

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

5:30 p.m.

Held At:

441 Fourth Street, N.W.

Old Council Chambers

Washington, D.C.

Reported and transcribed by: Gervel A. Watts,

CERT*D

Capital Reporting Company
District of Columbia State Board of Education Public Meeting 07-15-2015

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1 A P P E A R A N C E S

2 BOARD MEMBERS:

3 Jack Jacobson, President

4 Karen Williams, Vice-president

5 Mary Lord, At Large

6 Laura Wilson-Phelan, Ward 1

7 Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3

8 D. Kamili Anderson, Ward 4

9 Tierra Jolly, Ward 8

10 Brian Contreras, Student Representative

11 Kelly Davis, Executive Director

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1 C O N T E N T S

2 I. Call to Order

3 II. Announcement of a Quorum

4 III. Approval of the Agenda

5 IV. Approval of Minutes

6 V. Comments from the President of the DC
State Board of Education

7 VI. Comments from the State Superintendent
8 of Education

9 VII. Public Comments

10 VIII. Health Education Standards Update Panel

11 IX. GED Diploma Panel

12 X. Consideration of Ceremonial Resolutions
Honoring National Youth Science Camp
13 Attendees

14 XII. Adjournment

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CALL TO ORDER

3 MR. JACOBSON: On behalf of the members
4 of the District of Columbia State Board of
5 Education, I want to welcome you, our guests, and
6 our viewing public to our State Board of Education
7 meeting.

8 The State Board holds its regularly
9 scheduled meetings on the third Wednesday of every
10 month. The State Board of Education meeting for
11 July 15, 2015 is now called to order.

12 The roll will now be called to determine
13 the presence of a quorum.

14 ANNOUNCEMENT OF QUORUM

15 MS. DAVIS: Jack Jacobson?

16 MR. JACOBSON: Present.

17 MS. DAVIS: Karen Williams?

18 (No response.)

19 MS. DAVIS: Mary Lord?

20 (No response.)

21 MS. DAVIS: Laura Wilson-Phelan?

22 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Present.

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1 MS. DAVIS: Ruth Wattenberg.

2 MS. WATTENBERG: Present.

3 MS. DAVIS: Kamili Anderson?

4 MS. ANDERSON: Present.

5 MS. DAVIS: Mark Jones?

6 (No response.)

7 MS. DAVIS: Joe Weedon?

8 MR. WEEDON: Present.

9 MS. DAVIS: Tiera Jolly?

10 MS. JOLLY: Present.

11 MS. DAVIS: For the record, Brian

12 Contreras?

13 MR. CONTRERAS: Present.

14 MS. DAVIS: Mr. President, you have a
15 quorum.

16 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

17 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much. A
18 quorum has been determined and the State Board
19 will now proceed with the business portion of its
20 meeting.

21 I would entertain a motion to amend
22 tonight's agenda by striking Item 11. That is the

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1 recognition of Patel Asfaha, our student
2 representative. She's not able to be here tonight
3 and we'd like to postpone her recognition until
4 she can be here. Is there a motion to amend the
5 agenda?

6 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: So moved.

7 MR. JACOBSON: By Ms. Wilson-Phelan. Is
8 there a second?

9 MS. JOLLY: Second.

10 MR. JACOBSON: By Ms. Jolly. The motion
11 has been moved and seconded. Any discussion?

12 All those in favor of amending the
13 agenda, please say aye.

14 (Board Members vote "aye")

15 MR. JACOBSON: Opposed?

16 (No response.)

17 And any abstentions?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. JACOBSON: Is there a motion to
20 adopt the amended agenda before us?

21 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: So moved.

22 MR. JACOBSON: Moved by Ms. Wilson-

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1 Phelan. Is there a second?

2 MR. WEEDON: Second.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Second by Mr. Weedon. Is
4 there any discussion?

5 (No response.)

6 The motion has been properly moved and seconded
7 and we are ready for a vote. All those in favor,
8 please signify by saying aye.

9 (Board members vote "aye.")

10 MR. JACOBSON: Any opposed?

11 (No response.)

12 MR. JACOBSON: Any abstentions?

13 (No response.)

14 MR. JACOBSON: The ayes have it and the
15 agenda is approved. Is there a motion to adopt
16 the minutes from our July 1st working session?

17 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: So moved.

18 MR. JACOBSON: Moved by Ms. Wilson-
19 Phelan. Is there a second?

20 MS. JOLLY: Second.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Ms. Jolly. The motion
22 has been moved and seconded. Any discussion?

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1 (No response.)

2 MR. JACOBSON: If not, all those in
3 favor, please say aye.

4 (Board members vote "aye.")

5 MR. JACOBSON: Any opposed?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. JACOBSON: Any abstentions?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. JACOBSON: The minutes are adopted.

10 COMMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF SBOE

11 MR. JACOBSON: Good evening. My name is
12 Jack Jacobson and I am the President of the State
13 Board of Education. We have a packed agenda this
14 evening. A proposal came before the Board last
15 year under the previous administration to provide
16 high school diplomas to those who successfully
17 passed the GED or NEDP exams.

18 We have heard from stakeholder that
19 there should be more public discussion around this
20 issue and tonight we will hear from adult
21 education students and educators to help inform
22 future action on this issue. A panel of experts

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1 will also inform the Board on the need for a new
2 health education in the District and how we can
3 work together to create the standard that meets
4 the needs of our students.

5 D.C. is an urban district. We have
6 really special populations here that have special
7 health needs. We have more chronic diseases. We
8 have more violence. These health standards -- a
9 revision of our existing health standards will
10 help get us to a place where more children are
11 safer in our schools and at home. So I look
12 forward to the discussion this evening and working
13 with our partners and the administration on this
14 vital issue.

15 I'd now like to turn it over to the
16 Superintendent of Education, Hansuel Kang, for
17 comments.

18 COMMENTS FROM THE
19 STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

20 MS. KANG: Good evening, everyone, and
21 thank you President Jacobson. I just had a couple
22 of comments I wanted to make this evening.

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1 First, with regard to the health
2 standards that were just mentioned, I'd like to
3 recognize the efforts that have been made by the
4 State Board, the State Board staff and the many
5 community members who have engaged in this process
6 to date. We look forward to working with the
7 State Board and the community in order to ensure
8 that we are able to create effective standards
9 that meet the needs of our students and our
10 educators and can be used very effectively in D.C.
11 classrooms.

12 We recognize the need for updates to our
13 standards and also want to encourage thoughtful
14 planning so that these updated standards can lead
15 to a different reality in our classrooms, both for
16 our students and our educators, and we hope that
17 we are able to, together, come up with a process
18 that is clearly defined, transparent and inclusive
19 for how we will finalize revisions to the
20 standards.

21 Around the state diploma, I look forward
22 to continuing this discussion around how the state

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1 can better provide access to our adult education
2 students, who complete the GED or NEDP and I look
3 forward to continuing that discussion as well. I
4 think our goal is to ensure that our residents
5 have multiple pathways to be able to access both
6 postsecondary opportunities and career
7 opportunities that come with having additional
8 credentials.

9 PUBLIC COMMENTS

10 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you Superintendent
11 Kang. I know the Board is very much looking
12 forward to digging in on both of these issues and
13 working with you and your team to move things
14 forward.

15 We will now hear from public witnesses
16 who wish to speak on education-related matters.
17 Public witnesses are asked to contact Board staff
18 by telephone or email if there is an interest in
19 providing testimony at our public meetings, and
20 asked to call 24 hours in advance or by the close
21 of business the day earlier.

22 Now, there are quite a few public

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1 witnesses, so we're going to call you up in panels
2 of four. There will be three-minute rounds, so
3 please try and contain your testimony to three
4 minutes. If you go over, I'm unfortunately, going
5 to have gavel you a little bit because we have a
6 packed agenda tonight.

7 I'm going to call up the first four
8 people. If all four aren't here, I'm going to go
9 to the next couple of folks until we get four
10 seats filled.

11 Brenda Rhodes-Miller, D.C. Campaign to
12 Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

13 James Peters, Bell Multicultural High
14 School.

15 Angela Montero, Wilson High School. Is
16 Angela here?

17 Heyab -- I'm going to ask you to
18 pronounce your own name so that I don't kill it
19 for you.

20 MS. ASEGAHEGNE: Heyab.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Heyab. Wonderful. Thank
22 you so much. That's all four. Wonderful. Let's

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1 start on this end with Ms. Miller and work our way
2 down. Three minutes.

3 MS. MILLER: Okay. President Jacobson
4 and other esteemed members of the State Board of
5 Education. Thank you for this opportunity to
6 testify before you today. My name is Brenda
7 Rhodes Miller and I would like to encourage you to
8 approve and adopt the revised DC Health Education
9 Standards. The need is urgent.

10 DC Campaign is a nonprofit organization
11 that promotes research-based investments to
12 improve the lives of the District's adolescents.
13 We constantly makes the case for rigorously
14 evaluated programs. Competence of school
15 education has been on the books in Washington,
16 D.C. since final rulemaking in December of 1994.
17 Section 23043 requires that the superintendent
18 shall ensure that health education, as defined in
19 this section, is taught through the use of
20 appropriate monitoring and establishment of
21 minimum proficiencies or learning outcomes in at
22 least 11 content areas, including HIV/AIDS and

1 other sexually transmitted diseases; human
2 sexuality an family life; prevention and control
3 of disease, nutrition and dietary patterns that
4 contribute to disease; tobacco, alcohol, and other
5 drug education; physical education; parenting;
6 coping with life situations; CPR, first aid;
7 consumer health and environmental health.

8 The superintendent shall establish and
9 maintain a system of teacher training that
10 supports comprehensive school health education
11 through appropriate staff development activities
12 mandated for health and physical education
13 classroom instructors.

14 Here we are 21 years later, without
15 health standards that incorporate the real life
16 information that youth want and deserve. An
17 entire lifetime has passed with untold ill effects
18 on children and adolescents who did not receive
19 high quality health education from their public
20 schools.

21 Health standards detail what students
22 should learn and when they should learn it. They

1 are also a clear guide for what should be taught
2 at each grade level and can be used as an
3 accountability mechanism.

4 Health standards provide students with
5 the knowledge and skills to reduce risky behaviors
6 and increase healthy behaviors. Approval and
7 passage of the revised DC Health Education
8 Standards can have a profound impact on fears
9 about personal safety, obesity, nutrition and
10 physical activity, sexually transmitted
11 infections, chronic health conditions, and teen
12 pregnancy.

13 According to the most recent data from
14 the department of health, there were 790 teen
15 births in 2013 to girls ages 15 to 19 in
16 Washington, D.C. While there has been a dramatic
17 73 percent reduction in the teen pregnancy rate,
18 since DC Campaign was established, the sad truth
19 is that more than half of all teen births are to
20 girls who live in Wards 7 and 8.

21 Yet in Washington, DC, sexuality
22 education has been mandated K through 12 since

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1 1979. Why hasn't it been taught to young people
2 who are desperate for accurate, age-appropriate
3 information, the very information incorporated in
4 the revised DC Health Standards?

5 High quality health education is far
6 more cost effective and affordable than after-the-
7 fact efforts to deal with the tragic consequences
8 of ignorance. Thank you.

9 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much. Next.

10 MR. PETERS: Hello, President Jacobson
11 and other Board members. My name is James Peters
12 and I'm a rising senior at Bell Multicultural High
13 School.

14 I am 17 years old and after I graduate
15 high school, I plan on enrolling in college, where
16 I will pursue a career in law. I'm interested in
17 HBCU colleges such as Clark in Atlanta, Morehouse,
18 or maybe Bowie State.

19 I'm here as a youth health educator at
20 the Young Women's Project (YWP). I hold classroom
21 and lunchroom presentations where I educate my
22 peers about sexual health issues. I have also

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1 been a part of the Health Education Standards
2 Working Group for the past year. In this group, I
3 did research on our health experience through
4 focus groups, interviews and surveys. We have
5 presented in front of DCPS teachers, as well as
6 the DC State Board of Education.

7 In these focus groups and surveys, we
8 got a lot of useful information from the youth.
9 Today I wanted to focus on an issue that was
10 discussed by most of the youth we spoke with,
11 which is violence prevention. The teens in our
12 focus groups and who took our survey all
13 experienced violence in one way or another.

14 There are all types of violence in our
15 communities, and teens want to know how to deal
16 with them. Eighty-nine percent of teens that
17 responded to our survey said that knowing how to
18 deal with family violence is important to them
19 that's because domestic violence is a very common
20 -- it's very common in our neighborhoods and I
21 often see old and young couples fighting and
22 yelling where I'm from.

1 Youth also talk about the opposing
2 messages that they receive at school and at home.
3 When talking about school fights, one youth
4 claimed, "My mother would beat me if I didn't
5 retaliate," and others chimed in saying that, "I
6 would never sit there and let somebody touch or
7 hit me."

8 They believe teachers don't do anything
9 about fights and so students should handle their
10 business. They believe health classes should
11 adjust student's real life circumstances. During
12 the focus groups, participants claim that the
13 violence that they see most is "jumping" in their
14 neighborhoods and school fights. These jumpings
15 and school fights tend to come from a hood beef or
16 from different neighborhoods having old fights
17 that get brought up over and over again. The kind
18 of violence in our communities leaks into our
19 schools.

20 Some of my friends from other schools
21 talk about how there are fights in their schools
22 every day. Some fights are due to the beef in the

1 hoods, but some fights stem from a lack of
2 knowledge on how to resolve the issues in a
3 nonviolent way. Issues that happen in their
4 neighborhoods find their way into the classroom.
5 If we include standards about violence and how to
6 stay away from it, some of these problems can be
7 avoided. Future students might have a better
8 chance to stop violence in their neighborhood as
9 well as in the classroom.

10 In some schools, students try to get
11 weapons passed the metal detectors because they
12 feel unsafe in their school. They also can't
13 leave the school and go home without a weapon in
14 some neighborhoods, it's just that unsafe. They
15 feel like they might run into some trouble along
16 the way home.

17 Another thing I learned from my research
18 with DC teens in the health class is not very good
19 because it is not using the student's time
20 effectively. Most teens now feel like the health
21 classes are currently a waste of time because they
22 don't learn anything that they would actually need

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1 and they feel like it's boring. I feel like if we
2 actually learn about things like neighborhood
3 violence, students would find health classes more
4 interesting because it is something that is
5 relatable and something that students like me go
6 through.

7 Violence is an overlooked topic in
8 health classes and it shouldn't be. Youth need to
9 know what it is and how to avoid it. We need
10 adults to be talking with the youth so that youth
11 could see how community violence can be resolved.
12 I believe strongly that the health standards
13 should be improved in any way they can, but
14 specifically through incorporating lessons on
15 violence.

16 Thank you for listening to my testimony.

17 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Peters.
18 Ms. Montero.

19 MS. MONTERO: Hello, President Jacobson
20 and other Board members.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Can you make sure your
22 microphone is on? It should be a green light.

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1 MR. PETERS: Let me pull it down a
2 little bit.

3 MS. MONTERO: Hello, President Jacobson
4 and other Board members. My name is Angela
5 Montero and I am a senior at Woodrow Wilson High
6 School. I am currently a Peer Educator at the
7 Young Women's Project. As such, I work with other
8 peer educators to present information in classes
9 and at lunch to other students and I work to
10 distribute contraception and information to my
11 friends and peers whenever possible.

12 I'm also a member of the youth working
13 group that helped to develop the DC Health
14 Education Standards. I'm here to testify about
15 the need to adopt and pass this new draft of the
16 DC health education standards so that students can
17 receive better and more comprehensive health
18 education. I'm especially concerned about
19 sexuality/gender identity and consent education in
20 order for health classes to be a safer space for
21 all students.

22 Right now, health classes do not do an

1 adequate job of teaching about or teaching to
2 LGBTQ students. This issue comes in two parts.
3 The first is that the old health education
4 standards fail to include gender and sexual
5 orientation so students are not learning about
6 LGBTQ issues. But the second part is that even if
7 these issues are addressed in a single class, the
8 entire course is still extremely heteronormative.

9 As a sophomore, I was taught that
10 sexuality was a choice and I sat through a
11 semester-long class that was designed for straight
12 cis-gendered students. Therefore, I encountered
13 both of these problems because not only was the
14 information I received false, but the entire class
15 failed to incorporate gender- neutral pronouns and
16 sexual ambiguity into other aspects of health.

17 The failure to address this aspect of
18 health is about more than just informing and
19 educating LGBTQ students, it is also about
20 educating straight cis-gendered students to
21 encourage discussions and remove social stigmas. I
22 also think a lot of health classes fail to address

1 consent.

2 Throughout my experience leading
3 presentations, I have come to realize that a lot
4 of people do not understand their own right to
5 consent and the right of their partner to their
6 own consent. Too often students don't get the
7 idea that you can say no even after you have
8 initially said yes.

9 I think that instead of saying that
10 consent to be your responsibility to give, health
11 teachers need to teach it as your responsibility
12 to get, and these revised standards do that. They
13 encourage students to investigate what consent
14 means and understand its importance in all
15 relationships.

16 The new standards even specifically
17 address how alcohol and drugs affect one's ability
18 to give consent. All of these are dramatic
19 improvements to the current standards that don't
20 even use the word. I also think that there is a
21 problem with the general attitude that these
22 standards take toward sex and how that attitude

1 transitions into the classroom.

2 Health classes are places that need to
3 be safe for students. In my health class, my
4 teacher constantly asked for people to share
5 personal experiences and ask the questions they
6 have about sex and relationships. However, few
7 students ever did because admitting to having sex
8 or even having questions about sex made them
9 targets of jokes and judgment.

10 Abstinence is clearly the goal of these
11 standards, instead having the goal be educating
12 teens. I completely understand the importance of
13 teaching abstinence as an option for teens to
14 decide, but the last thing a health class should
15 be is a place of sexual shaming and the language
16 of the standards doesn't create a safe space for
17 students to learn in.

18 For example, one of the standards wants
19 students to be able to demonstrate health sexual
20 behaviors, abstinence, from those that are
21 harmful: date rape, sexual promiscuity, and
22 identify barriers and supports.

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1 There are so many things that are wrong
2 with this. For starters, we are implying that
3 sexual promiscuity and date rape are equally
4 wrong, which is extremely problematic, both in its
5 failure to address the severity of date rape and
6 in its shaming of sexual promiscuity. Furthermore,
7 if abstinence is the only healthy sexual behavior,
8 than all sexual behaviors are sexual promiscuity
9 and therefore all sexual actions are equally as
10 bad as date rape.

11 MR. JACOBSON: I'll ask you to wrap up.

12 MS. MONTERO: Okay. To conclude, here
13 are my recommendations. I think that the new
14 draft of the health standards need to be adapted
15 so that the standards include less shameful
16 language and put more emphasis on teaching consent
17 when teaching healthy relationships and teaching
18 gender and sexual orientation.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much.

21 MS. ASEGAHEGNE: Hello. My name is
22 Heyab Asegahegne. I am going to be a senior at

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1 Columbia Heights Education Campus. I am 16 years
2 old and I work with the Young Women's Project as a
3 peer educator. I've worked with Young Women's
4 Project since 2013. I am a member of the Youth
5 Health Standards Working Group. In this group we
6 conducted focus groups, collected surveys, and did
7 interviews to research DC youth's health needs. I
8 focused specifically on mental health issues.

9 Today I will be talking about the
10 importance of learning about depression.
11 Depression is a serious issue amongst teens.
12 Depression is caused by a lot of things, for
13 instance, low self-esteem and feelings of
14 uselessness. I have a friend that was depressed
15 and did not feel like she belonged in this world,
16 and felt like her life did not have any purpose.
17 Her family thought she was just going through a
18 phase of her teenage years and that's why she was
19 not communicating with them, so they blamed her
20 for breaking the bond that they had.

21 She would call me and tell me that she
22 always feels like crying without knowing the

1 reason, and that she had been having suicidal
2 thoughts. While doing research at on mental
3 health, I learned that 25.5 percent of DC youth
4 felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two or
5 more weeks in a row, and 13.4 percent of DC youth
6 have attempted suicide, compared to a national
7 average of 8 percent.

8 Luckily, because I was working with the
9 Young Women's Project and focusing on depression
10 and stress, I was able to find resources where she
11 could go get help. We went to Upper Cardozo
12 Clinic and we were able to find a man that was
13 working with teens on different issues.

14 Stress is another issue that does not
15 receive enough attention in health class. I
16 personally have dealt with stress. During the
17 school year, there was a lot of homework, and many
18 finals and quizzes I had to get done in order to
19 continue on to my next grade. In addition, I was
20 a part of the early college program, so I was
21 taking college classes at UDC twice a week after
22 school. I was also working with the Young Women's

1 Project twice a week after school, so I did not
2 have time to spend with my friends, or get to
3 relax.

4 When I get home from work or college
5 class, I had a lot of home responsibilities I had
6 to take care of. My mother is a single mother
7 working two jobs, so I do my best to try to help
8 her with anything I can. When I was stressed,
9 there was nothing that could really help other
10 than trying to get some sleep and repeat the same
11 thing the next day.

12 If I had learned how to cope with stress
13 in health class or learned where to go to have
14 somebody to talk to in the school or outside the
15 school, I would have been able to deal with it
16 sooner than I did. This type of information is
17 not covered in health class. We are not taught in
18 depth about the symptoms of depression, the steps
19 to overcoming it, nor where to go and who to talk
20 to. Health class is more focused on nutrition and
21 obesity, and it doesn't not give enough attention
22 to mental issues.

1 You have to be able to overcome your
2 mental issues before you try to fix your physical
3 health. Most of the time stress and depression is
4 the cause of obesity and suicide, therefore mental
5 health issues need to have as equal attention in
6 health class as other issues. Health class is a
7 place where students are supposed to learn what is
8 best for their health and a place for them to get
9 resources so they can get the help they need.

10 Many teens are not aware of the signs of
11 stress or depression, so they don't usually know
12 what is going on. It would be great if health
13 classes are able to educate teens more about these
14 issues before it leads to more serious or even
15 deadly consequences.

16 Thank you for listening to my testimony.

17 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you for your
18 testimony, Ms. Asegahegne. Pretty close?

19 MS. ASEGAHEGNE: Close enough.

20 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Thank you all
21 for coming down and speaking with us. The Board
22 is going to continue to hold hearings and work

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1 with partners like you all on these issues and
2 with our partners at the Superintendent's Office.

3 With that, I'm going to release you and
4 ask the next panel to come up. Thank you so much
5 for coming down.

6 Also, please let the record reflect that
7 Ms. Lord and Mr. Jones are now in attendance. The
8 second panel, please come down as I call your
9 name. Angelous Hall, rising fifth grade student
10 at Mary McLeod Bethany Day Academy.

11 Erin Sweeny Larkin, Policy Attorney, DC
12 Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

13 Meghan Snyder, Teacher, Academy of Hope,
14 Public Charter School.

15 Angela Wilkinson, Learner, at Academy of
16 Hope Public Charter School.

17 MS. SYNDER: Angie wasn't able to make
18 it tonight.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Is Shana Moses available
20 in attendance? She is also a learner at Academy
21 of Hope Adult Public Charter School. And we'll do
22 like we did last time, we'll start here on my

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1 right, on your left, with Erin.

2 MS. LARKIN: President Jacobson and
3 members of the Board, my name is Erin Larkin and I
4 am a Policy Attorney at the District of Columbia
5 Coalition Against Domestic Violence. We are the
6 federally recognized statewide coalition of
7 domestic violence service providers here in the
8 District.

9 We are a membership organization that
10 provides training and technical assistance,
11 conducts outreach, and advocates for policies to
12 prevent domestic violence, hold abusers
13 accountable, and support survivors in building
14 safe and secure lives.

15 I would like to comment on the revised
16 Health Education Standards and the important role
17 that they play in preventing domestic violence and
18 mitigating its harmful effects on the mental,
19 emotional, and physical health of young people.

20 My comments will focus on two ways in
21 which domestic violence impacts the health of
22 students:

1 1) When teens or pre-teens experience
2 violence in their early dating relationships; and
3 second, when children of all ages witness domestic
4 violence at home. Our hope is that by teaching
5 youth about healthy relationships early, rather
6 than reacting to unhealthy ones later on, we can
7 stop the generational cycle of domestic violence.

8 Turning to teen dating violence. Teen
9 dating violence is defined as a pattern of
10 coercive behavior that one teen uses for the
11 purpose of establishing and maintaining power and
12 control over the person they are dating. It often
13 begins between the ages of 12 and 18. Like adult
14 domestic violence, teen dating violence includes
15 physical violence, threats of violence, verbal and
16 emotional abuse, sexual assault, and the use of
17 technology to control and abuse a dating partner.
18 Unfortunately, teens rarely report dating
19 violence, and when they do tell someone, it is
20 usually a peer.

21 Nationwide, nearly 1.5 million high
22 school students experience physical abuse from a

1 dating partner in a single year. Girls and young
2 women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the
3 highest rate of intimate partner violence.² In the
4 District, we have one of the highest rates of teen
5 dating violence in the nation. In 2013, for
6 example, 12 percent of high school students were
7 physically abused, and over 9 percent were victims
8 of sexual violence, including rape, by a dating
9 partner.

10 Teen dating violence has both immediate
11 and long-term effects. Young victims are at
12 higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders,
13 teen pregnancy, risky sexual behavior and further
14 domestic violence. Research indicates that dating
15 violence in adolescence is predictive of more
16 severe domestic violence in adulthood and is
17 related to adverse health outcomes in young
18 adulthood.

