

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

Greetings Councilmember Allen and DC Council staff. My name is Takiyah Worthy. I am a Ward 7 resident and I serve as a PAVE PLE member. I am also a proud mother of a ten-year-old son who attends Anne Beers Elementary School.

Thank you all for being here today and holding this hearing. I am here today as a parent and longtime Washingtonian to urge the Deputy Mayor of Operations and Infrastructure to:

- 1) Collaborate with DC Human Resources to come up with effective strategies to recruit and retain bus drivers for the OSSE bus program for students with disabilities, DC School Connect, and WMATA program effectiveness and usage, and
- 2) Work with WMATA to create dedicated youth-to-school bus routes that help students all over the city commute safely to school and back

As the adults and leaders of this city, it is our job to make sure that kids have a safe and reliable way to get to and from school. It is also our job to ensure that all our kids are getting to school on time so they can maximize their learning time. Students in the District deserve a more consistent and reliable expanse of transportation options and the Department can go a long way in making that happen. While student transportation programs do exist in DC, there are issues with timeliness, access, and accountability. All student transportation options, including DC School Connect and the OSSE bus program, need to have more accountability and expand the programs and contracts currently offered to other organizations that will do the best job at picking kids up and getting them to school on time.

I know from experience the extreme stress of having to do school drop-offs for my child, and I am not alone in this as it is a regular theme for many parents in DC. There simply aren't enough trusted and dependable options available. My son yearns for more independence and would love to ride public transportation with friends from his soccer games after school, but based on what I know about the bus and the lack of access we have to current transportation options, I cannot trust it enough to allow my son to utilize it.



When I'm thinking about middle school options for my son, I would want a trusted source where he could be picked up and transported across town due to the limited options where we live. It would be extremely challenging for my family to get him to where he needs to go for school and school activities which can lead to truancy issues. When students are able to get to school safely, they spend more time in class learning and doing what a kid is supposed to be doing instead of worrying about if something is going to happen to them while on their way to school. I once again urge the Deputy Mayor to utilize funds in the budget to expand access and increase seats to student transportation programs and to assist in the hiring of more bus drivers.

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

Sincerely,

Takiyah Worthy

Ward 7 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)