<u>PCSB Public Testimony – David Koenig – 2/25/19</u>

Quite a few people are here tonight to testify about the decision to close Chavez Prep, and particularly the lack of transparency in the way that decision was made. This is a significant problem, to be sure. But I would like to spend my time discussing a different issue with respect to that decision—and the decision of this Board to close a school like National Collegiate Prep—and that is the issue of legitimacy.

How can a group of unelected people claim any sort of legitimate power to close a school over the expressed wishes, and against the interests, of the school community? I don't know the Chavez board, but I know that they are not elected, and I suspect—based on my experiences with other charter schools—that many of them have little or no connection to the school and its families. There are multiple charter school board members in this city who get their positions via a corporate style recruiter. The members of this Board are likewise not elected, and are not accountable to the community of NCP, whose members implored you not to close their school, and who are still fighting for its survival.

As one staff member at NCP argued to you when you were on their campus, "It is immoral to tear something down that you did not help build. Especially when you offer nothing to replace it."

One school that you voted to shut down a couple of years ago—Excel Academy—has managed to remain open as a DCPS school, but I have been unable to find any information about how this process worked. If you are going to continue to close schools because you don't think they are "good enough" for your charter school club, or approve a school board's decision to close a campus because they don't like dealing with their teachers' union, you should at the very least lay out a path for them to remain open as DCPS schools if the community so desires.

A public school belongs to the community. Not to an unelected board of trustees; not to a consulting company; and not to you.