

Testimony of Mary Filardo, Executive Director, 21st Century School Fund

Good evening. I am Mary Filardo, executive director of the 21st Century School Fund. I am here tonight to beg that the District not lose heart in the funding of the capital improvement program for comprehensive modernization of the District of Columbia Public Schools.

Building improvements to our public schools are still urgently needed and long overdue. The District must maintain its public school buildings in good repair. Public schools should be an asset to the communities in which they are located; and they must be able to support good educational practice, if we are to retain and attract high quality work from our students and teachers.

While we, at the 21st Century School Fund, are not satisfied that the DCPS has the planning or management of its facilities under control, progress is being made and in the testimony offered by my colleagues, you will see that there are specific activities that can be undertaken to improve school facilities planning, the implementation of its building program and the maintenance of school facilities.

Our early investments to build capacity and public involvement have been costly, but these will be squandered if the mayor reduces support for school facilities at the very time increased funding for construction is required.

I urge you to set a sufficient and stable level of locally generated funds for public school facilities, including charter school facilities that the District commits to over a ten year period.

If the District does not have the fiscal capacity with current revenue sources to fund the entire modernization program and related public charter school needs, we urge you to set up a school building financing commission to identify new revenue sources which can support the funding of the comprehensive rebuilding program, a life cycle replacement budget and the needs of charter schools.