



March 1, 2024

Re: 2024 Youth Task Force Demands

To Whom It May Concern:

In January 2024, Led by our Youth Advisory Board, DC Girls' Coalition along with: Black Swan Academy, Bold Yoga, Children's Legacy Theatre, DC Action, Mikva Challenge DC, The Safe Sister Circle, School Talk, United Leaders 4 Freedom, YWCA National Capital Area, and Youth for Justice hosted our 3rd annual Youth Town Hall at Thurgood Marshall Service Center. We had 165 young people of color and over 30 of their allies were in attendance. We held conversations with City Leaders including Councilmember Brainne Nadeau, Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Councilmember Trayon White, and Councilmember Robert White, and several DC agencies in which youth shared their concerns and solutions for issues affecting their lives. The focus of this year's Town Hall was Education Policy and Youth Safety. These two areas became the focus after an August Youth Summit with over 40 youth in attendance to discuss issues affecting them and their community. Young people of color are realizing more each day how they would like to learn more about their history, the need for mental health education to be incorporated in all levels of education, and how outdated education policies need to be updated. This event was their opportunity to discuss potential new policies and ideas to address these concerns. In addition to the above mentioned issues young people of color are very much concerned about their safety in schools and in their community. With many city leaders focusing on punishment instead of addressing root causes for violence young people wanted to create an opportunity to address these causes to start the process of decreasing violence in their community. The Town Hall gave them the opportunity to discuss these solutions with city leaders.

The entire Town Hall was facilitated by youth of color who are part of the various organizations listed above. Youth facilitators helped all youth in attendance share their experiences, issues they care about and most importantly solutions for those issues during the summit.

The following is the result of that convening and what youth of color in DC expressed as needed resources. Youth are demanding that those in charge begin to address the issues listed with the solutions named by them in order to have results. The following are a list of demands from the town hall. We are demanding city leaders answer our youths' call.

An extensive list is provided below. The most pressing demands include:

1. Increase Mental Health Support for youth and parents
  2. Creating a community based culture for youth safety
  3. Increase in Out of School time programing
  4. Improved curriculum on black and brown history and LGBTQ history
  5. Courses about financial literacy
  6. Alternative ways to assess student learning levels
  7. Allowing grassroots groups to participate in school based education
  8. Increase support to teachers in trainings around social and emotional support
- **Increased Mental Health support in schools and communities:**
    - Adequate and comprehensive mental health services that includes grief counselors, additional mental health personnel in the school such as counselors, social workers, behavior techs, therapists and other clinicians
    - Increased mentors within schools who are trusted adults outside of mental health staff
    - Teacher trainings for mental health and social and emotional support (grassroots groups)

- Creating courses for learning about mental health as early as elementary school
- Increased breaks within classroom instruction time that focus on mental health
- Direct connection to mental health professionals for families
- Peer to peer mentorship services
- Adequate services for LGBTQ+ students
- **Improve Safety and Violence Prevention:**
  - Increase after-school and out of School programming to address trauma
  - Develop schools as physical/safe spaces after-school and during out of school time
  - Address sexual harassment in school and community
  - Access to phones and personnel in the midst of an emergency
  - Improve curriculum to prevent the targeted harassment of LGBTQ+ youth or based on race
  - Incorporation of conflict resolution strategies such as mediation and restorative approaches
  - Assessment of gun and gang activity and how the frequency of this can cause anxiety and depression
  - Increase access to trusted adults before and after school
  - Increase the presence of a nurse and nurse's office in schools
  - Increase and improve Safe Passage program
- **Improve School Curriculum:**
  - Increase courses of history about black and brown communities
  - Develop courses about LGBTQ history
  - Develop Financial Literacy courses for high school students to include building credit, budgeting, taxes, money management and investments
  - Develop mental health courses for all levels of education
  - Develop entrepreneurship courses in school
  - Create course in school for college credit for trades

Sincerely,

Janiah Barnes, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Yasmina Konate, DC Girls' Coalition Youth Advisory Board Member

Ayoka Miller-Aganyemi, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Makayla Ofori-Krua Konate, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Brooklynne Payne, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Annisha Perry, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Arayah Shelton, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Elijah Scott, DC Girls' Coalition's Youth Advisory Board Member

Samantha Paige Davis, Founder & Executive Director, Black Swan Academy

Kristi Matthews-Jones, Director, DC Girls Coalition

Jaquelin Santos-Castillo, Youth Organizer, DC Girls' Coalition

Kimberly Perry, Executive Director, DC Action

Leila Patterson, Executive Director, School Talk DC

Monica Gray, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA National Capital Area

Toneja Mixon, Organizers United Leaders 4 Freedom

Carla Portillo, Organizers United Leaders 4 Freedom

Please email Kristi Matthews ([kmatthews@blackswanacademy.org](mailto:kmatthews@blackswanacademy.org)) if you are interested in a virtual call with youth to discuss these demands further. We look forward to hearing from you.