

Testimony of Sameena Kluck

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Budget Oversight Hearing: Transportation & the Environment

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Hello. My name is Sameena Kluck, and I am a resident of Ward 6. I live down the street from Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, which is the school my 8 and 9 year old children have attended since it opened in the abandoned Logan building in 2011. We chose this school over other Ward 6 schools and our own neighborhood school for its unique student-led Montessori education and very diverse student body and faculty.

We greatly appreciate the support this committee gave to help with the HVAC and window stabilization projects that we hope will be fully and efficiently well-installed this summer. We are working closely with DGS to help ensure this happens.

But the reality is that we have great needs that only will be met through a full modernization. The stabilization projects will only address the main/elementary building and don't go far enough. They do not touch the middle school which has been housed in a trailer since it opened 3 years ago. Our school has a long waiting list and is retaining more and more students in the upper grades as the school matures. We are facing a space crisis quickly.

The Mayor's proposed budget includes \$2.7M in FY23 – long after many of our children will be in high school or beyond – not for modernization itself but just for *planning* for a subsequent modernization. This is wholly unacceptable given our serious needs that require a modernization:

- Our middle school is in an ill-equipped trailer.
- Our large common space – the multipurpose room – is used as a cafeteria, gym, auditorium, student performance space, and community meeting space.
- Our multipurpose room is insufficient to house our student body for an event.
- Our multipurpose room reverberates sound so badly we can't understand our students' performances. And the reverberation of noise in our hallways and classrooms off our cement walls results in children and parents covering their ears during drop-off and during class.
- We have a cafeteria that can hold only half the students it needs to hold resulting in half our students having to eat in the multipurpose room.

- We have a library with inadequate space, peeling lead paint and few technology or other modern resources.
- We have classrooms with water damaged flooring that children can trip over.
- We have unsecure entrances to our buildings that expose us to unwanted intruders.
- We have regular breaks in water and sewage pipes that have led to school closures and evacuation of school space.
- We have bathrooms with water-stained walls and floors, and rusty old fixtures.
- We don't have sufficient constructed outdoor space for our current student body.
- We have rats and mice that leave droppings in our school and visit our children during the school day
- We have no way for students with a disability to get to a second floor classroom.

My daughter came to this building last month with her 3rd & 4th grade classmates on a day off to speak to each councilmember (or their staff) about how much she loves her school but wondering when and how she would get a more modern building to study in, one featuring less rats and sewage. She has a hard time understanding why year after year our school always remains one of the 12 never-modernized DC public schools. Our family just made the decision NOT to pull up stakes and leave the DC public school system for charters but to stay for 5th grade and middle school—but we are hoping her middle school years will not be spent in a trailer, nor her younger brother's. Our students, parents, and faculty are fully engaged in this community, not just the school grounds but Ward 6 and the District of Columbia as a whole; we ask the Council to fully commit to and prioritize full modernization of Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan.