



**Bloomfield  
Garfield  
CORPORATION**

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November 24, 2025

Testimony delivered to Board of Directors, Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Re: School Facility Closure Plan

Dear Board Members:

Our community development organization has followed from a distance all of the media coverage of the efforts of Pittsburgh Public Schools to reduce its physical footprint in the wake of declining enrollment and the difficult budgetary picture confronting the system in 2026 and beyond.

While we agree that some downsizing of the district-run schools is inevitable, we wonder if the board members have truly grasped how the current plan before you will have lasting repercussions here in the East End. We have spent the past 45 years revitalizing the Garfield and Friendship neighborhoods, and that work has leveraged over \$150 million in new residential and commercial investments. These efforts have helped to anchor a number of new families with young children in our community, and *their* presence has boosted enrollment at a number of public schools in the area, including Friendship Montessori.

The plan before you at the moment would close not only the Montessori building, but also the Woolslair and Fulton School buildings in Bloomfield and Highland Park, respectively, and relocate the Arsenal Elementary School altogether from Lawrenceville. Taken together, it will leave the following neighborhoods without a district-run elementary school: Garfield, Bloomfield, Friendship, Morningside, Lawrenceville, and Highland Park. This is one of the densest clusters of households anywhere in the city, and yet it will be bereft of even a single, district-run elementary school.

As the old saying goes once the toothpaste is out of the tube, there is no putting it back in. Charter and private schools will recognize the void you'll be creating, and will move to fill it. A new generation of students will be educated outside of the mainstream system, and the erosion of the district's brand will continue. It will only be a matter of time before Arsenal Middle School closes because there will not be a sufficient number of students feeding into it. The same could ultimately prove true for Obama Academy.

We would strongly encourage the board to keep at least one of the four schools (Woolslair, Fulton, Montessori, or Arsenal) open in the area and not abandon it altogether. If a choice has to be made, we would clearly argue for Friendship Montessori. While it's clear the building could benefit from a number of upgrades to improve its long-term viability, it is hardly a school that is suffering from declining enrollment. If it has to be moved regardless of the community support for it, then let the move to Point Breeze be a temporary one while the district plans and implements the necessary capital improvements to the facility by 2029. Otherwise, all you'll be doing is making it even harder for kids living in Garfield, Friendship and Bloomfield whose families value what Montessori has to offer.

As for the plan to make Sunnyside Elementary a feeder school for kids living in Garfield, nothing could be more



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simple-minded than to have it be classified as “walkable” for those students. I would suggest board members try making the hike themselves over two hills to the Sunnyside building. It is a laughable premise. Woolslair would actually be more accessible to students from Garfield or Friendship if they had to make it there on foot.

We do not envy the school board in trying to decide what the best course of action is at this stage. But don't be lulled into thinking that the plan that's been placed before you is anything more than another step in the demise of a long-standing public commitment to educating all children, regardless of their means, their intellectual capabilities, or their ethnic backgrounds.

Sincerely,



Rick Swartz

Executive Director

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