



# PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

*Jerry T. Jordan, President*

*Testimony re: School Facilities Crisis*

*Presented before Joint Committees of Finance and Children & Youth*

*December 15, 2021*

## **Testimony Attachments:**

- 1. May 2021 “Scope and Solutions” Facilities Report**
- 2. Letter from PFT President Jerry Jordan to Dr. Hite, 10/15/21**
- 3. Letter from Dr. Hite to PFT President Jerry Jordan, 10/20/21**
- 4. Fund Our Facilities Letter to Dr. Hite, 11/2/21**
- 5. Letter from Dr. Hite to Fund Our Facilities Coalition, 11/9/21**

# School District of Philadelphia Facilities Crisis

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*SCOPE AND SOLUTIONS: AN UPDATED REPORT*

MAY 2021

**PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS**

JERRY T. JORDAN, PRESIDENT



## SECTION 1: SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The toxic schools crisis in Philadelphia and across the commonwealth is emblematic of just how profoundly the deep seated, systemically racist underfunding of our schools has impacted our students.

Our young people, the majority of whom are Black and brown and experiencing poverty, have had to endure conditions that would never, ever be tolerated in wealthier, whiter school districts.

The school facilities crisis is a searing example of this atrocious inequity, and it's exactly why we formed the [Fund Our Facilities Coalition](#) to identify real, workable solutions to the **decades of neglect that have left toxic conditions plaguing our schools.**

- Decades of neglect that led SEIU worker Chris Trakimas to lose his life after a boiler explosion at FS Edmonds.
- Decades of neglect that lead then first grader Dean Pagan to suffer lead poisoning after eating lead paint chips from his desk.
- Decades of neglect that led to a devastating mesothelioma diagnosis for PFT member Lea DiRusso, who spent her career teaching in buildings with known, damaged asbestos.
- Decades of neglect that led Chelsea Mungo, then a fourth grader at Cassidy Elementary, to write to her State Senator and ask why the color of her skin impacted how her school is funded, and shared with him that she feels like she is in prison or a junkyard when she is in what is supposed to be a sacred place of learning.

In addition to systemic disinvestment and severe underfunding, pervasive and significant failures in District oversight, governance and management of buildings has resulted in the erosion of public trust and confidence in District leadership and management.

**What follows are a number of critical facilities issues, process-based concerns, and a number of needed action items:**

### Section 2: Urgent Facilities Issues

- 2a. Overall Conditions
- 2b. Lead in Water
- 2c. Lead in Paint
- 2d. Asbestos
- 2e. Ventilation
- 2f. Moisture & Mold
- 2g. Roofing Issues

**Section 3:** Process Based Problems

**Section 4:** Action Items

**Section 5:** Conclusion

**Appendices 1-3:** Examples of recent asbestos, moisture/mold, and roofing problems.

**Appendix 4:** Photos of recent facilities conditions.

## SECTION 2: URGENT FACILITIES ISSUES

### 2A. OVERALL CONDITIONS

In 2015, the SDP contracted with Parsons Environmental & Infrastructure Group to have them conduct a Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) of all Philadelphia schools. The Parsons FCA report for the District, along with individual school reports, was publicly released in January 2017 and identified the following problems and issues:

- District buildings (school inventory) had a “cost of replacement value” (CRV) of > \$14 B.
- District buildings had an average age of 66 yrs (compared to a national average of 42 yrs.)
- Current average age = 70+ years old (80% of buildings are >70 y.o.)
- There was a documented 25-year deferred maintenance backlog of needed work.
- There was a documented \$4.5 B Maintenance & Operations (M&O) need associated with the backlog.
- There was a capital infrastructure need of more than \$3.3 B (in addition to the M&O need)
- The “current” financial needs/cost at the time was pegged at almost \$8 B -- nothing even remotely close to that number was ever devoted to either necessary capital improvement or M&O so continued deterioration is, and was predictable.

According to the 2015-2017 FCA (referring to the FCI values in the Parsons report) the overall District FCI rating was > 32%, reflecting an exceptionally advanced state of deterioration.

- The schools in poorest condition were elementary schools and closed schools (FCI > 37%)
- 85 schools had FCIs of between 40% & 60%
- 20 schools had an FCI of > 60%
- \$3.5 B was recommended to be spent within the 5-year period (2015 – 2020) to address priority needs
- \$3.1 B was needed for O&M & Health & Safety

| FCI % Range | Recommended Action                                    |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <15 %       | Minimal Capital Funding Required                      |
| 15 to 25%   | Refurbish Systems                                     |
| 25 to 45%   | Replace Systems                                       |
| 45 to 60%   | Building should be considered for major renovation    |
| > 60%       | Building should be considered for closing/replacement |

In 2020, the District again contracted with Parsons to re-inspect all schools and to update the FCA assessments from six (6) years ago.

The District has refused to disclose or provide any information related to updates to the FCA since 2017 or how/if they used the data for planning purposes over the past 4-6 years. Finally, they are now “updating” the FCA survey work but without providing any information, data, or collaboration.

## **2B. LEAD IN SCHOOL DRINKING WATER**

In 2016, PFT and others pushed for lead testing of water in all drinking water outlets in all Philadelphia schools and for remediation work to be performed. We also conducted a nationwide survey of what other Districts had been able to accomplish around the country and made recommendations to the District and offered to work in collaboration with them. At the time, our participation and recommendations were ignored.

After a push from City Council and subsequent hearings, the District was required to engage in another round of testing, to share the information obtained openly, to afford stakeholders the opportunity to observe testing, and to ensure proper remediation work was done. Those activities were required and the District’s testing of water outlets was done and remediation work as well as the installation of 1,000 + “hydration stations” in all schools was a result of this effort.

A contractor, ANDalyze/Terra Phase was involved in those testing activities starting in 2016 and Keating Environmental Management (KEM) was responsible for coordination and oversight. Data was collected (supposedly) for all outlets in all schools.

District stopped cooperating with PFT and other stakeholders in 2019 and has failed to provide access to data and information from that time forward.

## **2C. LEAD IN PAINT: P&P ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXPANSION**

Following the documentation (as a result of joint assessment by PFT & District) of the lead poisoning of a 1<sup>st</sup> grade student (Dean Pagan) at Comly ES in November 2017 and subsequent and continued public reporting, PFT advocacy, and collective action, the District was forced to take specific recommended remediation actions and to establish a lead “Paint & Plaster Advisory Committee.” It was this committee that District leaders promised would be expanded to include all environmental hazards and related facility condition deficiencies.

The P&P Advisory Committee had representatives from PFT, SEIU-32BJ, and CASA, as well as parent representatives from various communities. State Senator Vincent Hughes also participated on this committee.

The Committee operated in a closely collaborative manner with the District’s C.O.O., and directors of OEMS and other facility departments to review all data and information as it was collected, to participate in site assessment activities, to jointly develop testing and inspection protocols and procedures, and to review and help create and edit communication materials and approaches.

The committee played an active review, oversight, and advisory role and was *not* simply another “rubber stamp” mechanism for the District to “check the box” of public engagement without substantive engagement with stakeholders.

Throughout 2019 and early 2020, discussions were held with District leaders (Danielle Floyd and Jim Creedon) who agreed to expand the P&P Advisory Committee (as structured and operating) into a District wide Facility Environmental Advisory Committee (FEAC). The PFT, parent, and other stakeholders were asked to identify parent representatives for consideration and there was a promise to engage in a joint effort to broaden participation but to implement the FEAC with the same scope and substantive oversight, review and advisory role being played by the P&P Advisory Committee that had been in place for about 2-3 years.

*Without notice or further discussion, the District simply decided to break their promises and established an EAC that has neither the access to comprehensive information nor the scope or charge to play an active oversight, review, and advisory role.*

## 2D. ASBESTOS: 10 BUILDING CLOSURES, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SF OF ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIAL

Problems related to the assessment, evaluation, inspection, remediation, and testing of asbestos containing materials (ACMs) in our schools presents one of the most significant potential hazards to our staff and students for several specific reasons:

- With an average age of more than 70 years most of our buildings have accessible and large amounts of ACM
- There are hundreds of thousands of square and linear feet of ACM in classrooms, hallways, gymnasiums, cafeterias, air handling/fan rooms, special needs rooms, and many other areas that need attention
- Deteriorated physical conditions of facilities such as roofing, exterior walls, heating/cooling/plumbing piping, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, all contribute to ongoing asbestos damage to existing in-place ACM

**Several recent examples can help illustrate the scale and scope of the asbestos problems faced.**

1. Issues related to the major construction at BFHS/SLA with failures leading to exposures that sickened multiple students and staff. In following up on these complaints and issues in the summer of 2019, PFT identified serious asbestos concerns that had been previously gone unrecognized resulting in the need to delay opening of school to address asbestos and other issues (eventually a highly critical Inspector's General Report).
2. Ten (10) schools had to close because of asbestos concerns and issues (between 9/2019 and 3/2020 when the District shut down because of the pandemic) – in each case the District claimed the schools were safe before being forced to acknowledge the actual

situation. These were schools across the District including: BFHS, SLA, McClure, T.M. Pierce, Pratt, Hopkinson, Sullivan, Barton, Carnell, and Richmond.