19 Turning now to the impact of children
20 who are exposed to domestic violence in the home.
21 Children are exposed to violence in their homes at
22 alarming and unacceptable rates. According to the

1 National Survey of Children's Exposure e to
2 Violence, 1 in 15 children in the United States
3 are exposed to intimate partner violence against
4 their parent or caregiver during the course of one
5 year.

6 To understand the impact of these
7 numbers locally, consider that law enforcement
8 received nearly 33,000 calls for service that were
9 related to domestic violence 2014. Exposure to
10 violence in their home can cause children and
11 teens to suffer significant physical, mental and
12 emotional harm with long-term effects that can
13 last well into adulthood. The groundbreaking
14 Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, or the ACEs
15 Study indicates that growing up in a home in which
16 the mother is physically abused or threatened with
17 weapons is one of the 10 known adverse childhood
18 events that increases a person's risk of
19 developing certain chronic diseases, mental
20 illness and risky behaviors as an adult. Children
21 who witness domestic violence can also suffer
22 severe emotional and developmental difficulties

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1 that are similar to those of children who are the
2 direct victims of abuse.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Ms. Larkin, I'd ask if
4 you could conclude, please.

5 MS. LARKIN: Yes. Thank you.

6 MR. JACOBSON: And we'll keep your
7 entire testimony for the record.

8 MS. LARKIN: Thank you. The Coalition
9 is pleased that the Board's draft revised health
10 education standards for incorporate empowering
11 students with the knowledge and skills to build
12 healthy relationships and recognize abusive ones
13 in their own dating relationships or in their
14 homes. Implementing a health education curriculum
15 that embraces these standards will create
16 healthier outcomes, and academic success, for all
17 students.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much.

20 MS. SNYDER: Hi. My name is Meghan
21 Snyder and I'm a language arts teacher at Academy
22 of Hope Adult Public Charter School.

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1 MS. ANDERSON: Pull the microphone
2 closer.

3 MS. SNYDER: Yep. Working with our
4 learners has truly taught me what dedication,
5 perseverance, and hope look like. They've also
6 taught me so much about this wonderful city. If
7 you can believe it, before I started teaching at
8 Academy of Hope, I didn't know what mumbo sauce
9 was, but my students schooled me and now I know.

10 The family we have built together has
11 changed my life. Next fall, I will be attending
12 Columbia University to earn a master's degree in
13 sociology and education, something that I never
14 would've predicted that I would do four years ago;
15 but more importantly, our school and the work that
16 we do changes learner's lives.

17 Audrey Lord once said, "When I dare to
18 be powerful, to use my strength in the service of
19 my vision, then it becomes less and less important
20 whether I'm afraid."

21 This quote hangs on the wall of my
22 classroom and every day I have the privilege of

1 watching learners articulate their goals, realize
2 their brilliance, power, and strength and release
3 the fear they have about taking the GED.

4 In my opinion, it is absolutely
5 essential that adult learners in DC earn a state
6 diploma when they pass the GED test. As someone
7 who has taught to both a 2002 and 2014 series GED,
8 I can unequivocally say that the demands of the
9 new exam are equal to those of high school
10 classes.

11 The degree to which students must use
12 higher-level critical thinking skills on the exam
13 is extraordinary. As an example, recently I was
14 discussing a writing requirement on the GED social
15 studies section with an Academy of Hope volunteer
16 teacher, who is also a federal judge.

17 Students on the test are required to
18 read two difficult primary source texts, identify
19 an enduring civics issue and draft and write an
20 argument about the relationship between the two
21 text and the enduring issue all in about 25
22 minutes. We both agreed that we could not

1 complete the task in a high level in the time
2 allotted. There are many more example I could
3 give you like this that clearly demonstrate that
4 the exam is extremely difficult and that students
5 who complete it, have absolutely demonstrated an
6 academic aptitude that should earn them a state
7 diploma.

8 Beyond academic eligibility, our
9 students prove daily that they are learning other,
10 less tangible skills that high school students
11 typically acquire. In classes, we require
12 students to work in groups, cooperate with each
13 other, listen respectfully to others' opinions,
14 and practice the give and take that is necessary
15 in the work world and in higher education.

16 Adult students also find new depths of
17 their own potential at school. Being a teacher
18 myself, I'm always tickled by the few students who
19 tell me each term that are our classes have helped
20 them to see that they want to be educators too.

21 We can't take all the credit for these
22 successes because many students come in these soft

1 skills already sharpened from a lifetime of
2 working, learning, raising wonderful children, but
3 it is clear to me that these students improve on
4 these abilities as they interact with each other
5 in class and prepare for the exam.

6 Just like high school, Academy of Hope
7 is a place where friendships are made, where
8 difficult, interpersonal conflicts are overcome
9 and occasionally, where romance blossoms. At the
10 beginning of every term, I see learners hesitantly
11 walk into my classroom as individuals with lofty
12 aspirations, and without fail, when these same
13 learners shift their tassels at graduation, having
14 met some of their goals, they do so as a powerful
15 community.

16 For many learners, passing the GED is
17 not simply proof that they are smart, competent
18 students, but also that they are people who
19 believe in something like education so deeply that
20 they are willing to sacrifice almost anything in
21 the pursuit of their dream. I think this profound
22 commitment should be honored with more than a

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1 simple certificate. I want to see my students
2 walk across our stage to a recognition that is
3 worthy of their incredible spirits, a state
4 diploma.

5 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much. Ms.
6 Moses.

7 MS. MOSES: Greetings. My name is Shana
8 Moses. I am a 30-year-old Academy of Hope Adult
9 Public Charter School student and a Ward 8
10 resident. I'm ecstatic to have the opportunity to
11 give my testimony and express my feelings towards
12 DC offering a state diploma.

13 I have personal experience of attending
14 a GED program and being able to overcome certain
15 barriers in life, such as becoming a parent at the
16 age of 16, having to receive public assistance and
17 working ends-meets jobs that would hire me without
18 having a high school diploma.

19 I tried to go back to school and
20 finished, but got discouraged when Anacostia High
21 School tried to make a do a grade all over again
22 that I had already completed. It made me lose

1 hope. I feel like I was never going to become
2 anything other than another statistic, another
3 black young girl with no education just having
4 kids. That's how the world looks at situations.

5 Even though I had no high school
6 diploma, I was able to receive many certifications
7 and learned that I had many talents. This pushed
8 me not to give up because my story could help
9 someone else. One of my biggest discouragements
10 was when I was told that the GED test would be
11 changing and all the old test scores would be of
12 no use because the test would be upgraded, as well
13 as computerized.

14 I had passed all the subjects but math,
15 and still procrastinated. I was extremely
16 disappointed in myself. I couldn't be mad at
17 anybody by Shana. Academy of Hope has given me so
18 much positive energy, great support, and
19 mentorship. As my fellow classmates and I aim for
20 our GED or NEDP diploma, we work just as hard, if
21 not harder, than the average high school student.
22 It's harder for GED and NEDP students because most

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1 us haven't been to school in decades and have to
2 be taught from beginning to end in order to pass.

3 I'm learning subjects that I haven't
4 seen for several years, so you can say for most,
5 it's like a baby just learning to crawl.

6 Moreover, earning a new GED is equivalent to
7 earning a high school diploma. GED 2014 has been
8 revised to be more difficult and in line with
9 requirements of colleges and employers as well as
10 becoming an online test that is based on the
11 Common Core state standards.

12 GED students work extremely hard for
13 this credential and are acquiring skills to meet
14 or exceed 60 percent of graduating high school
15 students. We work hard on a day-to-day basis
16 preparing ourselves to pass the exam. Offering a
17 state diploma would motivate the students even
18 more with them having more confidence in passing
19 the exam and reaching a goal to many that many
20 have tried to achieve many times before.

21 The state diploma is one of the best
22 ideas that could be thought of for adult learners.

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1 It opens more doors to achievement excellence.

2 Thank you for this opportunity.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Moses, for
4 your testimony and for persevering.

5 Mr. Hall.

6 MR. HALL: Hello my name is Angelous
7 Hall. I am a fifth grade scholar. I go to Mary
8 McLeod Bethune Day Academy. I like sports I plan
9 to get a better job and have a great education. I
10 want to go to Yale University. I am here to talk
11 about what kids should learn in school around
12 health.

13 Kids need to learn what to do in certain
14 situations like emergencies. I think they should
15 know what to do in case of fires, or if some
16 person pulls out a gun. This experience happened
17 to me.

18 I was taking out trash and someone in my
19 apartment building, pulled out a gun, and I just
20 left the trashcan there and went inside my house
21 screaming and crying. This man was later shot at
22 doorstep around my neighborhood. This stuff

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1 happens a lot. I would like my school to talk
2 about what to do during these situations so I can
3 be safer. What we need to know is what to do like
4 how to get away or contact someone to help with
5 these situations. I think my teachers need to
6 know about what goes on in our lives. How else
7 would they know what their students need?

8 I think kids should know about their
9 body works, so if anything that happens they will
10 be prepared. Kids go through a certain stage at a
11 certain age called puberty. They should know what
12 is happening to them. I have an older friend, he
13 was 16 and I was eight years old. He was talking
14 to me about sex and protection. He was telling me
15 about how to put on condoms. He didn't tell me
16 how many, but I was thinking that for extra
17 protection, I should put on two; I know that's
18 wrong now.

19 Kids should know about this so they can
20 protect themselves from pregnancy, or HIV, or
21 other diseases. I think they should start
22 learning about puberty at eight years old, so that

1 they are ready for when it happens to them. I
2 think kids should know about mental health because
3 they should know how to get their hopes up when
4 they're feeling down, or they feel depressed.
5 They should also learn to control their happiness.
6 As far as stress, they should learn how not feel
7 stressed.

8 In my life, family can causes stress.
9 When you haven't seen your family members in a
10 while gives you a lot of stress. Half of my
11 brothers are in jail and the ones that are not in
12 jail are very far away. My little brother lives
13 in Virginia and I can't see him. And for me and
14 other kids stress like that can lead to
15 depression. I think school could tell kids how to
16 adjust their temper how to keep their happiness
17 up.

18 I have a problem with anger. If you
19 talk about me, I don't care, but if you talk about
20 my family, I'm swinging on you. For some kids
21 such as myself, it's very hard to control
22 themselves. I think they should teach you to

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1 control your anger in school because it takes
2 practice.

3 In conclusion, I think all of this can
4 keep kids safe and off the streets. Thank you for
5 letting me present my testimony.

6 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Hall.
7 Witnesses, if you have written testimony, if you
8 could leave it over here at the table so that we
9 have it for our record. I'd really appreciate it.
10 And keeping fighting and keep hope. We're going
11 to keep working on our end.

12 I'm going to call up the next panel,
13 please. Trivoria Ballard, a learner at Academy of
14 Hope Adult Public Charter School.

15 Terees Jones, a learner at Academy of
16 Hope Public Charter School.

17 Monique Folk, a learner at Academy of
18 Hope Public Charter School.

19 Celeste Gatling, a learner at Academy of
20 Hope Public Charter School. Then we'll go onto
21 Tesfa-Adams Admassu, a learner at Academy of Hope
22 Public Charter School, and Shalaura Ham, a learner

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1 at Academy of Hope Public Charter School.

2 Is there anyone that had signed up whose
3 name I haven't called?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. JACOBSON: We have two more chairs.
6 Could you two both come down then? We had an
7 awful lot of witnesses sign up today, so I think
8 we might've missed one or two. Just start on my
9 right, your left. There are two chairs at the
10 table, and we'll just go, starting on the left
11 side. And again, when you're finished, please
12 give your testimony to Jamikka over here.

13 Thanks so much. Go ahead. You get
14 three minutes each.

15 MS. BALLARD: My name is Trivoria
16 Ballard and I live and live in Ward 1. As a
17 person that hasn't finished school, I am
18 testifying to let you know why I want a state
19 diploma or a certificate and why I wasn't able to
20 finish school at the time I was supposed to.

21 The school I was attending had shut
22 down, and I had children, so I had to think of a

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1 smart plan on how to go about school. Throughout
2 the years, I attended two GED programs, but I
3 didn't go like I was supposed to. I went whenever
4 I felt like it, and I had a lot of catching up to
5 do. Both schools I had attended I didn't really
6 like them. I didn't like how the students would
7 play a lot as if they were children. It's like
8 the teachers and the students weren't serious
9 about things. I didn't like that.

10 One of the schools I had attended, the
11 teacher came late a lot. She wasn't always on
12 time for class. So the class would just be
13 sitting there waiting for her to come and the
14 longer she took to come just made me more
15 impatient and I left. I left because I didn't
16 want to sit there not doing anything, I felt as
17 though I can sit at home and not do nothing. Her
18 being late was very unprofessional. I didn't
19 understand why she couldn't be on time every day,
20 just like how they expect the students, the same
21 rules should apply to them.

22 Then in 2014, I heard of Academy of

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1 Hope, and from the first semester, I really liked
2 it. The teachers was always dedicated to coming
3 and on time, they are motivators and they don't
4 move on to the next lesson until everyone
5 understands it. They have staff here you can talk
6 to if needed and they give you more than three
7 absent days.

8 This is my third semester here, I've
9 been here since September 2014, and I don't plan
10 on being here no longer than a year. This is the
11 final straw for me; I've taken this school way
12 more serious than I've ever did in the past. I'm
13 getting older and I want to get my GED now. I
14 want to have it now while I'm still young, so that
15 I can move on with my life and make things better
16 for me and my children. I don't want, nor am I
17 going to wait till I get older to finish school.
18 The test would be much harder then. I don't want
19 to waste anymore of my time trying to accomplish
20 this. I'm ready to close this chapter in my life.
21 The ability for me to finish school and earn my
22 GED is important to me because I don't want to

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1 live my whole life regretting not finishing
2 school, especially if there was no reason.

3 My most important reason is because I
4 have four little children who look up to me and is
5 expecting the best of life. I don't want to be
6 known as a loser or to have my children think of
7 me as one and think it is okay to not finish
8 school, and to be able to help them as they get
9 older. I want to make the best of life for the
10 sake of my children, but in order for me to move
11 forward is for me to complete school.

12 In conclusion, I just want to earn
13 something in my hand that says I've completed High
14 School, whether it's the certificate or the state
15 diploma. I can't wait until the day I graduate.
16 I'm ready to start a new chapter in my life, and I
17 can't wait for that to happen to me.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much.

20 MR. MARTINEZ: Good afternoon. My name
21 is Arturo Martinez and I'm here on behalf of The
22 Next Step Public Charter School, speaking on

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1 behalf of Julie Meyer, our executive director.

2 This is regarding the state diploma competency-
3 based credentials for GED recipients.

4 The Next Step Public Charter School is a
5 bilingual GED and ESL program in the Columbia
6 Heights area, serving over 450 --

7 MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Martinez, you're
8 actually going to be on a panel later so that we
9 can actually question you.

10 MR. MARTINEZ: Okay.

11 MR. JACOBSON: So would you mind
12 waiting?

13 MR. MARTINEZ: Absolutely.

14 MR. JACOBSON: And the other gentleman,
15 what was your name?

16 MR. SANCHEZ: Sammy Sanchez.

17 MR. JACOBSON: Both of you are on our
18 actual panel. So if you could just wait, we'll
19 have you come back up and you'll have five minutes
20 then instead of three, and you'll be able to
21 question and answer with the Board.

22 MR. SANCHEZ: Okay.

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1 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you both.

2 MS. HAM: Good evening.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Good evening.

4 MS. HAM: My name is Shalaura Ham. I am
5 a single mother of one. I am a student at Academy
6 of Hope Adult Public Charter School. I am 23
7 years old and I live in Southeast DC Ward 8. My
8 goal is to get my high school diploma and go to
9 college. I am here to support the State Diploma.

10 First, it is important to offer non-
11 traditional paths to a high school diploma. I
12 didn't finish school because I got expelled. When
13 I was in the 10th grade, I had a knife on me to
14 protect myself. I was 16 years old and ten girls
15 came to my house to jump me and my cousin. We had
16 a fight that turned into a riot.

17 My mom, aunt, and uncle were there to
18 stop the fight. After the fight, my mom took us
19 to give a police report. One of the girls was in
20 my health class. When I went back to school, five
21 girls came to my class and tried to jump me. The
22 school made us do peer mediation, but that didn't

1 work. To protect myself, I kept my knife on me.

2 One day, me and my friend left for
3 lunch. When we came back, the principal told us to
4 throw our food away. I didn't have any lunch so
5 he decided to search me. I had a knife in my
6 right pocket. It was nine inches long, so the
7 school police came and got me. When my mom came
8 to the school, she told the principal about the
9 police report, but he didn't care. The principal
10 suspended me until we went to court.

11 That's when I got expelled and put on
12 probation. I was on probation for a year and had
13 to do community service. The courts gave me no
14 option to return back to school. The only option
15 I had was to do GED classes. After getting put
16 out of school in 2009, I had a baby in December of
17 2010.

18 It is very important to get my high
19 school diploma. I got a second chance to come
20 back to school. I would like to wear a cap and
21 gown. I would like to walk across the stage. I
22 would like to show my son anything is possible. I

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1 would love to be recognized for all my hard work.

2 At Academy of Hope, we participate in
3 class; we do homework and even go on trips. We
4 get progress reports. It's like we're in school,
5 so therefore, I believe we should be granted a
6 high school diploma and not just a GED
7 certificate.

8 Thank you for listening to my testimony.

9 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so very much
10 for coming down here tonight. Next.

11 MS. ADMASSU: First, I would like to
12 thank Academy of Hope as well as Board of
13 Education for giving me --

14 MR. JACOBSON: Could you pull your
15 microphone just a little closer, please?

16 Thanks so much.

17 MS. ADMASSU: Sure. -- share my opinion
18 and to hear my stand on this proposal. My name is
19 Tesfa-Adams Admassu. I have resided in the United
20 States for 13 years. I originally came from
21 Ethiopia. I came to the United States of America
22 because I want to have a better education and

1 profession. I believe that Washington D.C.

2 should give the residents the honor of
3 having the superintendent's diploma.

4 From my perspective, several personal
5 issues can lead students to drop out of school.
6 For example, parents may not have been able to
7 afford to send their children to school. Those
8 children may have to work to support their family.
9 In my case, I previously earned my high school
10 diploma in my country; however, it was not
11 accepted in the United States and I have to take
12 English as a second language. I am now working on
13 earning my GED.

14 It would benefit me greatly if I could
15 also have a state diploma. Having this in
16 Washington, DC will put me and other students at
17 the same level with states close to us. This will
18 put us on the same educational platform and grant
19 us the same advantages as our peers in Maryland
20 and Virginia. It's important and a major
21 necessity for people to get a better job.

22 The 2014 GED is harder than it used to

1 be and it will take more time to study and more
2 hard work. In fact, I have had to get back to
3 full time school after 10 years and I am working
4 full time for my hard work and dedication to get
5 my GED and to be a better person in the community,
6 the Board of Education should consider people like
7 me our eagerness to continue our efforts to obtain
8 higher education by awarding the superintendent's
9 diploma.

10 Getting the Superintendent's diploma in
11 Washington, DC give the students' fairness of
12 their work. Credentials earned based on those
13 standards should also allow students access and
14 equity.

15 To summarize, people like me who work
16 hard, dedicate ourselves to better our education,
17 all while supporting our families, should be
18 awarded the state diploma. That will support the
19 moral of the Washington, DC residents and to
20 continue forward for a better and more successful
21 community. Thank you.

22 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so very much.

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1 And I want to thank all of our public witnesses
2 for coming down and sharing their stories and
3 sharing their vision for the future. I really
4 appreciate. This Board appreciates you coming
5 down and spending your time with us and we've got
6 a lot more research and work to do on our end, but
7 we're going to do that and I appreciate you coming
8 down.

9 If you can leave your testimony with
10 Jamikka, we'd appreciate it. Thanks so much.
11 Thank you to everyone.

12 (Applause.)

13 HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS UPDATE PANEL

14 MR. JACOBSON: Next on the agenda is a
15 panel to discuss updating health education
16 standards for the District of Columbia.

17 Health Standards are extremely important
18 and one of the first actions by this body after
19 its creation in 2007, was to adopt standards,
20 based largely on the National Health Education
21 Standards. However, these standards are getting
22 outdated and they don't reflect current data and

1 demographics and are narrowly tailored to meet the
2 needs -- and are not narrowly tailored to meet the
3 special needs of an urban school district.

4 The District of Columbia faces unique
5 challenges as an urban school district, in terms
6 of gun violence, mental and sexual health, and a
7 host of other areas. Just last month, the City
8 Council convened a roundtable to discuss support
9 services in schools for trauma victims.

10 Witnesses at the hearing reminded us
11 that 4,000 of our city students are homeless and
12 that 40 percent of high schoolers will experience
13 some sort of trauma in a given year.

14 Additionally, a recent study found that suicide
15 rates for black children ages 11 and below have
16 nearly doubled since the early 1990s.

17 Another recent study shows that black
18 Americans are more likely to be murdered, much
19 more likely to be murdered than their white
20 counterparts. Data from the 2012 Youth Risk
21 Behavior Survey found that almost 20 percent of DC
22 high school students had carried a weapon in the

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1 past month.

2 In middle school, almost a third of
3 students reported being bullied at school, with
4 rates even higher for LGBTQ students. Twenty
5 percent of middle school students also reported
6 being sexually active. We must remember these
7 sobering facts as we work to create standards that
8 empower students with the skills they need, not
9 just knowledge, but actually how to use that
10 knowledge, now to interpret it, how to use it in
11 their lives and give teachers the necessary tools
12 to help these students become healthy and
13 productive citizens.

14 I'm going to ask our panel to come down.
15 We have a five-person panel. Carolyn Hunt, a
16 teacher at Jefferson Middle School.

17 Sammy Sanchez, Executive Director, From
18 Within Mentor Program. And if you could sit one,
19 two, three, so on.

20 Irwin Royster, Director of Youth Program
21 Center in Ward 8.

22 Loral Patchen, Executive Director, the

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1 Alliance for Prepared Parenting.

2 MS. HUNT: Loral won't be here. She's
3 delivering a baby.

4 MR. JACOBSON: Oh. She's not able to
5 make it, unfortunately. She's delivering a baby.
6 That's exciting.

7 MS. HUNT: Otherwise, she's be here.

8 MR. JACOBSON: A new resident.

9 MS. HUNT: Not hers, but someone else's.

10 MR. JACOBSON: Well, I hope we can get
11 her testimony for the record. And Nadia Gold-
12 Moritz, Executive Director with the Young Women's
13 Project. You'll each have five minutes to
14 testify. I'm going to hold you to that, and then
15 the Board will have five-minute rounds of
16 questions for Board members.

17 We'll start with Ms. Hunt.

18 MS. HUNT: Pardon the use of the phone
19 and not the paper. Good evening. My name is
20 Caroline Hunt and I am about to begin my 6th year
21 teaching physical education and health teacher for
22 DCPS.

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1 I'm here to encourage you to bring the
2 District's health and physical education into the
3 21st century by creating new skills-based,
4 district-wide standards. Our current PE and
5 health standards are in dire need for updating.
6 For example, Standard 3.1.9 indicates that
7 students should be able to "Differentiate between
8 healthy and unhealthy eating habits by using the
9 USDA Food Guide Pyramid."

10 Teaching kids to make healthy eating
11 choices sounds great, but we haven't actually used
12 the Food Guide Pyramid in going on four years,
13 since 2011. All of the standards under

14 Strand 5 involve communication skills:
15 "Students demonstrate the ability to utilize
16 interpersonal communication skills to enhance and
17 protect health."

18 The standards under this strand deal
19 with effective and respectful communication and
20 resolving conflicts; however, not one standard in
21 the entire strand mentions the use of technology
22 as a tool for communication. If you've ever even

1 seen a school-aged child, you are well aware that
2 their most commonly used method of interpersonal
3 communication, is technology based.

4 Kids are constantly connected to
5 technology. Our students are bombarded with
6 information, including information about personal
7 health. We need to teach students how to navigate
8 social media, and tech in general, in a way that
9 empowers them to find accurate information on
10 their own and to understand potential consequences
11 of the information they share and the information
12 they consume.

13 Our current standards merely require
14 students to memorize large amounts of information,
15 but what they need are strategies and skills that
16 they can apply in their daily lives. Another
17 glaring area needing improvement is sexual health
18 education. Because we, as a society, tend to shy
19 away from frank, accurate discussions of sex, our
20 students are receiving information of questionable
21 origin and extremely questionable accuracy.

22 For example, I recently overheard from a

1 high school student that if you pour Sprite on
2 your vagina, you can tell if you have an STD or
3 not by whether or not it bubbles. These
4 problematic misconceptions cannot be countered
5 unless sexual health is adequately addressed and
6 taught. Actual human reproduction, the way it
7 actually happens, is never mentioned in the
8 current standards. In fact, the 5th grade
9 standard 5.1.7 reads: "Define STIs and HIV/AIDS;
10 describe behaviors that place one at risk for
11 HIV/AIDS, STIs, or unintended pregnancy." But how
12 are our students supposed to understand what an
13 STI is if they don't have an accurate perception
14 of sex is in the first place?

15 Across the country, states are adopting
16 the Common Core standards to develop learners who
17 are equipped with the 21st Century skills
18 employers are looking for. These skills move
19 beyond rote understanding and develop creativity,
20 problem solving, working as a team and
21 negotiation. The Partnership for 21st Century
22 Learning, specifically enumerates health literacy

1 as one of the necessary interdisciplinary 21st
2 century skills.

