



**Testimony of Rashida Young
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DC Public Charter School Board**

**Roundtable on Graduation Rate Accountability
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Chairman Grosso and Councilmembers, my name is Rashida Young, and I am the Senior Manager for Equity and Fidelity at the DC Public Charter School Board. Thank you for inviting us to testify today about our graduation oversight practices.

Making sure students are prepared to succeed after high school is a primary driver for our work. We have seen the troubles associated with failing to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive. That is why we take seriously the fidelity of our issuance of diplomas.

For schools that issue a diploma, setting rigorous graduation standards is not only an aspiration but a requirement set by the board. Under the School Reform Act, public charter schools must graduate students who perform competitively on districtwide assessments as well as nationally and internationally. We ensure this by including those graduation requirements in each school's charter agreement.

Each school must submit their graduation requirements to DCPCSB by July 15 prior to the school year. Those requirements are then reviewed by DCPCSB staff to ensure they meet the minimum requirements.

In the case of schools that offer competency-based learning, the school must obtain a waiver from DCPCSB, following a process outlined in the High School Credit Flexibility regulations by OSSE and the State Board of Education.

Another layer of oversight comes annually during DCPCSB's transcript audit. Between March and May, our staff audit the transcripts of all 12th grade students on track to graduate. Prior to the audit, we send each school a roster of all 12th grade students enrolled, which the school then verifies. During the audit, our team reviews every 12th grade student's files, which contains documentation from grades 9 through 12, including transcripts, report cards, credit recovery documentation, summer school grades, and community service documentation. We count every credit of every course taken throughout the student's high school career, as well as the student's 12th grade schedule, to ensure they are indeed on track to graduate.

Our transcript reviewers work with the school's staff to analyze student records, the course catalog, and other materials to ensure a thorough review is completed.

In the weeks prior to each school's graduation ceremony, we conduct a post-audit interview. At that interview the school is asked to provide documentation for any students whose graduation status changed from "not on track" to "on track" or vice versa since the time of the transcript audit. Once this process concludes and evidence is provided which shows the requirements are met, each diploma is signed by the DCPCSB chair or vice chair.

For this spring's upcoming transcript audit process, we have decided to add an additional area of review. For any schools that have attendance included in their school's promotion policy, we will review student level attendance data to determine if those students are on track to graduate per the school's policy.

As you know, DCPCSB receives and reviews monthly attendance data. We hope adding an attendance review into our transcript audit process will improve our ability to ensure the integrity of diplomas in the District.

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