



**Testimony of Eboni-Rose Thompson  
Ward 7 Representative and President  
D.C. State Board of Education**

*Before the Committee of the Whole, Council of the District of Columbia  
On the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget*

**April 5, 2024**

**I. Opening**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Council of the District of Columbia, and staff thank you for holding this hearing today to discuss the fiscal year 2024 budget needs of the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board). I am Eboni-Rose Thompson, the Ward 7 Representative and President of the State Board. I am testifying today on behalf of the agency.

As the Council knows, the State Board is required by the D.C. Official Code to submit a Need for Appropriations (NfA) each year to the Mayor. That NfA will be included in the mayor's budget proposal and any recommendations she might make related to our request. The mayor understands the law differently and requires the State Board to participate in the regular budget process. Still, unlike agencies under the Mayor's control, the State Board is not informed of what will be included in the mayor's submission until it becomes public. We request that the Committee of the Whole include language in their committee report or the Budget Support Act (BSA) clarifying the budget process for the State Board.

Furthermore, the state board urges the Chairman and members of the Council to safeguard the independence of the DC State Board of Education and support our continued ability to fulfill our mandated responsibilities. With this in mind, we ask that you eliminate the mayor's cuts for SBOE included in the supplemental budget. The \$182,000 amounts to 6% of our total budget. Moreover, it will negatively impact our ability to negotiate with candidates we are interviewing. We understand the city's fiscal challenges, but we believe that preserving the critical services we provide is integral to the well-being and success of the students and families we serve.

**II. Agency Performance Overview**

As we reflect on the past year's accomplishments and set our sights on the challenges ahead, we are pleased to share a few highlights from our 2023 Annual report. This report outlines and highlights our significant strides and underscores our unwavering commitment to the critical initiatives shaping the educational landscape in the District of Columbia.





The State Board held eleven (11) public meetings, twelve (12) working sessions, twenty-eight (28) committee meetings, and twelve (12) other community engagement events. We received over 205 pieces of testimony on various topics, including updating and improving the DC School Report Card, school-based mental health, education governance, attendance, public safety, out-of-school time programming, and more.

Over the past year, our collective efforts have been focused on completing essential tasks, such as revising the social studies standards, crafting new menstrual health standards, and revising the DC report card. These foundational elements play a pivotal role in shaping our students' educational experience and ensuring that our educators have the tools they need to foster a dynamic learning environment.

In addition to these crucial tasks, we have embarked on groundbreaking initiatives, such as publishing the Healthy Schools Facilities Report, participating in the Early Literacy Work Group and School Safety Enhancement Committee, and adopting education governance recommendations. These initiatives aim to create a robust foundation that supports the holistic development of our students, educators, and communities.

One of the hallmarks of this year has been our dedication to building meaningful relationships and establishing our rightful place in the education landscape. The first-ever DC Council and SBOE breakfast exemplifies our commitment to aligning priorities and advancing educational equity collaboratively. Through such engagements, we can collectively address the challenges facing our education system and work towards fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

We are particularly proud of our strides in direct engagement with communities. The growth of our Ombudsman's office with the addition of the DC Special Education Hub is a testament to our commitment to supporting families directly. By creating more opportunities for engagement, whether through social studies standards discussions or joint initiatives with OSSE around the report card, we aim to understand better the diverse needs and aspirations of our students, educators, and families.

The State Board, through a diverse slate of resolutions, brings attention to education issues that we know profoundly affect students and families across the District. As the only elected body for public education in the District, the State Board continues to amplify community voice, enhance interagency collaboration, expand our reach and visibility, and create opportunities for deeper student engagement in our work.

### III. Agency FY 2025 Budget Asks

The State Board understands the reality of this year's budget constraints and what they mean to agencies across the district. We urge the Council to prioritize items that meet the critical needs of students and families and protect the District from any lawsuits.





We would appreciate the Council’s assistance in restoring the funding in local dollars to the Special Education (SPED Hub) with the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and funding a full-time human resources professional for the State Board Office.

The State Board thanks the Mayor for including funding to retain the Special Education (Sped Hub) within the Ombudsman for Public Education office created three years ago with ESSER funds to address the increasing demand for their services due to the covid 19 pandemic. While the District is no longer in a “state of emergency,” the community demand for their services has not diminished, and requests for their services have increased. Moreover, each FTE, part of the Sped Hub team, assists needy families. Since its inception, the Sped Hub has supported more than 800 families, delivered 31 trainings, and published a website with digital resources for families with special needs students. This website has had more than 14k visitors to date. We urge the Council to support this work and retain the funding put in by the Mayor. The Special Education hub is critical for families navigating the DC education ecosystem.

The State Board requests one FTE to lead and manage its human resources work for the agency. To keep pace with the agency’s growth and required governmental responsibilities, such as having a dedicated Sexual Harassment Officer, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, and Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Coordinator, we need one full-time equivalent (FTE) to hire a human resources (HR) Manager. Our Executive Director currently serves as the agency’s FMLA coordinator, Sexual Harassment Coordinator, human resource advisor, ADA coordinator, and Ethics Officer. This eliminates due process for agency staff on issues critical to a safe and productive workplace and goes against statutes passed by the council for the adjudication and reporting of sexual assault and workplace bullying. The State Board currently has an MOU with the DC Department of Human Resources, but it does not cover any of the duties above. Moreover, staff changes and shortages at DCHR have negatively impacted our agency. For example, while our Position Description for our procurement analyst awarded to our agency in the FY2024 budget cycle was complete and ready for the position, staff changes at DCHR prevented us from securing a position number, posting it in Peoplesoft, and beginning the recruitment process until late-December. This human resources FTE would serve all three SBOE offices, prevent legal challenges due to lack of due process, increase organizational efficiency, and improve our agency’s ability to respond to citizen requests.

IV. FY 2025 Look Ahead and Thank you.

As the State Board looks ahead to FY 2025, we are grateful that the Mayor included funds in the Capital budget to renovate the State Board’s office. These funds will help us create a space to accommodate our growing team and better serve district residents. We are also excited to continue working with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to update and refresh the District’s graduation requirements. We look forward to supporting OSSE in implementing the newly passed Social Studies,





Financial Literacy, and pending Social-Emotional Learning Standards. The State Board is also committed to strengthening our communication and relationship with our Education Cluster partners to enhance our service to families and students.

To close, Mr. Chairman, the State Board may be a relatively small agency, but even with a limited budget and staff, we have proven to be strong partners in advancing and amplifying community voice, supporting student voice and engagement, and strengthening interagency collaboration. We look forward to continuing this work in fiscal year 2025.

I also want to extend my appreciation to the State Board staff, including the employees of the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and the Office of the Student Advocate. They are incredibly hard-working and deeply dedicated to our mission. We would not be successful without them, and they have the State Board's deepest gratitude.

I am now available to answer any questions you might have.