3 Our students need to know how to
4 advocate for themselves and their communities,
5 where the closest farmers market is and how to use
6 SNAP benefits once you get there. We need to be
7 able to have candid conversations about emotional
8 control and mental health so our kids spend more
9 time in school and less time in out-of-school-
10 suspension or worse, being bounced from one school
11 to another.

12 Simply stated, our current physical
13 education and health education standards promote
14 the ability to regurgitate information, not for
15 students to think on their own. One of my former
16 students is entering 7th grade this year and I
17 recently found out she is pregnant. As her
18 teacher, I feel like I failed to provide her the
19 education that she needed to avoid pregnancy at
20 the age of 12.

21 Our current approach to health education
22 and physical education isn't good enough. We need

1 to improve and adapt as quickly as the world is
2 moving around us. We cannot wait 8 to 10 years to
3 update our standards because of, what some people
4 think are, "more pressing issues."

5 All academics are incredibly important,
6 but no one has ever died because they were a grade
7 level behind in a "traditional academic" subject.
8 Preventing 12-year-old moms is just as important
9 as the newest math or reading initiative.

10 Our kids aren't getting arrested over-
11 dosing, or being infected with STI's because they
12 are two grades levels below in reading; we are
13 allowing them to self-destruct because we are not
14 setting them up with all of the tools they need to
15 be successful and live healthy lives.

16 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Hunt.

17 MS. HUNT: Thank you.

18 MR. JACOBSON: I appreciate it.

19 MR. SANCHEZ: Good evening, members of
20 the State Board of Education. I'm Executive
21 Director of From Within Mentorship Program, a
22 community-based organization that provides mentors

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1 to support to youths, ages 9 to 18. I'm also an
2 educator and taught 2nd and 3rd grades at a DC
3 Public Charter School.

4 I was also involved as a community
5 stakeholder in reviewing and providing feedback on
6 the current draft of the standards. I'm here
7 today as an educator, a mentor, and a mental
8 health advocate to encourage the State Board of
9 Education to move forward with the approval and
10 passage of the revised DC Health Education
11 Standards.

12 There are three main reasons why I
13 support the quick passage and implementation of
14 these new standards.

15 Elementary school kids in public school
16 are not getting the health education they
17 desperately need. As an educator, there are are
18 many passionate and dedicated educators that use
19 their own money to buy deodorant, tooth brushes,
20 sanitary wipes to ensure that our youth, our
21 children are comfortable and are clean and are
22 ready to learn because these are things that are

1 not taught at home or enforced in the home.

2 Implementing the revised health
3 education standards will provide children with a
4 greater sense of responsibility when it comes to
5 their personal hygiene and allow them to have a
6 better understanding of what good personal hygiene
7 looks like and how to achieve it, even if it is
8 not something that is taught and reinforced in the
9 home, which is common for most of our youth.

10 Students are consistently sent to school
11 sick and getting in contact with parents for pick
12 up proves to be nearly impossible. Children
13 should know how to identify and protect themselves
14 from illness through understanding how these can
15 be transmitted.

16 Children as young as 10 are receiving
17 information about sex and relationships from their
18 peers and misinformed relatives. They need to
19 receive as much accurate information as possible
20 and understand what healthy relationships look
21 like.

22 Currently, health education is briefly

1 covered in schools for middle school students and
2 mainly covers the topic of physical development.
3 Nevertheless, the need for attention to be given
4 to topics such as mental wellbeing, hygiene, and
5 drug and alcohol prevention are critical for the
6 children in the District of Columbia because these
7 are the realities that our children struggle with
8 daily. If these continue to go unattended, the
9 result will be devastating.

10 These standards provide critical
11 information, skills building, and guidance on
12 mental health, violence, anger management.
13 Students are being suspended from school due to
14 emotional outbursts and violence that stem from
15 their lack of emotional intelligence and are not
16 taught how to understand and redirect these
17 feelings.

18 I've been working with a child that was
19 suspended over 30 times in a school year for
20 behavior issues. In working with him, I've found
21 that his behaviors are directly related to the
22 lack of understanding of his emotions concerning

1 the absence of his father and his anger due to his
2 life experiences. Implementing the revised
3 standards that provide them with insight into what
4 they are feeling would, without a doubt, make a
5 huge difference.

6 Students are unable to recognize if they
7 are experiencing depression or anxiety and these
8 conditions often go untreated. Unfortunately, in
9 most schools test prep and testing takes priority
10 over the children's mental wellbeing. We are
11 missing a key fact; children in survival mode
12 don't thrive.

13 By implementing the standards that
14 address these conditions and help children
15 recognize the problem and provide strategies for
16 dealing with the issues we would prevent further
17 damage and provide a safe space for children to
18 express these feeling so that they can have the
19 necessary attention and begin to thrive.

20 The new standards are written with
21 educators in mind. They are well organized, and
22 offer adequate detail for lesson planning. I also

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1 wanted to share with the school board some of the
2 needs that I've witnessed among elementary aged
3 children. I've worked with closely as a teacher
4 and a mentor. Our children live in environments
5 with substandard living conditions, and these
6 conditions have become normalized in their lives.

7 Our children live in environments where
8 violence and unhealthy relationships are
9 normalized. Our children live in environments
10 where substance abuse is not only normalized but
11 often praised. It is my firm belief that passing
12 and implementing the revised health education
13 standards will make the battle against all that is
14 plaguing our students much more intentional. It is
15 imperative that we take greater initiative in
16 exposing our children to healthy life styles and
17 debunking detrimental beliefs that turn into
18 unbreakable cycles of negativity.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much. Mr.
21 Royster.

22 MR. ROYSTER: Good evening, President

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1 Jacobson and members of the School Board. I'm
2 Irwin Royster, Director of the Youth Program
3 Center in Ward 7 of the District of Columbia.

4 I'm been working on the frontline with
5 youth for the past 20 years. I'm here today as
6 director, as a community leader and a youth
7 developer to support the development and passage
8 of the revised DC Health Education Standards and
9 to talk about the health needs of the youth I work
10 with.

11 I was one of the many community
12 stakeholder who had an opportunity to review and
13 have input in this impressive document. I
14 appreciate all of the time, trouble, and the
15 School Board has gone through in order to find,
16 convene, and engage community leaders and youth in
17 the process. And I believe that the quality and
18 responsiveness of this document is all the better
19 because of that engagement.

20 This document is a resource to all of
21 us:

22 youth, parents, teachers, and community-

1 based groups like mine, who are educating youth
2 outside of the school. It is a checklist for what
3 to include in our curricula.

4 More importantly, I support these
5 standards because youth lives and their wellbeing
6 depend on high quality, engaging health education
7 that speaks to many issues they are dealing with.

8 We've heard them all before: mental
9 health, conflict, poverty, violence, navigating
10 gangs, dealing with stress, food deserts, and
11 anger. We don't have that now.

12 The 2006 DC Health Education Standards
13 do not include many of these issues and skills and
14 they do not -- and they're not organized in the
15 way that youth and practitioners can really use
16 them. The revised standards include a much
17 broader range of information, critical issues and
18 skills that youth need to maintain their own
19 bodies and health to build and navigate
20 relationships and to make good decisions.

21 As part of my testimony, I would like to
22 share some of the struggles I witnessed with my

1 own youth. Just three weeks ago, a family that I
2 work with son was shot 30 times. Can you imagine
3 what that did to the immediate family?

4 But not just to the family, the
5 community, to the friends, to the many members
6 that it touched. When we look at our statistics,
7 30 percent of middle schools students and 11
8 percent of high school students report being
9 bullied on school property during the past 12
10 months.

11 Twelve percent of middle school students
12 and 8 percent of high school students were
13 electronically bullied during the past 12 months.
14 One question I have when I look at the family and
15 their friends that I deal with, did they receive
16 any type of mental health counseling in order to
17 decompress or even in order to just understand
18 what happened to that young person.

19 Think about the causes or think about
20 the emotions. Think about the stress that the
21 family and the community was put through in order
22 just to deal with that murder. When we look at

1 high schools, 20 percent of our high schools have
2 carried a weapon, one or more times in the past 20
3 days. Forty percent of our high school students
4 were involved in a physical fight one or more
5 times in the past 12 months.

6 Let's talk about mental health for a
7 moment. Only one pediatric psychiatry specialist
8 east of the Anacostia River, yet Ward 7 and 8
9 contain 39 percent of the city's children. Ward 8
10 has only eight school-based providers, one
11 specialist for 20,000 children under 18, while
12 Ward 3 has two providers for 10,000 under 18. At
13 least half of DC's children covered by Medicaid do
14 not get the mental health treatment they need.

15 Eighty-eight percent enrolled in
16 Medicaid managed care organizations did not
17 receive the mental health they needed in 201. The
18 average wait time for an outpatient appointment is
19 10 weeks. Stress; the youth I work with are under
20 incredible stress. Relentless stress. Again,
21 murders tend to happen east of the river on a
22 daily basis. Who is there to help navigate the

1 kids to the mental health services that they need?

2 They medicate themselves through drugs,
3 unprotected sex, and other risky behaviors. Let's
4 not forget poverty. According to the latest kid
5 count report, 39,822 youth ages 12 to 18 and a
6 significant percentage lack the resources to
7 thrive. Fifty-five percent of children live in
8 single parent families. Thirty- nine percent of
9 the youth live with parents who lack secure
10 employment. Forty-two percent of youth live in
11 households with a high house cost burden, and 31
12 percent of the children live in areas of
13 concentrated poverty.

14 Nutrition and food deserts. According
15 to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 12 percent
16 of DC households experience food insecurity, which
17 means limited access to nutritionally adequate and
18 safe food. A 2012 GALA poll found that 15 percent
19 of respondents in DC, experienced food hardship.
20 Of the city's 43 full service grocery stores, only
21 two are located in Ward 4, four in Ward 7, and
22 three in Ward 8.

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1 The wellbeing of our youth is all of our
2 responsibility, the kinds of problems youth are
3 facing. DC Public Charter Schools, Child and
4 Family Services, Department of Health; however,
5 the best chance we have at reaching the most youth
6 is through public education. We need that.

7 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Royster.
8 Ms. Gold-Moritz.

9 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: Good evening President
10 Jacobson and members and Superintendent Kang.
11 Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I'm
12 Nadia Gold-Moritz. I'm the Executive Director of
13 the Young Women's Project (YWP), a DC-based
14 organization that trains youth leaders and puts
15 them to work, improving policies. You've met some
16 of them tonight. I'm also a DCPS parent of two
17 elementary school children and a proud member of
18 the Health Education Standards working group.

19 My testimony tonight is going to focus
20 on a couple of things. One is to provide a quick
21 glance of some of the youth needs, although,
22 you've already heard plenty about that. I'm going

1 to talk a little bit about the standards
2 development process so far. We have a working
3 draft. We're not done yet. We have a lot of work
4 to go, but, you know, we've been working for a
5 year and I'm going to hit some of those
6 highlights.

7 So I think one thing I want to mention
8 right off the bat is that we know the health
9 standards are not going to solve every health
10 problem that you've heard about tonight, and
11 you've heard about many of them, but they will
12 create a foundation, a foundation where youth can
13 learn knowledge. Not just knowledge but skills
14 and practice.

15 We don't want to put the full burden on
16 the public education system, but where else our
17 youth, every day, for seven hours a day, for 14
18 years in the public health education system. So
19 there is a really significant opportunity, and
20 also a significant burden to try to use this to
21 take on some of the issues that you heard today.

22 You have heard a lot about youth

1 problems. The only thing that I -- and my
2 testimony includes a lot of statistics. It's
3 statistics that OSSE has collected and they've
4 done an amazing job through the YOBS analysis of
5 documenting in excruciating detail the problems
6 that young people are having. We all know the
7 statistics and today, you know, you've heard of
8 some of those stories firsthand, which are
9 heartbreaking.

10 I think the thing we all need to
11 remember, which I think sometimes we forget, Jack,
12 you mentioned this is your intro -- sorry.
13 President Jacobson. I apologize. -- is that
14 we're an urban school district. We have 41,000
15 public school students who are considered "at
16 risk," which means they are homeless, they are in
17 foster care, or their families are on public
18 assistance.

19 They are living in very stressful
20 conditions, you know, all of the things that you
21 heard today. It is our responsibility to shape
22 our health standards in response to these young

1 people. They are the ones that need the education
2 that are skills building. They're the ones whose
3 parents are very stretched and who don't have time
4 to cover 400 health education objectives and
5 standards at home.

6 I mean, I have two little ones. You
7 know, I have a very resourced family and it's hard
8 to cover everything with them. So I think parents
9 are relying on the school to really cover that. I
10 think -- let's see.

11 So the other thing I want to talk about
12 quickly in my last two minutes is a little bit
13 about the standards process. I think, as
14 President Jacobson started about a year ago, WYP
15 came into that process because we were really
16 pretty desperate to deal with some of the health
17 issues that our young people were dealing with. I
18 think we were, you know, the School Board
19 immediately put together an extremely diverse
20 working group.

21 And I think in terms of best practices,
22 I provided quite a lot of detail in my testimony

1 which I'm not going to go into. We followed every
2 best practice. I think we went beyond the best
3 practices. I think the two hallmarks of this
4 process is we were guided by two goals; one is we
5 wanted the standards -- you know, if we revise the
6 standards, eventually we decided that need to
7 happen, we wanted them to reflect the realities of
8 youth. There were youth at the table from Day 1.

9 One of the roles of the Young Women's
10 Project is we got to convene the youth helping
11 group and you've heard from some of those youth
12 today. Every step of the way, they were there
13 giving input, doing research, you know, surveying
14 their peers and having that input into the
15 standards. It kept the adults honest. As you all
16 know, you know, it's rare that there are youth in
17 the room with adults developing policy.

18 So we checked that -- well, we added
19 that box and we checked it. Also, it was very
20 important to design standards that were accessible
21 to teachers. I think one of the challenges of the
22 existing standards and many of the educators -- if

1 you're an educator and you try to use them to put
2 together a lesson plan, it is a challenge, the way
3 that they're organized. So I think that was also a
4 second goal to have teachers involved in that
5 process so that the eventual outcome was friendly
6 to teachers and also implementation was smooth.

7 So there are lots of other details.
8 Those were the two main goals of the process. I
9 think I also included some notes in here about
10 documents we reviewed, about some of the
11 comparison with the current OSSE standards and the
12 revised ones. This is in no way a comprehensive
13 document. You'll have more documents that are
14 more comprehensive, but at least it's a snapshot
15 and hopefully makes the case about how important
16 this project is, how grateful we are to all of you
17 for taking it on because it's daunting, and
18 especially President Jacobson for your leadership.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much. I
20 want to thank all of you for coming here this
21 evening. If you haven't already, make sure that
22 your testimony over there, but we're going to ask

1 you to stay while we do a round of questions from
2 Board members.

3 Board members will have five minutes
4 each. I'm actually going to take the first shot
5 at it. I don't normally do this, but this has
6 been a very important issue to me since I joined
7 the Board, and that's why I took leadership on
8 this last year.

9 So obviously a draft exists. I'm going
10 to call it a discussion draft because that's what
11 it's for, it's for discussion purposes. So what's
12 this based on?

13 What are some of the sources and
14 literature that informed the creation of this
15 draft?

16 MS. GOLD-MORITIZ: Yeah. And we do have
17 them in my testimony, but we, of course, started
18 with the existing OSSE 2007 standards. And 90
19 percent or a significant majority is in these
20 standards. So we started with the existing
21 standards. We looked at the national standards.
22 We looked at 35 state level standards and, as you

1 all know, the national standards have not been
2 revised in quite a bit, but many of the states,
3 most states have started to revise theirs. So
4 there are a lot of great examples out there.

5 We also looked at the YRBS data, you
6 know, the Department of Health data. So we based
7 it on data. We had based it on what had been done
8 previously and all that hard work and then also
9 what was going on in the states.

10 MR. JACOBSON: Great. That's helpful.
11 Ms. Hunt, I wonder if, from a teacher's
12 perspective, are the standards, as they currently
13 exist, as you're using them, are they easily
14 usable for you, as a teacher, to create lesson
15 plans to teach your students?

16 MS. HUNT: They are extremely surface
17 level. So if I was to actually just to the
18 standard, I would be a pretty poor teacher.

19 MR. JACOBSON: What does that mean?

20 MS. HUNT: So for example, one of the
21 standards, it might be kindergarten identifying
22 different body parts. And if I was getting

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1 observed for my own --

2 MR. JACOBSON: Impact statement.

3 MS. HUNT: Yeah, my own assessment, that
4 would be a really poor score, let's say. It's not
5 great teaching.

6 MR. JACOBSON: Gotcha. You've been
7 teaching for a couple of years?

8 MS. HUNT: Yes.

9 MR. JACOBSON: So if we have new
10 standards, doesn't that mean you need new lesson
11 plans?

12 Doesn't that mean a lot more work for
13 you?

14 MS. HUNT: I reflect and revise every
15 single year. I've never used the same lesson
16 plans twice. So I think that's the best practice
17 across the board, no matter what your job is.

18 MR. JACOBSON: And from a teacher's
19 perspective, were teachers consulted in the
20 creation of this discussion draft?

21 MS. HUNT: I was not present for it, but
22 there were teachers, some of my peers sat it.

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1 MR. JACOBSON: Ms. Gold-Moritz, can you
2 speak to that real briefly?

3 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: We had lots of
4 teachers. Yeah, we had lots of everybody. We had
5 the traditional researchers, experts, education
6 professionals, but we also had community
7 stakeholders. We had, you know, I don't even know
8 what the count is, more than probably 25 teachers
9 who were involved at different points in the
10 drafting and the structuring of it. We also had a
11 lot of youth.

12 MR. JACOBSON: How many teachers said
13 that this wasn't a good idea?

14 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: How many?

15 MR. JACOBSON: Yeah.

16 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: I don't even --

17 MR. JACOBSON: How many said it wasn't a
18 good idea to do this?

19 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: Oh. That it wasn't a
20 good idea to revise the standards?

21 MR. JACOBSON: Yeah.

22 MS. GOLD-MORORITZ: None.

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1 MR. JACOBSON: Okay.

2 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: Yeah. I think the
3 folks who were involved in this process, and part
4 of the reason they came out -- and we've had an
5 outpouring of folks who've wanted to get involved
6 in this process, but they felt very strongly that
7 they needed a tool and it needed to be revised.

8 MR. JACOBSON: Wonderful. Turning to
9 the gentlemen, bullying. I'm a gay man. LGBTQ
10 bullying is a huge issue. Certainly, a lot of
11 demographics, bullying is a big issue. Schools
12 are already required to have bullying prevention
13 policies. Why isn't that enough?

14 MR. SANCHEZ: I can say that it's not
15 enough because every school, whether they have
16 these policies that they're supposed to be
17 implementing these lessons, they don't do it. They
18 don't have time. They say they don't have time.
19 They put priority on test taking and test
20 prepping.

21 There's tons of bullying going. I mean,
22 bullying, across the board, across the nation, is

1 an issue, but working in an urban school in the
2 city, you see that there is no intentionality on
3 how we address the issue and I think what happens
4 is those policies, those anti-bullying techniques,
5 they're given to one person, the disciplinary of
6 the school and the disciplinary get it and you get
7 a kid who just got into a fight or because he said
8 something and the goes up to that person and that
9 person says you're not supposed to do that. What
10 did we tell you about character first? What's
11 character first? Don't say this. And then they
12 say don't say this, and then they get suspended.
13 And he gets at home and when they come back they
14 do the same thing.

15 There is not a class dedicated to
16 telling the child why they're reacting the way
17 they're reacting, and that's the issue. They
18 don't understand.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you.

20 MR. SANCHEZ: They're mimicking what
21 they see at home. Nobody is telling them that
22 this is not appropriate and that this is why

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1 you're reacting that way and this is the way you
2 should react and this is why. We have to be
3 intentional about it and that's what we're
4 missing, intentionality.

5 MR. JACOBSON: And these standards will
6 help get us there?

7 MR. SANCHEZ: Correct.

8 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. I'm over
9 time. I'm going to ask Board members if they have
10 questions. Ms. Wilson-Phelan from Ward 1.

11 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Thank you to all the
12 panelists. It's been helpful to hear your
13 testimony. I want to hear what you think is not
14 in the revised version of the Standards that
15 should be there.

16 MR. GOLD-MORITZ: That should be there
17 that got cut out in an understandable because
18 everything couldn't fit.

19 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: I just want you to
20 interpret the question.

21 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: I mean, the only thing
22 I would say about it is that there is so much

1 discussion and negotiation with the Standards and
2 we cut quite a lot. I mean, what we tried to do
3 was to make sure that the meaning and the main
4 points of everything were incorporated into the
5 other stuff, but there was quite a lot that was
6 cut.

7 You guys want to say what you think is
8 missing?

9 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Your testimony was
10 interesting because to your point, Nadia -- I'm
11 sorry, I'm forgetting your last name.

12 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: Gold-Moritz.

13 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Ms. Gold-Moritz.
14 The Standards aren't going to actually solve what
15 you're talking about. A lot of what you're
16 talking about is how we structure class time, the
17 priority we're placing on mental health challenges
18 that students face, trauma-based education,
19 informed education, et cetera, et cetera.

20 I understand they're a stepping-stone,
21 but I do wonder if you know of any precedent of
22 any other state entity that has decided to

1 prioritize a certain section of standards over
2 others and actually indicate the proportionality
3 of time that really should be spent on one section
4 or another.

5 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: I don't know the
6 answer to that, but it's a really great question
7 and I think it's a good one to find out. So next
8 time I'll get an answer to you.

9 I don't know. The one thing that I
10 think that is important to keep in mind is that
11 right now the Healthy Schools Act is not being
12 implemented. That mandates 75 minutes per week of
13 health education for elementary school and junior
14 high, and that's an incredible tool to increase
15 the amount of health education that we can get.

16 So the Standards are a foundation, but
17 then there are other tools, if we followed through
18 on them, would also support it.

19 MR. SANCHEZ: I would just like to say
20 that if others have it, why not us be
21 trendsetters? Because there is a great need and
22 I'm not willing to compare. I think we need it.

1 Other states need it, but we're here fighting for
2 it because our kids need it and it's visible for
3 us.

4 It's visible for others and if they
5 don't want to do it, that's fine. Maybe they'll
6 take after us, but we need it.

7 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: I would ask then,
8 Ms. Hunt, as a former teacher myself, Standards
9 are a very tremendous flexibility for a teacher,
10 especially when there probably what some of the
11 standards that are here. And so you can actually
12 create a curriculum and lesson plans that you
13 think are most appropriate for the children you're
14 addressing.

15 So in your opinion, that idea of say,
16 for the District of Columbia, we believe these are
17 the most important standards and creating some
18 kind of hierarchy of standards, given the number
19 of standards that are here and understanding that
20 you also had to cut several, what is your opinion
21 of how that either limits or enhances your ability
22 to address the needs of your students?

1 MS. HUNT: I'm not sure I totally
2 understand your question.

3 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: If the State Board
4 of Education were to be a pioneer and address the
5 hierarchy of standards that we actually think
6 should be taught, to actually get to the root of
7 some of the challenges such as socio-emotional
8 development, which is part of the Standards,
9 therefore, it would tell you as a teacher you need
10 to focus on this piece of the Standards, even more
11 than all of the other ones. Maybe spent two
12 months on that instead of two weeks, which if you
13 had to hit all of the standards, you might only
14 get two weeks to do a particular lesson.

15 MS. HUNT: So it sounds like what you're
16 saying there would be more micro-management, I
17 guess. And that's the way I'm thinking. Like,
18 you would be told this is what's the most
19 important so you should spend X amount of time on
20 it, giving us less flexibility for what we think.

21 So I think that's good and bad. I think
22 we, because DC is such a diverse place, we can't

1 prescribe for every single school. All schools
2 need this unit for six weeks because that's what
3 we think. Like, maybe this Ward needs it for six
4 weeks and this Ward needs just like a brush up on
5 it.

6 As a teacher, I feel like you have that
7 flexibility anyways, and at the end of the day, we
8 don't even have the time to do what you're saying.
9 And I know you guys don't necessarily control
10 that, but kind of like you were saying, I mean,
11 this is all null and void if we don't have the
12 time to teach it.

13 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Thank you.

14 MR. JACOBSON: Ms. Lord, our at-large
15 member.

16 MS. LORD: Thank you very much for this
17 incredibly interesting, insightful, and passion-
18 inspiring conversation. I'm going to start by
19 picking on the Jefferson Academy teacher. Just so
20 I'm clear, do you teach a standalone health
21 curriculum as a health teacher or are you
22 incorporating health into your lessons?

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1 MS. HUNT: Good question. So I teach
2 all my students for half of the year and we do
3 three days a week of physical education and then
4 two days a week of health.

5 MS. LORD: So new students -- so
6 Jefferson Academy students are getting,
7 essentially, a full panoply of health and physical
8 education?

9 MS. HUNT: For half the year.

10 MS. LORD: Gotcha. And then I cannot go
11 without remarking, I want to make sure I really
12 heard this right, but essentially, our current
13 standards for health do not include how human
14 beings procreate. They do not include what we
15 used to call the facts of life.

16 MS. HUNT: Yes. So if you look, they
17 start in fourth grade. And I believe they are
18 under human sexuality or sexual reproduction, they
19 start by saying, you know, what a mother puts in
20 her body affects her baby. That kind of thing.
21 And then it goes to STI's and how to protect
22 yourself from STI, and then it takes off from

1 there.

