

Katrice Fuller
Committee on Public Works and Operations
Department of For-Hire Vehicles Budget Hearing
Wednesday, April 24th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Nadeau and DC Council staff. My name is Katrice Fuller. I am a Ward 5 resident and I serve as a PAVE Citywide board 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 can provide for our school environment.

I want to begin by expressing my support in the Mayor's Budget for the \$7.2 million to maintain the DC School Connect program and the \$6.5 million increase for the OSSE special education transportation program as well as the \$8.7 million to create 40 new community safety officers and fund new civilian positions within MPD to free up sworn officers for more critical tasks, which I hope can at least partly be used to hire more School Resource Officers.

Though Mayor Bowser's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025 did include funding to maintain the DC School Connect program, it did not provide funding to expand the program. I urge the DC Council to find funding that will allow the DC School Connect program to create more seats and routes for students in our city.

DC youth are traveling at great lengths to do something as trivial as getting to school every day. The students in Wards 5, 7, and 8 are traveling over 2.2 miles, many more than that, just one way on their travels. Many students must rely heavily on public transportation to commute to school, which we've seen time and time again isn't always the safest. Transportation programs like DC School Connect can make a huge difference in helping students obtain safe passage during their daily commute.

As the leaders of Public Safety, we need you to collaborate with us and other agencies to ensure the safety of our children when they travel between home and school. Because of all that I shared above, myself and other PAVE parents ask the Department of For-Hire Vehicles to:



- 1) Increase DC School Connect routes to transport more students across Wards, prioritizing students and school communities with the greatest need;
- 2) Work with the Deputy Mayor of Operations and Infrastructure and DC Human Resources to recruit and retain more bus drivers for the DC School Connect program;
- 3) Regularly aggregate and release public data on the DC School Connect program regarding program effectiveness, usage, cost per student, and so on.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure our children are safe at all times, especially when seeking to obtain a great education. With the help of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles and with mutual coordination with parents, students, school leaders, Safe Passage Workers, and more, we can make safe passage of all students a reality in our city.

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

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)