



**Testimony of Scott Pearson
Executive Director
DC Public Charter School Board**

**Roundtable on Graduation Accountability
Committee on Education
June 13, 2018**

Chairman Grosso, members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Scott Pearson, Executive Director of the DC Public Charter School Board.

Back in February, we described our process where before we sign a diploma, we conduct a rigorous audit of the graduating student's transcript to assure that student has earned the credits required by the school's graduation policy. We also made clear that we ensure students earning a credit through credit recovery have failed the initial class before enrolling in the recovery class.

To date this year, we have reviewed 1,228 transcripts. Of that number, 338 students were deemed "off-track" to graduate at the time of the audits in April. Student transcripts deemed "off-track" at the time of the April audit are then re-reviewed in June if a school changes the students' status to "on-track." At that review, the school must present documentation to show the student has gained the credits or community service necessary to graduate. We are in the middle of that post-audit reconciliation process, but I have attached a chart to my testimony that gives preliminary school-by-school numbers.

At the graduation hearing in February, we committed to further strengthen our practices, in line with the recommendations found in the OSSE report on January 16 of this year. OSSE's report recommended five improvements. We have followed through on all of those recommendations and I will update you on each.

1. Back in February, we posted HS graduation requirements for all high schools on each school's profile page on our website. We will update the information annually. Additionally, we added a page on our website where users can find graduation requirements for each school as well as our transcript audit policy.
2. We have revised our High School Course Catalog Requirement to include a "Memorandum of Understanding" between families and schools. Schools will be required to include an explanation of their MOU process (e.g., what

time(s) of year they provide parents with the MOUs, and next steps after families sign or don't sign). Our hope is that this level of interaction will help families, students and schools develop a better understanding of what it takes to earn a diploma from each LEA.

3. We have also modified our High School Course Catalog requirement to include credit recovery policies. Schools' credit recovery policy must include eligibility for participation, how students are referred or assigned to credit recovery, where and when credit recovery courses take place, and how credit recovery credits are earned. This requirement will take effect this summer. This change makes explicit practices we have long followed – specifically that credit recovery is not a substitute for actually taking a course.

4. As a part of our transcript review audit, which is currently in progress, we are reviewing all students' attendance for those schools that include attendance as part of their course promotion policy. This was formally revised in our transcript audit process policy during our April 2018 board meeting.

5. DC PCSB will continue to use the transcript audit excel spreadsheet we have used for the past several years but this year we included on the spreadsheet the names of specific courses needed for graduation in DC. For example, auditors will not only check for four years of science, but they will also ensure Lab Science has been completed. This is already done during our audits but by adding the specific course names to the spreadsheet we are codifying our practice. I have attached a sample of this spreadsheet to my testimony.

Finally, the board voted on a series of policy changes to strengthen our existing practices and codify some new procedures. For example, our graduation policy clarifies that any waiver from a school's graduation policy must be approved by the school's board and be consistent with that school's waiver policy. Further, our transcript audit policy now makes it clear that we will be auditing attendance.

We are proud of the role we have long played in graduation oversight. We will continue to do our part by conducting rigorous transcript audits and working with the Council and our partners at DME, DCPS, and OSSE to ensure all students are held to a high standard.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.