

Good Evening Chairperson Hood, members of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission, and Staff. My name is Serena Wong and I live on 3308 Cathedral Avenue, NW 20008. I am senior at School Without Walls and I have the pleasure of serving as the 2006-2007 Student Government Association President.

I have been attending School Without Walls for four years now and I and many other students like myself, have endured a deteriorating school building while gaining an educational experience at School Without Walls. Although this is the best public high school in the city, our building is literally falling apart, a fire hazard, and is unhealthy to be in.

One of the main problems at School Without Walls is that of inadequate classrooms for students to learn in. Many of our classrooms are crowded and are hard to access. Some classrooms were initially designed to have 25 students. However, later the rooms had to be separated into two to allow students to study at School Without Walls. Thus, a room that was originally built for 25 students now fits 50 students.

In addition to cutting standard rooms in half to accommodate students, many classrooms are designed poorly, making it difficult for both students and parents to access them. For instance, when you enter the second floor and ask to find a math teacher, you find that her room is imbedded in another teacher's room. Not only is such building construction confusing for students, but it is also disruptive for those already learning in the classroom.

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The relationship between The George Washington University and the School Without Walls is a important one. As mentioned by those who spoke earlier, we represent a program for the 21st century—one that uses its city as a classroom, brings new and innovative teaching techniques for students, and most importantly, inspires students to learn. Attending a school across the street from a prestigious university such as The George Washington University gives School Without Walls students, many who otherwise may have never dreamt of attending college or achieving a higher education, a goal and an opportunity to be emerged in a highly positive and inspiring learning environment.

The proposed renovation plan will provide an improved educational environment for both School Without Walls and George Washington students and will update and repair the environmentally hazardous Grant school building. Furthermore, a renovated School Without Walls building will foster a greater relationship between the citizens of the Foggy Bottom community and its students. Thus this plan must be carried out for the benefit of all participants.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Zoning Commission today.