

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: India Patrick, Ward 8 PAVE PLE Board Member

Date: March 28, 2022

Good evening Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is India Patrick and I am a proud parent of one child who attends school in Ward 7. I am a Special education teacher and my son has a disability called Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). I also serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Ward 8 PLE board.

Thank you to Mayor Bowser for her \$3.8 M investment in school based mental health and for the 5.9% increase in the UPSFF.

I am testifying today to advocate for even more investment in School Based Mental Health programs, specifically improving coordination of care across the system and training for all school staff. We also need the District to provide \$2.4M for stabilized grants to CBO providers.

As both the mother of a child who has been diagnosed with ODD and as an early childhood special education teacher in Ward 8, I have firsthand witness and experience with issues related to school based mental health. Many of my colleagues are leaving the profession because we are spread too thin! Even with the SBMH expansion, and support from CBO partnerships we simply need more help. We know the needs of our students are so high, and to support them we try to record data during the day time, but we can't truly do these things well until after hours. Most days I'm up from 6pm until midnight diving into data for students that we are gathering in the day time. We are overwhelmed! It's not that we don't want to help but it's not like we're being compensated. It's almost impossible for us to truly collaborate with service providers and CBO clinicians during school hours so much of the paperwork necessary for SBMH interventions happens after hours and they often have contracts with multiple schools. They are spread thin too!

We have been in the Pandemic for almost three years now, everyone is tired! –kids, teachers and clinicians. I sometimes feel as if I have a similar story to the 'Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe'. This is a familiar nursery rhyme that I want to use to help you understand some of the issues I face as a teacher and parent.

My nursery rhyme would be 'There Was a Good Teacher Who Worked in a School':

There Was a Good Teacher Who Worked in a School

She had so many children (her own and others who needed a lot of support) she felt like a fool.

They gave her many rules without any effective tools (like resources and training).

Then shipping her all around until she was down and left doubtful and with a frown.

So what now?

Should she just quit the profession she loves and leave this town?

Because what she loves is causing her to drown (mentally, physically and financially)

Where is HER wrap-around?

At the end of the day her goal is to find a more equitable way.

A way where she can have all her children receive wrap around services without a delay!

Thank you for allowing me to testify today!

India Patrick

Ward 8 PLE Board Member, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education