2 So there's this whole middle piece that
3 we're kind of missing and I think it's very easy --

4 MS. LORD: To say the least --

5 MS. HUNT: Yeah. I think it's very easy
6 for a lot of teachers. I mean, even health
7 teachers, some of the health teachers I know can
8 be a little bit uncomfortable teaching that
9 content matter. And so when it's not in there,
10 they're going to say oops, maybe I don't need to
11 do that. And a lot of administrators will use
12 that to kind of pushback and say well, I don't
13 really see it in there, so we're not going to
14 teach it at our school.

15 MS. LORD: I'd also like to then open it
16 up for the whole panel. We heard some incredibly
17 moving testimony, most especially from our rising
18 fifth grade who wants to go Yale University. I'm
19 from the rival school, so you know, look a little
20 north. But how do we use these standards to not
21 only empower students with self-advocacy how to
22 deal with and avoid danger and how to control

1 anger? But to also educate the families, the
2 communities, and the other teachers in the
3 building that this is an essential part of
4 learning, not just teaching, not just school.

5 And some of the language of the
6 Standards, I think may work against that. If
7 you're asked to describe and identify. That's a
8 very passive, kind of book learning thing. What
9 I've heard all the panelists talk about is a very
10 active, a very proactive thing. You know,
11 personal hygiene, which is simple basic stuff that
12 goes a long way in the workforce. A long way in
13 school, for that matter, but that is somehow left
14 up in the air as to how it would get taught.

15 So help me figure out how we move from a
16 discussion of Standards to inculcating this into
17 the culture of our communities and our schools
18 because just having the Standards doesn't get the
19 learning necessary.

20 MR. ROYSTER: I would love to comment on
21 that. You know, what you just said, how do we get
22 the standards of learning in the community and the

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1 schools? And is there a way to include the
2 community in part of the Standards, when we're
3 rolling out the Standards. True, we are
4 developing the standards and we are including the
5 community and community stakeholders, but what
6 about including the community and some effort?

7 So let me go back and say some effort
8 has been made to include the community, but how
9 can we really make that happen? And I look at
10 PTAs, and I look at the attendance of PTAs around
11 the city and sometimes that's not an effective
12 avenue. And I wonder and sit down, what is the
13 right way to do that? And I think there is some
14 of the answer because just like my colleague right
15 here said, kids go home to a different environment
16 to what's in school.

17 It seems like school facilitates the
18 learning, but the learning is kind of completed or
19 the oven is there so we can really bake it and put
20 it together at home, and a lot of times that
21 doesn't happen. So the burden of the school is to
22 do all of that.

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1 MR. JACOBSON: The red light is on.

2 MS. LORD: The red light is on.

3 MR. JACOBSON: I apologize, but we may
4 have one more short round for a final follow-up
5 question.

6 Ms. Anderson from Ward 4.

7 MS. ANDERSON: I'm going to give you the
8 ability to continue your comment because that's
9 basically where I was going with this because it
10 sounds to me as if education itself, we know is
11 not going to suffice in this case, in terms of
12 really changing behaviors, in terms of developing
13 the kinds of behaviors that we want to see,
14 health-related behaviors that we want to see. So
15 I'm going to let you continue what you were saying
16 because my question was basically that same thing,
17 what else is needed?

18 How deep does this need to go and it
19 sounds to me as if you're making a very strong
20 case for community support of services within the
21 schools and the schools are actually taking on
22 some of those additional tasks that maybe social

1 services might otherwise provide, or in many
2 cases, do not provide because we don't increase
3 them. Go ahead.

4 MR. ROYSTER: And you're right. I think
5 we are depending on the teachers to do a whole lot
6 and we're stretching them and we can't stretch
7 them anymore. Just like we have school- based
8 health centers in schools -- and that's a valuable
9 point, how about a social services piece inside of
10 schools.

11 So early in my testimony, I talked about
12 a family that had a son that was shot 30 times.
13 The mother is fed up now. So what she's doing is
14 she's taking her community by storm. She's trying
15 to go around to the residents in that community
16 and advocate that we need to all get along.

17 This is a community and this is one
18 thing we have to face. And the community I'm
19 talking about is the Benning Terrace Community.
20 They are at odds with other communities. For what
21 reason, we don't know, but this community does not
22 like this community, so they can't go here. They

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1 can't go there. It impedes the learning process.
2 Kids have to rush home from school before another
3 school gets out from a rivaling neighborhood. It
4 seems like we're not doing enough to solve those
5 issues, but now parents want to get involved. We
6 have a parent that wants to get involved. I think
7 that's where the conversation may start.

8 She's a resident on the property and
9 maybe she has a better relationship with the other
10 parents. The violence is one piece. I talked
11 about violence here, but then we can go ahead to
12 reproductive health. We can go ahead and talk
13 about bullying because one of your points,
14 bullying comes from the LGBTQ communities.
15 Sometimes if we can just dissect that word
16 masculinity and see what it means and then we can
17 breakdown the bullying. And that's something
18 we're doing in the Benning Terrace Community,
19 trying to just understand what it really means and
20 maybe we wouldn't be bullying folks.

21 But all in all, what I'm trying to say
22 is communities need to be in schools and schools

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1 kind of need to be a part of the community, and I
2 think that's a broader solution.

3 MS. HUNT: May I add two words to that?

4 MR. JACOBSON: Yes.

5 MS. HUNT: So I've already been outed as
6 a Jefferson teacher. I have a counterpart of my
7 school, who is fabulous, and we like to think that
8 we're really good at our jobs. We had a
9 conversation recently where we have two very
10 highly competent teachers. We have an
11 administrator who supports us and we really push
12 to make sure everyone is getting PE and health
13 every year, and she granted us that this year.
14 It's still not quite where it needs to be, but
15 we're getting there. And we're still not making
16 an impact at all.

17 So there's a missing link because there
18 are, you know, community-based health centers and
19 there are Planned Parenthood centers and there's
20 this, that, and the other thing, but it's not
21 working, so I think starting with the Standards,
22 starting to teach kids to advocate for themselves

1 is a huge part so that they can go into the
2 community and make change because as a small white
3 woman from Massachusetts that teaches at an all
4 black middle school is southwest, I mean, I'm not
5 the person to go into the community. I mean, I
6 love everyone and they love me, but do I have the
7 relationships with everyone as they would growing
8 up there? Of course not. So I think we need to
9 put power or empower our students and their
10 families to go into the community and make this
11 change. And it's really refreshing to hear that
12 that's happening.

13 MS. ANDERSON: And I would also think
14 that as a Board -- well, I know for myself, I
15 won't speak for the Board -- I think it's very
16 important that we advocate and link our policies
17 to programs that would be supportive of this
18 instead of just putting policies out there. I
19 think this kind of falls into a vacuum. So I
20 really think that, on my behalf, I'd like to
21 really let you know that that's what I intend to
22 do, in terms of this policy adjustment. That we

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1 put some teeth behind it and that I would advocate
2 for additional supports to make that policy
3 something more meaningful.

4 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: Can I just add one
5 quick thing to that? And thank you so much for
6 those questions. This draft of the Standards has
7 been designed very much with that in mind as a
8 tool for the community, with community involvement
9 and as an accessible tool. One of the things we
10 do at YWP is we train these educators and we have
11 100 young people on the ground in 14 schools. We
12 use the Standards. We will use these standards to
13 train them and so that they are teaching, you
14 know, from the peer level, the same things that
15 are being reinforced in the classroom. So I think
16 that's the intention.

17 MR. JACOBSON: Apologies, but we need to
18 get to Ms. Wattenberg from Ward 3.

19 MS. WATTENBERG: I'll be very quick.
20 The comment I was going to make is very similar in
21 the end to what other people talked about. Let me
22 just frame it a little differently. When you all

1 -- I think all of you really talked about the
2 health standards. You really talked about how
3 they were going to change these huge issues in our
4 school and I just think, wow, that is quite a
5 heavy lift for a set of teaching standards.

6 I guess what I want to say is sort of
7 the flip of what we've talking about, which is
8 clearly, the agenda of what needs to happen in the
9 schools is huge. I think if we try to sell these
10 standards as being the magic bullet that is going
11 to provide that, we're creating a lot of problems
12 for ourselves. And I also think -- and you all
13 have probably thought about this -- is sort of
14 where the dividing line is between teachers
15 teaching kind of the standards and the content in
16 the curriculum, but not trying to be therapists
17 for which they're not trained for.

18 And as you said, we stretch our teachers
19 in all kinds of different ways. That's a little
20 scary, I think. I don't think we want teachers to
21 do that and it shouldn't become an excuse for not
22 providing the kind of services that need to be in

1 the school. So you don't need to comment on them,
2 I just wanted to offer a flip side to what's been
3 talked about.

4 MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Contreras, our
5 student representative.

6 MR. CONTRERAS: Thank you. Thank you so
7 much for all of you coming here to talk about
8 these issues. They have a lot of importance to
9 the student communities, especially thanks to all
10 the students who came here to talk. Not a lot of
11 students get involved to this degree in these
12 kinds of issues, so I think that's really
13 admirable.

14 One of the things that was brought up
15 was having sort of a regimentation of which issues
16 should take precedence over other issues. Sort of
17 the inverse of that, it seems like there's a lot
18 of overlap between different issues, especially
19 with regards to how bullying and sexual identity
20 and violence are related to mental health.

21 How do the Standards address how much
22 these issues have in common? You can't really

1 teach it in units because everything is all
2 related. Thank you.

3 MS. HUNT: I think that's a really good
4 point that relates to how you prioritize the
5 Standards because there are so many; there are
6 more than 400. I think there is a significant
7 overlap in terms of skills, especially
8 communication, problem-solving, goal setting. They
9 are repeated in all of the issue content areas.
10 Relationship building is another one. You know,
11 it's much more of a spectrum. I think what our
12 hope is, is that teachers will not need to teach
13 every single notch on the spectrum because of the
14 overlap and that they'll be able to focus on the
15 areas that are most relevant to their class.

16 MR. JACOBSON: Do any Board members have
17 additional questions? Ms. Lord, did you want to
18 ask your follow-up very briefly?

19 MS. LORD: Thank you. Just one quick
20 follow-up. Are there potential synergies with,
21 for example, the new science standards and health
22 and physical education?

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1 Similarly, are there opportunities or
2 should this Board be considering, since we're a
3 policymaking Board, ways of acknowledging the
4 education that community groups are giving,
5 perhaps, in partnerships with schools, to validate
6 the education that's going on there.

7 I think to my Ward 3's colleague's
8 point, we are stretching teachers a little thin.
9 They are not mental health experts, although, I'm
10 sure it probably feels like that. So I'm looking
11 for synergies and I'm keenly aware that we had
12 several adult learners whose education was
13 interrupted by pregnancy, but we have a system
14 that sort of says well, that's too bad for you.

15 So I'd like to rethink like how we can
16 make education a 24/7 adventure through the health
17 standards.

18 MS. GOLD-MORITZ: It's a very big
19 question. It's a great point. And I think we
20 would love to take that up in the next hearing
21 when we talk about that because I think that it
22 something that we've mindful of through this

1 process and I think you're absolutely right; we
2 need to develop those intersections in order to
3 cover everything.

4 MS. HUNT: I think the only downside to
5 that is health is constantly pushed to the side.
6 And if now we're saying oh, the science teacher is
7 going to integrate health -- maybe. Maybe not.
8 Then that health education gets watered down and
9 then the health teacher is obsolete.

10 So I think it's great cross-curriculum
11 work is amazing. It needs to be done and that's
12 how kids learn, but I think putting policy in
13 place where we're saying health is going to be
14 incorporated into science or health is going to be
15 incorporated into whatever, like, humanities. Like
16 community health or something. I worry that the
17 integrity of our content would be lost.

18 MS. LORD: I see your point. I mean, it
19 actually was suggested by your comment about kids
20 and technology.

21 MR. JACOBSON: I want to thank all of
22 our panelists. If you have testimony, please

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1 leave it. If you have it electronically, email it
2 to us so that we have it for our records and can
3 refer to it. We're going to put it up on website
4 so that we have it available for future reference.
5 I also want to say that you're completely right.
6 We can be trendsetters in this city. We can
7 really work on diving deep in a lot of these
8 skills regarding mental health, emotional health,
9 gun violence, safety, same sex relationships and
10 intercourse, issues related to our transgender
11 population, healthy relationships in general. We
12 can be a national leader on this.

13 We have the mental capacity here with
14 all of the national organizations and many
15 international organizations here that have had
16 input on the content here. It's not everything,
17 but it's a good start and we can be leaders. So
18 let's. Thank you all.

19 MS. HUNT: Thank you.

20 GED DIPLOMA PANEL

21 MR. JACOBSON: Now, let's move to the
22 next item on the agenda, the GED Diploma Panel

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1 discussion. GED and NEDP.

2 For the first panel, I'd like to invite
3 up Leicester Johnson, CEO, Academy of Hope, Adult
4 Public Charter School.

5 Arturo Martinez, Principal at Next Step
6 Public Charter School, and Karen Rivas, Vice-
7 Principal at Carlos Rosario International Public
8 Charter School. My understanding is Dr. Madye
9 Henson is not able to be here tonight.

10 So with that, I'll start the panel
11 discussion. Ms. Wattenberg has been leading this,
12 so I'm actually going to ask her to say a couple
13 of words first.

14 MS. WATTENBERG: All right. Well, lucky
15 for everybody it's late and I'm going to truncate
16 my comments a lot, but I do want to say something
17 about how we got here and what our plan is.

18 When I was first elected to the Board in
19 November, I came just like an apprentice to the, I
20 think with Laura, I think it was the December
21 meeting, and the School Board had been presented
22 with a big package of proposals around a state

1 Superintendent's Diploma. And the Board, at that
2 time, made a decision that it was unable to deal
3 with that because there had not been discussion.
4 They themselves were not familiar with the issue
5 and didn't feel as though the city itself had had
6 that discussion and so it was tabled.

7 And then this spring, we had a new
8 superintendent and a new mayor, and we were
9 presented with a different package, a much smaller
10 package of proposing a Superintendent's Diploma
11 first for Hospitality High, where the kids were in
12 danger of not being able to get a diploma at all
13 and a diploma for high school equivalency
14 certifications.

15 And the Board again said we need to move
16 very quickly on Hospitality High, but again, we
17 didn't feel like there had been yet been the
18 conversation that was necessary to what I think is
19 a pretty big piece of policy, which is to say,
20 citywide, that after all the work that's been done
21 by previous Boards to create high standards, to
22 create high school graduation requirements, kids

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1 were going to be able to choose, or adults, I
2 should say, in many cases, to get a GED instead.

3 This is very important. So we said when
4 we didn't vote for it at that time, and we talked
5 to the superintendent that we wanted to move
6 forward on this conversation and I visited Academy
7 of Hope, which was terrific; it was so interesting
8 for me. And since then, meanwhile, there's also
9 been a proposal from the City Council to deal with
10 this, and I've been in touch with the deputy mayor
11 of Education, who is also very interested in this
12 on behalf of the mayor.

13 So we are going to have what we need to
14 have, which is a full conversation about this. So
15 I want everybody to consider this as Act 1 of a
16 new play. I just want to say one other thing to
17 set this up, which is I come out of the policy
18 world. I'm also a parent. One of the things that
19 I bring to it is every policy has trade- offs, and
20 I feel like our obligation is to thoroughly
21 understand what the trade-offs are. To fully
22 understand the benefits of this policy to and to

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1 fully understand what, if any, side effects or
2 downsides there are. And so that's what we're
3 going to try to do as we move forward.

4 With that, with my truncated comments, I
5 think I'm just going to say I know we have a great
6 panel now from the schools themselves, from the
7 schools that prepare students for GEDs, and we're
8 going to hear about the ways in which students
9 there would greatly benefit from this and our city
10 would greatly benefit from their benefits, and I
11 look very forward to talking to you and hearing
12 from you and all of us talking to you and moving
13 forward on this conversation.

14 MR. JACOBSON: Great. We'll start our
15 discussion. We'll start with Ms. Johnson.

16 MS. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you. My
17 name is Leicester Johnson, I am the CEO of Academy
18 of Hope Adult Public Charter School. We've been
19 around for 30 years. We're located in Ward 5 and
20 Ward 8.

21 Our core work is really preparing adults
22 to take and pass their GED exam, and also the

1 National External Diploma Program. We also have a
2 college transition and preparation program for our
3 adults.

4 In addition to that, you know, digitally
5 literacy is a major part of basic literacy today,
6 and we also do comprehensive career guidance and
7 some work readiness to help adults transition into
8 the workforce. Just to say a little bit about
9 what's happening, nationally, there is a huge
10 change coming down the pike with the passage of
11 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, really
12 integrating the adult basic education with
13 workforce training that no longer can these two
14 groups operate in silos. That really, for adults
15 to be more efficient with their time, we need to
16 integrate these programs so that adults are
17 improving their academic skills but they're also
18 picking up those work skills that they need to go
19 directly into the workforce. That's not in my
20 testimony, but it was something that I thought was
21 important to know what's happening down the pipe.

22 You've heard from a number of adult

1 learners from Academy of Hope and I think one of
2 things that should, I hope, strike you is that
3 adult learners don't leave school to take the GED
4 because it's easy. It's just not why they leave.
5 And I know there's some researchers out there
6 who've talked about the risk of the GED, you know,
7 pushing students to take the GED because it's an
8 easier route.

9 When you talk to adult learners, even
10 the younger students, it is not about taking the
11 GED so that they can get out of school. There are
12 so many life circumstances that are pushing people
13 out of school. They leave because they need to
14 help their families and contribute to income. They
15 leave because of really difficult social
16 situations with their families. They are not
17 leaving to take the GED.

18 And if you ask many of them, and many of
19 the students that we had here, it was not I want
20 to take my GED because it's easier. And that was
21 even before things changed. So we've got a lot of
22 folks whose needs aren't being met in the current

1 system. We have a significant portion of our
2 students who have disabilities. About 30 percent
3 disclose that they have a disability, but we know
4 that number is much closer to about 50 percent
5 when we do our own testing and screening.

6 So needs aren't being met. Students who
7 leave school, you know, it's not because they
8 don't have the persistence or motivation, they're
9 needs just aren't being met and all of the other
10 things that are happening.

11 When an adult learner walks through an
12 Academy of Hope door and begin their educational
13 process, they have very complicated lives. They're
14 working. They're juggling a number of family
15 issues, employment, unstable housing, budget
16 constraints. There are many drivers for folks to
17 go ahead and get that high school diploma, and
18 it's not because they haven't wanted it. It's
19 because they've had to work to get income going
20 and they're finding a way to make this all work
21 for them.

22 We talked to some of our students. We

1 have a number of students, you know, we've been
2 working on arguments in some of our writing
3 classes. We had one student who said that she
4 actually wasn't in support of the State Diploma
5 because she wanted people to know that she took
6 the GED and that it meant that she worked her butt
7 off to get that. And so she was not so much in
8 support of it.

9 I have a couple of other things. There
10 have been questions about grit and persistence.
11 When you talk to our learners, I mean, if you've
12 ever interviewed or had a conversation with an
13 individual attending an adult education program
14 and the kinds of struggles that they face every
15 day, you know, the fact that they are able to get
16 up every morning and take the bus, sometimes two
17 or three buses to get to a class says a lot about
18 their determination and grit to make this happen.

19 In terms of how long it takes, with the
20 old GED exam, it took 18 to 24 months for a person
21 to pass, and that's starting at the adult basic
22 education level and that's below 7th grade, and

1 that was without having any learning difficulties.
2 When we look at the number of hours and we
3 translate that into seat time, we're talking about
4 200 hours of instruction to make that happen,
5 coming through a part-time program.

6 If you have special learning needs, when
7 we look at students with significant disabilities,
8 we're looking at 500 to some students and over
9 1,000 hours of instruction. So we are certainly
10 meeting seat time requirements for learners to
11 pass that GED.

12 The new GED, even for learners who are
13 coming in at higher levels, they are taking an
14 additional 70 to 100 hours of instruction to pass
15 that. Aside from the outside circumstances, the
16 test, the GED and the National External Diploma
17 went through a major transition. The content is
18 aligned with the Common Core. You've heard about
19 the Common Core State Standards. Students must
20 have stronger skills than at least 40 percent of
21 2013 high school graduates. So that's the norm
22 group for that.

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1 MR. JACOBSON: I'm going to ask you to
2 conclude your testimony, please.

3 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. The one last point
4 that I just want to make is that, you know, a high
5 school credential, what we're finding with our
6 graduates with this new GED is that they're much
7 better prepared to go onto postsecondary. The
8 first cohort of graduates, we were looking at
9 their performance. We're even considering
10 eliminating our bridge to college program because
11 of the work that we've had to do to revamp our
12 curriculum, it's preparing students absolutely to
13 move into postsecondary.

14 MR. JACOBSON: Thank so much. Mr.
15 Martinez.

16 MR. MARTINEZ: Good evening. Thank you
17 for being patient and instead of reading the
18 letter that you will get, because a lot of the
19 information that you have illustrated is actually
20 part of that, so instead of repeating information,
21 I think it's compelling to understand why students
22 seek a GED opportunity.

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1 Many of them leave school not because of
2 their own willing, it's because of circumstances
3 that happened to them that lead to an alternative.
4 And what that really say is that they are looking
5 for an opportunity that isn't already given in the
6 regular high schools. A lot of students don't
7 actually go to the regular high schools around
8 here in the District, or in Maryland or Virginia.
9 Many of them come from other states and from other
10 countries.

11 Students seek the opportunity to do one
12 thing and that's just to better themselves to help
13 others. When we get students to come to our
14 doors, no one is pressuring them to find the next
15 step for them. They somehow see ads; they talk to
16 people and they knock on door because they want a
17 second opportunity. They really want to make sure
18 that someone is willing to help them. They've
19 heard "no" so many times from other schools
20 because they're too old.

21 So there is a pretty good myth out there
22 that the GED is easy to go get and just skip high

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1 school and if you're 16 or 17, you'll just be done
2 early and then you'll go to college. That really
3 doesn't happen because kids are really interested
4 in staying in school with their friends. They are
5 really social beings and they want to stay in
6 their high schools and stay with their friends.

7 The ones that don't stay is because
8 something terrible happened to them, whether it's
9 bullying, pregnancy, rape, whatever. You name it.
10 They may be evicted from their homes. So they are
11 seeking for an alternative route.

12 I forgot your name, I'm sorry.

13 MS. JOHNSON: Leicester.

14 MR. MARTINEZ: As Ms. Leicester said,
15 they are basically willing and trying to do
16 everything in their power to succeed. What that
17 means is juggling a job, being a parent, and
18 continuing with their education. The ones that
19 complete this task, which is daunting -- and I can
20 say that because we administer the GED test, the
21 new sections of the test, four subjects, to our
22 staff and teachers and they have a hard time with

1 it. And they laugh and scratch their heads, but
2 they can't pass it. They can't pass it now
3 because they don't know the content or because
4 they are not cognitively able to pass it. They
5 don't pass it because it's been years since they
6 are out of school and they don't remember
7 formulas. They don't remember certain aspects of
8 U.S. government or how a bill becomes law.

9 So what the GED does is really revisit
10 all of the standards, all of the necessary aspects
11 of all the subjects, including biology, life
12 science, physical science, U.S. government, U.S.
13 history, geography, and then of course, the
14 reading and writing content, as well as math. And
15 the applied mathematics as well with problem
16 solving and computation.

17 So it isn't that a GED is, okay, let's
18 just go brush up and, you know, we'll be done in a
19 few months. A GED, nowadays, really means
20 relearning everything you already forgot and
21 spending a good time -- a good amount of time
22 basically applying yourself. And because it is so

1 hard and difficult and they have to really work at
2 it, they value it more than a regular high school
3 diploma, and especially because schools like our
4 are very supportive and provide a lot of help so
5 that when they finish, then they're able to apply
6 to a community college.

7 A lot the them actually dream of
8 applying to a four-year college, but many times
9 they come back to us saying that they didn't feel
10 valued because of their GED, as if the GED wasn't
11 worthy. As if the GED wasn't the equivalent as a
12 high school diploma, which, of course, we always
13 tell them that it is.

14 And now that it has changed and has
15 become more challenging, it is more equivalent.
16 And we don't send every single one of our students
17 to take the test unless they are actually GED
18 ready first. And if they are, then they go
19 downtown and take their test. That wasn't the
20 case before. There were many students who
21 repeated, failed, and kept trying.

22 So to wrap up, I want to say that we

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1 have very few students who are 16 and 17 enrolled
2 in our schools. We actually have more adults, 18
3 to 24 years of age, who are really looking to turn
4 their lives around, who are passionate about
5 education and helping their families and their
6 children. And they want an opportunity to say
7 I've graduated. I have made it and I'm going to
8 college. Thank you.

9 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you so much. And
10 then Ms. Rivas.

11 MS. RIVAS: Yes. Thank you, State Board
12 of Education for allowing me to testify here
13 today. My name is Karen Rivas, and I'm vice-
14 principal at Carlos Rosario International Public
15 Charter School. We have campuses in Ward 1 and
16 Ward 5.

17 I'm here to speak in favor of the
18 proposed rules for a competency-based graduation
19 requirement and the Superintendent's Diploma for a
20 GED and NEPD program completion. The mission of
21 the Carlos Rosario School is provide education
22 that prepares the adult immigrant population of

1 Washington, DC, to become invested productive
2 members of American Society.

3 We serve approximately 2,000 learners
4 every year, who are gaining their English language
5 proficiency, training for jobs and working for
6 their GED credential. In our GED program, we have
7 over 200 adult learners. While these adult
8 learners are very educated in the school of life,
9 they were forced to interrupt their formal
10 schooling as children, usually due to war or
11 poverty in their countries of origin.

