

**Before the District of Columbia City Council
Committee of the Whole and
Committee on Government Operations and the Environment**

March 26, 2010

RE: Pubic Comments -- Bill 18-564 --“The Healthy Schools Act of 2009”

Testimony of Antoinette McIntosh, a member of the Federal City Alumnae Chapter of
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, a Public Service Sorority.

Chairman Gray and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Antoinette McIntosh, a member of the Federal City Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. a public service sorority. We are a private non-profit sisterhood of over 200,000 predominantly black college educated women in over 900 chapters around the world. Our purpose is to provide assistance and support in international and local communities based upon our five-point programmatic thrust: Economic Development, Educational Development, International Awareness and Involvement, Physical and Mental Health and Political Awareness and Involvement. Federal City Alumnae Chapter is also an active volunteer partner with some of DC’s schools and I am a parent of a student at Woodrow Wilson.

I urge you to not only pass this legislation but make sure that it is fully funded. There are numerous studies that show that Healthy Children learn better and childhood obesity is an alarming health concern.¹ The legislation covers a lot, but I will only focus on a few key items.

¹ See http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/child_obesity/, showing increasing trends in childhood obesity.

See also, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/consequences.html>.

Regarding the **Farm-to-School program**, it is clear that food that travels less retains more of its freshness. However, DC has a well documented rodent problem in every ward across the city.² Funding must be allocated for adequate monitoring at the **Central Warehouse**, where the food is to be stored, and at the schools. We also hope that the Council makes appropriate provisions for upgrading food storage facilities³ at the schools and training for preparation of tasty meals with high nutritional value.

Fresh filtered water should already be available to every student in every school.⁴ If this is not currently the case, it should be remedied immediately before the end of this calendar year. Understandably the pipes at some of the schools will need to be upgraded. In the mean time, students should be allowed to bring water bottles from home or water bottles should be distributed.

Students must be given at least **30 minutes to eat**.⁵ This may be difficult for schools with large populations. But we hope that the schools are required to consider all options in ensuring that students get the time that they need to eat including possibly extending the school day.

The legislation prescribes 150 minutes per week for PreK-8 and 225 minutes for grades 9-12 of physical education (PE). However, it only requires that 50 percent of that time be

² See article, "Three Closed DC Schools Won't Reopen Soon," March 22, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/21/AR2010032101114.html>

³ See article, "To Fix School Lunch Program, D.C. Turns to Restaurateur." March 23, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/23/AR2010032301187.html> (stating that Kimball Elementary School in Southeast Washington does not have a kitchen)

See also, post by "The Slow Cook," stating that H.D. Cooke elementary school does not have a stove. <http://www.theslowcook.com/2010/01/19/tales-from-a-d-c-school-kitchen/>

⁴ See "Water: How Much Should You Drink Every Day." <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/water/NU00283>

⁵ This could probably be 20 minutes actual eating time not including getting to the cafeteria and standing in line.

dedicated to actual physical activity. This breaks down to a total time of 30 minutes and 45 minutes a day respectively for physical education with only 50% of that (15 and 22.5 minutes) dedicated to physical activity. Students need time to warm-up, stretch and cool down after engaging in at least 15-20 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity. We believe that at least 60% of the required time for PE should be dedicated to actual physical activity.

Some schools only offer PE once a week because of budget issues. Therefore, classroom teachers should be required to provide the 30 minutes of physical activity on the other days.

The physical activity requirements must be applied to both public and charter schools even though some may lack the physical space for a formal gym. That is a challenge, not an obstacle. You can exercise anywhere and you do not need fancy equipment.⁶

Healthy foods, clean water and physical activity all improve brain function and increase cognitive development. As a parent and as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, I pray that this legislation passes and that the Council takes all necessary steps to ensure that it is properly funded and monitored. My sorority sisters and I will be watching the progress of this bill and its implementation in schools across the city. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns.

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⁶ Students can exercise in the hallways, cafeteria, or furniture can be arranged so that students have space to do basic exercises like jumping jacks, push-ups, sit-ups and stretches.