

**Veronica Branch
State Board of Education
State Board of Education Meeting
March 15, 2023**

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

My name is Veronica Branch and I live in Ward 7. My grandkids go to Barnard Elementary and Brookland Middle schools. I currently serve as a PAVE parent leader on the Ward 7 board. I want to thank you for your partnership and leadership on Out of School Time (OST) Today, I’m testifying because I would like to see more equity and more quality programs in the Out of School Time programs for my granddaughters and my autistic grandson in the Ward 5 neighborhood that they reside.

This matters to me because each of my beautiful granddaughters have done wonderfully in the DC public schools that they attend. They are striving excellently with the support of their parents and grandparents on both sides. However, I would like your support in getting more enrichment programs in their area. They would like to explore more science, dance, arts, and IT however, the city doesn’t offer these types of programs and they are cost-prohibitive with having 3 children to fund through the summer months. If given the opportunities, these two young girls might be the next Mayor of our wonderful city.

Also, my grandson has autism and he too would like to have programs with individuals who understand his diagnosis and would be able to provide an experience where he too can learn new skills and develop in a stronger manner the ones he has learned during the school year.

In order to make this vision a reality, alongside PAVE parent leaders, I would like to see support from the SBOE in advocating for providing targeted resources so that we can increase the number of OST seats close to where families already are, and increasing information sharing so that families know what opportunities there are in terms of programming, financial aid, scholarships, and more. (PAVE parent priorities around this issue).

Thank you all for your time and partnership.

Best,
Veronica Branch
PAVE Ward 7 PLE Board Member