



PAVE Parent Leaders' Statement of Beliefs on Safe Passage

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WHO WE ARE

Our Mission

PAVE connects, informs, and empowers parent leaders to give families in DC a voice and choice in the vision for education in our city.

Our Vision

Parents are partners and leaders with schools and policymakers to develop a diversity of safe, nurturing, and great schools for every child in every ward and community.



Our History

PAVE was founded in April 2016 because we believe that for too long, parents have been informed of our education policy decisions after they have already been made instead of being invited to the table to create them. Since 2016, PAVE has grown into a network of 6,000+ DC parents and caregivers united behind a vision for an education system that is created not just for, but by and with families and guided by the following core values:

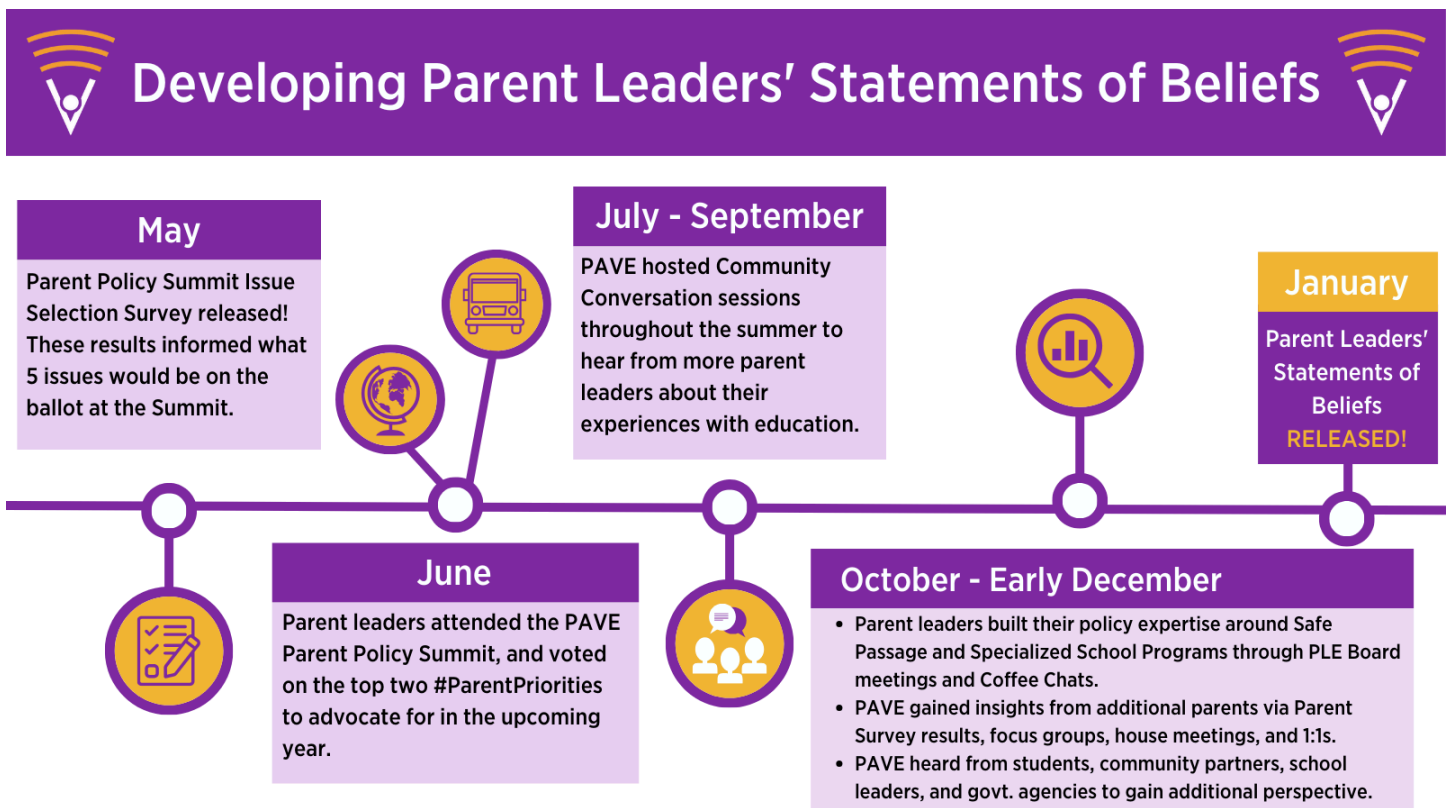
- Value #1: All families have access to high-quality schools and the information they need to make the best decisions for their children.
- Value #2: All schools have adequate and equitable funding to support the needs of children and families.
- Value #3: All students have a safe, healthy, and welcoming school environment.
- Value #4: All students have access to out-of-school time and summer school programs that allow them to foster their passions and enrich their learning.
- Value #5: All parents have the resources they need to support the success of their children at home and in school.

