



**Testimony for the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME)
Performance Oversight Hearing
Wednesday, February 12th, 2020**

To: DC Council Committee on Education, Committee on Education Chairman David Grosso, Committee on Education Members, and Committee on Education Staff
From: Kerry Savage, Director of Policy at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)
Date: February 12, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Grosso, and members of the Committee on Education and staff. My name is Kerry Savage and I serve as the Director of Policy at PAVE. PAVE was founded in April 2016 with an all-parent governing board in order to connect, inform, and empower parent leaders to give families in DC a voice and a choice in the vision for education in our city.

For the past two years, hundreds of PAVE parent leaders from across all eight Wards have prioritized Mental Health Supports and Trauma-Informed Training in All Schools. The DME has been an important partner in this work and has especially been a champion for social emotional learning. Last year, a strong initial investment from the Bowser Administration led to more than \$9 million dollars for the Department of Behavioral Health to increase the number of mental health professionals in schools.

This year, our parent leaders are once again calling on the Mayor to invest in the wellness of their students through mental health supports and trauma-informed training. We are deeply grateful that the Mayor took the right step by committing to increasing the per-pupil weight by 4% in the coming fiscal year, but we know there is so much more to do.

In particular, parents are asking that our city's leaders:

1. Invest in our kids and schools by working with the Department of Behavioral Health to provide mental health professionals in 60 more schools, increase funding for social emotional learning and trauma-informed training, and increase the UPSFF and at-risk weight to be in line with the 2013 Adequacy Study.
2. Produce and share a mental health landscape analysis.
3. Develop best practices for working with families and communities.
4. Improve coordination of service and care.
5. Develop a clear accountability system, and;
6. Develop a pipeline of mental health professionals in schools. This should be done in conjunction with the Department of Behavioral Health.



Deputy Mayor Kihn has already met with our parent leaders this year, and we were glad to see that his vision to ensure all students are ready to learn aligned with PAVE parents. Another part of the vision that DME expressed – ensuring that every child is on a pathway to their own version of secondary success – is also very aligned with PAVE parents’ vision on their second priority this year: Increased Access to Specialized School Programs (i.e STEM, dual language, Montessori, CTE programs, etc). I’ve attached parents’ full Statement of Beliefs to my testimony today that includes more information about what they want to see from our city leaders. Most pressing for the Deputy Mayor would be to fund our schools adequately, which they have already taken a strong step towards doing, and to forge partnerships between the business and non-profit communities with our schools, so that students can learn from experts in the field of their specialized program.

We are grateful that the Mayor will once again be hosting multiple community budget forums throughout the city in order to incorporate parent voice into the budget. Our parent leaders are looking forward to bringing their voices and stories to those forums once again.

At PAVE, our vision for the future of DC education is a system where parents are partners *and* leaders with schools and policymakers, in order to develop a diversity of safe, nurturing, and great schools for every child in every ward and community. In other words, we believe that change and growth must happen *with* families not *to* families. We are grateful for the steps the DME has taken the past year to make that vision a reality, but we know there is far more we must do. We look forward to continuing the progress this year.

Thank you,

Kerry Savage
Director of Policy
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