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[written testimony]

TO: Chairman Schweyer and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Jerry Roseman.

My training and career are in environmental, building, and data science, with a major focus on the physical and environmental conditions of PK–12 schools. For over forty years I've worked alongside direct and near direct school stakeholders including with educational sector unions, staff, parents, and students to document and improve school conditions, always centering facility condition and environmental impacts on the *as-lived, as-experienced* realities in classrooms and hallways—the air people breathe, the water they drink, the systems that either work or fail around them.

I am the Acting Director of Environmental Science for the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Health & Welfare Fund, where I conduct independent school inspections, develop recommendations for best practices and collaborate directly with the School District of Philadelphia's

facilities and environmental teams to help ensure accountable improvement.

I work directly with teachers, support staff, and parents across Pennsylvania to assess school facility and environmental conditions, and to translate that reality into practical fixes that make classrooms healthier and more effective today.

I also serve on, and am a member of, the District's Facilities Planning Process (FPP) Project Team, which provided me with firsthand insight into how long-range facility decisions are being framed.

Beyond my work in looking directly at the conditions in Philadelphia's public schools, there are other critical contexts in which highlight my work with direct and near-direct stakeholders:

- As a Translational Science partner/advisor with the University of Pennsylvania and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's NIEHS-funded Center for Children's Environmental Health (PRCCEH), I translate asbestos and hazard reports into plain language for parents and staff, and present the information at schools and in on-line meetings.

- As a board member of the 21st Century School Fund, I contribute to national research and advocacy on condition assessments, development of participatory planning processes, and equitable funding strategies and efforts.

- I advise the National Center on School Infrastructure funded by the US

Department of Education. A part of this effort is the federal Supporting America's School Infrastructure ("SASI") grant program, helping states — including Pennsylvania, one of about 10 states currently participating in the program and receiving funding and support — to build capacity to support high-need schools.

In addition, I've provided expertise to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, related to assessing school facility and environmental condition inadequacies on issues of racial equity, worked with PennEnvironment on lead-in-school drinking water evaluation, adequacy and the writing of legislation, and co-launched the Philadelphia Healthy Schools Initiative.

I've also developed the PFT Healthy Schools Tracker, a digital technology, web-based reporting platform that allows staff to log and report problems in real time and track the status of their evaluation and repair ---- this tool is being used, by the PFT, as part of a collaborative and coordinated effort with the SDP to help address problems and to give a voice to those in our school buildings.

What unites all of this work is a single focus: translating complex building science and environmental risk into actionable information for decision-makers and communities and doing so from the perspective of an environmental, building and data science practitioner, working for and with those who are directly impacted by school building conditions.

It is from this unique vantage point that I have reached the unavoidable conclusion that our current approaches have not been sufficient - we need a new way forward that matches the scale of the problems faced and the

urgency families feel. I support the goals embedded in HB 1701 and the data collection requirements are a start: a statewide, standards-based picture of our school buildings, uniform assessments, and public modernization plans. If we get this right, Pennsylvania can move from episodic crises to continuous improvement. But to succeed, I think important consideration should be given to strengthening the bill in three ways:

1) Radical transparency—methods, data, and results must be public

HB 1701 sets up an inventory and a statewide facility condition assessment. That's good. But families and staff need verifiable, school-level data—and to understand the methods behind them. That means publishing the data dictionary, the assessment instruments, scoring formulas and weights, and anonymized school-level files, all machine-readable with appropriate security redactions.

This isn't theory. Administrators themselves say we can't grasp the magnitude of the problem without comprehensive statewide data, and that building conditions materially affect student and teacher outcomes—air quality, acoustics, lighting, temperature, and space all matter.

Women for a Healthy Environment's statewide findings confirm why transparency matters: 94.8% of districts that tested found lead in drinking water; 61.5% found mold; 75% of those that tested found radon exceedances—yet actual remediation was reported in only a minority of cases.

