

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
PUBLIC HEARING
on
Agency Performance Oversight:
DCPS and PCSB
on
Wednesday, February 17, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

Hello Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Robert Henderson. I am here in my individual capacity as Ward 5 member of the State Board of Education, and I am not representing the views of the Board as a whole.

DCPS

For DCPS, I want to express my appreciation for the responsiveness of Chancellor Ferebee and Abe Clayman on a range of inquiries made by the State Board collectively and by me personally over the past year. I also appreciate the role that Glenn Starnes from DCPS has played in speaking to CTE and related issues on the SBOE's Graduation Recommendations Task Force.

Last year, I testified in support of funding to help international DCPS teachers get green cards. I was grateful that the council allocated funding for that purpose, and was dismayed that DCPS did not follow through. The fact that you, Chairman, predicted as much last year only underscores a maddening pattern of the executive disregarding the will of this body. Teachers who came to the U.S. on H-1 visas and the school communities they serve deserve support in achieving permanent residency.

I continue to hear reports of inadequate staff-to-student ratios in self-contained special education classrooms, and urge DCPS (as well as other LEAs) to do better by our students with disabilities.

Moving forward, I invite DCPS to reconsider the implications of ELA curricula that reduce the number of full-length novels students read in middle school. I recognize that, as a city, we have asked LEAs to adopt curricula aligned with the science of reading and state learning standards, but I do not believe those requirements are in opposition to expecting and supporting students to read full novels and plays.

PCSB

For the Public Charter School Board, I would also like to thank Kristie Dennis for her service on the SBOE Graduation Requirements Task Force.

I admit that this part of my testimony may be misdirected out of my misunderstanding of oversight roles in our current governance system. I am desperate for correction. More than once during my tenure as an SBOE representative, I have been contacted by charter parents who have struggled to get responses from individual charter boards and then found themselves with no recourse. The PCSB offers a community complaint process, but that does not always elicit a response. Who provides oversight for public charter school boards? It should not take multiple attempts and the enlistment of government officials to add pressure to get a response from a charter school's board, yet that has been the experience of some charter families.

I also call on the PCSB to investigate and address complaints and concerns raised by the public. As a representative, I hear testimony or read complaints and concerns about schools or LEAs that have been lodged with the PCSB that, if substantiated, would merit an oversight response. Sometimes these concerns are raised about schools that have recently been renewed. Someone should be providing meaningful, effective oversight. If it is not the PCSB that should be doing it, please tell me who should.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education