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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC HEARING

4

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
March 25, 1998
1:22 p.m.

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11 Resolution No. 970368 - Memorializing the
12 Education Committee of the Philadelphia City
13 Council to hold hearings to investigate the school
system's response to health emergencies in
Philadelphia public schools

14

15 Resolution No. 970466 - Calling on Council
16 Committee on Education to hold immediate hearings
17 regarding possibility of requiring Department of
Licenses & Inspections and Health Department to
conduct two inspections per year in all public
school bathrooms and food preparation and service
areas.

18

19 PRESENT: COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, Chair
20 COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
21 COUNCILWOMAN HAPPY FERNANDEZ
COUNCILMAN FRANK DICICCO

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VINCENT VARALLO ASSOCIATES, INC.
Registered Professional Reporters
Eleven Penn Center, Suite 600
Philadelphia, PA 19103
25 (215) 561-2220

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2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good

4 afternoon. The City Council Committee on
5 Education is now called for the purpose of hearing
6 two resolutions.

7 The first resolution is Resolution No.
8 970268. We will ask the clerk to please read the
9 title of the resolution.

10 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 970368
11 memorializing the Education Committee of the
12 Philadelphia City Council to hold hearings to
13 investigate the school system's response to health
14 emergencies in Philadelphia public schools, and
15 what, if any, Citywide approaches can be
16 implemented to improve them.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
18 much.

19 Let me say that -- to welcome everyone
20 here this afternoon. We held hearings on this
21 resolution, the resolution was adopted on May 15,
22 1997.

23 At the public hearings on May 29th, we
24 spoke in detail about the tragic death of a child,
25 Khyllon Tyler, who succumbed to meningococcal

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2 meningitis. Then on June 12th, we followed up
3 with a second hearing to get a resolution of this
4 matter.

5 Our resolution calls for a Citywide
6 approach to dealing with health emergencies; that
7 is, insofar as the School District is concerned.
8 This is inclusive of all kinds of emergencies,
9 from contagious diseases to victims of violence.
10 Victims of violence are also victims of health
11 emergencies. The information we received from the
12 School District on May 29th detailed contagious
13 diseases but did not respond to the specific
14 issue.

15 As we stated on June 12, New York faxed
16 us a copy of their four-point program. We learned
17 that there is a procedure that lists four specific
18 things that they do:

19 One, the Department of Health is
20 notified by the treating hospital or the
21 Department of School Health Sciences;

22 Two, the School District nurse contacts
23 the principal, and they draft a letter with
24 pertinent information as to how the disease is
25 spread, who is at risk, and typical symptoms;

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2 Number four, this letter is then sent
3 to parents of children that attend the school that
4 is involved.

5 I believe the first one was to call
6 emergency services.

7 This is done as soon as the Health
8 Department is notified. And I say if these things
9 can happen in other cities, if we can have a
10 specific response to health emergencies in other
11 cities, certainly we can have that here in
12 Philadelphia.

13 All of us even today witnessed a
14 tragedy that happened in Arizona with school
15 children; and, in fact, young children 9 to 11,
16 where some children decided to start,
17 unfortunately, for whatever reason, to start a
18 shooting spree. Teachers and children were killed
19 and injured. And we realize even more so that we
20 have to have a specific response that the schools,
21 the parents, everyone who's interested knows how
22 to deal with health emergencies.

23 And with that, we would certainly like
24 to thank you all for coming. Again, as was
25 stated, this is not the first time we've had this

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2 hearing; it is the third from May 29 to June 12.
3 And, hopefully, we can get this resolved quickly.

4 I will now call on the School Board to
5 testify. Who's here from the School District?

6 (Members of School District panel come
7 forward.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Would you
9 identify yourself for the record and please
10 proceed.

11 MS. INGRAM: Sure. Good afternoon.
12 I'm Germaine Ingram. I'm Chief of Staff in the
13 School District of Philadelphia.

14 DR. LEDEBUR: I'm Gary Ledebur. I'm
15 the Executive Director of the Family Resource
16 Network of the School District of Philadelphia.

17 MR. JACKSON: And I'm Darryl Jackson,
18 Director in the Family Resource Network, School
19 District of Philadelphia.

20 MS. INGRAM: We don't have prepared
21 testimony today. We're here to present a protocol
22 as well as a set of frequently asked questions
23 with answers with regard to how the School
24 District deals with emergencies or communicable
25 diseases even when they don't present emergency

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2 situations.

3 I'm happy to have Dr. Ledebur and Mr.
4 Jackson give you some context for this protocol.

5 DR. LEDEBUR: Let me start. And Mr.
6 Jackson is the person in the School District who's
7 responsible for --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Oh, excuse me
9 one moment.

10 Does anybody on the committee want to
11 make an opening statement with regard to this?

12 And may I state that we do have in
13 detail as part of the previous transcript what
14 happens with contagious diseases. We've had that,
15 and that was submitted earlier.

16 So we're not talking about contagious
17 diseases. We're talking about any kind of health
18 emergencies, whether there's a shooting, whether,
19 as with McMichael School, a child dies from what
20 is viewed as a communicable disease across the
21 street from a public high-rise.

22 We want a general response as something
23 that every child can know, every parent can know,
24 as opposed to a detailed one, detailing contagious
25 diseases and what they are and all of that. We

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2 certainly have that already as part of the record
3 in one of our previous hearings.

4 DR. LEDEBUR: Well, let me be brief,
5 and I'll give you a you a quick overview, and Mr.
6 Jackson can give you a bit more specifics as
7 related to health and psychological services.

8 The School District takes very
9 seriously the illness, the death, an accident of
10 any student that we have. We operate during the
11 school day in loco parentis; and that means we
12 have a parental responsibility during that day to
13 ensure that children are safe and taken care of.

14 The Family Resource Network, in
15 particular, the nurses, the counselors, the
16 psychologists, the school community coordinators
17 in every building are trained. We have worked
18 with them closely to support the safety of
19 children, the health of children, and to work
20 closely with the families.

21 They all are familiar with the
22 procedures that Mr. Jackson will give you an
23 overview of. They're all familiar with the
24 resources in their community as well as within the
25 City to make appropriate contacts and referrals.

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2 And we have also looked at other school
3 districts across the country and have surveyed the
4 kinds things they are doing. We've learned from
5 them; and in some cases, they've learned from us.
6 So we're quite confident that we have adequate
7 procedures and policies to assure the health and
8 safety of our children.

9 Darryl, do you want to talk about the
10 procedures?

11 MR. JACKSON: All right. What we've
12 brought with us today, it's the responses that
13 we've made to the issues that you addressed in May
14 and June of last year, which really dealt with
15 communicable diseases and how we interacted with
16 the City's Department of Health. And we're
17 willing to share those with you.

18 But, basically, I think we've addressed
19 the points that you mentioned when you talked
20 about the procedures that were established in New
21 York City in which the School District and the
22 Health Department stay in active communication
23 with each other to ensure that information is
24 given from one system to the other, and that the
25 appropriate people are notified as quickly as

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2 necessary.

3 I don't want to necessarily talk you
4 through the entire document, but the procedures
5 basically list what is to be done by each office,
6 and who is supposed to be the point of contact so
7 that we can ensure that the schools and the
8 communities are appropriately informed about the
9 nature of what is occurring in a community as well
10 as information that needs to be immediately shared
11 with the community at large, and the procedures
12 for ensuring that that happens. And also to make
13 sure that the information is accurate.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Might I note
15 that for the record that we have a quorum. To my
16 left is Councilman Mariano, next is Councilwoman
17 Happy Fernandez, Councilman David Cohen. And to
18 my right Councilwoman Donna Miller.

