



**JUNE 21, 2023**

**TO: Members of the General Assembly**

**CC: Honorable Governor Josh Shapiro, Honorable Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid Mumin**

**FROM: Jerry T. Jordan, President**

**RE: SUPPORT for HB1408 (Dedicated Facilities Funding)**

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I am expressing our support for House Bill 1408 that will create funding for facilities in Pennsylvania schools.

For too long, students in Philadelphia have been learning in schools that are hundreds of years old and filled with asbestos and leaky roofs. Time and again, we have said that the conditions in which Philadelphia's children, a majority of whom are Black and brown and experiencing poverty, would never be tolerated in a wealthier, whiter school district.

Our students and staff cannot afford to continue learning and working in buildings that can poison them.

The facilities crisis in Philadelphia is not new. Our union formed the Fund our Facilities coalition to identify real, workable solutions to the **decades of neglect that have left toxic conditions plaguing our schools.**

**Decades of neglect** that led SEIU worker Chris Trakimas to lose his life after a boiler explosion at F.S. Edmonds.

**Decades of neglect** that led then-first-grader Dean Pagan to suffer lead poisoning after eating lead paint chips from his desk.

**Decades of neglect** that led to a devastating mesothelioma diagnosis for PFT member Lea DiRusso, who spent her career teaching in buildings with known, damaged asbestos.

**Decades of neglect** that led Chelsea Mungo, then a fourth grader at Cassidy Elementary, to write to her State Senator and ask why the color of her skin impacted how her school is funded and shared with him that she feels like she is in prison or a junkyard when she is in what is supposed to be a sacred place of learning.

Our members, students, parents, and community partners have worked tirelessly to draw attention to the enormous human and civil rights issues unfolding in our city every day while simultaneously making ends meet in school buildings that are quite literally poisoning them.

House Bill 1408 makes critical investments in school facility funding, and it is a first step in ensuring that students and teachers across our Commonwealth can focus on learning and not on their school-building facilities.

We applaud this first step and look forward to seeing this legislation become law.

Thank you.