

Tyesha Andrews
Committee of the Whole
Deputy Mayor for Education, Office of the State Superintendent of Education,
and District of Columbia Public Schools Budget Hearing
Thursday, April 4th, 2024

Hello, Chairman Mendelson 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 Ward 8 resident and native Washingtonian, I have seen firsthand the inequities that exist for families and students who live East of the River. These inequities exist in many aspects, however, it is especially present in education. Access to specialized school programs such as STEM, Career and Technical Education, and Dual Language, among many others, is unequal across parts of the city. According to the best available data, West of the River has 76% of all specialized school programs in the city while East of the River has the remaining only 24% of programs, even though East of the River is where more students call home. This lack of equitable access to programs hinders students in Wards 7 and 8 from fully benefiting from all educational opportunities and exploring their career interests.

I want to thank Mayor Bowser for the increase of \$21.8 million in funding for CTE programs, for maintaining the \$700,000 in funding for the District's dual enrollment programs, and for the \$581,000 to expand access to support the Ward 8 Advanced Technical Center. I urge the members of this Council to think about using these funds to not only increase access to seats East of the River but to also diversify the programs available based on student and community input and with an equity-centered lens.

The lack of specialized school programs not only poses an equity challenge but also impacts the safety of students commuting to school. If there were high-quality specialized school programs more equally distributed East of the River, students in Ward 7 and 8 would not have to travel two or more miles to school each day. For example, my son travels across the city just so he can obtain a great education that meets his needs and interests. If we had more choices in school programs on this side of the river, then I wouldn't have to put my son through the hardships of



having to take two trains, a bus, and walk to get on another bus just to get to school and he wouldn't be

I am asking the Deputy Mayor of Education to restructure the Master Facilities Plan to expand programs, increase seats, and improve feeder patterns for high-demand specialized school programs. All kids in DC deserve to have access to a specialized school program of their interest. This will help improve student attendance and graduation rates and help students identify their interests from an early age that can set them up for the workforce and career. Though I appreciate the Mayor's budget for reflecting a \$7 million increase to DHS to increase truancy intervention and funding to support the continuation of an attendance intervention program, having access to programs that students actually want to be in will be extremely helpful in lowering rates of absenteeism and help these intervention programs be successful. I also ask that the DME works with DCPS, PCSB, WMATA, and DDOT to ensure that students have a safe and efficient way to travel to and from these programs so that they aren't as susceptible to violence and crime.

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 seeing these solutions in the budget and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Tyesha Andrews

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