DC Council Committee on Education Hearing Monday, July 11, 2016, 1:00 p.m., Room 412

B21-777- "Planning Actively for Comprehensive Education Facilities Amendment Act of 2016" 21st Century School Fund Testimony, Nancy Huvendick

My name is Nancy Huvendick, I am DC Program Director for the 21st Century School Fund, a small DC non-profit that has worked over 20 years to foster the public will and capacity for school facilities that support a rich curriculum and promote civic and neighborhood vitality.

Over the past seventeen years a huge amount has been accomplished in modernizing DCPS school facilities. But in comparing our fully modernized DCPS schools to the schools yet to be modernized and the partial modernizations we agree that we need better and more equitable planning and budgeting. And in a city with so many students in the charter sector, the District also has to grapple with cross-sector, comprehensive school facility planning. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Education Committee and its willingness to tackle these issues.

Consequently, we support the proposed legislation because it addresses many of the current problems but we believe that the legislation can be even more effective if it is expanded in some respects and limited in others.

- 1. Changing the Master Facilities Plan from a 5 year to a 10-year is sensible. But the concern is that a 10-year plan has to be extremely thorough, particularly with only one Council hearing required. More specificity about how the process will include thorough coordination with the office of planning and about outreach and community input would help.
- 2. While the mayor may submit changes for council review with each annual CIP recommendation, there should be a provision requiring public hearings on any changes over a certain amount (\$1,000,000?), or a certain length of time (six months?). In the past, for instance, whole modernization projects have been dropped or substantially postponed with no notice at all to the communities affected and this has been very detrimental to the MFP's credibility.
- 3. The legislation includes the need for data collection for the MFP for the charter facilities along with the DCPS facilities. This is so fundamental to planning for our two-sector system that it should be more explicit.
 - With the annual condition assessment for public school facilities the legislation should be clear that assessments are by means of a standard review by DGS. The city needs objective, comparable, and consistent information on each of the facilities that house public school students in both sectors in order to meet its responsibilities for planning and budgeting for those buildings.
 - In detailing the collection of capacity and utilization data for the Master Facilities Plan, the legislation should specifically state that the data collected and recommendations made for consolidation, closure, co-location, etc., are for both sectors, except in the case of attendance zone boundaries which apply only to DCPS.
 - Similarly, updated information on enrollment projections, facility needs, utilization rates and the primary use of each LEA's buildings (classroom instruction, swing space,

administrative purposes, etc.) should clearly apply to DCPS and charter schools. Further, rather than be specified as to "primary" use, the legislation should call for reporting of an estimated percentage of use.

- 4. Funding for the Deputy Mayor of Education to staff the Office of Public Education Facilities Planning and for DCPS and the Public Charter School Board to support capital planning should be increased. Costs for proper planning will save tax dollars in the long run with better planned and better maintained facilities. This in itself will help support a thorough process in developing the 10-year Master Facilities Plan.
- 5. In the section on the development of the Capital Improvement Plan for DCPS, not only the name, address and ward of each project should be required, but also the gross square footage of the building (with the gross square footage of any structured parking indicated separately). The acreage of the grounds should be included as well. With all the modernization of buildings over the past decade, the size of the buildings has changed with each addition or covered atrium. But decades-old square footage is frequently reported and this has led to much confusion and some un-fair decisions. This information should be required of the charters as well.
- 6. With the criteria for prioritizing modernizations, we fully understand the desire to require objectivity because over the past decade it has become clear that modernized school buildings have been built first in areas of the city where political access is greatest, where children are least needy and where the economic assets that come with a new civic buildings are least needed.

But legislating such *specific* criteria risks having the criteria ignored or manipulated in future years and it may inadvertently hold back worthy projects for un-foreseen reasons. Hopefully, the list of other factors to consider will provide sufficient flexibility.

However, if there is to be a matrix of required criteria then we propose one that is focused first on the condition and utilization of the buildings with equity as a tie-breaker so that high-needs communities are served first. We propose that the following matrix be considered.

Base Category	Base Category Weighting	Subcategory Definition	Subcategory Weighting
Building Need	0.55	Date and type of last major construction or age of component/systems.	0.15
Building Need		Evaluation of the school facility, component or system condition based on the annual survey completed by the Department of General Services	0.25
Building Need		Expenditures for modernizations and capital improvements for Fiscal Year 1998-through the preceding fiscal year per square feet of the school facility	0.15

Community Need	0.15	The number of in-boundary age-appropriate school age children living within the zone as compared to facility capacity, or without an elementary school within half-a-mile.	0.1
Community Need		Percent change and number of projected age- appropriate children living in the attendance zone and/or neighborhood cluster over a 6-year time period	0.05
Demand	0.1	Ratio of age appropriate students with the right to attend compared to the number of age-appropriate students who do attend.	0.05
Demand		Average percent of facility's building utilization over the past five school years	0.05
Equity	0.2	Total number of modernized square feet in the school's feeder pattern divided by total square footage of the feeder pattern	0.1
Equity		At-risk enrollment numbers based on the current school year enrollment project	0.1

Thanks to the Committee for this important work and the opportunity to weigh in on the legislation.

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