

Karen Williams March 22, 2017
ESSA Testimony

I would like to start by thanking our stakeholders, parents, teachers, and education advocates for their insightful, thoughtful, and helpful input during this past year. My inbox has been stuffed with emails and texts, messages and letters full of information on how we can build a better accountability system.

I assure you, my colleagues and I have looked at and listened to them all. Our ESSA Committee chair Ruth Wattenberg has held many meetings since we started this process, and moved the members towards consensus recommendations. She has fought hard to have all our ideas incorporated in the new ESSA plan. We must remember that right now proficiency is the only measure of success we have. Few other metrics currently exist in the District on which to build an ideal accountability system. Saying this I feel compelled to vote for the proposed State Accountability plan. On Monday and Tuesday, many State Board Members had the honor of attending conference hosted by the National Association of

State Boards of Education. The focus of the conference was of course, ESSA, because every state in the union is grappling with this issue. What we heard at this conference, and at the many other ESSA forums and conferences we attended, were great new innovative approaches to measuring achievement, but unfortunately, we are all missing the data, strategies, and plans, for implementation of these new concepts. To my amazement, the Washington DC plan was mentioned as an innovative model of how to develop a plan using the data and info that currently exists while looking forward to creating a plan and timeline to include more of matrix's, i.e. such as a School Environment Survey; developing a way to give more weight to the high school growth component; and creating a School Report Card, that allows parents to assess all schools, DCPS and PCS using the same info.

The SBOE and OSSE have learned a great deal from this first round of public engagement and we vow to do a more thoughtful and thorough job next time round. Right, you say, we have heard

those promises before. I promise you as soon as we can map out new time, we will be back asking for your input in the next round of submission. Believe me when I say, **we heard you**, and trust us to be the forum you need to be heard.

The plan we are voting for tonight is not ideal by any means.

There is still much work to be done. We would like to have school environment surveys, more weight on high school growth, and other untested measures of achievement, but that's the problem, these criteria in many cases have not been developed across our education system, and therefore cannot be used as indicators in this integration of the ESSA Plan.

OSSE has removed 10 points from the proficiency weight reducing it to 30. These 10 points have been set aside for the inclusion in the School Climate Matrix.

Most our schools both DCPS and Public Charter have weighed in in favor of the ESSA Plan. It is our schools who must implement this new approach. So, we are pleased to see that they are supporting our work.

I am a product of DCPS. So were my parents and grandparents. We're all educators. Thus, my passion for education and why I am serving as the Ward 7 State Board of Education Representative. My goal is to ensure that the same high quality education that prepared me to serve, is available for all and our public education graduates and prepares them for college career and beyond. As an elective representative if you don't trust me to fight for your right to participate in the process, you can just vote me out of office during the next election cycle. But if you trust us today, by the next election cycle you will be able to measure how much the plan has grown and how much better all our students are progressing. Then we will be able to continue our work knowing we have accomplished something that has not existed in this city, ever. EDUCATIONAL EQUITY ACROSS ALL SECTORS OF THE CITY! So tonight, I am voting to support the ESSA plan as proposed by OSSE and the SBOE. Thank you!