

Testimony by Sara Burns, parent at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan School, at the Committee on Transportation & the Environment Budget Oversight Hearing on the Department of General Services, April 22, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am a parent at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan and I live in Ward 6.

CHML has been left out of the Mayor's proposed budget for school modernizations which means that for the next six years at least, our children will go to school in conditions that threaten their health and safety, and undermine the ability for us to provide an environment conducive to learning.

The school is heated by a old boiler system which is either on or off. There is no way to control the heat in the classroom. During the coldest months of the year, my children's classrooms can be close to 90 degrees! Can you imagine working and trying your best to focus when it is that warm in the classroom? I cannot. Teachers can't open windows in their classrooms and the air conditioning units are old, unreliable, and do not keep up with the heat the boiler puts out. Isn't it amazing that air conditioning units must be used in the winter? It is a crazy way to operate a building.

In the school, the windows are old single pane and painted shut. For many of the windows, the glass is orange/brown and you cannot see out of them. Some of the windows are broken and have plexiglass. In some of the classrooms the panes are dark, which lets in no natural sunlight. Paint is peeling off the windows both inside and outside. I am concerned about lead in the paint as there are paint chips around the windows and ground. There are windows on both floors with this issue. We have three year olds in the school who still put their hands in their mouths regularly. In addition, some of the window panes are being held together by duct tape!

Of course, the lead in the water. DGS found lead in our water last year without notifying us and we found out from a blog article in March 2016. Now, DGS cannot provide data showing that our school is 100% remediated of lead. They tested last week and found two concerning sources. They said they have put on filters and will retest. But parents discovered one of those sources had not been turned off which is protocol until they know it is safe. There is no labelling protocol or system for accurate descriptions for what water sources correlates with what result. DGS admits that they have no protocol for communicating with parents and principals about lead. Chancellor Henderson said in a hearing, "The communication has been unacceptable." I hope DGS and DCPS uses this mess up to move forward and change the way they conduct lead tests, communicate results and test every water source in every school.

Now to modernization, CHML modernization has been pushed off indefinitely. What data was used to decide the CIP? There is no record of the data collection used for the building assessments. If it was DGS data, their data shows that our school has never been assessed. It was suggested to us that the Mayor got her own data instead by touring schools (45 schools in 3 days?), but we've never seen that data and we don't know if it is accurate. Were modernization experts with her? Were principals who know their buildings best asked to help identify the school's needs? Was our school included?

DGS please to come to CHML and fully assess it to understand the needs of our building. In addition, include full funding for a CHML modernization in FY19 in the final 6-year budget approved by the Council. We would like the city to support funding for modernization – specifically to replace the HVAC system and all of the windows, and source healthier and safer cleaning products – to address the human health and environmental hazards that our children and teachers are exposed to daily.

Thank you,
Sara Burns