



Testimony for the Committee of the Whole Performance Oversight Hearing Tuesday March 9, 2021

To: DC Council Committee of the Whole, Chairman Phil Mendelson, Committee of the Whole Members, and Committee of the Whole Staff

From: Maria Jose Carrasco

Date: March 9, 2021

Good morning Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Maria-Jose Carrasco. My daughters, Valentina and Alicia, attend the Latin American Montessori Public Charter School. I serve with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) on the Ward 4 PLE board.

First, thank you for the 3% increase in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, the almost \$4 million for socio-emotional learning, and the \$3.3 million to school-based mental health funded for the Fiscal Year 2021. Those are very important investments for our children!

I am submitting this testimony because I want to make sure all DC children in DCPS and public charter schools not only learn but also thrive academically and emotionally. We know the pandemic has had a huge negative impact on students' socio-emotional wellbeing. My daughters have been learning virtually for exactly a year now. I can see the emotional toll this causes. Still, I am luckier than others. I have close friends whose teenage son has fallen into a deep depression with suicidal thoughts. He barely gets out of bed and is failing all his high school classes. He is not the same amazing young man he was before the pandemic changed his world and reduced it to a computer screen with very little real contact with his friends. I know he is not the only one facing this and I know, without appropriate funding, schools will not be able to help him and so many other students who desperately need help.

I urge the Council to address the mental health crisis our students are facing and will continue to face due to the pandemic. Now more than ever, school-based mental health supports must be strengthened. I ask you to allocate:

- **+\$6.4 million** to fully fund the school-based mental health expansion in 80 more schools
- **+\$4 million** to restore the cuts to community-based health providers. This would add **\$5 million** in federal dollars because of the multiplier.

- **\$10.8 million** for social-emotional learning and trauma-informed training in all schools.
This is based on an estimated average cost of \$45,000 per school

Of course, to implement successful school-based mental health supports, schools need adequate funding to provide the best possible education possible. Please allocate the additional \$106 million needed to fully fund the UPSFF.

Thank you for reading my testimony and letting me share what I want to see for our kids and our city. I hope you will fully fund the UPSFF at \$106 million and allocate \$21.2 million to support student mental health.

Sincerely,
Maria Jose Carrasco
Ward 4 PAVE PLE Board Member