



District of Columbia Government
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A
Box 75115
Washington, DC 20013



April 10, 2015

David Grosso
Chair, Committee on Education
D.C. Council
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Grosso:

In the recently proposed Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, the modernization funding for School Within School @ Goding Elementary School (SWS) was postponed from FY 2016 to at least FY 2019. SWS is located within ANC6A and serves many families within our ANC. At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting¹ on April 9, 2015, our Commission voted 6-0 (with 5 Commissioners required for a quorum) to request that you restore the Capital Improvement funding for SWS in the 2016 budget.

SWS was previously slated \$12 million for a Phase I modernization of the Goding building in FY 2016. The proposed budget would push the school's modernization back to at least FY 2019. This came as a complete surprise to the school, which already formed an active School Improvement Team several months ago and recently completed a series of collaborative meetings with the Department of General Services and DCPS to develop Educational Specifications for its modernization. In addition to basic life safety and quality of life improvements at the school, a typical Phase 1 modernization includes right-sizing the classrooms to comply with DCPS's own guidelines, and upgrading technological, electrical and mechanical systems to 21st century standards.

The continued delays and repeated failures to keep commitments to the school community are unacceptable and should be addressed as the Committee on Education reviews the proposed budget. As you know, SWS opened in the Goding building in 2013, after DCPS authorized the expansion of the school from a PreK4/Kindergarten program to a PreK3 through 5th grade school. When the SWS community agreed to DCPS's proposal to house its growing program at Goding in early 2013, it did so with the explicit understanding that DCPS recognized the building did not meet the needs of SWS's unique Reggio Emilia inspired curriculum. With a Phase 1 modernization already slated for FY2014, the community was assured the mismatch would soon be rectified. That date was subsequently pushed back to FY 2015, and then FY 2016, before the latest budget proposal's delay to FY 2019.

¹ ANC6A meetings are advertised on the listservs anc6a-announce@yahoogroups.com, anc-6a@yahoogroups.com and newhilleast@yahoogroups.com, at www.anc6a.org, and in the *Hill Rag*.

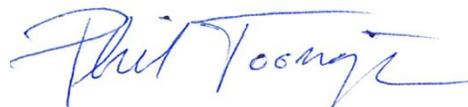
Currently, 55 ANC6A residents attend SWS, which is nearly 25% of SWS's total student population. As the school continues to grow to add 4th and 5th grade classes, we expect that the number of ANC6A families will also grow.

SWS is a model school for educators throughout and beyond DC who want to incorporate elements of the Reggio Emilia-inspired approach into their own schools. Since SWS moved to the Goding building in August 2013, educators from 17 local schools have come to SWS to observe best practices and collaborate with SWS teachers. In order to continue to assist with growing DC's other Reggio-inspired offerings, the school should be afforded adequate physical space to provide a Reggio-based education and to train the many other educators who come to it to learn about its outstanding educational environment.

SWS is inclusive of all students, including the 51 students with Individualized Education (IEP) and 504 Plans. Together, with the students receiving Response to Intervention services, 30% of the student population has access to specialized programming to meet individual learning needs. SWS houses two dedicated classrooms for children with complex medical needs and has an ongoing partnership with the Ivymount School to offer an inclusion classroom for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. One of the best features of SWS is that children with individual learning needs are completely integrated in the inclusive setting provided. That being said, many of the spaces within the building are ill suited to one or both of these populations. For example, some of the children cannot adequately access the spaces on upper floors, and the needs of the children with sensory issues cannot be adequately met in classrooms or multi-purpose spaces that are much too loud or bright.

The children who attend SWS need a building that 1) provides a safe facility for its students, 2) enhances the learning environment, and 3) allows its Reggio Emilia-Inspired teaching philosophy to be fully realized. We urge you to restore modernization funding in the FY 2016 budget for SWS at Goding and to keep the District's commitment to modernize it and all of the DCPS elementary schools across town. Thank you for providing great weight to the request of this Commission.

Sincerely,



Phil Toomajian
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

cc: Deputy Mayor for Education Jennifer Niles
Chancellor Kaya Henderson, D.C. Public Schools
Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6 Councilmember