

**Testimony to the Committee on Health for the
For the Oversight Hearing on the Department of Health Budget**

**Lateaisha Brooks and Derrica Vines
Young Women's Project youth staff members
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Hello! My name is Derrica Vines. I am 16 years old, and a junior at Woodrow Wilson SHS. Thank you for creating the opportunity for our youth staff and organization to present our work to you. I am a part of the youth-staff at the Young Women's project under the PHASE-Peer Health and Sexuality Education campaign. This testimony – which I wrote with Lateaisha Brooks-- focuses on the Report Card Findings for the community based organizations. Lateaisha and I were both part of the Youth Health Assessment team this summer – working with three other teen women who visited eight programs and two government agencies to assess their youth health programs. The goal for the summer was to produce a series of report cards that assessed community based and government run youth sexual health programs to see how effective they were at delivering education, testing, and services – and -- how youth were involved in the work. We interviewed staff and collected information about program, community impact, numbers of youth reached, youth engagement and leadership, and budget and staff. To present our findings, we developed eight report cards and one summary chart. Youth and adults worked together to develop these materials with youth staff taking the lead on strengths, growth areas, and youth leadership.

We are very glad that you asked us to work with the Committee on Health to complete this research. It's important because DC youth are dealing with a lot of health issues including high rates of HIV, STIs (with half of Chlamydia and gonorrhea diagnoses were among District residents 15 to 19 years old.), and teen pregnancy. The number of youth infected with HIV/AIDS is a major concern, especially when not all that are infected are aware of their status. So the youth really need help. Luckily we have many innovative programs and policies in place to help us –as our Youth Assessment shows. The problem is that many of the programs are not fully evaluated, many policies are not fully implemented, and the community and government are not working together to identify and meet shared objectives. Each person here today will highlight a different aspect of the assessment findings and go in depth to share information and recommendations for policy. Here is an overview of findings.

This past summer, we saw that the DC community has a lot of youth based programs working to meet the needs of the youth. As our report cards reflect, these programs have several strengths. Most of the programs are very youth friendly and have positively impacted the youth involved. In talking to the youth staff, it was clear that their involvement with the organization had had a positive impact in their lives. Most of the organizations we reviewed had clear objectives, well-executed activities, and committed staff. At the same time, there were some opportunities for improvement among individual programs – especially in creating more leadership roles for youth and collecting more and better evaluation data. As a group, we would like to see more involvement of the groups and their youth in

These improvements along with the implications for the FY13 DOH budget are reflected below. We are very encouraged to see that HAHSTA's budget for community outreach and youth condom distribution has increased by \$5 million. Dwanna – can you add more context here... (

Evaluation: I (Derrica) noticed that most programs were doing a lot in the community however they had no concrete way of measuring how successful the efforts were. This was a major issue among several programs. How do you know if the program is successful? How do you know what to do and what not to do if you don't know if your current method is working? These were the questions that often had no answers. Evaluation was also a problem with HAHSTA run programs. We know how many boxes of condoms are given away but we don't know where they are going or who is using them. We don't even count the condoms distributed in schools. Based on our assessment, the only groups that are collecting outcome data are TAPP and Generations (who both have federal grants to collect long term evaluation data). MTA reaches thousands of youth with condoms and information and collect distribution numbers. But it's hard to get a sense of the programs' impact on youth behavior or life status change. Funding and capacity were mentioned as barriers to evaluation. **We suggest that HAHSTA hire someone to work with partner groups to build evaluation capacity and to collect and share data from partner organizations and other outreach and distribution efforts back to the community????**

Youth Involvement: I (Lateisha) was concerned that there were not more youth staff or youth involved in shaping the education and training curricula and program delivery. Only three out of 10 programs seemed to have youth involved in this area. How can the work be relevant if more youth are not involved in shaping it? One way to increase youth leadership and involvement is by supporting DC-PEN – the Peer Educator Network on Sexual Health..... Youth involvement could really help with another (Derrica) huge problem with the programs is little to no knowledge amongst youth about the programs. Before getting involved with YWP I had only heard about two programs, MTA and Planned Parenthood but didn't know about the other programs.

Collective Planning & Goal Setting: Everyone is out there doing good work but no one seems to have a sense of how that work fits together - or – how their piece contributes to a set of community-defined objectives or what those objectives are. Based on what Michael Kharfen shared in our interview and the HAHSTA oversight documents, it was hard to get a sense of our community strategy for addressing youth sexual health needs there is not a clear strategy for defining the problems they are addressing, what kind of change they would like to see, and how all of the pieces that they are doing and funding add up to the impact they would like to have. As a young person in DC, this lack of coordination creates barriers and even confusion. We would like to see increased partner involvement in planning and goal setting and more formal input through a community partner working group or advisory board (with youth and adults) that meets monthly to set goals, make plans, and provide input to HAHSTA.

Criteria for partner funding: We would like to see a clear and specific criteria for partner funding that requires all of the partners to contribute to common goals for youth HIV prevention and treatment and sexual health. First, organizations and the programs that are funded should be directly and primarily focused on youth. Second, organizations should have clear objectives and benchmarks and be able to demonstrate how the funding is being used. Third, organizations should be able to perform basic data collection and sharing and this data should be available to the community. Finally, organizations should have a low cost per student ratio. Right now there is a broad range for how much organizations receive from DOH and how many youth they reach. For example, the Carrera program received \$500,000 from the Department of Child Health in Fy11. They serve about 20 participants in their multi-year program; about 100 a year school school-based sex education classes. Metro Teen AIDS receives about the same amount of funding and reaches thousands of youth.

Distribution of funding should reflect the goals and priorities of the agency. Based on the documents we reviewed for this work and the interviews we conducted, we are not sure how the HAHSTA program priorities are intended to be reflected in their partner grantmaking. We would like to see grantmaking reflect specific goals and targets.....

In closing, I want to thank you again for this great opportunity and ask for your support in continuing the work that we started this summer. We would like to do the same work again this summer – but with different organizations. There are so many other groups we'd like to visit. We will also be moving forward with your suggestion to do the youth-led website that would include all of the report card and other information.