



Testimony on the FY21 Budget for the Committee of the Whole

To: DC Council Committee of the Whole,

From: Maya Martin Cadogan, Founder and Executive Director of PAVE and Ward 6 Resident

Date: June 18th, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson and other members of the Council. My name is Maya Martin Cadogan and I'm the founder and Executive Director of PAVE.

Chairman Mendelson, at the Committee on Education hearing on June 4th, you and I had an important conversation about **the meaning of "equity."** What is it? And how do we both see its application by our city's government? Never one to shy away from a difficult conversation or a healthy debate, I'd like to revisit that.

We believe....

Equity **is** our city ensuring that there are COVID testing sites East of the River, given that the virus is disproportionately impacting and killing Black people.

Equity **is not** our city having the highest maternal mortality rate in in the United States, due in no small part to the fact that there is nowhere for Black mothers East of the River to give birth.

Equity **is** our city creating universal early childhood programs in our city's schools, growing women's participation in the workforce five times faster than the rest of the country.

Equity **is not** our city lacking a childcare stabilization package of \$20 mil over the next two years in this budget, undoing the workforce gains for mothers made through our PreK programs by underfunding our childcare providers.

Equity **is** our city identifying in 2013 that the city needed to create at-risk funding for our schools, since students on TANF and those who are homeless need extra supports and services to close an undeniably unjust opportunity gap.

Equity **is not** our city spending seven years underfunding the at-risk weight from our own internal adequacy study.

Equity **is** our city's school leaders, including the Chancellor of our largest school system, DCPS, identifying that mental health supports and trauma-informed training for our teachers will be one of the most critical components of a successful return to school next year.



Equity **is not** our city budget leaving out \$4 million for DBH's school mental health expansion and \$10.6mil for SEL and trauma-informed programs in schools so that school leaders can meet their students' needs during this pandemic.

Equity **is** our city's schools sending chromebooks home so that all students, regardless of their family's finances, can continue learning at home.

Equity **is not** forgetting about distance learning and telehealth in this year's budget, especially as we continue to watch our COVID rates rise and other states in the US that have reopened plan for closure AGAIN.

Today, our city finds itself at a vital inflection point. We face a global pandemic that disproportionately threatens Black and Brown Washingtonians and we embrace a powerful movement for Black lives spurred by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others at the hands of police.

As PAVE parent leaders wrote in their #DCSchoolsRecovery statement of beliefs, "The system we had BEFORE coronavirus was not working for all kids and families. Therefore, our goal should not be to "get back to normal," but rather create a "new normal" that is centered in racial, economic, and social justice." AKA equity. This will require a significant investment from our city but over 80% of DC residents are willing to get creative, even raising revenue on the highest incomes, in order to make equity a reality.

Chairman Mendelson and members of the Council, will you respond to their calls for equity in this budget?

Thank you,

Maya Martin Cadogan
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PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)
Ward 6 Resident