

Tyesha Andrews
Committee of Transportation and the Environment
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Friday, February 16th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Allen and DC Council staff. My name is Tyesha Andrews. I am a Ward 8 resident and I serve as a PAVE Citywide and Ward 8 PLE Board member. I am also a parent and my children currently attend Plummer Elementary and Jefferson.

Thank you all for being here today and holding this hearing. As a parent and resident of the District of Columbia, I have a lot of experience riding on WMATA buses and trains. However, I also recognize that different people in our city have different experiences. Some live in low-crime areas and have access to great schools. Some live in higher crime areas and in places where the schools don't offer what our children want and need to be successful. Today I am here to urge you to put yourselves in my shoes and in the shoes of many other parents in DC like myself, who live in places where our local schools aren't what is best for our children. Imagine if you didn't have the opportunity to live in a low-crime area, your children would be more at risk to violence and the challenges violence brings like many of us are experiencing. Put yourselves in our shoes. Parents like me are the majority of parents in DC. We need your support to protect ALL of our children.

I want to begin by sharing how my family and I have personally been affected by violence traveling to and from school while on WMATA. Last year, my son was on his way to McKinley, where he attended school at the time, and had an incident happen to him on his way home from school. Keep in mind that this is not the only time he has had an issue getting to and from school. But most recently, my son was jumped by other kids at the Waterfront metro station. There was no trained adult around and no WMATA PD to help him; the only people present to intervene were his own peers. When I filed a report to his school, nothing was done and the children who jumped my child were not held accountable. Our kids need to be safe traveling to and from school AND they need to get to school efficiently. Teenagers now are having a much different experience getting to school than what I received growing up. I didn't witness all of the violence that my children are. Times have changed and we as leaders of this city must create systems and put structures in place to help our kids, especially when they are doing something as simple as going to school or home.



I am not alone in these concerns, PAVE parent leaders have worked with schools, community organizations, and even agency staff to come up with specific solutions to address this issue. I am asking WMATA to create a student-only metro car for students to utilize when commuting to school with WMATA PD, Safe Passage Workers, or MPD present to intervene if and when necessary. I would also advise that WMATA PD and Safe Passage Workers obtain the proper training to deal with youth, including youth development and de-escalation training. Overall, we need more eyes on the ground during pick-up and drop-off hours. This will help ensure that our young residents can get to school safely and efficiently.

Again, I repeat that we must collaborate and develop solutions to make this great city, which should be a state, better for ALL our children. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the solutions you develop and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Tyesha Andrews

Citywide and Ward 8 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)