



**Testimony for the
Budget Oversight Hearing: Committee on Education
Day, June 4th , 2020**

To: DC Council Committee on Education, Committee on Education Chairman David Grosso, Committee on Education Members, and Committee on Education Staff

From: Marta Jimenez, PAVE LatinX Parent Leader board member, DCPS Teacher and Ward 2 Resident

Date: June 4th, 2020

My name is Marta Jimenez and I am a proud mother of a kindergartner and a third grader attending the International School. I am also a passionate DCPS PK teacher at Tyler Elementary School in Ward 6, a member of the Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) Latino PLE Board and Ward 2 resident. PAVE parent leaders have been working hard to make sure families have everything they need to continue supporting their children. I hope you will join us in continuing this work to make a difference for all children and families in our city.

I want to begin by thanking Mayor Bowser for proposing a 3 percent increase in per-pupil funding formula in her budget; while districts and states across the country are seeing their funding devastated by COVID-19, I am grateful that city leaders continued to invest in DC's children, who need our support now more than ever.

Even with this investment, DC's children and families will still be facing very challenging circumstances in trying to receive the appropriate tools to engage in their school and learning. The entire school community, teachers, staff, students and families need more when it comes to the technological gap in our city. This pandemic caught us all by surprise. My household is fortunate enough to provide my own children with a private school education. So when our city closed and school was moved to remote learning, my children's school provided special support for their learning. I have witnessed first hand how well their school has worked to coordinate with parents' schedules to provide their students a consistent and strong distance learning experience. However, as a public school teacher, my experience has been completely different. As a teacher, I have experienced many challenges especially in the effort of trying to reach all my students. I have families and students in my classroom that I have not seen since March.

As a teacher, I have had to adapt to the new skill of teaching my students over the computer using multiple platforms. I have noticed my colleagues feel absolutely drained



and disengaged from this transition. I know that our school communities need more in order to support learning at home and support each other.

Schools and teachers need stronger tools to engage families and students. This crisis was a wake up call for schools and teachers like me because when in the beginning of this pandemic, we were still trying to figure out which technological platform was the best for teaching students. The first challenge was making sure all families had access to a reliable internet source. Next was adapting to the platform of Zoom conferencing for class and then asking families to switch to Microsoft teams. With Zoom conferencing, it was easier for families and students to connect and as a teacher, I was able to see all of my students at the same time. When we transitioned to Teams, I found that it was not responsive to my needs as a teacher, the needs of my students or their families. It is a difficult platform to download and navigate. I am not allowed to see more than 6 students at a time and I have about 20 students. As a PK teacher, I know that it takes double the amount of effort to engage very young students so I need the platform that I teach with to help me see and reach EVERY child at the same time. Due to these technological gaps and the lack of strong instructional tools to engage students and families, I noticed that there are students who I have not been able to get in contact with since the beginning of this pandemic. School staff and teachers need stronger tools to help us create a fun and participatory class for children through distance learning.

The Council can act to support our city's school communities by:

- The Mayor and Council, alongside the philanthropic and private business community, should commit \$4.2 million to provide 70% of public school student households with basic internet through Comcast at a rate of \$10/month or \$120/year.
- OSSE, DME, PCSB, and DCPS should work together to provide all school leaders with professional development, best practices, exemplar technological resources, and additional support to improve communication and engagement with families and support kids and families with learning at home.
- In order to improve cross-sector coordination and communication, the DME should provide consistent education system updates and guidance for parents across DCPS and public charter schools.

Our city needs to support all schools in the district with the funding necessary so that all schools use the best platforms where students can use distance learning. Our district must provide the best materials for teachers so that they have the appropriate tools for distance



learning. We also have to support families with basic technology training, so that they can teach their children as they are their teachers for now.

Thank you, councilmembers, for this opportunity to testify and share my experience with you. I am a big believer in the fact that it takes a village. I want to make sure we all do our part to provide resources for all our families in DC to thrive.

Thank you,

Marta Jimenez

Parent Leader

PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)