June 11, 2020

Chairman Phil Mendelson
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

On behalf of ANC3B, I would like to share our concerns regarding Mayor Bowser’s proposed school budget for fiscal year 2021. We appreciate the Mayor’s continued support for increasing investments in the city’s public and public charter schools and are generally supportive of her proposal to establish a new elementary school on the grounds of the Hardy Recreation Center and the old Hardy School in nearby Ward 2. However, we oppose the Mayor’s proposal to re-allocate $20.5 million in funding for the new school facility away from existing plans to add needed capacity at Stoddert Elementary School.

While construction of a new school facility in Foxhall Village may provide some capacity relief for Stoddert Elementary, that relief will not come soon enough to address the significant crowding and capacity issues the school currently faces. When Stoddert was modernized in 2010, it was designed to hold a maximum of 320 students. Yet in school year 2019-2020, over 500 students were enrolled. Stoddert is already expecting enrollment of 525 in the fall of 2020, or 200 students beyond its designed capacity. Assuming the current growth in student population continues, the number of seats needed at Stoddert by 2025 will already equal the number of seats expected to be added at the proposed new Foxhall School.

Overcrowding at Stoddert has had a significant, negative impact on the school’s education and enrichment programs. Cafeteria crowding is forcing students to eat their meals in hallways, while other students are forced to have their lunch at 10:30 AM to accommodate all the students. The school also lacks the space to accommodate the arts
and music program that DCPS is intent on moving away from Fillmore Arts Center. Other students are forced to learn in “temporary” trailers that sit beyond the school’s secure perimeter, putting students and teachers at needless risk.

Building a new school several neighborhoods away will do nothing to address Stoddert’s present overcrowding. That is because the new school will not be completed until, at best, fiscal year 2026, according to the Mayor’s own projections. In contrast, restoring the $20.5 million that had originally been allocated for the expansion of Stoddert Elementary School will provide direct relief much sooner. That expansion, if funded now, could be completed within the District’s 2022 fiscal year, providing capacity relief within the span of a single school year.

That is why ANC 3B strongly urges you and the entire Council to ensure that the promised $20.5 million for Stoddert’s expansion be restored to the budget. Doing this will provide more immediate education relief to one of the city’s most successful elementary schools, providing a safer and more secure learning environment for hundreds of our children.

Sincerely,

Brian Turmail
Chairman

This letter was approved by a vote of five to zero at a duly noticed public meeting of the Commission on June 11, 2020, at which a quorum was present. (Three of the five members constitute a quorum.) With this vote, the Commission also designated the Chairman or his designee to represent ANC3B on this matter.

CC: Mary Cheh, Councilmember, Ward 3; David Gross, Councilmember At Large; Charles Allen, Councilmember, Ward 6; Robert White, Councilmember At Large; Trayon White, Councilmember, Ward 8; Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn; Stoddert PTO President Jorge Highland