

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
PUBLIC HEARING
on
Agency Performance Oversight:
OSSE
on
Friday, March 7, 2025 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.

My testimony will speak to the performance of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

OSSE

In 2023, the OSSE-led Early Literacy Education Task Force recommended mandating structured literacy instruction for several categories of teachers including all Grade K-5 general education teachers. My understanding is that thus far, we have not budgeted to provide training to teachers beyond kindergarten. To make the gains that we want to see in reading, we should not delay the expansion of this training to additional grades any longer. To the extent that these delays are related to funding, I ask OSSE to prioritize and request adequate budgeting and need to explore all options to fund or otherwise expedite this training. We should also avoid comparable delays in supporting math instruction by accelerating the work of the Math Task Force that OSSE has convened and act quickly on their recommendations.

OSSE is currently in the process of reassessing and graduation requirements. I look forward to their continued community engagement to ensure that the District's graduates possess the foundational knowledge and skills that make them college-ready, while also providing exposure and access to a wide range of CTE pathways. I appreciate the progress that the District has made through the Advanced Technical Centers and partnerships with area universities in this regard.

I continue to hear reports from Ward 5 families about late, long, and unpredictable transportation for special education students with OSSE DOT. Students are missing class time, spending excessive time on buses (by the standards of OSSE's handbook), and are generally subject to uncertainty. What I hear from my constituents is that the situation has not improved in the past two years.

I want to thank OSSE for launching the School Climate Survey, which will help us better understand student and family experiences.

Finally, I want to thank the MySchool DC team for coordinating the two successful EdFest events this year, which is no small feat.

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

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education