

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



**PR23-342, the “Public Charter School Board James Sandman
Confirmation Resolution of 2019”**

**Testimony of
James Sandman**

**Before the
Committee of the Whole
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
and
Committee on Education
The Honorable David Grosso, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia**

**June 27, 2019
10:00 AM
Room 412
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004**

Good morning, Chairperson Grosso, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Council and committee staff. I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am also grateful to Mayor Bowser for nominating to the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board.

I have been a resident of the District of Columbia for the past 27 years. I am a lawyer, who practiced with the international, Washington-based firm of Arnold & Porter for 30 years, including ten years as the firm-wide Managing Partner. Twelve years ago, I decided to take up a new career in public service, and I left the law firm that had been my professional home for three decades to become general counsel of the District of Columbia Schools. I served in that position for three years and was proud to work for the District of Columbia government. As someone committed to public service, I believe I would be a productive and useful member of the Public Charter School Board. I do not think there is a more important local issue than public education. I have broad leadership experience in the private, public, and non-profit sectors that I hope would be helpful to the work of the Public Charter School Board.

In 2011, I became president of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), the United States' largest funder of civil legal aid programs. LSC, established by an Act of Congress in 1974, supports 132 independent legal aid programs with more than 850 offices serving the entire country. Our budget, which comes entirely from an annual Congressional appropriation, is currently \$415 million. The legal aid programs LSC funds represent low-income people in civil cases involving evictions, foreclosures, child support, child custody, adoptions, protection orders against abusers, public benefits, and consumer debt. My work is about improving the lives of low-income Americans.

My hobby is being a volunteer. I am currently chairman of the board of the D.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. I am a member of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, by appointment of the Court of Appeals. I am a member of the boards of the Tahirih Justice Center, which serves immigrant women and girls fleeing violence; of Washington Performing Arts; and of the College of Saint Rose and Albany Law School, my late parents' alma maters, which I serve to honor my mom and my dad. I am a former chairman of the board of the Meyer Foundation and of Whitman-Walker Health. I am a regular volunteer at the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center's Saturday morning Advice and Referral Clinic in Anacostia. I am a past president of the over 100,000 member District of Columbia Bar.

I believe my former and current work qualify me to be a member of the Public Charter School Board. Because of my experience as managing partner of a significant international law firm; as chief executive officer of a \$415 million non-profit organization; as president of the District of Columbia Bar; and as the chair of the board, Audit Committee chair, or member of the board of a number of District of Columbia non-profits, I believe I am familiar with the operation of a financially sound enterprise. From my volunteer experience in the District of Columbia, I am familiar with the social and economic development needs of our city. From my experience as General Counsel of the D.C. Public Schools, I know about the needs of students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

I believe the charter sector has an important role to play in ensuring that every child in the District of Columbia has access to a high-quality public education. I believe that every parent should be able to choose an excellent school for her or his child. I hope that my service as a member of the Public Charter School Board will help to make these goals a reality.

Thank you for allowing me to testify before you, today. I would be honored to be able to give back to the city that is my home, and that I love, as a member of the Public Charter School Board. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.