

**STATEMENT OF JOSEPHINE C. BAKER, CHAIRPERSON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND RECREATION
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING ON CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Kevin P. CHAVOUS, CHAIRMAN

MAY 15, 1997

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Josephine C. Baker and as chairperson I welcome this opportunity to represent the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board.

The purpose of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board is to help improve education for children and youth in the District of Columbia by chartering public schools that work. It is one of the two public school chartering authorities in Washington, D.C.

Members of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board believe that charter schools are an integral part of education reform in the District of Columbia. These independent public schools can provide the regular public schools in our city with real life models of school designs that work. They can offer true alternatives to students and parents. At a meeting in Seattle last week, made up of state authorities with a track record on chartering schools, one participant stated "Charter Schools can show a system how it can adapt before it becomes extinct."

We want to HELP IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULT LEARNERS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BY CHARTERING PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT WORK. To that end we heed well the advice of another Seattle participant who said, "A board should err on the side of taking time to plan."

The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board is authorized under the District of Columbia School Reform Act Provisions of the Fiscal Year 1996 District of Columbia Appropriations Act. The Board is responsible for:

- (1) receiving applications for establishment of public charter schools for which it grants charters.;
- (2) monitoring the operations of each school for which it grants a charter;
- (3) ensuring that each such school complies with applicable laws and the provisions of the charter;
- (4) monitoring progress of each such school in meeting student academic achievement expectations specified in the charter, approves or denies requests for renewal of charters for such schools, and
- (5) revoking such charters for reasons specified in the authorizing legislation.

Through a charter awarded by the Board, an eligible applicant is given authority to create and run a school that, except as provided by law, is independent of the District of Columbia Public Schools. A public charter school may be a brand new school or it may be a public or private school that converts to public charter school status.

Public Charter Schools receive public funds based on the number of students they serve, as do all District of Columbia Public Schools. They also may be eligible to receive certain federal categorical funds, such as those made available through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 or Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In general, the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board intends to charter schools

- where all children are expected to learn;
- where students achieve at international standards
- where consensus exists on clearly articulated educational goals and philosophy;
- where there is strong school leadership and an effective governance structure;
- where the environment fosters support for academic achievement, creativity, and enthusiasm for learning among students, teachers and other school staff;

- where children, teachers and school staff are safe;
- where maximum use is made of new technologies in teaching and learning;
- where adults and children take shared responsibility for learning;
- where the school meets a community need, and parent and community involvement is robust and continuing;
- where good business and financial management practices are the norm;
- where solid beneficial relationships exist with businesses, associations, federal government agencies, foundations, or other organizations in the District of Columbia; and
- where full advantage is taken of the rich abundance of resources in the Washington metropolitan area.

We want the school³ we charter to succeed and we are going to work to see that this happens. Our first step toward that goal is the development of a responsible process for selecting the schools that we charter.