

**Testimony for the DC Council 9/27/02 Public Hearing on the DC FY 2003 Budget
Submitted by Jordan Spooner, Director for DC Programs, 21st Century School Fund**

First, as a member of the Fair Budget Coalition, the 21st Century School Fund supports a balanced approach to the District's fiscal crisis. This city's poorer residents can least afford the impacts of cuts to education and social services, and thus they need to be the most protected. We are particularly concerned about negative impacts on the District's public school facilities; specifically on the Capital Improvement Program in place, and on daily maintenance and repair.

We believe that the DCPS Capital Improvement Program is already in serious jeopardy of not meeting its long-term goals, for a couple of budget reasons. For one, some of the projects underway are already over-budget. For another, in FY02 the Capital Improvement Program effectively lost \$15M due to a transfer of technology system payments from operating to capital, and we have heard that this transfer is being considered again for \$8.4M as a way to save operating money in FY03. While the DCPS Administration testified last week that this type of transfer has no effect on the out-year capital projects, we definitely dispute that. The Capital Improvement Program budget needs to be protected.

Also, the maintenance and repair portion of the DCPS operating budget has already suffered severe cuts in recent years, and more budget pressures on the school system will almost certainly reduce this function even further. Poor maintenance and repair over the years is one of the reasons we desperately need the Capital Improvement Program, and continued under-funding of daily maintenance will only continue this vicious cycle!

We believe the bottom-line is this: Beginning now and into the upcoming year it is critical that you, as elected leaders of our city, step forward and commit to fixing our crumbling public school buildings by focusing on immediate and long-term funding, and also proper oversight. Our students, teachers, and other school-based staff deserve nothing less!