

Yvette Selby
Department of Parks and Recreation
Performance Oversight Hearing Testimony
Committee on Recreation, Libraries, and Youth Affairs
Thursday, February 23, 2023

Good morning, Councilmember White and members of the Committee on Recreation, Libraries and Youth Affairs. My name is Yvette Selby, and I am a proud parent of 12th grade twins that attend Capital City High School in Ward 4 and McKinley Tech High School in Ward 5 and I also serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Citywide and Ward 5 Parent Leader Boards.

Thank you to the Mayor for proposing \$13M in additional funding for OST Programs and for a secured a needs assessment to inform OST Office's Strategic Plan. Those are important investments! I am testifying today because dedicated access to DPR programs for summer, and winter/spring breaks should become a priority for all district children including middle school age children. OST programs play a critical role in providing a safe, structured environment for children. OST enrichment programs also promote positive benefits such as improved academic, social/emotional, and health and wellness outcomes. My son is a perfect example of the benefits of OST enrichment programs he participated in middle school. I have testified in the past about my son's exposure to robotics in a community-based STEM OST. His robotics team participated in several competitions, and they were able to compete at a Worlds competition against teams from Romania,

Liberia, and other teams across the US. As part of the program, he learned not just to build robots but also about coding, measurement, project management, teamwork, problem-solving and strategic thinking, and academically he went from being a B student to a straight A student who wants to become a mechanical engineer and entrepreneur. My daughter also participated in a STEAM girls' program as part of the YWCA while in middle school. She benefitted greatly from learning about science with her peers which sparked her interest in becoming a veterinarian. My kids attended DPR camps in elementary school but there were few or no options for them in middle school. These programs were not in our neighborhood. I had to take my kids to camps to other wards and to Maryland to get access to quality summer programs while they were in middle school.

Educational equity is essentially giving every single student the tools they need to succeed and thrive, and DPR programs are part of enrichment. OST enrichment programs can level the playing field and help to close the achievement gap between lower and higher income students. That is why it is so important that the dedicated funding to improve and expand access to vouchers, financial aid, and scholarships for students in need, increase access to OST programs by making sure families have access to quality programs in convenient locations that meet their needs. In addition, DPR should improve information sharing about community-based organizations and establish partnerships with DPR to provide quality programs for our middle school age children.

DPR programs have to be quality, affordable and accessible, therefore a strategic plan with families, educators, OST providers and community partners to ensure access to in-demand programs for all kids should be priority. This plan should define what high-quality DPR programs look like, metrics for evaluation, and include the results of the needs assessment to identify existing program gaps/needs, and look at both location and program type, as well as other factors described in our PAVE parent statement of beliefs. Ultimately, the strategic plan should be used to inform allocation of funding and resources and other policies needed to expand access to DPR programs.

I'm concerned that if we continue to not invest in quality OST programs and do not aggressively support enrichment for our students, they will not be in a position to succeed in our global society. Every year we have to push our leaders to make addressing the needs of our Black and Brown students a priority. Every child in DC deserves to have equitable OST enrichment programs to help them learn and grow. Let's work together to make that a reality. Thank you for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our District.

Yvette Selby

Ward 5 Citywide PLE Board Member