



Feb. 7th 2021

Dear Dr. Hite and Mayor Kenney:

The health and safety of our educators, school staff, students and their families have been at risk for years because of the toxic conditions that persist in many of our school buildings. Our children and our teachers have gotten sick from cancer, asthma, and other respiratory issues they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Despite our demands for sufficient school facilities funding, government at city, state and federal levels have all failed to provide money to swiftly and safely remediate the lead, asbestos, mold, rodent infestation and other hazardous conditions that our youngest residents have been subjected to for generations.

As lawmakers, community leaders, and community advocates on this letter, we stand in solidarity with the workers of Philadelphia, including the unions and their members who work in our public schools. We will not allow them to be shamed, bullied or strong armed into accepting unsafe conditions at any point in their service to our city. The latest push by the School District of Philadelphia to send teachers back into schools has raised deeply troubling questions about sufficient safety precautions and without even a comprehensive plan to vaccinate them before potential classroom exposure. As a group that has advocated for funding to bring school buildings to a basic level of safety and decency, we are deeply troubled by outstanding important concerns about air balancing tests and building readiness. This is outrageous. Our society has a long tradition of undervaluing the lives of those who devote themselves to educating and supporting the next generation, and to caring for the school buildings where they spend their days. That must change. Educators, children and their families are fully aware of the immense challenges and potential learning loss related to virtual schooling. None of us wants this pandemic to continue. But we have no choice other than to deal with the situation in front of us and to proceed with compassion for the workers and children who are being asked to walk into these schools in mere hours.

Philadelphia families deserve to have complete confidence that their lives will not be put at risk when they enter a Philadelphia public school building: that remains true as relates to lead and asbestos, and now in the face of a devastating pandemic, it is doubly true as relates to the deadly COVID-19. It is clear that right now, as the District attempts to reopen for a third time, a basic level of trust and confidence is lacking. We call for the District and the city to devote themselves to transparency about decision making and to completely remedying building concerns before proceeding to reopen schools.



That is the least we can do in the short term. In the long term, we recommit ourselves to continuing to fight for the safe, healthy, warm, and dry school facilities that our children and educators deserve.

Joanna McClinton
Minority Leader
District 191

Mary Jo Daley
State Representative
District 148

Patrick Eiding
President
Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO

Elizabeth Fiedler
State Representative
District 184

Sharif Street
State Senator
District 3

Bishop Dwayne Royster
Executive Director
POWER Interfaith

Brian Sims
State Representative
District 182

Tim Kearney
State Senator
District 26

Rick Krajewski
State Representative
District 188

Mary Isaacson
State Representative
District 175

Nikil Saval
State Senator
District 1

Eric Rosso
Executive Director
PA Spotlight

Danilo Burgos
State Representative
District 197

John Kane
State Senator
District 9

Maureen May
President
PA SNAP

Donna Bullock
State Representative
District 195

Vincent Hughes
State Senator
District 7

Keon Liberato
President
BMWED-IBT Local 3012

Morgan Cephas
State Representative
District 192

Christine M. Tartaglione
State Senator
District 2

Thelma Clements
APRI Philadelphia Chapter

Stephen Kinsey
State Representative
District 201

Helen Gym
Councilmember At-Large

Kendra Brooks
Councilmember At-Large

Joe Hohenstein
State Representative
District 177

Jamie Gauthier
Councilmember
District 3

Katherine Gilmore Richardson
Councilmember At-Large

Malcolm Kenyatta
State Representative
District 181

Damon Allen
Chapter Chair
SEIU Local 668

Kenyatta Johnson
Councilmember
District 2