You can find more about PAVE parent leaders and their incredible work and accomplishments [here](#) and in their [Parents' Bill of Rights for the DC Education System here](#).

Our Why

PAVE parent leaders developed and wrote their Statements of Beliefs to pursue educational equity and improved outcomes for kids and families across all Wards and communities in the District. We want to achieve this by encouraging and empowering caregivers to use their voice, providing accessible and inclusive information about issues they care about most, collectively creating policy solutions, and holding the system accountable to deliver on those solutions - together.

Our Process



Choosing Our Issues

Out-of-School Time (OST) programs and School-based Mental Health (SBMH) have been the focus of PAVE parent leaders' advocacy over the past seven years, being voted as their top policy priorities at five Parent Policy Summits. In 2023, PAVE's Citywide Parent Leader in Education (PLE) Board voted to make those issues "anchor issues", meaning they will continue to build on the success they made possible with the relationships and expertise they built over time. They wanted to select new issues at the fifth PAVE Parent Policy Summit, and because everything PAVE does is driven by parents, we took to the broader parent community in the District to identify the most important new policy priorities and create PAVE's policy and advocacy agenda for the new year.

In May, **251 parents and caregivers** completed our citywide [Parent Policy Summit Issue Survey](#) to determine the top five policy issue areas to be on the ballot at the fifth PAVE Parent Policy Summit in June. **Eighty-five parent leaders** participated in discussions about their experiences, shared their personal stories about the issues, and voted on the policy priorities they identified as most critical to their children's education. **At the summit, parents selected this year's #ParentPriorities: Safe Passage and Specialized School Programs.**

The Bottom Line: DC's youth are in crisis. Since the pandemic, chronic absenteeism, missing 10% or more of school, has been rising and youth violence is more **predominant** than **ever** before. We need to get children back into the classroom and **engaged** with their own education. Based on data from schools and policy partners and their own experiences, PAVE parent leaders know Safe Passage and Specialized School Programs are two of the most important issues to get right and amplify to support our children getting back to school, excited about learning, and graduated.

Identifying the Problem and Our Policy Solutions

Identifying the Problem

Throughout a myriad of meetings in the fall, PAVE parent leaders shared their experiences - including bright spots and challenges - and vision for Safe Passage (SP) in DC. We also heard from students, school leaders, community partners, and agency staff doing the work around the District.

Here are the most common and pressing problems raised in these conversations:

- Most **Safe Passage Workers (SPW)** are **disconnected from schools**.
- **Quality** of Community-based organizations (CBOs) who manage SPW is **inconsistent**.
- Most **people who are working on safe passage do not know each other** (have a relationship, met in person, talked outside of problem/emergency).
- All of the **safe passage convenings that do happen now are mostly made up of high-level citywide leaders** (who already know each other) and **there isn't strong coordination on the ground**.
- Right now, many **students don't feel safe on public transportation**, and **parents and school leaders agree**.
- **DC School Connect** is **limited in scope** (mostly elementary schools and East of the River).
- There are **not enough bus drivers** and new bus driver **hiring** is an **expensive, long process** (background checks, licensing, drug testing, etc.).
- The **Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)** and **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Police Department (WMATA PD)** need **stronger youth-centered programs**.
- Only **sworn officers can address serious crimes** (weapons, shootings, assaults, etc.) and there are currently 35 **School Resource Officers (SROs)** for 60 middle and high schools (on average covering 2-4 schools each), making Unusual Incident Reports and other school safety concerns slower to receive MPD response.
- Schools are not able to get the **infrastructure changes they need** in a **timely** manner - **if at all**.
- **Crossing guards** often **move between sites**, and there are **not enough of them** to meet the needs of all schools.
- There is **very little public information about safe passage programs**, and the information that is available is **not comprehensive**.

