



**Testimony for the Committee of the Whole Performance Oversight Hearing
Tuesday March 9, 2021**

To: DC Council Committee of the Whole, Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole Members, and Committee of the Whole Staff

From: DaSean Jones

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My name is DaSean Jones and I am a Ward 8 parent of 4 children, including PK4 at Eagle Public Charter School in Ward 8, and grades 11th, 8th, and 7th at Columbia Heights Education Campus in Ward 1. I am also a Parent Leader in Education board member with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education, better known as PAVE.

In the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, we saw many important investments in parent priorities, including:

- 3% increase in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF)
- +300k for funding for at-risk students
- Almost +4M to social emotional learning
- +3.3M to school-based mental health
- +5M for emergency child care funding
- +6.9M for distance learning supports (tech, internet)
- +9M for relief for excluded workers
- +500k for Out of School Time (OST) programs

Those were important investments! Today, I am testifying before you because we need to make sure EVERY school can level the playing field for kids by investing **+106 million** to fully fund the UPSFF and **+\$78.5 million** to fully fund the at-risk weight, as well as maintaining the Out of School Time funding.

My children's schooling has always been one of my top priorities, and I work hard to build a rapport with their teachers each new year by visiting their schools regularly. Forging those relationships is no small task for my family: I co-parent my four children, in grades high school down to prekindergarten, with their mothers, and I work full-time helping families through DC's Child and Family Services Agency.

With all four of my kids learning at home, I'm doing all of that relationship building with their teachers virtually, just like they are. I pay close attention to their lessons and drop into their classes occasionally to chat with their teachers. I also attend all of their schools' virtual parent events and have regular phone check-ins with their teachers. I am doing my best, but it's a challenge because teachers are stretched to the breaking point, much like parents — many of them with their own children learning from home, too.

There is a lot of anxiety for parents and students alike right now. This pandemic has turned the world upside down in many ways for every family, and mine is no different. The systemic issues of the pandemic have placed parents in very compromising and uncomfortable positions, some having to choose work or finding work over making sure their children are logging in, attending class, and completing class assignments. But we're navigating this school year with a focus on developing teacher relationships, continuing consistent daily routines, and focusing on sustaining and building friendships and connection. During parent teacher conferences teachers have provided very positive feedback on how well my children are doing. I attribute that to the consistency of structure I have given them with the benefit of working remotely. Many families are suffering with their children's education because they are not as fortunate, being able to monitor their children's education while working from home.

My four-year-old receives three hours of instruction a day. She is suffering terribly with the reduced time she's given in comparison to my other children at that age. I spend more time supporting her instruction by using apps like ABC mouse and k12 reader as well as other resources I receive from other parents connected to social media platforms. She's losing many hours of instruction in the shortened time provided for virtual learning. With the education gap so wide and widening daily with lost hours of instruction - can you say education to prison pipeline? We need to ensure that all schools can provide access to resources to meet students - and we can do so by investing **+106 million** to fully fund the UPSFF and an additional **+78.5 million** to fully fund the at-risk weight.

It is important to note that, according to the [DC Policy Center](#), many schools in D.C. have a strong track record of helping students classified as at-risk improve their learning outcomes - but neighborhoods with the highest concentration of at-risk students lack access to those schools. Large swaths of the city in Wards 7 and 8, east of the Anacostia River, have the highest concentration of "at-risk students." But the schools most likely to serve those students well are far out of reach. All kids deserve a great education, and we know that with the right resources, it IS possible, as seen in the [report on leveler schools who are successfully supporting at-risk kids](#). We need to make sure EVERY school can level the playing field for kids by fully funding the UPSFF and at-risk weight.

I understand that last year's increase in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula of 3% was excellent compared to other states; however, we are still falling short of providing a quality education for at-risk students and students of color. In order to serve students and families equitably in this unprecedented time of crisis and need, DC needs to fully fund the at-risk weight in the UPSFF to the recommended adequacy level in order to meet the needs of at-risk students.

Making sure all schools are adequately funded guarantees the city's ability to provide a great education that all kids deserve. Maintaining funding for out of school time can also assist with closing the



achievement gap and addressing learning loss - as we know academic and socioemotional outcomes are closely tied. Parents will benefit greatly from maintaining OST funding as these programs provide instruction that supports the youngest of our student population, and prepares them for the next level of their education.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our city. We need to make sure EVERY school can level the playing field for kids with an additional **+106 million** to fully fund the UPSFF and an additional **+78.5 million** to fully fund the at-risk weight, as well as protecting Out of School Time funding. Closing the education gap needs to be at the top of our list of priorities for securing as promising a future as possible, for all of our kids and communities.

DaSean Jones
Ward 8 Parent Leader