

---

## Committee of the Whole: Education Agencies Budget Oversight Testimony Monday, March 28, 2022

**To:** Chairman Mendelson, Committee of the Whole members, and Committee staff  
**From:** Maya Martin Cadogan, Founder and Executive Director of PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)  
**Date:** March 28, 2022

Good morning Chairman Mendleson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and Committee staff. My name is Maya Martin Cadogan, Founder and Executive Director of PAVE.

I want to start by thanking Mayor Bowser for historic education investments in her proposed budget - significant increases to the UPSFF, OST, mental health, and facilities, just to name a few. And yet, despite the good news, we have some stark realities in DC today that point to a “Tale of Two Cities” and raise the question - in the best of budgets but the worst of times, what more can we do for educational equity and justice for all of our children?

### School Attendance:

- Official reports from the 2020-2021 school year note that **chronic absenteeism was 31%. Truancy was nearly 39%**<sup>1</sup>.
  - *At-risk students were ~3.7 times more likely to be chronically absent.*
  - *Black students were four times more likely to be truant.*
  - *Hispanic or Latino students were nearly three times more likely to be truant.*

### Academics:

- According to EmpowerK12’s recent analysis of student academic data<sup>2</sup>:
  - Students designated as **at-risk are, on average, performing nearly two grade levels behind** in math and reading.
  - **Black students’** average percentile rank went **down 10.5 percentile points**, while **White students** declined just **1.7 percentile points**.
  - *See complete chart in Appendix A.*

### Violence:

- As of a February 2022 Washington Post poll<sup>3</sup>:

---

1

[OShttps://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2020-21%20Attendance%20Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2020-21%20Attendance%20Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.empowerk12.org/blog/act-for-dcs-most-vulnerable-students>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/02/25/police-poll-violence-dc/>

- A greater percentage of **people living in Wards 7 and 8 feel unsafe — more than 4 in 10.**
- Areas east of the Anacostia River where the majority of public school students live have the **highest concentrations of violent crime.**
- **Nearly a quarter of Black and Hispanic residents** report that someone in their household has been a victim of a violent crime.
- PAVE's Fall 2022 Back to School Parent Survey<sup>4</sup> found similar results:
  - **DC parents are very concerned about their child's physical safety (35%) and proximity to community violence (33%).** This increases dramatically in Ward 8, among people of color, and in lower-income families.
  - *See the complete chart of results in Appendix B.*

#### Mental health:

- The Surgeon General, along with pediatricians, child and adolescent psychiatrists and children's hospitals **declare a national emergency in children's mental health**<sup>5</sup>.
  - There have been dramatic increases in Emergency Department visits for all mental health emergencies including suspected suicide attempts.
    - Rates are especially concerning for Black girls<sup>6</sup>.
  - CDC data showed **63% of young people reported substantial symptoms of anxiety and depression** last year, **and record-high levels of loneliness and social isolation.**<sup>7</sup>

Fortunately, in this period of great inequity like the one detailed in Dickens' famous novel, the people are telling our leaders what they see as the solutions. You will hear from over 200 tireless advocates today - parents, teachers, students, community members, school leaders - about their visions for DC's schools. After a democratic process that included the voices of over

---

<sup>4</sup><https://dcpave.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/FINAL-Back-to-School-Survey-Nov-2021.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://www.aacap.org/aacap/zLatest\\_News/Pediatricians\\_CAPs\\_Childrens\\_Hospitals\\_Declare\\_National\\_Emergency\\_Childrens\\_Mental\\_Health.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/aacap/zLatest_News/Pediatricians_CAPs_Childrens_Hospitals_Declare_National_Emergency_Childrens_Mental_Health.aspx)

<sup>6</sup>

[https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/well/mind/suicide-rates-black-girls.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=styleIn-youth-suicide&variant=show&region=BELOW\\_MAIN\\_CONTENT&block=storyline\\_flex\\_guide\\_recirc](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/well/mind/suicide-rates-black-girls.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=styleIn-youth-suicide&variant=show&region=BELOW_MAIN_CONTENT&block=storyline_flex_guide_recirc)

<sup>7</sup>

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/02/young-adults-teens-loneliness-mental-health-coronaviruses-covid-pandemic/>

500 families from across DC, PAVE parent leaders have made clear what they believe can fix this: a **focus on school-based mental health and OST**. And yet, real barriers remain.

