

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”
Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators
Cathy Reilly

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We fully support the need for comprehensive planning through a 10 year master plan updated every two years and a Capital Improvement Plan with clear requirements for capital spending every 6 years.

We fully support the requirement of each charter LEA and DCPS to submit full information on their projected enrollment and specific facility needs as outlined, with the adjustments recommended by the 21st Century School Fund.ⁱ The Master Plan is to be a citywide public education facilities plan. Many in the charter sector have advocated strongly for an increase in their facility allowance. Having a master plan that looks at the information from the Office of Planning on population along with the detailed information from each school site will allow our city to more effectively and efficiently spend its dollars. It will be easier to ascertain whether additional schools or more funding will be needed.

The specific recommendations made in the Master Facility Plan should include recommended school openings and also a cap on any school openings if this is what the planning process calls for. The recommendations should be informed by the city’s basic responsibility to provide a by-right option within the appropriate distanceⁱⁱ for each grade level for the families of the District of Columbia. The charter sector has no obligation to continue operating their public schools into the future. They may close them at any time. This remains the obligation of DCPS. Maintaining a publicly owned infrastructure as well as acknowledging the needs in our current charter and DCPS system is part of the challenge of writing a facilities master plan for the District of Columbia.

We appreciate the specificity required for engaging the public in the master plan as noted in (b)(2)(H)ⁱⁱⁱ. The same process should be required if the Mayor proposes changes to the Master Plan along with the requirement for a public hearing. Many states and districts require a citizen partner or planning advisory committee. We believe this should be seriously considered. This was part of the original School Reform Act but was never staffed or utilized. Understanding what went wrong there and addressing its shortcomings should provide for a better planning process and ultimately a plan the public will embrace.

We support the need for a requirement of clear criteria to support the designations in the CIP for DCPS. We are less clear that this chart will accomplish that, especially going forward. Some capital funds will need to be spent to maintain the modernizations the city has invested in, they will be smaller projects but may fall off this chart. The 21st Century School Fund has proposed another option. We feel more work will need to be done on this section, looking at drafts of

what the CIP might look like under different scenarios to see if it actually passes a common sense fairness test.

In closing, thank you again for all the effort that has gone into this legislation to date.

ⁱ 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 spell out 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 likewise 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.

ⁱⁱ Walkable elementary schools are within a half mile. We do not provide buses so this is vital

ⁱⁱⁱ **H)** A communications and community involvement plan for each geographic planning area that includes engagement of key stakeholders throughout the community, including but not limited to:

(i) Advisory Neighborhood Commissions;

(ii) Local school restructuring teams;

(iii) School improvement teams; and

(iv) Ward and city-wide based volunteer civic groups.