

**Simone Scott**  
**Department of Parks and Recreation**  
**Budget Hearing Testimony**  
**Committee of Recreation, Libraries, and Youth Affairs**  
**Wednesday, April 5th, 2023**

Dear Councilmember White and fellow Committee Representatives,

Thank you for your time and consideration today. I am Simone Scott, a native Washingtonian and Social Impact Entrepreneur. In addition, I am a 2 Parent Board Member with PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices for Education) a parent led organization providing a platform and resources to support(s) strengthening my ability to give my testimony today, and the other with Digital Pioneers Academy. As a Ward 7 Parent Leader within these positions I am also a mother of two. A 15 yr old Sophomore thriving at DPA (Digital Pioneers Academy) and my daughter loving her Kindergarten experience at I Dream, both Public Charters East of The River.

I first want to thank you for adding the additional 13 million to this year's fiscal budget pertaining to OST programs. Continuing to work together to fund these initiatives is just one of the many reasons to acknowledge your successes. Furthermore, the implementation of the OST Office's needs assessment in order to answer many questions many residents have around equity, accessibility, and affordability regarding where the OST program currently is, and how its maximized moving forward.

The DC Committee of Heath have worked on reciprocity to meet the need of filling the SBMH professional vacancies. I believe this innovative approach should be addressed to meet similar hiring needs within OST programs. To continue, I believe we are leaving much on the table, not truly assessing how we can utilize many of our residents who may already be qualified but not in regulation to sponsor DPR programs. Most importantly, this may meet hiring requirements necessary to increase more program opportunities. I became a Social Impact Entrepreneur ( a founder commits 80% of their mission to community based engagement) 5 years ago after my TANF interview for benefit eligibility during a time of a major health recovery. I was asked, "Ms. Scott, what do you really want to do? After my professional assessment for job placement I found myself actually career searching. Career placement, although acknowledged on a federal level, is not fully developed for successful business ownership. Many residents who find

ourselves on assistance are looking towards purposeful, driven career training, placement, creative ownership, and vocational recognized accreditation.

However, we are only supported federally if entrepreneurs are interested in job placement. What I witnessed is counter-productive for the current process, let alone eligible residents like myself looking to offer our best qualities within career professions servicing the District. The reason I find this important to share is that within these 5 years I often ask myself how much ground could I have covered with my community initiatives, if not cycling the same repetition of entry level entrepreneurship programs. I hope with your support the DHS Business Entrepreneurship System will be completed for qualified residents to add more value to our city, our lives, and position passionate individuals for hire. Further, start-up businesses can begin to roll out more products and services to bridge the gaps needed to assist facilitation of our OST programs/goals. Opening more hiring opportunities for DPR to fill positions with qualified employers from the District and expanding Entrepreneur sponsorship to develop and host more DPR OST programs.

Lastly, I believe innovative strategies mentioned herein are complementary to other initiatives such as Learn24 and can expand local, national, and international partnerships vital to propose more earning capital potential to our city's 20 billion dollar spending budget.

In closing OST operations should be free of cost for every family in our District regardless of disability or concern. In addition, the employees and sponsors associated with these programs need to have the correct resource support(s) to strengthen earning profit, and B2B to B2C capabilities. I agree the time is now to meet that numerical figure to fully fund OST programs.

I now conclude my testimony.

Thank you,

Simone Scott

PAVE PLE Ward 7 Member, Parent Board Member of Digital Pioneers Academy, and Social Impact Founder located in Washington, D.C