

DC OST Coalition

POWERED BY DC ACTION

OST Budget Advocacy 2023 (Fiscal Year 2024)

What: DC Council Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget Hearing for ALL Education Agencies

When: Wednesday, April 5, 2023

Where: Virtual via Zoom. You will receive a unique link to participate, but when you're NOT testifying, you can watch here: <https://chairmanmendelson.com/live/>

How: Check out [DC Action's testimony guide](#) for information on who should testify, preparing your testimony (including a template), and how to follow the hearing.

[Sign up to testify](#)

The deadline to sign up is 5pm on Monday, April 3

Talking Points

Why We Must Invest More in OST

When Mayor Muriel Bowser took office for her third term earlier this year, she called for creating "the most robust free before and afterschool programs in the nation." New data from the forthcoming OST needs assessment shows that afterschool programs in DC currently have the capacity to serve less than half – just 41% – of public school students in the District. For summer programs, there are enough spots for just 35% of DC youth to participate. This is unacceptable.

Afterschool and summer programs are critical to the healthy growth and development of young people, providing academic, social and emotional, mental health, and numerous other benefits. They are also one of the most important investments we can make in keeping youth safe outside of school hours, in a time when gun violence is a growing concern.

To achieve universal coverage for public school students, DC needs to add more than 52,000 spots in afterschool programs, and another 57,000 spots in summer programs. The mayor's budget only proposes adding 1,250 spots through new

OST Office funding, 360 spots for summer camp for youth with special needs through DPR funding, and an unspecified number of new seats through an additional \$2.95 million DPR investment. These proposed investments are a step in the right direction. However, they fall short of the \$10 million increase that advocates and some Councilmembers have advocated for around OST.

Our Asks

The mayor's proposed budget is a starting point, but we must do more to make progress toward universal access. We are asking the Council to:

- **Preserve the \$5 million increase to the OST Office allocated for My Afterschool DC** (at least \$3 million of which will go toward OST grants to provide programming to about 1,250 more youth), **and invest an additional \$5 million in OST grant funding for general operating expenses** to create opportunities for more of the tens of thousands of youth who still face barriers to participation, including cost, location, awareness, and accessibility for students with special needs.
 - In their budget request letters to the mayor, Councilmembers Allen and Parker recommended a \$10 million increase for OST; Councilmembers Nadeau and White recommended a \$25 million increase; Councilmembers Henderson and Pinto also requested unspecified increases for OST. We are asking these Councilmembers to follow through on their requests and invest more in afterschool and summer programming.
- **Preserve the proposed \$2.5 million investment in the Special Education Enhancement Fund (SEEF)** earmarked for out-of-school-time slots for children with disabilities and a referral system. Youth with special needs and disabilities deserve the same access to high-quality, affordable OST opportunities as their peers. The District must continue to ensure that there is sufficient funding for programs to provide necessary accommodations and resources to serve youth.
- **OSSE must increase FY24 funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program** to increase the number of grantees in the cohort to make up for a full year of missed funding due to the decision to pause the RFA in FY23, which left many organizations underfunded.

In addition, the OST Office must listen to parents, youth, and youth development professionals in determining how to spend additional funding to ensure that it is

responding to the needs of the community. The OST Coalition recommends the following:

- Increase maximum awards for small nonprofits from \$25,000 to \$75,000 to better support grassroots, community-based nonprofits as they face rising costs. This would cost approximately \$322,000 and would help small nonprofits continue to meet critical needs of young people.
- Allow grantees at the end of their three-year funding cycle to re-apply for multi-year funding without requiring them to wait a year. This will ensure continuity of access for the thousands of youth and families who rely on these trusted programs for afterschool and summer programming.
- Ensure additional OST funding addresses the need for more general operating expenses, which allow programs to scale up and serve more youth.
- Conduct comprehensive community engagement around the development of the My Afterschool DC initiative to ensure that the online hub meets the needs of parents and youth seeking program information and signing up for programs.
- Ensure on-time payments of grant funding, as programs have been facing long delays that threaten continuity of programming that families rely on. This includes adequate staffing and collaborating with grantees to create solutions to more streamlined grants management processes.

Additional Tips

- Make sure to highlight the important role that your afterschool and/or summer program plays in supporting young people's growth and development, academic achievement, and overall well-being.
- Use stories and data to demonstrate how you have made an impact, especially if you have received public grant funding.
- Share what you could accomplish if your organization had more funding – getting youth off waiting lists and into programs, leveraging more school partnerships, providing staff with increased pay or benefits, etc.