12 They have set for themselves the goal of
13 earning a U.S. high school diploma in order to get
14 a better job, to enter postsecondary programs, and
15 to finish an education that was interrupted years
16 before. The adults in our GED classes often start
17 their studies with academic skills at an
18 elementary level and they work for years to earn
19 their GED certificate.

20 They come to graduation in their cap and
21 gown with their spouses and their children to
22 celebrate this accomplishment. Our graduates send

1 these pictures of themselves in these cap and
2 gowns to their relatives back home to really
3 celebrate this accomplishment of achieving the
4 American dream.

5 It's an unfortunate reality that many
6 employers hold a GED certificate in less regard
7 than a regular high school diploma and that GED
8 certificate holders end up earning less money than
9 high school diploma holders. The knowledge and
10 skills that the Carlos Rosario students gain is no
11 less valuable than the knowledge and skills earned
12 by other high school graduates. And as taxpayers,
13 it's important that they're paid their worth.
14 These are the reasons that we at the Carlos
15 Rosario School support the Superintendent's
16 Diploma for GED completion.

17 We believe that the GED, NEPD and other
18 options of demonstrating high school level
19 knowledge and skills are every bit as worthy of an
20 official diploma as a traditional high school
21 education. We urge the Board to support DC's
22 adult learners for whom a valid high school

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1 diploma is part of their American dream.

2 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you all for your
3 testimony. Board members who are interested,
4 we'll do five-minute rounds. Remember, we have
5 one panel after this, which is Dr. Antoinette
6 Mitchell with OSSE, who will probably be able to
7 answer substantive questions better.

8 We'll start with Ms. Jolly from Ward 8

9 MS. JOLLY: Thank you. About a month
10 ago I had the privilege of visiting Academy of
11 Hope Adult Public Charter School in Ward 8, and
12 while I was there, I heard one of your adult
13 learners tell a story in which she broke down in
14 tears about being discouraged from completing her
15 GED process because when her sister, also a GED
16 recipient, went to apply for a job, her
17 interviewer laughed at her and made her feel shame
18 for having a GED instead of a high school diploma.

19 I was wondering if that was a common
20 experience for your graduates. If it is, could
21 you speak more about that and how the State
22 Diploma can help to remedy that?

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1 MS. JOHNSON: Well, I wouldn't say we
2 don't always hear that it's a problem. We know
3 that there is a stigma often attached to having a
4 GED. People know what GED is. They know that
5 people dropped out of school, but what they don't
6 know is the amount of work that they've put in to
7 attain that GED. And we've heard stories, you
8 know, I don't want to say that's common because I
9 really don't have concrete evidence to say that
10 that's a common thing, but we do know that when
11 people hear, when you talk to folks about a GED,
12 there's an assumption made about a GED versus a
13 high school diploma. And I do think, particularly
14 when you're looking at colleges and making that
15 transition to college, there is not widespread
16 acceptance of a GED for a postsecondary; it has
17 implications for that as well.

18 MS. RIVAS: I'm going to agree with my
19 colleague here. I don't have hard evidence on it,
20 but I can say that we know that individuals with
21 high school diplomas earn much more than GED
22 holders. And we do know that transitioning into

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1 postsecondary is much more difficult for a GED
2 holder, yet we do know that our students persist
3 for a very, very long time to accomplish this very
4 difficult task.

5 MR. MARTINEZ: And then in my case, I
6 really talked to student who basically wanted,
7 after finishing the GED, she wanted to validate
8 her high school equivalent from her country in
9 fear that her GED diploma wouldn't be as valid. So
10 this was as recent as a few months ago.

11 MR. JACOBSON: Finished? Ms. Lord, our
12 at-large member.

13 MS. LORD: Thank you very much for this
14 just fascinating look at what we call college and
15 career readiness because you really are operating
16 at the cusp of both preparation for postsecondary
17 and adult learners.

18 My first question is really quite na
19 perhaps, but do students who graduate from your
20 programs in the diploma -- in other words, is
21 there something that would be the equivalent of a
22 high school diploma coming out of your

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1 institutions and do you award it regardless of
2 whether the learner passes the GED test?

3 So that's my first question. Is there a
4 document for your students now?

5 MS. RIVAS: There are two things.
6 There's the National External Diploma program for
7 degree granting organizations like Academy of
8 Hope. In my school, Carlos Rosario International
9 Public Charter School, we are an adult basic
10 education organization. We have non-degree
11 granting, noncompulsory, so we prepare our
12 students for the DC GED exam.

13 So you can graduate from us because you
14 earned your GED. If you earned your GED, you can
15 walk across our stage; otherwise, you have
16 participated in our program.

17 MR. MARTINEZ: We are accredited by the
18 mid-Atlantic states for secondary schools and we
19 do grant a certificate of completion once you have
20 passed the official GED and you have a transcript
21 from the office that has said that you passed the
22 test, but we don't have a diploma. It's really

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1 just a nice frame with the name of the school.

2 MS. JOHNSON: Right. And that's exactly
3 for us. There is a certificate that we have at
4 graduation. We give a certificate to recognize
5 the accomplishment and students only walk across
6 the stage once they've passed the GED exam or if
7 they've completed the National External Diploma
8 program.

9 MS. LORD: So I'm wondering to myself,
10 do we need another diploma device or do we need to
11 find policies that perhaps, would legitimize the
12 diploma granted from your various schools because
13 the GED is aligned with college and career ready
14 standards. As one of your students remarked, they
15 want people to know how hard they worked to earn
16 it. So I'm sort of trying to imagine if there's a
17 different way.

18 Another question I had, I think for you,
19 Dr. Johnson, you had mentioned that your students
20 are now better prepared for postsecondary life and
21 that you are recalibrating or even thinking of
22 phasing out your college bridge program. What are

1 the indicators of better preparation?

2 MS. JOHNSON: Accuplacer for performance
3 for the community college. They are scoring off
4 the charts on the Accuplacer. We also have a
5 college prep program, the higher-level math.
6 They've already accomplished those skills with
7 some of the curriculum work that we've done over
8 the past year to scale up to meet the new
9 requirements of the GED.

10 MS. LORD: So in other words, they're
11 going into community college without needing
12 remedial or developmental courses, et cetera?

13 MS. JOHNSON: We have our first cohort,
14 and it looks like through their Accuplacer
15 results, they will be going into credit bearing
16 courses. And we have a bridge program because
17 that will take students going in would generally
18 go into one or more developmental courses.

19 MS. LORD: And roughly, what proportion
20 of the students enrolled in your program take and
21 successful complete the new GED?

22 MS. JOHNSON: It's been small. Right

1 now, we're projecting by the end of July we'll
2 have 14 students who will have passed this exam.
3 In previous years, we were averaging about 60. So
4 it's a much tougher exam. We did a complete
5 overhaul of our curriculum last year. We brought
6 in, you know, trainers to work with our teachers
7 on doing a lot of work around the Common Core.
8 It's a massive overhaul of the exam and the depth
9 of knowledge that's required.

10 I put a sample math question, I think,
11 in my testimony for you. I think the question
12 talks about a baseball field -- a baseball diamond
13 is a square, which sides of 90 feet, what is the
14 shortest distance to the nearest 10th of a foot
15 between first base and third base?

16 So you have to understand that they're
17 talking about the hypotenuse of a triangle. These
18 are kinds of things -- it's not telling you that
19 here, but you have to have that level of knowledge
20 to even begin to work through this particular
21 problem.

22 So those are the kinds of skills that

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1 are now required on the GED. It's a deeper level
2 of knowledge that folks must go in. They must
3 have prior knowledge of scientific principles.
4 When you were talking about social studies, a lot
5 of information on the founding documents, all of
6 that, we have to get to students.

7 MS. LORD: Thank you.

8 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Ms. Anderson
9 from Ward 4, and then we'll go to Ms. Wattenberg.

10 MS. ANDERSON: Thank you. This is for
11 either one of you. Thank you for your
12 presentation. My question is by what means do you
13 propose to acknowledge the victories that have
14 been achieved and the persistence demonstrated by
15 GED attainers if, in fact, they receive basically
16 a generic state diploma?

17 And do you believe that in any way
18 awarding that diploma degree to a GED attainer
19 might mask, or even hide, or diminish either their
20 capabilities or the realities of their educational
21 and life trajectories?

22 MR. MARTINEZ: I would like to say that

1 everyone's path is not straight from high school
2 to college, nor is it from the GED straight to
3 college, but what I can say is that what getting a
4 diploma would mean is that now students are able
5 to apply for certain scholarships that they're not
6 being to apply to right now because of the GED.

7 Those organizations that grant
8 scholarships, or as soon as they see a GED
9 certificate, they kind of put it to the side, so
10 they don't take into account our students, but if
11 they were to present a diploma, then I don't know
12 that there would be any questions asked. Right
13 now, we have dual enrolled students who are at
14 Trinity and other community colleges, who are
15 getting A's and B's. So they are ready for
16 college.

17 MS. JOHNSON: I'm not sure if I truly
18 understood. Are you asking if getting the state
19 diploma would hurt our learners as opposed -- or
20 enhance their opportunity?

21 MS. ANDERSON: You can entertain that if
22 you think that it would.

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1 MS. JOHNSON: Oh. No, I don't --

2 MS. ANDERSON: I guess the core of what
3 I'm asking is does receiving a state diploma
4 somehow mask the fact that you have a student, a
5 GED attainer who has taken the challenge head-on
6 to get back into school to understand that their
7 needs to really attain a certain level of
8 education -- a certain level of education
9 attainment, who've actually gone back and
10 persisted and overcome interruptions or whatever
11 kinds of challenges they may have faced.

12 On the one hand if you give them a state
13 diploma and that basically hides a certain aspect
14 of their character and perhaps, of their
15 achievement from potential employers or potential
16 education institutions or whatever, do you think
17 that is something that might need to be addressed
18 that would be a negative?

19 MS. JOHNSON: I don't think of it as
20 negative because, you know, when you talk to
21 people about individuals who've dropped out of
22 school, they generally have this negative idea

1 about who this person is, and getting that GED,
2 while we know how hard it is, people still think
3 that a GED or a person who dropped out of school
4 wasn't serious about education.

5 Certainly, with some of the literature
6 out there saying that the GED isn't as rigorous,
7 you know, it's false information. There are a
8 significant number of people who really think that
9 the GED isn't worthy. So I think having a state
10 high school diploma or something that recognizes
11 that this person has completed, you know,
12 secondary education, actually gives them a much
13 stronger -- it's much better than sort of that GED
14 or the equivalency as people interpret it.

15 I didn't point out -- I wanted to make
16 sure that I pointed out that 11 percent of the
17 students in our programs are students with high
18 school diplomas. They have graduated from DCPS,
19 and 84 percent of those individuals with high
20 school diplomas are coming in at the adult basic
21 ed level, so 7th grade or below.

22 So I think the questions about the rigor

1 of the GED and, you know, whether we're watering
2 down or sort of undermining the value of the
3 current high school diploma, isn't as real, you
4 know, given what we see. And a number of people
5 who are coming into our programs, you know, there
6 is not some uniform rigor that's already happening
7 in the schools and this is not a ding on the
8 schools, but there are a significant number of
9 people who are already walking out without the
10 skills.

11 Folks are coming into our program with
12 the hopes of getting into the college pathways
13 program and they can't do it. We have to put them
14 in our ABE program, get those foundation skills up
15 before they're even able to take advantage of the
16 Bridge to College programs. So we may keep that
17 for high school graduates.

18 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Ms.
19 Wattenberg and then Ms. Wilson-Phelan.

20 MS. WATTENBERG: You partly answered the
21 most recent question I had, which was why would
22 high school graduates be there?

1 So as I'm understanding it, these are
2 the people who have gotten their high school
3 diploma but can get into a community college but
4 would be in developmental courses for which they
5 would have to pay, so they're choosing to go to
6 you?

7 Am I getting that right?

8 MS. JOHNSON: Right. They were going to
9 developmental courses. They know that they're not
10 as prepared. And even some of the certificate
11 programs, you know, even if you're going through
12 the Department of Employment Service, some of the
13 workforce training programs, if you're unable to
14 hit the 8th level on the exam, you can't take
15 advantage of the workforce training that's there.
16 So there are people with a high school diploma who
17 aren't able to -- who don't have those basic
18 skills needed to even take advantage of some of
19 the workforce training in the city and they're
20 coming to us to skill up.

21 MS. WATTENBERG: And are those recent
22 graduates?

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1 MS. JOHNSON: You know, I can run the
2 numbers, but yeah, it's pretty consistent with the
3 graduates that are coming through. What we're
4 seeing now are those folks who are passing this
5 new GED, they don't need our Bridge to College
6 program. So for us, that is a pretty interesting
7 finding.

8 MS. WATTENBERG: I want to push on this
9 question. The purpose of this change in policy
10 would be to provide a greater benefit, in your
11 judgment, a totally deserved benefit, to the
12 students who are getting the GED.

13 So I want to fully understand what the
14 additional benefit is, what they're not getting.
15 So it sounds like -- I know we talked about this a
16 little bit before -- insofar as the students are
17 prepared, they can enter higher education with the
18 GED without having the state diploma. So unless
19 I'm misunderstanding, I want you to correct me,
20 that's not something that would necessarily be
21 aided by this or tell me that I'm wrong.

22 MS. JOHNSON: It's not consistent. It

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1 depends on the university, whether or not they
2 will accept it. Generally, most will say yes,
3 it's acceptable, but most of our students are
4 going through it because they don't have the
5 transcript and some of the prerequisite courses,
6 they enter through, they will generally do a
7 community college path if we're looking at
8 postsecondary. With a state diploma, there's just
9 a different connotation associated with it.

10 MS. WATTENBERG: Just to really push,
11 are there community colleges, let's say, in our
12 region, that would not accept someone for
13 admission if they had their new GED?

14 MR. MARTINEZ: I don't know if it's the
15 new GED, I think it is because, historically, the
16 GED has had such a negative popularity, I guess.

17 MS. JOHNSON: Right.

18 MR. MARTINEZ: Students are just afraid
19 that if they present themselves in front of
20 someone, they will not be respected equally.

21 MS. WATTENBERG: So they won't be
22 respected at the college.

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1 MS. JOHNSON: But most community
2 colleges are open enrollment, so that's not as
3 much an issue, but if I am a person who has
4 completed a GED and I have the skills to go onto a
5 four-year college, I have to generally do a
6 transfer program to move into a four-year college
7 if I have a GED. That's the easiest route for me
8 to go onto a four-year college.

9 MR. MARTINEZ: The other issue is
10 financial aid, quite frankly. Like I said
11 earlier, a lot of students, particularly in the
12 last two years, come back saying I'm not getting
13 any scholarships. I'm rejected because they don't
14 think that I have the skills because of the GED. I
15 guess it would help in the financial aid
16 department and give students the drive to pursue a
17 little bit harder if they knew that their
18 equivalency was really equivalent if they had a
19 state diploma.

20 MS. WATTENBERG: Or to get the colleges
21 to explicitly make some of their scholarship money
22 available to people who have GEDs.

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1 I want to go back to the four-year
2 college -- so, generally, people can use a GED now
3 to get into a two-year college, but to get into a
4 four-year college, you can't, of course you
5 couldn't with a high school -- you're saying event
6 to get into the freshman year of a four- year
7 program, that is the issue because that's a
8 barrier that four-year colleges don't look fondly
9 on that.

10 MS. JOHNSON: Yes. You're generally
11 going the community college route.

12 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. The time is
13 expired, unfortunately. Ms. Wilson-Phelan and
14 then Mr. Jones.

15 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Thank you. It's
16 great to see you all here tonight. Thank you for
17 spending your evening with us. I am a big fan of
18 the work that you all do. As I know that Wards 2
19 and 1 know, I had the privilege of speaking at the
20 Carlos Rosario graduation and experiencing the
21 pride and honor of those students. It was really
22 an incredible and inspirational experience for me,

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1 but at the same time, I really, echoing what Ruth
2 has said, I really want to understand the true
3 benefit one more time about shifting of policy.

4 I've also spoken with your leadership,
5 asking these questions, too, because I actually
6 don't think we have a lot of data that says
7 there's actually a benefit or discrimination. We
8 have a lot of anecdotes and those policies usually
9 aren't made based on anecdotes. So I'm really
10 struggling from the perspective of wanting to be a
11 good steward, as an elected official, and as at
12 the same time, recognizing that your students are
13 doing incredible work. My questions don't lie at
14 all with wondering they have earned some kind of
15 designation or whether their passage of the GED is
16 potentially, actually meeting a higher academic
17 bar in core subjects than our diploma right now in
18 DC.

19 There is evidence, if you look at UDC's
20 enrollment, that the average DCPS graduate with a
21 high school diploma enter there at 8th grade. And
22 we know the GED is based on the 10th and upper

1 grade standard. So that's not my weighing. I
2 weigh that other elements that are part of the
3 high school experience and not a part of a GED
4 passage. That's not to say they aren't a part of
5 the experience that students go through in going
6 through your programs.

7 So I'm interested in pursuing a couple
8 of things. I know we have such limited time,
9 including your answers. I'm interested on your
10 thoughts on do you think we should be pinning a
11 diploma with both GED passage and some kind of set
12 of course completion in your programs, the social
13 aspects that you talk about that are part of an
14 individual learners experience?

15 Does that make sense at all? I do worry
16 that passage of a GED does not match our
17 graduation standards in all of the subjects. Are
18 you saying that you think that's okay and
19 therefore, should we adjust our other high school
20 graduation requirements to eliminate things like
21 health that we just hear all about? I mean, that
22 isn't a requirement of a GED.

1 Finally, what I am hearing, in terms of
2 your answers to Ruth's questions are the biggest
3 benefit is morale. It's a morale in addressing
4 fears that students have. It's morale in feeling
5 valued in a society. And if that is a benefit,
6 I'm not afraid to call that out. All of us have
7 heard testimony after testimony or experienced it
8 directly in our work with students and children
9 that morale and the mental effect of achievement
10 and setting goals is tremendously powerful in the
11 lives of individuals, especially those who had
12 felt disempowered our society for any set of
13 reasons.

14 But I do think that if that is the true
15 benefit, and we don't really have data to back it,
16 that that's where we should start our
17 conversation. We should talk about this being
18 associated with a morale-based benefit for the
19 students who are already having so many odds put
20 against them. Then we should have a conversation
21 about whether we, as a city, value that
22 significantly enough to pursue a policy switch.

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1 MS. HUNT: If I could speak to the last
2 point. We know that Pennsylvania has gone as far
3 including GED rather than the high school diploma
4 as a protected trait under the state's employment
5 discrimination law. And so for the students at
6 the Carlos Rosario School, they are adults or they
7 are emancipated minors, no younger than 16. So
8 they must work. They do work. They work very
9 hard. So we want, when they earn that GED, if
10 it's what they need, to get whatever their dreams
11 are that they are paid fairly. So it much more
12 than morale, it's dollars and cents. The dollar
13 difference is about \$1,600. I believe that's a
14 monthly statistic.

15 In addition to that we are all
16 accredited organizations through the middle states
17 organization, so there are many things that happen
18 in high schools or middle schools that also happen
19 in our schools. I would say that they do have
20 those experiences, but in very unique ways, in our
21 urban adult settings.

22 MR. MARTINEZ: I'd like to add that

1 there already 10 states, including Maryland, that
2 award the state diploma to GED recipients. Each
3 state can design their schools the way they want
4 to. The experiences of a student in Pennsylvania
5 are definitely not, by any means, the same as a
6 student in New York City, even in a public school
7 system.

8 So I don't know that that's the really
9 the center of it, but I do want to agree with you
10 that we have a lot of activities and a lot of
11 celebrations in our building, including some
12 sports that allow students to experience more or
13 less the high school-like experience. The reality
14 is most of them are adults who have really busy
15 lives with work and their own children, so they're
16 not really looking for that at that stage in their
17 lives. They're actually looking for the
18 equivalency, in terms of dollars and just
19 recognition all around to be better citizens.

20 MS. JOHNSON: I would just echo that
21 these are not kids, these are adults. So it's an
22 adult school. The goal is not to replicate high

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1 school, but really have relevant programs for
2 individuals who are in their 20s and 30s and they
3 are integrated programs. We do integrate health
4 into our science programs in a number of other
5 ways. We also do field trips.

6 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Mr. Jones and
7 then Mr. Weedon.

8 MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. President.
9 I've got a few questions, however -- well, first
10 of all, I want to applaud you all for the work
11 that you do for our citizens in this city.

12 One of questions is in response to your
13 comments in reference to colleges not accepting
14 GED recipients. According to a 2007 survey
15 conducted by the American Council in Education, 98
16 percent of colleges accept GED students. I
17 believe the colleges and universities that
18 selectively do not, that is a societal issue.

19 MS. HUNT: Right.

20 MR. JONES: I don't believe policy
21 corrects that. So that's something that we all
22 need to work on. I'm relying on the most recent

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1 up-to-date survey. I want to say upfront, I
2 really want to support this. And I hear anecdotal
3 reasons why I should, but it's not enough
4 evidence, as Ms. Phelan suggested earlier. Well,
5 it's not enough for me yet, but I'm willing to
6 have an open mind and open heart.

7 I'm more concerned about finding more
8 resources to help institutions like yours provide
9 the services that are necessary so we can have 1)
10 a higher pass rate, 2) the experiences that these
11 young men and older men and women need to be
12 successful in life, not just have a diploma to put
13 on the wall. I hire some of these people and I'm
14 amazed of their intellect because it's high, but
15 what disappoints me is their lack of soft skills
16 to manage themselves throughout life. That's been
17 my experience.

18 I have to ask a few questions for all
19 three of you. How many test takers did you have
20 in 2014 and how many passed?

21 MS. HUNT: I can answer that. We had
22 three students take and pass all four sections of

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1 the GED. Many of the students, as I mentioned
2 when I was testifying, at elementary level. Our
3 students come from impoverished war-torn
4 countries. So if they enter as a 4-year-old and
5 they left school as a 10 year-old in a country
6 with no books or building, even, they have a far,
7 far way to go. And so for us, it's not always a
8 question about did you take and pass the GED in
9 the last school year, it's how much growth did you
10 make, which was tremendous, which is why I feel
11 very strongly that these students are earning like
12 a diploma because they are persisting for a very,
13 very long time. And we are working hard with them
14 to bring in student supportive services to
15 building things like soft skills, which we agree
16 is an area that we can all grow in.

17 MR. JONES: Okay. And for the other
18 two?

19 MR. JOHNSON: For us, we don't send
20 people to take the exam until they're ready.

21 MS. HUNT: Yes.

22 MS. JOHNSON: I mean, you don't want

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1 successive failures. That's not good for people.

2 So I would say we have 100 percent pass rate.

3 Well, that's not true.

4 MR. JONES: Well, how many?

5 MS. JOHNSON: It's about an 80 percent

6 pass rate for the folks because there is a

7 practice exam prior to taking that and the goal is

8 not to have people take and pass one section at a

9 time. You want them to pass the whole thing

10 before they go down. So with the new GED, this

11 fiscal year, by the end of July, we're projecting

12 about 14 graduates.

13 Nationally, there is a 90 percent drop

14 in the pass rate on this new GED. Some of that

15 has to do with some of the issues that you brought

16 up, what has happened nationally is that we

17 haven't scaled up the adult ed providers across

18 the country to meet the demand of the new GED. We

19 raised the bar, but we didn't sure up the systems

20 that deliver this education.

21 Most adult ed programs run on

22 volunteers. And part of the reason we made the

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1 transition last year to charter was because to
2 scale up to meet the new demands of the GED and
3 some of the other things that we saw coming down
4 the pipe. The resources weren't there to do that.
5 We couldn't hire the professional teachers to
6 bring in the trainers or do the curriculum work
7 without making that transition to a charter.

8 MR. JONES: Numbers is what I want. How
9 many took the test?

10 MS. JOHNSON: Oh, how many took the
11 test?

12 MR. JONES: I know you gave me the
13 number 14 that passed in 2015.

14 MS. JOHNSON: We are projecting -- oh,
15 in 2015, this year, yes --

16 MR. JONES: How many took the test?

17 MS. JOHNSON: we got seven. For the GED
18 Ready, we've only had about 20 or 25 or so to take
19 the GED Ready test. That's when we send people.

20 MR. JONES: Which GED Ready?

21 MS. JOHNSON: So there's a pre-exam.

22 MR. JONES: No, hold on. I know what

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1 the GED Ready is. This is my time.

2 MS. JOHNSON: So there's a --

3 MS. LORD: She's just explaining.

4 MR. JONES: Okay. I understand, but let
5 her answer.

6 MS. JOHNSON: There's a pre-exam that
7 you take before you send someone to take the GED
8 exam.

9 MR. JONES: I'm familiar with that.

10 MS. JOHNSON: And it will tell you if a
11 person is likely to ready (sic). So I'm saying
12 that number is about 25 people that when we do the
13 CASAS exam and see that their scores are high,
14 let's have them take the GED Ready, and then if
15 they don't pass the GED Ready, we don't send them
16 down to take the actual GED exam.

17 MR. JONES: I understand that. I want
18 to hear the hard numbers. Again, I'm with you.
19 I'm supporting you, but I want to hear the hard
20 numbers like the other lady gave me. I want to
21 know the number of test takers. My time is up.
22 And you don't have to give them to me now, but I

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1 want to see the documented numbers from your
2 program of the people who have sat for the test
3 and the people who have passed.