Radical transparency also helps to accelerate effective and prioritized fixes. The PFT's Healthy Schools Tracker shows how front-line reporting can surface hazards in seconds and force timely attention; their advocacy helped deliver filtered water fountains district-wide—evidence that open, trusted reporting + public follow-through gets results.

2) Put lived-experience building-environmental science experts in the room

The advisory structure should reflect how schools actually operate. As currently proposed, the committee under-represents education-sector union environmental and building science experts, building engineers and trades, school nurses and pediatric environmental health physicians, and parents from high-vulnerability communities. The result is likely predictable: blind spots in what we measure and how we fix it. PFT's testimony underscores the role of educator, and educator advisor, expertise in surfacing hidden hazards and in designing practical, building-level responses.

3) Deliver immediate wins through upgraded assessment and support for Maintenance & Operations (M&O), and cleaning efforts while the long-term plan takes shape.

Children are in these buildings right now. The fastest, most cost-effective improvements are in repairs, preventive maintenance, ventilation and filtration, and baseline cleaning and bathroom functionality.

Relatively modest investments can yield significant returns. Proper filter replacement, building envelope sealing, cleaning protocols and other cost

effective and protective actions matter - these aren't glamorous, but they work.

Before discussing some of specific details and recommendations associated with PA HB 1701 I'd like to provide at least an overview of Pennsylvania's public schools.

The State of Pennsylvania K-12 Schools

Pennsylvania's public-school infrastructure is vast with 573 school districts operating nearly 2,800 schools serving over 1.8 million students and staff. These facilities encompass an estimated 329 million gross square feet, with a current replacement value of $115 billion. However, behind these numbers lies a persistent and growing gap between the funding available and the investment required to ensure safe, healthy, sustainable, and equitable learning environments across the Commonwealth.

Funding Shortfalls and Investment Gaps

Recent analyses reveal that Pennsylvania's annual spending on school facilities—combining both maintenance/operations (M&O) and capital outlay—totals about $4.3 billion. However, the annual benchmark for good stewardship is 7% of replacement value, or $8.07 billion per year. This leaves a staggering $3.8 billion annual gap, meaning students and staff are learning and working in buildings that are underfunded by nearly half of what is needed to maintain and modernize them.

Equity and Geographic Disparities

The funding and condition gaps are not spread evenly. Economically disadvantaged, minority, and rural students disproportionately attend schools that have not benefited from recent investments or modernization. Rural and small-town districts, in particular, spend less per school on both M&O and capital improvements, exacerbating inequities in health, safety, and educational opportunity. High-poverty districts have a higher share of Black and Hispanic students and are less likely to have had substantial facility upgrades.

State and Federal Roles

Local districts continue to shoulder the vast majority (80%) of capital costs, with the state contributing 20% and federal support accounting for less than 1% over the last decade. Pennsylvania's long-term debt for school facilities is high—$15,600 per student, well above the national average. Temporary federal relief funds (e.g., ESSER) have helped reduce the M&O gap by about a third, but these are one-time resources, not long-term solutions.

As of 2025, Pennsylvania's school facilities face significant and persistent underinvestment, with the greatest impacts falling on the most vulnerable students and communities.

Our state's schools face well-documented problems: aging buildings, failing systems, inadequate ventilation, persistent hazards like asbestos and lead, and far too many classrooms that are simply too hot, too cold, or too damp to support learning. These conditions are not abstract—they are the daily *as-lived* experience of children and staff.

Addressing these challenges will require not just increased funding, but also stronger data, standards, and stakeholder-driven oversight to ensure every child and educator has access to a safe, healthy, and modern school.

I come before you with one (1) overarching message: Pennsylvania needs a new way forward in how we understand, plan for, and improve our school buildings.

HB 1701 matters to the extent that it establishes a statewide structure: common definitions, a unified inventory, a uniform facility condition assessment (FCA), a public advisory committee, and a requirement that districts produce modernization plans. That is the right direction. It can move Pennsylvania from episodic crises and opaque decisions toward a transparent, statewide understanding and a sequenced plan of action.

