

Maya Martin Cadogan
District Department of Transportation
Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony
Tuesday, April 30th, 2024

To: DC Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment, Committee on Transportation and the Environment Chairperson Charles Allen, Committee on Transportation and the Environment Members, and Committee on Transportation and the Environment Staff
From: Maya Martin Cadogan, Founder and Executive Director at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)
Date: April 30th, 2024

Good afternoon Chairperson Allen, members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, and Committee staff. My name is Maya Martin Cadogan. I am a Ward 4 resident, the Founder and Executive Director of PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education), and the parent of a 16-month-old Black boy—a seventh-generation Washingtonian!

For background, PAVE parent leaders are mothers, fathers, grandmothers, and other caregivers who share their stories, dig deeply into understanding education policy, and bring their voices to our city’s leaders in order to impact the educational experience of all children in DC. Our parent leaders are overwhelmingly Black, many are native Washingtonians, and the majority live in neighborhoods that wrestle with community violence, food and housing insecurity, and a lack of excellent school options.

We want to thank DDOT for their engagement with PAVE throughout the year and for helping inform us on the inner workings of how decisions are made about how infrastructure updates are prioritized for schools. We also thank them for their willingness to help facilitate relationships between schools and school crossing guards.

2023 had the most traffic fatalities since DC Vision Zero launched in 2015 and these [fatalities disproportionately affect residents East of the River](#). Traffic fatalities are especially growing among children. Even if someone survives being hit, there can still be lasting damage. In 2023, there were over 6,000 traffic injuries. More must be done to ensure children are safe from dangerous drivers.

Today, I am testifying on what PAVE wants to see included for DDOT in the final FY25 budget.

First, we want to see more resources and support for Crossing Guards.

- We want to thank you, Councilmember Allen, for your commitment to improving working conditions for school crossing guards.
- School crossing guards are essential to keeping students safe and building community. They are a welcoming and happy face for students during their commute and can help them start their day on a positive note. Despite this, we've heard that crossing guards don't feel valued. They can face frequent changes in their school placements, limited career advancement opportunities, and low pay with limited hours - sometimes under extreme weather.
- Crossing guards are integral to the whole safe passage infrastructure. While their primary function is to ensure students' safety as they cross streets, they also regularly engage with students and are often the first eyes on safety incidents. We've heard of stories of crossing guards being the first person to call in a nearby shooting, as they are in positions to "observe and report." We must honor their role in the safety ecosystem and provide adequate training and support for the full breadth of their role.
- Simple things like bringing water bottles when it's hot, providing hand warmers when it's cold, and following up with folks if they have witnessed harm (e.g., a shooting, someone getting hurt in a traffic incident, etc.) to make sure they are okay go a long way towards making people feel cared for and appreciated.
- We want DDOT to create consistency in crossing guard placements, hiring, and training as well as increase support and provide career advancement opportunities.

Second, we want more schools prioritized for infrastructure updates each year.

- We appreciate the time and detail DDOT puts into its action plans for schools. We hope to see this process and information shared directly with schools and their communities and to ensure that the selection process for the 25 schools each year prioritizes schools most at-risk, regardless of sector.
- We have seen that it's possible to get infrastructure updates even if you are not a prioritized school, as Bancroft did last year when closing down the road in front of their school, but schools should not have to engage in lengthy negotiations and create a volunteer corps just to make a small change. It should be much easier.
- Given the potentially life-or-death stakes of this work, we think a specific process for schools is necessary. Still, we understand that "emergency" can be relative, and we encourage DDOT to work in partnership with schools to come to a clear understanding and subsequently develop a school-specific process when an emergency presents itself and can be handled in a timely manner.

We know funding is tight, but we need to make sure we continue to prioritize students in this budget and not allow those cuts to rest on the communities most in need. This work is only possible with leaders on Council who also believe in the power and promise of community voice and will stand hand-in-hand with parents to



ensure students get what they need and deserve. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today, I hope we can count on your leadership.

In service,

Maya Martin Cadogan
Founder and Executive Director
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)