3. Data collected by District Maintenance & Operations Department Facility Area Coordinators with school principals in November and December of 2019 documented thousands of specific facility condition and environmental problems that, in many cases required follow-up by environmental monitoring consultants.
4. District mandated inspections as per the EPA, "AHERA" (Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act) regulation were performed in 23 schools in late 2019 and early 2020 but were so poorly done – based on our review which was brought to the attention of the District's Office of Environmental Management Services – that the process was stopped and a full review and new effort had to be restarted at considerable expense.
5. A draft "Asbestos Best Practices" plan was jointly developed by the PFT, SEIU-32BJ, and District representatives, at the direction of the Mayor's Office (12/2019- 6/2020) that, while not perfect, including many important protections but the District has still not agreed to implement many of the agreed-upon measures.
6. Asbestos abatement work performed during the past twelve (12) months – from 4/2020 – 4/2021 – has been extensive and, based on our reviews and on-site work, has resulted in several incidents where significant asbestos contamination was documented. These situations are of serious concern (some examples provided in Appendix 1).

## 2E. VENTILATION

Upgraded, and maintained Heating, Cooling, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems are critically necessary components for healthy, safe, and comfortable schools. The lack of adequate HVAC is a major, recognized contributor to increased illnesses and respiratory symptoms, including asthma that adversely impacts student and staff health and safety, contributes to absenteeism and lost time for both students and staff from school, and compromises educational achievement and opportunity. Considerable established and peer-reviewed research and studies have documented that in PK-12 settings with inadequate levels of fresh air (resulting in build-ups of Carbon Dioxide), educational achievement is decreased by 7% - 12% or more when accounting for other variables.

District HVAC systems and components - in most schools - are deteriorated and beyond their useful life and require major upgrades and replacement. Many of the interior system components are corroded and failing, and the controls used to provide fresh air, heating, and cooling have, in many cases, not been working for many years. The system condition - on a District-wide basis - results in significant impacts on students, staff, and building operation and also involves excessive costs for reactive and emergency maintenance in many locations.

When we talk about “ventilation” we are not typically including heating systems that do not provide air such as radiators and convectors that use hot, water, steam or even electricity to heat coils — however, for the purposes of this report, we have included heating systems (even those without “air”) in this summary. The major HVAC systems found in Philadelphia schools includes:

- Whole House Fan Systems - old original ventilation and heating systems present in many dozens of our schools built between about 1900 - 1940
- Classroom Unit Ventilator (CUV) systems that look like covered radiators placed along exterior classroom walls beneath windows and that are designed to use a mixture of fresh and recirculated air to provide a mixture of fresh and recirculated, heated, and/or cooled filtered air. Thousands of CUVs are present in dozens of schools built between about 1945 - current time
- Central Air Handling systems - more modern HVAC systems with ceiling and wall mounted registers for air supply and air return. Designed to provide a mixture of fresh and recirculated, heated and/or cooled filtered air.
- Radiators - Wall (and sometimes ceiling) mounted heating components that provide heat from steam or hot water.

A range of urgent **short, medium, and long term HVAC system needs with repair and upgrades** as well as capital improvement totaling many tens of millions of dollars (for short term) to the hundreds of millions of dollars (for medium and long term) fixes is required and falls into the following categories:

1. Ensuring existing system operation and function specifically to ensure provision of adequate levels of fresh, outside air — a gross lack of fresh air currently exists in the majority of school locations for most of the school year.
2. Ensuring adequate and effective heating and cooling is provided on a routine and ongoing basis - hundreds of complaints are received each year due to failing heating and cooling systems and components at the room and school levels.
3. Ensuring that system components are maintained to prevent failures leading to major water leaks and the build-up of mold and microbial growth.
4. Ensuring effective and basic operation of thermostatic controls.
5. Ensuring that units are properly and routinely cleaned and that filters are adequately maintained and changed.
6. Ensuring that increased airborne contamination by environmental hazards, such as asbestos, mold and other agents is not facilitated by the condition and operation of the HVAC system.

## 2F. MOISTURE AND MOLD

Moisture, dampness, humidity, and mold are consequential impacts and exposures related to problems with HVAC systems, as well as from problems related to the “building envelope” - the walls, windows, and roof of the school that serve the function of protecting interior building surfaces from exterior water penetration.

As with many of the District's mechanical and building systems, HVAC, roofing, exterior walls, and windows are seriously deteriorated and have aged beyond their useful life. The lack of necessary capital improvements results in these systems becoming more and more damaged, and thereby requiring more and more repair and response time and attention from the District's Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Departments; however, instead of receiving additional funding, the M&O department itself has been significantly underfunded and has seen personnel reduced by about 200-300 trades workers (roofers, plumbers, HVAC mechanics, etc.) over the past 10 years making it even more challenging to maintain aging buildings and infrastructure. Additionally, the lack of experienced and properly trained building engineering and custodial workers and an insufficient number of maintenance trades workers, has caused extremely significant problems, with excessively elevated costs, in multiple locations on an every-year basis.

There continue to be a very large number of major problems with significant mold growth throughout many occupied areas across many schools. Mold growth, and other microbial contamination from uncontrolled water intrusion, dampness, and moisture has been repeatedly documented with multiple recommendations made to more effectively fund and prioritize prevention and response activities, although very little of a systemic nature has been done by the District.

Failures to address the moisture, dampness, and humidity issues in a timely and effective manner have resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in emergency response costs (which could have been avoided) and major impacts on occupant health and safety as well as on educational achievement and programming.

Some relatively recent and notable examples of large scale mold damage and impacts are provided in Appendix 2.

## 2G. ROOFING ISSUES

The roofing system which includes gutters, downspouts, flashing, and other components is obviously a critical system necessary to maintaining interior condition integrity in our school buildings and for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of all staff and students as well as preventing loss and damage to books and supplies, destruction of walls, ceilings and floors, and consequential damage including to asbestos and lead paint in addition to the development of mold growth.

Although it is very difficult to determine the exact number of roofs that have gone beyond their useful life span (because of District data-related limitations) or the number of roofs that are significantly damaged and experiencing frequent leaks, what is clear is that being able to

maintain roofs in a stable and intact condition is crucial. Unfortunately, available resources, combined with planning and systemic and accountable response deficiencies, have resulted in dozens of locations where impacts associated with cracking, crumbling, and failing roof systems caused major interior damage.

It should also be noted that in buildings where the average age is at least 70 years, it is expected - and has now been documented - that "legacy hazards" (asbestos and lead) are widespread throughout our schools. The reason to mention this here is that leaking roofs that allow water to penetrate into building interiors, often causes significant cascading and consequential damage and elevated remediation costs, when the water damages existing asbestos or lead. Increased remediation costs also result from the growth of mold and bacterial contamination that typically occurs, subsequent to roof leaks.

Serious and repetitive problems have been seen during past few years at many schools - a few examples are provided in Appendix 3.

### SECTION 3: PROCESS-BASED PROBLEMS

In addition to the specific facilities concerns outlined, there are a number of critical process-based concerns that largely inhibit wholesale forward progress in tackling the urgent facilities crisis facing Philadelphia's public schools.

#### Some of these concerns include the following:

1. Lack of meaningful public **stakeholder engagement** in planning, priority setting, solution development, and effective and accountable implementation
  - a. This is especially highlighted by the details related to the District's currently in place "Environmental Advisory Council" structure instead of the promised Facility Environmental Advisory Committee (FEAC) structure (and functionality) that was supposed to be implemented instead.
2. Gross **failures related to substantive and broad-based District practices** related to providing real transparency and data sharing and access continue to be a central element of the District's unwillingness to be open and honest about school conditions
3. The lack of the development, with direct and near-direct stakeholder engagement, in the creation of a "**Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan**" is a major problem that must now be fixed.
  - a. Comprehensive Education Facilities Master Plans are critically needed element in ensuring equitable, efficient, high quality, and sustainable infrastructure improvement. The District, despite numerous recommendations, still has no such plan.

