

## Basic Education Funding Commission

September 14, 2023

Philadelphia

Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. I am Fatoumata Sidibe, a senior at William Bodine High School for International Affairs.

I've had a diverse upbringing when it comes to education, I've been blessed to experience different schools with each its own culture, from a college prep-charter, to a quaker school, and then an Islamic education school. I felt like my childhood education was compacted into one when I heard stories about Bodine, I felt that it was the right fit for me.

And don't get me wrong it's not because of our quaint and worn-down converted elementary school building that opened in 1924, and will soon turn 100 years old, it's the people that contributed to its culture and are helping bring it back to life.

I love to learn and I was excited to start ninth grade, and experience a new atmosphere. But, unfortunately, the pandemic took place causing me and my new classmates to be retained behind little boxes engaging over a screen.

There has been a difficult adjustment to say the least, going back into the school building, coming from the pandemic, and having to face the violence around the city, too.

These events definitely took a toll on students' mental health, and I know a majority of us were unprepared for going back to school.

My classmates and I usually leave the house before light just so we can make the train on time; then, we often move our seats because of the second-hand smoke we're

exposed to; and then going down the terminal steps we have to dodge past people blocking the walkway with a needles in their arm – walking past another pile of needles; and, finally, making it to class, just on time.

We are then required to fully engage and be present while hoping that our environment outside will not show up in our work. We're required to invest so much time with little effort given back to us with support for our success. We don't even have a library, or a cafeteria. Two bare minimum things that kids need to get through the day. We shouldn't have to go through so much just to get an underfunded education.

My school would definitely benefit from having a library, with a librarian; a cafeteria, cleaner bathrooms; an adequate gym, and just overall, fundamental support.