

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Public Charter School Board Stephen Bumbaugh Confirmation
Resolution of 2017 (PR22-0137)

Confirmation Hearing Testimony

Committee on Education

6/9/2017

I'd like to begin my testimony by thanking Mayor Bowser for nominating me to serve a second term on the Public Charter School Board (PCSB). I'd also like to thank Chairman Grosso and the Committee on Education for holding this hearing. I look forward to serving a second term with distinction.

I grew up in and around Washington, DC and have lived here since 1969. The city was very different when I was a child, and the public schools were in disarray. As a result, my family sent my siblings and me to public schools in Alexandria. It was a choice that worked well for me, as I worked my way to Yale University. But I was always haunted by the deprivations experienced by many of my peers who remained in the city, and was committed to deploying my relative privilege in a way that benefitted young people in the city. I am delighted to see the improvements both in DCPS since my youth, and in the options families have for their students here.

Regarding my qualifications and career: I began my career working in an education program at Kramer Junior High School in Anacostia during the 1990s. Our program was not perfect, but we did graduate our students at three times the rate of the neighborhood average. My experience with these students convinced me that education was a direct path out of poverty and into the middle class, and I've spent my career largely in the education sector. Locally, I was involved with some of the first charter schools in the city, including the SEED School and what is now the Maya Angelou School. Nationally, I've been involved with efforts at the intersection of poverty and education. For instance, for five years, I served as the Executive Director of a mid-size foundation that focuses primarily on urban education and secondarily on health issues, where I developed an intense and successful capacity building initiative to boost enrollment and increase funding for struggling schools in Los Angeles, where outside evaluators found outstanding academic outcomes. I also served as President of the ECMC Foundation where my strategy focused on keeping students in school throughout the K-college pipeline. As a grant maker there and at other foundations, I've had an opportunity to review the most successful work from schools across the country and familiarize myself with the evaluations and studies of programs both successful and not. Currently I head the College & Career Access division of the College Board, and work on building pathways to colleges that offer the right fit for low-income and first generation students.

I earned my M.B.A. from Stanford and will continue to bring a businesslike approach to my work on the board if confirmed, meaning I will be data-driven in my thinking and will insist on accountability and results.

As someone deeply steeped in education reform, and someone who understands DC's neighborhoods, even as the city is experiencing dramatic demographic shifts, I'm well positioned to continue to add value to the governance of our charter sector. I have an appreciation for evidence-based reforms. But I also appreciate the necessity of understanding the community's inherent assets, the cultural nuances attendant with our communities, and how those assets and nuances must be considered when developing new schools and running existing schools.

From my year of service on the Board, I've become familiar with the Board's role in approving new charter applications, in providing oversight and support to charter schools, in reporting on

performance, in engaging the community in our decision making, and in participating constructively on committees and endeavors relating to education under the purview of the Deputy Mayor for Education, OSSE, and the Mayor. I've been proud to participate in helping to govern a sector that is ranked as the healthiest in the country by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, in a city where both charters and the traditional public schools are thriving and improving together.

I've been excited to watch the emergence of a robust charter sector in Washington, DC and to participate in the emergence of this sector. Initially, I'd hoped charter schools would be a learning laboratory for DCPS, and to some extent they are. But my vision for charter schools now extends beyond that initial hope. I've watched them provide a broader array of options (in terms of geography, size of school, and curricular and programmatic foci), particularly for low-income families. Going forward, I would like to see our charter schools better serve a larger pool of disadvantaged, hard-to-serve students in DC; a group that comprises a large percentage of our public school students. To date, I've observed that our charters have done a commendable job challenging high achieving, low-income students. However, I think they've lagged in serving students who are behind academically and/or are enduring multiple risk factors. I believe a focus on service to our most challenged students should be a clear goal for the charter sector over the coming years. And I would work to build collaborative cross-sector work, to make sure that our charter schools are not only individually successful, and not just part of a successful charter sector, but to be sure that they are partners in building stronger schools for all our students, in traditional public schools as well as charters.

In sum, I've enjoyed my service filling out the remainder of an unexpired term on the Charter School Board, and I would be most grateful for your confirmation of my nomination to a second term. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.