



**D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TESTIMONY**

**PRESIDENT & WARD 6 REPRESENTATIVE DR. JESSICA SUTTER**

***Bill 24-81, Financial Literacy Education in Schools Amendment Act of 2021***

**OCTOBER 6, 2022**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Members of the Council and staff, my name is Dr. Jessica Sutter, and I am the President and Ward 6 Representative of the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board). I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the State Board to provide testimony on *Bill 24-81, Financial Literacy Education in Schools Amendment Act of 2021*. The bill would require the State Board to adopt financial literacy standards and submit assessment reports of the program to the D.C. Council biannually.

I would like to start by thanking you for holding this hearing and raising the importance of providing students access to financial literacy in schools. The State Board recognizes that financial literacy is an important aspect of preparing students for life beyond high school—and creating equitable access to instruction in financial literacy should be a priority for the District. In fact, the State Board has heard directly from students, educators, and social science professionals about the importance of financial literacy.

That being said, the State Board has concerns about the Council’s purview in requiring specific educational standards for District students. As the Council is aware, the State Board was designed with very few direct powers, but among them is working with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) on the creation of and approval of statewide educational standards for D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools. Chairman, it is the statutory responsibility of the State Board to make decisions around statewide educational standards in the District of Columbia.

I had the pleasure to serve as the previous-past chair of the State Board’s Education Standards Committee and oversaw the establishment and robust work of the Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee (SSSAC), which delivered a grounding document on guiding principles related to the revision of the District’s social studies standards. During the initial work of the SSSAC, advisory members discussed and addressed the possibility of including financial literacy as a skill within the guiding principles; however, the majority of the SSSAC agreed that financial literacy did not fit within the goals of the social studies standards and would be better suited as a stand-alone elective or part of the District’s mathematics standards. It is the State Board’s understanding that this is a common point of discussion when states are thinking about where and how to include financial literacy into statewide educational standards.

Community input on financial literacy has also been shared with the State Board during other occasions, too. In 2018, some members of the State Board’s High School Graduation Task Force





44 advocated for the addition of a financial literacy requirement into the District’s high school  
45 graduation requirements. There, again, was robust discussion on this topic—and it is included in  
46 the Task Force’s final report. At our June 2018 Public Meeting, two high school students—  
47 Oluwaseum Peter Omole and Menkhu-ta Whaley—also testified on their work encouraging D.C.  
48 Public Schools (DCPS) to offer financial literacy coursework for students in grades 11 and 12 and  
49 explained that financial literacy is an essential skill that students need to have *before* graduating  
50 from high school. As part of a listening tour, current SY22–23 Student Representative China  
51 Jones-Burgess also asked her peers about their concerns and requests—one peer shared, “*I*  
52 *definitely feel like there needs to be more opportunities for scholars, such as teaching students*  
53 *how to be financially independent...students don’t really know about life after high school,*  
54 *especially if they’re going to college and don’t have financial backing it can be very hard for*  
55 *them.*”

56  
57 Further, in 2020, our Student Advisory Committee (SAC) raised concerns about post-secondary  
58 preparation and formed a sub-committee to further explore students’ access to financial literacy  
59 within District schools. Our students recommended encouraging local education agencies (LEA)  
60 to develop a financial literacy class, as well as a professional and career readiness class to help  
61 them be better prepared for the transition into adulthood.

62  
63 As the only publicly elected body responsible for public education issues in the District, it is the  
64 State Board’s prerogative to ensure that we do our due diligence in listening to our community,  
65 drawing from what works and what does not work in other states, and consulting experts in order  
66 to provide what is best for our students. And, I thank the members of the public who have already  
67 testified today on the importance of financial literacy and provide additional information for the  
68 State Board to consider in this area.

69  
70 The State Board is currently in the process of hiring an Education Standards Specialist, who will  
71 serve to inform and support State Board members on understanding and developing the best  
72 practices and processes for revising statewide educational standards—including considering  
73 statewide standards for financial literacy. We ask that the D.C. Council grant the State Board time  
74 to take on this important work in the months ahead. We understand the District’s desire for more  
75 robust financial literacy opportunities.

76  
77 We thank you, again, for elevating the importance of financial literacy for our students, and for  
78 the opportunity to speak on behalf of the State Board on *Bill 24-81, Financial Literacy Education*  
79 *in Schools Amendment Act of 2021*. Again, the State Board is supportive of the spirit of this bill;  
80 however, reminds the D.C. Council that the State Board is statutorily responsible for the statewide  
81 educational standards work that is being legislated in this bill. I welcome any questions or  
82 clarification you might have at this time.

