

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
District Department of Transportation
Tuesday, April 30th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Allen and DC Council staff. I am Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin, a Ward 8 resident and a PAVE PLE Board member. I am also a Dunbar High School-Engineering Academy and Eagle Academy Public Charter School parent.

First, I want to uplift several items in Mayor Bowser's Budget like the \$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 and other PAVE parents created a few asks, many of which are budget-friendly, that we want the District Department of Transportation to implement moving forward that will go far in helping keep our kids safe during their daily commute between home and school. DDOT should work to create better incentives to hire more crossing guards and place those crossing guards on popular routes students are taking to get home from school in ALL areas of the city, especially those with the highest need. School crossing guards are important pieces of the village that it takes to raise a child, something I know all too well as both a parent and a teacher. Crossing guards are integral people in the school community and should receive livable wages and consistent school placements. At the end of the day, school crossing guards make a difference in the safety and livelihood of our youth.

I cannot stress enough the help our kids need. The crime and violence rate of the District youth is far too high and each of us must do everything we can to end this cycle. The Department of Transportation is a huge leader in this city and should, therefore, lead other entities in building effective safe passage opportunities for all DC students, which would be extremely beneficial and help cut back on truancy and chronic absenteeism. For example, a Dunbar High School student who lives in Ward 8 current trip time to the school from Southern Ave train station is 43 mins. This does NOT include the time it took to get to the train station from their home. This does NOT include rush hour WMATA traffic. This is AVOIDING walking through a neighborhood that may have an issue with another or a neighborhood that is going through a turf war with



another neighborhood. So the student would have to take a different route after their 17-minute train ride to Mt. Vernon Sq train station, instead of the 22-minute walk on N St, they have options between busy M St or an even busier NY Ave. Along these paths there are 2 safe passage personnel walking along N St. There are 2 parked MPD cars with lights on near Dunbar, however, no one is visible or out making connections. A school crossing guard could be stationed along routes such as these and be there as a consistent face and trusted adult that students can build a rapport with. It's sad to see that we have more organizations helping sports fans get to and from the arenas safely than making sure our students get to and from school safely. There should be the same all hands on deck in neighborhoods by schools with crossing guards, traffic controllers, safe passage personnel, and officers out of vehicles showing their presence to ease students who must walk to and from the station, as well as to and from their homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the solutions you develop and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin

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