

**Testimony to the Committee on Education
For The Performance Oversight Hearing on the
District of Columbia Public Schools**

**Nyjia Williams
Peer Educator, The Young Women's Project
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Good afternoon Chairman Grosso and members of the Committee on Education. My name is Nyjia Williams, I'm in the 12th grade, and I attend Paul Laurence Dunbar SHS, I will be graduating in June 2016. I am from Ward 7. I want to become a psychologist and I enjoy working with new people and helping them through their problems. I would love to work in something related to the Psychology field such as interning at a psychology office or doing work similar to my intended field of study. I plan to work hard so I can attend college to achieve all my short term and long-term goals.

Today I will be talking about college support and how it affects me and other youth in Washington DC. I believe DC gives us a great amount of financial support, thanks to DC TAG, and other scholarship opportunities. We really appreciate the help that we are receiving but there are other things that are important also. As growing teenagers there are things we don't know how to do, but if there isn't someone to help us learn, how do we get things done? In our case at Dunbar we have a great counselor as far as I know, because I haven't experienced any other college counselor. Sometimes we don't get the help we need because he has 140 students to tend to. That is a lot of students and I feel like some students don't get their needs met, and I am one of those students. Although sometimes it may be difficult to help so many kids that are all doing the same thing, he has helped us plenty. He helps us with college applications, recommendations, he gave us fee waivers for our applications, he helped us register for the SAT and ACT, he answered our questions about applications and some stuff we didn't understand, and he gives us scholarship applications. Many times, I have had to help myself because he wasn't available to do so. He isn't at fault for this but at the same time it's frustrating to both the student and the college counselor.

For example, I am a senior and I have gone through a list of things that needed to be done. One of those things is FAFSA. I didn't have any help from my counselor although I asked him countless times. I had to do it all by myself because I didn't want to sit around while everyone else is receiving the money I will need for college. FAFSA is first come first serve. FAFSA is a difficult process for someone who never did it before.

A solution that will help increase college support would be if my counselor had a team to help him get his tasks done if he had a team to help the 140 students, at Dunbar it wouldn't be as chaotic and stressful. This will give the students more people to go to for assistance. More things will be able to get done at one time. The team should be 3 or 4, they could split the responsibilities of a counselor so they are able to assist with anything.

Another issue we have is little to no options for the students who don't want to attend college and don't know what else they could do. Although we are more than halfway into the school year, Some people in my graduating class still don't have a post high school plan to rely on after they graduate high school. This is a big issue because many teens who have no plan after high school tend to go down the wrong paths of drugs, violence and gangs. I have been attending Dunbar for almost a year now, I have never heard or seen anyone talking about helping students who don't want to enlist in the military or attend college. Many students don't know that they have other options because no one has presented any options to them.

This problem can be solved by creating programs that will give students an option in their future. A program that will ensure that students aren't going to be stuck in a bad position after the graduate because they don't have the knowledge of other paths. This program will present ideas of what a student who doesn't want to attend college can do, and will help students decide on what route they want to go.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.