19 Let me note that we see we have a
20 report about disease. What about a shooting?

21 MR. JACKSON: We -- in coming here
22 today, we thought we were addressing situations
23 that involved the School District and the
24 Department of Health.

25 When -- we don't have a -- this is just

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2 directed to that. We do have other documents that
3 we didn't bring with us today that detail how
4 schools are to deal with emergencies and to have
5 their emergency plans in place in each school.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me say
7 that we had a hearing May 29th and we had a
8 hearing on June 12th. It is now March the 25th,
9 and we still don't have a system in Philadelphia
10 in public schools to respond to emergencies.

11 We're not talking about communicable
12 diseases alone; we're talking about any health
13 emergency. It's part of the transcript, we've
14 said it over and over at each hearing, I talked
15 with the Superintendent who I know is out of town
16 just yesterday and Friday.

17 What we need is a written, point 1,
18 point 2, whatever, that deals with emergencies.
19 And I find it unconscionable that we have to
20 continue to ask the same questions even we've had
21 so much crime fortunately to the degree we've had
22 it.

23 Even today, after we learn of another
24 situation in another state in this country, and
25 still, in Philadelphia, we don't have a system

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2 that everyone can relate to that deals with
3 emergencies. It's got to be a communicable
4 disease, somebody's got to get polio or meningitis
5 or some other disease before we have a specific
6 response. I find that unacceptable and
7 unconscionable.

8 Councilwoman Fernandez?

9 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Councilwoman,
10 maybe -- I just got this so I'm just reading it,
11 but it says here on page 1, How does the School
12 District define and respond to school health
13 emergencies?

14 I guess, I do consider gunshot
15 incidents are really -- they're often -- they're
16 health and safety, but it says, "Category 1,
17 emergencies in which immediate and proper
18 intervention is necessary." And then an example,
19 If a patient is not breathing --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We've had all
21 of this before.

22 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: -- or does not
23 have a heartbeat and they need, you know,
24 immediate and medical care, I would think the kind
25 of situation talking about falls into that

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2 category.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But,
4 Councilwoman, we've had this before. Read the
5 last -- the last sentence of that paragraph says,
6 "Designated adult personnel at the school should
7 be able to provide first aid."

8 Give me a break. Provide first aid if
9 a person -- we already had this before. This is
10 the exact -- I mean, it's put in a neater package,
11 a cleaner package.

12 Come on now, you're going to tell me
13 that whomever --

14 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Well, it says
15 so --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Whomever that
17 designated person is? We know we don't have
18 nurses in the schools, we're right back to where
19 we were before. We don't have nurses in the
20 schools, the principals are supposed to assign
21 someone who's in charge of emergencies that day.
22 What if that person's not around?

23 We -- all of this is a matter of
24 record. We went through all of this before in the
25 transcript. And, apparently, the School District

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2 still -- the School District of Philadelphia still
3 does not have a system as to how to respond with
4 emergencies.

5 What if you can't find that person?
6 What if they're in another class because it's
7 person assigned that overall responsibility that
8 day? What if it's a person who doesn't know what
9 to do? What if it's -- it could be in the yard,
10 it could be anyplace.

11 We need a system that responds to --
12 this didn't doesn't even say to call 9-1-1. We
13 need a system that responds to health emergencies.
14 This is not a system that does that. This is some
15 detail, this is exactly what we already have that
16 is part of the transcript that we received at a
17 prior hearing.

18 I find it absolutely insulting that the
19 School Board would come back with the same exact
20 report we had before.

21 MS. INGRAM: Councilwoman Blackwell, it
22 certainly isn't our intention to insult you. We
23 are responding based on what was our understanding
24 of the purpose of this hearing, which relates back
25 to the incident last year with the unfortunate

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2 death due to meningitis.

3 Certainly, the School District has a
4 system, a protocol for dealing with all kinds of
5 emergencies, not just communicable diseases; for
6 dealing with serious incidents, whether they be
7 gunshot wounds or other types of disruptions
8 within the school. They're separate and apart
9 from these procedures that refer to communicable
10 diseases.

11 And now that we know that the
12 Councilwoman wishes to address those types of
13 emergencies and situations as well as communicable
14 diseases, we're happy to provide you with the
15 protocols that have been in place for some years
16 now that relate to that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well, I sure
18 would like to know what the big secret is. I
19 don't understand that if parent has a problem, if
20 some emergency happens in their school, they can't
21 know because -- I can't imagine giving a parent
22 whose child is shot a booklet that talks about
23 measles and hepatitis and infectious diseases.
24 That's unbelievable.

25 You can't tell me that on day one,

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2 teachers don't say something to children. At
3 least they did when I went to public school. I
4 don't know where we're missing the boat. And I
5 absolutely don't understand what's so very, very
6 hard to understand about a resolution whose title
7 is four and a half lines long:

8 "Memorializing the Education Committee
9 of the Philadelphia City Council to hold hearings
10 to investigate the School District's response to
11 health emergencies and public schools and what
12 Citywide approaches can be implement to improve
13 them."

14 I mean, we still don't have a system,
15 and we've said it throughout transcripts from both
16 hearings. And it's just really unbelievable.

17 Well, I think what we're going to have
18 to do is -- and I find it unconscionable that
19 we're told to vote for \$1.5 billion budgets, but
20 yet children and parents don't know a simple thing
21 like what happens if there's an emergency in their
22 school or what happens if there's an emergency
23 dealing with their children.

24 MS. INGRAM: May I respond to that?

25 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Councilwoman,

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2 could I just --

3 MS. INGRAM: Of course, parents,
4 principals, and teachers know what the protocol
5 is.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well, maybe
7 you can --.

8 MS. INGRAM: We publish that
9 information at the beginning of every school year
10 and throughout the year, it's contained in
11 handbooks that are distributed to parents at the
12 beginning of every year. It's the topic of
13 discussions with Parents for Partners
14 organizations that represent parent groups.

15 And on any occasion in which there is
16 an emergency-type situation, there is a
17 reaffirmation of the procedures that are necessary
18 in each school in order to address them.

19 Now that we know that the committee
20 desires copies of those types of procedures, we're
21 happy to provide them, but they are certainly in
22 place, as they have been for years.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
24 honestly, I have no way of knowing that that is in
25 fact true because we don't have that.

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2 MS. INGRAM: And we're happy to share
3 that with you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Again, I'm not
5 sure what should be there. But, again, looking on
6 page 3, it says --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilwoman
8 Fernandez --

9 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Just a minute.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If you're --
11 I've seen --

12 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: May I finish?

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I've read it
14 all.

15 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: May I finish?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If, in fact,
17 if you prepared for the hearing, if you read the
18 other transcripts, you would know that we went
19 through all of this.

20 I am ready -- certainly we will listen
21 to the rest of your comments and then we will
22 certainly go on to the next hearing -- the next
23 resolution, because there is absolutely nothing
24 else we can say on this that would not be
25 redundant.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Okay. I'm
3 looking again just at what's here. Again, having
4 had three kids --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We know what's
6 there.

7 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: It says --
8 here in the office.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All of that is
10 in your office.

11 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Excuse me. It
12 says, "To provide prompt emergency care" -- first
13 it says that the principal needs to have a plan.

14 Then it says, "To provide prompt
15 emergency care, the principal is to secure medical
16 help from the following sources: school nurse or
17 school physician, Family Resource Network Physical
18 Health Staff, rescue squad for life-threatening
19 emergencies --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilwoman,
21 are you going to tell me you have a nurse and
22 doctor in a school?