4. There is an ongoing lack of **specific and granular collaboration**, coordination, and cooperation with independent expert stakeholders (e.g. PFT H&WF/U Environmental Science representatives) that has only worsened over the past 12 months.
  - a. District representatives, managers, and leaders have become less and less willing to work with PFT and others in a coordinated and collaborative manner to identify and remediate environmental hazards and related facility condition problems, further eroding school staff confidence in the health and safety of schools.
5. The **lack of adequate and accountable stewardship and efficient governance** of resources and programs re: construction, capital improvement, M&O, and environmental remediation activities in general has increasingly compromised public trust, and issues of social justice and equity as well as resulting in permitting potentially hazardous conditions to exist and pose risk to students and staff.
6. There has been a broad-based **failure to implement and follow specific and documented “Best Practices”** – and data-driven, evidence-based - approaches and efforts related to construction work in occupied buildings, asbestos remediation and testing activities, lead stabilization and remediation work, and multiple problems relating to HVAC system operation results in hazardous exposure conditions to occur.
  - a. These conditions, while presenting serious potential risk to all building occupants, place our most vulnerable students at heightened risk.
7. The District has **neglected to respond to pressing issues reported** through the PFT Healthy School Tracker App.
  - a. The **District has not responded to a problem submitted since 11/30/2020**, despite problems that have been submitted as immediate, urgent, or important.
  - b. The District gave no notice of their intent to neglect to respond to reported facilities concerns and is in fact obligated to respond to issues of health and safety.
  - c. Of the **281 problems** reported in the past two months since school buildings reopened, 0% have been responded to by District officials. **5% of those are listed as “immediate” (response within 24 hours), 22% as “urgent” (response within 72 hours) and 16% as “important” (response within 14 days).** The remaining reports are uncategorized.
  - d. **In total, there are 1,475 outstanding problems on the app that need response.**
  - e. The District has publicly stated that they intend to put “eyes on” suspected damaged asbestos within 24 hours of a report, but this is clearly not taking place, and potentially exposing students and staff to damaged asbestos for longer periods of time due to the District's refusal to respond.

Without open and transparent sharing of data and information related to environmental issues, programs and initiatives, and related facility condition data (from Operations, Maintenance, Capital Programs, & Environmental Management) it is exceedingly challenging to effectively evaluate, assess, and analyze District priorities, plans, and the funding decisions that directly impact and affect the health, safety, welfare, of occupants, and that matter from the standpoint of ensuring socially just and equitable academic opportunities and learning and teaching conditions for all students and staff.

## SECTION 4: ACTION ITEMS

The PFT is ready, willing, and able to engage in the ongoing work to ensure that substantive, meaningful progress is made in order to mitigate the facilities crisis in our schools. We have been, and remain, deeply committed to ensuring safe, healthy schools for all of our students and staff. As such, we offer the following recommendations to address the ongoing concerns:

### 1. Immediate funding

- The time is now to address these untenable conditions. For a mere \$200 Million, we could remediate the most pressing environmental concerns within more than 225 School District of Philadelphia buildings.
- That includes, but is not limited to, electrical upgrades, lead and asbestos remediation and stabilization, ventilation upgrades, and COVID related safety protocol.
- **\$200 Million should be a floor—not a ceiling.** This is the bare minimum, and really will only begin to scratch the surface of what our students need.
- The \$200 M figure is in addition to already planned upon facilities funding, which have already been committed to the budget.
- We should think further than that, and think about how and what a real plan to not only remove the hazards but also to really modernize spaces and ensure that our students are afforded access to the education facilities they so richly deserve. To do this will require significant investment beyond \$200 Million.

### 2. Establish the FEAC (Facility Environmental Advisory Committee)

- This committee must include expert, experienced, and independent (e.g. the PFT's Environmental Science Director) as well as public stakeholders consistent with promises and representations from the District and that the committee's scope be defined to include the following:
  - A substantive role in planning, priority setting, solution implementation development, and oversight and advice for all environmental issues throughout the District.
  - The FEAC to be provided with all facility construction related environmental hazard data, documents, records, and materials needed to perform an effective oversight and advisory role.
  - The FEAC to work in a joint and collaborative fashion with District leadership and management to develop a Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan to form the basis for priorities and implementable solutions for sustainable school infrastructure improvement.

- The District should immediately implement agreed upon Best Practice approaches for asbestos, and should work in a joint and collaborative fashion with the FEAC to develop sets of best practices for lead, mold, and other hazardous condition evaluation, assessment, testing, and accountable solution implementation.
- The FEAC should be appointed and assigned to develop and publish public reports and information updating all stakeholders about facility condition and environmental hazard issues, approaches, and initiatives in an updated and ongoing manner and should provide presentations, written summary reports, and other status update information directly to the City Council, Mayor's Office representatives and Board of Education Members for their review, consideration, and action.

### **3. Data Access, Sharing, & Transparency**

- The District should immediately live up to its statements about data access, sharing, and transparency by providing specific details, reports, records, contract/work scopes, and similar documentation about all ongoing facility condition evaluation and planning work, related to capital improvement projects and maintenance and operations activities as well as all environmental assessment and related project activities to include access to underlying data and information for all work related:
  - The current FCA efforts by Parsons
  - The Environmental Data Management efforts being undertaken by Done Safe, Inc
  - All Asbestos evaluation, assessment, remediation, and testing work – planned and ongoing
  - All Lead-in-Paint evaluation, assessment, remediation, and testing work – planned and ongoing
  - All Lead-in-Water evaluation, assessment, remediation, and testing work – planned and ongoing
  - All HVAC-IAQ related mold, moisture and dampness evaluation, assessment, remediation, and testing work – planned and ongoing
  - Other materials still TBD

### **4. Response to Concerns**

The District should immediately resume responding to issues submitted to the Healthy Schools App, and to issues reported in other manners. These reports from people in the buildings are key to identifying concerns. The District must respond to items marked "Immediate" within 24 hours, items marked "Urgent" within 72 hours, and items marked "Important" within 14 days.

## SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

The work ahead is crucial, and it is incumbent upon the District to work in partnership with the PFT and other stakeholders to ensure that facilities remediation and modernization are done in an efficient, effective, and safe manner. The health and safety of our students and staff depend on the District's willingness and ability to do this essential work quickly and correctly.

The urgency of addressing the facilities crisis cannot be overstated. This work can be done and it can be done well. We urge the District to adopt our recommended action items, and we urge lawmakers at every level of government to ensure that significant funding is appropriated to address the critical infrastructure needs that impact Philadelphia's young people and school staff each day.

In the **attached appendices**, you will find examples of serious concerns regarding many of the topics addressed in this report.

Additionally, in appendix 4, you will find a sampling of photos illustrating the severity of the facilities crisis in our schools. In fact, photos 14-20 are all from a single high school and submitted within the past week.

## APPENDIX 1: ASBESTOS

### *SAMPLING OF SCHOOLS WHERE SERIOUS ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION PROBLEMS WERE DOCUMENTED:*

#### **1. Bethune ES – April 2020**

Major asbestos remediation work in several areas including the cafeteria, gymnasium, boiler room, and classrooms with more than 25,000 SF of ACM and asbestos-contaminated materials removed. During this work, significant contamination issues, outside of contained work areas was documented.

#### **2. Pratt ES – April 2020**

Issues with work practice controls and set up of abatement areas resulted in cross-contamination problems and elevated airborne asbestos levels that were avoidable and could have been addressed by a more collaborative and joint process being in-place and accountably implemented as part of the planning process for this project.

#### **3. Woodrow Wilson MS (several month project, 2020)**

Air samples collected in May, 2020, documented significant airborne asbestos fiber contamination outside of the contained work areas.

#### **4. Mitchell ES – May 2020**

Air samples collected in May, 2020, documented airborne asbestos fiber contamination outside of the contained work areas. This information was shared with District OEMS representatives and measures to clean up and respond to the situation and to perform additional follow-up testing to confirm acceptable safety were implemented.

#### **5. Sharswood ES—June 2020**

Air samples collected in June, 2020, documented airborne asbestos fiber contamination outside of the contained work areas (room 217) and highlighted systemic problems with work site set-up and failure to follow Best Practices.

#### **6. Carnell ES –July 2020**

Air samples collected in July 2020, documented airborne asbestos fiber contamination outside of the contained work areas (room 217) and highlighted systemic problems with work site set-up and failure to follow Best Practices.

#### **7. Gompers ES – May 2020 – December 2020**

Significant construction activities were performed at Gompers ES during 2020, that included significant asbestos removal activities and testing. On several occasions, and consistent with

problems and issues at other schools, Best Practices were determined to not being followed and, during testing in and around the school auditorium in October 2020 a significant contamination issue was brought to our attention by building trades workers on site.

