

Tyesha Andrews
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
Wednesday, April 10th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Pinto and DC Council staff. My name is Tyesha Andrews and I am a Ward 8 resident. 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 helping my family navigate the various modes of transportation in the city and I am honored to have the opportunity to speak on it today.

First, I want to say that I agree and support Mayor Bowser for setting aside \$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 hope that the officers that are freed up to focus on more critical tasks include placing officers along all routes students are taking between home and school because, 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 school. We must do a better job at protecting all of our children because they are our future.

As a parent, I have many concerns about getting my children to school safely. My heart goes out to the students and families who were involved in the tragedy at Brookland just last week. It brought me to think about last year when my own son was on a WMATA train while 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. My son was jumped by other kids after getting off the platform at the Waterfront metro station. There was no trained adult, no WMATA PD, no MPD around to help him, and the only people present to intervene were his peers. Our kids need to be safe traveling to and from school AND they need to get to school efficiently. 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 the DMPSJ to:

- Shift program management structure of Safe Passage Workers from Community-based organizations to schools or school clusters;
- Identify model SPW program partnerships with schools and host sessions at those school sites with all stakeholders to share best practices with other schools and SPW programs.
- Work with WMATA to create a student-only metro car with WMATA PD, Safe Passage Workers, or MPD present to intervene if and when necessary. I would also advise that the DMPSJ collaborate with WMATA PD and Safe Passage Workers to obtain the proper training to deal with youth, including youth development and de-escalation training.

Overall, we need more eyes on the ground during pick-up and drop-off hours and we need everyone to be highly trained so that incidents like what my son endured do not continue to happen. It is our responsibility as adults and leaders of DC to make sure our young residents can get to school safely and efficiently.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tyesha Andrews

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