

February 26, 2016

The Honorable David Grosso
Chairman, Committee on Education
Council of the District of Columbia
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Dear Chairman Grosso,

On behalf of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (PCSB), in light of its upcoming "Performance Oversight Hearing" on March 3, 2016.

NACSA is devoted to improving public education by improving the policies and practices of the organizations that are responsible for authorizing and overseeing charter schools. We advocate for authorizers to hold themselves, and the schools they oversee, to high standards based on national best practices for charter school authorizing, defined in our *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*.

From our 15 years of experience, we know that a strong authorizer must continually balance three things: providing charter schools with the autonomy they require to thrive, holding schools accountable to high standards, and protecting the interests of students and the public. When one or more of these three principles is weak or missing, problems such as uneven academic quality of charter schools and equity issues arise.

Under the leadership of Scott Pearson, the PCSB is not only a strong authorizer successfully balancing the three principles of authorizing, but has become a national model of charter school authorizing that provides meaningful support to schools. The new strategies, tough and rigorous oversight, and best practices that the PCSB has pioneered are now being adopted by authorizers around the nation. For instance, to help parents and the community choose the best school for their child, the PCSB uses the innovative Performance Management Framework to rate every public charter schools as Tier 1, 2 or 3, with Tier 1 being the best.

The PCSB also commits itself to quality by adopting 11 of 12 essential practices critical to fulfilling the responsibilities of an authorizer. Only 61 percent of authorizers nationally have 11 or more essential practices in place.

Because of the strong authorizing by the PCSB, public charter schools in D.C. are living up to their mission as public schools open to all, serving higher percentages of low income students and students of color than the city average, and similar percentages of special education students. We commend the PCSB for addressing equity issues and making strong progress towards reducing the number of suspensions and expulsions in its schools. It is a model for doing so without creating overly intrusive policies that conflict with schools' autonomy and ability to build a strong, effective school culture.

NACSA also publicly acknowledged the PCSB's commitment to quality and accountability late last year by appointing Mr. Pearson to serve as the Chairman of NACSA's Board of Directors.

We believe all children deserve a quality education and are pleased to call the PCSB a partner in this vision.

Sincerely,



Greg Richmond
President and CEO
National Association of Charter School Authorizers