On 10/23 we were notified about a problem on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor of Gompers with asbestos work in/near the auditorium that had resulted in what all considered to be an airborne asbestos fiber release into the auditorium, nearby hallways and entrance areas and some other locations. Construction workers had refused to continue work and the environmental monitoring firm originally assigned to perform project oversight was replaced.

Extensive additional cleaning and testing was required as response to the failures that occurred in the auditorium.

The conditions documented above resulted, to a significant degree, from the direct work and involvement by the PFT only following notification that the work area had been "completed" and ready for final testing. The problems in these schools, obviously, are not "one-offs", rather they are systemic and pervasive problems. Our substantive participation at earlier points (during planning and job set-up) would likely have resulted in avoidance of the contamination issues, especially impacting "clean" outside the containment work areas.

## APPENDIX 2: MOISTURE AND MOLD

### *SAMPLING OF SCHOOLS WHERE SERIOUS MOISTURE AND MOLD PROBLEMS WERE DOCUMENTED:*

#### **1. Cook-Wissahickon**

Thousands of SF of mold growth throughout the library, destroying books, furniture and furnishings. If trained and experienced personnel were on site, this would have been easily preventable.

#### **2. Lawton**

Expensive HVAC system upgrades were improperly performed resulting in extensive mold growth in classrooms and other occupied spaces. Highlights problems with planning and oversight with respect to capital projects. A secondary, and significant problem was an issue with the system thermostatic controls.

#### **3. OEC**

Overbrook Education Center has a very vulnerable student population and the lack of adequate maintenance and operational control over new and older existing HVAC system components lead to a multi-month mold remediation project being required with many educational spaces being inaccessible to staff and students.

#### **4. Muñoz Marín**

In August of 2017, thousands of square feet of mold growth were documented in this schools in the air handling systems, on musical instruments, chairs, carpeting, curtains, and even staff "mail slots" in the main office. Similar conditions, although to a much lesser extent, were documented in 2015 & 2016 as well. PFT input about the potential "systemic" (in other schools with similar systems) nature of the problem and recommendations to identify and inspect other schools resulted in finding another 20 schools with mold growth. Total remediation costs likely exceeded \$1,000,000 and also the partial and temporary closure and loss of educational spaces.

#### **5. Gompers**

Uncontrolled and unrepaired (for several months) steam leaks in the newly renovated school library resulted in extensive mold growth and the damage and loss of books and other educational materials and supplies as well as furnishings and fixtures throughout the space.

#### **6. Bethune**

In October of 2018, more than 1200 square feet of mold growth was documented on ceilings and pipe insulation in at least 6 classrooms and other normally occupied educational ceilings. As reported by on site staff, and as obvious from the extent of the mold growth, these conditions had existed, even if to a lesser extent for several months.

## APPENDIX 3: ROOFING ISSUES

### *SAMPLING OF SCHOOLS WHERE SERIOUS ROOFING PROBLEMS WERE DOCUMENTED:*

#### **1. Hill Freedman World Academy**

Leak in roof above auditorium resulted in damage to the asbestos acoustical plaster ceiling with debris falling into the auditorium.

#### **2. Lea ES**

The “new” “L-Wing” of the school has had ongoing and repetitive roof leaks for many years resulting in damage to walls, ceilings and floors inside the hallway and classrooms of this wing. Additionally, newly modernized classrooms were damaged from the water intrusion that continued to occur from the documented and ongoing roof leaks.

#### **3. Academy at Palumbo**

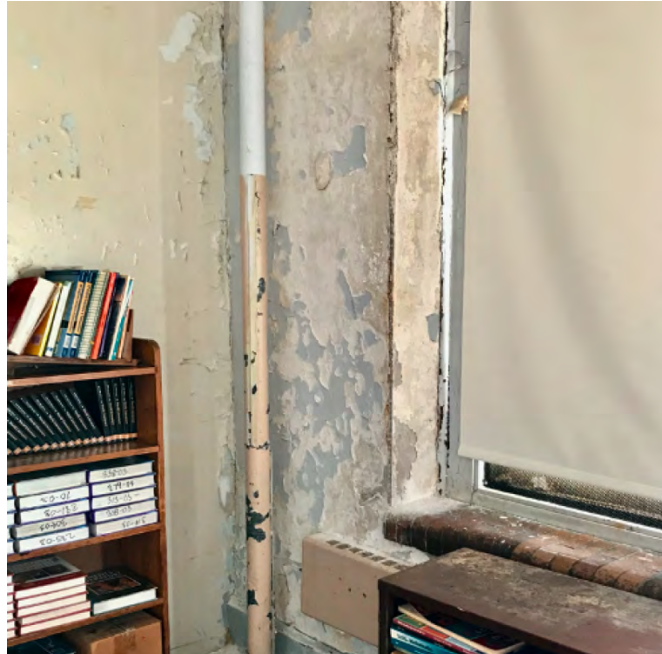
A clogged and overflowing roof drain resulted in massive leak impacting several floors of the schools and causing significant damage to dozens of building areas. This situation caused the closure of large sections of the building and ended up with remediation costs in the \$100,000's of dollars for what was an easily preventable issue.

**APPENDIX 4: PHOTOS****SAMPLING OF DOCUMENTED PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS 2017-2021**

***Photo 1– Elem. Classroom — Antiquated classroom unit ventilator, damaged/flaking lead paint, and obvious signs - and damage associated with - moisture and water intrusion.***



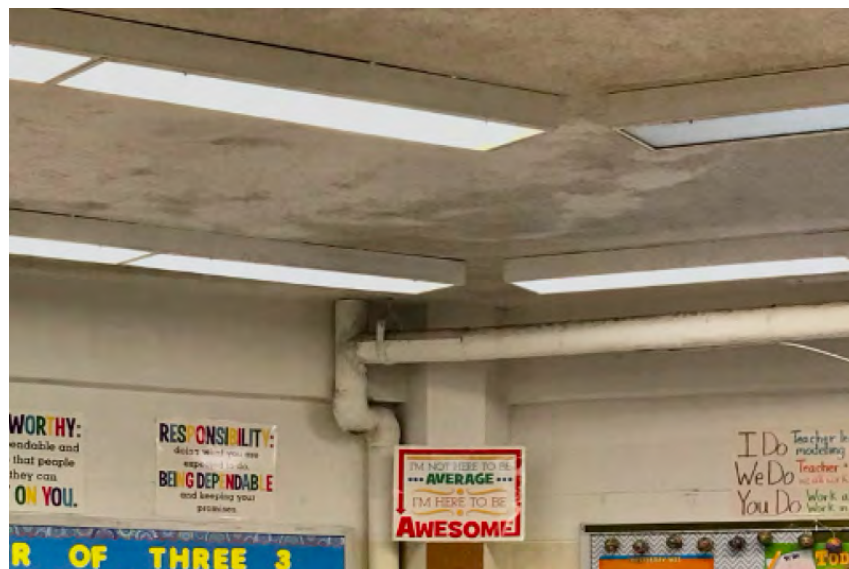
**Photo 2 – Elem. Classroom — Extreme water damage resulting in severe deterioration of lead paint, flaking with dust and debris on materials**



**Photo 3 – Occupied Gym/Lunchroom— Kids sitting and eating underneath severely damaged lead painted ceiling**



**Photos 4 & 5 – Mold Growth on Ceiling and Wall of Occupied Elem. Classroom - according to teacher, condition present for months — Associated with HVAC System Problems**



**Photo 6 – Elem. Bathroom – Mold growing on ceiling and ductwork**



**Photo 7 – Elem. Classroom — Repeat flooding from malfunctioning classroom unit ventilator resulting in extensive damage and mold growth to newly installed flooring — the original flooring was replaced for the same reason just a few weeks earlier. An example of what happens if the “root causes” are not addressed and also issues related to inadequate governance, oversight, and management**



**Photo 8—High School—**Teacher described the conditions as existing for several months. The floor tile is an asbestos-containing material.



**Photo 9 – ES – Classroom Unit Ventilator - Typical inside condition of the CUVs [dirty, rusted, leaking, & deteriorated with mold & bacterial slime]**



**Photo 10 – Elem. Boys Bathroom— Filthy conditions, leaks on floor and ceiling deteriorated/damaged and missing insulation on piping presenting a burn hazard from very hot heating pipes.**



***Photos 11 & 12– Bathroom — Accessible, damaged asbestos insulation between urinal and sink — this condition is present in multiple locations.***



**Photos 14-20: A sampling of dozens of photos received from ONE high school in the past WEEK. The photos represent lead paint, physical damage, and possible asbestos.**











# PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

Via Electronic Transmission

October 15, 2021

*J. Jordan  
Council 12.17.21  
Attachment 2 of 5*

Dear Dr. Hite:

I am writing to outline a number of persistent and urgent facilities issues that need immediate attention. These are conditions that we have repeatedly shared with District officials. Throughout this communication, I provide a host of examples of ongoing issues at a number of schools. These issues are not stand alone issues, and in fact are representative of concerns we are seeing District-wide. I provide them as examples to demonstrate the scope of our concerns as well as specific instances where the District's process of addressing these urgent issues is failing. All photos are directly from our Healthy Schools Tracker App, to which the District has direct access and has made multiple commitments regarding responses.

