

Tyesha Andrews
Committee on Recreation, Libraries, and Youth Affairs
Department of Parks and Recreation
Thursday, February 22nd, 2024

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

Thank you all for being here today and holding this hearing. As a parent and longtime resident of the District of Columbia, my children and I have a lot of experience with the programs offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation. My son currently attends a basketball program and I enjoy attending a spin class at our local recreation center each week. I am grateful for these programs, however, there is room for improvement to better meet the needs of parents and children.

Although DPR programs have grown over time, I have noticed a lot of inconsistencies that impact families like mine. Last year my children were able to sign up for lacrosse training right up the street from our home, however, the location of the program was abruptly changed to across town which we could no longer access. Changes in program locations have been an inconvenience, especially for families in Wards 7 and 8 who heavily rely on these programs and view our local recreation centers as pillars of our communities.

In addition to their need for consistency in programming offerings, there also needs to be clearer communication between DPR and parents regarding program information and deadlines. Many parents like myself face challenges staying informed about available programs due to busy schedules and limited access to information. We had an incident last year where I wasn't able to register my youngest son for basketball because I missed the signup deadline. Another time I was able to sign my son up for basketball, but there weren't many practices or games because not enough people signed up, not due to lack of interest, but again because the dissemination of information isn't getting to parents in places where they are already looking at or familiar with. DPR should work more with communities, parents, and schools to help keep parents informed of programs in time. DPR programs are very important for families because our schools can't or don't offer the enriched programming that DPR can. DPR programs truly have the power to complement the learning our youth are hopefully getting in school.



Lastly, one of our PAVE parent priorities this year is Safe Passage and I believe this goes hand in hand with DPR. Many kids would participate more consistently in DPR programs if they had a safe way to get to them. If parents and students didn't have to worry about transportation to DPR programs and recreation centers, they could be more involved in positive programming and less likely to be involved in crime or violence. I urge all the leaders of the city to work together to ensure students have access to youth-only metro cars and student-friendly bus routes with Safe Passage Workers, MPD, or WMATA PD present so that our kids can arrive safely to their destination.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to future collaboration and am available for questions at the end.

Sincerely,

Tyesha Andrews

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