I support HB 1701's scaffolding, and I recommend strengthening it around four (4) main pillars—a "Plan B" that converts structure into outcomes.

What Else Do We Need – What PA HB 1701 Lead To

1) Establish implementable adequacy standards

Every school should meet a transparent **Adequate Today** baseline: *safe, dry, warm, and ventilated; bathrooms operable; filtered drinking water; moisture and mold under control; reasonable acoustics and lighting*. Define room-level temperature and ventilation bands, minimum filtration, inspection and preventive-maintenance cycles, and require annual public

adequacy attestations by each district. Bake these standards into the inventory and FCA so data and daily experience line up.

2) Require radical transparency—of data and methods

Families, staff, and local leaders need verifiable school-level information—not just infographics. The Department should publish the data dictionary, assessment instruments, scoring formulas and weights, and downloadable school-level results in machine-readable form, with appropriate safety redactions. Add monthly public scorecards on the Adequate Today baseline and a visible, simple way to report hazards and track responses. Openness is not a luxury; it's how we build trust and aim scarce dollars at the highest-value risks.

3) Promote substantive, supported stakeholder engagement

The advisory structure must include people who live and work in these buildings and those with field expertise including those working with the direct and near direct stakeholders.

Expand guaranteed seats to include designated representatives, with relevant expertise and experience in building facility and environmental condition assessment and improvement, from educational-sector unions (AFT and PSEA as well as unions representing building engineers, custodial and skilled trade workers), school nurses and pediatric environmental health practitioners. Consideration should also be given to having parent organizations, universities and advocacy groups assign designated representatives with relevant expertise and experience in building facility

and environmental condition assessment and improvement.

A 90-day appointment deadline from bill passage should be put in place to reflect the need for urgency.

4) Deliver immediate, cost-effective improvements through upgraded maintenance & operations (M&O), cleaning and custodial work expansion, training and additional resource support.

While long-term modernizations are planned, we can protect health and instruction in. Authorize hybrid assessments that combine third-party experts with trained district staff using standardized tools and mobile data capture. Consider creating a small-projects grant lane for bathroom improvement, roof patches, filters, controls, and ventilation fixes and for developing guidelines for after-hours custodial capacity to reach APPA Level 2 cleaning. These are the fastest, most cost-effective interventions; maintenance and cleaning improvements like these not only significantly improve as-lived building conditions now but they also stretch every capital dollar we will spend over the next decade.

This hearing has drawn testimony from administrators, business officials, educators, facility professionals, and public-health advocates. They converge on key points that align with these recommendations:

- **Chronic underfunding and deferred maintenance** have produced unsafe and inefficient learning environments that depress attendance and performance.

- **Transparent, statewide, school-level data**—paired with clear methods—are essential for trust and targeting.

- **Environmental health hazards** (lead, asbestos, mold, radon) must be routinely monitored and mitigated, with straightforward reporting and follow-through.

- **Preventive maintenance and small, targeted projects** provide the fastest, most cost-effective improvements and protect future capital investments.

- **Representation matters:** decisions improve when the people who live and work in our schools—and those with technical expertise—share real power in shaping criteria and priorities.

HB 1701 can move Pennsylvania from sporadic fixes to a transparent, participatory, and health-focused system of continuous improvement. To realize that promise, please adopt amendments that:

1. **Mandate open data**

2. **Broaden representation**

3. **Require immediate M&O action**

With radical transparency, real stakeholder power, and near-term M&O and cleaning upgrades, HB 1701 will deliver not just plans, but results — healthier classrooms, better attendance, improved learning, and a fairer

distribution of limited capital.

Especially with further follow-up, and building on HB 1701's push for increased data and information gathering, more effective and widespread assessment and evaluation of school conditions, and promoting more robust public engagement and planning, Pennsylvania can move from sporadic fixes to a transparent, participatory, health-focused system of continuous improvement.

Thank you for your leadership and for providing me the opportunity to testify today.