

Simone Scott
Committee of the Judiciary and Public Safety
Metropolitan Police Department
Tuesday, February 13th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Pinto and DC Council staff. My name is Simone Scott. I am a Ward 7 resident and I serve as a PAVE Citywide and Ward 7 PLE Board member. I am also a parent of two young kids. My son attends Digital Pioneers Academy and my daughter attends I Dream.

I want to start by thanking each of you for being here today. I will keep my testimony brief and straightforward. I am here to talk about the Metropolitan Police Department and how I believe they can play an integral part of our communities in a way that is positive and non-punitive. One of PAVE's parent priorities this year is Safe Passage. I feel that MPD can help with the safe passage of students to and from school in many ways, one of which is by engaging more with the community and building relationships with students.

I remember having positive interactions with MPD when I was a child in elementary school here in the District. I can distinctly recall the Mr. Friendly Officer program that used to run at elementary schools across the city where the officers would come to the schools, interact with students, and give fun presentations. They purposefully went into the communities they served and showed their humility and humanity. I remember that due to these experiences, I didn't have a fear of law enforcement that others perhaps had.

MPD should get back into communities and receive training on youth-focused interventions. MPD having relationships with students and knowing how to de-escalate students when problems arise could be a huge preventative measure in making sure students are safe when traveling between home and school. Though it is of course important, and necessary, for MPD to be trained in responding to youth in crisis, it is also reasonable for them to have training on restorative practices and general youth development.

The good thing is that MPD is already doing some work similar to this now, but that it isn't the same across all communities. As stated previously, my son attends Digital Pioneers where there are a lot of incidents that take place between students and the community. MPD can regularly be found in their cars near the school, which is helpful for the safety of students, but I've mostly seen them sitting in their cars and not actually engaging with the people around them. On the



other hand, my daughter attends I Dream. At her school, MPD recently came to her school and went around the classrooms talking with kids and just being intentionally present in the school halls. My daughter told me about it and it seemed like a good interaction between kids and law enforcement. I think our city would be better off with more of that and that these types of interactions would go a long way in keeping our kids safe. When MPD interacts with students and communities in these ways, they also show that they are not just there to get people in trouble. MPD needs to focus on showing students that they don't need to be feared and that they are there to help people feel safe at all times, not just during a crisis.

I urge MPD and the leaders of our city to reimagine what MPD presence looks like around schools and on routes students frequently travel. A meaningful relationship between law enforcement, students, and the community can go a long way in keeping our kids and thus our city safe, especially during travel between home and school. With expanded training for MPD on youth-focused interventions, we can rebuild the gap between the community and law enforcement and develop strong connections that benefit us all.

Sincerely,

Simone Scott

Citywide and Ward 7 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)