

Baltimore City Council – Taxpayer Night
May 15, 2025
Mr. Everette Johnson testimony

Good evening Council President Cohen and members of the Council,

My name is Everette Johnson, and I work in building maintenance with Baltimore City Public Schools. In my role, I make sure our public school buildings work and function well for students and staff. Building maintenance workers are the people making sure our HVAC systems are keeping our students cool or warm depending on the season, that windows, ceilings, floors, railings, plumbing systems, and other parts of our building are well maintained and repaired when there is a problem. My responsibilities require me to work on maintenance projects in our schools throughout west and northwest Baltimore. I respond to routine work orders, while also responding to emergency jobs throughout all hours of the day, including an emergency job I had to do at 2am. In short, there is a lot of ground to cover and not a lot of time to get it done.

I love my job but there is plenty that must be done to make work better for my coworkers at BCPS. Communication is one of the top concerns I have with my job. I cannot tell you how many times building maintenance workers are told to report to a school to fix a problem, but there is no communication from management that identifies where the reported problem exists. For example, if I show up to a school with more than 40 toilets and no other information other than there is a broken toilet, I have to spend a great amount of time running around the building to find which toilet is damaged. When we don't have clear lines of communication, it hinders our ability to get the job done. Relatedly, I've had a frequent experience of showing up to complete a work order only to find that a school building principal hired a contractor to complete the work that I was sent to do, but no one tells me or my coworkers. Spending money on outside contractors for work that our employees do is wasteful and the work should be performed by our public school employees.

In addition to these challenges, we also spend our own money on our equipment. In the past three years, I've spent close to \$8,000 on tools needed to do my job—money that has come out of my own pocket. I am not unique unfortunately; many building maintenance workers experience this problem and pay for tools out of their own pocket.

We need changes for our staff. We need this Council to hold the School Board accountable. We need to invest in our school support staff employees in the FY26 budget. We need to stop wasting money on contracting out work that public employees can do, and we need to dedicate those resources to our employees who can get the job done. Thank you