4 MS. JOHNSON: I can get you the
5 documentation.

6 MR. JONES: I have a number of other
7 questions, but my time is up. Thank you.

8 MR. JACOBSON: It looks like a number of
9 Board members have additional questions, so we'll
10 do another round. Mr. Weedon from Ward 6.

11 MR. WEEDON: Thank you. First, let me
12 applaud you and your students for the work that
13 you do. I don't think anybody up here or anybody
14 in the audience, anybody watching online or on
15 T.V. is going to say that, especially with the new
16 GED, students aren't working hard and they're not
17 learning.

18 My question really gets back to what Ms.
19 Wilson-Phelan was talking about and what some of
20 my other colleagues have been talking about. What
21 is the true benefit of this policy change?

22 If we simply award a state diploma to

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1 anybody who passes the GED, are not businesses,
2 are not colleges just going to say that's the same
3 as a GED?

4 So what is the added benefit that we
5 need to add to award a diploma to the students who
6 go through this test and go through your programs?

7 I don't understand how giving a state
8 diploma is going to change the college admissions
9 process where the college is going to look for a
10 transcript or how it's going to change the
11 attitude of an HR manager at a company. It's the
12 same thing of a different name.

13 What are we trying to do to change and
14 add something to ensure that your students really
15 get a benefit from this new state diploma that
16 we're talking about creating?

17 MR. MARTINEZ: I think one of the
18 changes already happened when the new standards
19 were revamped to actually equate it more so.
20 Initially, the GED was designed for war veterans
21 who didn't get a chance to go to high school, for
22 whatever reason. So they had a chance to do it

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1 later on in life. People who missed the boat,
2 does that mean that we never give them a chance?
3 No. It means that there is an opportunity to do
4 this now. For the ones that put all the work into
5 it, people what to be recognized. What else do we
6 add to it other than the exact rigor that requires
7 students to learn reading and writing skills,
8 comprehension skills so that they can enter a
9 four-year institution and be recognized for that.

10 We are not fighting against social
11 stigma, necessarily. I think what our students
12 want is a true sense of equivalency and if people
13 say oh, well, a GED is the equivalent, then let it
14 be the equivalent. That's all they want.

15 Although Mr. Jones brought some
16 statistics about 98 percent of colleges and 96
17 percent of employers traditionally accept GEDs,
18 the truth on the ground is that it's really not
19 that at all. It's being published, but that's not
20 what our students are experiencing.

21 MR. WEEDON: So what we're really being
22 asked to do, though, is to award a diploma for

1 your graduates. What else do we need to do to
2 make sure that then those graduates are accepted
3 and that the diploma we're awarding is recognized
4 as being more than just a GED?

5 I think we're all in agreement that the
6 GED has changed substantially over the last couple
7 of years and we've raised the bar. That is a
8 marketing issue for the organization that issues
9 the GED to ensure that colleges and businesses
10 accept it for what it is today, not what it was.
11 How can we make sure that if we go down this path
12 that we're really going to that level plus
13 something else to ensure that those who are going
14 through your programs, not just those who are
15 taking the test, but who are going through the
16 programs are really recognized for their
17 achievement?

18 MR. MARTINEZ: I don't know if there is
19 a straight answer to that. Right now, all we have
20 is about 10 states that award a state diploma for
21 that. It would probably be a good thing to
22 research what they do, how much they achieved and

1 if their graduates make more money. I mean, we
2 don't know that. We don't know what will come
3 after the fact, but it's something that is worth
4 fighting for.

5 If the policy changes, I don't think
6 that would affect colleges or universities. I
7 don't think that more 16 year-old will drop out of
8 high school just to get a GED diploma because it
9 hasn't happened in years, so it wouldn't happen
10 now.

11 MS. HUNT: For our students to enroll in
12 public charter schools in the District, they need
13 to attend school for several hours every day. And
14 to be successful, they need to get computer
15 skills, interpersonal skills, soft skills. They
16 need to do a lot to be successful. The
17 counterparts over the border in Maryland, they
18 will do all that work, but in Maryland, they will
19 get a state diploma and likely be hired at a
20 difference of \$1,600 a month. So we want our
21 students to realize their American dreams and we
22 want them to be able to compete and we want them

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1 to benefit the community by their hard work and by
2 being recognized just like it's happening in
3 Maryland with other states.

4 MR. JACOBSON: Are there any other Board
5 members who wanted a first round?

6 (No response.)

7 I have just a couple of very quick questions. You
8 were just speaking about Maryland. Are there DC
9 residents that go to Maryland to get a GED so they
10 can get a high school diploma?

11 MS. HUNT: I would have to look into
12 that to give you more information. I think that
13 it's very difficult for someone who needs to earn
14 a GED to get a quality program in Maryland. In
15 DC, this is an innovative area. There is public -
16 - there are public schools for adults that need
17 it. At the Carlos Rosario School, we have
18 organizations from other states coming to learn
19 from us all the time, trying to figure out how
20 they can influence policy so that they can have
21 organizations like ours in their states.

22 MR. JACOBSON: Well, I'd be interested

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1 in that, particularly if any folks are taking your
2 coursework, but then taking the actual exam in
3 Maryland so that they do get that diploma. If you
4 can find any instances of that, if you can report
5 that back to the Board, I'd appreciate it.

6 MS. HUNT: I'm happy to. I can also
7 tell you that that's not the case for any Carlos
8 Rosario School student because we track their data
9 so much, so few of them are GED ready. The ones
10 who are ready, work with counselors, work with
11 administrators, work with their teacher teams that
12 they will never receive such good support today,
13 unfortunately, because other states the
14 infrastructure for adult basic education like
15 ours.

16 MR. JACOBSON: Fascinating. What
17 precludes your schools from granting a high school
18 diploma on its own?

19 MS. JOHNSON: Well, we are not
20 accredited yet. We are a first year. We're not
21 middle states accredited. We'd like to offer an
22 accredited, you know, a high school credential

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1 from an accredited school. It take a while to get
2 through the middle state accreditation. So it's a
3 long haul to go through the process and we're
4 still trying to figure out what's needed locally.
5 I know there are some other folks that are looking
6 to give that of what is needed to grant a high
7 school credential from your school.

8 MS. HUNT: I can tell you that BRIA,
9 which is another adult public charter school, does
10 the NEDP program. So the National External
11 Diploma Program that they offer to their students
12 was previously issued through Ballou, and then
13 they were able to earn -- they are charter school
14 for children because the children go while the
15 parents go. So they have a different structure
16 completely. We are schools for uniquely adults to
17 meet a critical need. So it's a structure that
18 we're working with, with our students. We are a
19 basic education, non-degree granting organization.

20 MR. JACOBSON: Great. Am I correct,
21 Academy of Hope offers NEDP as well?

22 MS. JOHNSON: We do. We offer the

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1 National External Diploma Program as well, yes.

2 MR. JACOBSON: How do students decide
3 whether they want to go GED or NEDP?

4 MS. JOHNSON: You know, it just depends.
5 It's an individualized discussion. Most people
6 come in going towards the GED that serve, you
7 know, that's what they know of. A lot of people
8 don't know about the NEDP. And then once they are
9 ran and we do information sessions and we talk
10 through the differences between those programs,
11 some people don't like the idea of not sitting for
12 a long exam.

13 Although, the NEDP is now computerized;
14 everything is done on the computer, it's a very
15 competency-based program model and students have a
16 lot more flexibility in their schedule if they are
17 working adults, to master each of those
18 competencies. But it is a personal choice and
19 part of that is once they've gotten in and gotten
20 exposure to the GED program and the NEDP, they
21 make a decision with some guidance.

22 MR. JACOBSON: And are you seeing any

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1 difference in outcomes for NEDP versus GED?

2 MS. JOHNSON: Well, they both went
3 through a change. We're early in this process
4 right now of what's happening.

5 MR. JACOBSON: Sure.

6 MS. JOHNSON: What we do know is that a
7 large percentage of our NEDP students are working
8 full time and they need the flexibility of a
9 program that is not fully classroom based,
10 although the number -- most people who come in
11 start in our ABE classes because 95 percent of the
12 adults entering our program are coming in at the
13 adult basic ed level. So they're still, not even
14 quite ready to do the NEDP program.

15 MR. JACOBSON: Great. Thank you. We'll
16 do a second round, starting with Ms. Wattenberg
17 and then Ms. Anderson.

18 MS. WATTENBURG: Well, Jack took some of
19 my questions, so I'm going to do follow-ups on
20 his. I'm trying to understand the difference
21 between the GED and the NEDP. I'm picking up that
22 the NEDP, you don't sit for a test in the same

1 way. You can do a little bit here, a little bit
2 there.

3 We've heard a lot about how high the GED
4 test standard is now. What can you say about how
5 that compares to the NEDP, both in terms of what
6 it tests and kind of the rigor of what it tests?

7 MS. JOHNSON: Well, they both have some
8 of the Common Core. The NEDP is slightly
9 different in that it is really more of life skills
10 competencies. They are demonstrating the high
11 level math skills and some of the writing skills,
12 but they are in the context of daily life.

13 So things like percentages would be
14 demonstrated by calculating, you know, the tip on
15 a bill, for example. So they have a different
16 approach. They have a similar rigor. Particularly
17 with the new NEDP, it too just had a major
18 overhaul.

19 MS. WATTENBERG: I'm going to also ask
20 this of the OSSE person who comes up. It's not
21 clear to me why you guys can't provide the high
22 school diploma. I understand that you're not

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1 accredited yet, but you are accredited.

2 MR. MARTINEZ: Correct. So there are --
3 a high school diploma requires 25.5 credits,
4 including half a credit of health, half PE, and
5 when you're 22 and pregnant, you don't want to be
6 jumping around and doing that kind of stuff, but
7 it also requires, you know, three years of foreign
8 language. Most people who come to the GED program
9 haven't been in high school for maybe two or three
10 years and dropping out shy of their senior year,
11 don't have four years. Years, as they get older,
12 are a luxury.

13 Normally, they stay with us three
14 semesters, maybe four. So they are really looking
15 to save some time. They are willing to work hard,
16 but they don't have the time to put in a year for
17 English Language Arts 1 and then English Language
18 Arts 2 and so on because four years is a very long
19 time. That is really the main reason that we
20 don't have credits. If we did, then we would be
21 regular high school and we wouldn't want a GED, we
22 would just become a regular high school.

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1 MS. HUNT: Can I add to that also?

2 MS. WATTENBERG: Yes.

3 MS. HUNT: So we have an immigrant-based
4 mission and our students have interrupted formal
5 education almost always in their countries of
6 origin. So what they come in needing and knowing
7 and not knowing is very diverse. It's very
8 specific to each student and the tradition high
9 school structure is not appropriate for them.

10 I have some students that test in around
11 the 10th grade level in math and then a second
12 grade level in reading, and then it can be
13 something else in social studies or science. So
14 that traditional model is not appropriate for our
15 students. We focus on what they need because we
16 have no time, as he mentioned.

17 Life does not stop happening for them
18 and they also had a lot of life already, and so
19 the things that come along with high school are
20 not what's needed and most appropriate for these
21 individuals to get into the workforce and get
22 better job training and get into college as soon

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1 as possible for their families.

2 MS. WATTENBERG: I'm struck through this
3 whole conversation about on the one hand, you know
4 how we sometimes say like, to kids and to other
5 that equivalence is not the same as equal, right?
6 And I'm struck by on the one hand, the level of
7 rigor that students need to reach to pass the GED
8 might actually be higher in certain subjects and
9 on the other hand, the coursework is much
10 narrower, it seems to me.

11 I mean, I'm thinking about the high
12 school graduation requirements that we have here,
13 and by the way, they're extremely stiff. I think
14 I just read that they are -- I think they are the
15 most complete in the country. They include music;
16 they include health; they include foreign
17 language. So they're not the same, I guess is
18 what I'm saying and I guess I'm sort of wondering,
19 you know, the extent to which maybe they're equal
20 but not the same. They're equivalent but not the
21 same. So it's a thought that I'm considering, so
22 how do we deal with that?

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1 The other question I had -- well, I'll
2 pass at the moment.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Dr. Mitchell
4 will be joining us shortly and she might be able
5 to answer some of these questions as well. Ms.
6 Anderson, then Mr. Jones.

7 MS. ANDERSON: I come out of a
8 publishing background and this question you may
9 not be able to answer, but I know many folks in
10 publishing have seen the giant Pierson Company
11 that now basically sells the GED exam itself. It
12 has an enormous amount of influence and clout in
13 the publishing and testing industry and in that
14 marketplace.

15 It holds an increasing market share in
16 that industry, even monopoly-like. I won't say
17 monopoly. My question is the Pierson Company
18 itself, which I think is adverse to taking on a
19 product that would cast dispersion on any of its
20 consumers, why do you think that the Pierson
21 Company itself is not, I guess, taking the lead or
22 more of the forefront in terms of basically

1 eliminating and minimizing the stigma that GED
2 attainers receive when they go to employment
3 places or to college admissions?

4 Another part of this questions is do you
5 think that the reasons for the rejection of GED
6 attainers by employers and colleges have more to
7 do with those isms, you know, that traditional and
8 long-standing discrimination on the basis of race,
9 ethnicity, gender, et cetera, et cetera, et
10 cetera?

11 And that perhaps, that GED gives those
12 employers just another bit of ammunition to
13 perpetuate discrimination?

14 MS. JOHNSON: Well, that's a thorny
15 question.

16 MS. ANDERSON: Pierson markets its
17 product as well, you're going to be looked at
18 differently because you have a GED. They don't do
19 that. They have a lot of influence with
20 employers, with admission officers, with colleges.
21 They have a lot of influence. So I'm wondering
22 how this idea that the GED is somehow less than

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1 either it's substantiated or will continue to be a
2 real issue, given the fact that Pierson run the
3 show, basically, in a lot of different arena.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Here too.

5 MS. ANDERSON: Yes, in the District of
6 Columbia too. On the other hand, we know that
7 historically, past the point at which many of the
8 GED attainers were, in fact, veteran's from World
9 War II. Historically, those persons who are faced
10 with the choice or the circumstance of having to
11 get the GED degree as opposed to completing their
12 education from K-12 on a normal trajectory, a lot
13 of those folks are persons of color, you know,
14 disenfranchised folks who have to present
15 themselves to the workplace and to employers, in
16 some cases, in too many cases, we know with
17 several strikes against them.

18 Do you think that changing it from a GED
19 -- allowing for them to get a diploma instead a
20 GED will make a substantive hit on those kinds of
21 problems and challenges that those students face?

22 MS. JOHNSON: A substantive change,

1 well, that's hard to say, but you know, what we do
2 know for a fact, you know, in urban centers, the
3 majority of folks who are accessing GED programs
4 are people who are persons of color. When you get
5 out into the rural areas, you got primarily a
6 large poor white population.

7 So when you're talking about the middle
8 states of Nebraska, Iowa, you got a significant
9 portion of folks who are not people of color, it's
10 primarily white, rural folks who are living in
11 poverty. So it is a diverse population. It's
12 when you're in these urban centers that you're
13 seeing a significant number of folks who are
14 persons of color.

15 I think there are a lot of layers to
16 this. I mean, there are just many layers to the
17 discrimination of individuals who drop out.

18 MR. JACOBSON: Sorry. This is the
19 second round of questions, so we need to move on,
20 unfortunately. Mr. Jones and then Ms. Jolly.

21 MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. President. I
22 want to go back to my earlier line of questioning.

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1 Mr. Martinez, you didn't get a chance to answer.

2 How many test takers and how many passers?

3 MR. MARTINEZ: I was trying to do
4 numbers in my head, but it think --

5 MR. JONES: I mean, if you don't have
6 them exactly, it's okay. We can get them later.

7 MR. MARTINEZ: Right. It's pretty high.
8 It's between 65 and 72 percent right now. We had
9 10, initially, in December of 2014, which was our
10 first round of students and we added four more
11 towards the end of that testing cycle. So we had
12 14 for the first round and right now we have
13 between seven and ten more because they have taken
14 one more semester of instruction. Our semesters
15 are 21 weeks long.

16 So with 40 weeks of instructions, we've
17 been able to do -- or to allow close to 25
18 students to pass the new GED, which is pretty
19 tough. So that's maybe out of 35 students who
20 attempted it. So it's maybe two-thirds. I can
21 get you the numbers.

22 MR. JONES: Thirty-five students that

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1 have taken it?

2 MR. MARTINEZ: That have attempted to
3 take it who were GED ready. Only close to 20 have
4 passed it. There are students who are going to
5 take it in July, towards the end of the month.
6 We'll see how many more we can add. Those are
7 potentially between 20 and 30 more adults in the
8 District of Columbia who are now on their paths to
9 a better life.

10 MR. JONES: A question for all three of
11 you again. Do you know your average scores of
12 your test passers?

13 MS. JOHNSON: We can get that.

14 MS. HUNT: We can get that. I have had
15 one student pass math with honors. And I know
16 that the GED Ready data we've seen is an
17 indication to how well the student will do on each
18 of the four sections of the test. We can get
19 those numbers. It's a range.

20 MR. JONES: Mr. Martinez, I just want to
21 say congratulations. I don't know if your numbers
22 are accurate. I'd like to find out if they are

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1 because if they are, then you've got half of the
2 people that have passed this year come from your
3 program. I don't think that's right because I
4 don't think the numbers that we're getting from
5 the city is correct.

6 MR. MARTINEZ: Okay.

7 MR. JONES: That's also a challenge for
8 me with data. The data needs to be consistent.

9 MR. MARTINEZ: I agree with you.

10 MR. JONES: And quite frankly, it isn't.

11 MR. MARTINEZ: All I'm saying is that
12 right now we have a few more students in the
13 pipeline who will be testing, who have already
14 passed one, or two, or three sections. For
15 instance, we had a couple of students that were
16 left out of the last round because they only
17 passed three out of the four sections.

18 Once you don't pass a section, you have
19 to wait 90 days. So they're sort of waiting
20 around saying I just need to pass social studies.
21 For them, it's a really, really long time, and for
22 us it's like an eternity because now we can't add

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1 them to our roster and give you the numbers that
2 you are asking for. But come July 31st, we'll
3 have some kind of aggregate data with whatever
4 scores students got individually or as average of
5 how many attempted and passed. I didn't know that
6 question would come up, so I didn't bring the
7 data.

8 MR. JONES: I'd like to know that and if
9 we can follow up.

10 MR. MARTINEZ: Absolutely.

11 MR. JONES: Do you all track your
12 students after? And if so, how do you track them?

13 MS. HUNT: I can speak to that. In our
14 English GED program, we had three graduates in the
15 last school year and one whose dream it was to go
16 to college. So he has received a scholarship that
17 our school raised for him and he is going to UDC.
18 So he will be continuously working with us. We
19 have a supportive services team that stay in touch
20 with any graduate in whatever path they take as
21 part of all of our performance management
22 framework. We must follow up with buckets of

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1 graduates in many different ways, so we track them
2 for up to 90. Or if we're giving them a
3 scholarship, we track them until they achieve
4 their dream because that's our mission and we do
5 that.

6 I also wanted to add that many students
7 are not ready to take the GED because they started
8 maybe in fourth or fifth grade. So recognizing
9 the progress towards a GED, it a marathon. It is
10 an uphill climb, up a big mountain, carrying heavy
11 bags.

12 So I would like to share that many of
13 our students made progress towards the GED. They
14 just aren't there yet.

15 MR. JONES: Good. Lastly, I do want to
16 say that I support this, however, I've been on the
17 field trying to help this for years before it was
18 popular. But I need some help and I need help
19 from the providers and other people in the city.
20 We just don't have enough evidence, at least I
21 don't. I just need help to get me there. My time
22 is up. Sorry.

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1 MR. JACOBSON: No worries. Thank you,
2 Mr. Jones. Ms. Jolly from Ward 8 and then Ms.
3 Wilson-Phelan.

4 MS. JOLLY: Thank you. These are
5 comments, not a question. I'm still kind of in
6 shock that one of my colleagues declared that
7 policy doesn't fix social ills. I wonder if we
8 would tell that to civil rights leaders who, for
9 quite a long time, demanded policy changes to fix --

10 MS. ANDERSON: Just the specific policy
11 issue.

12 MS. JOLLY: I would like to just say
13 that to me, my support for this is because this is
14 a civil rights issue, and a lot of the
15 conversation that has happened up here on the
16 Board has been talking about diploma systems that
17 are separate but equal. And as early as 1954, the
18 Supreme Court did decide that when it comes to
19 education, separate but equal is inherently
20 unequal. And I think that when we look at the
21 data as well, test passers, GED test passers in
22 the District of Columbia in 2013, 54 percent of

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1 them were male, 78 percent of them were African
2 American. So to me, this is very much a civil
3 rights issue because we're talking about policy
4 that can prevent young men of color from being
5 discriminated against in the workplace.

6 I think that the sheer fact that
7 Pennsylvania has a law protecting GED recipients
8 as a protected class against employer
9 discrimination shows that this discrimination is
10 real. I also think this is a way for the Board to
11 take a policy step that supports the mayor's
12 initiative on empowering men of color, especially
13 when we look at Census Bureau data that shows, as
14 Ms. Rivas was saying before, that the average
15 monthly earnings for a GED recipient are \$3,100 a
16 month. But the average monthly earnings for a
17 high school diploma recipient are \$4,700 a month.

18 Again, maybe this number sounds
19 inflated, but it comes right from the Census
20 Bureau. I am not a statistician, so I will not
21 challenge it. So to me, when we're looking at this
22 data, what we have been given here is the

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1 opportunity to take up the mantle of civil rights
2 and to say no, we see that there is this
3 opportunity and achievement gap in the city. We
4 can really take a simple solution to vote for this
5 state diploma for GED recipients to help close it.

6 I have to say, too, I take this really
7 personally. Again, looking at data, 7,500 young
8 people aged 16 to 24 in the District of Columbia
9 have no high school diploma or GED credential
10 whatsoever. Forty percent of those young people
11 live in Ward 7 and Ward 8. So as a representative
12 of those people, of my constituents, my community
13 in Ward 8, who are overwhelmingly black and who
14 will be disproportionately benefitted by us
15 passing this policy, I have to say I'm still
16 confused about why we're not just doing this. I
17 know that's not a question, but I have two minutes
18 and 20 seconds left. I'll just turn it over so
19 that we can keep moving.

20 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Ms. Wilson-
21 Phelan.

22 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Thank you. I still

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1 would love to hear your thoughts on that morale
2 question. I had a very sort of long-winded
3 statement, so I didn't give you a chance. But at
4 the end of the day, in your best estimate, knowing
5 what we know, knowing that that census data isn't
6 actually as relevant as we would like it to be
7 because the GED has changed so significantly and
8 because it's from 2010 and because it's a national
9 sample where incomes are different and they're
10 comparing the Massachusetts earner with the
11 Alabama earner, et cetera, et cetera. And also, I
12 mean, if you do the math, it doesn't really make a
13 ton of sense when we know the vast majority of
14 individuals in our city who do not have a diploma
15 or a GED, or even those who only have those are
16 not earning \$55,000, which is what it works out to
17 per year.

18 All of that said, I keep coming back to
19 morale. And I actually think a true case can be
20 made for morale. And if we're talking about,
21 essentially, 100 people, whose lives are made
22 better because they get some sort of recognition

1 and appreciation and we actually think it truly
2 makes a difference, I would just love to hear the
3 arguments for that.

4 MS. HUNT: I think it truly makes a
5 difference because we have students who come into
6 our building saying oh, I wanted to get into the
7 nurse's aide training program, but I can't because
8 I don't have my high school diploma, so I want to
9 sign up for a GED. How long will that take?

10 And then we explain to them how long it
11 will take. Our own students have this myth that
12 it's just a test. It is not just a test. It is
13 demonstrating that you have so much knowledge --
14 so many critical skills. So if we're able to kind
15 of help people understand, yes, you have to pass
16 four tests, or if it's the NEDP, it's the other
17 set of rigorous criteria, but it is the same as a
18 diploma. We need to help people value -- we need
19 to help people understand that it has the same
20 value as a diploma. I can imagine if I was
21 thinking it was just a test and actually find out
22 it's a big diploma, I would feel much more

1 confident to persist.

2 MR. MARTINEZ: And if it were just a
3 test, then we certainly would have hundreds and
4 hundreds of people lined up at the door trying to
5 take this test. But when they find out they
6 couldn't pass it and then they would have to go
7 through a program that is structured and that
8 would actually teach them something and then it
9 would teach them the value of actual learning and
10 acquiring something that is valuable and pushing
11 forward.

12 The issue of morale, I mean, if a
13 student comes to you and they are 30, and they say
14 you know what, I never went back to high school
15 and never finished high school, but I did go and
16 get my high school diploma -- or my GED
17 certificate, which is now a state-recognized
18 diploma, and I'm 29, I'm already better off. So I
19 don't think we are trying to say that just give it
20 away to anybody who lines up. That wouldn't
21 happen because people really have to be invested
22 in getting this.

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1 MS. JOHNSON: I'm struggling with that
2 because it is -- to say that it is a morale issue,
3 sort of diminishes the real issues. What
4 frustrates me right now is that we know that there
5 are real issues and stigmas attached to that GED.
6 The problem is there's not a lot of research
7 that's been done in adult ed because the people
8 who are generally accessing these programs are
9 poor and their voices aren't heard.

10 So even when you look at what are sort
11 of the best practices that need to happen for
12 adults, you know, when you're talking about people
13 who are struggling and who are really sort of an
14 underclass and we don't see them really as -- I
15 think Ms. Cardoza said it eloquently, "These are
16 the folks in the shadows."