#### Challenges around OST Programs:

- **TOO HARD TO FIND.** It's incredibly difficult for families to find programs.
  - For example, it is rare for parents - even extremely informed and plugged-in parents - to be aware of the LEARN24 program finder.
  - Once they are aware of the platform, many feel frustrated at the lack of correct information and poor user experience.
- **NOT ENOUGH SPACES.** There are not enough OST spaces - period - let alone those that are age-appropriate or close to where kids live and/or attend school.
- **NO TRANSPORTATION.** Transportation is a major challenge, especially for working parents.
- **THE COST IS TOO DARN HIGH AND VOUCHERS ARE TOO HARD TO GET.**
  - Financial aid for OST programs is not meeting the needs of DC families. Programs are still cost prohibitive for even middle-class families- let alone those with lower incomes.
  - Undocumented students are not eligible for voucher support.
- **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS NEED OPTIONS TOO.** Families with children with special needs have long advocated for programs to better accommodate their children and for more options.
- *See additional data on participation and barriers to OST in Appendix C.*

#### Challenges Around School-based Mental Health (SBMH):

- **PARENTS DON'T KNOW ABOUT SBMH.** Lack of awareness of services available.
  - As of Fall 2021, only one-half know of DC parents are aware of mental health resources available at their child's school.<sup>8</sup>
- **NEED TO ENGAGE BLACK AND BROWN PARENTS.** Stigma is a significant barrier for many families, and we need to better engage Black and Brown families around mental health in our schools.
- **WAGES MUST GO UP AND CASELOADS MUST GO DOWN.** Lack of competitive pay and benefits coupled with high caseloads contribute to a dearth of school clinicians - *especially* clinicians of color.
  - Right now, this results in a shortage of services and long wait lists.
  - In the long term, it hampers clinicians' ability to build long-term and meaningful relationships with school communities.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://dcpave.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/FINAL-Back-to-School-Survey-Nov-2021.pdf>

- ***WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DON'T KNOW.*** A lack of information about the true need, and subsequently what funding and resources are required to address that need, leads to poor planning and leaves behind our most vulnerable communities.

**PAVE parent leaders have put in the time to craft targeted policy solutions to address this and they will be sharing them in their testimonies today.** Their top priorities that remain this year:

#### Expand Access to OST Programs

**While grateful to see the large funding increase for OST programs, PAVE parents are asking for a strategic plan created WITH families, educators, providers, and community partners that includes 3 things: 1) a needs assessment, 2) strong program evaluation, and 3) real community engagement.**

1. Defining what a high-quality OST program looks like and metrics for evaluation.
2. An updated needs assessment to identify existing program gaps/needs, looking at both location and program type, which should include DPR programs.
3. Accessible community engagement to inform expansion plans and allocation of funding.

#### Improve and Expand School-based Mental Health Supports

**While the Mayor's investments in SBMH are important, they do not address parents' two top priorities: 1) CBO grants and 2) a cost study.**

1. Right-size the grant amounts for our CBO clinicians with an investment of \$80,000 per clinician or ~\$2.4 million.
2. Provide at least \$300,000 to fund a cost study to determine the correct cost of the school-based mental health program.

I would like to end by saying thank you to Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Trayon White, and the Deputy Mayor for Education's Office for coming out to join 53 of PAVE's parent leaders at their Budget Forum two Saturdays ago. Hopefully, as this budget advances through the Council, every member will heed the voices of the people and continue to grow our education investments equitably, beckoning a "spring of hope" for our 51st state. Our children deserve our "beautiful city" and "brilliant people" giving them everything we've got for their futures: it will be "a far, far better thing that [we'll] do than [we've] ever done."

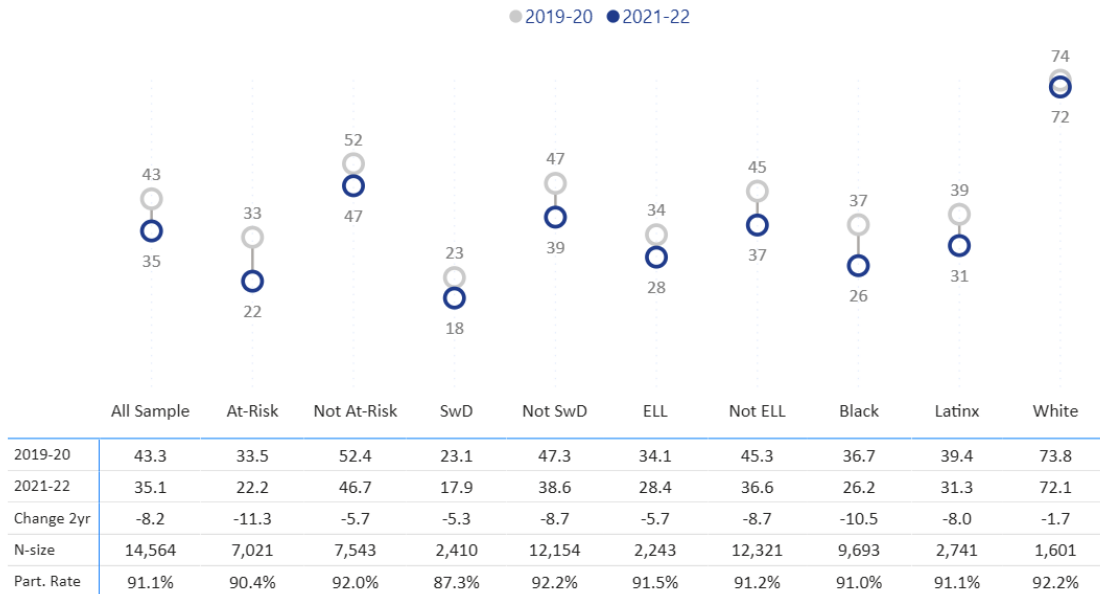
In service,

Maya Martin Cadogan  
Founder and Executive Director  
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)

