Testimony of Shemeka Pugh, Parent & Board Member

Maya Angelou Public Charter School

The Committee of the Whole’s Hearing on

**Reopening and Academic Recovery: Hearing from Ward 7 & 8 Families**

Council of the District of Columbia

May 26, 2021

Hello my name is Shemeka Pugh.  I am the mom of Jermaine, an 11th grade scholar who attends Maya Angelou Public Charter School.  But I also serve as a board member and have the pleasure of seeing the ins and outs of how the school runs—especially their strategies for working with different kinds of learners, their fundraising and their strategic partnerships that help make things flow.

During the pandemic Maya has worked to make sure virtual learning could work for every student and their family.  In the beginning, they made sure that every student had a laptop to work on.  And if students didn’t have a connection to the internet, they gave them hotspots.  The individualized attention and the constant communication with the staff about food and clothing distribution and the Wednesday Workshops for parents are phenomenal.  One of the greatest successes I have seen with the school has been with their adaptability.  As an example, when laptops did not work and access was not available to the Zooms or Google Classrooms, we were directed to an IT line with dedicated help just for students and parents. And the staff at Maya have been very transparent from the start with their handling of the CoronaVirus.  They have a testing van on site once a week to make it easy and accessible for the community.  When someone onsite has tested positive for the virus, they have immediately communicated with emails and text messages to let us know the school is being closed and cleaned to ensure the school is safe. I also know that they have made significant upgrades like adding contactless water fountains, air purifiers, and hand sanitizing stations all over the building to make sure the students and staff remain safe when they are all back.

I have mixed emotions about returning to in-school learning only because I am not 100% sold on the vaccine. When we return, I do agree with weekly testing for all of the students, if that is an option.  Wednesday testing at the van is already in place. Regular testing would help protect us all. And, I am open to having hybrid learning--allowing the students to gradually go back in the building splitting the time between in-person and virtually, because the negative mental impact and health concerns could arise with just being home-- or the loss of social skills from not being in school.

We celebrate the wins and the lessons learned throughout this Pandemic. I am more than confident that Maya will do what is best for the students and staff. I have unlimited support and resources and I am grateful. We are able in a pandemic to live and flourish and lack nothing. I want to thank Team Maya for everything.