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## 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:** Randee Grant

**Date:** March 9, 2021

Good morning Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Randee Grant and I am speaking out today with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE). I have lived and worked in Ward 7 for over 10 years, and as a mother of two daughters, I know first hand the necessity for mental health services for youth and young adults. I want to begin by saying thank you! In the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, we saw many important investments which support families in need of these types of services, including: investments of over \$300,000 for funding for at-risk students, almost \$4M to social emotional learning and over \$3.3M to school-based mental health. Even with these gains, I hope my family's story will highlight the need for the city to do even more.

My youngest daughter's journey began at 11 years old when she was attacked by two teens on her way home from school. She had just gotten off of the U8 bus at Hillside RD and Chaplin St SE and was attacked from behind, thrown to the ground and her wallet was taken. This spun into her inability to go to school, a suicide attempt and CFSA being called. She was given a therapist for the upcoming school year, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and continued to fall deeper into what I now know as agoraphobia, PTSD, anxiety and depression. At the time I didn't have Medicare, which left me unable to be added to the enormous waitlist for services and my learning curve kept me in the dark. This subjected me to a wide range of insults ranging from being called an incompetent parent to a CFSA label of educational neglect. There are organizations that I have learned who are competent and compassionate to the needs in our community, but finding the appropriate resource is too complicated. My youngest daughter literally lost her High School years due to the inability to get the services due to her.

My daughter is not alone in this. [Of the more than 5 million students affected by mental health issues in the US, about 80% of students will not receive counseling, therapy, medication, or treatment, at all.](#) As a parent, these statistics are staggering, and I know our city needs to come together to do better for all our children.

When I think about how the city and families can partner to address this issue – increasing the availability of services and assistance in diagnosis and trauma informed training for parents, teachers and other adults in our community working with our children, I know that it boils down to funding. This is why today I am asking the District to focus on the mental health crisis in our communities and invest a



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total of \$10.8 million for social emotional learning and trauma-informed training in all schools, \$6.4 million to fully fund the school-based mental health expansion, and +\$4 million to restore the cuts to community-based health providers.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our city. I hope you will take seriously the urgent need for mental health and social emotional learning support in our schools.

Randee Grant  
Ward 7 Parent Leader