

**Dawn Smith**  
**State Board of Education**  
**State Board of Education Meeting**  
**March 15, 2023**

Good evening President Thompson, Vice President O’Leary, and members of the State Board of Education,

My name is Dawn Smith and I reside in Ward 7. My oldest daughter Niya is a high school graduate from Eastern Senior High, my son, Nasir is a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Washington Leadership Academy, and my youngest daughter, Faith is a preschooler at AppleTree, SW campus. I currently serve as a PAVE parent leader on the Ward 7 PLE Board.

I want to thank you for allowing me to share my story of parenting two school-age children. Both of my children have a 12-year age gap between them. I want to talk about Out of School time for my teenager and Family Engagement for my toddler. These two issues are vital not just for them but for me emotionally and mentally.

Parenting can be very stressful having to juggle with schooling, extracurricular activities and whatever might arise at the last minute. We need a community to help us navigate DCPS and DC PCS. And PAVE is just that, a helpful resource which voices what is needed for our children.

Today, I’m testifying on how Out of School time and Family Engagement has changed my children lives and mines. In a city which crime has risen drastically, Out of School time and Family Engagement is an intricate part of Nasir and Faith lives as they develop and matriculate within the DC school system safely.

This matters to me because without OST and family engagement it would be hard for me as a single mother to work a full-time job without the recourse of knowing that my children are safe and engage with my community in a positive way. Without the two I probably would not be able to work full-time to maintain a home for my children.

Families shouldn’t have to travel outside of their ward to achieve support for their child(ren) within the District of Columbia. I’m appreciative of the schools that my children do attend and what they have to offer, I just want the comfort of knowing that it will be obtainable in the future not just for my children but other children in the District.



In order to make this vision a reality, alongside PAVE parent leaders, I would like to see more Out of School time, not just in the afternoon but the morning also for all families especially those in single family and low to moderate income homes. Family Engagement can help achieve these priorities if families come together and advocate for these issues.

Thank you for your support and partnership in advocating for the needs of our students, families, and schools.

Sincerely,  
Dawn Smith  
PAVE Ward 7 PLE Board Member