



**JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS**

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April 28, 2023

David Banks, Chancellor  
NYC Public Schools  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

**RE: Planned Proposal to Swap West Side High School and The Young Women's Leadership School**

Dear Chancellor Banks:

I write to you to follow up on my letter dated (4/18/23) regarding Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School, our city's first alternative high school. For 50 years, West Side High School has served young people who have struggled in traditional high school settings, including young parents, gang-involved youth, homeless youth, young people with learning disabilities, and who have experienced interrupted learning for various reasons. Citing declined enrollment numbers, the New York City Public Schools is proposing to move West Side High School into part of a converted office building in East Harlem. West Side High School's current building also houses a LYFE Center Daycare program for students who are young parents as well as a health clinic in partnership with the Ryan Center. Neither of these programs would be offered in the new facility, ending an over fifty year partnership between West Side High School, LYFE, and the Ryan Center.

There are also serious safety concerns in moving West Side High School out of its longtime neighborhood on the Upper West Side and into a new neighborhood on the East Side. Gang conflicts between neighborhoods and specific housing projects are serious, and serving gang-involved youth has been part of West Side's work since its inception. West Side High School has had a long relationship with Frederick Douglass Projects that has helped ensure the safety of West Side students as they travel to and from school, making West Side High School a safe place for young people who may not be safe in their own neighborhoods.

As for The Young Women's Leadership School, I ask that you move forward with next steps to procure an appropriate school site for the school to grow to meet the enrollment demand, not at West Side High School. I have at least one adequate school space in mind that would serve this purpose and I would be happy to discuss further. I applaud their school model and support for their students and look forward to finding a suitable solution together.



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Additionally, I ask that you pull the proposed relocations proposal of West Side High School and The Young Women's Leadership School. West Side High School has a multi-generational legacy building community and serves as a second home for young people at the intersections of systemic failures. School systems that fail to comprehensively meet students' needs will always need transfer schools. As NYC public schools attempt to address multiple social crises, West Side High School should be invested in to help provide creative solutions. Instead, the DOE is taking advantage of a vulnerable population with this proposal.

For any questions or discussion, please contact First Deputy Public Advocate Nick E. Smith at [nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov](mailto:nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.D. Williams", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jumaane D. Williams

Public Advocate for the City of New York