



PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

**Philadelphia City Council
Committee of the Whole
Bill 200366
December 1, 2020**

**Testimony by:
Jerry T. Jordan, President of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers**

Good afternoon Council President Clarke and all members of the City Council. My name is Jerry Jordan, and I am the president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today regarding Bill 200366.

Last year, City Council passed legislation that made changes to the 10-year tax abatement given to housing developers. This legislation, which would have ultimately allowed more tax dollars to flow to Philadelphia's schools was another instance of our local leaders doing their part to fund public education. Thus, we were disappointed in learning that the City Council is considering a measure that will push back the ten-year abatement of the new construction for an additional year. This means less funding for our schools during a pandemic that has disrupted every aspect of our students and PFT members' lives and slashed our city and state budget.

Time and again, we have said that the conditions in which Philadelphia's children, a majority of whom are Black and Brown and experiencing poverty, would never, ever be tolerated in a wealthier, whiter school district. Our students and staff cannot afford to continue learning and working in buildings that can quite literally poison them. These concerns are particularly heightened in the wake of COVID-related safety concerns surrounding the re-occupancy of school buildings. **Bill 200366 not only takes away much-needed funding for our schools, but it also demonstrates that our city is once again prioritizing wealthy developers over its school children.**

We understand that economic development is needed for our city to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, however, that does not mean we should turn our back on children and families who are struggling both financially and emotionally during this time. The long-lasting impacts — both in terms of learning regression and impacts of the trauma of this crisis — will require careful attention and resources.



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Our response to the crisis must be reflective of whom we want to be as a society. Quite simply, we must reject efforts to prioritize economic development over public goods such as public education. I believe that our great city can do both at the same time: spur economic development while also supporting its public schools. It should not be an either/or situation.

Even before the pandemic, our students and teachers were learning and teaching in buildings that were unacceptable and deadly. We must fund our public schools more than ever. We have to ask ourselves, are we going to invest in crucial programs and services that our children not only deserve but to which they are also legally entitled? Or are we going to prioritize wealthy developers? We cannot be taking away the funding that was promised to our cities school youth. This is never acceptable, but now it seems unconscionable during a global pandemic. Yet, this bill does just that.

We all want the same thing: for our city's schools to prosper and thrive for all. When Council is asked to make hard choices for the constituents and communities they serve, I know that they will find a way to make sure that the students we all serve have what they need to truly thrive. That's why I ask that this body reject Bill 200366.

Thank you for your time and consideration.