



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

August 9, 2018

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

In light of the recent discovery of unacceptably high levels of lead on the exterior walls of Building 9, we ask that you immediately stop demolition at the D.C. General campus while families are still housed at this location. Thirty-nine organizations and over 1,000 individuals signed a petition asking you to stop demolition.

The potential danger to the families living at the D.C. General shelter is simply too great to allow the demolition to proceed, given that Administration officials have stated there is no deadline for completing demolition. In any demolition there is a risk of disturbing lead or asbestos even if you have made efforts to remove those toxins from the building. Last week's disclosure that lead has, in fact, been discovered on the property requires your immediate action. Additionally, a demolition will generate dust, which can include insect and rodent droppings that are contained within walls and roofing. Many of the children who use a nearby playground at the D.C. General location suffer from asthma, which is exacerbated by exposure to dust, insect and rodent droppings, or other toxins.

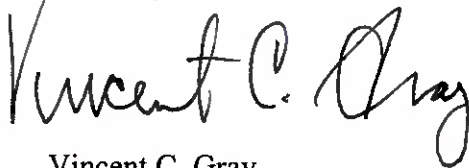
Regardless of whether the families are exposed to contaminants that adversely impact their physical health, there is an even greater likelihood of an adverse impact to the mental health of families from the noise and disruption of this project. In addition to many stressors that are associated with homelessness, many children from homeless families have experienced traumatic incidences. For these families, particularly children, a calm and stable environment is essential. The recent failure of the Department of General Services to promptly notify shelter residents of heightened lead levels in the soil outside the shelter has caused further anxiety and reinforced the distrust of the community in the handling of the overall D.C. General project.

What is clear is that this demolition poses a potential risk to the physical and mental health of the approximately 135 families still living at the D.C. General site in Ward 7. What is not clear is why this is being done now. If there is an intent to develop this property, typically the demolition is paid for and performed by the developer. So, we have a situation in which proceeding with the demolition potentially puts the health of vulnerable residents at risk with no discernable upside that has been publicly articulated. We simply do not understand the urgency to demolish these buildings and certainly cannot imagine a reason that outweighs the danger to the families living on the D.C. General campus. If there is a compelling rationale, please include it along with your next weekly report submitted in accordance with D.C. Act 22-430, the D.C. General Resident Relocation Emergency Act of 2018.

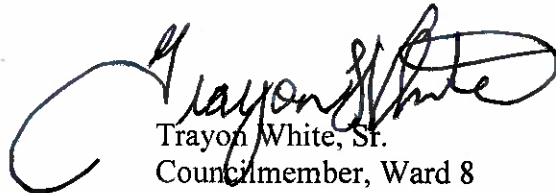


This demolition does nothing to move the closure of D.C. General further any faster, since that challenge involves placing families in safe and stable housing. We respectfully ask that you immediately stop demolition until all families currently residing on site have received other appropriate housing placements.

Sincerely,



Vincent C. Gray  
Councilmember, Ward 7



Trayon White, Sr.  
Councilmember, Ward 8



Robert C. White, Jr.  
Councilmember, At-Large



Elissa Silverman  
Councilmember, At-Large



David Grosso  
Councilmember, At-Large



Mary M. Cheh  
Councilmember, Ward 3



Charles Allen  
Councilmember, Ward 6

cc: Councilmembers of the District of Columbia  
HyeSook Chung, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services  
Brian T. Kenner, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development  
Tommy Wells, Director, Department of Energy & Environment  
Greer Johnson Gillis, Director, Department of General Services