

## **Remarks, as prepared, Jack Jacobson, Vice President, Ward 2**

Thank you Madam President.

I want to start by thanking my constituents for their thoughtful and constructive engagement throughout this year-long discussion on the Superintendent's proposed state accountability plan, which is required under the Every Student Succeeds Act. I've received telephone calls, emails, and tweets, have had conversations at the supermarket and ANC meetings, and participated in numerous roundtables, community meetings, and State Board fora. I've heard arguments on all sides, and I appreciate your activism and your passion to do what is best for our children.

The dialogue we've engaged in has been critical in informing the Board as to what is working and what is not working in our schools. I think many of us have also been frustrated at what is achievable within the State Accountability Plan and about what is not achievable through this plan, but that the Board still needs to work on to continue to improve school quality and close the achievement gap that has persisted for far too long.

The plan before us tonight is not a panacea, nor is it perfect. But this is a better plan because of the Board's thoughtful engagement with our families, teachers, students, school leaders, business leaders, and the Superintendent's office. This is an incredibly strong, creative plan that makes enormous strides in multiple areas and ensures that the District of Columbia remains a national leader in improving student achievement.

What does this plan do?

- The plan significantly reduces the weight of assessments from current levels while still ensuring academic rigor and achievement remain the cornerstone of our schools. The Board's work was instrumental in achieving this reduction in assessment focus and

directly addresses the “over testing” refrain heard frequently in our discussions.

- The plan takes on chronic absenteeism directly by making student attendance a measure of a school’s success. Additionally, schools with high chronic absenteeism will be rewarded for reducing overall absenteeism.
- The plan emphasizes a student's growth over her proficiency. This improvement was the direct result of the Board’s advocacy.
- This plan ensures schools are safe and welcoming and that schools provide students with a well-rounded education. For our disabled, LGBTQ, immigrant, and other disadvantaged students, this plan commits to piloting and instituting a common school climate survey.
- And finally, this plan brings together our traditional public school system and our network of public charter schools under a common accountability system for the very first time. We cannot continue to have two separate education systems and pretend that they are equal. This plan will bring more clarity and access of information to parents and families who are in desperate want of information on where their children will thrive.

Washingtonians, incremental progress is certainly progress. This is a strong, thoughtful foundation for school accountability that we will build on in the coming months and years.

To that end, working with my colleagues, I intend to offer a resolution at our April meeting that establishes an ongoing ESSA Task Force that is led by the Board that will include parents, students, teachers, school leaders, education advocates, and other stakeholders including, I hope, OSSE, that will monitor this plan’s implementation, conduct community roundtables to continue this rich, grassroots engagement, and review the results of the pilot projects created by this plan. OSSE has committed in this plan to bringing improvements back to the Board for consideration and approval, and this ESSA Task Force will hold OSSE and the Board accountable to following through with ongoing improvements to this plan.

Taking a step back from an historical standpoint, the U.S. Department of Education was created because all students were not receiving the high-quality education they deserve, many times based on race or socioeconomic status. Former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa says, "Education is the civil rights issue of our time." I cannot agree more. The civil rights community in Washington has recognized the enormous positive impact this plan will have, and over 50 of them have signed a strong letter praising the plan and urging its approval by the Board. I encourage everyone to read this letter to truly understand the transformational nature of this plan for our students and the strides this will make in helping close the achievement gap.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield back.