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**Testimony before the Board of Education**

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Good Afternoon, I'm Jerry Jordan, President of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. This spring as we were thrust into the COVID-19 crisis, our 13,000 members, along with parents and students, put forth herculean efforts as they navigated what many days felt nearly impossible. Remote learning was profoundly challenging, and for students with special needs, students learning English, and students experiencing poverty, the challenges can be exacerbated even more. Believe me, educators want to be in schools, supporting our students face to face, **as long as it is safe**. And that's not selfish—it's human.

But students and staff **cannot be asked to jeopardize their lives and the lives of their families** by passively accepting a plan that is, as it is currently written, entirely insufficient and lacks absolutely non-negotiable safeguards.

The PFT has released a series of requirements for school reopening rooted in protecting our young people and educators. And number one is virus tracking. Without a sustained positivity rate of lower than 5% (which Philadelphia is currently exceeding) combined with a sustained reproduction rate of lower than 1, it will be unsafe for buildings to reopen. These metrics must be the foundation of decision making.

And even then, we can only consider reopening buildings if the plan that the District intends to use is workable, rooted in science, and enforceable. **And right now, the plan, as it is currently written, is terrifying.**

Terms like “when feasible” scattered throughout this plan will **literally mean life or death for educators and students**. The failure to adopt even the PFT's most basic requirements around square footage calculations is infuriating. I've heard stories of principals going into buildings and literally measuring rooms. While I applaud their effort, the fact that they are being put in this situation is reprehensible. Under no circumstances can it be left to an individual school administrator to measure, develop, and implement a program of this magnitude.

Similarly, perilous issues abound regarding ventilation. Fresh air flow is critical. And by that, I mean scientific measures evaluated by scientists.

There are hundreds of issues that I could discuss at length regarding the District's plan. The PPE provisions are absurd. To supply employees with one 'complimentary' cloth mask per year, with only some teachers receiving face shields and masks, is insulting. Further, the lack of specialized PPE for our teachers, nurses, and support staff who work with our students with complex physical needs is **reckless**.

**Our plan right now cannot be based on an assumption that buildings will open in September.**

**It's the end of July, and we have upticks in cases, an irresponsible plan, and a morally bankrupt leader in the White House.** This is why we have been adamant that the District must be planning a robust remote learning program now.

What I've laid out today is a fraction of the concerns we're hearing from our members. We've received over 4,000 question submissions regarding the reopening plan.

**Our members are terrified. And so am I.**

***These are lives we're talking about—and I should not have to say this—but "where feasible" just doesn't cut it.***