**Before providing specific situations, I want to lay out the overarching concerns I have:**

First, it remains unacceptable that Jerry Roseman does not have regular access to buildings. In a meeting with members of your team on September 20, 2021, I raised concerns regarding the removal of Jerry Roseman from Frankford High School. Larisa Shambaugh informed me that she would provide the District's proposed protocols for Mr. Roseman's access to buildings. I have not yet received the proposal, and wish to be clear that I will object to any proposal that does not allow him similar access as he has had for close to forty years.

Second, the response time to submissions on the Healthy Schools App is unacceptable. As you will see in several examples below, problems that we have deemed Immediate (needing response within 24 hours) or Urgent (needing response within 3 days) are left to languish sometimes for years. This is absolutely disgraceful. Further, with your commitment to the community that the District would put "eyes" on suspected damaged asbestos within 24 hours of reporting, it is especially confounding to me the amount of time that these conditions are allowed to persist. There are, as of 10/14/21, twenty-three (23) schools with more than ten (10) outstanding problems. Many of these problems are marked as immediate, urgent, or important. A full list of those schools, and incomplete problems is attached.

Third, the District refuses to implement protocols that have either been in practice for years or protocols that have been agreed upon, or protocols that we have outlined that are best practices. Attached to this letter are six such documents: the lead paint and plaster procedures and lead clean-up protocols; the asbestos best practices; the jointly developed asbestos assessment policies; our summary of the mold remediation procedures based on previously implemented practices; and the Healthy Schools App

protocols. At this current juncture, zero of these documents are being implemented with fidelity, and students and staff are more vulnerable to toxins as a result.

These issues encompass an ongoing litany of concerns I have with the District's approach to the facilities crisis. I recognize the ongoing funding needs-- and that is exactly why this Union has taken the leading role in advocating for funding at every level of government in any form possible to address these concerns. However, as you will note in a number of the examples below, poor planning and execution have exacerbated problems.

I hope the information below will serve as instructive examples of the work that needs to take place and the urgent course corrections that must be implemented.

### **School Examples and Courses of Action**

#### **Richard Wright School**

Over the course of several years, staff at Richard Wright have submitted dozens of concerns regarding broken asbestos floor tiles, and often report back that despite the District's marking the issues "complete" on the Healthy Schools App, the tiles are in fact not fixed.

The tiles at Wright must be addressed using the jointly developed PFT-SDP asbestos assessment protocol document, attached for your reference. A number of the submissions on the App would fall under categories in need of swift remediation--certainly not allowed to persist for years. Below you will find a particularly concerning situation in room 203.



The photo pictures removed asbestos tiles, leaving behind asbestos mastic. The mastic, now damaged by water intrusion from a faulty HVAC unit, presents a particular danger. This problem was first submitted in May of 2019, with notes from District officials (via the App) that work orders have been in place since 2018. Now, the water damage has increased the environmental hazard from the asbestos significantly. This is a problem that could have been relatively straightforward to address, but unfortunately was not, and now presents a much more significant concern. Room 203 is but one example at Richard Wright of incomplete work to address damaged asbestos tiles.

***Richard Wright Course of Action: The tile work at Richard Wright must be immediately addressed, and damaged asbestos must be addressed according to the asbestos best practices. Particular attention must be paid to the water damaged mastic in room 203.***

### **Furness High School**

Through our Healthy Schools Tracker App, we have received ninety-nine (99) submissions from Furness, with sixty-four (64) problems unresolved. Further, of those 99 submissions, thirty (30) have been marked as “urgent” or “immediate.” These conditions include lead, asbestos, water damage, and unsanitary conditions.

It is unconscionable that, despite ongoing efforts to remediate these toxic hazards, the students and staff have been left without appropriate solutions to the massive issues in their buildings. From the lead dust particles to possible asbestos, the impacts of these conditions are very serious.

We have toured Furness multiple times, shared our concerns repeatedly, and yet the issues persist. It is absolutely imperative that a full and thorough joint PFT-SDP assessment take place and that a true plan for remediation is implemented swiftly.

Below are several examples of absolutely disgraceful conditions and their current status:



**Left: Room 317**

Submitted: May 15, 2019  
Last District Update: August 19, 2019- *Source under investigation, will have a update by Friday 8/23/19*



**Right: Room 320**

Submitted: April 30, 2021  
Last District Update: June 9, 2021- *All paint and plaster issues are currently being checked by maintenance personnel on the best way to address this situation*



**Left: IMC/Library**

Submitted: April 30, 2021  
Last District Update: June 9, 2021- *All paint and plaster issues are currently being checked by maintenance personnel on the best way to address this situation*



**Right: Room 106**

Submitted: Repeatedly over the course of years. First report 9/4/2019. Last submission from April 2021, with note: Twice fixed, paint flakes and turns into dust when the window is open.  
Last District Update-1: September 27, 2019: *Work order created for Painters*  
Last District Update-2: June 9, 2021: *All paint and plaster issues are currently being checked by maintenance personnel on the best way to address this situation*

### **The U School**

Conditions in this building are absolutely disgraceful, and the District's recent public claim of having no record of any concerns in the building is reprehensible. Through our Healthy Schools Tracker App, we have received, and in turn submitted to the District, forty (40) submissions. Of those submissions, twenty (20) have been marked as "urgent" or "immediate," and yet have been allowed to languish by the District for, in some cases, more than three (3) years.

The conditions in this building present concerns including asbestos, lead, mold, and other respiratory hazards. Despite the persistent reporting of these issues, and repeated follow up by the PFT, very little has been done to address these issues in any sort of comprehensive manner. The approach, which appears to be currently employed, of plastering over damage is wholly insufficient. The damage pictured in the App submissions is indicative of incredibly long term deterioration that has been allowed to persist without systemic remediation. The damage pictured includes several emergency situations, including exposed and damaged asbestos, flaking lead paint, particulate matter coating floors and windowsills, and moisture damage.

Much of the water damage might be attributable to roofing system deficiency and deterioration (FCI is 89.73% = extremely deteriorated) and/or possible other sources. The school was inspected in August of 2015 - 6+ years ago, without underlying repair and improvement.

A number of more recent submissions of issues at the U School were marked on October 13, 2021 as having work orders created for plasterers and electricians: *Plasterers and the electricians are here at the U school also looking into the job and repairing it.*

The work will be critical, but it cannot be done as one-off jobs. A joint review and remediation plan is imperative. Without truly addressing the source of the issues (likely the deteriorated roof), any work completed will not be sustained.

Several of the older problems from U School are pictured below and exemplify the building-wide issues that should have triggered an immediate and joint assessment and remediation plan years ago.



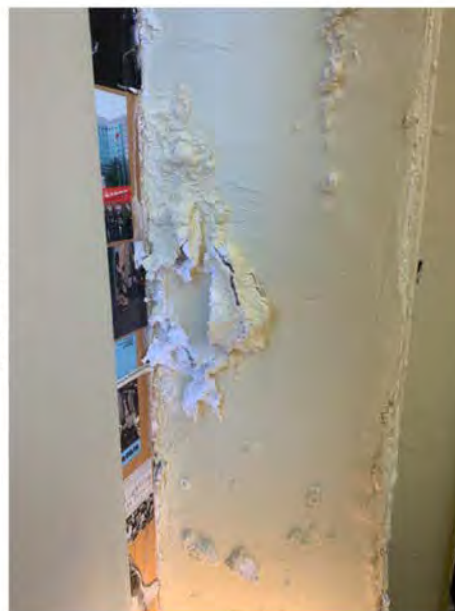
**Left: Room 304**

Submitted: October 7, 2019

Last update from District:

October 27, 2019- Work

order created for plasterers



**Right: Room 305**

Submitted: October 7, 2019

Last District Update: October 28,

2019- Work order created for  
plasterers



**Left: Room 300**

Submitted: October 2, 2019

Last District Update:

December 3, 2019- Work

order created for plasterers



**Right: 3rd Floor Hallway**

Submitted: October 1, 2019

Last District Update:

October 23, 2019- Work

order created for

plasterers

*Course of action for The U School and Furness High School: The examples at both The U School and Furness High School are emblematic of the urgent need for the implementation of joint inspections with the Federation and the District, along with the implementation of our agreed upon and past practices for asbestos, lead, and mold remediation. A comprehensive and jointly developed remediation plan must be implemented for both buildings. Those documents are included for your reference.*

**Baldi Middle School:** The ongoing mold issue at Baldi is particularly concerning, and we believe that it is likely present at a number of schools throughout the District. Despite recent repeated and thorough communications from the PFT to the District regarding our concerns at Baldi and elsewhere, and our proposed joint course of action, we have received no response other than minimal information via the App. Jerry Roseman has written a number of times to ensure that the previously in place mold protocols, including a joint assessment and plan for remediation, would be implemented, and he has been ignored. Those protocols are attached, and should be implemented.