17 So when I hear morale, that's great. We
18 don't want to pat anybody on the head and say
19 thank you for a good job. They've worked really
20 hard. They deserve it. We know that there are
21 real issues associated with having a GED versus
22 not having that high school credential. And so I

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1 really struggle with sort of saying that's it.
2 This is a morale conversation. And what is
3 frustrating is not having the kind of data that
4 you need to support that because we don't do the
5 kind of research that we need. We don't do the
6 kind of rigorous research that's needed to really
7 talk about what's happening with adults with low
8 literacy in this country.

9 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: I hear all of that
10 and at the same time, I tend to think along the
11 lines of my colleague from Ward 6 that employers
12 are going to do the same shift in their minds.
13 They're going to say you have the State
14 Superintendent's Diploma. Oh, that's the GED. I'd
15 be curious if you think to the contrary.

16 MR. JACOBSON: I think we're going to
17 have to let that question hang, unfortunately, and
18 move onto Mr. Weedon and then Ms. Lord.

19 MR. WEEDON: Well, actually, I will let
20 that question hang for just a couple of seconds
21 because that's really the crux of my question. If
22 we're going to do this and move forward, and it is

1 something that I am very sympathetic to and
2 believe that we should in some way, but at the end
3 of the day, I think DC could be a real leader here
4 and not just say we're going to award a
5 Superintendent's Diploma or a diploma of whatever
6 name to GED recipients.

7 But we also need to recognize the work
8 that the adult charters are doing and hold the
9 students that we're giving these diplomas to or
10 awarding these diplomas to -- we're not giving
11 them anything, they're earning them -- but
12 awarding these diplomas to these students and
13 saying it's the GED plus.

14 My question would be what's that plus?
15 How do we really award something that's valuable
16 and goes beyond just a GED if there's the stigma
17 around the GED? We alone aren't going to change
18 that, despite the changes to the test itself.

19 So what is that plus that we're really
20 rewarding?

21 MS. JOHNSON: The plus that we're
22 rewarding with a state diploma is what you're

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1 asking?

2 MR. WEEDON: Yes.

3 MS. JOHNSON: The plus is that these
4 adults are also getting these work readiness
5 skills. These are integrated programs. I mean,
6 you're going to start to see a huge shift. I know
7 for sure Carlos Rosario has not only the academic
8 portion of the program, but they are the workforce
9 programs that are integrated into these adult ed
10 programs.

11 Right now, adult charters are uniquely
12 positioned to really do what's coming down the
13 pipe with the changes in the Workforce and
14 Innovation and Opportunity Act. The plus is that
15 it's not just the academic piece that's happening
16 in these programs, there are workforce pieces that
17 are happening in a number of these programs. So
18 it's much more than we, you know, sometimes what
19 I've heard is that we're looking at sort of the
20 high school curriculum and all of the other things
21 that they're doing. Adults are also dually
22 enrolled. Adults are also picking up the work

1 readiness kinds of things.

2 There is service learning that is
3 happening in our program in particular, and I know
4 there are some happening in the other adult
5 charters. So there is a lot more that happens in
6 an adult school that does --

7 MR. WEEDON: So ultimately, are we
8 saying that we should be developing a set of
9 standards that go beyond just the GED to secure
10 this state diploma that incorporate those work
11 readiness skills, that incorporate and maybe
12 competency- based. The skills that the adults
13 have that really say these students are working
14 hard and have received more than a GED?

15 I mean, everything I'm hearing is that
16 these students are doing a lot more. And in some
17 way we need to codify that in policy so that
18 employers, universities, other who say it's just
19 the GED. Well, no, it's not. It's the State
20 Superintendent's Diploma.

21 MR. MARTINEZ: Right. I think it can
22 come in the form of financial literacy courses.

1 The issue with things like that is that you could
2 offer them on and on, but not everyone is
3 interested in that portion of it, for example.

4 The plus, whatever the plus is, if it's
5 written down for one school, it won't match the
6 needs of a student of another school. I mean, we
7 have three very distinct schools right here, right
8 now. A set of policies like that would not really
9 measure everybody's gains the same. We're not
10 looking for a plus, necessarily, we're looking for
11 the equivalent. Right now it looks like it's the
12 minus that we're looking at and we're focusing on
13 we don't want to give you the same level of
14 advantage because you didn't do 25 credits and you
15 didn't play for a team in high school, and you
16 didn't go to prom.

17 I mean, we are looking at the exact same
18 standards in a different format for science,
19 social studies, reading, and language arts, and
20 math. That's really the core of how the students
21 get prepared for college. So if they're able to
22 write, read, and solve math problems, and fill out

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1 applications and navigate the world, there doesn't
2 need to be any more pluses to that. It just needs
3 to be a just recognition that they are ready for
4 college.

5 MR. WEEDON: Right. That's largely what
6 the GED is. So dressing up a pig in lipstick,
7 it's still a pig. How do we really push forward
8 and make sure that what we do, from a policy
9 perspective, changes or helps to change the
10 perceptions of the GED? Or positions DC above
11 what other states are doing?

12 MR. JACOBSON: And that's going to be
13 another question that we're going to let hang so
14 that we can get to Ms. Lord and then to our final
15 panel. I think what this shows us is there is a
16 great yearning from Board members to understand a
17 lot of aspects of this issue a lot better than we
18 currently do. I think we can plan to have some
19 roundtables and some community discussion in the
20 summer and into the fall on this. So this is not
21 Board members only opportunity to engage on this
22 issue. We intend there to be more and partnership

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1 with other folks.

2 Ms. Lord.

3 MS. LORD: Thank you, Mr. President. I
4 will try to keep this short. I am very struck by
5 the similarities in the discussion between a
6 Superintendent's Diploma and the GED. The same
7 things that we heard with career technical
8 education, you know, it doesn't get any respect.
9 It's oh, it's not the old shop class, and yet when
10 you ask employers whether they hire for, they
11 don't care about the diploma, they care about do
12 you have that IT certification?

13 Are you certified to do the job? I'm
14 also struck about the conversations we've been
15 having about competency-based learning. So my
16 question is really, in your adult programs, do you
17 use competencies?

18 Do you measure competencies? And would
19 that perhaps, supply a model for us, as we move
20 forward, thinking about that?

21 Then the second questions is should this
22 Superintendent's Diploma only be applied to the

1 2014 GED?

2 I mean, that is rigorous college career
3 ready, proven in your graduates, to really prepare
4 students well. So my two questions are really
5 competency-based learning and sort of should we be
6 extending a Superintendent's Diploma to people who
7 took the GED in 1999?

8 MS. JOHNSON: I've also thought that
9 sort of the models, good models of adult education
10 and competency-based education -- so yes. The
11 answer is yes for competencies.

12 Certainly, we've got about three layers
13 of competencies. There are the GED competencies.
14 There are CASAS competencies. You know, there are
15 the college and career readiness competencies that
16 you're using in your program, you know, good adult
17 ed programs. I know my colleagues here are doing
18 the same thing.

19 The thing that is different than adult
20 education that could be borrowed for K-12 is that
21 we move kids in age cohorts through our system.
22 It's all about moving your grade level and moving

1 through at a certain age. That all goes away. Our
2 entry into the adult charter system was really
3 hard because I still think that the Charter School
4 Board sort of thinks of you've got a cohort that
5 comes in together and they're going to move
6 together through this program, and that just
7 doesn't happen. What happens is you come in, you
8 got a baseline of skills. You look at where those
9 skills are and competencies and you move people
10 based upon individual assessments. Where are their
11 skills and are they ready to move from whole
12 numbers to fractions?

13 Are they able to move from a sentence to
14 a paragraph writing? That's how folks are moving
15 through, at least in our program, and I know there
16 is a level of that happening in a lot of the other
17 adult programs.

18 I think in K-12 and taking a look at how
19 we really individualize instruction for adults,
20 there are some lessons to be learned there. On
21 the question of do we give the Superintendent's
22 Diploma for those who've passed, you know, I guess

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1 the policy generally take effect going forward.

2 MS. LORD: But it also sounds like if we
3 approach the policy change in a different manner,
4 say for example, to allow competency-based
5 learning, then all of your institutions would be
6 permitted to have a high school diploma. You can
7 have a diploma from your school.

8 I'm sort of thinking to myself, gee, if
9 this test is so rigorous and prepares students so
10 well, maybe we should make the state test and have
11 all of our students, no matter what age they are,
12 take that. I'm not sure I'm prepared to go that
13 far right now, but it does beg the question of if
14 there is a really viable model for people who are
15 challenging students, they're working, they're
16 poor or if they've kids, it's something worth
17 exploring. Your programs offer a look at what it
18 looks like.

19 So as we move forward, to my Ward 8
20 colleague's comment, education isn't just a civil
21 rights issue, it's emancipation. And whether you
22 get education in the little conveyor belt that's

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1 known as K-12 or whether you acquire the
2 credentials and the learning, and the knowledge
3 and the skills in some other fashion, I think it's
4 up to all of us to imagine how to make the most
5 accessible, highest quality, learning experience
6 for all of our residents. If you offer a model,
7 that's great.

8 MS. WATTENBERG: Can I close us out with
9 30 seconds?

10 MR. JACOBSON: You can close us out,
11 very briefly, with no questions, hopefully.

12 MS. WATTENBERG: No. I just wanted to
13 thank you so, so, so much, especially to Ms.
14 Johnson, who has been out here three times during
15 my tenure to testify. We're going to take this
16 forward. I also want to say you guys did a
17 terrific job and made a tremendous case for the
18 benefit that this will provide -- well, a
19 tremendous case for how much your students have
20 earned this. How much they deserve something
21 special. And that's really important because as
22 we go forward, there will be discussion about

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1 trade-offs and it's really important for us to
2 have a very good, strong understanding of the
3 benefits and I think you've done a great job of
4 that.

5 I also want to say for a lot of the back
6 and forth on the statistics, that we have a great
7 policy analyst, who, as we go forward, we want
8 statistics from you, but I think we also have some
9 work that we have to do to settle some of these
10 statistical discussions and add together what you
11 have.

12 So thank you so much.

13 With that, the panel is released with
14 our thanks and appreciation for coming down and
15 spending so much time with us. If you have
16 testimony that hasn't already been submitted to
17 our folks, please do that. We appreciate you
18 coming down.

19 We're now going to hear from our final
20 panel, as we are into our fourth hour here. Dr.
21 Antoinette Mitchell, who is the Assistant
22 Superintendent of Postsecondary and Career

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1 Education at OSSE.

2 Before that I'm going to allow the
3 Superintendent to introduce her. Heading into
4 that, I'm going to say if we can stick to the five
5 minutes on testimony, that would be great. Board
6 members, if we could do one eight-minute round and
7 not have a second round, I think that might work
8 best if no one has objections.

9 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Why don't you do two
10 fours? I think it just helps people to be able to
11 sort of --

12 MR. JACOBSON: Two four-minute rounds?

13 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: I would favor that.

14 MR. JACOBSON: All right. We'll do two
15 four-minute rounds. Dr. Mitchell. I'm sorry, Ms.
16 Kang. Superintendent Kang.

17 MS. KANG: Yes. I just wanted to
18 briefly comment and say first, I appreciate the
19 level of engagement and interest in this issue. I
20 think we knew that there would be a need for
21 significant conversation, which is why we have not
22 brought this matter forward as a specific proposal

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1 for a vote. We knew that this was the start of a
2 longer conversation. And I just wanted to clarify
3 that actually, the proposals we have brought
4 forward since I've become superintendent were
5 around state-managed schools only.

6 So I know this was originally introduced
7 in December, but we have since then not brought
8 this issue up for a formal vote because we knew a
9 longer conversation needed to take place.

10 I also just want to say that I'm
11 actually struck by some of the parallels between
12 this discussion and the health standards
13 discussion we had earlier this evening. I just
14 want to urge that I think that part of our role as
15 a state education agency and a State Board is to
16 consider the voices of the people that we serve
17 when they are raising challenges for us. Places
18 where they see our roles potentially helping them
19 in addressing a barrier that they face.

20 And so we heard from students and
21 community voices earlier this evening about the
22 need for a different approach to health education,

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1 not only in the standards as a basis for one point
2 of foundation for that, but also in other actions,
3 resources, et cetera. And I appreciated the
4 acknowledgment, both from the panelist and from
5 the Board that standards are one piece of that,
6 the one piece we can act on in the shorter term.
7 And there are other parts of that need to take
8 place. So I just wanted to put those thoughts out
9 there.

10 Dr. Mitchell and her team work really
11 closely with alternative and adult education
12 providers in the District. They've been working
13 and understand these needs really deeply and have
14 been working on this particular issue. I also
15 want to acknowledge also Colin Shurer (phonetic)
16 from Dr. Mitchell's team is here. He has come
17 back from vacation just for this discussion, so I
18 really appreciate him being here as well.

19 Now, we'll let Dr. Mitchell speak.

20 DR. MITCHELL: Well, good evening,
21 everyone. Thank you very much for the opportunity
22 to speak with you this evening. I'm coming to

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1 share with you some additional information around
2 the proposal that OSSE may be putting forward to
3 provide a high school diploma to those individuals
4 who successfully complete the GED or the NEDP.

5 I believe that we've already stated that
6 there are 60,000 individuals in the District of
7 Columbia who don't hold a high school credential
8 of any kind. And we know that there is basically
9 7,500 students, 16 to 24 who aren't in school and
10 who also don't have a high school diploma. We
11 know that 40 percent of the ninth graders who drop
12 out of school dropout and they are over-aged and
13 they are under-credited.

14 This proposal to grant the high school
15 diploma would essentially enable thousands,
16 eventually, of DC residents to have the
17 credentials that will enable them to both get jobs
18 and to enter into postsecondary education. There
19 has been a lot of discussion here about why a
20 diploma and not just the GED. I think that we can
21 all acknowledge that there is a stigma attached to
22 the GED. I think that the clearest representation

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1 of that is in the military, where if one wants to
2 enter the military and one has a GED, that person
3 is deemed a Tier II individual, in terms of his or
4 her education. And that individual will not
5 receive bonuses. And there are other issues
6 related to that Tier II educational level that
7 suggest that that person does not have an
8 education that is equivalent to a high diploma.

9 We also know that there is indeed
10 discrimination that happens in terms of
11 employment, when an individual presents the GED in
12 opposition to a high school diploma. It's just
13 that discrimination is really hard to get
14 statistics on. And as Leicester Johnson stated,
15 adult education doesn't have a lot of research
16 efforts anyway.

17 Some of the research that has been
18 cited, particularly, the research around
19 employment earnings, is very interesting. I've
20 looked at those studies and I cannot find
21 information around what the researchers did with
22 the individuals who both have a high school

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1 diploma and the GED. So are they counting those
2 individuals on the GED side? Are they counting
3 them on the high school diploma side? It's really
4 not clear.

5 And without that clarity, without
6 studying those individuals, we don't know the
7 impact of having just the GED in opposition to
8 having the GED and a high school diploma. We know
9 that when someone applies for a job, basically,
10 you check a box. And if you can check a box that
11 says that you have a high school diploma, then
12 your application moves forward.

13 If you check the box that says you have
14 a GED, quite honestly, we don't have statistics to
15 say that, but we know that, as was said earlier,
16 we know that the situation in Pennsylvania, people
17 with a GED have been identified as a protected
18 class. In addition to that, at least we have the
19 support for granting a high school diploma from
20 our Chamber of Commerce here in DC. And that is a
21 body that represents the business community.

22 I don't think that the difference in

1 income is insignificant if indeed we have
2 individuals that have shown the same amount of
3 abilities, in terms of knowledge and skills. Those
4 individuals should be paid equally. We know that
5 the surrounding areas do indeed grant a high
6 school diploma to those individuals who have
7 achieved the GED or the NEDP. So it does create
8 an inequity, in terms of sort of the employment
9 situation here in the city.

10 Those are the primary reasons that I
11 think are important. In terms of higher ed, you
12 are quite right, sir, that ACE does say that 98
13 percent of colleges and universities accept the
14 GED. I cannot find statistics about this either,
15 but I do know that the more selective the
16 university, the fewer GED students that they have.

17 So this is an opportunity that you have
18 to make a change that will lessen the burden for
19 people who have worked exceedingly hard and who
20 have demonstrated quite clearly that they have the
21 same knowledge and skills that a high school
22 graduate has. I think we've talked about the fact

1 that many -- the breadth of a high school diploma
2 representing the high graduation standards, so
3 there are other courses that are required that
4 students in a traditional high school might earn
5 in order to meet the graduation requirements, but
6 we really are talking about two separate
7 populations.

8 Given that we're talking about kids that
9 are under 18 in the traditional schools, sort of
10 providing a breadth of information for them is
11 certainly a good thing. Nonetheless, the core
12 subjects: math, reading, science, and social
13 studies are what we test. And those are the items
14 that are in the GED and those are the items that
15 the people who take the GED, as well as the NEDP
16 show that they have mastery of.

17 I'll stop talking now. I see that my
18 time is almost up -- well, probably is up and
19 beyond. I'm happy to answer any questions that
20 you have.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. I think we've
22 got a great deal of questions. I'm going to ask

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1 Ms. Wattenberg if she'd like to open us up.

2 MS. WATTENBERG: All right. Let me make
3 a couple of comments and then ask some questions.

4 Just on the research thing, I'm new at this and
5 sort of learning it and we're all going to learn a
6 whole lot before we get through this. Based on
7 what I've seen, I've seen a lot of research that
8 suggests that the soft skills, in particular, of
9 GED recipients and high school graduates is not
10 the same. And that explains why employers have
11 typically paid a premium for high school
12 graduates. I just want to put that on the record.

13 Now, I also think that all that research
14 is based on the prior GED. So we really don't
15 know what that means today about the students who
16 are getting GEDs.

17 One thing I wanted to put out for you --
18 well, a couple of questions. Mary Lord had raised
19 the question about would it be for all GEDs or
20 just the one starting in 2014. I want to know
21 what the answer is for that.

22 And then I would add to that, what if

1 the GED changed its standard, then what would
2 happen. I guess I have the same question for the
3 NEDP. So that is one set of questions. And then
4 another one that I want to ask is to me, a huge
5 piece of this is we've worked so hard in this city
6 to make the DC diploma really something that's
7 worthwhile.

8 Joe talked a lot about the stigma that
9 might be attached to a Superintendent's Diploma
10 and how to avoid that. I mean, most of us have
11 been here when the D.C. Diploma had a lot of
12 stigma attached to it. I think, you know, people
13 at your agency and people on the Board and people
14 around the city have done a lot to really inflate
15 the worth and the reputation of the DC diploma.
16 And that's what I want to talk about, how do we
17 maintain that and to what extent does this have
18 any effect on it?

19 Now, I read a couple of things, I think
20 from the National Bureau of Economic Research that
21 seem to establish that when students were able to
22 take the GED that high school dropout rates went

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1 up, suggesting there was a connection. And it also
2 said that as the GED standard went up, the high
3 school dropout rate went down.

4 In other words, as the GED becomes
5 harder, kids are going to stick around in high
6 school. If the GED is easier, they are going to
7 drop out of high school. So I just think we need
8 to keep -- it sounds right me, right? MBER is a
9 big organization. So I want to keep that in mind,
10 what is our balance here.

11 MR. JACOBSON: You have one minute left
12 for her to answer the questions.

13 MS. WATTENBERG: Okay.

14 DR. MITCHELL: Okay. So those were
15 several questions. I'll see if I can get to them
16 all. In terms of soft skills in the GED, it's
17 been my experience working with the job training
18 providers as well as the individuals who run the
19 adult charters and the CBOs that work with our
20 adults, there is not much difference between the
21 soft skills of those individuals who are in the
22 GED programs and those individuals who have high

1 school diplomas.

2 I think that employers will tell you the
3 same thing. Again, we don't have studies to
4 suggest that, but I would suggest that soft skills
5 is an issue that we have to work with across the
6 board with both traditional high school students
7 as well as our GED recipients.

8 In terms of now versus 2014, I would
9 imagine that we would not make this -- we would
10 not retroactively grant diplomas to individuals
11 that took the 2002 series. A part of the reason
12 that now is a good time to make this change, if
13 you decide to do that, is because of the increased
14 rigor of the 2014 series. So I think that if OSSE
15 were to make a proposal, that proposal would be
16 for 2014 and beyond, in terms of granting a high
17 school diploma.

18 The question around if the GED changes
19 its standard. That's a very interesting question.
20 One of the things that GED has done is it has said
21 that the norming that it does to determine the
22 past scores is not set in stone but that that

1 norming will change as the high school students
2 get used to the Common Core Standards and
3 hopefully, as they improve their knowledge and
4 skills, when the norming happens, the GED cut rate
5 -- pass rate will increase, along with the
6 increasing knowledge of the high school students
7 as the Common Core Standards are better
8 implemented.

9 In terms of the question about the DC
10 diploma and sort of the fact that we worked hard
11 to standardize it and make it meaningful and
12 whether or not granting a diploma for the GED
13 would change that. I think that if we know that
14 the GED is testing skills and knowledge that are
15 at levels that are equal to, if not higher than
16 the levels of our high school graduates, then we
17 know that there is no denigration of the high
18 school diploma.

19 I also think that if you talk to
20 employers -- not employers. But if you talk to
21 the practitioners, they will tell you that it is,
22 and they have said already that this is a very

1 difficult test. So I don't see it as in any way
2 denigrating the high school diploma.

3 I would sort of venture to say that our
4 notions that the standardized process means that
5 the diploma is equal across the city, might not
6 quite be as accurate as we may think. We don't
7 have a standardized curricula. We don't have
8 standardized grading scales. We don't have an
9 exit exam, so we don't even know what students
10 know in the end.

11 So for those reasons, I do not believe
12 that granting a diploma to individuals that pass
13 the GED will hurt the reputation of the
14 traditional high school diploma.

15 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. We'll have
16 another round, so let's go to Ms. Wilson-Phelan
17 from Ward 1 and then Ms. Anderson. Put five
18 minutes on, please.

19 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Thanks for bearing
20 with us. I'm wondering when it's 9:00, it's time
21 for crazy ideas. So I'm wondering, you know, if
22 we really want to treat all diplomas as equivalent

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1 in this city, would you support asking all of our
2 DCPS graduates to take the GED?

3 DR. MITCHELL: I think that the city
4 would have to think broadly about whether or not
5 we want to do an exit exam. Certainly, the notion
6 of an exit exam is not new. There are states that
7 have exit exams and states that have had exit
8 exams for a very long time. So I just think that
9 that would be a decision. I don't think that the
10 GED is particularly aligned -- well, actually, I
11 think it is aligned with the Common Core, so it
12 could be used. I mean, I'm sure people would say
13 that the GED was not meant to stand as a high
14 school exit exam.

15 So when a test isn't designed for a
16 particular purpose, it's not methodologically
17 sound to use it for something else, so there is
18 that. But I think, you know, if the city is
19 interested in an exit exam, it's a discussion that
20 should be had.

21 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: And correlated with
22 that, one of things I understand all of the people

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1 -- elements that we're talking about tonight, and
2 I don't put them in a lower priority, but I do
3 think when you think about standards and just
4 thinking about standards, giving that we think
5 about the standards we want to set for our city,
6 we have said we believe that it's not just about
7 our academics. We have said and credits have been
8 Carnegie units associated with a whole slew of
9 other things that we find critical when we are
10 saying this person is not just college ready, but
11 is actually someone that we want to distinguish
12 has having graduated from high school.

13 And so when I think about equivalency,
14 that isn't equivalent. It's different and it all
15 might be merited, but it isn't equivalent. And so
16 I do wonder if this shouldn't be called something
17 other than a State Superintendent's Diploma.
18 Maybe it is -- if it could be called some kind of
19 diploma, my colleague in Ward 6 has whispered
20 maybe we should call it an adult education
21 diploma.

22 I don't know, but it just seems like we

1 are actually holding two separate standards. And
2 as a state agency, how can we say that?

3 DR. MITCHELL: Well, certainly, some
4 states do have an adult diploma, but it seems to
5 me that what we should keep in mind is that we're
6 talking about two different populations. We're
7 talking about a traditional K-12 population, which
8 is under 18, and then we're talking an adult
9 population which is over 18 or 18 and older.
10 There are compulsory laws in place that separate
11 the two and it seems to me that the scope of a
12 high school diploma for a traditional resident
13 under 18 is rightfully inclusive of all of the
14 graduation requirements that this Board has sent.
15 It seems to me that for an adult population, which
16 is a different population, you look at the core
17 subjects which are those things that are measured
18 at both the K-12 level, as well as the adult
19 level. And if indeed the alternate routes, the
20 paths that we are trying to create to provide
21 access to more people, particularly the 60,000
22 that don't have a high school diploma, if indeed

1 we think that those core things are equivalent,
2 then I don't see a problem with granting the
3 diploma.

4 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Although, you know,
5 it is somewhat artificial to just draw the line at
6 18 years old, right?

7 I mean, I know legally, they become an
8 adult, but someone's experience at age 17 may be
9 equivalent to someone's experience at age 19. So
10 it's a little bit -- I hear you, but I would still
11 say, metaphysically, that's a challenging
12 distinction to make in terms of saying the set of
13 life experiences that's associated with this
14 diploma because you're 19 years old instead of 18
15 or 17 should be different than for those who are a
16 couple of years younger.

17 DR. MITCHELL: I understand what you're
18 saying and you do have to draw the line. I will
19 say that the biggest group of GED takers and
20 passers in DC is like, 19 to 24.

