

Remarks of Joe Weedon on ESSA Accountability Plan – March 22, 2017

First, let me say that I agree with the majority of the comments that we've heard today – especially those just made by Mr. Jones and I'll share responsibility for not doing enough to engage those most disengaged. And I too want to thank the entire team at OSSE and my colleagues for their work. We all want one system to rate our schools. The PARCC is a strong measure – the closest that we have to an outcome of what we want our schools to learn. We, as individuals, and as board, along with OSSE largely agree on the need to incorporate high school growth, engage students in learner centered education, ensure a strong and safe school culture... and much more.

I also want to specifically note that we do our parent communities a disservice when we drive wedges between public (DCPS) and public charter parents. All our schools are public. All parents – I'm one with two children in public schools in the District – want a great education for their students. Ideally, we'd measure that by outcomes and all of our students would be performing at grade level and we – as parents – could measure our schools based upon whether they provide a engaging education.

Unfortunately, that's not reality in our city. Nearly 3 out of 4 students are not performing on grade level in our elementary schools. And, I don't think this plan does enough to address the needs of our most at-risk students.

As the plan currently stands... two of the major components – well over 75% of the plan – of the plan are often seen as proxies for poverty... Attendance and test scores. In a city where so many of our students are subject to the traumatic effects of poverty we

need to look long and hard at whether our government institutions are adequately serving those students.

As policy makers, we have to set broad goals for our LEAs to meet and steer practice toward the outcomes that we want. And we have set broad guidelines that will help all DC students prepare for college, career and life opportunities. We can't dictate practice.

However, we know what is measured is what is taught. It's been made clear in public testimony and in my conversations with LEA leaders, teachers... In fact, one of the major arguments put forward by LEA leaders for moving forward in April is so that they can align resources with what the plan measures. In conversations with LSAT leaders from across ward 6 as DCPS schools prepared their budgets, I was not asked "what will help students learn best" I was asked – to echo the comment from my colleague from Ward 1 the voice that rings in my head is from an LSAT chair asking -- "what is the plan going to measure? We don't have money in the budget to support another attendance counselor."

To me, that's teaching to the test and exactly what we want to avoid in moving away from No Child Left Behind.

I largely agree with my colleagues from Ward 3 and Ward 8 – as well as many, many others - about the need for well rounded curriculum, climate and other factors. I also harbor great concerns about how the re-enrollment measure will impact our elementary schools given that many public charters begin middle school in 5th grade while DCPS middle schools begin in 6th. Many elementary schools will be penalized under this element of the plan.

While I believe OSSE has done a good job incorporating many of

the changes that the public and the board sought – I can agree to disagree on whether some of the data points sought are attainable and the timelines to implement new measures. We MUST have a clear process for public engagement – from parents, community members, teachers and LEA leaders - moving forward.

I must oppose the proposal because I don't believe that we have a clear, public process for incorporating those changes and adjusting the plan as needed. Under the plan, we will only have one more public roundtable – before Dec of 2018 – after that point there will be no more opportunities for a plan that could last decades...

We've heard from more than one of my colleagues tonight about the need to weigh-in in the future. To develop HS growth, develop and weigh a climate survey and other measures. I understand the need to move quickly but as I stated before, I do not find it a persuasive argument. I support my colleague from Ward 1's resolution to ensure the SBOE provides oversight of implementation... but with the Board lacking policy to initiate policy, we have no way to ensure that our recommendations are even considered, outside of the good will of the OSSE leadership.

The board has missed an opportunity to engage the public, ensure on-going public conversations about how we rate our schools and – most importantly – to do what's best for the most at-risk students in our community.

I believe we need more time to massage the current language to ensure on-going public engagement and a role for the board and LEAs to ensure that the plan – after Dec of 2018 – measures what we want it to measure.

With all due respect to Mr. this, I MOVE to TABLE the resolution on the table.