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## Testimony for the Committee of the Whole Budget Oversight Hearing Thursday June 3, 2021

**To:** DC Council Committee of the Whole, Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole Members, and Committee of the Whole Staff

**From:** Mary Mccane Ward 8 PAVE Parent Leader

**Date:** June 3rd, 2021

Dear Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee,

Good afternoon! My name is Mary McCane, and I am a Ward 8 parent, a PAVE PLE Board Member, and I am testifying today to advocate for protecting the Mayor's increase to the UPSFF, as well as fully fund the at-risk weight in the UPSFF. This is important to me because I believe with at-risk funding we will be able to help kids with issues that are happening with their families outside of the school building that have a huge effect on their ability to learn while at school. When I first started advocating with PAVE, even though I can't stand the term, my family was considered "at-risk." My grandson Zion was a recipient of foster care, and we were considered homeless. I'm not saying this for any pity or or sadness, but so that you can see that your decisions about what to prioritize affect REAL families. Your budget priorities aren't just about dollars in a budget, it's about our lives - it's about my life.

When families are "at-risk," they face undue stress - for a mother to wake up and not know how your child is going to eat breakfast, or where the clothes and bill money is coming from - it starts to mess with your psyche. It affects your mental health, both as parents and as a child. And as someone who is passionate about mental health and wellbeing, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor for her increased funding for school-based mental health, and to call on this Committee to continue to fund social and emotional learning by investing \$10.8 million and continuing to expand mental health programming in schools.

Many people aren't afforded the opportunities that I've been awarded, and I believe that equitably and fully funding our schools will help other families in the District get the same level of care treatment that I was able to get. When I first adopted my grandson, I wasn't in a housing situation that was suitable for our family. A lot of people who are experiencing homelessness don't know about Bright Beginnings, the program that helped my family, and these programs



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and the flexible use of at-risk funding can address the needs so that ALL children in our city have access to the fully funded opportunities that they deserve.

Thank you again Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee for your time.

Mary McCane  
Ward 8 Parent