The situation at Baldi is very serious and requires the isolation of areas that have not yet been remediated. An extensive joint inspection must occur. Despite District App reports that a walkthrough took place on September 23, 2021 and that a remediation plan is in place, we have zero understanding of the scale, scope, or source of the problem.

As such, we cannot trust that the remediation plan is comprehensive and will actually address the scope of the issue. Time and again, we have seen issues reoccur because of refusal to implement a plan addressing the underlying sources of issues. At Baldi, and all other schools facing similar issues, we must know whether the mold growth is due to deterioration of insulation, lack of insulation, or another cause. And this cannot be based on an assessment of one area over a damaged ceiling tile. Without a comprehensive remediation plan, this problem will persist.



**Above:** Outside Cafeteria Submitted: September 27, 2021  
Last District Update: October 13, 2021-  
Tile has been cut to remove mold, light is supported by rest of tile, if remaining tile is removed light will have to be disconnected

**Right: Orange Hallway**

Submitted: September 22, 2021

District Update-1: September 23, 2021- Steve Link just visited Baldi and walked the building with the BE. He identified the ceiling tile that was noted in the PFT app. This one ceiling tile will be sprayed with BNC 15 and then disposed. There may be an issue with a leaking pipe above this spot because there is water seeping through the insulation. A w/o for plumbing will be issued to investigate.. there is a lot of valves being replaced by maintenance and thus a lot of missing ceiling tiles throughout the space. The ceiling tiles will be replaced once the lines are reinstated.

District Update-2: October 1, 2021- Insulation contractor scheduled to have insulation replaced on many pipes that are sweating. Will start on Monday 10/4. Expected completion date is 10/13.



**Ben Franklin Elementary School:** We are equally concerned about recent reports of unremediated mold at Ben Franklin Elementary School. I draw your attention to a report received on October 8, 2021 of an urgent and persistent problem in Room 113, where the submitter noted: *The air conditioner system has not worked since school started. I have had extreme water drainage from the ceiling, requiring multiple buckets that have gotten filled to the top and overflowed. Drenched Ceiling tiles have fallen down.*



Ben Franklin Elementary School  
Room 113



The member notes that despite repeated clean-ups, the problem persists. There are a number of other mold concerns submitted at the school. This issue, pictured above, represents mold, asbestos, and lead concerns and rings alarms about possible school-wide contamination.

***Course of Action for Baldi, Franklin Elementary: As with Baldi Middle School, as with Frankford High School, as with Gompers Elementary School, and as with any location where mold is suspected or present, it is incumbent upon the District to engage in a good-faith partnership with the PFT to jointly assess and plan for remediation.***

### **Overall concerns:**

Again, I am reiterating our call to address the concerns outlined at the start of this letter, including but not limited to the following:

- Immediate access to buildings for Jerry Roseman and members of his team
- Addressing the chronic lapses in responses and remediation plans on the Healthy Schools Tracker App
- Utilizing, with fidelity, the policies and procedures outlined in the attached documents: asbestos best practices, jointly developed asbestos assessment procedures, mold remediation procedures, and the paint and plaster protocols, and Healthy Schools Tracker App protocols

- Implementing the recommended course of action outlined above for specific schools and situations, while noting that these situations exemplify district-wide concerns, and similar courses of action must take place anywhere problems are identified.

The issues I have outlined here have real, documented impacts on the health and safety of our students and staff.

Our team remains committed to ensuring that each and every student and staff member in our District has access to safe, healthy schools in which to learn. The issues I have outlined above are critical.

I want to highlight, as well, that in each of these schools, and in many others, a robust, coordinated and collaborative inspection, assessment and solution development process involving District managers and PFT, must immediately be put in place to effectively address environmental hazards and facility condition deficiencies.

It is deeply disturbing that our repeated efforts to work towards what should be this collective goal are ignored or rebuked. The protocols and practices outlined in the attached documents must be followed. While we continue our efforts to bring much needed resources to the District, the District must work on these desperately needed shifts in operational practices in order to keep our children and staff safe.

Sincerely,



Jerry T. Jordan

*Attachments*



**William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
440 North Broad Street, Suite 301  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
(215) 400-4100

October 20, 2021

Via E-mail: [REDACTED]  
Jerry T. Jordan, President  
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers  
1816 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

*J. Jordan  
Council 12.17.21  
Attachment 3 of 5*

Dear Mr. Jordan:

I am writing in response to your October 15 communication to address your concerns about the process of addressing environmental issues and to challenge your implication that the School District of Philadelphia is lacking urgency in addressing the most pressing concerns in our buildings.

We expect - and indeed our students, families and staff deserve – that we will be held to account for how to use our extremely limited resources to maintain hundreds of schools and buildings, dozens of which are more than 100 years old. We take reports of potential hazards seriously.

However, raising vague claims, creating duplicative work streams, and demanding the District conform to standards beyond regulatory and contractual specifications is not helpful to achieving safer schools nor to providing an accurate depiction of the effort being made.

**Let me be clear: the health and safety of students and staff is unequivocally our top priority.**

To address specific areas raised in your communication:

We prioritize responding to reports of alleged conditions that could cause immediate and substantial harm to students and staff. Coordination with a third-party's calendar would cause delay to the District's response to a potential health and safety concern. You seek to hold us accountable for not moving fast enough, yet when we act without deferring to Mr. Roseman's schedule, we are accused of bad faith. We must first act in the best interests of the students and staff, then turn to communicating the details of what we have found and what will be done.

The PFT's environmental consultant, like other third parties, does not have the authority to explore our buildings without coordination with the District. Mr. Roseman did not alert District staff ahead of his arrival at Frankford High School, and he was denied entry by the principal. However, Mr. Roseman has since been allowed into District buildings when he has coordinated the timing with the District. While Mr. Roseman is not a PFT employee, a licensed building inspector or an AHERA Project Designer, he is allowed to do joint walk-throughs when the District tours a site with contractors and conduct side-by-side testing after remediation of asbestos. Mr. Roseman must continue to coordinate in advance with District staff regarding access to District buildings. The District is developing specific protocols to guide this process.

I would also like to address the points you made regarding the Healthy Schools App. The Healthy Schools App is not the District's database for managing reports of facilities issues. Reporting through that platform creates additional delay in the process of addressing the issues reported because we understand that the PFT vets the reports submitted to the App before providing the information to the District. If PFT wants to encourage timely reporting and remediation of such issues, they should recommend their members contact Building Engineers at the schools to address identified issues and to enter work orders in the District's MOJO system, as appropriate. PFT could then use the Healthy Schools App to maintain their own records to track the District's progress.

However, since PFT has been unwilling to do this, and because the District takes reports of potential hazards seriously, the District has agreed to accept reports from the Healthy Schools App. The District has assigned a person in our Facilities department to track these reports, confirm they are being incorporated into the District's MOJO system, and report back on progress.

Although the PFT assigns priorities and timelines for response to issues reported through the App, the PFT has no way of knowing whether those issues are, in fact, the most urgent priorities across all of the District's facilities. That is the determination of the District.

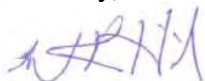
To briefly address the specific schools, you cited:

- Wright: The District has determined what it believes to be the underlying source of the leak and is working to address the issue.
- Furness: The District will be able to address the vast majority of work orders through a paint and plaster project, which is scheduled for board approval this month.
- U School Room 305: The concrete repair has been completed and the roofing repairs above the area will be completed this evening. Plaster paint repair will start tomorrow, October 21. Students do not have access to this space.
- Baldi: The mold, as you know, already has been addressed. Work has begun regarding the insulation and is in progress.
- Franklin Elementary: This is in review; PFT indicated this issue occurred on October 8, 2021, but the District was made aware of this issue on October 15, 2021.

We all are working toward the same goal: achieving and maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for all students and staff in all of our buildings. We appreciate your partnership to move forward on a constructive basis to help us achieve regulatory standards, not compel us to conform to outside mandates that can exacerbate the disparities or challenges we already experience in our District.

