



**Testimony for District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
Performance Oversight Hearing
Wednesday, February 19th, 2020**

To: DC Council Committee on Education, DC Council Committee of the Whole, Councilmember Grosso, Chairman Mendelson, and Committee Staff

From: Brittany Wade

Date: February 19, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Grosso, members of the Committee of Education and Council staff. My name is Brittany Wade, proud Ward 7 resident, wife, Air Force veteran and mother of five; four of which attend schools in Ward 6 (Ludlow-Taylor And Stuart Hobson). I'm currently serving as a Ward 7 PLE member of (PAVE), as well as a Parent Representative for the Stuart-Hobson LSAT.

It's good to see that parent advocacy is paying off, which is evident by the \$13.1M increase in mental health spending, and the Mayor's proposed 4% increase in the UPSFF.

I've shared many discussions with other DCPS parents and members of PAVE on the topic of equitable staffing or spending across all DCPS. I speak on behalf of numerous families when stating that we need to ensure that every school has full-time academic and behavioral-health professionals. I've noticed that certain schools share social workers and academic support staff such as literacy specialists; or they don't have any support in those areas at all. It is an injustice that the resource gap between schools in DC most often negatively impacts students and families East of the River (EOTR). This means that families like mine add hours to our commutes; also families have to choose between the pride of attending their neighborhood schools, or access to resources not widely equitable in schools EOTR.

This is why I believe that as the city continues to invest in schools, we have to improve coordination of services and care; especially for mental health supports and trauma informed training. This would set standards and create effective systems of collaboration for agencies like DCPS, OSSE and DBH. This type of coordination of services should include clarity regarding which agencies are accountable for effective implementation, as well as appropriate mental health staff and academic support staff to student ratios



Perhaps a line item can be added to the budget to ensure that every school across DCPS has at least one full-time behavioral health and academic support professional, which would ensure that students who are in need of increased academic or behavioral health services will not have to wait for the schools part-time professional to make their way to the school. This type of action by DCPS would greatly support the strategic priorities listed in the “Capital Commitment: 2017-2022” and reduce the resource gap that exists between higher and lower performing schools. This would also greatly ensure that our children will have equitable access to the academic support, mental & behavioral health resources they deserve. By making efforts to reduce this gap in resources, the city would be increasing the ability for neighborhood schools to offer more quality and robust specialized school programs like STEM, Arts Integration and CTE. Access to these types of programs improve student outcomes like increased student achievement, graduation rate and even fewer discipline problems.

Again, I’d like to propose that DCPS add a line item ensuring that every school has a full-time behavioral health and academic professionals staffed at every school which would successfully: “Promote Equity”, “Ensure Excellent Schools”, “Educate the Whole Child” & “Engage Families.”

Thank you,

Brittany Wade
Parent Leader
PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)