



FEDERAL CITY COUNCIL

State Board of Education Panel

on

DC High School Graduation Requirements

Wednesday, Apr 22, 2026

Written Testimony of Tanya Borachi, Director of Education and
Workforce Initiatives at the Federal City Council

Good evening, State Board Members, and staff. My name is Tanya Borachi, and I am the Director of Education and Workforce Initiatives at the Federal City Council (FC2). FC2 is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization dedicated to advancing civic life in the nation's capital. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight and to serve on the SBOE High School Graduation Requirements Task Force.

Top of mind for everyone is how well we are preparing DC Youth for their life and careers. At the Federal City Council, we co-convene two industry-led sector partnerships with CityWorks DC focused on construction ("DC Builds DC") and hospitality ("Hire Local DC Hospitality Sector Partnership"). These 40+ Employers are actively hiring DC residents for good careers in their industries, not only as the right thing to do but also to meet their business imperatives.

From day one of this process, we were thrilled that OSSE wanted industry input and feedback on the Graduation Requirements, and we organized several sessions in [which employers eagerly shared](#) with OSSE what they wanted to see. Employers across the board coalesced around a clear directive to help DC students graduate career-ready: **Employers want more students to have access to meaningful college and Career Asset Building Opportunities, such as internships, dual enrollment, advanced coursework, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships. They want to see all students access these career opportunities equitably without sacrificing the rigor of the requirements.**

A comprehensive early career outcomes study by Bain & Co., CityWorks DC, the DC Policy Center, and DC ETEP office reveals both the urgency and the opportunity: D.C.'s high school alumni face stark disparities in earnings and employment compared to similarly aged peers who move to the city later in life—an estimated \$37,000 gap—the silver lining from research also shows that students who participate in [Career Asset Building opportunities](#) are more likely to be

employed, earn higher wages, and experience greater professional fulfillment over the long term.¹ We can't continue with the status quo where we aren't bridging students to their next steps with meaningful and preparatory experiences. Let me give you a recent example. A rising senior at one of our public high schools was given a job offer by one of the largest employers in the region to train as an apprentice in business operations - and earn more than \$35K over two years while doing it. While she and her family were excited about the incredible career-building opportunity, which required her to be at the employer's office from 2 - 6 pm Monday through Thursday, she had to decline the offer because her schedule wouldn't allow for an early release. The role was offered to another student, in this case from VA, whose schedule could accommodate the apprenticeship. We have heard from numerous students, alumni, and school staff repeated instances just like this, and our students will miss out on the opportunities. In fact, the DC Policy Center's report on Career Asset Building opportunities found that the top barrier preventing students from pursuing these opportunities is the rigidity of their course schedules. LEAs also report that students who need to retake courses usually have to choose credit recovery over CTE coursework or summer internship opportunities in order to graduate, and these are often the exact students who need these opportunities the most.²

To achieve this goal of creating equitable access in students' schedules, our top recommendation to OSSE is to expand the use of course equivalency. OSSE has made progress in this area with its [2023 guidance](#), which empowered LEAs to identify CTE courses that meet multiple graduation requirements. We recommend providing LEAs with more guidance and incentives to identify additional course equivalencies, including for non-CTE coursework, and allow students to demonstrate mastery in different - but equally rigorous - ways. Per DC Education Through Employment Pathways reports, DC alumni reported feeling more prepared for careers if they participated in Career Asset Building opportunities. Moreover, alumni reported wanting more Career Asset Building Opportunities at their school.³ **At 2.5 elective credits, DC is offering high school students the fewest opportunities to explore college and career pathways in the country.** The city has made great strides in investing in Career Asset Building Opportunities by

expanding CTE enrollment and funding high-quality internships, but many students lack the course schedules needed to take advantage of these opportunities. According to the DC Policy Center Study on career assets, among D.C. high school-aged youth participating in the 2022-23 school year, less than 60 percent reported participating in intensive career asset-building opportunities more than twice a week.⁴ The data we have is still limited. One step we've recommended is to conduct an analysis to identify which students currently have access to Career Asset Building Opportunities, so we can see how many students have sufficient schedule flexibility to participate and whether that access is equitably distributed.

I fear that the current proposal, as it stands, will not equitably distribute access to Career Asset Building opportunities for our city's high school students. Thus, we will not increase the number of students who experience highly impactful career-connected learning at an age when they need it most.

We have an incredible opportunity to deliver on what all the stakeholders, including employers, are asking for. We have made incredible strides in building career pathways, and we have a vision in Compact 2043, which advances policies, goals, and investments to ensure that DC children born today will be prepared for success in higher education and good jobs by 2043. Graduation requirements are a critical component of this vision, and we have the opportunity to propel our students and schools to adapt with the world around them.

Endnotes:

1. Calma, E. 2021. *D.C. high school alumni reflections on their early career outcomes*. D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/early-career-brief/>
2. Coffin, C. & Mason, H. 2024. *Building career assets for lifelong success*. D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/building-career-assets-for-lifelong-success/>
3. DC Office of Education Through Employment Pathways, 2025. DC Alumni Early Career Outcomes Survey from https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/page_content/attachments/DC%20Alumni%20Early%20Career%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Brief%201.pdf

4. Coffin, C. & Mason, H. 2024. *Building career assets for lifelong success* D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.depolicycenter.org/publications/building-career-assets-for-lifelong-success/>

Additional Resources:

1. [Hire Local DC Industry Feedback on OSSE Proposed Graduation Requirements](#)
2. [Citywide Talent Pipeline Working Group Feedback to OSSE: Grad Profile & Requirements](#)
3. [2nd Round Citywide Talent Pipeline Working Group Feedback to OSSE: Grad Profile & Requireme...](#)