



**Testimony for the Committee of the Whole
Budget Oversight Hearing
June 25, 2021**

To: Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and Committee Staff

From: Claire Taylor, Ward 8 PAVE Parent Leader

Date: June 25, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Claire Taylor, I live in Ward 8 and serve on the Parent Leaders in Education Board with PAVE. All parents are supposed to love their children, but If there is one thing you need to know about me, it's that I really love my son Malik! His dad and I didn't conceive until later in life, and he's my miracle baby! Well, he was my miracle baby. Now that Malik is 12 years old and attending Friendship Ideal Middle, he's not a baby anymore! He's growing into an independent and positive young man who I'm so proud of. And one of the main factors in this growth is that his dad and I nurture his love of athletics and encourage him to develop his skills in basketball. I am here today to share how OST programming has had a positive effect on Malik's life and to tell District leaders the importance of investment in OST funding as well as investing \$841K to extend the School-Based Mental Health Expansion to all 83 schools.

Malik is a bright and social young boy who is full of energy! He hates being an only child and loves being around his friends. Although he's great at academics he's most happy when he's on the court playing AAU basketball with GrindHouse Hoops. For Malik, the benefits of playing ball competitively are endless. It allows him to be active and have positive interactions with peers. It's also a pathway to recognition and scholarships to top-tier colleges. I pay out of pocket to support Malik's athletics. And honestly, I'm tapped out! I've spent thousands of dollars this year alone, but I invest in my son because I believe in his potential. If you believe in the potential of our kids you need to invest too! Especially in Ward 8 where I live, families often can't afford to provide their kids the opportunity to do what they love! There should be no cuts to OST so that all kids can get these types of opportunities, not just ones for families who can pay for it.

I want to close by saying that Malik was recently diagnosed with ADHD. This means that for him, getting his energy out is really important. Before his diagnosis, his previous school was constantly punishing him for what they perceived as "acting out". As his mom, I didn't have the diagnosis yet, but I knew that he just had a bunch of pent-up energy that he needed to manage before he could focus on his school work. The problem was that his elementary school could not



afford to provide care before school. Because of this, I ended up taking a few kids to shoot hoops each morning. But we all know I shouldn't have to do this! Students and families need access to before and aftercare and the District should invest further here, especially as parents are getting back to work in person and the economy picks up after the pandemic.

Being a ball player and teammate is so important to Malik! One of the things he likes most about it is that the team is fighting for a common goal! So today I want to ask District leaders to fight with me for a different common goal - quality education, mental health supports, and extracurricular activities for our kids! Thank you for your time today and for your continued investment in our kids. I hope you will continue this trend by investing \$841K to extend the School-Based Mental Health Expansion to all 83 schools, as well as making sure there are no cuts to OST funding.

Claire Taylor
Ward 8 PAVE PLE Board Member