

DCPS Budget Hearing – FY09, Thursday, November 15, 2007
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Good evening, Chancellor Rhee. Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about the budget you are preparing for next year, and thank you for all your hard work for the District's children. My name is Marc Borbely. I run a website, FixOurSchools.net, which focuses on the repairs needed in our school buildings. I am a law student at UDC, a former DCPS high school teacher, and a former ANC Commissioner on Capitol Hill. I hope to have children, and hope they will attend DCPS.

I have two requests: 1) Ask for what our schools need now; and 2) Move money to the schools.

1. Ask for What Our Schools Need Now

Plan for 10 years from now, but budget for next year. Past superintendents and school boards have refused to ask for the money our schools needed because they were afraid of losing their jobs, or because they thought they could get by with less, maybe by eliminating the waste and mismanagement. Please, do not make these same mistakes.

First, do not put your career ahead of our children. You have a lot of political strength right now. We are counting on you to use it. You have said repeatedly that the Mayor has promised to give you whatever you need. SO ASK, and ask publicly. Make the Mayor and the Council, who are the ones who have to weigh our city's priorities, be the ones to say no, not you. Your priority is simple: DCPS. Second, don't think you can see immediate, major cost savings by eliminating waste. It will take some time. In the meantime, if there's waste, it's not the children's fault, and they shouldn't have to pay. They need what they need, no matter what it costs.

You have an awesome responsibility: to prepare a budget that provides the necessary resources NEXT YEAR. It will be YOUR signature on the budget request you send to the Mayor. Make sure after you sign it you can still look kids and parents in the face and honestly say you've done EVERYTHING YOU CAN to get them what they need. Don't collude with the Mayor and Council in depriving our schools of what they need.

2. Move Money to the Schools

Continue to move administrative office out of this building, for which you are paying a lot in rent, and into vacant schools.

Also, when you're looking to cut something, please look to cut your own \$275,000 salary first. Even half of that would go a long way for lots of kids, and the message of commitment it would send would be powerful. With 10 of you in the transition team earning high salaries, the money adds up quickly. Tell the Mayor and Council your budget will fund kids first.

Thank you for your attention.