

**Testimony on Behalf of PROP 100%**  
By Jack Koczela  
**PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE**  
**BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON**  
**PROGRESS IN MODERNIZING AND IMPROVING**  
**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SCHOOL FACILITIES**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2008, 10:00 A.M.**  
**JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING, ROOM 123**  
**1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Council, my name is Jack Koczela. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of *PROP 100% (Pledge to Rebuild Our Public Schools 100%)*. Although I also serve as chairman of the Wilson Management Corporation, the timing of the announcement of this roundtable did not permit us adequate opportunity to vet a statement with our Board. We understand that the hearing today is to provide, among several specific items, a forum for a general examination of the progress in modernizing and improving DC school facilities.

Let me say on behalf of *PROP 100%* that we believe substantial improvements have been made over the past months since Allen Lew took over school modernization efforts and the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization was formed. We continue to believe that even better and timelier improvements could be made to all schools if the OPEFM was formally established as an independent authority, rather than as a unit within the executive branch of our government. We have previously offered extensive testimony on many occasions regarding this proposal and still believe you should make this final “tweak” to the original enabling legislation.

Whether you choose to give OPEFM independence or not—and *PROP 100%* believes you should—we would also recommend that you raise to at least \$2.5 million, preferably \$5 million, the level of contracts subject to your approval. We believe that the present \$1 million threshold is simply too low, and too cumbersome for OPEFM to operate as efficiently as the convention center and stadium construction efforts did, and we believe those are the standards our City is looking for with respect to school construction completions. Critics will say that more people need to be involved in letting contracts and making decisions on construction and so forth, but that is the old slow, failing way of doing things. *PROP 100%* is interested in outcomes, not long drawn out processes that often are designed only to protect the status quo. We believe OPEFM is finally breaking down some of the barriers of the past.

Specifically, at Wilson High School, I can report that virtually all of the small OPEFM projects are being handled well, and that the major projects that were undertaken last summer we completed before the start of school. Wilson now has working window A/C units in every classroom. A contract has been let for a leaky roof around the cupola, which should finally make Wilson water tight, something it has not been for years. We still have issues with the way custodial services and small ticket items are being handled, but as that was not part of the original OPEFM charge, we believe that topic should be addressed at a different hearing. And of course, at Wilson, the community is concerned that its schedule for commencing A&E design work in FY 09 and construction in FY10 not be jeopardized or changed from the last comprehensive CIP.

We would encourage the Council to demand of OPEFM full accounting for the expenditure of the roughly \$500 million spent over the past year, on a project-by-project basis. Without project

accounting in hand, the Council simply cannot do its job and report to its constituents. We are certain that OPEFM can provide you with figures, something OFM could not.

Since the MFP has not been produced yet, it is difficult to testify about a future plan based on conjecture. Nevertheless, we remain supportive of OPEFM and allowing them to finalize their new plan, as long as the Council and Mayor continue to fully fund the modernization program as originally envisioned with Bill 16-250. If you allow funds from the \$2.1 billion to be used for the crash “buff and scrub” programs or for providing adequate heating and air conditioning to all schools, and any other short term maintenance needs, without “refilling the pot,” you will not be funding modernizations, only band aides on the crumbling buildings. Rest assured that every child in DCPS is entitled to safe, secure and healthy school environments; but once again, do not sacrifice long-term modern schools by failing to fund necessary short-term improvements from other sources. And do not be trapped by past underestimates of construction costs from incompetent OFM staff or simply from dated estimates that do not reflect the reality of true and accurate cost estimates being produced by OPEFM today.

In addition, we ask the Council to not fall into the trap of thinking that the City cannot afford to continue to modernize *all* of the schools in its portfolio now. We are sure you will hear that mantra from the City CFO before long. Instead, think of what the City can’t afford if it *doesn’t* modernize each and every school within the next ten years? Can you honestly tell a child entering DCPS today that he/she might not attend a modernized school during his/her total 13 years in the system? And don’t let anyone talk the Council or OPEFM into compromising on quality. We need our portfolio to last another 75 years or more and the only way to do that is to guaranty that every school is modernized to the highest, state of the art standards.

We also understand the Council is reviewing various modernization contracts today, contracts that have to do with repairs to “receiving schools” that are part of the portfolio consolidation process. It would seem that such work as proposed by OPEFM would be necessary in order to prepare those schools for this fall. Our only concern would be—and the Council should satisfy itself—that the work proposed is indeed “more necessary” than modernization work promised to other schools that held priority positions in the queue. Simply being a “receiving school” should not necessarily trump modernization needs of other schools. If OPEFM can provide you with satisfactory justification, we would encourage you to quickly approve their plan on these contracts. But make sure that the \$50 odd million for these schools is consistent with original promises made to all schools across the city.

We thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and look forward to the public review processes promised by OPEFM as soon as the draft MFP becomes available.