

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin
Committee of the Judiciary and Public Safety
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
Wednesday, April 10th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Pinto and DC Council staff. I am Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin, a Ward 8 resident and a PAVE PLE Board member. I am also a Dunbar High School-Engineering Academy and Eagle Academy Public Charter School parent.

First, I want to uplift several items in Mayor Bowser's Budget like the \$7.2 million to maintain the DC School Connect program and the \$6.5 million increase for the OSSE special education transportation program. I also fully support the \$8.7 million set aside to create 40 new community safety officers and fund new civilian positions within MPD to free up sworn officers for more critical tasks.

I and other PAVE parents created a few asks, many of which are budget friendly that we want the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety and Justice to implement moving forward that will go far in helping keep our kids safe during their daily commute. The asks are as follows:

- DMPSJ should regularly aggregate and release public data on safe passage program effectiveness and usage like Safe Passage, Safe Blocks;
- DMPSJ should collaborate with MPD, Safe Passage Workers, WMATA PD, DCPS, and all public charter school leaders to convene in person for a citywide meeting to build relationships and discuss safe passage solutions;
- DMPSJ in conjunction with MPD, DCPS and public charter schools, and the DME should review the structure, re-implementation, training, and hiring of the school resource officer program together.

I cannot stress enough the help our kids need. The crime and violence rate of the District youth is far too high and each of us must do everything we can to end this cycle. The Deputy Mayor is a huge leader in this city and should, therefore, lead other entities in building effective safe passage opportunities for all DC students. DC Connect or private WMATA bus or train specifically for Dunbar students who live in wards 6/7/8, would be extremely beneficial and help cut back on truancy and chronic absenteeism. For example, a Dunbar High School student who lives in Ward 8 current trip time to the school from Southern Ave train station is 43 mins. This does NOT



include the time it took to get to the train station from their home. This does NOT include rush hour WMATA traffic. This is AVOIDING walking through a neighborhood their neighborhood may have an issue with or that neighborhood is going through a turf war with another neighborhood. So the student would have to take a different route after their 17-minute train ride to Mt. Vernon Sq train station, instead of the 22-minute walk on N St, they have options between busy M St or an even busier NY Ave. Along these paths there are 2 safe passage personnel walking along N St. There are 2 parked MPD cars with lights on near Dunbar, however, no one is visible or out making connections. Dunbar SROs are limited to the school. It's sad to see that we have more organizations helping sports fans get to and from the arenas safely than making sure our students get to and from school safely. There should be the same all hands on deck in neighborhoods by schools with crossing guards, traffic controllers, safe passage personnel, and officers out of vehicles showing their presence to ease students who must walk to and from the station, as well as to and from their homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the solutions you develop and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin

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