



**Testimony of Rick Cruz, Board Chair
DC Public Charter School Board**

**DC Council Committee on Education
Confirmation Roundtable
June 27, 2019**

Thank you, Chairman Grosso, Chairman Mendelson, and members of the Education Committee, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rick Cruz and I am the board chair of the DC Public Charter School Board.

I am pleased to be here today in support of the re-nominations of my fellow board members Vice Chair Saba Bireda and our secretary Ricarda Ganjam along with the nomination of Jim Sandman. Saba and Ricarda have been outstanding members of our board over the past years. I hope you will vote to continue their tenure. And Jim will be an excellent addition.

Our city's education sector has thrived during Ricarda and Saba's tenure. We've seen enrollment grow by thousands of students, discipline rates decrease, and the Board has approved exciting new programs, dozens of schools have replicated or expanded, and more students attend Tier 1 schools than ever before.

It has been an enriching experience to serve DC families with Saba and Ricarda. Each asks insightful questions that get to the heart of what is best for our city. As a parent of a student in a public charter school and an East of

the River resident, Saba brings a fresh perspective to our board and speaks to the experiences of the families that choose our schools. Her education policy and Department of Education background has been an asset when our board conducts thoughtful debates and considers new policies. Ricarda, on the other hand, brings her consulting and human capital perspective to our board. To her, it is imperative that a school have a great team to support students. During the application process, Ricarda's sharp and incisive questions ensure that prospective applicants are prepared for being high quality on the first day.

As DC residents and parents, neither Saba nor Ricarda hesitate to lift the voices of families in DC on issues ranging from community engagement to student discipline. They are passionate about not just focusing on low performing schools to get better but also about pushing high quality schools to raise their standards and become more inclusive.

Turning my attention to the new nominee, Jim Sandman's nomination to our board will be welcome in filling the shoes of Don Soifer. As a former DCPS general counsel and longtime District resident, Jim will bring his expertise not only in education law but in management, drawing from his experience as managing partner of Arnold & Porter. As president of the legal services corporation, Jim will also be able to bring a perspective from the criminal justice system. Jim has firsthand experience interacting with many

of our families and understanding some of the struggles that they face. We look forward to Jim bringing these experiences to the forefront.

In conclusion, each nominee brings a unique perspective and a wealth of experience to the DC Public Charter School Board. Their perspectives and approach toward our City's education sector are highly valued amongst our colleagues and should be prized by the city. I ask that the Committee and full Council support each nomination so that we can continue the work the public charter school sector has achieved.