

Good afternoon, and thank you Council Member Sanchez for providing us with this opportunity to speak. My name is Anna Phelan, I am a first grade teacher at Overbrook Educational Center. I am also a PFT member and Building Representative for my school.

First and Foremost, I would like to see this funding be spent on providing remediation for facilities.

The health and safety of students in Philadelphia has been at risk long before COVID even became a threat. These buildings are well overdue for remediation.

My school is riddled with asbestos, mold, rodents, broken windows, and the list goes on.

I can tell you first hand how the lack of safe school buildings has personally effected the children in my classroom.

The other day my heat was stuck on 85 degrees. I have broken windows in my classroom and windows without screens, and I also have a hornet's nest right outside my room. I somehow had to choose between opening the windows and providing my students with optimal ventilation and breathable air, or keeping them safe from outside bugs and hornets.

I've seen mice when I'm at school late by myself and I've seen them during the day when students are around.

I have what's called a cozy corner in the back of my classroom to provide my students a space to calm down and take a break when they are feeling emotional. There is

a leak right above it that stems from the 3rd floor bathroom. The leak often contains urine. That is unacceptable.

These are just a few examples of the unsafe learning conditions in *one* classroom in *one* school. You can only imagine the types of unsafe conditions that the students all across Philadelphia are facing each day. They are long overdue for changes and remediation. Our students deserve a safe and healthy space to learn in each day.

In addition to providing remediation for our buildings, I would like to see this funding being used to provide mental health services and social emotional support for students.

I have the same group of 25 students as I had last year, and I specifically asked my principal if I could switch grades and follow these students into the next grade in order to provide them with a sense of consistency and normalcy in such an insecure time of their lives.

I have seen these kids from their first day of Kindergarten to their almost last day of first grade and I have seen how their mental health has suffered over the past year. They have lost loved ones, they have loved ones they haven't seen in over a year. They've been given terrifying information, they've been given false information. They are scared, they are confused, and they miss their friends.

And now I see them struggling with reentry. They were so excited to be back and see their friends again, only to be told "Stay apart!" "Don't get too close!" And now they are

quarantining for two weeks because of a positive COVID case. This takes a toll on a child's mental health.

They've lost confidence, they've lost social skills, and they've increased anxiety. And although we say we care about their mental health- we're testing them just as much if not more this year than in the past! I see their nervous little faces when they're taking a test. They need support. Their mental health has suffered, and we need to provide them with the support and services to make up for it. All of this takes a serious toll on young children, and we cannot expect them to return to school next year like everything is normal. We need to provide them with the social emotional support and mental health services to set them up for success when they return.

As a district, if we are concerned about their academics and we want to see learning loss be recovered, then first we have to make sure social emotional learning loss is recovered as well.

Our students deserve the best. They deserve to learn and grow in a building that is physically safe, and they also deserve to be in a building that is mentally and emotionally safe and supportive. I hope the funding we have received can be allocated to ensure this becomes a reality.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and for providing us with this space to share our concerns.