



**Re: Traffic Safety at Watkins Elementary School**

To: DCPS (MScott Berkowitz, Andria Caruthers, Shawn Stover, Tanisha Montgomery, Jeffrey Holmes, Sherti Hendrix), DPW (Timothy Spriggs, Johnny Lee Gaither, Raymond Haynesworth)

CC: CM Charles Allen, CM Phil Mendelson

*At a properly noticed general meeting on November 14, 2023, with a quorum present, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6B voted 9-0-0, based on the unanimous recommendation of its Transportation Committee, to submit the following request to the relevant officials at DC Public Schools (DCPS) and the Dept. of Public Works Parking Enforcement Management Administration (DPW-PEMA). Courtesy copies are sent to DC Councilmember Charles Allen and Chairman Phil Mendelson, who had expressed interest in the matter.*

After-school pickup at Watkins Elementary School has become a pedestrian safety crisis, which must be rectified as soon as possible. Watkins has a relatively large population of students who travel by car. However, recent changes by Principal Berkowitz have made the situation much, much worse.

Until recently, Watkins parents who walked were allowed to wait at the main entrance, while Watkins parents who drove were allowed to wait in a DDOT-designated pickup zone on 12<sup>th</sup> St SE. This school year, Principal Berkowitz unilaterally reversed this policy, and now requires all parents to pick up their children on the Watkins football field on E & 13<sup>th</sup> St SE. This policy induces parents to unsafely and illegally double-park on E St SE, as seen in the attached photos, which were taken on several different days. Double-parking drastically reduces driver visibility of bicyclists and pedestrians.

Numerous neighbors and parents have complained to the ANC about this pickup policy, purely because they are tired of witnessing drivers nearly run over children every single afternoon. The neighbors and the local ANC member have urged Principal Berkowitz to either completely reverse the policy, or else make changes that would make it safer. Among the many ideas proposed to him were allowing parents to meet students at the 12<sup>th</sup> St DDOT pickup spot; allowing parents inside the school building; allowing parents to remain in their cars; requesting assistance from DDOT's Safe Passage Team; and using staff and parent volunteers to monitor and correct unsafe drivers.

Principal Berkowitz has repeatedly heard their concerns and then done absolutely nothing. The principal and several other DCPS officials were invited to argue their case either via email or at our November Transportation Committee meeting. None did (although DDOT did send several employees to the meeting, and CMs Allen and Mendelson have both written Principal Berkowitz in favor of a safer policy).

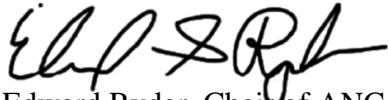
If nothing continues to be done, someone is going to get hit by a car.

**DCPS**, we urge you to require Principal Berkowitz to revert to the policy of previous school years, in which parents were not required to leave their cars and walk onto the football field.

**DPW**, until DCPS reverses course, we urge you to pre-emptively send Parking Enforcement staff to the 1200 block of E St SE every afternoon at 3:15pm to enforce safe driving.

Thank you for giving great weight to this Commission's recommendations. Should you wish to discuss this letter with the Commission, please contact ANC Commissioner Matt LaFortune, Chair of the ANC 6B Transportation Committee, at [6B09@anc.dc.gov](mailto:6B09@anc.dc.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Ryder', written in a cursive style.

Edward Ryder, Chair of ANC 6B



