



**Testimony for the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
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: Aiyana Knowles, Director of Community Engagement and Organizing at PAVE
Date: February 12, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Grosso, and members of the Committee on Education and staff. My name is Aiyana Knowles and I am the Director of Community Engagement and Organizing at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education).

In Spring of 2018, nearly 150 parent leaders from all wards and backgrounds came together at the PAVE Parent Policy Summit to share about their experiences and collectively decide what issues they want to prioritize in the coming year. Here, parents selected Transparent Citywide School Funding, knowing that increased accessibility and transparency in school budgets will foster open conversations between communities, school staff, and city leaders, and ultimately promote - and ideally ensure - equity in our education system. PCSB swiftly responded to this call from parents with a new School Transparency Policy that addresses many of PAVE parents' priorities, including:

- Requires schools to post more information on school websites, including detailed descriptions of at-risk spending, a schedule of the school's board of trustee's meetings, and to note which meetings are open meetings (in full or in part).
- Commits to working with schools, OSSE, and other stakeholders to develop a common chart of accounts by the 2020-21 school year.
- Puts all financial information about schools in one place: The School Transparency Hub. This centralized resource also connects parents to a great deal of other information, like school health profiles, school annual reports, and school contact information.

PCSB staff also met directly with PAVE parent leaders upon their initial introduction of this policy in order to get feedback on proposed solutions and what was most important to prioritize. This conversation is a crucial step to ensuring that policy is driven by those it will impact most: parents and families.

At the most recent Parent Policy Summit, PAVE parent leaders chose Mental Health Supports and Trauma-Informed Training in All Schools and Increased Access to Specialized School Programs as their top two priorities. I've attached their full Statement of Beliefs to my testimony today that includes what they want to see from our city leaders. In their



approval and oversight role over the public charter sector, PCSB will play a crucial role in making the priorities of PAVE parent leaders a reality, and we look forward to PCSB continuing to encourage parent and community voice in its work supporting safe, nurturing, and great schools that meet the needs of all children in DC, ignite their passions, and allow them to learn and grow into the best version of themselves.

Finally, we'd like to thank PCSB for seeking to incorporate parent voice in their search for a new executive director. During this process they have hosted several meetings in the evening or on the weekends – with food and childcare provided – in order to hear from the community about what they want to see in the next leader, and invited PAVE parent leaders to participate in that process. I've also attached statements from two Ward 8 parent leaders that shares their individual perspective. PCSB's team has also met community members where they already are and attended existing meetings to gain even more insight. I look forward to PCSB continuing that conversation with DC's families as they look to make this important decision.

We know that when a parent advocates for their child, they see positive change for their child. And we know that when our parent leaders bring their voices together to advocate for all our children, we see positive changes in our education system and realize the promise and the power of education.

We believe that, together, our parent leaders will reimagine an education system in DC to be created with parents, for all of our children. And we cannot do that work without partners like the Public Charter School Board who also believe in the power and promise of parent voice and leadership.

Thank you,

Aiyana Knowles
Director of Community Engagement and Organizing
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)