

**Testimony of Khalilah Woodland**  
**District of Columbia Public Schools Oversight Hearing**  
**February 23, 2017**

My name is Khalilah Woodland, parent of a first grader at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan (CHML) and Parent Teacher & Staff Organization Board member.

CHML is a citywide DCPS school with students enrolled from every ward. My family lives in Ward 4. I decided to enroll my son in the best school environment that I could find to ensure his academic success. When I enrolled him in CHML in 2014, I believed him to be in the safest learning environment and a healthy environment. I am hoping to keep him at CHML until 8<sup>th</sup> grade. However, the school is in desperate need of modernization.

We are the only Ward 6-based elementary school that has not received *any* modernization since the school's inception six years ago. This is unacceptable to me as a parent. It is my job to protect my child from being in an unsafe environment. I recognize that we are not the only school in this situation. We have previously testified about our situation: we have been pushed back on the Capitol Improvement Plan (CIP) a number of times and then last year were cut out of the CIP completely. After much advocacy, we finally got a first-ever Department of General Services assessment, but our confidence in DCPS and the city continues to erode as our children are educated in a facility that inhibits rather than enhances their learning.

At the same time, DCPS has been developing new educational specifications (Ed Specs) for our schools. The Ed Specs narrative says that the "[Ed Specs] describe the *essential components* of a school facility..." The Ed Specs actually serve to further underscore how lacking the CHML building is.

Today, I am here to make clear that our facility is woefully inadequate on all elements which the Ed Specs include: lighting, environmental and air quality factors, acoustics, ergonomics, full technology capabilities, a fully functional cooking kitchen, as well as adequate spaces for food services, library, visual arts, performing arts, physical education, music, outdoor play, community meetings, and a technology lab.

My son, Matthew, has asthma and his classroom gets so hot it triggers asthma attacks and he has to get nebulizer treatments when he gets home so that he can breathe properly. The air quality affects my child's health in other ways, he has gotten sick numerous times because of the poor air quality in the school building. I would like to keep my child at CHML for the duration of his elementary education, however if the facility can't be modernized into a healthier environment I will have to make the difficult decision to educate him elsewhere. I have no idea how many children or families have lost the opportunity to experience a public Montessori education because one of them has health challenges similar to my son's.

I urge you to advocate with us to ask the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Education to make a significant investment in the capital budget to modernize all DCPS schools. Again, I beseech

you, as a concerned parent, that CHML is put in the CIP in FY19 so that planning can begin in FY18.

Our school community and its leadership is strong, working together to foster successful learning despite the building needs. I think it is well past the time for CHML and other schools that have been left behind to be modernized.