



**2015 – 2016
BOARD MEMBERS**

February 29, 2016

Robin Diener
President

Marcy Logan
1st Vice-President

Charlie Ellis
2nd Vice President

Allison Fitzsimmons
Secretary

Susan Volman
Treasurer

Phil Carney

Barry Karas

Sarah Peck

Suzanne Richardson

Lance Salonia

Stanton Schnepf

Chancellor Kaya Henderson
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 1st Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

RE: Fillmore Arts Centre Funding

Dear Chancellor Henderson:

The Dupont Circle Citizens' Association (DCCA) has learned that you and your staff intend to cut the funding for the Fillmore Arts Centre from the 2016-17 schools budget as well as subsequent budgets. The DCCA Board considered this matter during its regular meeting on February 25, 2016 and voted to ask you to rescind that decision. Our comments and recommendations follow.

As you may know, the Ross Elementary School (1730 R Street, N.W.) is in the heart of our neighborhood, and is also one of the smallest schools in the DCPS system. According to the DCPS web site, Ross enrolls 166 students; the total enrollment of the five elementary schools served by Fillmore is 1,665 students. None of these schools has the space to provide its own instruction in visual arts, music, drama, dance, or other artistic endeavors such as creative writing. According to the parents and teachers who are DCCA members or friends, Fillmore does an impressive job in developing children's talents and contributing effectively to their well-rounded education. At a time of great emphasis on academic topics, a generous approach to arts education is vital for such rounding; it is also helpful to children's accomplishment in academic subjects.

In small school buildings with no additional space and full enrollment, there is no space to construct an arts program that would, in any way, compare with what Fillmore now offers. If the five affected schools lose Fillmore, the arts education for their students will undoubtedly suffer in quality and reach, and the parents of these students will not be pleased. This is especially worrisome when one considers that accomplishment and training in the arts contribute to overall satisfaction with school as well as achievement in academic subjects.

Ross may be physically small, but it is one of the jewels of the city's public school system. Its academic achievement is among the best of our city's elementary schools. It has a long and happy relationship not only with the Dupont Circle Citizens' Association, which provides a number of its parents

and volunteers, but also with the neighborhood at large. Our neighborhood attracts a good many younger adults as residents and parents of school children, and the Ross enrollment fills up to the building's capacity year after year. Moreover, the school's building and playground fit in our historic neighborhood; they do not overwhelm or impair its appearance, as is the case with many newer buildings around the city.

Finally, the notion that Fillmore has to be cut in order to serve budget needs leaves the inevitable questions:

- What school budget needs would be served?
- Are these needs equally or more deserving of funding than Fillmore?
- Is there any doubt that the District can afford to continue funding an important component of many students' education?

Ross and the other four schools served by with Fillmore serve an increasingly diverse student population, reflecting a hopeful demographic trend in the city and the nation. It is important to remember that we, as citizens, parents, and educators, do not get a second chance at proper rearing and education of the city's children; these tasks must be done to the best of our ability the first time. A critical part of this endeavor is to avoid subordinating children's education to a perceived need to cut school funding.

Again, the Dupont Circle Citizens' Association urges you to rescind this budget cut, cancel the proposed closure of the Fillmore Arts Centre, and promise all of the affected schools that Fillmore will continue its excellent public service.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robin S. Diener
President

cc: Council Member Jack Evans, Ward 2
Council Member Mary Cheh, Ward 3
Council Member Brianne Nadeau, Ward 1
Council Member David Grosso, At-large (Education Committee Chair)
Council Member Brandon Todd, Ward 4 (Education Committee)
Council Member Charles Allen, Ward 6 (Education Committee)
Council Member Yvette Alexander, Ward 7 (Education Committee)
Council Member Anita Bonds, At-large (Education Committee)
Mr. Nathaniel Beers, DCPS
Mr. John Davis, DCPS
The Honorable Muriel E. Bowser, Mayor
Affected Schools