



**Roundtable on At-Risk Funding for Public Schools
Testimony of Scott Pearson
DC Council Committee on Education
October 27, 2016**

Good morning Chairman Grosso and members of the committee. I'm Scott Pearson, the Executive Director of the DC Public Charter School Board. Thank you for holding this hearing today to discuss an important resource, the at-risk funding, for DC public schools.

One of the roles of DC PCSB is to provide financial oversight of LEAs. That oversight covers schools' fiscal health, contracting procedures, and the use of funds. Schools' auditors report to us school expenditures according to broad categories such as occupancy, personnel, G+A, and program. Separate and apart from this, in the two years since the shift to the at-risk funding DC PCSB has surveyed schools on how this at-risk funding is spent, and submitted a report to the Council.

In this year's survey, DC PCSB asked LEAs to explain how their at-risk funding would be used for SY 16-17. Our survey results show that schools primarily use a portion of the funding on summer school, hiring additional staff for one-on-one student support, and to offer extended day programming.

Of the 36 LEAs that responded to the survey:

- 23 reported some of the money was used to support summer school programming.
- 20 reported hiring additional staffing or tutoring supports.
- 19 reported using the funding for after school activities.

Overall, our survey results show schools would like to see an increase in the allocations so they can provide more robust programming and services for students. Some find that the definition of at-risk should be expanded to capture populations that don't qualify for SNAP or TANF but are in need. This could include families who receive WIC benefits, for example.

We recognize that the survey includes responses from slightly more than half of all LEAs. Next year we are planning improvements to this process that should lead to responses from all, or nearly all of the LEAs.

The generous at-risk funding provided by this Council has been so important to our schools' efforts to close the achievement gap and assure that all children achieve their potential, regardless of their circumstances. As you know, charter schools serve the same percentage of at-risk students as does DC Public Schools, and we are grateful for your support in providing this much-needed supplemental funding.

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