## Appendix

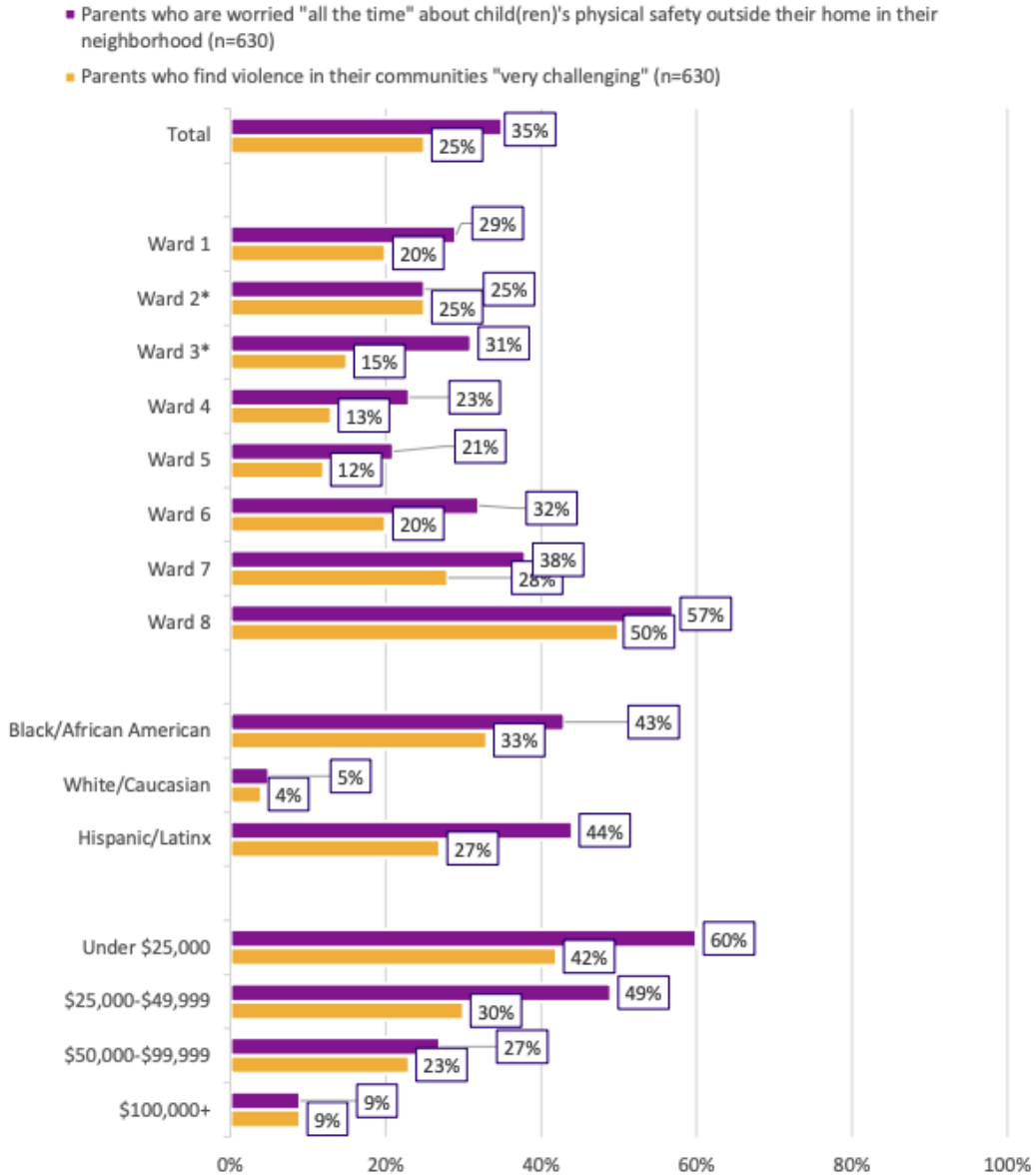
### A. EmpowerK12 Analysis of DC Student Achievement SY 19-20 to Winter 21-22

Change in Average Achievement Percentile (all tested) for 2yr Cohorts in Math-Reading from Winter 19-20 to Winter 21-22



## B. Results from PAVE Fall 2021 Back to School Parent Survey Question on Safety and Community Violence

### Parental concerns within the community



\*Sample sizes in these wards are not large enough to be projectable to or representative of the total population of parents.

C.

### Participation in out-of-school programs (n=630)

