

## **Megan Higgins Palomo**

### **“Closing schools harms neighborhoods.”**

I am submitting my written testimony for the PPS public hearing on 6/23/25. Despite trying several times, I was not able to pre-register to speak and therefore am submitting my testimony via email.

I am a PPS parent, community volunteer and tax paying citizen of Pittsburgh and am outraged by the plan to close 9 buildings across our district. You have already heard a lot about the many ways in which the closure plan will impact students, families and teachers. In addition to those concerns, I would like to speak about the ways in which school closures harm neighborhoods and communities.

**It is well documented that school closures have detrimental effects on cities.** (sources below)

Schools are the beating heart of neighborhoods- spaces that not only provide vital education facilities but also community gathering space, social connectivity, civic duty and enhanced safety and sense of place for residents.

**School closures cause blight, disinvestment, increased crime and reduced safety for the surrounding residents.** Other cities like Philadelphia, Detroit and St. Louis, who have implemented plans very similar to yours, recorded no improvement to academic performance and little cost savings over time, however blight and disinvestment surrounding the vacant buildings significantly increased.

**School buildings are very difficult to sell or repurpose, often taking years, even decades, and significant time and resources on the part of the district.** This leaves huge buildings in the heart of neighborhoods shuttered and abandoned for years, inviting vandalism, illicit activity and disinvestment.

**I urge you to rethink how you can invest in maintaining and improving these school buildings, many of which are architectural gems, beloved educational buildings, and vital community assets.** They could be the shining stars in your portfolio- an example of how to do things successfully.

You, as our elected officials, have the duty to serve in the best interest of not only our PPS students and families, but the tax paying residents of our city as a whole. The closure of NINE school buildings, many of which encompass whole city blocks, will spread blight and disinvestment across the city and shred the fabric of our tight knit communities across Pittsburgh.

**Hear your constituents and vote NO on resolution 8.11 and commit to working with communities to keep their schools open.**

Thank you,

Megan Higgins Palomo



## Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies Submitted Not Read June 23, 2025

Studies showing how school closures have backfired for cities:

[Shuttered Public Schools: The Struggle to Bring Old Buildings New Life, Pew Charitable Trust](#)

[Revisiting Research on School Closings: Key Learnings for District and Community Leaders, Research for Action](#)

[The Harm of School Closures Can Last a Lifetime, New Research Shows; Education Week](#)

[The Long Shadow of School Closures: Impacts on Students' Educational and Labor Market Outcomes, Brown University](#)



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June 23, 2025

Dear PPS Board of Directors,

As a grandparent and guardian of three children attending Catalyst Academy Charter School, I'm so grateful to have found a school that works so well for each of them. It's not just a place my children go to school — it's where they've belonged, where they've grown, and where they've started to achieve things I never imagined so early in their education.

The level of support my entire family has received is remarkable. They are intentional about creating a supportive environment not just for children but for the entire family. I regularly hear from teachers and administrators about the progress my grandchildren are making.

Families like mine rely on Catalyst to be a safe, caring, and academically strong place for our children. I strongly support the renewal of their charter and hope you will continue to stand with schools that put students and families first.

Sincerely,

Rita Thomas