

**Education Agencies
Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony
Committee of the Whole
Monday, March 28, 2022**

To: Committee of the Whole, Chairman Mendelson, Committee of the Whole Members, and Committee of the Whole Staff

From: Bre'Jan'e Williams, Ward 7 PAVE PLE Board Member

Date: March 28, 2022

Hello! Good Morning, my name is Bre'Jan'e Williams. I want to thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am a native Washingtonian. I attended private school for elementary and middle school, then I attended Alice Deal and eventually graduated from Woodrow Wilson SHS. I currently have two kids, one daughter who attends a DC Public Charter School and one son who is in a DCPS school. Speaking today is very important because school based mental health and Out of School Time Programming are a must! We really never know what kids are going through and for so many, schools and afterschool activities are their only outlet.

I am grateful for the investments that the Mayor has made for School Based Mental Health, as well as the \$15.3M in investments in OST, including expanded DPR seats for this summer. Even so, I was disappointed to learn that the \$2.8 million for OST programs that was listed under public safety was just a typo. The overall funding increases are great, but we need every cent to meet the needs of all families!

I am speaking here today because I want to see the District conduct a needs assessment, so we can find out what is really going on with the kids. My children and some of their classmates are sometimes so scared to say things that are too difficult to adults. Even if they don't have major mental health needs, it's not good that so many kids express feeling constantly anxious. The initial investment in the SBMH expansion is good, because it helps to put more professional clinicians in school, but we really need that 300,000 cost study so we can find out the overall cost to make it the most effective.

I just feel like kids should have a safe place at school. We deserve positive school climates that support all kids, even the ones who don't have any type of diagnosis or who might not know how to properly express what's on their minds.

Another thing that is important to me is out of school time programming. This is important because as Summer is coming and summer camps slots are few and far in between. The expanded offerings for DPR programs is really great and much needed, but we need to make sure that the funding is equitably distributed, especially in Ward 7 and Ward 8 where most of the students in the city live. We want to see a current needs assessment and community engagement around OST programs. It's not enough to just have more programming, it has to be programming that kids and parents actually want! In addition to more opportunities for DPR activities, I want to see more support for partnerships with organizations like the Boys and Girls clubs. This is something that all families could benefit from! With so much going on, kids are bored and more after school programs are needed to keep their attention, keep them out of trouble and help keep kids active through the Summer.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids!

Bre'Jan'e Williams

Ward 7 PLE Board Member, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education