



**Testimony for the Education Agencies Budget Oversight Hearing  
Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**

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

From: Cassandra Gentry, PAVE Parent and Ward 6 Resident

Date: October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

Good morning, Chair.

To the Committee on Education, and the Council of the Whole, I'm Cassandra Gentry and I'm one of 1,100 grandparents that are raising children in the District of Columbia. I have two children that attend public charter schools in Ward 5, and I live in Ward 6.

At the beginning of distance learning, there was no training for parents, and right now, we're not able to assist our children with learning. The communication from our schools has been very poor. I get mixed emails from the school. I don't know what it is that is expected from me for my child to excel. A lot of the time, my child won't participate because she doesn't understand. I can't help her because neither do I.

The children are being put out of the classroom because of their behavior which leads us to the mental health portion of this. Many of the grandparents, we have children that have suffered trauma and separation, and they had received mental health services at school. They're not receiving these services now. My daughter used to get services once a week. Since she's been back in school, we have not received anything from the school concerning mental health services.

Earlier, before school started, I contacted the Committee on Education to ask them if they could send a facilitator out to our program at Plaza West Grant Families Program where we have over 90 children here that need assistance. I thought they could send us a facilitator that could help get our children on this virtual learning, but I haven't heard from them yet.

We want our children to succeed. I need you to make sure that parents like me understand the components to distance learning so we can help our children be successful. Now is the time for us to have more mental health supports in our schools. As our elected officials, you have an obligation to our children to make sure they have the resources they need for a well-rounded education.

Grandparents, we need you. We cannot do this alone. We need all the support we can get. Thank you.