



**Testimony of Scott Pearson  
Executive Director, DC Public Charter School Board  
Testimony on  
Military Installation Public Charter School Amendment Act of 2015  
And  
School Choice for Military Families Amendment Act of 2015  
Committee on Education  
October 29, 2015**

Thank you, Chairman Grosso and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to testify today on this important opportunity to help the families of our servicemen and women. The DC Public Charter School Board strongly supports these efforts to help the children of active duty military personnel receive a quality education, and we thank you, Chairman Grosso and Council Chairman Mendelson for introducing these bills.

The brave men and women of our armed forces have made tremendous sacrifices for our country, often leaving behind loved ones for deployments overseas, moving frequently domestically, and facing uncertainty about the road ahead. The average military family moves every two to three years, requiring their children to change schools.

This is difficult and stressful even in the best of circumstances. But when there are concerns about access to quality schools, or about complicated



or inconvenient admissions policies, moves can be extremely stressful and difficult. And that is the case at Joint Base Anacostia Bolling, or JBAB.

One of the primary barriers to a quality education for students at JBAB is the timing of My School DC, our common lottery. While our adaptation of this system has been a boon for many families in DC, the timing of the lottery comes too early for the vast majority of families transferring into JBAB, who are typically notified of their pending moves by late April at the earliest. Others are transferred in the middle of the school year, leaving families with even fewer options.

JBAB and their school liaison have worked hard to make the best of the current situation, but many remain unsatisfied with their current school option, or choose private schools. In fact, more than 200 children are home-schooled at JBAB.

The bills being discussed here today would be a great help for these families. First, The Military Installation Public Charter School Amendment Act would open the door for us an authorizer to approve the creation of a public charter school near the location of JBAB that would be able to hold half of its seats for the families living on the base. This would be a huge win for the



hundreds of students whose families are transferred on the base *after* the common lottery deadlines, as the new school could plan the lottery for those seats to come once most families have received their transfer orders. In addition, half of the seats would be available for all through an open lottery, providing another quality option for families in Ward 8 and across the city.

This is a solution that has been pursued in a number of other jurisdictions, including nearby Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, with excellent results. We have provided a full list of these bases in our written testimony.

If this bill were passed, PCSB would work with JBAB to identify a potential operator for the school that could provide quality education, particularly an operator that could demonstrate the ability to teach well with highly transient populations. Any operator would still have to complete, in full, our rigorous application process, including completion of our comprehensive application, site visits, and rigorous examination by our staff, and ultimately a positive vote from our Board. The second bill would open additional doors for these families, by allowing any given DC public charter



school to offer a preference for children of active duty military personnel living on JBAB or in DC.

Last year, DC joined the Interstate Compact on the Education of Military Children, under which the District agreed to take measures to ease burdens on military dependents in public schools. Together, the proposed bills move the District toward living up to the spirit of that compact. It would address the real challenges and hardships faced by our military dependents, and would permit the creation of a quality public school that would also serve the surrounding community.

We thank you for your support of this legislation, of the men and women of the armed forces in DC, and quality education in the District. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.