



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: Elizabeth Reddick

Date: March 9, 2021

Good Morning Councilmembers and State Agencies,

My name is Elizabeth Reddick and I am a proud parent of 5 children, 2 of whom attend DC schools systems. My eldest attends Bard Early College Highschool where we live in Ward 7 and my 3rd grader attends Bridges Public charter school in Ward 5. I serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Ward 7 PLE board, which brings me to this discussion today.

I am grateful for this opportunity to meet with you. I come here today first as a parent and secondly as a concerned citizen and neighbor. May I just say, we as a community are not doing ok. We are doing what we can but I ask you, are we collectively doing our best? The inequalities plaguing the US, the District specifically, have not gone away. They've been exacerbated to the point that many of us are losing hope for what the future will look like. Even with additional educational resources, access to quality services will not magically occur. Equity in education is the solution, but in doing so, we must take a family centered approach to truly address the needs in our school. Behavioral Health supports should be integrated into how we do business as a whole. It's the compassionate, goal oriented thinking that helps us transition through life with our best selves present. These skills need to be integrated into the curriculum, reinforced by teachers and school staff and nurtured into the family network. We need to eliminate punitive school systems and work collectively as a unit to provide the best care for our families. To support our educators in creating culturally responsive, caring school systems, PAVE parent leaders are asking for a total of \$10.8 million for social emotional learning and trauma-informed training in all schools and investing +\$6.4 million to fully fund the school-based mental health expansion.

Healthy families are supportive families which produce responsible citizens. The same citizens who grow up to be the essential workers who have supported us through this pandemic. I look at my own children, one is thriving during virtual learning and the other has checked out, completely disconnected. What have I learned as a person about us? Environment is everything. We are a neurodiverse family and we each need different supports to be successful. Available resources aren't any more effective as unavailable resources, if that resource isn't what I need to be successful. *How is a \$10,000 lawn mower going to help me if I have no grass to cut? How are libraries going to be effective without effective programming to maximize utilization?* In order to ensure that all schools have the resources they need



to meet children and families where they are in their learning, I am calling on you to invest in the future of our city by fully and equitably funding our schools: including \$106 million to fully fund the UPSFF and \$78.5 million to fully fund the at-risk weight.

"I have the right to accessible, timely, and consistent communication from every school district and agency that makes decisions around education." This is not a request, it's a requirement from our PAVE Parents Bill of Rights. Please take this opportunity to create a new norm where agencies support and strengthen the student and the family. They are our essential workers. Let's take care of them so that they may take care of us.

Elizabeth Reddick
Ward 7 Parent Leader