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Department of Parks and Recreation
Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony
Wednesday, April 5th, 2023

To: DC Council Committee on Recreation, Libraries, and Youth Affairs, Committee Chairperson Trayon White, Committee Members,, and Committee Staff
From: Faith Gibson Hubbard, Chief Strategy Officer at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)
Date: April 5th, 2023

Good afternoon Committee Chairman White, members of the Committee on Recreation, Libraries, and Youth Affairs, and Committee staff. My name is Faith Gibson Hubbard, and I am the Chief Strategy Officer at PAVE, a Ward 5 resident, and a parent of two DCPS students. PAVE is a part of the OST Coalition - a coalition of providers and community members, dedicated to expanding access to high-quality OST programs for every DC kid.

PAVE parent leaders have been steadfastly advocating for OST programs since 2018. Their collective vision is simple but powerful: every family, regardless of their income or where they live - should have access to a high-quality OST program for their children that supports their individual needs where they can explore their passions and enrich their learning.

PAVE parents have long known about the benefits of OST programs and the great benefits they can provide - the availability of academic enrichment, an opportunity to explore passions and interests, and, most importantly, a safe place for kids to go to when school is not in session.

That's why PAVE parent leaders and our partners are extremely grateful for DC's continued investments in out-of-school time programs. As with any successful policy, our approach to expanding high-quality out-of-school time programs requires rigorous attention to detail, inclusive efforts for continuous improvement, continuous family and community engagement, and, of course, resources. PAVE parent leaders came together in countless meetings to discuss what [policy solutions](#) are foundational to lasting, systemic change around out-of-school time programs and would address the biggest gaps and needs for our students and families. Today, I want to amplify their top priorities:

First, to best meet the needs of our students, DC needs to continue investing in expanding access to high-quality OST programs.

- We are grateful for the Mayor’s increased investment of \$3.125 to OST grants and to expand over 5,000 more DPR seats. This increase in funding is an important first step to build upon previous investments; however, to best support our OST providers and ensure expanded access to high-quality DPR and OST spots, PAVE parent leaders encourage an additional \$7 million for a total of at least \$10 million for FY2024.
- DPR heard DC parents’ call about the DPR summer hunger games and responded with a lottery system to ensure the odds are now in the favor of parents. PAVE parents are grateful for the improvement of a clearly inequitable system by implementing the lottery system.
- To maximize the return on our investments in OST, we urge the Council to provide oversight over the lottery results and work to establish a plan for continuous improvement, including adding in preferences for students with disabilities and students who are considered “at-risk” and expanding access to scholarships and financial aid.

Second, DC must continue to remove a key barrier to participation in OST programs - the lack of accurate and available information.

- Information is a powerful tool and connecting parents and caregivers to that information is even more powerful. That’s why PAVE parent leaders are excited about the Mayor’s investment of about \$1.875 million to begin planning and implementing My Afterschool DC, which will serve as an online central hub for OST programs.
- To ensure My Afterschool DC does not experience similar pitfalls as the Learn24 program finder, we urge the Council to provide oversight so that:
 - Program information is accurate and up to date - which requires working closely alongside program providers,
 - The website is built with extensive feedback and collaboration from parents and caregivers,
 - And that the launch of My Afterschool DC includes a productive and wide reaching communication campaign. Building a perfect website is only half the challenge - but making sure families know it exists and know where to access it is equally as important.

This upcoming budget and oversight season is an opportunity to show our values - that DC truly takes care of its people, especially our kids, and one that will courageously act to right the wrongs of historic injustice and step up with bold, innovative action to meet this unprecedented moment, with investments in our future and in our children.

This work is only possible with leaders on the Council and in DBH who believe in the power and promise of community voice. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today, I hope that we can count on your leadership.

In service,

Faith Gibson Hubbard, PhD
Chief Strategy Officer
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