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Testimony Submitted to Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors

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Education Law Center (ELC)

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The Education Law Center joins community partners and families in urging Pittsburgh Public Schools to increase transparency and center equity in its review of facilities within the District. We recognize that reevaluating the footprint of the District will be challenging and difficult choices may have to be made. However, these choices should be grounded in principles of equity and based on outcomes of previous school closures, with a focus on ensuring the educational success of those students who are often least served by public education, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

Since we last testified in February about the potential consolidation of schools, the District has published a proposal for a facilities utilization plan. This proposal sets forth high level goals that appropriately include many equitable factors. However, the true impact of any potential school consolidation decisions will be in the details and the plan must also consider how a potential building closure will impact neighborhoods. School buildings are beacons in communities and the unintended consequences of building closures can be devastating. We encourage the District to set forth a more detailed plan on how factors other than functional utilization rates will be considered when difficult building consolidation decisions are made.

Additionally, although the proposal states that community engagement will be a key part of creating the plan forward, the transparency to date surrounding the plan and data collected could be improved. Community engagement is only meaningful if it is a two-way process. The District should be willing to share the data it has

collected without the need for public records requests. And, it should provide additional information on how exactly they intend to ensure that equitable factors set forth in the proposal are woven and weighted into any potential facility utilization plan.

Who we are: Education Law Center (ELC) is a legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all of Pennsylvania's children have access to a quality public education, in particular the most underserved students: children living in poverty, children of color, children with disabilities, children in the foster and juvenile justice systems, children experiencing homelessness, multilingual learners, LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming students, and students at the intersection of those identities.