# **Written Testimony**: PUBLIC HEARING on School Security in District of Columbia Public and Public Charter Schools on Wednesday, April 21, 2021

* Hello - my name is Officer Robert Lee and I’m a 16 year veteran of DCPS security.
* I’m resident of Ward 8 and native Washingtonian. I graduated from Bellou high school.
* Before the pandemic, I was working at Roosevelt high school but I’ve been at Patterson middle school since then.
* In 2004, when I was a volunteer football coach at Bellou senior high school, a student was shot.
* My younger brother was a student at Bellou at the time so I rushed to the school with my mother fearing that his brother might have been a victim in this shooting.
* It was this school shooting and my role as a volunteer football coach that motivated me to become a security professional in DCPS.
* But I am more than just a security officer. As a football coach at Wilson high school – I have helped dozens of DCPS student athletes get college scholarships
* This role has allowed me to develop deep and meaningful relationships with students at every school where I work.
	+ My deep relationships with the students are precisely why I’ve been able to prevent violence before it occurs.
	+ The students respect me because of my ability to deescalate tense situations and prevent them from turning violent.
	+ The students also respect me because of the role I play in their community and in DCPS
* During one of my first years on the job at Hart middle school, a female student went missing and did not communicate with her family.
* Because my role in the guard force allowed me to develop a close relationship with the students - the missing student reached out to another guard.
* After our shift, I drove my coworker to meet the missing student and she was able to return to her family.

·       Nothing is more important than the safety of our students and teachers.

·       *Well-trained security officers like me are part of the solution to creating safer schools.*

·       We make sure only authorized parents/guardians pick-up children from school, resolve conflicts peacefully between students, and screen for weapons.

·       Students cannot learn if they do not feel safe

·       Students will avoid or drop out of school if they fear for their safety

·       Students need the reliability and peace of mind that comes with officers like me who they trust and who are prepared for the unknown.

·       If you care about the well-being of Black families in D.C. then you should also consider the fact that 85% of my fellow school security officers are Black women, and most of them are DC residents.

·       These jobs provide good wages and benefits for hundreds of Black workers and their families.

·       Good jobs are hard to find for our community and they should not be replaced.

·       Eliminating these good jobs with benefits only hurts Black families and communities.

·       We must protect and make permanent these good jobs for security officers!