

**Testimony of Josephine Baker  
Chair  
District of Columbia Public Charter School Board  
Before the Committee on Education, Libraries, and  
Recreation  
Council of the District of Columbia  
February 28, 2001**

**DRAFT**

***Chairman Chavous and Members of the Committee:***

I am Josephine Baker, chair of the DC Public Charter School Board, and I am accompanied at the witness table by the Board's executive director, Nelson Smith. We appreciate this opportunity to review the status of public charter schools and the work of our Board.

Once again, we can report that DC's charter school movement is thriving. This year, schools chartered by our Board have enrolled 6,412 students, an increase of 38 percent over the prior year. Between these schools and new schools opening this September, we project a total enrollment of nearly 9,400 students in the 2001-2002 school year.

Continuing growth presents challenges in many areas, but I would like to focus especially on facilities and accountability.

Any parent knows that children outgrow their clothes at a remarkable rate. DC's charter schools are doing the same. In the past year alone, six operating schools overseen by our Board moved into new or expanded facilities. Four new schools opened. We have approved three new charters for the coming school year; two will be in temporary quarters for the first year and one will occupy its own building. According to the DeJong and Associates facilities report, at least eight of our existing schools are actively looking for new quarters.

Public charter schools have grown beyond the point where church basements and storefronts can accommodate their needs. They need classroom space, science labs, playing fields, and all the other accoutrements enjoyed by other public schools in our area. That means making real their legal preference in acquiring vacant DCPS buildings; help in getting access to additional city-owned properties; and integration of charter school needs with the District's long-term development plans. We are working with the mayor's office on this

*Sometimes adequate for startup but quickly*