Please feel free to reach out to discuss.

Sincerely,



William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.

WRH/dpw

c: Alicia Prince, Chief of Staff  
Reggie McNeil, Chief Operating Officer



J. Jordan  
Council 12.17.21  
Attachment 4 of 5

November 2, 2021

Via electronic transmission

Dear Dr. Hite,

As members of the Fund our Facilities Coalition, we remain deeply committed to the fight for healthy and safe school facilities. Our Coalition came together in 2019 to identify real, workable solutions to the District's ongoing facilities crisis. We have relentlessly advocated for funding from every level of government, and we will continue to do so. **Our advocacy has yielded millions of dollars in increased funding for facilities remediation, and we have much work ahead in securing the urgently needed funding to address the ongoing crisis of lead, asbestos, mold, and other environmental hazards.**

Part of the work we continue to do as a coalition is to also identify process-based issues that need to be addressed. We work closely with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the founders of the Coalition, and we have found that the information that we receive from the PFT regarding facilities to be honest, detailed, and logical. **Unfortunately, with the District's refusal to engage in a good-faith partnership with the PFT in order to address the facilities crisis, far too much effort has been put into just securing the basic information about the infrastructure needs of our schools.**

We are particularly discouraged by the District's ongoing refusal to partner with PFTHW's Director of Environmental Science Jerry Roseman in coordinating school visits and evaluations along with providing the appropriate data. Further, we are discouraged that the **District continues to refuse to implement protocols that have been in place for years** (some of which were jointly developed by the District and Union). We also understand that the Union has put forth additional proposals around issues such as asbestos best practices, and the District has declined to adopt these protocols.

The PFT has provided a series of recommendations regarding overall practices, and has also provided a series of recommendations and in depth reports with regards to specific schools. The fact that these recommendations have not only gone unheeded, but in fact have often gone ignored, is simply

unacceptable. We found the October 20th response you provided to the PFT's October 15th letter to be wholly inadequate. The issues they raised were not addressed substantively, and in fact some of the responses were either false or misleading.

- For example, while you note that the District conforms to "standards beyond regulatory and contractual specifications," this is at the very least misleading — the District is not even following its own internal standards, nor do they follow the practices that have been in place for decades.
- Additionally, it is disingenuous to claim that the District makes a substantive attempt to coordinate any environmental assessment scheduling with the Union when in fact the District does not even notify the Union any longer about when they are planning to visit a school or where they are going. The attempt to blame the lack of shared information on a scheduling issue is offensive.
- In addition, we are compelled to respond to your comments about Jerry Roseman's qualifications to do this work. Just for context and comparative purpose, neither the OEMS Director, Stephen Link, nor the OEMS Environmental Compliance Manager, Kevin Meldrum, nor the OEMS Environmental Compliance Manager, Gaeton Tavella, is listed on the City of Philadelphia Air Management Services, Asbestos Control Division's 2021-2022 list of Certified Asbestos Project Inspectors or the 2021-2022 list of Certified Asbestos Project Investigators. Additionally, none of the 3 OEMS managers appear on the State of PA list of certified "Asbestos Project Designers."
- There are other factual inaccuracies, too. For example, the problem referenced at Ben Franklin Elementary was reported at 5:30 PM on a Friday, October 8 and was accepted by the Union on Monday morning. From that point on, 9:57 AM on October 11, the District had access.

In addition, the PFT raised specific examples of extremely hazardous conditions in schools as exemplary of a District-wide crisis. **The responses to these specific scenarios provided little substance as to how the urgent hazards will be addressed.**

In a subsequent visit to Richard Wright following the issues raised in the letter, the PFT provided the District with a detailed feedback report regarding urgent action items, including rooms that should be immediately unoccupied. To our knowledge, no response has been received, and the rooms remain occupied.

We are thrilled that Furness appears to be on the brink of some progress towards remediation. But we have been raising concerns about Furness for years. And we are still left with students learning, and staff working, in absolutely unconscionable conditions. **We need specifics about the remediation plan for the school, and we need an accelerated timeline and action plan that is clear and publicly available.**

The issues at the U School, too, have been reported for years. It is absolutely unacceptable that the District stated in the media that the District was unaware of any issues at the school until a partial ceiling collapse. **This is untrue and disturbing.**

**We share the PFT's unanswered questions regarding Baldi Middle School, Frankford High School, Masterman, Heston, and many other buildings.**

**We reiterate the PFT's demands in their October letter:**

- Immediate access to buildings for Jerry Roseman and members of his team
- Addressing the chronic lapses in responses and remediation plans on the Healthy Schools Tracker App
- Utilizing, with fidelity, the policies and procedures outlined in the attached documents: asbestos best practices, jointly developed asbestos assessment procedures, mold remediation procedures, paint and plaster protocols, and Healthy Schools Tracker App protocols
- Implementing the recommended course of action outlined above for specific schools and situations, while noting that these situations exemplify district-wide concerns, and similar courses of action must take place anywhere problems are identified.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing lack of transparency and accountability related to the facilities crisis. If it were not for the work of the PFT, many of these issues would remain hidden from the general public.

Our coalition will continue to advocate for the urgently needed funding to provide our students and staff with the schools they so richly need and deserve. We will also continue to draw attention to the extraordinary process-based problems we observe, and we call on you to implement the protocols provided by the PFT. Our Coalition is committed to this work, and we are committed to doing all we can to advocate for the healthy and safe schools our children and staff deserve.

We would be happy to meet with you to further discuss.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Members and Supporters of the Fund Our Facilities Coalition

*Damon Allen*

Damon Allen, SEIU Local 668

*Rick Bloomingdale*

Rick Bloomingdale, President, Pennsylvania AFL-CIO



Donna Bullock, State Representative, HD195



Kendra Brooks, Councilmember at Large



Morgan Cephas, State Representative, HD192

*Thelma Clements*

Thelma Clements, APRI Philadelphia Chapter



Patrick J. Eiding, President, Philadelphia Council  
AFL-CIO



Elizabeth Fiedler, State Representative, HD184



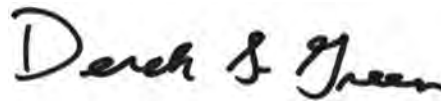
Nicole Fuller, Executive Director, PhilaPOSH



Jamie Gauthier, Councilmember, 3rd District



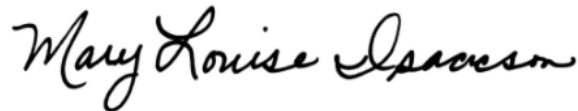
Katherine Gilmore Richardson, Councilmember at  
Large



Derek S. Green, Councilmember at Large



Helen Gym, Councilmember at Large



Mary Isaacson, State Representative, HD175

*Arthur Haywood*

Arthur Haywood, State Senator, SD4



Joseph C. Hohenstein, State Representative, HD177



Rick Krajewski, State Representative, HD188



Vincent Hughes, State Senator, SD7

*Larry Krasner*

Larry Krasner, District Attorney, Philadelphia



Jerry T. Jordan, President, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers



Leanne Krueger, State Representative, HD161

*John Kane*

John Kane, State Senator, SD9

*Maureen May*

President, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals



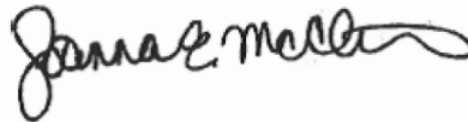
Tim Kearney, State Senator, SD26



Ashley McBride, Executive Director, For Our Future PA Action Fund



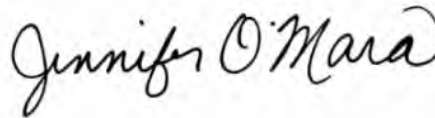
Malcolm Kenyatta, State Representative, HD181



Leader Joanna McClinton, State Representative, HD191, Minority Leader



Stephen Kinsey, State Representative, HD201



Jennifer O'Mara, State Representative, HD165



Cherelle Parker, Council Member, 9th District, Majority Leader

*Darisha Parker*

Darisha Parker, State Representative, HD198



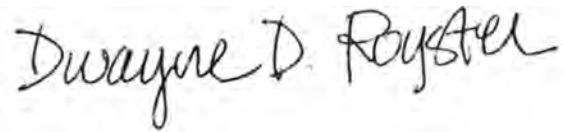
Rebecca Rhynhart, City Controller, Philadelphia

