

To the Council of the Whole:

My name is Andrea Jones, and I am a Ward 8 resident and mother of 4 wonderful children, 3 of which have IEPs. I am an advocate for children with disabilities because I first hand see the inequity of access and want the district to strive to create support here without parents having to commute to Maryland and Virginia for their children to engage in OST programming. OST is just as important as education because it supports the child as a whole. It supports their social-emotional learning and helps children engage with other children in a social setting (which is important for growth). These opportunities are lacking for children with disabilities that need the same amount of social engagement as other children.

This is why I thank Councilmember Henderson for introducing the bill. While there are some changes that need to be made, including the wording under IDEA and OSSE being the agency in charge, I appreciate the conscious decision to create a bill that, in spirit, would create an equitable space for all children in the OST programming. Thank you for opening the conversation around this issue that many people have seemed to overlook.

There are a couple of points that I need to make regarding the bill:

As I said, the wording of the bill, which only states children with IEPs, needs to be addressed to include all children with disabilities. This inclusion needed would fall under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act, which covers outside of the school parameters to include the child's support in society, employment, independent living, and social self-sufficiency. I have had my child kicked out of an OST program due to her disabilities, and many parents share the same experience in the district. These acts protect children with disabilities outside of the school day and need to be stated in the bill.

CBOs are dealing with a lack of funding to increase seats and provide training and support. Instead of creating a study, the DC Policy Center's data points can be used, and funding should be given to the OST providers to ensure they are able to support children with disabilities through mandatory training, additional staff, and equipment purchases. The mandatory training with periodic assessments to make sure the programs adhere to the quality of support needed for the children should be overseen by the OST Commission.

I would like to point out that DC Action has been consistent in advocating for additional funding, and I support their mission because there are many CBOs that are a part of DC Action that truly want the same equality that I advocate for. I want to shed light on the CBO, Sitar, for having Rob there, whom I have talked to numerous times; he is actively engaged in the disability community and is looking for ways to reach out and find resources to support disabled children and adults. This needs to be replicated in all CBO programs.

Thank you again for introducing the bill to shed light on an ongoing issue in the district. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this hearing and the appropriate changes to make OST equitable for all children.

Thank you for your time.

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DC OST Advocacy Plan

Our Story

We are families, educators, organizations, and advocates fighting for equitable Out of School Time (OST) programs. Our mission is to bring awareness and change to the challenges that exist for children with disabilities and their families. We are advocating for equal access to programs and services to ensure children with disabilities are supported and will thrive in a more inclusive setting.

Many children with disabilities in the District of Columbia cannot access OST opportunities due to OST programs not having the expertise and accommodations to serve them. There are also instances in which children with disabilities are dismissed from programs due to the lack of intervention services within OST programs.

Current Federal Protections

ADA (Americans Disabilities Act) Title II:

The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The law's purpose is to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. DC Government must reasonably modify any policy, practice, or procedure when necessary to enable people with disabilities to participate¹.

The Main Challenges

OST programs that receive federal funding **are required** to follow ADA Title II- which provides that persons with disabilities must have equal access, be allowed to participate, and receive reasonable accommodations.

¹ D.C. Office on Disability Rights. (n.d.) *Disability and ADA 101*.
<https://odr.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/odr/publication/attachments/Disability%20and%20ADA%20101%20updated.pdf>



In the District, families of children with disabilities face challenges obtaining access to government and Community-Based OST Programs that are properly equipped to provide reasonable accommodations.

Reasonable Accommodations: Many OST providers are not able to accommodate children with disabilities due to many reasons, such as understaffing, lack of behavior management training, and lack of education/training surrounding federal laws.

Lack of Transparency Accountability: Once funds are dispersed to community based organizations, there is no consistent data to track enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in OST programs.

Designated Funding: Funding is not allocated to provide reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities.

The Ask

Reasonable Accommodation:

- OST providers receive additional funding to train Community Based Organizations, receiving federal and local funding.
- OST providers will provide additional staff (if appropriate) to accommodate children with disabilities (**does the program need a nurse or other specialty staff?**)

Transparency and Accountability:

- Data regarding enrollment and retention of students with disabilities are to be collected continuously and consistently.
- Data needs to be accessible to the public as well.
- CBO's have accessible information for families of children with disabilities on their websites (homepages)
- CBO's have a listed direct contact for families of children with disabilities to contact (person with email or phone number) for more information



Designated Training Funds:

- Separate funding needs to be allocated for training OST staff and hire necessary personnel to accommodate children with disabilities.
- Disability law training for Community-Based Organizations includes Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Sec. 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973., etc.
- See testimony to help subsidize some of these costs.

DC OST Disability Coalition

Andrea Jones- Disability Advocate

LaJoy Johnson-Law- Disability Advocate

Yolanda Corbett- Disability Advocate

Astasia Clayborne- ABA Therapist and Founder of Refined Approaches

Misty Freeman- School Psychologist and Co-Founder of Refined Approaches