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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

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National Trust for Historic Preservation Highlights Deterioration at Franklin School

The Franklin School building “is empty and deteriorating,” according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s newsletter Preservation Nation. The article, “Adolf Cluss School Is in Limbo,” highlights the deterioration of the building since the D. C. Board of Education arranged for its exterior renovation in 1990-92. A leaking roof, broken or open windows, and lack of climate control are factors causing concern for the building and its historic features, including the 140-year-old murals on three walls of its Great Hall. The article quotes Joe Browne, Chair of the Coalition for Franklin School, who wrote to Mayor Adrian Fenty on March 7, 2010, asking how the D.C. Government, the owner, plans to address the problems that threaten the building. The Mayor has not responded with a plan for stabilizing Franklin School.

Franklin School is on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated a National Historic Landmark. The school is one of just 13 historic buildings in the nation's capital with a landmarked interior. The article explains, “Unfortunately, this protection does not require the city to uphold any maintenance standard. The city's Prevention of the Demolition of Historic Buildings by Neglect Amendment Act of 1999 officially prevents owners from neglecting such properties,” but the Preservation Nation article quotes Rebecca Miller, head of the D.C. Preservation League, who said, the law “is very difficult to enforce.” For a copy of the Preservation Nation article, see <http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2010/todays-news/adolf-cluss-school-in-limbo.html>

Franklin School is the work of Adolf Cluss, the District’s signature nineteenth-century architect, whose Eastern Market and Sumner School are among the District’s most cherished public buildings. Opened in 1869, Franklin pioneered new programs for District schools, including a teacher education school (housed at Franklin for forty years), Washington’s first public high school classes, and successful adult education programs. For more information about Adolf Cluss, see www.adolf-cluss.org, and for more on the history of Franklin School, see www.franklinschooldc.org

The Coalition for Franklin School, an ad hoc group organized in November 2009 to oppose the city’s plan for private, commercial development of the Franklin building, represents a cross-section of District of Columbia citizens and area residents. For information about the work of the Coalition for Franklin School as well as the Coalition’s proposals for public educational use for Franklin School, see www.franklinschooldc.org.