to Pay the Bills

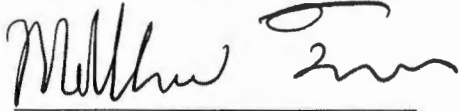
² Do Summer Youth Employment Programs Work?

³ Science, Volume 346, Number 6214

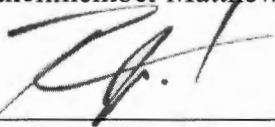
⁴ The Effects of Youth Employment: Evidence from New York City Lotteries

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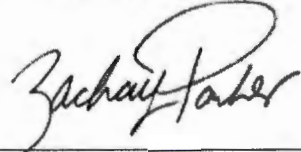
2 Councilmember Charles Allen

3 

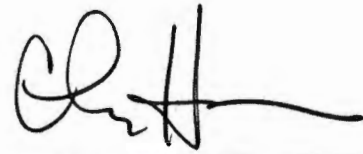
4 Councilmember Matthew Frumin

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6 Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

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8 Councilmember Zachary Parker

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10 Councilmember Christina Henderson

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12 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

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14 Councilmember Brooke Pinto

15 A BILL

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21 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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25 To amend the Youth Employment Act of 1979 to establish a Middle School Career Exploration
26 Pilot to provide occupational skills, academic enrichment, life skills, career exploration,
27 work readiness or youth development trainings.

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29 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
30 act may be cited as the “Middle School Career Exploration Pilot Amendment Act of 2023.”

31 Sec. 2. The Youth Employment Act of 1979, effective January 5, 1980 (D.C. Law 3-46;
32 D.C. Official Code § 32-241 *et seq.*) is amended as follows:

33 (a) Section 2 (D.C. Official Code § 32-241) is amended by adding a new paragraph (9) to
34 read as follows:

35 “(9) “Middle School Youth” means an individual who is between the ages of 9
36 and 13 years old.”

37 (b) Section 2a (D.C. Official Code § 32-242) is amended by adding new paragraphs (6)
38 and (7) to read as follows:

39 “(6)(A) Middle School Career Exploration — The Department of Employment
40 Services (DOES) shall create a summer pilot program for middle school youth that provides
41 occupational skills, academic enrichment, life skills, career exploration, work readiness or youth
42 development trainings.

43 “(B) DOES may provide an incentive to participants who participate in the
44 summer pilot program.

45 “(C) DOES shall implement the pilot program beginning June 1, 2023.

46 “(D) DOES shall be authorized to spend program funding to provide
47 meals and snacks to participants.

48 “(E) DOES shall administer a survey to participants following the
49 completion of the summer youth pilot.

50 “(F) Upon completion of the summer pilot, DOES shall issue and submit
51 to the Council a report with:

52 “(i) The total number of participants who participated in the
53 program;

54 “(ii) The total number of participants who completed the program;

55 “(iii) Partner organizations with whom participants completed their
56 experiences;

57 “(iv) Participants’ demographic data, as available;

58 “(v) Results from the survey administered pursuant to subsection

59 (e).

60 “(7)(A) Middle School Year Round Career Exploration — DOES may create an
61 after school program for middle school youth that provides occupational skills, academic
62 enrichment, life skills, career exploration, work readiness or youth development trainings during
63 the school year.

64 “(B) DOES may provide an incentive to participants who participate in the
65 year round pilot program.

66 “(C) DOES may implement the year round pilot program in School Year
67 2023-2024.

68 “(D) DOES shall be authorized to spend program funding to provide
69 meals and snacks to participants.”.

70 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

71 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement of the Budget Director as the fiscal impact
72 statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
73 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

74 Sec. 4. Effective date.

75 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
76 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of Congressional review as
77 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
78 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
79 Columbia Register.