

Hello, my name is Charlotte McCracken and I am the K-4 Science Specialist and PFT Building Representative at Bache-Martin K-8. Thank you Council Member Quinones- Sanchez for allowing me this opportunity to speak today.

I wish I could be giving testimony that advocates that we spend the majority of the American Rescue Plan money on playgrounds for all K-8 and middle schools, on making sure each school has a fully certified librarian and all the other resources that will excite our students but I can't. Many of our schools can't even meet our students' most basic need-safety. We have too many schools that are crumbling, too many roofs that are leaking, too many classrooms where teachers are covering up water damage with colorful bulletin boards, and furniture, too many students learning in buildings with exposed asbestos and lead. Issues that have plagued the city for decades and ones that wealthier, better funded districts across the nation have been able to fix. Issues that many of you on this committee that fought for: updated, safer buildings for all of our students, school based staff and the families that walk through their doors every day.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the city's response to it brought the School District of Philadelphia's beautiful,yet crumbling buildings into the national spotlight. People across the country were finally seeing what those of us who live and teach here have experienced for years, outdated heating and cooling systems that only heat half the building, overwhelmed electrical and broadband systems, exposed asbestos around vents, leaking windows and roofs, the list of building issues is long and seems to get longer by the day. While other districts were able to quickly upgrade HVAC and welcome students back to their buildings, Philadelphia had to acknowledge that many of our buildings have systems that are so old, manufactures no longer make the parts needed to repair them.

As a Building Rep I regularly get messages from colleagues with pictures of leaks and water damage,thermometers that read 90 degrees on one side of the hall and 60 degrees on the other side. Or the frantic phone calls from fellow staff asking me to come up to their rooms "to take a look";like the new mother who was pumping in a coat closet and discovered ripped pipe isolation when she went to plug her pump in. Concerned about what the flakes and powder were that had become unsettled and were all over the floor and the desk she was planning on using. These aren't just issues within my 85 plus year old building but are issues that are far too common across the SDP. Decades of capital maintenance upgrades that have been ignored or pushed to the side. They aren't surprising to the school staff, and students who maneuver around holes in the floor and cold classrooms daily,they've become just another part of the day like guided reading or science class.

All of our students deserve better. They deserve the playgrounds, libraries, STEM labs and school wide music programs that neighboring districts have. But they also deserve to be safe, they deserve to not be freezing or overheating in classrooms. I want every school to have a library that is open to them with a certified librarian, but how can we give our students that when the roof that covers the library leaks? Every student in Philadelphia deserves to walk into their neighborhood school and know that they are in a safe building. They deserve to learn,

grow, and thrive in environments that will not make them sick or trigger bloody noses and asthma attacks.

The American Rescue Plan gives the SDP and districts like ours around the country much needed support to finally truly focus on the facilities projects that have long been ignored or inadequately repaired. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to speak and thank you all for being strong advocates of public education in Philadelphia.