23 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Excuse me, let
24 me finish.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm sorry, but

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2 you are insulting our intelligence as well as
3 they.

4 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: No, I'm trying
5 to figure out what else you want.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: To contact a
7 doctor or a nurse?

8 I think my resolution is clear calls
9 for. My resolution calls for, and we've stated it
10 again in so many ways in May and in June, that we
11 want to know specific responses to health
12 emergencies, what happens if a child is hurt, what
13 happens. Because we have found out, we had a big
14 problem at McMichael School when it happened,
15 which prompted this resolution because there was
16 no system.

17 We had hearings dealing with STDs,
18 dealing with Ritalin and behavioral-altering
19 drugs. We find that when you tell a principal
20 that that principal has the right to make a
21 decision as to how to respond, some principals
22 respond well, some don't. Some may not even be
23 there, somebody could be at a meeting. Who's
24 running things? We've been through this.

25 In real life situations, many, many

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2 times, I will not make excuses for the School
3 Board. It is absolutely not acceptable.
4 Mrs. Ingram has said they will supply that
5 information, and I suggest we leave it there.

6 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Well, I just
7 wanted the record to reflect this seems to make
8 sense to me.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well, it
10 absolutely does not, the Chair states that. And
11 if you want to make excuses for the lack of
12 information -- the Board has said they don't have
13 it.

14 Now, if you know something that the
15 Board doesn't know, that you have, this committee
16 would certainly like to hear it.

17 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: I'm reading
18 what's in the manual.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: No, the manual
20 talks about the communicable diseases. It says
21 principals can come up with systems.

22 That's the problem now with truancy.
23 We have all these problems with truancy because
24 the principal can assign somebody in the school to
25 deal with attendance. Now how in the world is

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2 somebody in a school with 900 kids, 1400 kids,
3 going to know who's in and who's out? How can
4 anybody know every child in that school and have a
5 relationship with them?

6 We have a lot of problems with this
7 system. We believe in the School District, we
8 believe in the public school system of
9 Philadelphia. But where there are problems, we
10 have to try to right them. That is our goal, and
11 that has been our goal. And I will not make
12 excuses for things that are wrong and things that
13 need to be straightened out.

14 And with that, we will ask the clerk to
15 read the title of the second resolution.

16 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 970466,
17 calling on the City Council Committee on Education
18 to hold immediate hearings regarding the
19 possibility of requiring the Department of
20 Licenses and Inspections and the Health Department
21 to conduct two inspections per year in all public
22 school bathrooms and food preparation and service
23 areas to ensure that minimum code standards are
24 being met.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very

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2 much.

3 When we recessed our hearing of June
4 12th, Commissioner Richman graciously agreed to
5 sit down with her Deputy Commissioner and
6 representatives of the School District to try to
7 come up with a, quote, tighter calendar, in some
8 ways combining monitoring -- and these are her
9 words -- combining monitoring with inspections
10 that would give you more of a concrete time line
11 based on the risks of various schools, end of
12 quote.

13 She agreed to come up with a tighter
14 time line to hold herself -- this is part of her
15 quote. Pardon me, she agreed to come up with a
16 tighter time line to hold the Health Department
17 and the School District accountable.

18 Commissioner Domzalski spoke of trying
19 to complete inspections by the end of September in
20 order to allow the School District the summer to
21 make repairs. Mr. Vernard Johnson, who is here
22 again, and Deputy Commissioner spoke of health
23 issues that affect students. He spoke of the lack
24 of proteins and high blood pressure as well as the
25 need for doctors and dentists.

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2 Mr. John Campbell, who's also here, the
3 Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Manager -- last
4 time I couldn't remember that title, we've got it
5 today. He spoke about inspections and informed us
6 during those hearings that the L&I inspects 259
7 school buildings because not all our schools are
8 there, they have more buildings than that.

9 He also talked about summer programs
10 and fire code violation. This in addition to all
11 the duties that L&I does Citywide, they do
12 certainly for the School District.

13 He also told us that the School
14 District inspects every school at least once a
15 year and that they go back for reinspections if
16 violations are found.

17 Certainly, we appreciated the offer
18 from the Commissioner, Commissioner Richman, which
19 summarizes what we were trying to do in terms of
20 bathrooms. And we asked the School Board if they
21 would come forward again to find out if you've
22 agreed to take on the suggestion that was made at
23 the hearings that called for an additional --
24 perhaps an additional inspection in schools that
25 absolutely serve and prepare food on-site and if

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2 you've developed a system for additional
3 inspections in food areas and in bathrooms that
4 would allow for student input, as was suggested,
5 and just what exactly has come out of this.

6 Certainly, we ask you if you would come
7 forward and respond to the second resolution, the
8 School District. We certainly spoke with the
9 Commissioner, and I know that she's been in touch
10 with the Board. And this, again, was last June
11 12th, was the most recent hearings. So certainly,
12 we are hopeful that you would have some
13 information.

14 And all of you who are here, I talked
15 with the Superintendent on Friday and again
16 yesterday. And certainly Mr. Hornbeck said that
17 he would have you prepare to respond to these
18 issues.

19 So it is not my idea to try to --
20 certainly the buck has to stop someplace, and we
21 are trying to meet our responsibility, to try to
22 deal with these issues finally so that we can move
23 onto something else.

24 Would you identify yourself for the
25 record.

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2 MR. SHAPIRO: Councilwoman Blackwell,
3 I'm Eric Shapiro, Administrator for Facilities
4 Field Services.

5 MR. SCHMIDT: Councilwoman Blackwell,
6 I'm Paul Schmidt, from Food Services. I'm the
7 Director.

8 MR. SHAPIRO: Our general response to
9 the issue is that we welcome as much oversight as
10 the City wants to offer. We treat the inspections
11 as a positive issue, that there's things that we
12 have to handle. And as many eyes as you can put
13 on the scene at the schools, we welcome; we have
14 nothing to hide.

15 In the past year, since the hearings
16 last year, we have had in the facilities area, we
17 had 188 visits for inspections; and wherein we
18 found 21 of those schools to be totally compliant.
19 And of the remainder of the schools, 45 percent
20 were --

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Say that
22 number again? Out of --

23 MR. SHAPIRO: In 21 out of 188
24 inspections, the schools were totally compliant.

25 Of the remaining number of schools, we

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2 had a 76 schools that had more serious incidents
3 and had to be reinspected. And the remaining
4 number of 81 schools had simple violations that
5 were able to be rectified and remedied within a
6 few days from the inspection, and there was no
7 need for reinspection.

8 So over 60 percent of the visits
9 resulted in either quick remedies or total
10 compliance. And the remaining issues had to be
11 dealt with in terms of scheduling workers
12 prioritizing the issues and getting the material
13 needed to comply with the issue.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly we
15 talked at our last hearing about prioritizing the
16 degree of the severity of the conditions in the
17 schools. And we would like to know where you are
18 on that.

19 And we would also like -- the Chair
20 would also like a report from you on the various
21 schools and just where they are in terms of the
22 repairs and repairs needed.

23 Certainly, if we have 76 schools in
24 serious condition, that's quite a lot out of 188
25 and 81 with simple violations. We're glad that

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2 you said they were simple enough to repair, so
3 hopefully, that's done.

4 But we really, really need a tighter,
5 more specific response to schools. And we would
6 like to see a statement with the schools in the
7 City -- 213, are there? Or 287?

8 MR. SHAPIRO: 260.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right,
10 about 260 schools. We would like to see a report
11 or some statement listing the schools and whether
12 or not they pass code violations and whether it's
13 serious or, as you say, simple, and whether it's
14 been rectified or not.

