

FACILITIES PRESS CONFERENCE

South Philly High School

Friday, June 23, 2023 | 11:00 AM

Jerry Jordan, President, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers



Good morning, and thank you Representative Fielder for hosting this important press conference today, and for your relentless leadership on this crucial issue.

Day after day, year after year, we have to continue to call attention to the fact that we are failing one of our most basic fundamental obligations as a society: keeping our students safe at school.

We have to PROVE the worth of our children, and it's outrageous. In a wealthier, whiter school district, these decades of neglect would never be tolerated. And these decades of neglect have had devastating consequences:

- 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.

We are talking about **basic human rights**, and when we are not meeting the most *basic* needs of our young people and their educators, we are failing tremendously as a society.

And now, that failure is not only well-documented in the court of law, but it's unequivocally ruled upon. In her ruling, Judge Renée Cohn Jubelirer called on the Executive and Legislative branches of government to address this decades-long system of neglect.

Fortunately, many of our elected allies are doing just that. The facilities legislation we are discussing today will provide hundreds of millions of dollars in desperately needed funding for state-wide school facilities investments.

You [*HAVE HEARD or WILL HEAR*] more specifically about the legislative proposals from [*REP FIEDLER and/or OTHER ELECTEDS present*].

We must meet this moment with the urgency it demands. And that means fully investing in our school facilities and our entire system of public education. Thank you.