

**Testimony for the DC Council 7/7/05 Public Hearing on
Bill 16-250, the “School Modernization Financing Act of 2005”
Jordan Spooner, Deputy Director, 21st Century School Fund**

Good afternoon, Councilmembers Evans, Patterson, Fenty, and _____. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important piece of legislation that has the potential to affect, in an immensely positive way, the lives of tens of thousands of District children, youth, families, and residents of all kinds for many, many years to come.

I’m here today primarily to communicate my support for the proposed “School Modernization and Financing Act of 2005”, because as stated by Ms. Filardo, our work has shown that there are multiple (6, to be exact) elements necessary for a well-managed public school capital improvement program, and this legislation addresses at least one of them – stable and sufficient funding. But, I’d also like to speak briefly about two of the other elements necessary in our opinion, with my colleague Ms. Huvendick here to speak about the other three elements.

The first element that I want to address is that of internal controls and external oversight. Do you feel confident that there will be sufficiently routine documentation submitted to the Board of Education on the scope, progress, and cost of projects, and that the Board has the capacity to review this documentation? Will there be sufficient feedback on the procurement process, such as from contractors, to ensure that the process is working adequately? And, while there will be annual audits and reports completed, do you feel confident that the Mayor and Council has enough of their own capacity to properly monitor an expanded public schools capital program? In short, sufficient controls and oversight will be necessary to identify potential problems in the program and generate strategies for resolution.

The other element I want to address is that of effective and efficient project management. Do you feel confident that the school system will have the capacity to properly manage projects so that they are completed on time, within budget, and in accordance with specifications? The project management role is responsible for all aspects of the project – programming, total project budget, overall project schedule, and procurement for all services required. I think there is a legitimate question about whether or not there is sufficient project management capacity in the school system to even address the amount of projects ongoing right now. This element, like the others, is essential.

Ms. Huvendick will now address the other three necessary elements for a well-managed capital improvement program.

Thank you for your attention.