



Testimony of Jacque Patterson
At-Large Representative and President
FY2025 Performance Oversight Hearing
D.C. Council Committee of the Whole

February 25, 2026

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, esteemed members of the D.C. Council, and respected staff. I am Dr. Jacque Patterson, the At-Large Representative and President of the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board). It is with great pride that I stand before you today to reaffirm the State Board's unwavering commitment to equity in education. Over the past year, we have worked diligently to enhance our effectiveness, foster collaboration with members of the D.C. ecosystem, elevate student voices, and advance policies that support equitable outcomes for all D.C. students.

Policy Leadership and Impact

A key aspect of the State Board's work is not just elevating District residents' voices and concerns on education issues but empowering them to shape the future of education. The heart of our work is to ensure everyone in our community contributes to our students' success. In fiscal year 2025, the State Board held eleven (11) public meetings, twelve (12) working sessions, and forty-five (45) committee meetings. We received over 150 pieces of testimony on various topics, including high school graduation requirements, education governance, safe passage, chronic absenteeism and truancy, teacher retention, indoor air quality, and more.

A defining feature of our work this past year was our exploration of policy topics that matter deeply to students, families, and educators. Our close connection to communities throughout D.C. gives us the inspiration and flexibility to convene expertise to examine emerging and persistent issues across academia, school wellness, and the lived experiences of those in schools. Throughout the year, we hosted a robust series of expert panels on various education topics. These public panels ranged from highly technical issues, such as indoor air quality, to student-centered concerns, such as bullying. In several cases, these explorations informed concrete calls for action. For example, in December 2024, the State Board hosted a panel to explore the benefits and drawbacks of in-school cellphone restrictions. In February 2025, the State Board passed SR25-2, [*Calling for the Elimination of Student Cellphone Usage During the School Day*](#),¹ and transmitted it to D.C. Council, which then passed the *Heads Up! Distraction-Free Learning Amendment Act of 2025* in July 2025. The Board also passed resolutions to elevate Civic Education among DC students (SR25-12), to ensure equity in access to graphing calculators for high school students (SR25-5), and to support public funding for charter school athletics (SR25-8).

Board and Agency Effectiveness

¹ <https://sboe.dc.gov/publication/sr25-2-calling-elimination-student-cellphone-usage-during-school-day>





This past year, we took intentional steps to focus our work so that it is both meaningful and aligned with statutory responsibilities. The effort started with a thorough self-assessment. By updating our bylaws and refining standard operating procedures (SOPs), we strengthened our self-governance. These changes were not just technical updates; they clarified how we engage with the public, manage our committees, and fulfill our legal obligations. At our February 2025 Public Meeting, members voted unanimously to approve amendments to both the State Board’s bylaws and SOPs. This year’s amendments included better alignment between the bylaws and SOPs, improvements to language about conducting roundtables, and procedures for replacing student representatives if needed. In FY2025, the State Board’s updates to its bylaws and SOPs clarified the process for drafting legislation and submitting it to the D.C. Council for introduction.

To enhance the Board's effectiveness, members agreed during the Fall retreat on a new set of strategic priorities that align with the State Board’s mission. The mission of the State Board of Education is to provide policy leadership, support, advocacy, and oversight of public education to ensure that every student is valued and acquires the skills and knowledge needed to become informed, competent, and contributing global citizens. Later in the fall of 2025, the State Board approved [SR25-14, *Establishing Strategic Priorities*](#),² which are:

- Ensure safety and support for all students;
- Promote excellence and opportunity for all students;
- Support early-career teachers.

To support these efforts in FY2025, the agency rolled out new tools by which to formulate and discuss policy recommendations. In partnership with American University, the SBOE developed a research agenda to establish clear processes, goals, and strategies for producing unique in-house research, along with recommendations. The result was the PRIME Research Framework: Plan, Research, Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate. Furthermore, staff launched the State Board's new official policy blog, [The State Board Slate](#).³ The blog provides the SBOE with a venue to discuss the District’s most important education priorities and the policies that can drive meaningful, positive outcomes for learners. Most importantly, it provides constituents yet another channel by which to be our partner in vital conversations. Over the last fiscal year, eight posts totaling nearly 12,000 words were published on topics ranging from indoor air quality in schools to the expansion of career and technical education. The blog accrued more than 3,000 unique readers throughout the year.

Collaborations and System Alignment

At the State Board, we continually work to strengthen cooperation, coordination, and communication to better serve more D.C. families and educators. We have expanded our commitment to include our D.C. government partners, key community allies, and other stakeholders. In Fiscal Year 2025, the State Board collaborated with the Office of the State

² <https://sboe.dc.gov/publication/sr25-14-establishing-strategic-priorities>

³ <https://educationindc.com/>





Superintendent of Education (OSSE) on its citywide Math Task Force, which included SBOE, along with other District government agencies, local education agencies, and community members. The task force met every six weeks during the 2024-25 school year and engaged in in-depth discussions, research review, policy analysis, and community outreach. It produced a [final report](#)⁴ with powerful strategies in seven key areas to improve math instruction. The SBOE team also participated in OSSE’s annual EdFEST public school fair, giving families a chance to connect with their elected representatives and learn more about the State Board's work.

In pursuit of the same goals, the State Board worked jointly with the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education on the Everyday Counts Taskforce and supported Compact 2043. This latter initiative aims to expand and strengthen postsecondary pathways for D.C. students. SBOE’s approval of updated graduation requirements is a key part of this timeline.