15 MR. SHAPIRO: Just for your
16 edification, priorities for repairs deals in
17 safety and health issues first, and anything that
18 has any of the children in jeopardy is handled
19 immediately.

20 The reason that there is a delay in
21 repair work, sometimes due to fixtures being
22 broken and plumbing needing to be repaired,
23 sometimes parts and pipes have to be ordered. We
24 stock a lot of the material at the Kennedy Center
25 for inventory, but sometimes, on occasion, you

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2 know, special things have to be done.

3 So, usually, even the more serious
4 incidents are finished within 30 days.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me say
6 that, for example, we get a lot of reports. For
7 example, at Fidler School, and that's supposed to
8 be one of our best schools, girls have a buddy
9 systems to go to the rest room because the doors
10 won't stay shut.

11 I don't know if that, for example, has
12 been repaired. That's a simple thing. Doors
13 won't stay shut and girls go together. And there
14 are so many simple things that could happen.

15 We understand, of course, at Gratz High
16 School where we've had violence there, when we had
17 school violence hearings, I guess, back in '94,
18 Gratz was one of the schools singled out for
19 violence.

20 And certainly I understand that even
21 now, toilets are not in working order, as well as
22 urinals and bathrooms are just in deplorable
23 condition.

24 I understand also, for example, that --
25 talking about kitchens, at Ben Franklin High

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2 School, their hot water system is such that the
3 hot water can't go from the basement to the
4 kitchen. You have something like -- you have 120
5 degrees in the basement, but by the time the steam
6 or heat gets to the kitchen, the degrees is only
7 90 degrees, so I don't even know if that's safe
8 levels to even serve youngsters or anyone food in
9 a public place.

10 So these are just some of the reports,
11 just some information that we happen to learn of.
12 And, quite frankly, I am sure that if we went
13 around from school to school, in the majority of
14 neighbor schools, we would find big infractions.

15 In fact, I received a call from a
16 reporter yesterday from TV, asking me about
17 schools that that reporter could see. But the
18 reporter was, unfortunately, told that they
19 couldn't get permission from principals to welcome
20 a reporter in, that principals could not welcome
21 that reporter in.

22 And, in fact, I learned that the School
23 District was, in fact, trying to get some
24 principals to say, Great, come here look at my
25 great school so that today we could talk about

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2 great things. We're glad to talk about all great
3 things. We know we have wonderful schools in the
4 system.

5 But we still believe that we have to
6 try to do our best to protect all of the children
7 in public schools and neighborhoods throughout
8 this City. So we hope you will check into those
9 and report those to us.

10 MR. SHAPIRO: We will. And just one
11 response an issue on Gratz. We appreciate the
12 visibility that hearings like these bring to these
13 kinds of issues.

14 Gratz was a school chosen for MLK
15 (Martin Luther King) Day of Service, and their
16 bathrooms were specifically identified for
17 repair. We did a fantastic job working with the
18 community and the students of the school and did
19 many repairs that had gone undone for quite a
20 while.

21 The issue that we bring to these
22 hearings is one of vandalism and responsibility at
23 the local level for the students and the staff and
24 the community that use our buildings. And there
25 is difficult times when there's so much vandalism

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2 that does go on.

3 And we're not making that an excuse,
4 but it does tend to make the situation much more
5 difficult. And that the repeat times that toilet
6 and facilities are not in use, a lot of times is a
7 direct relation to vandalism.

8 Now, we have many principals working
9 with their staff and working with the PALM
10 Committee, which is the Philadelphia Area Labor
11 Management group to work on this issue. And the
12 more that we can do in bringing this issue to a
13 head is something that will help us immensely in
14 keeping the bathrooms clean and safe and available
15 for everybody.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly, we
17 agree that these are hard times in communities, we
18 realize there's a high level of vandalism. Our
19 concern is that we have an approach to deal with
20 it.

21 We had hearings in May, we had hearings
22 in June. We're in March again. And even if we
23 had a plan as to how we deal with it, that was the
24 whole point, to develop plans. We're not asking
25 for easy answers, but we are saying that, as

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2 leaders, we all have responsibility to try to come
3 up with plans to deal with our problems.

4 And that is why I take issue with the
5 School Board who is not doing its part in trying
6 to rectify, trying to ameliorate situations that
7 exist in public schools.

8 Councilwoman Miller.

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you, Madame
10 Chair.

11 I have one question. When you're doing
12 inspections, is there a requirement that soap be
13 in bathrooms in public schools?

14 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. So if
16 there's no soap, then who made the decision, the
17 principal, because of vandalism or whatever?

18 MR. SHAPIRO: Soap should be in
19 bathroom. There's no excuse. Even with the
20 vandalism, it's still a requirement. It's still a
21 safety issue and a health issue, and there should
22 be soap in every bathroom.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Because I
24 know of schools that do not have soap, and
25 children are there all day, touching things,

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2 eating lunch, and bringing home colds and flus and
3 everything else.

4 MR. SHAPIRO: We have taken an approach
5 to look at that issue. We were using powdered
6 soap in the District for quite a while, which was
7 a problem because it cakes up in the dispensers
8 and in the boxes. We're going to use liquid soap
9 in the bathrooms, and we're recessing the
10 dispensers so they're less likely to be
11 vandalized.

12 We're trying to get this instituted
13 throughout the District as we're speaking.
14 Because the inspections violations, a large amount
15 of those are due to soap dispensers and lack of
16 soap in bathrooms.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. And I
18 think that doors are very important in bathrooms.
19 These might be children, but they still need
20 privacy. And many times they don't want to use
21 bathrooms for certain things.

22 I just wanted to make that point, thank
23 you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly you
25 say you're working on that system?

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2 And then we'll hear from Councilman

3 DiCicco.

4 But you're working on that system?

5 When do you expect to have a full implemented

6 system?

7 MR. SHAPIRO: We're working on all the
8 high schools, then the middle schools. It is an
9 issue of funding and the ability to get all of
10 these things put in place.

11 I would think over the next six to nine
12 months, all schools will have liquid soap
13 dispensers, and the dispensers will be up and
14 secured.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Do you have
16 any idea where you are in terms of overall, in
17 terms of -- we've been in schools where maybe you
18 have five sinks, and one works. So before you can
19 get to the soap, you've got to have water.

20 And where we have those kinds of
21 problems where, of course, there are bathrooms --
22 and you've heard it all before -- with no doors,
23 even in girls' bathrooms, with no doors.

24 And when do you expect to have -- do
25 you have a priority list now?

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2 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes, we do.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And when do
4 you expect that you can have virtually all of the
5 schools in working order? What does that look
6 like from your viewpoint?

7 MR. SHAPIRO: We have aggressively
8 tried to repair make bathrooms, the repair of
9 bathrooms, a priority. If you give me a chance, I
10 would share with you a report on what we've done
11 over the last six months and what we have left to
12 do.

13 And I will have that to you in about a
14 week. Give me till the middle of next week, and
15 I'll a have your report to you on all the schools.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

17 Councilman DiCicco.

18 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you, Madame
19 Chair. Good afternoon.

20 Within your authority, do you also do
21 inspections, make recommendations for structural
22 problems to the school, plaster falling from
23 ceilings, and things of that nature?

24 MR. SHAPIRO: We inspect -- our
25 building engineers inspect each school every day

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2 with visible structural integrity, things that we
3 can view visually. Yeah, they check out plaster
4 ceilings, acoustical tile ceilings.

5 They walk in the bathrooms, they write
6 up every day what went wrong from the previous
7 day. So we do a daily inspection every day.

8 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Are you familiar
9 with the Willard School?

