

**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: Meaghan Mountford

Date: March 9, 2021

Good morning Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Meaghan Mountford and I am a proud parent of two daughters, a second grader at Shepherd Elementary and an 8th grader at Washington Latin, both in Ward 4. I also serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Ward 4 and citywide boards.

In the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, we saw many important investments in parent priorities, including a 3% increase in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) and \$300k for funding for at-risk students. However, there is STILL a gap of \$348 per student and the at-risk funding is \$1,879 lower than recommended by the DC Education Adequacy Study when adjusted for inflation.

There is a very distinct air that surrounds you when you live in financial stress. I grew up in a household with a single mother and three kids, and the anxiety over money was ever-present. When my oldest entered the DC public school system in 2011, I recognized it in the air, that near-constant worry that there are not enough funds.

Every single student in DC deserves to attend an adequately funded school. Not only is the at-risk weight far below what is needed, but because overall funding is insufficient, [DC schools routinely divert at-risk funds to cover other costs for the school, such as staffing](#).

And it's not just about adding dollars. It's about spending those dollars mindfully to close the gaps between west and east, white and black.

- In 2019, [47% of DC students were considered at-risk](#).
- [At-risk kids score roughly 30% less in PARCC scores, both ELA and math](#).
- [Schools with 70% or more at-risk population are concentrated in Wards 7 and 8](#).
- While at-risk students and students of color are falling behind, white students are actually gaining faster than before the pandemic in some areas. [In reading, at-risk students, a majority black population, only grew by 58% from last school year, while, on average, white students grew by 176%](#).



The racial and economic disparity in our city will never be erased until we offer equitable resources and a commitment and dedication to spending resources wisely. There is no greater long-term investment we can make as a city than our children.

I recognize that our budget is tight, but it CAN be done. We have federal stimulus money on the horizon and other sources of revenue can be found.

Do we tax our wealthiest neighbors, neighbors whose students attend fully-funded and high achieving schools so that we can finally inch towards equity in our city given the gross inadequacies? Yes.

I can't help but envision children all over the city walking into their schools and NOT feeling any stress in the air.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our city. I hope you will commit to increasing the UPSFF by a minimum of \$106 million and \$78.5 million to fully fund the at-risk weight.

Meaghan Mountford