

**Testimony to the DC State Board of Education  
On the Proposed Graduation Requirements**

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Hello, my name is Sade Brown and I'm a 12<sup>th</sup> grader at Dunbar Senior High School. I work for the Young Women's Project and am currently in training to be able to speak to my peers about reproductive health. I am here today to testify on the proposed graduation requirements, but specifically I want to talk about the Thesis requirement. This is a good idea, but it has its downfalls. I believe that students should be able to choose if they would like to do this or not. Completing a thesis should count towards college prep coursework and be required for getting a diploma with distinction.

I believe that having the opportunity to write a thesis is a good thing, because it gives students an opportunity to show what they know and to explore a topic that interests them. Students who are already doing well should have the chance to demonstrate their abilities by writing a thesis on a topic of their choice. Students with a 3.0 grade point average should be recommended to complete a culminating project because they have enough skills to complete the task. As a student interested in nursing, I would like to do a project like this on a health-related topic to show people what I know and to show nursing programs what I am capable of. However, I am concerned that requiring all students to complete this without the proper support will create additional obstacles for people to graduate. As a senior, I have to think about senior fees, deadlines for applying to post-graduation opportunities, finals, and other graduation requirements. Many students, like me, also have jobs and other commitments that make it difficult to complete the work that they already have. Students who are already struggling to succeed do not need an additional barrier to get their high school diploma.

There should be specific supports for and benefits to completing a thesis or culminating project. If students are required to write a thesis then teachers should be required to teach a thesis prep class. We need to have standards on how to produce this work so that students know what to do and how to do it. As I said before, I would be interested in doing a thesis, but I have not been taught how to produce a piece of work like this. So I would need a mentor or teacher who could help me through the process. I know some of my peers have difficulty completing their work. They shouldn't be pressured into doing something they won't be able to complete on their own. There are a lot of kids who drop out of school for various reasons and this is going to be another one if there is no clear path or benefit to completing a thesis. I also do not want this thesis to affect students who do their work

and do well. Suppose a student has straight A's all year, but wasn't able to complete the thesis, does that mean they can't graduate?

If a student successfully completes a thesis, they should be eligible to receive a scholarship to the college of their choice and a Diploma with Distinction for doing the extra work. There should also be a special showcase held at the schools to highlight all of the time and energy that these students put into completing this culminating project. Because I know the student wouldn't want his/her hard work to go to waste.

I want everybody to look forward to going to school and graduating. I want my younger siblings to want to go to school and not worry because of this one specific reason. And I don't want to see anybody I know and love give up on school because of this. This thesis shouldn't be required, but be optional for students who are really interested and committed to completing it.

Thank you for having me here to speak and enjoy your night.☺