10 MR. SHAPIRO: Somewhat.

11 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Do you have any
12 knowledge that you can share with us as to the
13 condition of that school?

14 I was supposed to be up there this
15 morning, but we were supposed to have a Committee
16 of the Whole hearing, and I cancelled that site
17 visit. One of my staff members went on my behalf
18 this morning, and she indicated to me that
19 literally plaster is falling from the ceilings.

20 Some of the students are being taught
21 in the hallways and may even be occupying
22 bathrooms because of some of the conditions in the
23 classrooms and the general condition of the
24 school.

25 And if I recall correctly, I think at

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2 sometime, the District had some plans to either
3 build a new school or entirely renovate that.
4 Could you shed some light on that for me?

5 MR. SHAPIRO: Mr. Armbrister is not
6 available right now; he's with the Mayor, I
7 believe. But Willard is a school that he is very
8 aware of, the problems and the conditions of the
9 school.

10 There are a lot of -- there's a lot of
11 movement right now for additional construction in
12 that area, and I'm not sure exactly where that
13 is. Ted Skirsky's (ph)'s here. Ted is in charge
14 of design and construction. He may be able to
15 shed some light on that for you.

16 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you.

17 MR. SKIRSKY: Good afternoon. My name
18 is Ted Skirsky. I'm currently the Administrator
19 Design and Construction in Capital Programs.

20 In terms of a replacement project or
21 school replacement at the Willard School, there is
22 nothing currently in our capital program. Our
23 Land Acquisition Division is trying to put
24 something together and see if there's local
25 property available that would give us that ability

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2 to replace that school.

3 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: My staff person
4 who did the visit is coming over with a note. I
5 thought my information was that there was a
6 meeting that took place.

7 Regina, would you stand here and
8 whisper in my ear what I'm forgetting. Excuse me
9 one minute here.

10 Do you recall, Ted, back in 1980, if
11 there was a plan to rebuild or redo the Willard
12 School?

13 MR. SKIRSKY: No, I don't recall, I'm
14 sorry.

15 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Well, our
16 information is that it was -- at the time in 1980,
17 it had been recommended that a new school be
18 built, so we're a little bit behind on that. I'm
19 not blaming you for that.

20 But the note that Regina hands me is
21 that (inaudible) -- no auditorium, no gym?

22 MR. SKIRSKY: It's my understanding
23 that --

24 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Plaster falling in
25 the lunchroom, paint peeling in bathrooms, etc..

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2 Generally, the place is in dire need of repair.

3 MR. SHAPIRO: We agree with you.

4 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: If not being
5 rebuilt, and you agree.

6 Well, let me ask you, then, the
7 process. You make recommendations, I assume,
8 based on what you see at the school, whether it is
9 if more economically feasible to either retrofit
10 the building or look to build a new building, I
11 would assume. Is that how it would work.

12 MR. SKIRSKY: There's basically a
13 situation, if that was our total focus, that is
14 the way we would normally do it, but we've
15 probably superimposed our overcrowding problems
16 where they would have a priority in terms of where
17 we could find space, where we could build new
18 buildings, and where those new are children
19 showing up on an everyday basis, and where that
20 critical need is to do what we can as quickly as
21 we can.

22 But a typical building, new
23 construction, would probably take 30 months.

24 MR. SHAPIRO: The District also,
25 Councilman DiCicco, hired an architectural

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2 engineering firm to do a review of all the School
3 District buildings, an assessment of what monies
4 it would take to bring the buildings to standard.

5 I could share with you their findings
6 on the Willard School so that you can see -- this
7 was done about two years ago, it's still active,
8 although it was a point in time -- since then,
9 there are other things that probably have gone
10 wrong.

11 But on a daily basis, we handle issues
12 like safety and health first. And anything that
13 would present an apparent danger to staff or
14 students or community, we would handle as we go
15 along. And our staff is not that large, so there
16 are some things we can't get to, but we certainly
17 wouldn't let anyone be in jeopardy.

18 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Well, wouldn't
19 falling plaster be considered jeopardizing the
20 safety of the students and teachers?

21 MR. SHAPIRO: Absolutely.

22 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: All right. When
23 you make that finding and put in your report,
24 where does that go next?

25 MR. SHAPIRO: The Managing Director's

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2 office, Mr. Armbrister. Although we will handle
3 that situation internally and fix it.

4 And I will be there tomorrow morning
5 and I will report to you --

6 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Well, that's where
7 I'm getting. I don't know who's responsible, so
8 you're taking responsibility.

9 And my question then is: Why is it
10 taking us so long? And you're telling me you'll
11 be there tomorrow morning, and I appreciate that.

12 But these are the kinds of things, I
13 think, that lead us -- and I'm a newcomer here --
14 to be kind of frustrated when these conditions
15 have existed probably as far back as 1980. And
16 I'm wondering, I'm hoping --

17 MR. SHAPIRO: I'm sure there's a
18 significant amount of work to be --

19 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: I don't expect to
20 be here another 18 years.

21 MR. SHAPIRO: Neither do I.

22 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: But within the
23 next 18 years, I'm hoping that we can address
24 that, if not the 18 months.

25 So you make the recommendation, you

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2 make it to the Manager Director's office, Mr.
3 Armbrister. And I assume from Mr. Armbrister, it
4 then goes to the School District?

5 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, he has to take a
6 look at the entire District and the priorities and
7 the monies available and make decisions based on
8 that in conjunction with the other areas that the
9 educators and the Superintendent have input and
10 community has input on what's needed.

11 But I'm sure that at Willard, there's a
12 significant amount of work that has been done
13 since 1980 and as recently as probably yesterday
14 with mechanics in the buildings. I'll share with
15 you what we have done, what we have found, and
16 needs to be done.

17 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: My staff person is
18 telling me they did put a new roof on but decided
19 maybe not to waterproof it because they're
20 considering building a new building. I don't know
21 if that's true.

22 And they won't plaster and paint
23 because the water's coming, and why put money --
24 and I could understand that, but I guess my next
25 question to you is that if you are going out to

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2 make an inspection, would you please supply the
3 Chair with a list of what your findings are and
4 what the inspection reveals and your
5 recommendations.

6 MR. SHAPIRO: Absolutely.

7 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you. Thank
8 you, Madame Chair.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
10 Let me also ask -- I understand that -- in fact,
11 I've been hearing about it since we were
12 demonstrating for a school crossing guard at
13 Bryant School.

14 I understand that Barry School doesn't
15 have a gym, an auditorium, and I think the third
16 thing is a yard, that they are grossly out of
17 space, and parents are really frustrated. I get
18 this from the mothers of the children who go
19 there.

20 Do you have any idea what the plans are
21 for Barry School, given that they don't have a
22 lunchroom, they don't have an auditorium, and they
23 don't have a gym?

24 MR. SKIRSKY: Councilwoman is correct.
25 It's a very small school and a very tight lot

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2 situation. There are portable trailers out there
3 or portable units in terms of they've serving for
4 classrooms. It is very space-tight.

5 The possibility of putting an addition
6 on that building, it has not been explored, I
7 don't know. We have not looked at that specific
8 situation.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well, let me
10 request that we try to do something. I mean, not
11 having a lunchroom, auditorium, or gym makes it
12 really, really difficult, and the fact that they
13 are complaining that the situation is now
14 intolerable and are even suggesting that maybe
15 some classes can be transferred to other schools
16 in the area.

17 Certainly, I do not recommend home
18 school, because we would like to see something
19 else in the community happening with home school.
20 That has so many problems. We're not interested
21 in that.

22 But it was even suggested that, for
23 example, classes be reassigned, some of the older
24 ones to Sayre or leasing Our Lady of Rosary at
25 63rd, near Callowhill, as some suggestions.

