

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

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Hello members of the State Board of Education, my name is J'znee Currie and I am a 16 year old junior at Dunbar High School. I work at The Young Women's Project as a Peer Educator on the Peer Health and Sexuality Education (PHASE) team. In PHASE we advocate for reproductive health education for everyone and change in our community. Today I am here to testify about the proposed graduation requirements. I support making U.S. Government a required course in social studies. Government is an important subject that we need. The whole world revolves around the government. If you don't know how the government works then you can't solve problems and get things done.

Young people have to deal with a lot of different aspects of the government. We go to school, use the Metro, and have summer jobs through the Summer Youth Employment Program. We need to know how these government systems work and how decisions are made. We also need to know how to be involved in the decision making process. If you don't know how to work the system then you can get messed up and start to feel frustrated. I've experienced small problems and did not know where to go to get information to fix the problem. A lot of young people don't know how the government works, which makes it hard for them to take care of problems they are facing and makes them start to feel disconnected.

Learning about government helps young people learn about voting and why it's so important. Young people in this city need to understand the importance of democracy and voting. I have not taken DC history yet, but I know that DC is not considered a state and we don't have full voting rights in Congress. This leads to some challenges for us to get laws passed. Youth should be working to get DC voting rights. In order to do this, we need to understand how the government works nationally and what we can do to influence the national government.

Every high school has a student government that could be making a bigger difference in the school and getting involved in important issues like why youth are getting into fist fights all the time. like all the fights. How can we have student governments in every school if students are not required to learn about government? Kids want to have fun, but still want to contribute to their experiences at school. We can learn how to create a strong student government by taking examples that we learn in government class. Thank you for listening and for providing an opportunity for me to testify.