21 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Okay.

22 DR. MITCHELL: And the sweet spot for

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1 GED is actually around 24.

2 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: And just really
3 quickly, would you recommend that if we do go
4 forward with this path that the statistics
5 associated with a number of State Superintendent
6 Diplomas count towards DC's high school graduation
7 rate?

8 DR. MITCHELL: No, I would not,
9 actually. I think that the high school graduation
10 rate, there's a set process for establishing that
11 graduation rate and it's based on cohort numbers.
12 And so I would definitely advocate separating
13 those individuals that go through the traditional
14 school with a cohort as one number and then
15 another number.

16 As a matter of fact, the Department of
17 Education does just that. They count GED and high
18 school diploma, in terms of educational
19 attainment, but when you talk about graduation
20 rates, they use the cohort rate.

21 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Thank you.

22 MR. JACOBSON: Wonderful. We're go to

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1 Ms. Anderson from Ward 4 and then Ms. Lord.

2 MS. ANDERSON: Thank you. Given that
3 most of the students who are -- or the GED
4 attainers whose education was interrupted -- that
5 was done while they were attending traditional
6 public schools, can you share what the consensus
7 of what kinds of the opinions that have been -- or
8 responses you've gotten to this proposal from
9 DCPS, specifically. I have another question to
10 follow up with too.

11 DR. MITCHELL: I actually don't have a
12 position statement from DCPS, so I can't share
13 that with you. Certainly, individual teachers and
14 counselors that I've spoken with have been in
15 favor, but I don't have an official response from
16 DCPS.

17 MS. ANDERSON: I'd be very interested in
18 hearing that. I don't think they're asking about
19 the fox who raided the hen house, but I mean, I
20 think that we should find out -- I would be very
21 interested in finding out where DCPS stands on
22 this measure.

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1 And my other question is that do you
2 have a sense or can you give me some idea as to
3 what objective other states or jurisdictions were
4 attempting to achieve when they decided to award
5 state diplomas?

6 Was it an economic objective or a social
7 objective? Do you have a sense of what their
8 primary goals with these measures were?

9 DR. MITCHELL: I think there are
10 probably two. One, I think is that states believe
11 that the GED and the NEDP are equivalencies and so
12 they determine that one thing that is equal should
13 get the same diploma or acknowledgment from the
14 state as another. And then I think the economic
15 imperative and the desire to address the stigma
16 that is attached to the GED is the motivating
17 factor for other regions, for the states that have
18 done this.

19 MS. ANDERSON: Thanks.

20 MR. JACOBSON: We'll go to Ms. Lord
21 then.

22 MS. LORD: It's much fun sharing the

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1 microphone. Thank you for hanging in here with
2 us, Dr. Mitchell. Some of my questions are going
3 to be extremely simple. How much does the GED
4 test cost and who pays for it?

5 DR. MITCHELL: Sure. The GED test,
6 nationally, cost \$120, but DC has entered into a
7 partnership with GED testing services and we are
8 able to offer the GED to our residents for \$3.75
9 per test.

10 MS. LORD: You said \$3.75 per test?

11 DR. MITCHELL: Per test, yes.

12 MS. LORD: And the total test that they
13 would have to take?

14 DR. MITCHELL: Four.

15 MS. LORD: Four.

16 DR. MITCHELL: Yes. And then for
17 retest, both an individual can take two retests
18 and those are free. In terms of the GED Ready,
19 which is a fantastic opportunity for students to
20 prepare for the GED, all of our adult education
21 providers have vouchers. And so those are free to
22 DC residents.

1 MS. LORD: So there's a lot of incentive
2 to keep studying and no disincentive to continuing
3 to prepare practice. Okay. So cost is a big
4 barrier in many states and I dare say, our
5 neighboring jurisdictions.

6 Who would set the cut score for test
7 passing? In Pennsylvania, for example, the test
8 scores are set at the state level, it's not a
9 national cut score.

10 DR. MITCHELL: Yes. GED testing
11 requires that jurisdictions -- they say
12 jurisdictions can set a cut score. I believe
13 that's higher than the past score that they set,
14 and right now, in DC, we go with the past score
15 that the GED testing recommends.

16 MS. LORD: So that wouldn't necessarily
17 have to come before the Board?

18 DR. MITCHELL: That is correct.

19 MS. LORD: Okay. The need of other
20 tests, notably, the educational testing services
21 high set that 14 states and a number of the island
22 trust territories also have -- have we explored

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1 that expanding our universe of what we would
2 consider high school equivalencies?

3 DR. MITCHELL: Yes. We did think about
4 and explore that early on when we learned that the
5 GED was going to undergo this drastic change. We
6 decided, though, to stick with the GED for a
7 couple of reasons; 1) we believe that the
8 alignment that GED testing did was closer to the
9 Common Core than some of the other alignments for
10 the other tests. And 2) in terms of preparation,
11 we thought it would be much more consistent across
12 the city to prepare for one exam rather than sort
13 of have the opportunity for adult providers to
14 prepare for multiple exams.

15 MS. LORD: And finally, this whole
16 competency thing, it sort of sounded like if we
17 weren't doing credits for health requirements that
18 all three of the program directors who came before
19 us tonight sort of indicated they could, in fact,
20 issue a diploma, something other than a
21 certificate.

22 So I'm wondering, have we explored any

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1 of that and the correlate of that is have we
2 explored diplomas for super achieving high school
3 students, ones who complete internships or speak a
4 foreign language. Texas, for example, has a
5 diploma that has a state seal for biliteracy.

6 DR. MITCHELL: So I believe that
7 charters can issue diplomas as long as they meet
8 the state requirements. So that is very real.
9 The notion of a Carnegie unit, though, as was
10 indicated here, when you're dealing with an adult
11 population, is not terribly desirable because it
12 takes so long to complete the high school diploma.

13 If indeed we adopted a competency-based
14 approach to education in general, then the
15 providers here probably would and could provide a
16 diploma, I would imagine, particularly, for the
17 charters. The CBOs, though, that offer GED
18 preparation and who work with adults to prepare
19 then to take the GED would not be able to offer a
20 diploma, whether we had Carnegie units or not.

21 MS. LORD: So that also raises some
22 interesting possibilities of, for example,

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1 tweaking or having pilot programs within our
2 graduation requirements that would allow the
3 educational institutions to issue diplomas and it
4 would also, I would think, open up new
5 opportunities for us to make sure that the quality
6 of the providers, whether they are CBOs or
7 schools, are really preparing kids and not just
8 doing the quality job of education because it's
9 all about the learning and not about the setting.

10 DR. MITCHELL: Yes, absolutely. I think
11 that, you know, the proposal that you just made
12 would probably require some legislative changes, I
13 think, but certainly, the NEDP is a performance-
14 based assessment that is a portfolio and people
15 have to include demonstration of mastery of 70
16 competencies in seven areas. And a competency-
17 based approach would fit that perfectly.

18 MR. JACOBSON: Wonderful. I have a
19 couple of questions if no other Board members have
20 a first round question. Great.

21 I'm going to actually play off Ms. Lord
22 and Ms. Phelan's idea to throw some crazy ideas

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1 out there since it is late. My question is, is
2 one answer to this to grant adult education folks,
3 like the ones who were here before us, the ability
4 to grant diplomas like a regular LEA can?

5 DR. MITCHELL: Yes. You know, I guess
6 we can change legislation, but generally, schools
7 grant diplomas. So to enable an LEA -- I'm sorry.
8 To enable a CBO to grant a diploma, would indeed
9 be very much outside of the box.

10 MR. JACOBSON: Okay. And then speaking
11 of the box, actually, you played right into my
12 second question. DC, a number of years ago, the
13 council banned the boxed legislation to remove
14 from job applications, the box to check if you had
15 been incarcerated. Council passed that
16 legislation. Does it make sense for the council
17 to pass legislation to ban the box where employers
18 can't ask if you have a GED or a diploma?

19 DR. MITCHELL: I don't think so. It
20 seems to me that employers have the right to
21 understand the educational level of perspective
22 employees. And so I don't see the need to do

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1 that.

2 MR. JACOBSON: Okay. Thank you. One of
3 the themes that has come up frequently is the
4 theme of access versus barrier and that one of the
5 reasons that had been given for making this policy
6 change is to remove barriers to provide access to
7 under-represented populations. Can you elaborate
8 on that a little bit for me?

9 DR. MITCHELL: Sure. I think we've been
10 here before. There is clearly a stigma attached
11 to the GED. That stigma has to do with the fact
12 that some people believe the GED is an easy test
13 to take. Some people believe that the people who
14 earn a GED are underserving because they dropped
15 out of school, and some people believe that people
16 who earn the GED not only dropped out of school,
17 but that they dropped out because of intellectual
18 deficiencies.

19 Clearly, none of this is true. And with
20 the new test, which is so much more rigorous,
21 possibly, with the new test that is more rigorous,
22 a diploma, on top of passing the GED, would

1 acknowledge, as a city, that this person has,
2 indeed accomplished the equivalent of those
3 individuals that go through K-12 school setting. I
4 think that it's important to acknowledge that if
5 an individual has not been successful the first
6 time around, often it's not just the failure of
7 the individual, but it's the collective failure of
8 all of us and this is the way that we can begin to
9 address some of that.

10 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. And to Mr.
11 Jones point, any additional data and information
12 you can provide us about removal of barriers
13 through this process, the military is one thing,
14 earning potential is potentially another thing.
15 Scholarships, I think were mentioned by the
16 previous panel.

17 DR. MITCHELL: Yes.

18 MR. JACOBSON: If we could just get a
19 list of all of the barriers that could potentially
20 be removed or would actually be removed through
21 enactment of this policy, I think that would be
22 very enlightening for us.

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1 DR. MITCHELL: Sure.

2 MR. JACOBSON: Please make it as
3 comprehensive as possible. My final question is
4 where do these folks live who are taking GEDs?

5 Which wards do they live in? Not only
6 the people who take the GED exam, but those that
7 actually earn a GED, where do they live?

8 DR. MITCHELL: Actually, I believe that
9 they live all over the city. I have some
10 statistics here. Give me a second to pull it out.
11 Here we are.

12 Oh, I'm sorry. I'm afraid I don't have
13 that information. I have years out of school,
14 gender ethnicity and age group.

15 MR. JACOBSON: Can you please provide
16 that to our research analyst, Shawn Chock
17 (phonetic).

18 DR. MITCHELL: Sure.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Along with the
20 information that Mr. Jones has requested and if
21 any other Board members have, if you can compile
22 that and get that to us, that will help inform our

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1 future activities.

2 DR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

3 MR. JACOBSON: So we would need that
4 sooner rather than later, probably.

5 DR. MITCHELL: That's not a problem, we
6 can get that to you.

7 MR. JACOBSON: Wonderful. We're going
8 to do a second round. We're going to go in the
9 same order. So Ms. Wattenberg, Mr. Jones, Ms.
10 Wilson- Phelan, Ms. Anderson, and Ms. Lord. And I
11 have no more questions. Ms. Wattenberg?

12 MS. WATTENBERG: All right. Going back
13 to the testimony that we heard earlier, one of the
14 pieces of testimony that struck me was one of the
15 people running one of the schools talking about
16 one of the students who had been essentially
17 pushed out of her high school because of bullying,
18 because of violence, and then she had a knife and
19 so on.

20 And another piece of testimony had to do
21 with another reason for someone, essentially,
22 leaving their -- presumably, DCPS could be a

1 charter school or high school. So my question is
2 really to step back a minute and ask what kinds of
3 programs exist in DC -- and this may not be
4 something you feel like you should answer and we
5 should have someone a different time, but I think
6 we really should understand what are the
7 alternative programs that are out there for
8 students who were in that situation because again,
9 one of the -- ideally, as we think of the pluses
10 and the minuses, it would be awful if we created
11 sort of an escape hatch so that schools didn't
12 have to fix these kinds of problems. I know there
13 are some programs.

14 I know the STAY programs, for example,
15 work with students who are having a hard time in
16 the regular schools. And I know there are others
17 and I know that there are charters that do that,
18 and I think we really need to have just a good
19 sense of what those are to the extent that we can
20 provide a regular high school education to a lot
21 of these students instead of letting them get sort
22 of pushed out and then ended up in the GED system.

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1 So to the extent that you can answer
2 that in a couple of minutes or tell us who to talk
3 to later.

4 DR. MITCHELL: Sure. I can give it a
5 shot. The thing that comes to my mind most
6 immediately is the Youth Re-engagement Center,
7 which is an entity which is an OSSE -- the part of
8 OSSE that is specifically designed to do outreach
9 to students who are between the ages of 16 and 24
10 and not currently in school. We have a staff of
11 six individuals and they go out, actively do
12 outreach to those individuals and do a full
13 assessment of where they are, both in terms of
14 education, but also other social and economic
15 needs.

16 We have established very strong
17 relationships with city agencies. Everything from
18 the Department of Transportation to behavioral
19 health, to DOES, to Health and Human Services. We
20 work with those individuals once we understand
21 their needs to find a best educational fit for
22 those individuals.

1 We have connections with both DCPS with
2 the charter schools with alternative schools with
3 CBOs so we find the best fit. We work with that
4 individual to ensure that they are enrolled and we
5 stay with that individual for a year. The Re-
6 engagement Center is relatively new, but we're
7 very excited about the possibilities there, and
8 that comes to mind most immediately.

9 You sort of talked about the other
10 schools and school settings that are available,
11 you know, once a student, unfortunately, may be
12 pushed out or leaves a traditional high school.

13 MS. KANG: If I could just tack on for
14 one second. I would say that the system that Dr.
15 Mitchell is describing speaks to, I think both the
16 LEAs, traditional charter and our desire to find
17 multiple pathways that fit the diverse needs of
18 our student, whether that is through traditional
19 high schools.

20 Some of them are re-enrolling in
21 traditional high schools. Some of them are re-
22 enrolling in alternative settings, some are going

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1 to these adult providers that work with ages 16
2 and up, and so we're looking for the best fit for
3 the needs of the student.

4 MS. WATTENBERG: It's late. I'm ending
5 my questions.

6 MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Jones.

7 MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. President.
8 Considering the late hour, I'll be extremely brief
9 because I have a lot of questions, but I believe,
10 Dr. Mitchell, I can call you and we can discuss
11 those issues.

12 DR. MITCHELL: Absolutely.

13 MR. JONES: But I want to close out on a
14 high note. I want to congratulate OSSE for
15 negotiating the arrangement to allow our citizens
16 to take the test. And I've seen some positive
17 movement of individuals doing that because the
18 cost barrier is not there.

19 But there is one thing, I want you to
20 make a public announcement because I did not know
21 that you guys had an arrangement to help with the
22 GED Ready because I have personally paid for a

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1 number of them for citizens. So if you don't have
2 that information -- if you do, please make that
3 public announcement. If you don't then perhaps
4 you can provide it to us because that's a serious
5 benefit.

6 DR. MITCHELL: Sure.

7 MR. JONES: For someone who is out there
8 on the ground helping families try to achieve
9 that, I can use that to help families with that
10 information.

11 DR. MITCHELL: Absolutely. We'll make
12 that available to you.

13 MR. JACOBSON: I think that might make a
14 great press release or some other public
15 announcement from the Board to the general
16 population at some point. Ms. Wilson-Phelan?

17 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: I have no questions.

18 MR. JACOBSON: Ms. Anderson?

19 MS. ANDERSON: I don't particularly have
20 -- well, I have a pretty succinct question. And
21 it may surprise my colleague from Ward 8, but I'm
22 generally and overwhelming in favor of pretty much

1 any measure that advantages disadvantaged
2 populations.

3 DR. MITCHELL: Okay.

4 MS. ANDERSON: But I'm still concerned
5 as to how we're fooling ourselves into thinking
6 that if we rename the GED award, give it a
7 different name that it makes -- that it would
8 eliminate the negative perceptions. Again, I
9 think the catch will be that -- and I guess this
10 would have to be brought out, and again, I would
11 be very interested in seeing if there's data to
12 contradict this, but I think it would have to be
13 brought out by what we see happening in other
14 jurisdictions that have done this with the state
15 diploma.

16 I think it would be brought out that
17 it's basically that we're just renaming the thing
18 and that folks will get pretty hip to what that
19 new name is and that there will be some additional
20 stigmas. I don't want to keep deferring and
21 reshaping stigma further down the line.

22 DR. MITCHELL: Yeah.

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1 MS. ANDERSON: That's pretty much my
2 comment.

3 DR. MITCHELL: I don't think that we are
4 doing -- you're quite right in that this is not a
5 great change. You know, we really can't control
6 what other people think, but I think that if we
7 grant a diploma as well as, you know, two
8 individuals that that have the GED, then in a lot
9 of instances, their educational background will
10 not be questioned. I just truly believe that. I
11 have looked for research. I have not found it. I
12 mean, but I will continue to look.

13 MS. ANDERSON: And I would certainly
14 encourage this as we go through this process and
15 we start raising these questions about -- we start
16 looking at this issue of ways to address that
17 stigma that's associated. We can also look,
18 perhaps at some other things that would, perhaps,
19 have some more long-term and lasting value that
20 will help us to eliminate the stigma that GED
21 attainers face.

22 DR. MITCHELL: Sure.

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1 MS. ANDERSON: And I know it is a very
2 real confrontation that GED attainers have with
3 colleges and employers when they see that, but in
4 some cases I've also seen where it actually
5 elevates the conversation between an employer or a
6 college about what the student brings or that
7 person brings to the -- can bring to the table.
8 And there have been some positive traits that have
9 been associated with it as well.

10 DR. MITCHELL: That wouldn't disappear.
11 Theoretically, if a student or someone seeking a
12 job has a GED and a state diploma and they go and
13 they sort of have a conversation with a college
14 admissions person, there is nothing to negate some
15 of the issues that happened in that person's past
16 that may have strengthened that person and given -
17 - and made the person who he or she is.

18 MS. ANDERSON: Just from personal
19 experience, I know several people who have
20 attained their GED who make very compelling cases
21 to both employers and college admission officers
22 as to why that is a strength, in terms of the

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1 package they bring to their --

2 DR. MITCHELL: Right. But you have to
3 get in the door. You have to get in the door so
4 that you can have the conversation.

5 MS. ANDERSON: Absolutely.

6 MS. KANG: And I'll just add that I
7 think to the point about stigma that has come up a
8 number of times, I think the Board's action, one
9 way or another, if we were to go forward with
10 this, will signal, right? If the Board would be
11 adding their voice to other voices that are out
12 there about the value of the GED and about the
13 difference that has happened in the last couple of
14 years with that. So I just want to put that out
15 there for your consideration as well.

16 MS. ANDERSON: Thank you.

17 MR. JACOBSON: Ms. Lord.

18 MS. LORD: Thank you. I will make this
19 short. I'm concerned, just in general that we may
20 inadvertently be creating, as my colleague from
21 Ward said, redefining stigma and creating,
22 inadvertently, a two-tier diploma system.

1 I also would ask us all to make sure
2 that we are not forgetting a significant
3 opportunity to change policy. For example,
4 children who are involved with the juvenile
5 justice system often have their educations
6 interrupted, but our policy does not permit them
7 to string together credits earned to a couple of
8 weeks in detention, a couple of weeks there. So
9 we are creating a population who will need the GED
10 simply because we didn't go back and connect some
11 dots.

12 So as we move forward, particularly for
13 this very volatile population, I want to make sure
14 we're doing right by them, too, and not just
15 creating this spiffy little tool that sends all
16 these signals.

17 I used to cover diplomacy for Newsweek
18 Magazine and everyone was always sending messages
19 and sending signals and you kind of want to say
20 well, pick up the phone and call, you know. So
21 that's really my only thing. I would also like us
22 to explore the idea that was raised by several of

1 my colleagues about making the GED -- one way to
2 truly destigmatize it is to say it's good enough
3 to prove that you're college ready. And if that's
4 the case, then, you know, \$3.75 a pop, that's a
5 heck of a lot cheaper than the state test we used
6 to have, the DC CAS, so just putting it out there.

7 MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Any Board
8 members that I haven't gotten to. If not, we will
9 offer you our great thanks for being patient and
10 for beginning to inform us. There is more work to
11 be done here and we have some deliverables we'll
12 expect from you and more dialogue over the coming
13 months.

14 Thank you so much.

15 DR. MITCHELL: Sure. Thank you.

16 CONSIDERATION OF CEREMONIAL RESOLUTIONS

17 HONORING NATIONAL YOUTH SCIENCE CAMP ATTENDEES

18 MR. JACOBSON: Next item on the agenda
19 is consideration of ceremonial resolutions
20 honoring three very special students that were
21 selected to attend this year's National Youth
22 Science Camp.

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1 I will allow Mary Lord, or at-large
2 member to add more about this and to take control
3 at the moment.

4 MS. LORD: Thank you very much, Mr.
5 President. In the interest of time, keep it as
6 short as possible. For the last couple of years
7 it has been my happy duty to pull together judges
8 to review applicants for the National Youth
9 Science Camp. This is a very prestigious
10 residential camp in the hills of West Virginia.
11 The governor of West Virginia invites state
12 governors, and in our case, our mayor, to send two
13 students, free of cost, no camp fees, travel
14 included, where they experience -- they do science
15 projects and it's just a life-changing experience.
16 Former astronauts and members of Congress who are
17 alumni. This year, we usually try to get our
18 students to the Board meeting so that they can
19 show their faces, explain who they are, talk a
20 little bit about their science hopes and dreams,
21 but they're so busy that they couldn't come, and
22 then the camp coincided with our June public

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1 meeting.

2 So we honored them with a ceremonial
3 resolution and I would just like to say on behalf
4 of the judges that we had three fabulous
5 candidates. Camila Holman, who is a graduating
6 senior from School Without Walls was the only one
7 who had the full three and-a-half weeks to attend
8 the camp, and she will be going off to the
9 University of Edinburgh to study biology and
10 international relations.

11 Taylor Lofton from Banneker Academic
12 High School was another delegate. She, alas, had
13 to decline the opportunity because the National
14 Institute of Health snapped her up for a paid
15 summer internship of 11 weeks. She is, I believe,
16 off to study at the University of Rochester,
17 bioengineering, as a Posse scholar.

18 And our third delegate from Friendship
19 Collegiate Academy, Jacob Martin, also,
20 unfortunately, couldn't attend for the entire
21 time, but he is an absolute engineering enthusiast
22 who was the leader of his engineering and IT

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1 teams, 3D printing team. I think they made phone
2 cases for just about everybody in the school who
3 needed one. He is off to study engineering at
4 Montgomery College in the fall.

5 So these are three outstanding
6 individuals. And if any of you have high school
7 rising seniors this year, either in your family or
8 in your circle of friends, please, please
9 encourage them to apply. It's a very painless
10 application, particularly after the college
11 application season, and it will open up a lifetime
12 of friendships, opportunities with their peers
13 from around the country and around the world.
14 It's one of these incredible opportunities that I
15 want as many of our students to take as possible.

16 So with that, I will entertain a motion
17 to approve three ceremonial resolutions which will
18 put in snail mail to our three outstanding high
19 school graduates of the Class of 2015.

20 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: So moved.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Moved by Ms. Wilson-
22 Phelan.

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1 MS. ANDERSON: Second.

2 MR. JACOBSON: Second by Ms. Anderson.

3 All those in favor?

4 (Board members vote "aye.")

5 MR. JACOBSON: Any opposed?

6 (No response.)

7 Any abstentions?

8 (No response.)

9 Wonderful. Thank you, Ms. Lord.

10 MS. LORD: We'll sign these and get them
11 in the mail.

12 MR. JACOBSON: We will sign them and get
13 them in the mail. We are minutes away from
14 adjourning, but I want to want to continue to give
15 Board members, if they have special announcements,
16 a quick opportunity to make those at this point.

17 Any Board member announcements?

18 (No response.)

19 If not --

20 MS. WILSON-PHELAN: Motion to adjourn.

21 MR. JACOBSON: By Ms. Wilson-Phelan. Is
22 there a second?

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1 MR. JONES: Second.

2 MR. JACOBSON: By Mr. Jones. All in
3 favor?

4 (Board members vote "aye.")

5 MR. JACOBSON: We stand adjourned.

6 (Whereupon, at 9:55 p.m., the
7 Public Meeting was adjourned.)

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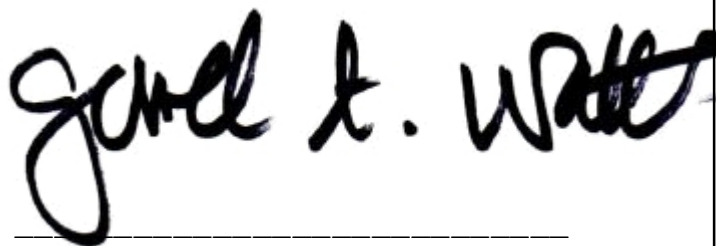
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1 CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, GERVEL A. WATTS, the officer before whom the
3 foregoing meeting was taken, do hereby certify
4 that the testimony that appears in the foregoing
5 pages was recorded by me and thereafter reduced to
6 typewriting under my direction; that said meeting
7 is a true record of the proceedings; that I am
8 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by
9 any of the parties to the action in which this
10 meeting was taken; and further, that I am not a
11 relative or employee of any counsel or attorney
12 employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or
13 otherwise interested in the outcome of this
14 action.



17
18
19
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21

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gervel A. Watts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

GERVEL A. WATTS
Notary Public in and for the
District of Columbia

22 My Commission expires: February 14, 2019

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