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2 Let me also ask you about a school
3 where I started my teaching career, and that's at
4 Lea School. I understand that they have two
5 portable buildings there that need to be
6 condemned. That's Lea School at 47th and Locust,
7 L-E-A, Henry C. Lea School.

8 Do you know what the plan is? The
9 suggestions made were that they try to use the
10 abandoned Acme Market at 43rd and Locust Street.
11 That's been closed for maybe, I'd say about seven
12 or eight years now, that they try to use that site
13 and even that yard for parking and try again to
14 work out something with the older children in the
15 school.

16 Do you have any idea of what the plans
17 are in terms of those little buildings that are
18 condemned?

19 MR. SKIRSKY: Unfortunately, our land
20 acquisition person is not here at the moment. But
21 the last I heard, we were exploring 4601 Haverford
22 as a possible purchase for some relief there.
23 That's the only one I'm aware of.

24 Where is the abandoned Acme?

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: 43rd and

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2 Locust, 4300, yes.

3 MR. SKIRSKY: I will find out for you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

5 And the third school that I learned
6 about was Wilson School. That's just absolutely
7 overcrowded as well.

8 In fact, they've getting more attention
9 lately. They've got a new PAL Program in there
10 that's about a year and a half old, but they are
11 also asking about their fifth graders, if they
12 could be reassigned perhaps. In fact, they
13 suggest Comegys School might be a solution for
14 them. And I don't know what the situation is at
15 Comegys School.

16 MR. SKIRSKY: We will find out for you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you
18 thank you.

19 Are there any other questions?
20 Councilwoman Miller.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, I just
22 wanted to get some information.

23 How often do you inspect schools for
24 asbestos, particularly the older schools?

25 MR. SKIRSKY: Specifically in response

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2 to the Adhera Act of 1984, each school within the
3 District had to be studied and evaluated in terms
4 of how asbestos could best be eliminated or
5 contained, either through total removal or
6 encapsulation, which would reduce the problem to
7 acceptable standards, you know, issued by the
8 government.

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So all schools
10 have been inspected.

11 MR. SKIRSKY: They have been.

12 MR. SHAPIRO: And they're reinspected
13 every three years.

14 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. What about
15 lead paint?

16 Well, let me tell you. Speaking of
17 Fitler, I was there not too long ago, and they
18 just painted down in the basement where the
19 bathrooms are located, and already, the paint is
20 chipping. And a couple staff people said to me
21 that they get sick from an odor or a fume in that
22 area right off near the girls' bathroom.

23 And I don't know whether they were try
24 to say maybe it's asbestos or just what is
25 happening there to those walls. The paint's

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2 chipping, peeling, cracking. And that's a real
3 old building. I think it's 130 years old.

4 MR. SKIRSKY: Which building was that?

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Fidler.

6 MR. SHAPIRO: Lead paint is not an
7 airborne contaminant. It has to be ingested in
8 order for it to have an effect on a human being.
9 And it's mostly affecting young children, not
10 adults.

11 But the Adhera Study also identifies
12 the lead paint and where it is in the building,
13 and we make sure that if it has to be chipped away
14 or removed, that it's done under the proper
15 circumstances, so it doesn't affect people.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, well, can
17 you add that to your list?

18 MR. SHAPIRO: Mm-hmm.

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you. No
20 more questions, Madame Chair.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I know we had
22 a lot of problems at Franklin Learning Center and
23 a lot of debate about lead paint and what happens
24 when it's chipped. Because in that school,
25 reportedly, it was just all over chairs. And

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2 every place you walked, you could see just crumbs
3 of it around, and that was a big battle.

4 And I see Mr. Vernard Johnson who's
5 shaking his head back there that it's not so, who
6 is also due to testify.

7 You're saying again that lead paint --

8 MR. SHAPIRO: It's not an airborne
9 contaminant; it doesn't travel through the air.
10 You'd have to take one of the chips and actually
11 ingest it in order for it to. . .

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right.
13 Are there any other questions from members of the
14 committee?

15 (No further questions.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We would like
17 to ask if you would stand by, and we'll call on
18 members who are here. We know Mr. Vernard
19 Johnson, we have him next.

20 Is there anybody else here who would
21 like to testify?

22 (Vernard Johnson comes forward.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you for
24 coming from, Mr. Johnson.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Johnson

3 has been invaluable in bringing us problems. You
4 know, we started the Ritalin hearings back in, oh,
5 April of '94 based on information that he was able
6 to get from parents who were coming and
7 complaining to him in the community at one of our
8 schools. Namely Mitchell School was one of the
9 schools in question about Ritalin and
10 behavior-altering drugs.

11 So we have been in a battle together
12 over the years to try to improve conditions in
13 neighborhood schools. We know our special schools
14 and our wonderful schools and our magnet schools
15 get attention, but so many of our neighborhoods
16 schools are overlooked, and we feel that it's our
17 responsibility to try to make that condition
18 better.

19 Would you identify yourself for the
20 record, Mr. Johnson.

21 MR. JOHNSON: My name is Vernard
22 Johnson. I'm the Executive Director of Healthy
23 Family Healthy Life, Incorporated. And we're
24 located at 1307 South Hanson Street, in the
25 southwest section of the City. And we've around

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2 and involved in Philadelphia public schools for
3 about 18 years now.

4 And I really came, Councilwoman, to
5 talk about the health care of students in and out
6 of schools. I won't do that now, but I just
7 wanted to highlight some of the areas of concern.
8 And then, hopefully, we could sit and talk about
9 how to address these areas, if that's okay.

10 I wanted to talk some about the need
11 for students and their parents to participate in
12 the Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic
13 Testing Program the, the EPSDT, a federal Title 19
14 program as it relates to the Social Security Act.

15 And we're finding that too many
16 students are not participating in the EPSDT
17 Program and are getting their health care
18 sporadically, and we think that that there's a
19 need to have a joint venture between the School
20 District and the Health Department and providers
21 in the community as well as families around that
22 issue. So that's an area that I would hope at
23 some point we could talk about.

24 And then after the EPSDT exam, there's
25 the need for proper follow-up. When we were

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2 in no particular order, we were just trying to get
3 them on paper so I wouldn't forget anything today
4 -- is lead poisoning in children.

5 And with all due respect to the people
6 that just testified, we have given you in your
7 package a number of research documents about lead
8 poisoning in children and in adults.

9 And it is a misnomer based on this
10 research that a child has to eat lead chips paint
11 in order to be poisoned. Today we're more
12 concerned, and we hold a contract with the EPA and
13 the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
14 here in Philadelphia through the Health Department
15 today. Today we're really concerned about lead
16 dust and our children being exposed to high levels
17 of lead dust.

18 And, as a matter of fact, I was having
19 a conversation with two ladies here before the
20 hearing started. And one of the ladies, if she
21 doesn't mind me, you know, just talking about the
22 conversation, was talking about how she put her
23 fan in the window in the summertime.

24 And the track that window goes up and
25 down on had been -- you know, paint had been

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2 chipped. And when the fan blew, it was blowing
3 lead dust right onto her child. And that was the
4 problem, the baby wasn't eating lead paint, and
5 the documentation is here to say that.

6 And so we'd like, at some point, to
7 really talk about lead poisoning in children and
8 what we believe should be a more proactive stance
9 by the Health Department and the School District
10 to reach children at an earlier stage in their
11 poisoning.

12 I believe the Health Department reaches
13 out and inspects homes and tries to assist
14 families whose children are suffering from 15
15 micrograms of lead in their body per deciliter of
16 blood.

