

Tyesha Andrews
All Budget Legislation
Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony
Friday, May 3rd, 2024

To: DC Council Committee of the Whole, Committee of the Whole Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole committee members, and Committee of the Whole staff
From: Tyesha Andrews, Citywide Board member at PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)
Date: May 3rd, 2024

Greetings Chairman Mendelson and DC Council representatives and staff. My name is Ty Andrews. I am a *Native Washingtonian*, Ward 8 resident, and proud parent of Mary H. Plummer Elementary and McKinley Technology High School students. I am also a parent leader with PAVE on the Citywide Board, a Plummer LSAT member, and the 1st Vice-President of the McKinley Tech PTO. Today, I am testifying to ask for required additional funding to make renovations and address administrative issues at Plummer and Tech and for safe passage for DC youth.

I want to thank Mayor Bowser for the increase of \$21.8 million in funding for CTE programs, for maintaining the \$700,000 in funding for the District's dual enrollment programs, and for the \$581,000 to expand access to support the Ward 8 Advanced Technical Center. I urge the members of this Council to think about using these funds to not only increase access to seats East of the River but to also diversify the programs available based on student and community input and with an equity-centered lens. I also 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. Lastly, I 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 hope that the officers that are freed up to focus on more critical tasks include placing officers along all routes students are taking between home and school because, during their travels, our youth are being targeted and enduring or witnessing violence. This often increases with distance to school, as many students travel across Wards and even across the city to get to school. We must do a better job at protecting all of our children because they are our future.

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 that help make education in DC better for students. Today I want to advocate that:

- The Department of For-Hire Vehicles to increase DC School Connect routes during school arrival and dismissal, prioritizing those with the greatest need during enrollment.
- The Department of Operations and Infrastructure and DC Human Resources work together to recruit and retain more bus drivers for the DC School Connect program and OSSE bus program. More routes will increase access, and those who can utilize it will have safer and more efficient commutes to school.
- Work with WMATA to create a student-only metro car with WMATA PD, Safe Passage Workers, or MPD present to intervene if and when necessary. I would also advise that MPD collaborate with WMATA PD and Safe Passage Workers to obtain the proper training to deal with youth, including youth development and de-escalation training.
- And, on a more personal note, I ask that Plummer receives funding to increase the amount of paraprofessionals in the building that can provide social and emotional learning support. Plummer has three federally mandated Autism classrooms but only one part-time paraprofessional, Ms. Phaedra Smith; Plummer is also currently without a Speech-Language pathologist or Occupational Therapist.
- I also ask that Plummer and McKinley Tech receive funding for its operating and capital budgets. The schools require *full modernization of their HVAC systems and updated libraries that students want to use.*

Overall, we need safer transportation options for students, more eyes on the ground during pick-up and drop-off hours, and we need everyone to be highly trained so that incidents do not continue to happen. We also need updates to our school buildings and funding to address the social-emotional health of our students. It is our responsibility as adults and leaders of DC to make sure our young residents can get to school safely and efficiently and receive the high-quality education they deserve.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Ty D. Andrews



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