

Tyesha Andrews
Department of Parks and Recreation
Budget Hearing Testimony
Committee of Recreation, Libraries, and Youth Affairs
Wednesday, April 5th, 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. Of course, for the purposes of this meeting, I will be speaking on out-of-time school programs.

We would like to thank you for the following investments in OST programs:

- **\$14.2M has been proposed** for Recreation for ALL and Urban Park and Roving Leaders. **\$2.1M** in enhanced recreation opportunities for underserved areas and communities experiencing upticks in crime and underserved areas, including late-night operating hours and afternoon recreational programming for children ages 3-12. **\$2.95M** proposed for summer recreation activities and accelerated learning opportunities for students recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. And **\$400,000** proposed to create 360 additional summer camp slots across sports and aquatics programs for children & youth with disabilities.
- **\$300,000 to assess the cost of high-quality training** for all government-funded OST programs to support students with disabilities to inform funding next year. The proposal is **\$6.8M** in the Special Education Enhancement Fund to fund dedicated childcare slots for infants and toddlers with disabilities and out-of-school time slots for children with disabilities and a referral system.

Today, I'm testifying because in my experience, children with special needs cannot participate in OST programs because DC schools do not have the staff or resources to assist children with special needs that want to participate in OST programs. Another obstacle is that if a child receives transportation services from OSSE, they automatically cannot participate in OST programs at their own school because OSSE does not make accommodations for children with special needs that want to participate in OST programs. Students cannot get reliable transportation to any OST programs, including DPR programs.

This matters to me because all DC students should have equal opportunities when it comes to enrolling in OST programs. OST programs matter because children need additional enrichment

and exposure outside of school and home. Students with special needs desperately need these programs. In the DC Policy Center's State of DC Schools report on the 21-22 school year, they found that 58 percent of students with disabilities were chronically absent and faced decreasing test scores. These programs can help students attend school and recover academically.

To make this vision a reality, I would like to see additional OST programs East of the River, with a wider variety of choices of programs to join, in addition to spaces for children with special needs to participate in all OST programs possible. An example of some of these programs would be lacrosse, swimming, robotics, coding, theater arts, soccer, gymnastics, and chess.

Thank you for your time and partnership.

Best,
Tyesha D. Andrews
Citywide/Ward 8 Board Member