

Council of the District of Columbia
COMMITTEE ON FACILITIES
NOTICE OF A JOINT PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
AND
COUNCILMEMBER JANESE LEWIS GEORGE, CHAIRPERSON
COMMITTEE ON FACILITIES

ANNOUNCE A JOINT PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE
on

“Heating and Indoor Air Quality Failures in the District of Columbia’s Public Schools”
on

Wednesday, February 12, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.
in

Room 120 (Track D)
of the John. A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

and via Zoom Online Platform

Streamed live at www.janeeseward4.com/live

On Wednesday, February 12, 2024, at 2:00 p.m., Chairman Mendelson and Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Chair of the Committee on Facilities, will hold a joint roundtable for agency representatives and invited witnesses on “Heating and Indoor Air Quality Failures in District of Columbia’s Public Schools.”

Several public schools in the District have reported HVAC issues during the winter months, citing inadequate heating and low temperatures within school buildings. Both the schools and the Department of General Services (DGS) have implemented temporary heating solutions while awaiting permanent repairs. These heating challenges have arisen amidst dangerously cold temperatures in the D.C. region, creating unsafe learning environments for students. One of the affected schools is Lorraine H. Whitlock Elementary School, a newly renovated facility. Despite undergoing a \$45 million renovation and reopening in August 2024, the school has experienced significant heating issues, with building temperatures dropping below 50 degrees. Unfortunately, Whitlock’s experience is not new nor unique. After Roosevelt High School’s \$136 million modernization in 2016, HVAC failures have occurred each year since; resulting in frequent system outages of heating and cooling functionality throughout the building. These system failures have led to millions of dollars in repairs, component replacements, and emergency contracting to provide temporary heating (and cooling) contingencies. These situations raise serious concerns about the functionality of the newly installed HVAC systems and the efficiency of DGS and its contractors in properly installing, maintaining, and repairing HVAC systems.

In addition, students, parents, and educators have reported poor Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) in schools across the District. Poor IAQ can be caused by a wide range of factors including, high levels of particulate matter, low levels of oxygen, high levels of humidity, and uncomfortable temperatures. These factors are exacerbated by interior and exterior conditions, including smoke, the presence of mold, non-functioning HVAC systems, and functioning HVAC systems with non-maintained filters. Poor IAQ not only interferes with fostering enriching school environments but also creates unsafe and unhealthy environmental hazards that can cause acute and chronic adverse health effects, especially for people with disabilities, including those with asthma and other respiratory conditions.

The purpose of this roundtable is to address the widespread heating and air quality failures in public schools across the District of Columbia. Specifically, it will review the state of schools' heating and air quality this past fall and winter, assess DGS' efforts to address issues, examine DGS' current processes and systemic challenges, and identify next steps to ensure all work orders and capital projects related to maintaining safe temperatures and air quality are completed promptly and effectively.

This hearing is limited to agency representatives and invited witnesses. Those who wish to submit testimony for the record may do so by using the Council's Hearing Management System at <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/hearings> or by leaving a voicemail at 202-741-8593 (up to 3 minutes which will be transcribed). Testimony will be publicly accessible upon Committee review. **The record will close at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 26, 2025.** If you have questions, please contact Bijan Verlin, Legislative Policy Advisor for the Committee of the Whole, at 202-724-4865 or bverlin@dccouncil.gov, or Sebastian Weinmann, Committee Director of the Committee on Facilities, at 202-741-8595 or sweinmann@dccouncil.gov.