

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

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## **Attorney General Encourages Hart Middle School Students to Persevere, Support Each Other Against Obstacles**

*Follow-Up Book Discussion Stemmed from Earlier Youth Violence Summit at Hart*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today encouraged young male students at Hart Middle School in Ward 8 to persevere through challenges and commit to supporting each other in achieving their goals, using the example of Ward 8 native Cedric Jennings from a book that the Attorney General and the students discussed.

The event was a follow-up on an earlier discussion between Attorney General Racine and the students at a February anti-violence summit in which he participated (see more here: <http://oag.dc.gov/release/attorney-general-racine-encourages-young-men-district-middle-school-believe-the-mselves>). During that summit, the Attorney General discussed author Ron Suskind's 1998 book, *A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League*. It relates the struggles and triumphs of Jennings, an academic standout at Ballou Senior High School (adjacent to Hart) who went on to earn a bachelor's degree at Brown University and embark on a successful career in public service. Attorney General Racine promised to read the book and return to Hart to discuss it with them.

**"When I was last here, we talked about this book – and I promised I would make sure you had copies and that we could read it and come back together to talk about it,"** the Attorney General said. **"I urge you to look toward positive influences in our community. I also urge you to support each other – unlike Cedric Jennings' peers, who frequently bullied him for his academic drive. Everyone needs encouragement to overcome their obstacles and succeed in life, and encouraging each other is crucial to your success."**

The students talked about some of the barriers to success they've encountered, including peers who can be bad influences and siblings who are hard on them. They also shared stories of fears they'd overcome, like the fear of failing tests.

**"I admitted to the students that I had to stay up late last night to try to finish the book,"** Attorney General Racine said. **"And even though not all the students had been able to read it, I think that this discussion of real triumph in the face of obstacles that these young men see every day is incredibly important to**

**developing positive views of themselves and their abilities.”**

The Attorney General promised to continue meeting with the students and suggested that they start a book club. Over the summer, he and the students will meet again and select their next book.

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