

Tyesha Andrews
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
District Department of Transportation
Friday, February 9th, 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 with the District Department of Transportation. Though I do 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. 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. With that being said, I'm here to talk about OUR children. Yes OUR children. Not mine versus yours. Not charter school versus public school children. All of our children.

First, I have some data that I feel is important for those on this Council and at DDOT to know about the experience of parents getting their kids to and from school.

- In recent surveys, it was found that children living in Wards 5, 7 and 8 are often traveling over two miles to get to school and some are traveling over three miles.
- Though 50% of all students in DC live in Wards 7 and 8, they are the ones traveling further than any other ward, besides Ward 5, to get to and from school each day.
- During their travels, our youth are being targeted and enduring or witnessing violence. This often increases with distance to school, as many students travel across wards and even across the city to get to and from school. We must do a better job at protecting all of our children because they are our future.

I also want to share how my family and I have personally been affected by violence while traveling to and from school. 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 to help him and 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 in an efficient way. 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 DDOT to create better incentives to hire more crossing guards and to place those crossing guards on popular routes students are taking to get home from school in ALL areas of the city, especially those with the highest need.

DDOT is not alone in this work, so I am also asking city leader to work together to not only onboard and train more bus and metro drivers, but I also ask that we create a student-only metro car for students to travel to school with Safe Passage Workers, MPD, or WMATA PD present to intervene if and when necessary. Overall, we need more eyes on the ground during pick-up and drop-off hours. This will make our students safer and help ensure that they can get to school in a safe and efficient way.

Again, I repeat that we must collaborate and develop solutions to make this great city, that should be a state, better for ALL our children, yes 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)