

Kevin Adams

May 12, 2025

Testimony – Borough of Queens CUNY Board of Trustees Hearing

Good evening, members of the Board of Trustees.

My name is Kevin Adams, a proud PSC HEO delegate from Medgar Evers College, named after the acclaimed civil rights leader and located footsteps away from the site of where Jackie Robinson bravely broke the color barrier in baseball.

I stand before you today with a heavy heart and a profound sense of urgency to address the ongoing crisis at the Charles Evans Inniss Memorial Library at Medgar Evers College. For far too long, the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff have been jeopardized by the pervasive and hazardous mold infestation that plagues this vital institution.

Let me be absolutely clear: this is not a new issue.

As far back as October 2023, the presence of mold was brought to the attention of Chancellery and the Board of Trustees (*see attached testimony from October 16, 2023*). However, this was not the first time that faculty, staff, and students reported foul odors, visible mold growth, and a range of health issues, including respiratory problems, allergies, and skin irritation.

Two years earlier in 2021, after record amounts of rainfall impacted the Northeastern United States, including New York City — particularly during the remnants Hurricane Ida, the Charles Evans Inniss Memorial Library was devastated. The total damage was so severe and pervasive from the onslaught of those record rainfalls that the library was closed. My colleagues worked remotely until Monday, April 4, 2022. As students, faculty, and staff then returned to the space, they quickly discovered that lingering effects from those rains remained. They immediately sounded the alarm. Despite what some might tell you, these early warnings were not mere complaints; they were desperate cries for help, yet they were met with indifference and neglect.

Instead of swift and decisive action, we have been met with bureaucratic delays, dismissals of our concerns, and a shameful disregard for the well-being of our community. The library, which should be a sanctuary for learning and intellectual growth, has become a source of illness and fear. Students are forced to study in disgusting conditions, staff members are risking their health to serve our community, and valuable resources are being damaged.

The consequences of this neglect are far-reaching. The mold overgrowth not only poses serious health risks but also undermines the integrity of the library's collections and archives as well as erodes the trust between the administration and the college community.

- We, the students, faculty, and staff of Medgar Evers College, refuse to accept this any longer.
- We, the students, faculty, and staff of Medgar Evers College, demand immediate and comprehensive action to remediate the mold overgrowth.
- We, the students, faculty, and staff of Medgar Evers College, demand you repair the underlying structural issues.
- We, the students, faculty, and staff of Medgar Evers College, demand you ensure that our library is a safe and healthy environment for all.

We, the students, faculty, and staff of Medgar Evers College, urge you to:

- **Acknowledge the severity of the problem:** Stop minimizing the issue and recognize the serious health risks posed by the mold infestation.
- **Allocate adequate resources:** Provide the necessary funding for professional mold remediation, structural repairs, and ongoing maintenance to prevent future outbreaks.
- **Establish a clear timeline:** Develop a detailed plan with specific deadlines for addressing each stage of the remediation process.
- **Ensure transparency and communication:** Keep the college community informed of the progress and any potential disruptions.
- **Hold those responsible accountable:** Investigate the reasons for the delayed response and take appropriate action to prevent similar negligence in the future.

The continued indifference and neglect of this critical issue is a betrayal of CUNY's mission to provide a safe and quality education for all. We implore you, the Board of Trustees and Chancellery, to act now, before more harm is done. The health and well-being of our community, and the future of Medgar Evers College, depend on it.

Kevin Adams

October 16, 2023

Testimony – Borough of Manhattan CUNY Board of Trustees Hearing

My name is Kevin Adams. I am a Higher Education Officer at Medgar Evers College and a delegate in the Professional Staff Congress.

Since the return to campus in August 2021, I, like many of my colleagues and the students we serve, have been disappointed in the working conditions we have been plagued with enduring at Medgar Evers College. Upon our immediate return, the College failed to meet the promised health and safety protocols prescribed by the University and campus-leadership. On August 31, 2021, I joined over two dozen faculty and staff members who rallied outside Medgar Evers College to call out what we saw as unsanitary conditions at the school.

Hurricanes Henri and Ida havocked the campus library – compounding what was already a lowly situation. Their impact forced a six-month closure of the library and water damage to other parts of the campus's footprint. Two years later, the individuals who access the library have dealt with constant mold and mildew issues. In addition to the environmental slights, those who have raised these concerns have been gaslit and stigmatized against when questioning the superficial remediations. Two weeks ago, we formally raised concerns about these persistent issues to the administration, only to be met with a retort about the College's inability to act appropriately.

Buildings, classrooms, and libraries — education infrastructure — are crucial elements to learning environments. High-quality infrastructure supports student learning outcomes, improves instruction, and reduces dropout rates.

Per [cuny.edu](https://www.cuny.edu), Dr. Mohamed Attalla, Vice Chancellor of Facilities Planning, states, “design for capital renewal projects will include new criteria to improve the indoor quality for our buildings and the latest health information to insure the health and safety of the CUNY community.”

- I ask all of you today, where are the renewal and assurances for the faculty, staff, and students at Medgar Evers College?

Per CUNY Space Usage Statistics for Fall 2021, out of the senior colleges — excluding the professional schools, Medgar Evers College ranked last in Net Assignable Square Foot Distribution. Conversely, Medgar Evers College serves some of the most needy and vulnerable students in our university system.

Coupled with mold and moisture-ridden spaces, bed bug and rodent issues, and a capital footprint in desperate need of an upgrade, this further disadvantages the students that Medgar faculty and staff serve.

From its inception, the lack of a proper investment in Medgar Evers College has been well-documented. Let's change that paradigm. CUNY cannot truly live up to its mission without addressing these issues in earnest. Medgar Evers College cannot thrive when decisions about education infrastructure investments chronically have been made under uncoordinated and decentralized models, driven by ad hoc needs and limited funding availability, rather than a strategic approach that addresses both the short-term and long-term needs.

Let's commit to our young leaders at Medgar Evers College to ensure that they have every opportunity to flourish.

Thank you very much.