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My name is David Pickens and I am the Executive Director of DC School Reform Now. The mission of DC School Reform Now is to educate, organize and advocate to build support for public education strategies that prepare kids to become college and career ready. I appreciate the opportunity to testify regarding the proposed high school graduation requirements in front of the DC State Board of Education (DCSBOE).

As former Deputy to the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, I have experience creating and refining district-wide high school policy and it is good that the DCSBOE engaged the DC community at large to get feedback on these proposed requirements. I understand the critical need to create high school graduation requirements that prepare kids to become college and career ready and I am particularly pleased to see that these proposed graduation requirements are aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

I look forward to learning how the DCSBOE plans to implement these proposed policies and seeing the long term results of these graduation requirements.

The District has always had the potential to be the best public education system in the nation. We have some of the best teachers in the country, innovative leaders with passions to serve, dedicated community members, relentless parent advocates and the brightest students who are eager to learn. We also know that getting DC to where the city needs to be in education will not be easy and requires great compromise and collaboration by all those involved.

We can all agree that our ultimate goal is to provide a high quality education for every District student. DC School Reform Now looks forward to continuing our work to support education in Washington, DC, and to ensure that a quality seat is available for all District students.