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Chairman and Members and Acting State Superintendent Mahaley
State Board of Education
Washington, D.C.

My name is Erich Martel, DCPS high school social studies teacher since 1969 and building representative at Phelps ACE High School.

I support the recommendations submitted by SHAPPE Director Cathy Reilly for an emergency revision of the graduation standards so as to accommodate the original intent of the 2007 revision and not place an unintended roadblock before the class of 2011 graduates.

It is my understanding and hope that you will not stop with this correction, but will conduct a review of the effects of the 2007 revision. That revision was not based on an examination and analysis of high school students' actual degree of mastery of the subjects required for the high school diploma. Rather, it was based on abstract and unmeasurable goals such as "high expectations," "greater rigor," and so on.

When students and teachers are held to unrealistic, rigid and high pressure goals and the public image they support, corruption of standards will inevitably result. You don't know, but you should demand to know, for example, how many graduates from the classes of 2011 and the classes of 2009 and 2010 could only satisfy the respective graduation requirements by taking watered down summer school and credit recovery courses.

I also urge you to consider alternative graduation criteria for students who want a more hands-on career technical or vocational diploma. Students interested in a career technical school should be able to choose between diploma paths that are simultaneously college preparatory and career technical AND those that are career technical or vocational. Students who have made up their minds to go into welding or carpentry or plumbing should not be forced to take college prep courses. Why does a student who wants to become a licensed plumber have to take more courses than a student who wants to go to Howard, Harvard or UVA?

Thank you.