

**Department of Behavioral Health  
Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony  
Committee on Health  
Monday, March 21, 2022**

**To:** Committee on Health, Councilmember Vincent Gray, Committee on Health members, and Committee on Health staff

**From:** Kelita Boyd

**Date:** March 21, 2022

Good morning Councilmember Gray and members of the Committee on Health. My name is Kelita Boyd and I am a Ward 8 resident and proud parent of three amazing children who have attended both DCPS and Charter schools. They have also graduated from The University of the District of Columbia. I am a Ward 8 Parent Leader in Education Board Member and Organizing Captain.

I want to start by thanking the Mayor for her continued investments in school based behavioral health in the FY23 budget. To support these investments of \$3.8M in new SBBH dollars, I believe that the District should fund a \$300,000 a cost analysis. This cost study would determine the true cost of the program now and in the future. The District should also develop a comprehensive map that would look at what supports exist in each school and what's missing!

Today I am testifying to advocate for even more support when it comes to school based mental health for our kids. We don't only need more dollars, but we need a stronger implementation and an accountability system. This calls for DBH and the DME to partner to develop a clear, publicly transparent, and strong accountability system, so that any agency or community based organization providing mental health supports in schools are working together to provide kids the services they need.

Mental health support encapsulates a lot .Although the comprehensive map and cost analysis will primarily benefit younger students, the positive effects of these investments will impact not only kids who attend K-12 schools, but also our UDC students. For many of these young adult students, the future seems unsure, considering the lasting effects of the pandemic on our economy and society. They need a strong foundation for resilience and tools to deal with their anxieties, which begins in their earlier years. The effectiveness of school based mental health interventions is also at least in part determined by what is happening in students homes and in the streets.We need to serve the whole child and whole family, providing wrap-around support for families. I hope that through improved implementation and accountability systems we will be on the right path to doing so.



Thank you for the opportunity to testify today!

Kelita Boyd  
Ward 8 PLE Board Member and Organizing Captain