*Chris Rabb*

Chris Rabb, State Representative, HD200

*Eric Rosso*

Eric Rosso, Executive Director, PA Spotlight



Bishop Dwayne Royster, Executive Director, POWER



Nikil Saval, State Senator, SD1



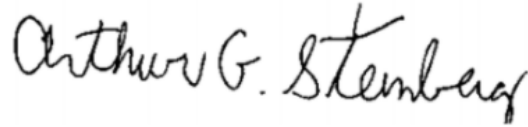
Brian Sims, State Representative, HD181

*Frank Snyder*

Frank Snyder, Secretary-Treasurer, Pennsylvania  
AFL-CIO



Natalie Sowinski, Working Families Partnership



Arthur G. Steinberg, President, AFT Pennsylvania

*Sharif Street*

Sharif Street, State Senator, SD3



Mark Squilla, Councilmember, 1st District



Christine M. Tartaglione, State Senator, SD2



Isaiah Thomas, Councilmember at Large

*Tom Tosti*

Tom Tosti, Director, AFSCME District Council 88

*Randi Weingarten*

Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of  
Teachers

*Mike Zabel*

Mike Zabel, State Representative, HD163



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
440 North Broad Street, Suite 301  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
(215) 400-4100

November 9, 2021

*J. Jordan  
Council 12.17.21  
Attachment 5 of 5*

Dear Members and Supporters of the Fund Our Facilities Coalition,

As I write in response to your November 2 correspondence, I feel compelled to first offer this reminder, which can too often be lost in rhetoric and the passion of our own convictions: All of us – the District staff, parent advocates, elected officials – are working toward the same goal. Every one of us wants every District building to be a safe and welcoming environment for our students and staff. Antagonism and accusations do not move us closer together toward that goal.

Our District, quite simply, cannot meet every need that it has with our current funding, yet we work every day toward achieving and sustaining compliance with the federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (“AHERA”) and City regulations. The persistent advocacy of the Fund Our Facilities Coalition is essential, and we remain grateful for it. The simple truth is that without additional sustained sources of funding, the District will continue to be unable to achieve everything we need for our children and our schools.

But we can, and indeed are, making improvements each day. And we are committed to working collaboratively with all our stakeholders toward the clear goal of meeting and sustaining compliance, even amid our funding challenges.

What we cannot do, and what thwarts progress, is forcing additional work streams that go far beyond what is prescribed by law and regulation and take us away from what is essential and required. Given our stark budget reality, accommodating selective requests will simply result in a denial to others. This is our reality, and these are the trade-offs that we must live with given our current funding.

We know that as a District we must strive to increase public trust and demonstrate consistent accountability; however, this should be achieved through equitable means and channels that lead us directly toward our shared goal.

As we said in our response to Philadelphia Federation of Teachers President Jerry Jordan on October 20, yet was mischaracterized in your letter by removing the context:

“We expect – and indeed our students, families and staff deserve – that we will be held to account for how to use our extremely limited resources to maintain hundreds of schools and buildings, dozens of which are more than 100 years old. We take reports of potential hazards seriously.

“However, raising vague claims, creating duplicative work streams, and **demanding the District conform to standards beyond regulatory and contractual specifications** is not helpful to achieving safer schools nor to providing an accurate depiction of the effort being made.”

Due to decades of underfunding, and despite the recent influx of federal funds, our facilities continue to face supply chain as well as District, City, and contractor labor capacity challenges. We are therefore appropriately focused on the regulatory requirements of the federal AHERA and the City’s Asbestos Control Regulations (“ACR”). Having an undefined, vague or fluctuating standard such as “best practices” creates significant confusion.

We understand why the notion of “best practices” can be appealing. However, adding undefined and potentially conflicting abatement obligations on a severely resource-constrained District will make it harder to manage asbestos and meet the existing regulatory obligations.

The District is working to improve the management of asbestos, abatement, aided by funding from the University of Pennsylvania and additional funding that District and advocates like the Coalition continue to seek. In fact, since summer 2020, we have done asbestos abatement work in 214 school buildings. Fundamental to our approach is a resolve that the District continue to focus on implementation of the requirements in AHERA and the ACR, which will inevitably result in better health and safety outcomes.

We understand the faith you have placed in PFT’s environmental consultant to raise public concerns and awareness. We have been working regularly with Jerry Roseman, who has toured several schools recently, despite your suggestion that we are not consistently permitting access. Mr. Roseman has been and will continue to be allowed to do joint walk-throughs when the District tours a site with contractors and conduct side-by-side testing after remediation of asbestos. However, it is important to note there may be instances when our clear responsibility is to be responsive to urgent issues, not to first coordinate with a third-party schedule.

Mr. Roseman, like other third parties, does not have the authority to explore school buildings without coordination with the District. We are working to develop a clear protocol around the work of third parties, including Mr. Roseman, so we can have clarity among all parties moving forward. The District also shares substantial information with Mr. Roseman via email, including information about scheduling of projects, project design, and sampling results where Mr. Roseman has indicated an interest in a project the District is undertaking.

Your remark about the certifications of OEMS leaders is correct. While the Director of OEMS is a Licensed Asbestos Project Supervisor, OEMS leaders are not listed as certified asbestos investigators; that is not their job. This is precisely why the District employs third-party, independent, certified, and licensed asbestos investigators and management planners to do this work.

We can provide this further update from the specific schools you cited:

- **Wright:** The District has determined what it believes to be the underlying source of the leak and is working to address the issue. Our industrial hygienist inspected the conditions on several separate occasions. On October 18, 2021 she went to Room 215 to investigate musty odors. She discovered carpet that was wet and instructed the Building Engineer to dispose of it and he did. Mr. Roseman then viewed Room 215 a few days later and, contrary to District permissions, he removed ceiling tile and purportedly discovered mold. Thereafter, our industrial hygienist performed a comprehensive evaluation of Room 215 when occupants were not in the building. She removed ceiling tiles and discovered minor leaks and mold on fiberglass insulation on the first floor (there was nothing on the second floor). The evaluation was completed on October 29, 2021 and the report is forthcoming. The fiberglass will be cleaned of mold as soon as possible. The fiberglass will be removed/replaced in an upcoming capital project to update the HVAC system.
- **Furness:** The District will be able to address the vast majority of work orders through a paint and plaster project, which was just approved at the October board meeting.
- **U School:** The District has made it clear that the conditions are of concern to us and will be addressed.
- **Baldi:** The District does not believe that there are currently unanswered questions about Baldi.
- **Frankford:** Mold remediation activities began on September 20, 2021, and were completed on October 1, 2021. As a preventive measure for future mold growth, we conducted an environmental survey of all spaces in preparation for adding the appropriate ventilation. An environmental plan has been designed, and a contractor has been selected. The District will take approximately three weeks to complete the environmental project. After the environmental plan is successfully completed, we will move into the second phase which is the installation of ventilation equipment. The District received a proposal that includes replacing the chiller, four uni-vents, control work, two air handling units, related piping, and pipe insulation. All of this combined will address the recurring mold issues for the Instructional Media Center (IMC), music suite, and main office. The District anticipates this work being completed by the end of this calendar year.
- **Masterman:** Mr. Roseman's report on Masterman did not conclude that there was damaged asbestos material observed in the school. The District cannot agree that further evaluation is appropriate when there is no specific identified risk to address. Since the District's response to this report, additional asbestos insulation, in good condition, was removed from room 14 on November 4, 2021, in order to replace a pipe.
- **Heston:** The loose floor tiles in rooms 112 and 114 have been removed and new floor tiles have been installed.

Regarding the Healthy Schools App, we would reiterate that this app is not the District's database for managing reports of facility issues. Reporting through the PFT's preferred platform can create

an additional delay, and sometimes confusion, in the process of addressing the issues reported because the PFT takes time to vet the reports before providing the information to us. If the PFT wants to encourage timely reporting and remediation of such issues, it should recommend members immediately contact Building Engineers at the schools to address identified issues and to enter work orders in the District's MOJO system, as appropriate. PFT could then use the Healthy Schools App to maintain their own records to track the District's progress.

However, since the PFT has been unwilling to do this, and because the District takes reports of potential hazards seriously, the District has agreed to accept reports from the Healthy Schools App. The District has assigned a person with a full-time position managing the MOJO system to also monitor the Healthy Schools App, and to confirm the Healthy Schools App reports are being incorporated into the District's MOJO system, and report back on progress.

Although the PFT assigns priorities and timelines for response to issues reported through the App, the PFT does so without knowing whether those issues are, in fact, the most urgent priorities across all of the District's facilities. That is the determination of the District.

I will end where I began: We are all working toward the same goal. We welcome and indeed need your partnership and advocacy moving forward, not demands unrooted in law or regulation that will further exacerbate the financial challenges, resource deficiencies and disparities we are already enduring.

It is my sincere hope that you can remain in fruitful and productive conversation with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William R. Hite, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.

WRH/dpw