



Budget Oversight Hearing Testimony Committee on Education

Good morning Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Grosso, and staff. My name is Loretta Jones and I am a proud parent of three that attends Ingenuity Prep Bright, Beginnings Inc. and Childrens' Guild in Ward 8 and PG county and also serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on Ward 8 and Special Education PLE Boards.

I want to start by thanking the Mayor for her proposed 3% increase to the UPSFF. As a parent, I am appreciative that our city is investing in education.

However, we must still do more. Although distance learning has been stressful, it is the only way that I know that my children are safe.

So until we know coronavirus is under control, the city has to prioritize support for kids and families at home. While things are going well for my daughter, that isn't the case for my son. He is in private placement and often isn't able to get on Zoom with the other kids. If he doesn't say anything or engage, they will push him off. He is really resistant to getting on and getting help in this different way of schooling and learning.

I am trying to help him, but I am not a teacher, and I get frustrated too. I understand the content, but I'm not able to teach it, it is a lot for me and I learned it a different way. But I don't want my son to fall even further behind. I'm worried about what will happen if he shuts down. I'm not behavior specialist or a mental health specialist, I can only do so much. I need support from the school to make sure my children can learn – and they need resources to make that happen.

I'm also not able to spend as much time with my other kids because I am having to spend time with my 3 year old to make sure he isn't bothering the others or distracting them and that he has activities and things to for him to learn because he isn't getting the social emotional development he would normally get in school.

I know there are several other parents who feel the same way and need to the support and don't know how the supports will look. So we MUST invest more in our schools, mental health supports, and special education services both while kids are learning at home to make sure parents like me can support their learning AND when we come back to school so that schools and child care centers can keep kids safe and productive.

Please make sure that our city:

- Increases the UPSFF and at-risk weight
- Increases funding for DBH
- Increases funding for childcare centers

So I'm asking you to help with resources such as behavior specialist and mental health specialist to help children with their social emotional development as well as educational growth.

Thank you Chairman Mendelson and Councilmember Grosso for allowing me to testify and share what I want to see for our kids and our city.