



Testimony for the State Board of Education Public Meeting Wednesday March 17, 2021

To: DC State Board of Education Representatives

From: Miguelina Zapata, Ward 4 PAVE Parent Leader

Date: March 17, 2021

Hello DC State Board of Education Representatives. My name is Miguelina Zapata, I am a ward 4 resident and proud parent of three children, two of them who attend Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School and my other child is in daycare. I serve on the Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) Ward 4 PLE Board.

I am writing to you today to express the importance of school based mental health supports. I am a speech-language pathologist, I see how bright and intelligent my students are. However, students can't learn if they aren't mentally stable, and are not able to have their trauma or mental health needs addressed. Additionally, students are not socializing or getting the supports, they need, which in turn makes them fall behind emotionally and academically. Increasing mental health supports in schools has been a PAVE parent priority even before this pandemic. We are asking you to please support efforts to fund the \$6.4 million needed to fully fund the behavioral health expansion and put clinicians in at least 80 more schools, and a total of \$10.8 million for socioemotional learning and trauma-informed training in all schools. With this Covid-19 crisis, mental health supports have been at the forefront of this pandemic. Parents and other caregivers must juggle being parents, teachers, and do their full-time work at home. With this crisis ever-changing and knowing that even if things go back to "normal" sometime soon, students will exhibit more difficulty to tap into their full potential due to increased mental health issues.

This increase in school based mental health supports will make a difference for DC's children and adults who are also experiencing incredibly stressful situations, which in turn decrease their emotional and academic performance. We need to make sure families are mentally stable and so that students can go back to school and be readily available to learn.

Sincerely,

Miguelina Zapata

Ward 4 PAVE PLE Board member