

**Testimony for the Committee on Health Department of Behavioral Health Budget
Oversight Hearing
Friday June 4, 2021**

To: DC Council Committee on Health, Chairman Vincent Gray, Committee on Health Members, and Committee on Health Staff

From: Randee Grant, Ward 7 PAVE Parent Leader

Date: June 4th, 2021

Good afternoon Councilmember Gray and members of the Committee on Health. My name is Randee Grant and I am speaking out today with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE). I have lived and worked in DC as an artist and educator for over 30 years, 10 of those years in Ward 7, 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! We are grateful to the Mayor for committing to fully fund the school-based behavioral health expansion and ensuring that all schools will have access to at least one clinician. However, the \$5.8M investment is not sufficient to fully fund the expansion to all 83 schools. We are asking for you to allocate \$80,000 per school, which is a total of \$841,000 for all 83 schools, so every clinician can best meet all the needs of our students as they return to in-person learning this fall.

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 8th 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, and I continue to be subject to judgment and blame as a mother for this experience.

And my daughter is not alone in this struggle. [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.](#) 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. Now is the time to use both local and Federal funds to make sure that DBH can expand access

to mental health professionals for our children at 83 more schools. 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