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Authorizing the City Council Committees on Children and Youth and Finance to hold joint hearings on a plan to fund a comprehensive remediation and modernization of Philadelphia's public school buildings to address major facilities flaws, adapt to a changing climate, and ensure public school students have the safe and modern buildings they deserve.

WHEREAS, Modern, safe schools have profoundly positive impacts on students, staff members, and surrounding communities, but Black and Latinx students across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania disproportionately attend old and unsafe facilities. In Philadelphia, the average age of a public school is nearly 70 years old, and the School District of Philadelphia has projected that the cost needed solely to remediate major facilities deficiencies is approximately $5 billion; and

WHEREAS, The *Philadelphia Inquirer*'s "Toxic City: Sick Schools" series in 2018 chronicled decades of deferred maintenance and failed remediation that has resulted in exposure of both students and school staff to hazards such as asbestos, lead, and mold in over 200 public schools. Additionally, a majority of buildings in the District lack air conditioning, which has resulted in school closures due to increasingly hot temperatures, as well as quality ventilation and filtration, which rendered city schools unable to safely open for in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The District has struggled to manage renovation projects in old buildings that threaten the safety of students and staff. An Inspector General report in 2020 regarding the botched construction and subsequent closure of the Ben Franklin High School and Science Leadership Academy shared campus castigated the District for repeated failures to listen to concerns about the conditions created during construction and failure to establish any contingency plan; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, the District has seen tragic death and severe injury, including 25-year employee Chris Trakimas, who died following injuries sustained from a boiler explosion at Franklin S. Edmonds Elementary School in 2016; veteran teacher Lea DiRusso, who developed incurable mesothelioma; and first grader Dean Pagan, who suffered from lead poisoning after allegedly eating lead paint chips off his desk; and

WHEREAS, The District has begun meaningful efforts to address the legacy of deferred maintenance. Capital expenditures have increased nearly eightfold in recent years from their low point in 2011, including the issuance of capital bonds in 2019 and 2021. State and philanthropic funds have committed over $100 million to support remediating environmental hazards in schools such as lead and asbestos. The District has commenced the process of updating its facilities conditions assessments, to reflect changing conditions and the cost of modernizing school buildings in addition to addressing existing deficiencies; and

WHEREAS, Despite these efforts, the District's current level of planned annual capital investment is still far below the amount needed to address major deficiencies and put the District on a path to sustainability, based on past facilities assessments conducted by the District in partnership with Parsons Environmental and Infrastructure Group. State investments in school construction and maintenance have not fully recovered since severe cuts to Pennsylvania's state education budget in 2011, which was accompanied by a moratorium on new

applications to PlanCon for state reimbursement of school construction expenditures that remains in place today; and

WHEREAS, Recent and proposed massive federal funding streams present a critical opportunity to remake our schools while creating thousands of high-quality, union jobs, improving health outcomes, reducing carbon emissions, and increasing the resilience of school buildings to extreme weather. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act is providing over $1.1 billion in funding to the District for COVID-19 relief; ARP funds given to the state, combined with surplus revenues from last year, amount to approximately $7 billion in unspent funds, which may be used for infrastructure investments such as modernizing schools' heating, ventilation, and cooling systems. In 2020, Governor Wolf proposed more than $1 billion in state funding to address asbestos and lead in school buildings and has repeatedly advocated about the need to end lead exposure across the state. Potential federal infrastructure investments could provide additional funds for improvements such as electrical grid upgrades necessary to install air conditioning, and a Green New Deal for Schools proposal has called for a $1.4 trillion investment in healthy green retrofits for school buildings; and

WHEREAS, Urgent investment is both necessary and fiscally responsible, as failing to address facilities deficiencies continues to drain resources from the District. Ignoring capital needs such as damaged roofs and exteriors, leaky boilers, and poor ventilation leads to increased maintenance costs and other issues such as extensive mold growth, damaged ceilings, and asbestos disturbances. The District has estimated that the annual life-cycle replacement costs should be $330 million in order to maintain the inadequate status quo building conditions; however, past funding has fallen far short of this target, leaving our buildings to fall further behind each year; and

WHEREAS, Modernizing our buildings would create safe environments that support young people's learning and development. Classrooms with abundant natural light boost student morale and reduce off-task behavior; quality acoustics quiet external noise and distractions; clean air keeps students healthy and in school; temperate classrooms allow for summer programming and continued operation in the face of global warming; sufficient space and equipment permits varied activities and modes of instruction. Further, access to areas such as art rooms, school gardens, science labs, and makerspaces enrich the educational environment and have shown positive effects on teacher retention. Spaces such as playgrounds and gyms promote physical health and joyful play, and fully equipped cafeterias encourage better nutrition and socialization; and

WHEREAS, Energy efficient, carbon-zero, and waste-zero buildings will minimize schools' climate impacts, reduce costs, and serve as green jobs training centers for both students and community members. These large scale workforce development efforts will provide an opportunity to create a diverse pipeline for union jobs, preparing students for careers in sustainability while they learn skills ranging from stormwater management to building retrofits; and

WHEREAS, For far too long we have sent Philadelphia's children into aging buildings that have put their health at risk and failed to set them up for success. The closure of 10 schools due to asbestos concerns during the 2019-20 school year and resulting displacement of students, as well as more recent issues this fall with school construction and reopening at Masterman, Science Leadership Academy at Beeber, and others, highlight the urgent need for major renovation as well as the need to listen to and communicate truthfully with students, staff, and families. Additionally, undertaking construction and renovation of this magnitude will require significant management and accountability as well as appropriate labor agreements. As such, careful consideration should be given regarding how to develop internal capacity within the District and the City to effectively oversee such a grand endeavor; and



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WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia must follow the path of other peer cities that have pursued ambitious plans to overhaul their public school buildings. For example, after years of advocacy from parents and the 21st Century Schools Fund, Washington, DC committed to modernizing its buildings and has invested over $5 billion to construct new school buildings and renovate others over the past two decades. New York City's School Construction Authority is upgrading electrical systems across their buildings and is on track to meet their Mayor's 5-year promise to install air conditioning units in every classroom by 2022; and

WHEREAS, Students, caregivers, teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, school support staff, and community members deserve safe, healthy, accessible school buildings. It is time for Philadelphia to embark on a massive investment to transform our facilities in partnership with those who bring vibrancy and resilience to our schools each and every day; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the City Council Committees on Children and Youth and Finance to hold joint hearings on a plan to fund a comprehensive remediation and modernization of Philadelphia's public school buildings to address major facilities flaws, adapt to a changing climate, and ensure public school students have the safe and modern buildings they deserve.



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