



Washington Teachers' Union

Fighting for the schools DC's community deserves

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington Teachers' Union Calls for Immediate Action as Mounting Facilities Failures Across DCPS Go Unaddressed

Washington, D.C. — The Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) is calling for urgent, system-wide intervention as facilities failures continue to jeopardize the health and safety of students and educators across DC Public Schools. From raccoons falling through ceilings at Noyes Elementary to extreme heat conditions at Ballou STAY due to a non-functioning chiller, these incidents reflect a growing pattern of delayed responses and inadequate maintenance by the Department of General Services (DGS).

At Noyes Elementary School, educators have reported multiple raccoons entering the building, including one that fell through a classroom ceiling, with remediation efforts delayed for days. Staff documented ongoing health hazards from raccoon feces, urine, and parasites, yet DGS failed to deploy a timely response team, leaving students and educators exposed to dangerous conditions.

At Ballou STAY, educators arrived on the morning of May 18 to find the building without air conditioning. Classroom temperatures reached 88 degrees and continued rising throughout the day, creating unsafe learning and working conditions, particularly for individuals with health concerns. Staff report that this is not an isolated incident but a recurring problem throughout the school year.

In response to the Ballou STAY incident, the Chancellor shared that “one of the chillers is not working. DGS has already been contacted and we are waiting on an update regarding a contingency or repair.” However, educators and the WTU emphasize that delayed communication and slow action have become the norm not the exception.

WTU President Laura Fuchs stressed the urgency of addressing these systemic failures:

“It is crucial that our buildings are safe spaces for our students, educators, and staff. DCPS and DGS need to do better at communicating with parents, staff, and educators regarding clear protocols and updates on what has been done.”

The WTU notes that these incidents are part of a broader pattern of unresolved work orders, HVAC failures, pest infestations, leaks, mold, and structural issues across DCPS



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buildings. Many schools report months-long delays for basic repairs, inconsistent communication from DGS, and a lack of transparency around timelines and remediation plans.

The WTU is calling for immediate action, including:

- Rapid-response protocols for all health and safety hazards
- Clear, timely communication with school communities
- Comprehensive inspections of buildings with repeated or unresolved work orders
- Public reporting on DGS response times and repair status
- Accountability measures to ensure DGS meets basic safety and operational standards

The union is also encouraging families and staff to document conditions and, when necessary, contact local media to ensure transparency and accountability. The Washington Teachers' Union will continue monitoring conditions across DCPS and advocating for immediate, comprehensive action to ensure every school building is safe, healthy, and fully operational for students and staff.

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About the Washington Teachers' Union

The WTU represents more than 6,000 active and retired teachers. It is dedicated to social and educational justice for the students of the District of Columbia and to improving the quality of support, resources, compensation and working conditions for the public servants and proud teachers who educate our students in D.C. Public Schools. Learn more at www.WTULocal6.net.

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