Approval of graduation requirements is a statutory responsibility of the State Board of Education. In 2025, the State Board geared up to review proposed updates to the requirements. Throughout the year, in preparation, the Board hosted expert panels to explore topics such as special education graduation requirements, students’ skill needs, high school math, and career and technical education. In the spirit of collaboration, the Board established the [High School Graduation Requirements Task Force](#),⁵ which convenes 22 experts and practitioners from across the District to make recommendations, with representatives from DCPS, OSSE, the DME, and the Public Charter School Board.⁶ The Task Force was initiated in April with SR25-7, [Initiating the Creation of a Graduation Requirements Task Force](#),⁷ and members were named in SR25-13, [Establishing Membership of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force](#),⁸ at the October 15 public meeting. The Task Force will continue to meet throughout spring 2026.⁹ It is critically important to the Board that every voice and perspective is heard as we decide on the next set of graduation requirements for DC’s high school students.

Student Leadership and Civic Empowerment

One of the D.C. State Board of Education’s top priorities is ensuring that students are not only listened to but also actively involved in shaping education policy. Since 2015, the State Board’s Student Advisory Committee (SAC) has directly connected our elected members with the voices

⁴https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/DC%20Math%20Task%20Force%20Report%20%281%29.pdf

⁵ <https://sboe.dc.gov/graduationrequirements-taskforce-2025>

⁶ In addition to the members of the College, Career, and Life Readiness Committee.

⁷ <https://sboe.dc.gov/publication/sr25-7-initiating-creation-graduation-requirements-task-force>

⁸ <https://sboe.dc.gov/publication/sr25-13-establishing-membership-high-school-graduation-requirements-task-force>

⁹ The task force membership was updated with new members in January 2026 via SR26-1, *Updating the Membership and Timeline of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force*. See

<https://sboe.dc.gov/publication/sr26-1-updating-membership-and-timeline-high-school-graduation-requirements-task-force>.





of District students. In FY2025, we expanded our SAC from 90 to 150 D.C. high school students. The SAC reviews and provides input on State Board resolutions and projects and identifies important student experience issues for the Board to consider and act upon. Their efforts and high-quality work were recognized in the FY2025 annual report. The SAC also produced [its own annual report](#)¹⁰ with recommendations on key education topics such as college, career, and life-readiness, as well as curriculum and knowledge.

The Board's commitment to student voice extends beyond its student advisory committee. In FY2025, the State Board partnered with the DC Girls' Coalition to host their 4th Annual 2025 Youth Town Hall. The event took place at Trinity Washington University and featured booths for co-sponsor organizations and agencies, including DC Action, United Leaders 4 Freedom, Black Swan Academy, School Talk, and the D.C. State Board of Education, to share information and collect students' email addresses. At the State Board booth, we provided general information about the agency and promoted the Student Advisory Committee (SAC). Over 100 students from various schools across D.C. attended the event and collaborated with policymakers and educators to explore solutions and build partnerships to drive systemic change.

To further strengthen the Board's commitment to amplifying student voices, our agency's executive director, Bernice Butler, and SY '24-25 student representative, Anna Mayer, co-authored an article on how the D.C. State Board of Education has more fully integrated student voices into its decision-making processes. The article, [From Symbolic to Substantive: How DC Elevated Students as Partners in Policymaking](#),¹¹ was featured in the September 2025 issue of the National Association of State Boards' official journal, *The Standard*. This article provides evidence of the State Board's initiatives' success. In recent years, our student representatives have played a key role in some of the Board's most ambitious policy proposals, including menstrual health education standards, improved indoor air quality management in schools, and providing graphing calculators to the city's economically disadvantaged students.

Closing

The State Board of Education is supported by a small but dedicated team committed to delivering high-quality service and efficient operations. As we look toward FY26, we are focused on collaborating with OSSE to update the District's graduation requirements, completing our office renovation through the Department of General Services, and ensuring we have an ADA-compliant space for staff and the public. During the last quarter of FY2025 and the first two quarters of FY2026, the State Board has faced serious issues with the Old Council Chambers during our monthly Public Meetings as we have increased public engagement through digital platforms and in-person meetings. Since September, every Public Meeting in the Old Council Chambers has experienced major audiovisual and network failures, which have interrupted public testimony,

¹⁰ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/thyq4pzqun9t4h04kwzap/2025-06-09-FINAL-SY24-25-SAC-Annual-Report.pdf?rlkey=gwby2gpuzaz96tgnrnmrw9brf&st=8qkh3k2e&dl=0>

¹¹ <https://www.nasbe.org/from-symbolic-to-substantive-how-dc-elevated-students-as-partners-in-policymaking/>





disrupted virtual participation by expert witnesses, and hindered the Board’s ability to conduct its business. We have reached out to both DGS and OCTO for assistance in addressing these issues, but they have not yet been resolved.

Lastly, the State Board did excellent work in FY2025 and is well-positioned to do even more in FY2026, now that the Board’s new strategic priorities are in place. However, we believe we can achieve more. We ask the Council to hold a hearing on [B26-0553, the D.C. State Board of Education Expanded Authority Amendment Act of 2025](#),¹² which grants the Board the following expanded authorities:

- 1) Allow the State Board to request specific policy actions in areas where it already has approval authority.
- 2) Enable the State Board to require executive agencies to provide requested data promptly.
- 3) Mandate that agencies give significant weight to the State Board’s recommendations during deliberations, helping the elected Board fulfill its mission more effectively and comprehensively.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our annual performance oversight testimony. We value the Council’s longstanding support for our agency’s independence and authority. We believe that, together, we can create more opportunities and improve the educational experience for all District students and educators. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹² <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B26-0553>

