

**Tyesha Andrews**  
**Education Agencies**  
**FY24 Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony**  
**Wednesday, April 5, 2023**

Greetings,

My name is Tyesha D. Andrews, and I live in Ward 8. My kids attend Jefferson Middle Academy and Mary H. Plummer Elementary Schools, and I currently serve as a PAVE parent leader on the Ward 8 board.

PAVE parents have advocated, voted, and spoken vigorously about TWO main goals over the last two years. These are School-based mental health supports and out-of-time school programs.

**Today, I'm testifying because my children's schools need additional funding for building renovations and community resources.** We learned just a few short months ago that a few DCPS schools Across the river are losing funding due to enrollment, and however, funding is still needed to provide additional services to the enrolled students.

**This matters to me because my youngest son attends Plummer Elementary.** Plummer has taught me that just because a school is in a troubled neighborhood doesn't mean that greatness isn't happening within the school walls.

Over the years, Plummer Elementary has consistently scored the highest in Wards 7 & 8 of the district on the nationwide assessment called Classroom Scoring System (CLASS). Due to the COVID pandemic, no assessments were conducted during the 2019-2020 school year. However, in August 2022, Plummer scored #1 in all DCPS. In addition, Plummer's PARCC scores have consistently shown gains in one academic area or both. Despite this, in initial budgets for this year, Plummer is losing nearly \$260,000 in its budget. And our School still has many unmet needs.

All SBMH supports vary by School, based on budget and need. In 2021, PAVE conducted a 2021 Fall Back to School Survey, where we learned that 55 % of caregivers are unsatisfied with the mental health and social-emotional support DC Schools give their children with IEPs. Outside of that, the National Survey of Children reports that almost 50% of children in the US have experienced "at least one type of severe childhood trauma. Increased funding would ensure the hiring more mental health professionals and other staff to assist them. All schools need increased access to mental health professionals. Imagine the heights Plummer can achieve with more funding to support their SBMH.

Every family 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 - regardless of income level or where they live. It's a known fact that other countries excel in education compared to the US because other countries focus on the family, whereas the US focuses on numbers. The numbers then, in turn, equal money. Both parents and teachers need support from each other for each child to succeed, and city leaders are just as responsible for the lack of educational support as parents.

Due to the recent pandemic, Mental health will continue to be a core focus for families and teachers to provide a successful educational experience for all students. Plummer embodies this environment but needs additional funds and resources to succeed and go above and beyond for SBMH and building renovations.

**To make this vision a reality, I would like to see** Plummer Elementary receive a complete renovation with a new library, gymnasium, green space, and a space with more light. The School needs extensive renovations, especially on the first floor, due to lighting, and in the library. The first floor has limited natural lighting due to the lack of windows; the library has folding chairs and old carpets for the students to sit on. The bookshelves are not conducive to the height of elementary school children. The brightness and colors inside any school impact the mental stability of the staff and students; a brighter school is a happier school. Plummer needs to look more inviting to the community to increase enrollment and ensure that funding stays the same.

There needs to be more equity and responses toward the needs of the Plummer school community. Additional funding needs to be provided for the before and after-school staff. The staff at Plummer get a base salary for their positions but having them come in early for before-care and stay late for after-care is only realistic with premium pay; therefore, an administrative premium is needed to manage a before and after-care program that many parents need.

In closing, being a PAVE parent leader has encouraged me to be more involved in my children's educational and social growth. I confidently request anything to ensure a successful school experience. Therefore, I advocate for all DCPS, including Plummer Elementary, to receive increased mental health support funding and proper renovations. Plummer is a beautiful rose in a concrete jungle that needs additional love and care to continue blossoming and growing.

**Thank you for your time and partnership.**

**Best,  
Tyesha D. Andrews**



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Citywide/Ward 8 Board Member