

Pittsburgh Public Schools Budget Public Hearing Testimonies Submitted Not Read
September 22, 2026

Bernice Wilkerson

PPS Employee

My name is Bernice Wilkerson, and I am a Pittsburgh Public Schools employee. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend tonight's hearing in person, but I respectfully ask the Board to consider lifting the residential requirement for **all PPS employees**, rather than having different requirements for different groups of employees.

I believe that if the District has determined that employees can effectively serve Pittsburgh Public Schools while living outside the City of Pittsburgh, then that same opportunity and flexibility should be available to **all PPS employees**, regardless of their position or classification.

Every employee plays an important role in the success of our schools. Whether we are teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, custodians, food service workers, administrators, or other members of the PPS team, we all contribute to creating safe, supportive, and successful schools for our students.

This issue is also very personal for me. I have been looking for housing for several months, and I have found that many of the homes that are affordable, suitable, and places where I would feel comfortable relocating are located just outside the City of Pittsburgh. There are communities very close to the City that offer housing options that may be more affordable and more plentiful, but because of the current residency requirements, those options are not available to me if I want to remain employed by PPS.

This has put me in a very difficult position. I am trying to find a home that I can afford and feel comfortable living in, while also wanting to continue working for Pittsburgh Public Schools. Because of the residency requirement, I feel as though I have to choose between finding housing that works for me and maintaining my employment.

I believe employees should have the ability to consider surrounding communities when making important housing decisions. Housing costs, availability, family circumstances, financial situations, and personal needs are different for every employee. Giving all employees the flexibility to consider nearby communities would provide more options and could make it easier for employees to find safe, affordable, and suitable housing.

I also believe that lifting the requirement for all staff could benefit PPS when it comes to **recruitment and retention**. When people consider accepting or remaining in a job, they look at the entire picture — including salary, benefits, working conditions, and whether they can realistically afford to live in the area.

Most importantly, **where an employee lives does not determine their commitment to Pittsburgh Public Schools or to our students**. An employee's dedication is demonstrated by the work they do each day, the students they serve, and the support they provide to their school community.

I am not asking the Board to take anything away from employees who choose to live in the City of Pittsburgh. I am simply asking that **all PPS employees have the same opportunity and**

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flexibility to determine where they can afford to live and what is best for their individual circumstances.

If the District has already recognized that employees in certain positions can live outside the City and continue to effectively serve PPS, I respectfully ask the Board to consider extending that same flexibility to **all employees**.

I believe doing so would promote fairness, consistency, and respect for every employee who contributes to the work of Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request and for listening to the perspective of the employees who serve this District every day.

I sincerely hope the Board will consider lifting the residency requirement for all PPS employees. Thank you.

Bernice Wilkerson