

**Tyesha Andrews**  
**Public Hearing on “Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy”**  
**December 12, 2023**

Good afternoon,

My name is Mrs. Ty Andrews, and I am a Ward 8 resident and proud parent of a student at Mary H. Plummer Elementary School and McKinley Tech High School. I am also a parent leader with PAVE on the Citywide/Ward 8 PLE Boards; Plummer LSAT member, and McKinley Tech PTO 1st-Vice President.

Although my children have not had severe issues with truancy and absenteeism, we have had to overcome a few hurdles, that I'm sure all families cannot combat. I'm sure many other parents share my concerns about having their children travel on public transportation. To put this in a clearer perspective, I have traveled on Metro public transportation almost all my life as I am a native Washingtonian. The Metro did not allow a lot of what they allow now back in the 90's. They didn't allow women with babies to get on the bus with their strollers. They didn't allow children to take up all the handicapped seats. They made people get off their bus or would not move their bus if customers didn't pay their fare or follow bus rules. Now, the customers are more violent and irate, and the Metro employees are scared to do what's right.

Nowadays, children are exposed to severe aggression, violence, sexual assault, private exposure, drug use, and more. Both my high schooler and I have experienced some of these unfortunate types of events and I am aware of other families that have experienced worse. In addition, I'm sure you are aware of the increased violence in the McKinley Tech area. Two students were robbed at gunpoint recently, in addition to many other incidents. Why would a parent want to send their child to school, if the parent or child does not feel safe traveling to and from on public transportation? All parents do not have to means to Uber or drive their children to school, especially in ward 8, where many children travel outside of their ward for a better education. Also, the Metro has delays regularly on the trains and there is sometimes lots of traffic that the bus routes cannot avoid. If a student's main transportation is public and there are always delays, you can't expect a child to be on time, especially when they are traveling over an hour to get to and from school.

Next, my youngest son catches the school bus via OSSE. Although he is now in the second grade and we have used OSSE since he was in Pre-K 3, the issues are still the same. The buses do not always pick up and drop off on time and when they are going to be late picking up and dropping off, they do not provide notification. This is a huge inconvenience for working parents who have a set schedule. This is also detrimental to a child's education if they are late for school or do not make it to school, due to the school bus being late or not showing up, without notification. We've had situations where the OSSE claimed the bus came but it didn't and where the bus went to the wrong address for pick up. In those situations, I must inform my job that I will be late, put in a leave slip for the time I was absent when I finally arrive, and take my son to school by Metro, which takes at least an hour, making him late every time!

Last, we should also consider that mental health issues overall have increased nationally since the pandemic. Some families need mental health support for themselves to better take care of and provide for their children. If the parents are in a great mental space, you can't expect them to ensure that their children are in school and on time.

In closing, this may be a bit far-fetched to you all, but I've always thought outside of the box with the hopes that there is more than one way to solve any problem. There needs to be an increase in mental health support within DCPS for not only students and staff but for families as well. Safe passages should be expanded to partner with schools, DC Police, and the community. In addition, Deal and Jackson-Reed have a designated Metro Bus, route D31, that is specifically for and limited to Deal and Jackson-Reed students. This bus takes the students from Tentleytown Station directly to their schools. No other passengers are allowed on the bus, including parents. Why can we have designated buses for all our DCPS children? Why can't OSSE services be expanded to serve all DCPS students like the school bus system in the state of Maryland? I welcome the opportunity to work with the council on some of my suggestions and others to alleviate these issues. Thank you for your time.

Best,

*Ty D. Andrews*

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*PAVE Citywide / Ward 8 PLE Board*