

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

Hello, Councilmember Allen and DC Council staff. My name is Tyesha Andrews. I am a Ward 8 resident and I serve as a PAVE Citywide and Ward 8 PLE Board member. 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 riding on WMATA buses and trains and other public transportation options.

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 want to begin by sharing how my family and I have personally been affected by violence traveling to and from school while on WMATA. Last year, my son was 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. Keep in mind that this is not the only time he has had an issue getting to and from school. But most recently, my son was jumped by other kids at the Waterfront metro station. There was no trained adult around and no WMATA PD to help him; the only people present to intervene were his own peers. When I filed a report to his school, nothing was done and the children who jumped my child were not held accountable. 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 Deputy Mayor of Operations and Infrastructure to:

- 1) Collaborate with DC Human Resources (DCHR) to address 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) Work with WMATA to create a student-only metro car for students to utilize when commuting to school with WMATA PD, Safe Passage Workers, or MPD present to intervene if and when necessary.
- 3) I would also advise the Deputy Mayor to help push WMATA leaders to require WMATA PD to obtain the proper training to deal with youth, including youth development and de-escalation training.

Again, I repeat that we must collaborate and develop solutions to make this great city, which should be a state, better for ALL our children. Overall, we need more eyes on the ground during pick-up and drop-off hours. This will help ensure that our young residents can get to school safely and efficiently. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the solutions you develop and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Tyesha Andrews

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