

**Testimony
of
John Woodall
Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 730
Thursday, November 15, 2007**

Good evening Chancellor Rhee. I would like to thank you for holding this important hearing on the D.C. Public Schools budget.

My union represents boiler plant operators and some of the skilled trades repair workers. My members are responsible for keeping school buildings warm, cool and safe. However, over past few years, my members have not been able to effectively do their jobs because of being short staff and not having proper equipment and supplies.

Let me take a moment to relate a real incident that clearly shows how bad things had gotten. One of my members, who was the head engineer or boiler plant operator at one of the city's largest high schools, had been struggling for over a year to get DCPS to purchase a valve that would allow him to bring one of his three boiler on line. The engineer told his story at a school board meeting. Parents and others in the audience were so moved by the engineer's concern for the students that they passed the hat during the school board meeting and collected enough to cover the cost of purchasing the valve that the engineer needed. The money was presented to the President of the board of education, who refused to accept it. However, the board ordered DCPS facilities to get the valve and within a few days it was installed and the boiler was operational.

We are not here today to ask the public to pass the hat for DCPS. Today is a new day when it comes to funding DCPS. We are here today to urge you as you prepare the DCPS budget to include enough funding to ensure that schools are adequately staffed and that my members have what they need to do their jobs.

In addition, we want fund set aside for additional on-the-job training so that our current workforce of boiler plant operators are able to make a seamless transition into the modernized and newly constructed school buildings that are outlined in the master facilities plan.

We have been told that the boilers in all of our schools are up and running. If that is true it is a step in the right direction. However, the effort to improve facilities in DCPS can not end there. We must have:

- Funding for regular preventive maintenance on school heating and cooling systems
- Funding to ensure the on time delivery of water treatment chemical to prevent continuing damage to existing and new heating systems.
- Funding to fully staff boiler plant operators positions so that we can reduce the number of roving engineer positions and reduce the number of schools each roving engineer is required to cover.
- Funding to provide a full compliment of repair workers to help drastically reduced the current backlog of repair work order and to perform repairs before they expand into larger more expensive problems.

Local 730 members take pride in the work they perform in DCPS. They are concerned about the health and safety of both students and staff. The sight of students sitting in their classrooms bundled in winter coats because of a lack of heat due to faulty boilers hurts my members deeply. Their hurt is deepened by the fact that many of the problems causing boiler failures could have been solved if my members had the supplies, equipment and time to make the repairs.

That is why we appeal to you Chancellor Rhee to take a bold step and increase the school system's operations budget by at least 100 percent. While this sounds like a lot of money, it is really only the first steps to make up for budget cuts that have ripped the heart out of the DCPS facilities department over the past few years. Such an increase will give the school system a solid foundation to build on for the years to come.

In closing, we ask you to simply let our members do the work that they are trained to do. Give us the staff, equipment and supplies we need and we will show what we can do. These men and women have helped to hold the school system's crumbling buildings together for the past ten to 20 years. Let's start a new era by fully funding and fully staffing all the positions in the facilities department and provide supplies and equipment.

Thank for your time and we hope that you will immediately move to increase the operations budget.