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Dear Chavez Families, Staff, and Community:

As Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy marked its 20th anniversary last year, the Board of Trustees has reflected on both our pride in the accomplishments of the scholars and staff at Chavez Schools as well as how to build on these achievements for years to come.

Our high school scholars are exploring careers through internships at approximately 70 businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. This year's seniors are examining public policy issues ranging from gun violence to homelessness for their capstone thesis projects, and 100 percent of the class is on their way to being accepted to college. Four 12th graders recently won prestigious Posse Scholarships – more than any open-enrollment high school in DC – which will pay their full tuition at some of the country's best colleges. And, thousands of graduates from the last two decades are leaders in their communities using the academic and public policy skills they gained at Chavez Schools. We are appreciative of the hard work and dedication of the staff, scholars and families that have led to these tremendous results.

Alongside these achievements are other realities that influence Chavez Schools as we head into our third decade as one of the District of Columbia's longest-standing charter networks. School options in DC have expanded exponentially since Chavez PCS started as a one-campus school with 60 students in the basement of a grocery store. Competition for students has increased with the opening of more charter schools and the renovation and improvement of DCPS campuses.

Performance expectations are higher, too. Last year, the charter authorizer, the DC Public Charter School Board, required that we close Parkside Middle School by 2020, causing a decline in network enrollment of 300 scholars. Enrollment is lower at all campuses except for Parkside High School, and today we are serving 956 students in three buildings spread across the District, each that stands half full.

The Board of Trustees, which includes a Chavez graduate, two current parents, our founder, and education, civic and business leaders, has spent more than a year analyzing city enrollment trends and school options, the operations and performance of the network, and the financial viability of operating three disconnected school buildings at a lower-than-planned student enrollment. In 2010, Chavez Schools secured \$27.2 million in bonds, financing the purchase and renovation of our three school buildings. This bond structure was based on enrollment growing to 1,500 students, targeting a 2020 refinance. Today, with enrollment at only 956, the network must be reconfigured for the organization to meet its financial obligations and ensure continued viability.

We must restructure the network around a new vision. We will put all our energy into what Chavez does *best*, what *only* we do, and *where* we can make the biggest difference for scholars.



Going forward, Chavez Schools will serve the District of Columbia as a single-campus high school in Ward 7. Over time, and after the full closure of Parkside Middle, we plan to rebuild the middle grades at the Parkside campus as an entry point to a Chavez education. We will focus on what Chavez Schools was uniquely founded to do: prepare DC's young people to succeed in college, careers and life, and empower them to use public policy to create a more just, free and equal world.

To realize this vision for the future, we will:

- **Invest in our Parkside campus to create a unique, top-tier high school** located in the modern building that we own at 3701 Hayes Street, NE, in the Kenilworth neighborhood of Ward 7. Parkside High School is not only Chavez Schools' highest-performing campus, it is among the top five highest-performing high schools in Wards 6, 7 and 8 and far exceeds the performance of all DCPS high schools in these wards.

***Investing in the Parkside campus will include:*** more Advanced Placement (AP) courses and advanced electives, more dual enrollment early college opportunities, more SAT preparation and support, a greater focus on college matching and alumni support, more public policy internships and policy curriculum offerings, more supports for students with special needs and for those learning English, and an even stronger athletic program than we already have. It also means building improvements, technology upgrades and greater support for teachers, staff and community. ***These investments will help us ensure all our graduates have the knowledge and skills to succeed in competitive colleges, careers, and life. Together we – scholars, families, staff and community – can turn Parkside into the highest-performing school in the District.***

- **Consolidate Capitol Hill High School into the Parkside campus at the end of this school year, effective June 30, 2019.** Enrollment at the Capitol Hill campus has declined every year, except for one, each of the past six years. It currently serves 238 scholars, in a facility with capacity for 420. With a lease that expires in one year, and enrollment levels below almost all other high schools in the District and too low to sustain competitive programming, joining the two high schools makes sense. All high school scholars will benefit from our programmatic investments at Parkside and the modern facility. With science labs, a gymnasium, a library, nearby fields, and Metro access, the Parkside campus has space to enroll every scholar from Capitol Hill next school year. A majority of Capitol Hill scholars live in Wards 7 and 8, along with their Parkside peers, so for most students, Parkside is closer to home than Capitol Hill.
- **Close Chavez Prep Middle School at the end of this school year, effective June 30, 2019.** Due to declining enrollment at Chavez Prep, we are currently serving only 235 scholars in a facility with capacity for more than 400. Enrollment at the campus has declined annually since 2015– down 34% from four years ago. This trend leaves the facility significantly under-utilized and unaffordable given the level of operating expenses, which include financing costs covering \$10.8M of improvements Chavez made to the Prep facility over ten years ago. We know that closing the school is a disruption and a disappointment. We will be working with families to ensure every scholar has a strong alternative enrollment option for the 2019-20 school year.
- **Continue to wind down operation of Parkside Middle School, as required by the DC Public Charter School Board.** This year we are serving only 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Parkside Middle, and



the school is not accepting new students. The final 8<sup>th</sup> grade class will graduate in 2020 and can then move on to high school at Parkside.

While we know that these changes affect everyone in different ways, they are the result of the need to secure the future of Chavez Schools and the positive impact we have on scholars' lives and our city for years to come. We are committed to offering a premier, public-policy focused secondary school at the modern building that we own for students in the District of Columbia. We are eager to engage with families, students, staff and the community to shape it into a local and national model.

We are grateful for the teachers and staff at every campus and at the home office for your talented and tireless work on behalf of scholars. We appreciate families for your loyalty and trust in us. And, we respect scholars for your motivation and willingness to work hard. We are committed to stewarding Chavez into a new era of excellence. We must all work together over the next few months to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Please see the next page of this letter with information related to your specific school. And, please feel free to contact us with questions or feedback at [chaveztrustees@chavezschools.org](mailto:chaveztrustees@chavezschools.org).

¡Sí, Se Puede!

The Chavez Schools Board of Trustees