17 And you have a document in front of you
18 that talks about the developing nervous system in
19 children and how that could be affected over the
20 long term when there is just 10 micrograms of lead
21 per deciliter of blood. So right away, we're in a
22 -- we need to become more proactive around the
23 issue of lead poisoning in children.

24 And as you read this document -- I just
25 didn't have enough time to make copies for

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2 Domzalski's office, the Environmental Service
3 Division of the Health Department, and Greater
4 Philadelphia Health Action around developing a
5 program to support the school nurses in the
6 Bartram Cluster and getting information to
7 students about making wise sex choices and doing
8 more around family planning than they've been
9 doing.

10 And I talked some about the dental care
11 and treatment. And I'd like to say that in our
12 effort to make the community -- at least in the
13 Kingessing, Pascal and the Larchwood Gardens
14 Community out in Eastwick -- more aware around
15 issues of public health issues.

16 We're putting together a collaborative
17 effort with the Health Department and the Bartram
18 Cluster and Greater Philadelphia Health Action and
19 our organization and several other community-based
20 organizations, the Healthier Corners at Larchwood
21 Garden, to actually begin this spring, it says
22 here, but we really started, to begin this spring
23 to do more public health outreach in those
24 neighborhoods where Health Department statistics
25 show that everything negative from a public health

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2 perspective impacts those communities in Southwest
3 Philadelphia.

4 And on April the 21st -- it's on the
5 other page there -- but on April the 21st, we'll
6 be having a public press conference in some
7 community within one of those neighborhoods to
8 announce the effort of the Philadelphia office of
9 the EPA and the Childhood Lead Poison Prevention
10 Program of the Philadelphia Health Department and
11 the Bartram Cluster, as well as a number of other
12 community groups, will be holding a press
13 conference to make the community aware that they
14 should begin to look for more public health
15 activity and information and workshops and
16 education in their communities.

17 And we'd certainly like to have your
18 participation in that, Councilwoman Blackwell.
19 Last week we met with the CEO of Mercy Hospital --
20 the old Misericordia Hospital by name -- and
21 they're going to join into that effort. And you
22 know our struggle to get the University of Penn to
23 the table, we'd like to have the University of
24 Pennsylvania and the efforts of the medical system
25 there involved in our effort in Southwest

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2 people how to wash hands. We think that that is
3 really important. And we've been convinced of
4 that not just by, you know, our own thoughts, but
5 by John Domzalski who was in Harrisburg, as he
6 told us, several months ago.

7 And all these deputy health
8 commissioners from around the State were there,
9 and the topic was hand-washing. And we think that
10 children -- should be built in. There may be
11 policy, but there needs to be the will to do this.
12 It should be built in to the learning process in
13 school that children get an opportunity to wash
14 their hands before and after they eat. And so we
15 have policy but the will to do is a whole other
16 thing.

17 And I'd like to say that this summer --
18 and we'd like to have you look at this and be a
19 part of this, Councilwoman. This summer in the
20 Bartram Cluster, we're going to have an intensive
21 program around literacy, reading for children who
22 are like leaving kindergarten and going to first
23 grade, children who are leaving elementary school
24 and going to middle school, and children leaving
25 middle school and going to high school. There's

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2 going to be an intensive literacy program for
3 those children to focus on their reading
4 development.

5 And also included in that program --
6 and people at the Bartram Cluster were really wide
7 open to this -- is a wellness program that will
8 support the health care of those children going
9 from one grade level to the other.

10 And we're concerned that children who
11 go from -- and students who go from one grade
12 level to the other in the Philadelphia public
13 schools are not getting the physicals that they
14 should be getting, and they're not getting the --
15 especially children 14 years and up are not
16 getting the necessary booster shots that they're
17 getting.

18 And I think that we need to make a
19 public effort to partnership around having
20 children again participate in the EPSDT Program.
21 And if they participate in that program, then
22 they'll get all the shots that they're supposed to
23 get, they'll get tested for iron in their blood or
24 the lack of iron in their blood. They'll tested
25 for lead in their blood, and they'll get tested

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2 for areas that affect their behavior.

3 And maybe we could get on top of a
4 child, a student doesn't have eye glasses and
5 needs them but don't know that he needs them. And
6 so, you know, again, we're pushing the EPSDT
7 piece.

8 And I'd like to have a copy of this
9 made for you before I leave today around. It's
10 around the Scott vs. Snyder decision around EPSDTs
11 and the need for students to have a physical
12 examination and the need for those students to
13 have physical examinations periodically beginning
14 at one month old.

15 And I'd just like to read this so I
16 could get it on the record 1 months, 2 months, 3
17 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months,
18 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, 3 years, 4 years,
19 5 years, 6 years, 8, 10. And here's where we
20 think we begin to have some problems, and we'd
21 like to work with the School District on this, is
22 the 12-, the 14-, the 16-, the 18-, and the
23 20-year-olds who are in need of the screenings
24 and testing and then the follow-up treatment.

25 And we'd like to work with the School

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2 District on a plan to develop a process where our
3 students can come to school more healthy. And if
4 they're not healthy, we certainly would be able to
5 detect it early on.

6 And I'd like to say this in closing
7 today, Councilwoman Blackwell, and thank you for
8 letting me do that. I'd like to say this in
9 closing is that we work with the Red Cross around
10 developing of disaster plans.

11 And we would certainly like to work
12 with the School District, if not overall, at least
13 in the Bartram Cluster, where we're working real
14 hard, around developing a disaster plan, not just
15 for the local school, but for the community around
16 the school and to make the community around the
17 school -- make them more aware of what the
18 disaster plan would be.

19 About four or five years ago, at the
20 Wilson Elementary School, in the West Philadelphia
21 Cluster, we worked with the teachers and the
22 students of the elementary school and the parents
23 and the Red Cross and the School District's fire
24 people and the City's fire people in developing a
25 disaster service plan for the entire neighborhood;

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2 one where, if there was a disaster in the
3 community, how the school could be used as a
4 disaster center. And, certainly, if there's a
5 disaster at school, then people in the community
6 would know what the disaster plan is.

7 And so I think, even though there may
8 be, as the Chief of Staff spoke about, there may
9 be disaster plans in every one of these schools.
10 We would like to make sure that those disaster
11 plans include the community and the need for a
12 disaster plan of the community.

13 And I think that is all I wanted to
14 say. But, again, Councilwoman, I hope that you'll
15 look at the information we gave you around the
16 environmental studies done in Southwest
17 Philadelphia and the impact of what was found in
18 the environment and the impact of that study on
19 the community.

20 And it's something that we're working
21 with John Domzalski right now, as we speak, in
22 terms of getting that information out to the
23 community and getting feedback from the
24 community.

25 And I'd like to say this, Councilwoman.

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2 You know that we agitate the system a lot, but
3 we're also trying to find a way to work with them
4 to move them from our position, to kind of move
5 them ahead.

6 And we found that Dr. Jackson is
7 someone that has been agreeable to sitting down
8 with us from time to time. We haven't done it in
9 the last month or so, but we had been meeting once
10 a month and looking at the issues around disease
11 control and the issues of disasters in schools and
12 just those non-teaching kinds of issues, those
13 health issues that you and I are concerned about.

14 And at some point -- not to speak for
15 Mr. Jackson, but I certainly suggest that at some
16 point, you and Dr. Jackson and Dr. Ledebur might
17 want to sit and see exactly what it is before a
18 hearing, see exactly what it is that they're
19 attempting to do and how the things that we're
20 trying to do could maybe complement with what
21 they're attempting to do.

