

# Public Hearing Testimonies (B) Not Read

November 24, 2025

Owen Fink

Testimony B

November 24 2025 Public Hearing

My name is Owen Fink, and I am a dedicated PPS employee and a proud member of Local 297 who has given everything to this district. I am writing because I am genuinely at the end of my rope, and so are most of my coworkers. We have now rejected *two* tentative agreements not because we want conflict, but because the offers were simply not livable, not respectful, and not compatible with the reality of the work we do every single day.

**The district is offering only a 3% raise for the next two years and refusing to include retroactive pay for the full year we have already worked without a contract.**

This is unacceptable, and it is insulting to every employee who has kept PPS functioning through staff shortages, emergencies, and impossible workloads.

We have gone an entire year without a contract.

We have gone an entire year without the raise we should have already received.

And now we're being told the district wants to pretend that year didn't exist that we don't deserve retro pay, that our missed raise doesn't matter, that our loyalty was worth nothing.

Meanwhile, costs have gone up, inflation is high, and we are barely keeping our heads above water. Many of us are now working second jobs just to afford rent, groceries, and basic bills. We are one emergency away from not being able to survive and PPS's current offer does *nothing* to fix that.

We need the Board to direct administration to come back to the table with:

- **Retroactive pay** for the year we worked without a contract
- A proposal that actually respects the essential work custodial, maintenance, food service, and support staff provide every single day

We are doing everything in our power to avoid a strike but I need to tell you honestly that people are at their limit. Staff cannot accept contracts that leave us financially struggling, disrespected, and disregarded.

The district cannot function without us.

Students cannot be safe without us.

Schools cannot operate without us.

All we are asking for is fairness.

Let me be very clear:

**Two rejected contracts in a row means the district's offers are not even close.**

Morale is collapsing. People are quitting. Others are openly saying they don't know how much longer they can stay. Many of us feel like our entire career is on the line because these terms simply aren't livable.

I need to be brutally honest:

**We are operating this district on fumes.**

Custodial, maintenance, food service, and support staff are keeping schools open under conditions that would never be tolerated in any other profession. We are scraping by on wages that do not match the workload, the expectations, or the cost of living in Pittsburgh. Meanwhile, the district continues to move slowly, offer minimal improvements, and ignore the fact that hundreds of us are barely hanging on.

This contract situation is no longer “negotiations.”

**It is a full-blown crisis.**

Two failed contracts should tell the district everything it needs to know:

**The workers are not being heard.**

**The offers are not close to fair.**

**And morale is collapsing.**

We cannot continue like this for much longer without major consequences. People are looking for other jobs. People are burning out. People are afraid they’ll never be able to retire with dignity. Many of us feel like we’re about to lose our livelihoods because we simply cannot survive under the current conditions.

I am asking no, insisting that the Board intervene immediately and direct administration to return to the table with a real, meaningful offer. Not another minimal raise. Not another recycled proposal with cosmetic changes. A **serious** offer that reflects the value of the people who physically keep PPS operating every single day.

If this situation is not resolved quickly, the district is heading straight toward disruptions that nobody wants not staff, not students, not families, not even the union. But the responsibility now sits squarely with PPS leadership to prevent that.

Please do not underestimate how desperate and frustrated your employees are. We want to work. We want stability. We want to serve students. But we cannot do it without fairness and respect, and we will not accept another weak contract presented as a “solution.”

I’m asking you directly:

**Use your authority. Step in. Demand better from administration.**

The future of PPS depends on it and so do our careers.

Thank you for your attention,

Owen

Tany Haynes

Testimony (B)

November 24, 2025 Public Hearing

Dear School Board Member,

My name is Tany Haynes, and I am the Youth Programs Coordinator at Assemble, a makerspace located in the Garfield neighborhood. We currently partner with the Montessori school to provide free after-school programming for the students who attend.

I'm writing to express serious concerns about the proposed district overhaul, specifically the plan to relocate the Montessori program. While I understand the goal of improving facilities district-wide, this move would have significant negative impacts on both the school and the broader community. Additionally, we risk losing important grant funding tied to student retention and consistency.

Beyond the school itself, the move would deeply affect the Garfield neighborhood. The Montessori program serves as a community anchor—families, local organizations, and businesses rely on its presence. Uprooting it would weaken community stability and reduce access to supportive partnerships such as ours.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Board to reconsider the relocation or explore alternatives that allow the Montessori program to remain in place. The long-term costs to families, staff, and the neighborhood far outweigh any potential benefits of moving the program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tany

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Tany Haynes

In House Youth Programs Coordinator/ Assemble Educator

she/her

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**Stephanie Wittman-Miller**

**Testimony B**

Dear Board members,

I am writing to you all to ask that you please vote NO regarding the Facilities Plan! There are too many unanswered questions that make it not logical to move forward with this plan. My son currently attends South Hills Middle school, one of the schools slated to close but no one has gone to see the amazing things being done at this school. South Hills was open to give families in the South Hills neighborhoods (Mt. Washington, parts of South Side, Beechview, Banksville, Beltzhoover, Knoxville, and parts of Brookline) a community middle school that their children could attend in their area and now you are trying to take it away. I'd like to touch on a few of the many positives that South Hills offers its students such as the ability for students to take World Language and higher level math courses next door at Brashear and the utilization of shared transportation with the High School...which I'm sure saves the district money! They also have a large population of students that are walkers.

