

April 1, 2015

Jesse Rauch
Executive Director
District of Columbia State Board of Education

Written Testimony – DC State Board of Education

Good afternoon. My name is Benton Murphy and I am a Ward 2 resident and Senior Philanthropic Services Officer at the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. I also serve as co-chair of the Youth Employment Change Network, the Federally-legislated youth council of the District's Workforce Investment Council and one of five change networks operating under the umbrella of Raise DC. I would like to thank the Board for considering proposed regulations governing the state-issued Superintendent's Diploma.

The Community Foundation is the largest funder of nonprofit organizations in the metropolitan Washington region, with annual grants of more than \$60 million. Education and Workforce development, alongside safety net services, are two of our strategic investment priorities, with significant investments in programs throughout the District that focus on re-engaging disconnected youth and building adult workers' literacy and workforce skills. We make these investments knowing that by 2018, more than 70 percent of District jobs will be beyond the reach of the more than 60,000 District residents who have less than a high school diploma.

With the proposed Superintendent's Diploma, the State Board of Education has a

unique opportunity to support the regional economic competitiveness of the District's youth and adult learners in our regional labor market. Given that Maryland and Virginia have already adopted either a State Diploma for GED attainment or competency-based graduation requirements, District GED recipients find themselves at a comparative disadvantage in our highly competitive regional labor market.

With the increased rigor and Common Core and Next Generation Science-aligned standards of the revamped GED, youth and adults that work hard to achieve this credential are acquiring skills that meet or exceed that of 60% of graduating high school seniors. However, employer perceptions have not caught up to the new reality of the GED test, with many GED recipients finding doors closed to them that would be open to someone that's been granted a traditional diploma. This is reflected in Census Bureau findings that GED certificate holders had lower earnings than those who earned a regular high school diploma regardless of sex, race, and ethnicity or age.

Overall, high school diploma holders earned approximately \$4,700 in mean monthly earnings compared with GED certificate holders, who earned \$3,100, a 51% difference!

For District residents, the Superintendent's diploma can be an important tool in changing the perception that our GED recipients are skills deficient, improving their employability and earnings potential dramatically.

As a member of the DC Adult and Family Education Coalition, a coalition of District advocates, funders, and adult education providers, I would also like to applaud the progressive thinking behind the provision in the regulation that would allow community-based adult education providers offering GED and NEDP instruction to also convey the Superintendent's Diploma. This provision has the potential to have a huge impact on the OSSE Adult and Family Education Department providers that served more than 3300 adult learners in 2013.

With thirteen states already having adopted a State Diploma for GED recipients, the proposed regulations will support the District's ongoing reform

toward a forward-thinking system based on best practices. I strongly encourage the State Board to support District learners by approving these regulations. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benton Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Benton" being more prominent than the last name "Murphy".

Benton Murphy

Senior Director, The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region