



D.C. POLICY CENTER

Education Policy Initiative

2026 PERFORMANCE OVERSIGHT HEARING

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Hearing Room 412 (Track B)

John A. Wilson Building

Testimony of Chelsea Coffin

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Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole.

My name is Chelsea Coffin, and I am the Deputy Director of the D.C. Policy Center, an independent think tank focused on advancing policies for a growing, vibrant, and compelling District of Columbia. My testimony today focuses on the Office of the State Superintendent's (OSSE's) priority of building futures for D.C.'s learners and how to keep the focus on developing the right skills for success in early careers.

One of the goals for D.C.'s public schools is to prepare students for life after high school with the right combination of foundational knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics.ⁱ It is crucial to maintain focus on and track progress toward this ultimate objective. The D.C. Policy Center's upcoming State of D.C. Schools report highlights OSSE's school report card data, showing that indicators of college and career readiness moved in different directions in school year 2024-25. For example, four-year graduation rates improved to a decade high of 79 percent, but the share of students meeting the SAT College and Career Ready Benchmark declined by 4 percentage points.

Publicly available information on outcomes after high school shows a need to keep pushing on preparing graduates. Based on the most recent available data on high school graduation and postsecondary completion rates for D.C.'s public school alumni, the D.C. Policy Center estimates that out of every 100 9th graders, 18 will complete a postsecondary degree within six years of high school graduation.ⁱⁱ This is a preliminary estimate, and does show improvement over previous estimates of 8 and 14 out of 100 doing so—but there is a long way to go to match the educational attainment levels of residents who have moved here. On high school alumni earnings, American Community Survey (ACS) data reveal that young adults aged 18 to 34 who were born and currently reside in D.C. earn an average of about \$34,000 annually—\$37,000 less than the \$71,000 earned by similarly-aged young adults who were not born in D.C.ⁱⁱⁱ D.C.'s Office

of Education through Employment Pathways (ETEP) will shed more light on these outcomes this year.

These outcomes make executing the proposed Graduate Profile and Graduation Requirements even more important to move the needle for D.C.'s alumni and make sure they have the right skills to succeed. The Graduate Profile includes seven characteristics: critical thinking and problem solving; communication and collaboration; foundational knowledge and skills; global and local citizenship; information media and technology literacy; learner agency; and social, emotional, and physical well-being. Moving forward, it would be good to crosswalk these characteristics both with the Graduation Requirements to ensure students have access to opportunities to acquire these characteristics and to the skills alumni need to be successful in early careers.

The D.C. Policy Center is looking deeply into this idea of the skills alumni need for jobs that lead to economic mobility in the D.C. region. Our forthcoming analysis compares the skills needed for occupations that alumni are likely to have, to those needed for the Department of Employment Services' (DOES') Hot Jobs and Gateway Jobs.^{iv} Early findings show that there is a lot of overlap in the skills alumni need to access these jobs, like judgement and decision making or reading comprehension, and less overlap in areas like time management, complex problem solving, and active learning.

Future efforts to strengthen outcomes for D.C.'s alumni should deepen the connections between high school experiences and the ability to gain the skills they need to access high-wage in-demand jobs. In the short term, this could mean making a crosswalk to understand the relationship between the Graduate Profile and Graduation Requirements and keeping an eye toward the skills that are most important for economic mobility in the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you have.

ⁱ Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). 2026. “Reimagining High School Graduation Requirements: Final Recommendations to the DC State Board of Education.” OSSE. Retrieved from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/cl/fo/ipgkuivzostn3p6sx1phw/ABlk1ad4yc-JorNS5tfU4y0/2025/2025-10/2025-09-30%20Working%20Session/V.%20OSSE%20Presentation%3A%20Reimagining%20HS%20Graduation%20Requirements/Graduation%20Requirements%20Proposal.pdf?rlkey=6qa05ai16c0ju6smyhhsnh3ue&e=2&st=colf6wxd&bmus=1&dl=0>

ⁱⁱ This calculation is based on the SY2024-25 high school graduation rate of 78.7 percent and an FY23 postsecondary completion rate within six years of graduation of 23 percent, as report in the Office of the City Administrator’s FY 2024 Performance Accountability Report for OSSE (<https://oca.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/oca/FY24%20PAR%20-%20OSSE.pdf>).

ⁱⁱⁱ Coffin, C. 2024. “Strengthening work-based learning is necessary to improve early career outcomes.” D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/strengthening-work-based-learning-is-necessary-to-improve-early-career-outcomes/>

^{iv} Department of Employment Services (DOES). 2026. “Washington, DC’s Hot 50 Jobs.” DOES. Retrieved from <https://does.dc.gov/page/washington-dcs-hot-50-jobs>