



**Testimony for the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) and DME
Performance Oversight Hearing
Wednesday, February 12th, 2020**

Good morning/afternoon to the Deputy Mayor of Education and members of the Public Charter School Board. My name is Tiffany Settle. I was born and raised in California and I've lived in Washington DC. in Ward in 8 for the last five years. I moved here with my husband, a native Washingtonian, so that we could raise our family in his beloved city. We have two children, Kennedy who is the 3rd grade and Christopher, who is in the 7th. I also serve on the Ward 8 Parent Leaders in Education Board with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE).

When the Mayor proposed a 4% increase in the UPSFF I was ecstatic. I know that this proposed increase to funding in our schools will provide necessary base level resources for all schools, including specialized school programs. It's an investment that can support school infrastructure aligned with the particular requirements for a specialized school program -- like robotics labs and program related school materials. It's an investment in opportunities that could give a diverse community of learners increased access to technology, experts, fieldtrips and evidence based and culturally responsive curriculum. --- a major win for our city's students. However, I am here to talk about why it's so important for PCSB and the DME to go even further in your commitment to specialized school programs, by piloting a cross-sector working group for family-centered school and specialized program planning; a working group which identifies and plans for equitable specialized program expansion across the city. PCSB and the DME can also show your commitment by supporting the creation of a common standard for each type of specialized school program in order to ensure quality.

My children are both students at DC Prep Edgewood middle and elementary campus. Yet, they have two very different experiences in education on two different ends of the spectrum. Kennedy has an IEP and Christopher is in gifted and talented classes. At this stage of their education, I've been able to enroll them in a school that can meet both of their needs. But as they have gotten older, I'm not as confident this will continue to be the case. My son Christopher has developed a genuine interest in Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) programs. And as our family begins to think about what high-school Christopher will attend, we have become aware of a clear disparity that the majority of STEM programs which exist in our city are located West of the river. This means that more likely than not, in order for us to support his academic passion for STEM, we would have to consider schools outside of our neighborhood that require a long commute. In addition to that, when researching programs that are available East of the River, there really is no standard to compare the quality of programs. There should be a way to verify that a school labeled as a STEM school is actually providing fidelity to the STEM model and has quality implementation of the program, to ensure that my child is college and career ready once he graduates.

As a parent, what I want is to increase opportunities for advancement for my children. One avenue for that is through specialized school programs. That's why I believe that the PCSB and DME should work with city leaders to create a common standard for each specialized school program type to build trust and ensure quality. A first step towards this is defining key information that families want to know about specialized school programs and use it as a basis for creating a citywide set of publicly available, baseline standards for each type of specialized school program in DC. Once this baseline standard exists, it's also important to design a clear indicator to demonstrate *how* a school implements specialized programs and included that in existing parent resources such as the My School DC School profile.

I also ask that The DME and PCSB center parent, family and student voice, by piloting a cross- sector working group for family centered school and specialized program planning. This working group would identify which entity is responsible for overseeing implementation, staffing and resources to support this process. It would ideally include both PCSB and



DCPS , families and community partners, who would collaborate to plan for equitable access to specialized school programs. The working group should also be committed to developing feeder patters for specialized school programs so that students like my son have the opportunity to continue their education.

As a parent I want my children, and all children, to not only attend school, but to be genuinely passionate and curious about their courses of study. Although my son Christopher finds joy in STEM programs--- which have been proven to make students more prepared for college, build 21st century skills and improve student outcomes (like a lowered chance of dropout and higher scores on standardized tests), other programs such as dual language, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment have similar benefits. These are just some of the reasons why access to a diverse and expansive variety of specialized school programs is an essential aspect to having a system of great schools in DC. and why your support in this is so important

Thank You,
Tiffany Settle
Parent Leader
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)