

Testimony of Tiffany L. Brown, Parent & Chairperson of the Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, Local School
Advisory Team (LSAT), to the Council of the District of Columbia,
Joint Oversight Hearing on Lead Testing in Public Facilities
June 22, 2016

Good Morning: Councilmember Grosso, Chair of the Committee on Education and Councilmember Cheh, Chair of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, other Councilmembers assembled, thank you for the opportunity to speak at this important council hearing. My name is Tiffany L. Brown, I am a 4th generation Washingtonian, a proud product of D. C. Public Schools, a DCPS Teacher, an ANC Commissioner for 7B02, the Chairperson of the LSAT at the Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, (CHM@Logan), and the proud parent of two children at the school, a rising 4th grader and a rising 3rd grader. I am here as a member of a school community that works tirelessly to ensure that the District has a great Montessori school.

I am speaking to you today about the “Lead” Issue we have in our school. In April 2016 the Capitol Hill Montessori Community learned that lead tests conducted in August 2015 showed three water sources with lead levels above 15ppb. The results came to light in Valerie Jablow's April 4, 2016, post on educationdc.net, without her post we may have never known about this critical issue in our school. The Department of General Services (DGS), which is responsible for conducting lead tests, did not inform our principal, parents, PTSO, or LSAT of the results of nine of the 77 water sources at our school. Three of the nine sources showed lead levels above DGS’s own 15ppb limit, including one sample at roughly 20 times that limit. In March 2016, DGS further tested six water sources at our school and it is not clear whether they re-tested the sources that showed lead in excess of 15ppb at the August 2015 test. Again, DGS failed to notify our principal, parents, PTSO, or LSAT of the results. This sparked weeks of research and meetings to determine what we now understand: DGS had no protocol to routinely test every water source, no process for keeping clear and consistent data, and no communication with school officials or communities about the tests, results, or remediation procedures. In 2016 there is no room for this egregious misstep in government. I know we can and must do better, our children’s lives depend on us protecting them from ALL harm. As you know it has

been only after extensive advocacy efforts did we secure testing of all of our water sources under a new and improved DGS protocol.

As I reflect on my testimony for today, I am reminded of my testimony in the past to the Council and to the State Board of Education. I believe these issues are part of the larger issue of modernization of schools. We need our facilities to meet the ever-growing demands of our school community. To do this we need our school FIXED! When I say fixed, I mean Fully Modernized. When schools are fully modernized all piping must be changed to meet the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule to reduce lead in the water that was enacted in the 1990s. Given the condition of our school and the recorded lead level, I would dare say that our piping has not been touched since before the 90s.

While I am grateful to learn late last evening that the Mayor's new Lead Testing Policy, will follow the American Academy of Pediatric's guidelines, it should be noted that the American Academy of Pediatrics clearly states that no amount of Lead Exposure is safe for children. With that said, I would like to ask this Committee on record for a robust plan based on the health and safety needs of all schools to address the lead problem. This plan should include a greater mechanism to ensure full transparency to all stakeholders in real-time, on-line when water sources are tested and the results, when and where filters have been installed; when they are changed; hiring of a lead expert for the City that can actually speak about the lead issue in the City, not a Department's Spokesperson who is not an expert. Finally, every good policy needs legislation to make sure this policy is permanent and enforcement.

I am here today with several members of the CHM@Logan Community because we are passionate about advocating for our children as well as the children in the District of Columbia. At the end of the day, we are asking for a few simple things to be done in our school to help restore trust and transparency:

1. filters on ALL water sources in the school, no matter what the ppb level is, that meet the National Science Foundation for reducing lead in water,

2. test all drinking sources every 12 months using up to date, reliable, high-quality testing methods, and
3. communicate in advance the testing schedule, test results, and remediation if any, promptly to all stakeholders, principal, parents, PTSO, and LSAT.

We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals and set us on a path to safety and success for every child in every community in the Nation's Capital.