I have heard claims that the change will include eventually giving middle school students access to World Language teachers but when? We are currently in a National teacher shortage so eventually is not good enough for me especially when students have access to highly trained teachers right now next door! Next, transportation is shared with Brashear, which saves on money I am sure. The amount of money that will be spent to transport the displaced students does not make any sense to me when you can keep South Hills open and utilize its current transportation model. Additionally, it is housed in an already air conditioned space that not only gives the students access to outdoor facilities along with a gym and pool. To send these students off to schools without these facilities is something else that does not sit well with me and many other parents!

Furthermore, have you considered what this "plan" will do to middle school sports? Closing middle schools will not only lead to less opponents to go against but it will surly lead to less opportunities for students to participate due to not enough spots on teams. Sports have a huge impact on student achievement and to lose the ability to participate would be a huge loss to so many. I fear that this will then spread into the High Schools, as students will not have received to confidence to pursue a sport because they didn't have a

chance to play/learn in middle school. Please reconsider closing South Hills as it is a wonderful school that sends students onto High School well prepared and ready to take on the next four years! Again, they have access to World Languages and higher level math classes next door, they share transportation with Brashear, no work needs to be done to their building, and they have access to sports fields, a pool, a fitness room (houses in South Hills), and also offer STEAM classes. The staff is amazing as well! WE ARE SOUTH HILLS!

Thank you,

Stephanie Miller

South Hills Middle School parent

Marimba Milliones

Testimony (B)

November 25, 2025

Testimony of Marimba Milliones RE: PPS Facilities Plan

Good evening. My name is Marimba Milliones, President and CEO of the Hill CDC, and I am speaking as part of the Hill District Education Stakeholders. I want to focus my remarks on the community development implications of the proposed facilities plan and why closing Miller School is not aligned with the documented growth occurring in the Hill District which is experiencing one of the most significant waves of reinvestment in generations.

The Choice Neighborhoods redevelopment has already brought new families, with more expected by 2028. This growth is not speculative. It is funded, underway, and visible on our streets.

In addition, PPS has now signed an intergovernmental cooperation agreement with the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to speed up the reuse of vacant, tax delinquent, and publicly owned parcels. The Hill District is one of the neighborhoods most affected by this agreement because of the volume of available land. This will directly increase future housing, neighborhood density, and the number of school aged children who will need stable, high quality education in the community.

Closing Miller School at this time risks creating future capacity shortages in a neighborhood that is already growing. It is far more difficult and expensive to correct a loss of capacity later.

We also raise concerns about transition timelines, safety conditions, cultural competency, transportation gaps, special education supports, instructional continuity, and whether Weil is prepared to absorb students without compromising the quality of learning. A six month shift is not developmentally appropriate for young children, especially for students with

IEPs or behavioral support needs.

We are asking the Board to vote no on closing Miller School. We are also asking for deeper collaboration between PPS and Hill District Education Stakeholders as decisions move forward. We want a planning process that reflects accurate data, cultural and academic equity, and the long term stability of our schools.

Every day, the Hill District loses hundreds of children to schools outside the neighborhood, and families cite instability and school performance as key reasons. If we want to retain Hill District students in Hill District schools, we must strengthen the quality of the experience and the outcomes for children and families.

Finally, I want to share why this moment is personal to me. I am the youngest daughter of Margaret Milliones. She and my father, Jake Milliones, both served on the Pittsburgh School Board and gave much of their lives to solving problems that PPS is still grappling with today. When I was a child, the Hill District had two schools that performed among the best in the City. Madison Elementary under Vivian Williams. Vann Elementary under Doris Brevard. Beltzhoover had Lou Venson. These were African American school leaders who were exemplary and set standards of excellence that shaped generations of children.

I come here in honor of those who sacrificed so much, and in the spirit and belief that we do not have to settle. No child in Pittsburgh Public Schools should be without quality educational options. Our City cannot afford it socially or economically.

So in the words of Margaret Milliones, whose name I humbly ask you to preserve permanently, and whose legacy I ask you to uplift in the daily work of educating Pittsburgh's children:

“What we need is a quality education for every student in every school without regard to color, sex, or race. More specifically, I would like to see Black children nurtured and taught by the system instead of being wounded by it.”

Thank you for your consideration.