

Council Testimony, DCPS 2003 Oversight Hearing
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Good morning. I am Mary Filardo, executive director of the 21st Century School fund. A well-managed capital improvement program is the responsibility of many. I am here today to speak specifically to what I believe are gaps in the Council role in improving school facilities. First, let me acknowledge that the council has appropriated more money for school construction than in the history of the District—including FY03, the Council has appropriated nearly \$700 million for school facility improvements over the past decade.

This is unprecedented, and has made what progress there has been, possible. But funding is only 1 piece of your job, and you have neglected the other—oversight. Oversight is not a blame game or finger pointing. It is an array of measures put in place to ensure that the District of Columbia obtains the best planned, designed and constructed schools our budget can support and that there is an equitable distribution of these capital improvements.

What should this council do?

1- Fund the cost of an annual audit of the process, cost and quality of school planning, design and construction.

I am just back from a project in Florida. There the legislature examines whether or not school districts are using best practices in the management of their schools. Included in this review is school construction and maintenance. This works well; we need a similar process here.

2- Establish a citizen's oversight committee—this would serve the city well by performing oversight of recreation and library projects as well.

We have looked at more than a dozen school districts throughout the country. This is standard procedure when a major capital program is underway. I have provided council members with a copy of a report we have just recently completed on citizen's oversight committees.

3- Hold a public roundtable on capital planning, design and construction to examine schools, recreation, libraries, charter schools and other agencies who may use or need to share or lease public school space.

4- Hold a separate council hearing on the capital budget for oversight and for budget requests—again with schools as one piece of this.

5- Sustain the funding for the capital program. There have been problems, there will continue to be problems, but these problems can be resolved if we don't stop and start the program, but keep looking for ways to do what we are doing better.