

Katrice Fuller
Committee of the Whole
State Board of Education, Office of the Student Advocate, District of Columbia
Public Charter School Board, and Ombudsman for Education
Tuesday, February 27th, 2024

Greetings Chairman Mendelson and the representative of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Katrice Fuller. I am a Ward 5 resident and I serve as a PAVE Citywide member. I am also a proud mother of four boys who attend Monument Academy and Miner Elementary. Additionally, I am a bonus mom, teacher, counselor, and confidant to the hundreds of students and families I serve under my role as Chief of Family and Community Engagement at Monument Academy Public Charter School; a place that I consider to be a gem within our city due to the plethora of programming and resources we are able to provide for our school environment. As a school leader, I am grateful for the 12.4% increase; however please note and consider, that with the conclusion of ESSER funds, we must continue to prioritize financial aid and stability across both sectors as ESSER funding provided us the opportunity to add additional amazing support staff to aid us in our systematic efforts such as academic programming, comprehensive mental health support and a robust family engagement efforts.

I am testifying today both as an educator and parent to talk about the opportunities, or lack thereof, for students to access quality specialized school programs. One of my many responsibilities at MA is high school transition coordination. My job is to work with students and their families to create an individualized plan for them to utilize in high school that aligns with their goals, interests, and talents. As a high school transition coordinator (& mother of a current 8th grader), I see and feel every day the stressful process families must go through to find a high school that best suits their child. For example, I am working with an 8th grader who is very much into the arts, specifically music and band. He's a percussionist. He is interested in an HS that is labeled to be arts-integrated, however, after some digging, they only prioritize performing arts and not instrumental music in the manner that he is looking for. We at MA have been blessed to build out a program that allows us to manage the transition of our students for their first-year post-transition to HS to guarantee their families' success, as data has shown me that no matter how academically sound a student may be, that a strong support system is what propels them to secondary and post-secondary success (our very own internal EdNavigator system if-you-will). This is also why matched financial sustainability is important within the

Charter sector as well. With that being said, I also urge you Chairman Mendelson, and other members of the Council to:

- 1) Increase high-quality specialized school program accessibility,
- 2) Create systems that do a better job at communicating to families what their options for programming are such as support the creation of an EdNavigator system that would connect families with someone like me who can help identify best-fit schools for all families in DC,
- 3) Create a system of accountability that communicates how well programs are operating, and if the programs are teaching with fidelity to the program framework, if it even exists, which for some programs sadly it does not. Can this information be adequately reflected in something like the DC School Report Card?,
- 4) Think through the feeder patterns and continuity of programs, students may have a Montessori program in elementary school, but where does that leave for middle and high school?

As a parent, the main thing I want for my sons and all of my bonus children is for their education to be transferable from one school to the next as they grow up. I would like to know what the ideal trajectory is for them and that is very hard to do with the way our educational landscape is now. Students should not have to travel across town to gain access to a specialized school program and parents should not have to work so hard to find out basic information about a school like what programs they offer and if they teach that program with fidelity. We must work together to do better for all of our kids.

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

Sincerely,

Katrice Fuller

Chief of Family and Community Engagement at Monument Academy PCS

Citywide and Ward 6 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)