

Testimony of Josh Kramer
DGS Budget Hearing
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
April 13, 2017
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My name is Joshua Kramer and I am a 13-year resident of Ward 6, proud parent of two thriving children at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, and the President and co-founder of Innovative Pest Management, Inc.—one of the Districts largest pest management firms with a team of nearly 50.

A few short years ago during much of 2012, I had the pleasure of working with staff members of Chairperson Cheh, former Council Member Wells and colleagues at the DDOE, largely in support of the “Pesticide Education and Control Amendment Act of 2012.” I was honored that I became a trusted resource as I worked closely with Matt Orlins and was invited to openly discuss areas of concern, propose sensible ideas to the committee and to pen language for consideration and consequential inclusion into the DDOE’s Notice of Final Rule Making and District of Columbia Pesticide Operation Regulations. Admittedly, I was new to the legislative process and had considerable doubts about whether my voice and concerns would be heard. Ultimately, I was proud to be part of a solution.

Today, I sincerely hope that our combined testimony will encourage this Council to act swiftly to modernize CHML in FY19 and in the best educational interest of all District children. A growing body of academic research has found that school facilities can have a profound impact on both teacher and student outcomes. With respect to teachers, school facilities affect teacher recruitment, retention, commitment, and effort. With respect to students, school facilities affect health, behavior, engagement, learning, and growth in achievement.

We sincerely appreciate monies allocated for capital improvements in HVAC as well as window replacement. Replacing windows means that lead paint remediation will no longer occur during school-time hours (as was the case last year), when workers donning full Tyvek suits and full-face respirators failed to “zip their plastic “zip walls,” and ran electric sanders to remove lead paint from interior hallway windows and doors while unsuspecting students walked through the lead dust storm. This actually happened. Installation of HVAC means that sparrows will no longer build nests on the hard-to-reach ledges of upper level window-based air conditioning units. Removal of these window units and subsequent nests will eliminate the need to use pesticides within classrooms to eliminate parasitical infestations of bird mites. This too actually happened. If you are unfamiliar with bird mites, they are tiny blood-feeding arthropod pests that are non-host-specific. Thus, they will feed on you whether you are a bird, a student or a teacher. This actually happened.

Two weeks ago, I was invited by a talented, brave and outspoken team of CHML’s 3rd graders to perform a brief inspection and review of the current pest management issues plaguing the school. During 90-short minutes, we found a logbook in disarray with only 6 entries between 2013-present, dry floor drains, compromised cast iron pipes, mice droppings within kitchen equipment and littered throughout the cafeteria’s kitchen floor, buried rodenticide bait boxes, zero mechanical snap traps and countless conditions conducive to pest entry. Uncontrolled, these pests pose serious health risks to children.

An improved facility can resolve many of these preventable issues. Chronic mice issues at Logan are a function of accessible “open” exterior vents near ground level (½” openings through grates), multiple penetrations into the foundation around pipe chases, presence of settling cracks, need for pointing of brick and architectural foundation elements, inadequate rodent controls and lack of interior exclusion to mitigate movement of mice within the school. Simply preventing mice and rats from moving into the building will decrease or eliminate any health hazard to children and mitigate disruptions in daily classroom activities as a function of regular occurrences of mice sightings.

American cockroaches within Logan are a function of deteriorating and rotting cast-iron sewer pipes within the building. Thus, American cockroaches are of particular concern as they are considered mechanical vectors for disease transmission. For instance, they mechanically carry organisms that cause: dysentery, urinary tract infections, gastroenteritis, food poisoning and a host of other adverse conditions.

Children and particularly asthmatic children are very susceptible to the allergens produced by mice and cockroaches. This was demonstrated in studies such as The National Cooperative Inner City Asthma Study in 1997 and concluded that 37% of asthmatic children were allergic to German and American cockroach allergens. During the past 5 years, our company collaborated with Johns Hopkins Medical Center to study the relationship between mice allergen and asthmatic inner city children particularly as it relates to mitigation of the allergen and its clinical significance. This study demonstrated that these children are very sensitive to these allergens and findings were published last month in JAMA. Because our children spend at least 8-hours per day at school, we are unnecessarily exposing at-risk children to these allergens.

These problems are either acceptable or unacceptable—it doesn’t cut both ways. I have to believe that you all must agree that these conditions are wholeheartedly unacceptable and that they should be corrected immediately with a modernization for CHML in FY19. Please be our champion for change. Thank you.