

**Kerry Savage**  
**DCPS and DME Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony**  
**April 4th, 2024**

**To:** DC Council Committee of the Whole, Committee of the Whole Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole committee members, and Committee of the whole staff.

**From:** Kerry Savage, Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)

**Date:** April 4, 2024

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and Committee staff. My name is Kerry Savage. I am a Ward 1 resident and the Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education).

**I will begin with the DME.**

I want to start by saying thank you to the Mayor and the DME for the 12.4% UPSFF increase and the 0.6 increase to the at-risk weight. These local increases will go a long way to cover staffing costs and lowered purchasing power due to increased costs.

We greatly appreciate the DME's consistent engagement with families. In particular, for including feedback from PAVE parent leaders in the recently published school safety recommendations report, as well as engaging with parents around the need for robust post-graduation employment data that includes specialized school programs and the District's education budget. We also appreciate the DME's consistent engagement with PAVE throughout the school boundary process where four PAVE parents served on the advisory committee and were able to share [feedback](#) on the need for an equitable access preference and a school navigator!

We are also thrilled to see the \$668,000 investment in the Office of Education through Employment Pathways and the upcoming database. Parents want to know that schools have strong results - now and in the future. They are looking to see which schools and school types have led to college enrollment and completion, securing jobs in high-demand and well-paying fields, and what life outcomes look like for students once they graduate. Sharing this data transparently can help parents make informed decisions about what schools will best serve their children, and help school leaders evaluate how their programs serve students beyond K-12. We encourage the Council to protect this investment, and for data to be made available as soon as possible to maximize the return on investment.

We also are glad to see stable investments in OST programs for students. As revenue growth allows, we should strategically expand program options in all parts of the city as offerings are not equitably distributed, with a focus on quality. We also need to ensure the MyAfterSchoolDC database is designed in partnership with families, is accurate and up-to-date, and is launched in a timely manner. Ultimately, OST programs can improve academic outcomes, attendance, and help keep kids safe after school ends.<sup>1</sup> The Council has been a consistent champion for OST, and we want to see as many students as possible have access to them through this budget.

**Last, I will close with DCPS.**

We commend DCPS for adding a supplemental at-risk weight on top of the UPSFF so more dollars are going directly to schools serving our students with the greatest need. Despite this, we know there are significant cuts to school-level positions across the District. We encourage DCPS central office and each of their schools to work closely with families as they make difficult choices, communicate clearly and consistently about any changes to staffing/programming, and make sure those cuts do not fall disproportionately on schools serving Black and low-income students.

**In Conclusion**

This upcoming budget and oversight season is an opportunity to show our values - that DC truly takes care of its people, especially when times get hard, and one that will courageously act to right the wrongs of historic injustice and step up with bold, innovative action to meet this unprecedented moment, with investments in our future and our children. We know funding is tight, but we need to make sure we continue to prioritize kids - our most precious resource - in this budget and not allow those cuts to rest on the communities most in need.

This work is only possible with leaders on the Council, DCPS, and the DME who also believe in the power and promise of community voice. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today, I hope that we can count on your leadership.

In service,

Kerry Savage  
Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy  
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)

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