

**Meaghan Mountford**  
**State Board of Education**  
**State Board of Education Meeting**  
**March 15, 2023**

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

My name is Meaghan Mountford. I’ve lived in various wards in DC for over 30 years. I have two daughters, one a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Washington Latin PCS and a 4<sup>th</sup> grader at our neighborhood school, Shepherd elementary.

I am a Ward 4 parent leader in PAVE, and a former city-wide board member. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row PAVE parent leaders have voted to keep School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) at the forefront of our focus as one of our two Parent Priorities.

I, personally, have **started** to see the commitments our city has made to SBMH. I have been searching for mental health supports for my older daughter, who suffers from an eating disorder, sensory processing disorder, depression, and anxiety, for over two years. After being put on waitlists and shuffled between hospitals and being turned away from \$600 an hour therapists, I learned that the Department of Behavioral Health’s expansion project reached her school, Washington Latin. And yet, even with a 504, we’re still waiting for her first session, 8 months into the school year.

It is my own priority as a parent that we vigorously pour resources and support into expanding school-based mental health, especially at this point in the pandemic where our children are in immediate crisis. I’d like to see:

- Expanded trauma-informed training and social-emotional learning for ALL teachers and school staff, as well as additional mental health supports for our teachers and school staff.
- Family engagement and increased communication about available help.
- Utilize the findings of DBH’s school based mental health cost study to allocate funding to match the needs of our schools.

One of the most important aspects of school-based mental health that **MUST** be addressed, with urgency, is to build and sustain a pipeline of diverse mental health professionals. This may be through incentives, such as scholarships, increased salaries, and loan forgiveness. Or



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simplifying the certification process and licensure. Or through creative measures, such as forming relationships with local universities.

Thank you for your work and dedication to the children in our DC schools. I hope you will join us in advocating for the urgency of these needs.

Sincerely,  
Meaghan Mountford  
PAVE Ward 4 PLE Board Member