

1 

2  
3 Councilmember David Grosso



4  
5  
6  
7 Councilmember Mary M. Cheh

8  
9 A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

10  
11 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

12  
13  
14  
15  
16 To declare the sense of the Council that dress code and uniform policies at public and public  
17 charter schools in the District of Columbia promote equity, nondiscrimination, and  
18 respect.

19  
20 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
21 resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council on School Dress Code and Uniform Policies  
22 that Promote Equity, Nondiscrimination, and Respect for Cultural Diversity Resolution of 2019.”

23 Sec. 1. The Council finds that:

24 (1) According to *Dress Coded: Black Girls, Bodies and Bias in D.C. Schools*, a  
25 2018 report created by the National Women’s Law Center and 21 African American student co-  
26 authors who attend or recently attended District of Columbia schools, many dress code policies  
27 and practices have a discriminatory impact that may fuel disproportionate discipline, promote  
28 negative associations with racial or cultural identity, push African American girls out of the  
29 classroom, and inhibit their academic success.

30 (2) Specifically, the report found that enforcement of dress code and uniform  
31 policies in District public schools rely on race- and sex-based stereotypes that reinforce negative  
32 depictions of African American women and girls; punish students for expressing or embracing  
33 their ethnic or cultural heritage; use subjective terms and open-ended restrictions, which permit

34 unequal enforcement due to implicit biases; and fuel disproportionate rates of exclusionary  
35 discipline.

36 (3) According to the 2017 research study *Promoting Resilience Among African*  
37 *American Girls: Racial Identity as a Protective Factor*, African American girls who have  
38 positive feelings about their racial identity are likely to be more academically engaged and  
39 curious, while those with negative feelings about their racial identity perform lower in school  
40 and have more symptoms of depression.

41 (4) In District of Columbia schools, African American girls are 20.8 times more  
42 likely to be suspended than white girls, whereas, nationwide, African American girls are 5.7  
43 times more likely to be suspended than their white, female peers.

44 (5) Exclusionary discipline makes it more difficult for students to learn by  
45 depriving them of instructional time, which may contribute to lower graduation rates and  
46 exacerbate school disengagement.

47 (6) On July 12, 2018, the Council approved on final reading the Student Fair  
48 Access to School Amendment Act of 2018 with the goal of reducing racial discipline disparities  
49 in both traditional public and public charter schools in D.C. by eliminating out-of-school  
50 suspensions for minor offenses, including dress code and uniform violations.

51 Sec. 2. It is the sense of the Council that:

52 (1) We recognize and support the work of the authors of *Dress Coded: Black*  
53 *Girls, Bodies and Bias in D.C. Schools*, reiterate their call for respect of students' expression of  
54 their cultural, racial, and ethnic identities, and reaffirm our commitment to racial, gender, and  
55 social inclusion and equity.

56 (2) We urge District of Columbia school leaders and staff to read *Dress Coded:*  
57 *Black Girls, Bodies and Bias in D.C. Schools* and review their dress codes and uniform policies,  
58 including the implementation of those policies with the report's recommendations in mind.

59 (3) We urge District Columbia schools to promote student, parental, and  
60 community engagement by working with students and parents to create and implement equitable  
61 dress code and uniform policies that reflect the needs of all members of the school community.

62 (4) We reaffirm the goals of the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of  
63 2018, including its prohibition on out-of-school suspensions for dress code or uniform violations,  
64 to avoid the harmful effects of exclusionary discipline, and encourage schools to prohibit, except  
65 in extreme circumstances and in the absence of reasonable alternatives, any classroom removal,  
66 including in-school suspensions, for dress code and uniform policy violations.

67 Sec. 3. The Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution, upon its adoption, to the  
68 Mayor, the Chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools, and the Chair of the Public  
69 Charter School Board.

70 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in  
71 the District of Columbia Register.