

**Testimony of Philip Pannell before the DC State Board of Education Public Meeting on Health and Wellness Programs in Public Schools, March 16, 2011**

From 1976 to 1983, I was the Program Developer of the Community Outreach Program for the Howard University Center for Sickle Cell Disease, a branch of the College of Medicine. That position tasked me with giving presentations in public schools and scheduling the mobile health unit to give free screenings and counseling for sickle cell disease, nutritional anemia and high blood pressure. The mobile health unit brought services to literally tens of thousands of students and their families. Any health and wellness program in the schools should make optimal use of mobile health units that give free screenings and counseling. Each year that I worked at the Center for Sickle Cell Disease I was scheduled to give audio-visual presentations to all of the biology classes at Ballou Senior High School prior to the screening of the students. I witnessed the students' intense interest about something concerning their health and their anticipation of the screenings.

The schools need to take optimal advantage of community health programs that give free screenings and counseling and these services should be prefaced with educational presentations as co-curricular activities. Also, the schools should encourage the formation of extra-curricular clubs such as future physicians, nurses and medical technicians so that the students can interface with the professionals and receive community service credits for volunteering with community health programs.

In 1991 the late William Lockridge and I were in the first Trainers of Trainers program sponsored by the DC Commission of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Office of AIDS Activities and after completing a 16-hour course we were certified to give HIV/AIDS presentations to community groups. I recommend that high school students be given the opportunity to take weekend courses in order to gain certifications to do HIV/AIDS community health education and peer counseling. By having DC teenagers actively involved in disseminating information about the pandemic, there may be dramatic reduction in the rate of infection.