



**Testimony of  
Scott Pearson, Executive Director  
DC Public Charter School Board**

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

**Mayor-elect Bowser's Transition Public Engagement Forum  
Education Committee  
Michela English and Dr. Wayne Fredrick, Co-Chairs**

**December 11, 2014**

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Scott Pearson, and I am the Executive Director of the DC Public Charter School Board.

PCSB is DC's charter school authorizer. This year we oversee 112 schools run by 61 non-profit organizations that serve more than 38,000 students, or 44% of the public school population, a percentage that has held steady from last year to this year.

DC charter schools offer parents *choice*, through unique, innovative schools with different approaches to learning. Some employ very structured educational environments while others focus on such things as language immersion, blended learning, expeditionary learning or adult education programs.

Our focus is on providing families in DC with quality educational choices for their child's education. We are passionately dedicated to school quality and that dedication has paid off. This year, academic performance at charter schools grew for the eighth straight year and continues to exceed the DC average, while at the same time serving more low-income students and a similar number of students with disabilities. And the number of students attending schools in the

highest tier of our innovative and nationally regarded school quality rating, the Performance Management Framework, has grown by thousands of students.

PCSB also has an unwavering commitment to making sure that students from all backgrounds and learning needs are served in charter schools. We have a team on our staff that is exclusively focused on equity. Due to this commitment, we have cut expulsions at charter schools in half since 2011 and our schools now have expulsion rates no higher than the national average. DC charter schools also serve more low-income students and children of color than the traditional school system, and serve similar percentages of special education and English language learners.

We also embrace the call for more collaboration and coordination laid out in the Mayor-elect's transition plan. PCSB and charter school leaders have already worked with DCPS and other education stakeholders to address citywide issues, like common application

and enrollment, and to produce the first-ever, citywide Equity Reports that offer parents more insight into school performance than any other place in the US.

We look forward to continuing that collaboration, to find ways to best meet the needs of DC students and provide more equitable access to facilities for public charter schools. This fall, we hired our first planner. She will help us coordinate with DCPS and the Deputy Mayor to find the areas of greatest need in the city as well as help charter schools secure buildings more easily.

We also recognize that the innovation and competition from public charter schools is bringing families back to the District and driving the transformation of education in the city. This year, charter school enrollment remained steady at 44% of public charter school students. I repeat, the market share of public charter schools in DC did not grow this year.

This is because of PCSB's critical work in closing low performing schools and approving new charters and additional seats for only the highest-quality and top-performing charters.

It is a myth that public charter schools in DC are seeking to grow for the sake of growth. PCSB is committed to bringing more quality choices for the district's children to serve some of the thousands of new children coming to the District each year.

We are hopeful and committed to being full partners with the new administration as we work to make DC a national model for urban public schools.

Thank you.