

**Denise Woodfolk
Committee of the Whole
OST Programs Hearing Testimony
Wednesday, June 7th, 2023**

My name is Denise Woodfolk and I live in Ward 5. My grandchildren will be attending Rocketship, Capital Village and Washington Leadership Academy Public Charter schools next school year. I currently serve as a PAVE parent leader on the Ward 5 PLE board.

Let me first say, I want to thank you for your partnership and leadership on Out of School Time (OST) and I am grateful for your dedication towards ensuring there are great schools in every Ward that support and nurture ALL DC children!

PAVE Parent support for OST programs has been fueled by three key factors:

1. After school, unsupervised kids tend to engage in risky behaviors;
2. Youth access to enrichment activities seem to be tied directly to family income;
3. Low-income students fall substantially behind their more-affluent peers, in terms of academic achievement, due in part to exposure to positive programing!

Today, I'm testifying because I personally know the importance of OST options for parents from all walks of life, no matter what their situation, we all want the best for our children. Wherever there are children; there will always be a need for OST programing options!

This matters so very much to me because I am currently functioning as an OST option for four (4) of my five grandchildren on a daily basis and then I'll have the other one as soon as school is out for the summer.

This is a very personal issue for me, first because I know how difficult it is to provide methods and "projects" to keep children of all ages occupied with activities that will assist in their development and overall knowledge going forward. Secondly, I think about, if this is difficult for me, and I know my grandchildren intimately, we have to implore those that have a love for our children at heart to be involved in the development of these activities and programs.

Getting access to quality programs and services has always been difficult as far back as I can remember. But now, it seems to be almost a pipe dream! I say that because there is a lot out there that could work for many, but one of the main problems is the program information always seems to be a "secret," that you only find out about if you run in the right circles. We

FIRST need a location where every OST program in the city – MUST – register, thus creating a central location for *ALL THINGS RELATED TO OST OPTIONS!*

I know that this has been discussed by many parents, so we are all looking forward to an OST directory that includes the program offerings, it's location, cost (to include options for reduced fees or assistance that provides "how to apply" instructions), transportation availability and a team dedicated to keeping this directory updated. This is the vision of so many parents that it's unreal.

And last but not least, is the reality that if a program is found to work well for most families that take part, and they have a positive track record, would it be possible to look for a way to stamp these programs out in all the Wards?

Currently there are STEM programs in Robotics that could be a conduit to a career path in coding that are currently active in Wards 1, 2 and in both Maryland and Virginia. We have been actively looking for a space to house this program in Ward 5 but have yet to get it off the ground.

Since we believe that every family should have access to high-quality OST programs for their children, that support their individual needs, where they can explore their passions and enrich their learning - regardless of income level or where they live – why can't we make this happen!

I believe that this could be the beginning that could foster a direct student impact on both learning and social development and how it would assist parents by authoring a much-needed "calming effect" that would allow them to concentrate on their daily activities (working from home or outside the home).

As I stated earlier, I know that this topic has been discussed quite a bit recently, but it continues to be an issue that needs to be in the forefront of every discussion. It matters because it has been proven to increase students' learning abilities/opportunities and allows parents a peace-of-mind that is paramount for their sheer sanity!

It is only when we come together, put our communities at the center of our work, and deeply believe in the promise of their leadership that we can advance equity in excellence for each and every one of our kids.

Always doing my best, to Do My Best,
Denise D. Woodfolk
Citywide/Ward 5 Board Member