

Katrice Fuller
Committee of Transportation and the Environment
Deputy Mayor of Operations and Infrastructure
Wednesday, April 24th, 2024

Good afternoon, Councilmember Allen and DC Council staff. My name is Katrice Fuller. I am a Citywide and Ward 6 PLE Board member and Miner Elementary School and Monument Public Charter School parent. I wear many hats and also serve as a bonus mom as Chief of Family and Community Engagement at Monument Academy Public Charter School.

In the past 2 school years at Monument, we've lost a lot of students and their guardians to violence. The more digging we did we learned so much of it was when getting to and from school, crossing into different neighborhoods, and school-to-school conflict (which we didn't have any idea about). We lost our School Resource Officers, who were heavily involved in our community, and with them, we lost a lot of intel and help. I've learned there are so many different sectors of Safe Passage and yet I feel and see its effects, especially being on the East side of the River. Needless to say, once we did begin conversations with other LEAs in our communities, collaborated with other school leaders, and more, we noticed that we needed to buckle down and address this problem together like staggering half days, building relationships with our local Metropolitan Police Department, and more which has been super instrumental as an administrator and a mom whose kids attend these schools. Communication has been key. Making sure that everyone convenes on the citywide and local level can bring a lot of positive change. This is more true now with all the boundary talks in the Rosedale community, which will affect us all. We've created a lot of meaningful partnerships and I've seen firsthand what school communities need to help kids feel safe traveling to and at school.

Before getting too far, I want to express 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.

As the leaders of this city, we need you to collaborate with us to ensure the safety of our children when they travel to and from school. Because of all that I shared above, myself and other PAVE parents are asking the Deputy Mayor of Operations and Infrastructure to:

- 1) Work in partnership with respective executive agencies to increase recruitment and retention of bus drivers for the OSSE bus program for students with disabilities, the DC School Connect program, and WMATA during school arrival and dismissal times.
- 2) Add more youth-only WMATA buses and pilot youth-only train cars, all stationed with Safe Passage Workers and WMATA PD, who are trained at interacting with youth, including youth with disabilities.
- 3) In collaboration with WMATA, explore creating student-friendly bus routes and micro transit options that bring kids from their neighborhood directly to their school or directly to a metro stop.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure our children are safe at all times, especially when doing something as trivial as going to school. With the help of the Deputy Mayor of Operations and Infrastructure, WMATA, WMATA PD, and with mutual coordination, we can make safe passage of all students a reality in our city.

Sincerely,

Katrice Fuller, Citywide and Ward 6 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)