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2 Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

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11 Councilmember Charles Allen

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A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to require the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools to direct the School Without Walls High School to allow eligible students who have not already taken the school's admissions test to take the admissions test and to complete an interview process, if the staff determine that the eligible student's test score on the admissions test is sufficient; and to require the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Schools to notify all eligible students of the date and time of any additional admissions tests held and that all eligible students who have not already taken the admissions test may take the admissions test.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Fair Access to Selective High Schools Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2019".

Sec. 2. (a) On or before February 1, 2019, some 8th grade students in public schools and public charter schools submitted applications, through the My Schools DC website ("MSDC"), to School Without Walls High School ("SWW").

(b) In the past, SWW had only required applicants to have met a minimum grade point average, but this year SWW announced that it was adding a requirement that all applicants must have received a score of "met" or "exceeded expectations" on a standardized test in both math and reading. For nearly all students in public schools or public charter schools in the District, this requirement would mean scoring a 4 or 5 on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

37 (c) In order to expand the pool of applicants to SWW, at open houses for families and
38 students wishing to learn more about the application process, SWW staff informed families and
39 students that, instead of enforcing a minimum test score requirement, the top 15 8th grade students
40 in each public school and public charter school would be allowed to apply to SWW (“top 15
41 policy”).

42 (d) The top 15 policy would have provided many additional students—in particular in
43 Wards 7 and 8—with the opportunity to attend SWW.

44 (e) Students who were aware of the policy change, and who had not received a score of
45 “met” or “exceeded expectations” on a standardized test, relied in good faith on the new top 15
46 policy when deciding whether to apply to SWW through MSDC.

47 (f) SWW requires students who have applied through MSDC to take an admissions test as
48 part of its application process, and that admissions test was scheduled for February 9, 2019.

49 (g) On February 7, 2019, more than 200 students, who had relied on the new top 15 policy
50 and applied to SWW through MSDC, received a letter from the District of Columbia Public
51 Schools informing them that the top 15 policy had been “communicated to students and families
52 in error,” and that their class ranking would not be considered in their application, rendering them
53 ineligible to take the SWW admissions test.

54 (h) Many 8th grade students who received the notice described in subsection (g) of this
55 section believed that they met the application standards for SWW and therefore chose not to apply
56 to other schools that they were also qualified to attend.

57 (i) Emergency legislation is necessary to ensure that students who applied to SWW before
58 February 2, 2019, in reliance on assurances from SWW staff that the top 15 policy would be in
59 place this year, remain able to take the SWW admissions test, with reasonable notice to students

60 and families, and to complete an interview if SWW staff determine that their admissions test score
61 is sufficient.

62 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances
63 enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the Fair
64 Access to Selective High Schools Emergency Act of 2019 be adopted after a single reading.

65 Sec: 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.