

## **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:** Tara Brown Ward 8 PAVE Parent Leader

**Date:** June 3rd, 2021

Dear Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee,

Good Morning, my name is Tara Brown. I am a Ward 8 parent, PAVE PLE Board Member, and Founding Board Member of Learn DC Public Charter School. I'm testifying today because I want

to emphasize the importance of this budget. Before, during and after this pandemic,

PAVE parents are pushing for your leadership to recognize the importance of the areas that most affect our families, specifically as it relates to education, which has devastated the

progress of most students, particularly those that are categorized as at-risk and special needs.

Thank you to Mayor Bowser for the proposed 3.6% increase to the UPSFF; however we are

advocating for greater investments to bring the at-risk weight to 0.37 in accordance with the

2013 adequacy study, as well as an investment of \$ 10.8M for social emotional learning and

trauma informed training in all schools. There are many areas in the budget that speak directly

to the Black and Brown families in our city hit the hardest by this pandemic. These same

families needed greater support before the pandemic and that need is even more critical

now. I am here today to emphasize the challenges facing these families and to remind you that

every dollar aimed at addressing those challenges should be considered sacred. Whatever else

the budget allows for, as you are considering your adjustments, do not diminish the

investments that Mayor Bowser has made in the areas directed at mitigating the trauma of DC's most vulnerable children and families. In fact, as you contemplate the provisions of the budget, consider taking that commitment a step further and fully fund all of the areas mentioned in the 2013 Adequacy Study. These are the things that parents and advocacy groups have consistently asked for and these are dollar amounts from a study that is 8 years old. Even if you meet this standard, it is still considerably inadequate, considering how old the study is.

Finally, once you have gotten on board with the Mayor and aimed the budget at the greatest needs of our residents, we need you to make sure that your investment is actually reaching those for which it was intended. Provisions for oversight and transparency are just as important as the money directed to the greatest problems facing our communities. It needs to be very clear to all of us what the money is allocated for and whether or not that is where it is going. I am asking for aggressive auditing, in real time, to leave no doubt that our city is actually living up to its commitments, in promise and in practice.

We have all learned lessons from this shared trauma. We look to you to remember those lessons as you approach the budget. We look to you to approach our city the same way the President is approaching our country. Let's try something unprecedented. Let's do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Please look at the budget through that lens. You are uniquely positioned to have the greatest impact on a city that is suffering. We have never counted on you more.



Thank You.

Sincerely,

Tara Brown

Ward 8 PAVE Parent Leader