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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:** Percia Williams, Ward 4 PAVE Parent Leader

**Date:** March 9th, 2021

Dear Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee,

My name is Percia Williams, I am a Ward 4 resident and a proud parent of two boys. My eldest son, Jeffrey, graduated with the rank of salutatorian and a 4.17 GPA last year during the height of the pandemic. He is now attending American University on a full-ride scholarship. My other son, Timothy, is a 10th grader at Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC), for which I am a member of the LSAT and the PTSO President. I also am also a Ward 4 PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education) Parent Leader.

I am testifying today because I want to speak from experience of how important Mental Health Support is to our children. My son Timothy, just like his brother, is a straight-A honor roll student. Lately, he has been struggling to keep the same grades for a reason he cannot explain. He cannot comprehend why he is sometimes feeling lost, sad, confused, and having difficulty concentrating. I tried my very best to understand him and try to figure out what is wrong, and since I'm not a behavioral health professional we just end up going in circles.

Although most children will manage well with the support of parents and other family members, even if showing signs of some anxiety or concerns, such as difficulty concentrating and agitation, some children may, however, have risk factors for more intense reactions, including severe anxiety and depression. This is why fully-funding school based mental health supports is what I am advocating for. Providing the \$6.4 million million needed for the program will expand the school-based mental health resources with the addition of clinicians and community-based health providers.

Some students may seem to cope easily with this pandemic, but the reality is, there will be a lot of them who will struggle to bounce back, and that is why having easy access to professionals will help a great deal.



Thank you for lending me a moment of your busy time, it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Percia Williams

Ward 4 PAVE Parent Leader