

For Immediate Release

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NEARLY 2,000 PARENTS AND CHILDREN DEMANDED LOCAL OFFICIALS SUPPORT SCHOOL CHOICE, INCLUDING THE DC OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Delivered a petition with over 7,400 signatures to Mayor Fenty

May 6, 2009 – At a rally today on Freedom Plaza, nearly 2,000 D.C. families demanded that Mayor Adrian Fenty, the D.C. City Council, and Congress defend their right to school choice, participating in an historic rally to protect the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program and public charter schools.

“We are here to support you and to stand up for choice” said Current D.C. Councilman Harry Thomas, Jr.

Supporters delivered a petition to Mayor Adrian Fenty with over 7,400 signatures. The petition was signed by D.C. residents who support quality educational options, including the reauthorization and strengthening of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.

“Every child in our city should have the opportunity to succeed” said former D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams. “To put our kids first, we need to fight to see that the U.S. Congress, the D.C. Council, and my successor all support school choice for our children.”

“We will demand an education for our children – one at a time if we have to – by any means necessary” said former D.C. Councilman Kevin P. Chavous.

Many parents attended the rally, including Patricia William, who has a 7th grader and a Kindergarten student in the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. “I am here to testify that this program works. My son has made tremendous progress. I think all parents should have the opportunity to send their children to the schools of their choice.”

D.C.’s current school choice options are under attack. Public charter schools are facing funding cuts, attempt to curtail their autonomy, as well as limited access to closed public school buildings to meet their growing demand. And both Congress and the Department of Education have taken steps that could end the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.

“We ought to tell the Congress to fund this program and not let D.C. families down. Therefore we have to fight, fight, fight to protect school choice,” said Councilman and Former Mayor Marion Barry.

“This program has changed my life and has made me the successful young man standing before you,” said Ronald Holassie, a 10th grader at Archbishop Carroll High School. “The Opportunity Scholarship Program must continue. I am shocked that there are some people who do not care about our education and would take away our chances of having brighter future.”