22 And I would hope that you would join us
23 in the same kind of meeting that we're having with
24 John Domzalski and his staff over at the Medical
25 Examiner's Office around this disease control and,

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2 you know, issues in the community and how we can
3 really get this information out to families about
4 ways to prevent, you know, disease and germs from,
5 you know, making them weak and sicker.

6 And so I found that both of them -- and
7 they're not paying me to say this, but I found of
8 them have been really --

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: They should.

10 MR. JOHNSON: They should, they should.

11 No, seriously, I found that both of
12 them have been, you know, willing to sit and
13 work. The real job is to get the information out
14 into the neighborhoods, into the community about
15 ways that the community and families can work to
16 keep themselves more healthy.

17 And I think that -- I'm sure the Deputy
18 Commissioner will speak for himself, but I think
19 that the meetings that we have had before the
20 situation at McMichael School, these kind of
21 hearings -- and I'm not saying that the
22 Commissioner hasn't been sensitive but maybe has
23 upped the sensitivity level that they're -- I
24 believe that making every effort to look at
25 schools closer.

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2 They might need more staff, they might
3 need more dollars -- I don't know -- to get around
4 to all of those schools and to do the type of
5 inspections and then to do the enforcement that
6 keeps the kid from sitting on a stall without a
7 door and going through all the troubles that
8 they're going through.

9 So that's all I really -- but, again,
10 children can be lead poisoned by the dust in the
11 -- not in the air, but once the dust settles and
12 it settles in their toys, it settles in their
13 pacifiers and the baby picks it up and puts in
14 their mouth, then we've got a problem. So it's
15 not just the eating of the chipped paint that
16 we're concerned about.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
18 much, Mr. Johnson. And might I say, you've been
19 asking me to meet with Dr. Jackson for about maybe
20 a year and a half. And certainly, I know of your
21 feelings for him and certainly of his work to try
22 to be part of the solution, as they say, instead
23 of the problem.

24 And also with Commissioner Domzalski.
25 He's been mentioned a lot. I couldn't spell the

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2 name if you asked me right now, but --

3 MR. JOHNSON: I can't spell it either.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But we'll have
5 you spell it for the stenographer.

6 But, certainly, we know that you have
7 really been committed to trying to help us from
8 day one with all of these issues.

9 And, again, we do not bring these
10 issues up because we have any issue with anyone
11 here, whether you be from L&I, the School District
12 or the Health Department. It is only our aim to
13 try to meet our responsibility in trying to make
14 schools a little better and a little safer for our
15 children. That's our responsibility, to try to at
16 least do that.

17 And we just hope that we don't have to
18 -- I think the dialogue that you gentlemen
19 brought about schools, which is really an
20 extension of health emergencies, but we appreciate
21 that focus. We haven't had it before.

22 But we are hopeful that if we -- and we
23 want to thank Thelma Peake from Peake's Day Care
24 here for being here today.

25 And we're hopeful that we can have

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2 another hearing for maybe a half hour and just go
3 through to say that these are the specific points
4 as to what we do if you have an emergency.

5 Mr. Johnson and many others, I have a
6 letter that I will be submitting for the record
7 from Veronica Joyner, Parents United for Better
8 Schools. And she says a lot of things about
9 communicable diseases.

10 And she ends her letter with -- her
11 last paragraph or second last paragraph says, "I
12 have surveyed elementary, middle and high school
13 students regarding their school bathroom.
14 Ninety-five percent of the students answered
15 dirty, smelly, and no soap or toilet paper. Most
16 children refuse to use their school bathrooms
17 because they are dirty."

18 So we know we have a problem, and it's
19 supported by that. Certainly, your statement that
20 out of 188 schools, 76 of them are in serious
21 condition means that we know we have a problem.
22 We just want to do our best to try to make that
23 better.

24 And let me say in conclusion that if we
25 have a better dialogue, we're not out to get you,

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2 and we certainly assume you're not out to get us,
3 but we have to do something to address this issue.
4 If I don't get answers at another hearing, I'll
5 only call another one. I mean, we've been here
6 May, June, here's March. I'll call another one,
7 you know.

8 And from the district races, I scored
9 highest so, God willing, I will be here again, and
10 I will continue to hold hearings to deal with
11 these issues until we have some kind of answer
12 that we can communicate to parents, to
13 grandparents, to foster care providers, to
14 neighborhood people, just something that's simple,
15 that everybody can understand.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Councilwoman, could I
17 close by saying one more thing, if you don't
18 mind?

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly.

20 MR. JOHNSON: One day last week, we had
21 at the Bartram Cluster, where there were nurses
22 and social workers and counselors and
23 psychiatrists, I guess, and psychologists, we had
24 John Domzalski was there representing
25 Environmental Services. We had a representative

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2 of Community Behavioral Health there, we had
3 someone from Maternal and Child Care there. We
4 had someone from Healthy Start there. We had
5 someone from the Whitman Avenue Health Center
6 there and someone from the Larchwood Gardens
7 Health Corners there. And there were probably
8 people there that I can't remember right now.

9 The effort was, it was to link the
10 non-teaching people to health services in West and
11 Southwest. The effort then would be to have
12 someone from -- just using the school Patterson
13 Elementary School as an example -- to say that I
14 want John Domzalski's environmental service
15 people, disease control people to come out here
16 and do a workshop for our home and school and for
17 our parents and for our teachers and for whoever
18 could benefit from a workshop that would maybe
19 have a focus on disease control, disease
20 prevention.

21 Some folks talked about the slow
22 process of getting a student into Behavioral
23 Health Services; it's taking two, three, months
24 sometimes to get someone into Behavioral Health
25 Services, at least in Southwest. Maybe that's

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2 because we don't have the number of providers that
3 other areas of the City have.

4 My point is -- is that -- I was
5 thinking that with all the conversation that was
6 going on and with all the concern about -- that
7 everyone was expressing about students, that our
8 phone would have been ringing off the hook, asking
9 to connect these services, these people to the
10 local school and to the community. Unless their
11 phone's been ringing, I haven't gotten one phone
12 call.

13 And what I'm saying to the School
14 District is that we can bring the resources there
15 in a preventive kind of mode. I mean, I think he
16 was real happy -- Domzalski was happy to be there
17 and said that in a preventive kind of mode. It
18 wasn't a meningitis scare that took him to the
19 school. It was our trying to be proactive.

20 We've got to find a way to get the
21 staff of the schools, the local schools, to give
22 them the will or the time or whatever it is that
23 they need to tap into resources that come out and
24 say we want to be available to you, we want you to
25 use this, we don't want you to wait until there's

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2 a disaster, until there's a problem.

3 We want to be proactive and, somehow,
4 we've got to get that message, in my opinion,
5 across to the people who are on the front line,
6 the teachers and nurses at the schools. And maybe
7 somehow find time for them to pick up the phone,
8 make a phone call and put a program together and
9 make sure that the people are there so that we
10 could bring the services in.

11 And until we do that, we can have all
12 these -- you know, with all due respect to you and
13 the committee, we can have all these hearings and
14 we can have all this stuff going on and we can be
15 meeting and we can be talking. But until we can
16 get the information to the students and to their
17 families and to people in the community, we're
18 going to still have these problems, in my opinion.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr.
20 Johnson.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly we
23 agree with you and thank you for commitment. To
24 the community and to education and to health
25 anyone.

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2 Is there anyone else who would like to
3 testify? Any other statements from the
4 committee?

5 Seeing none, we would like to at this
6 time recess this hearing.

7 (Adjourned at 3:00 p.m.)

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RE: COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Resolution No. 970368

Resolution No. 970466

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JOSEPHINE CARDILLO, RPR