



July 29, 2020

Dear Mayor Bowser,

I write on behalf of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association — a non-profit, membership organization of Cleveland Park residents founded in 1911 — in support of renaming Woodrow Wilson High School and to urge you to ensure the change is made without depleting DC school funds.

This is the public high school designated for all students who reside in Cleveland Park, and our community includes current students, parents and alumni/ae, of the school. Naming this school after Woodrow Wilson honors him and suggests that he should be viewed as a role model. Recognizing his positive achievements as an educator and statesman, Woodrow Wilson's racist actions should disqualify him from such an honor; suggesting him as a role model is not only offensive, but sends a destructive message to students and their parents, as well as the larger DC community. It is simply not acceptable for a school, let alone a school in Washington, DC, to bear the name of a president who did not merely espouse racist views or leave unchallenged racist policies, but rather pursued aggressive, racist actions, including segregation of the nation's civil service after it had been integrated for decades. These actions caused great harm not only to those specifically affected but to the cause of racial equality in our city and nation.

The mission statement of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association states our commitment to promoting a “diverse, thriving, forward-looking neighborhood” through educational programs, advocacy, and other action. We consider the symbolism of changing this school name important. We are also concerned that this action not have negative practical consequences for our students and schools. Specifically, we call upon you to ensure that the name change does not reduce funds available to support the programs and operations of this or any other DC school. There is much to do to ensure our school system offers all DC students the opportunities, support, and inspiration to thrive. The name change should be emblematic of our commitment to this important work.

Thank you for your consideration,

John Barlow Weiner
President, CPCA