

Statement of Fermina Blas

Good morning Madam Chair,

My name is Fermina Blas. Today I am here, worried about the situation that we as families are facing. It is not an easy situation. I cannot understand what the excuse or the problem is for families to know the ratings of the schools. It does not make sense that everywhere we have rights to information -- for example, if we go to the store and want to buy cookies we have options like: sweet cookies, salted crackers, coconut cookies, chocolate cookies, cookies of all flavors and colors – people in situations like this can count on having access to information on these products, thus they can choose what they want or that which is most convenient for them. In that moment [of choice] people can even see ingredients. What is more, if someone is allergic to nuts, for example, they simple do not buy that product. Viola, you have now been able to choose a product according to your likes and needs. But, it turns out that when a family wants to choose a school the information is not in plain sight. We almost never know the ratings of the schools, the progress [our students] have made in classes, and much less the school rating of the schools in other areas. When one asks for that information, almost always we are asked to make an appointment and end up talking with someone who tells and shows us information that is confusing and not very understandable. We finish not knowing what the schools offer us or if they are suitable for our children. It is urgent that we have access to clear information about the schools. Many of the families are asking for access to this information are families that are not familiar with the system, yet are willing to support their children and do all that is possible to see their children graduate from high school and be successful in college. But for this, we need to be given the tools so that choosing a school is easier and the most convenient to each family.

Thank you for your attention.

Statement of Isabel Ramos

Good morning Madam Chair,

My name is Isabel Ramos. I have three daughters in Minneapolis schools. We are grateful to have been heard [by you] about the need we have in the communities to know the school ratings. I personally have had to advocate in many ways – demand, be pushy, get mad, and have even had to bring helpers with me so that they would listen to me at the schools.

I have seen how they have given priority to other people to choose their schools and when I asked for a better school for my daughter, who had demonstrated she was ready for a school that offered a higher level, the answer was negative and was told that this [request] did not correspond me, and that the school was much too rigorous and difficult for my daughter.

I had to make many calls, send letters, and miss days at work until finally they accepted my daughter at the school that we wanted.

Families do not have the time or the necessary information to make the best decisions for their children. It is not fair that schools only have high expectations for students whose families know the system well, those that know the language well, and those who schools are afraid to upset.

There is so much talk of equity and racial justice, but the truth is that the rules and opportunities depend on expectations and respect that the schools have for only one group of students that already have many privileges. I know that you all are supporting us so that the school ratings become a reality. I know you all understand the necessity and the right that exists to have good information. I thank you all

in the name of all the families that are not present.

Statement of Maria Cisneros

Good morning Madam Chair,

My name is Maria Cisneros. Again, I come to advocate for the school ratings. I am representing LYDC, my community of Latino families, and the families of color.

We understand several positive changes have been made to the proposal, including information about ELL students. This seems good to us. We are confident the academic results of our Latino students will improve with the information that the school ratings can offer us, as the simple act of being able to access and understand how a school is rated gives us an opportunity to learn and develop uniquely in life. I want you all to think and to be conscious of what you are doing and can do. This will not only benefit families, but it will also raise the academic level of every school. Another thing that we need to know are student truancy statistics. Many times, we are informed that our children are underperforming because they are (not) going to school. We have found, that in most of the cases, this is not totally true. Our community strives on a daily basis to understand the school system, but for this to continue being possible it is necessary that the right to choose a better school is not limited and [we are given] the right to know about different options and what these can offer. Your decision and support will contribute to our children having more opportunities in their future.

Thank you for listening.