

December 2, 2013

Councilmember McDuffie:

The proposed “Comprehensive Planning and Utilization of School Facilities Amendment Act of 2013” (“B20-313”) is now before your Government Operations Committee.

We write to urge that before proceeding to mark up on B20—313, you hold a hearing or a roundtable to solicit views on the subject.

There is more than enough time to conduct a careful review and consider important community perspectives before passage. The first major action required under the bill is a report by the Office of Public Education Facilities Planning (“OPEFP”) due on December 15, 2014. While that report is to be informed by data provided earlier by other D.C. agencies and the Public Charter School Board, the Council has the time to give it the review it requires now.

Indeed, this bill could have very significant ramifications for the management of our public assets that should be carefully considered before moving it forward., The bill is styled a “comprehensive planning” bill and the version for mark-up includes some elements that could support planning that were not included in the version as originally submitted. That said, the bill is intended to and does further constrain discretion in the management of our public assets and could further foreclose flexibility to use our public assets to meet critical community needs.

There is a need for comprehensive planning in the education space. The question is whether this bill advances that goal or not.

The bill creates a framework that could contribute in 2015 (with critical decisions to be made in January 2015) to the removal of public assets worth many millions of dollars, and critical assets to meet a myriad of potential community needs, from the municipal control for up to 50 years.

Our city leaders should think carefully before proceeding further down this path, and at a minimum, we urge that you conduct a hearing or roundtable before proceeding to mark-up to hear views both in support of and opposition to B20-313 as written and to hear specific suggestions for how it might be modified or replaced.

Sincerely,

Faith G. Hubbard  
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Caryn Ernst  
Cathy Reilly  
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President, Ward Five Council on Education  
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Keisha Warner, M.Ed	DCPS Parent, Ward 5 Resident
Jack Koczela	Leader of Prop 100 Movement to Modernize DCPS buildings
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Mary Levy	Education Budget Analyst
Matthew Frumin	Ward 3 ANC Commissioner/Education Activist
Peter MacPherson	School Without Walls Parent
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