Identifying Realistic Solutions in Partnership with Those Leading AND Doing the Work

We believe in finding the best solution for kids - and that only comes when you bring together people from **all** parts of the system with diverse perspectives to get the best ideas. **We are so grateful for the insight, expertise, and time of all of our parents and partners, and couldn't be more proud of the collective solutions we crafted together.** We look forward to working with the District's leaders and policymakers to bring about positive change for our children.

Below are PAVE parent leaders' policy solutions:

- **The Deputy Mayor of Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ)** should:
 - Shift program management structure of Safe Passage Workers (SPW, or informally those in green vests outside of schools during pick up and drop off hours) from Community-based organizations (CBOs) to schools/school clusters.
 - Identify model SPW program partnerships with schools and host sessions at those school sites with all stakeholders to share best practices with other schools and SPW programs.
 - Re-evaluate the Safe Passage grant process to:
 - Ensure awardees have trusted relationships and proven capacity to engage with school communities,
 - Ensure all SPWs receive training around de-escalation and violence interruption practices with commensurate pay raises,
 - Provide capacity-building opportunities,
 - Include school leader input in the selection process, and
 - Ensure stakeholder feedback is a part of the annual evaluation.
- **District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)** and **all public charter school leaders** should convene in person for a citywide meeting, at least annually, with **MPD, WMATA PD, and Safe Passage program leadership** to build relationships and discuss ways they can collaborate around safe passage.
- **The Office of the Student Advocate (OSA)** should convene hyper-local (by school or neighborhood cluster) monthly meetings with safe passage stakeholders to discuss issues, updates, and interventions. This should minimally include school leaders, SPWs, MPD, WMATA PD, and safe passage and community partners (violence interrupters, Cure the Streets, Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) office, Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services (MOCRS) liaisons, agency staff, DPR, DCPL, etc.).
- **The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB)** should create a list of all of the security leads at each of their local education agencies (LEAs) and post it publicly.
- **OSA** should partner with **DMPSJ** to add information on all safety opportunities, resources, LEA security contacts, and services that are available for school leaders on their safe passage website.

Solutions continue on the next page

- In partnership with the executive (**Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)/District Department of Transportation (DDOT)**),
 - **WMATA** should pilot youth-only WMATA metro cars and station SPWs and WMATA PD on those routes during school arrival and dismissal times.
 - Starting with high schools, create dedicated WMATA “youth to school” bus routes modeled after the existing WMATA bus route for students at Shepherd Park to Deal/Wilson.
 - SPWs and WMATA PD should be stationed on those routes during school arrival and dismissal times.
 - Identify equitable sources of funding for program expansion across both sectors (DCPS and charter) and a process for schools to opt into the program.
- The **Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV)** should increase DC School Connect routes to transport more students across wards, prioritizing students and school communities with the greatest need.
- The **Department of Operations and Infrastructure (DOI) and DC Human Resources (DCHR)** should work in partnership with respective executive agencies to address recruitment and retention of bus drivers: the OSSE bus program for students with disabilities, DC School Connect, and WMATA during school arrival and dismissal times.
- **MPD** and **WMATA PD** should expand training on youth-focused interventions (i.e. responding to youth in crisis, restorative practices, de-escalation, interacting with students with disabilities, youth development, etc.).
- **DCPS** and **public charter schools, the DME, MPD, and DMPSJ** should review the structure, re-implementation, training, and hiring of the school resource officer program together.
- **DDOT should:**
 - Expedite the approval process for schools to request changes/improvements to their traffic safety infrastructure (I.E. crosswalks, crossing guards, speedbumps, staggered drop-offs).
 - Share school traffic infrastructure standards and assessments publicly and with all schools.
 - Create consistency in crossing guard placements, hiring, and training as well as increase pay and provide career advancement opportunities.
 - Make crossing guard partnerships with schools a core focus by doing an introduction of each crossing guard to the school principal before the first date of service (i.e. sharing name, phone number, email, and other important information between both the guard and the principal).
- Respective executive agencies should regularly aggregate and release public data on safe passage program effectiveness and usage including, but not limited to:
 - Safe Passage, Safe Blocks (**DMPSJ**)
 - DC School Connect (**DFHV**)
 - DC Vision Zero (**DDOT**)
 - School Crossing Guards and Traffic Officers (**DDOT**)
 - Kids Ride Free (**DDOT**)
 - OSSE Bus Program for students with disabilities (**OSSE**)