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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:** Tynisha Wright Ward 8 PAVE Parent Leader

**Date:** June 3rd, 2021

Greetings Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee,

My name is Tynisha Wright. I am a Ward 8 parent and PAVE PLE Board Member. My son Tiyvon is a 4.0 student and in the 8th grade at Digital Pioneers Academy. My daughter Jade is in Kindergarten at I Dream PCS and my son Joseph attends NCC. The pandemic has been hard for us all, and even though we are beginning to get back to “normal”, the trauma will be with our communities for a long time. This is why I want to sincerely thank May Bowser and the administration for prioritizing social and emotional learning as well as the mental health expansion in the upcoming budget.

Over the past year my family, like many throughout the District, has faced tremendous loss. Six of our family members have passed away in the course of the year. Some have been COVID-19 related and others have been due to illness or circumstance, but the grief and sadness that I feel, and that my kids feel, remains. The effect of this type of trauma has been amplified due to the pandemic, but it isn't something new in my community. Even before the pandemic kids in DC and East of the River have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences, which can inhibit their ability to do their best at school. And it is my worry that as we return to in-person learning in the fall, those challenges when combined with the challenges that are a result of the pandemic, will be overwhelming for the kids, educators and mental health practitioners. This is the reason I'm here today asking for your continued investment in Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning as well as an investment of to fully fund the at-risk weight in the UPSFF to adequacy (according to the 2013 study)

Before returning to in-person instruction, my daughter was struggling with school. I can remember one particular time when she had a melt down, crying that she's sick and tired of all of us being in the house together all the time! The separation from her friends was starting to

take a toll. Now that she's back to in-person learning, her sleep pattern has improved, which has made her more motivated to do her school work. I Dream PCS has been able to provide her with the individualized support she needed to get reacclimated to in-person instruction. I hope that by fully funding the at-risk weight to adequacy, the District will be able to support schools in using those funds for extra staff members to lower student to staff ratios in schools that will need it in the Fall.

In addition to this, I am asking for your continued investment in Out of School Time funding. Our families need more than just basic before or after school care, we need programs to help kids express their creativity and be themselves! At Digital Pioneers Academy, my son Tiyvon is in a program that partners with ESPN sports. In this program, Tiyvon is connected to a mentor who is in college. He and his mentor play video games together. My son loves playing games like Fortnite while talking about college readiness with his mentor. By investing in OST, the District can give more kids the option to explore the things THEY want to do, which is so important after a long time of being cooped up in the house. Investing in OST is also a good place where we can address the issue of learning loss. Many kids need the extra help because they struggled the whole year--- summer is a great opportunity to supplement the things they are lacking even before they return to the classroom.

Thank you again for your time and I ask again that you invest 10.8M in SEL, fully fund the at risk weight in the UPSFF, and continue to invest in Out of school time funding.

Tynisha Wright