

# THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

## HEALTHY SCHOOLS

### THE PROBLEM

- **Schoolchildren, educators, and school staff face widespread environmental hazards in Philadelphia district schools** like peeling lead paint, deteriorating asbestos, mold, rodent infestations, and leaking roofs and pipes. These conditions cause serious health issues and disrupt learning and teaching, as a 2018 investigation by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Daily News* exposed.
- Philadelphia has long struggled with the challenges posed by the age of its school buildings, but the severity and wide scope of today's building conditions is in large part the result of **massive and long term structural underfunding and budget cuts** to maintenance, operations, and capital infrastructure programs over the past two decades, accelerating during the Corbett administration. This has resulted in dangerously inadequate levels in needed environmental staff and building engineers as well as cleaning and maintenance crews.
- While some budget cuts have been restored, the District has relied on outside contractors who are expensive and often do substandard work, rather than hiring back necessary district personnel. Without proper staffing levels, there has been inadequate oversight from the District.
- Routine and preventive maintenance is deferred, leading to more damage and deterioration and to larger, more costly problems. It can take months or longer to address conditions reported by staff and when they are addressed, the work is often done during "schools hours", further exposing students and staff to toxic fumes, contaminated dust, and excessive noise that makes learning difficult.

### OUR SOLUTION

- Allocate new City money to the School District and ensure that this money, such as money coming in from ending the 10-year tax abatement, is put towards cleaning up toxic lead, asbestos, rodents, and insects, and repairing faulty electrical, poor ventilation, and climate control in all Philadelphia schools.
- With additional funds, hire, train, and reorganize permanent School District environmental, cleaning and maintenance, and building engineer staff:
  - Restore environmental and maintenance staff to pre-Corbett cut levels. Hire and train additional staff and facilitate recruitment by increasing wages to \$15/hour.
  - Create new training programs for skilled workers so that the District stops relying on overpriced and unaccountable contract labor.
  - Work with expert stakeholders to develop new practices for faster facilities repairs, training cleaners and painters in specific techniques and changing staff practices like scheduling work to be done after school hours when children and teachers are no longer in the building.
- Create a district-wide Healthy Schools Task Force of parents, students, educators, staff and unions to plan, prioritize, and oversee major capital improvements, as well as short, medium, and long-term repairs and ongoing maintenance.

