

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 7, 2014
10:20 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN JAMES KENNEY
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

BILLS 130489, 130724, 140140, 140144, 140145,
140146, 140147, and 140148
RESOLUTION 140159

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COUNCILMAN JONES: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, everyone. Thank you. Today we would like to continue the public hearings of the Committee of the Whole, and will the Clerk please read the title of the bills.

MS. LEWIS: Bill No. 130489, an ordinance amending Chapter 19-2500 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate Non-Utilization Tax," by changing certain tax rates; all under certain terms and conditions.

Bill No. 130724, amending Chapter 19-1300 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate Taxes," by authorizing the School Reform Commission to determine whether certain tax exemptions from School District of Philadelphia real estate taxes shall continue; and by making technical corrections; all under certain terms and conditions.

Bill No. 140140, an ordinance amending Chapter 19-1500 of The

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Wage and Net
3 Profits Tax," by decreasing the rate or
4 rates of the tax imposed upon certain low
5 income persons, providing for refunds of
6 excess taxes paid, directing the Revenue
7 Department to develop procedures and
8 forms whereby eligible taxpayers can
9 obtain such refunds, and requiring
10 employers to provide refund forms to
11 employees; all under certain terms and
12 conditions.

13 Bill No. 140144, an ordinance
14 to adopt a Capital Program for the six
15 Fiscal Years 2015 through 2020 inclusive.

16 Bill No. 140145, an ordinance
17 to adopt a Fiscal 2015 Capital Budget.

18 Bill No. 140146, an ordinance
19 adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal
20 Year 2015.

21 Bill No. 140147, an ordinance
22 amending Section 19-1806 of The
23 Philadelphia Code, entitled
24 "Authorization of Realty Use and
25 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Board of Education of the School District
3 of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the
4 use or occupancy of real estate within
5 the School District of Philadelphia,
6 under certain terms and conditions.

7 Bill No. 140148, an ordinance
8 amending Section 19-1801 of The
9 Philadelphia Code, entitled
10 "Authorization of Tax," to further
11 authorize the Board of Education of the
12 School District of Philadelphia to impose
13 a tax on real estate within the City of
14 Philadelphia, under certain terms and
15 conditions.

16 And Resolution 140159,
17 providing for the approval by the Council
18 of the City of Philadelphia of a Revised
19 Five Year Financial Plan for the City of
20 Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years 2015
21 through 2019, and incorporating proposed
22 changes with respect to Fiscal Year 2014,
23 which is to be submitted by the Mayor to
24 the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
25 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority")

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 pursuant to the Intergovernmental
3 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an
4 Ordinance of this Council approved by the
5 Mayor on January 3rd, 1992 (Bill No.
6 1563-A), by and between the City and the
7 Authority.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
9 very much.

10 First of all and foremost,
11 welcome. We are glad to have you here.
12 As stewards of the taxpayers' money, it
13 is important; in fact, it is vital, that
14 we hear from you. People often set
15 priorities based on what they think is
16 important. Today is about hearing what
17 you think is important.

18 So we welcome you here, and I
19 have to do the ground rules to let
20 everyone know, first of all, we have 66
21 people scheduled to testify just for the
22 morning. We will take a break after that
23 session and then come back and hear the
24 rest of the people that will be signed up
25 to testify.

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2 We have at least five schools
3 that are here in Chambers today, and we
4 welcome you particularly. We have
5 Dobbins, Meredith, Audenried, George
6 Washington, and IMHOTEP Charter. Did I
7 miss anybody?

8 (Adaire.)

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Adaire. We
10 have Adaire.

11 Well, I can't hear you. You'll
12 say it when you come up.

13 So we welcome you all. And we
14 would like to also say that when you come
15 up to the witness stand, the Clerk will
16 call your name. You'll come up to the
17 witness stand and please say your name
18 for the record so that we can know who is
19 testifying.

20 Also, all speakers who are
21 signed up must speak to the issue of the
22 budget, and that includes whatever issues
23 you may have about school funding.

24 So we're going to -- also
25 joining me is Chairwoman of the Education

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2 Committee, Jannie Blackwell. My name is
3 Councilman Jones, and you have other
4 members of Council here today:
5 Councilman Kenney, Councilman Goode, and
6 Councilman Greenlee.

7 So without further adieu, I'm
8 going to turn it over to Councilwoman
9 Blackwell who will open the proceedings.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
11 morning. Thank you all. Sorry to hold
12 you up, and we will begin.

13 MS. LEWIS: I'm going to call
14 them in groups of three.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we'll
16 call in groups of three. Please come up
17 to the witness table.

18 MS. LEWIS: Mary Dean, Jerry
19 Jordan, and Julie Slavet.

20 (Witness approached witness
21 table.)

22 MS. LEWIS: Mary Dean, Jerry
23 Jordan, and Julie Slavet.

24 (Witness approached witness
25 table.)

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2 MS. LEWIS: Pete Matthews,
3 Dr. Walter Palmer.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.
5 (Witness approached witness
6 table.)

7 MS. LEWIS: And Ted Kirsch.
8 (No response.)

9 MS. LEWIS: Beverly DeCer.
10 (No response.)

11 MS. LEWIS: Leah Harms.
12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.
13 (Witnesses approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Again, good
16 morning. Please state your name for the
17 record and begin your testimony.

18 MR. JORDAN: Good morning. I'm
19 Jerry Jordan, President of the
20 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.
21 Good morning. I want to thank the
22 Education Committee Chairwoman Blackwell
23 and the entire City Council for allowing
24 me to speak on behalf of the members of
25 the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers,

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2 who work every day to provide a quality
3 education for our city's children.

4 I also would like to extend my
5 appreciation of the work you have done to
6 develop sustainable funding solutions for
7 our public schools. I also thank you for
8 your transparency, accountability, and
9 accessibility to Philadelphia's taxpayers
10 and for encouraging citizens to share
11 with you their thoughts and
12 recommendations on the issues that face
13 our city.

14 While I always welcome the
15 opportunity to address Council on
16 educational issues, it's unfortunate that
17 we once again find ourselves trying to
18 solve a School District financial crisis
19 that has persisted for over a decade.

20 I don't need to outline the
21 impact of budget cuts on our school
22 children. Everyone in this room is aware
23 that our children have lost an
24 unacceptable number of teachers,
25 librarians, school nurses, secretaries,

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2 and counselors, along with academic
3 offerings like art, music, and other
4 programs.

5 I also don't need to spend a
6 great deal of time identifying who is
7 primarily responsible for the current
8 financial crisis. Clearly, if
9 Pennsylvania had a funding formula for
10 education that guaranteed sustainable
11 funding for our schools, our crisis would
12 not be as dire.

13 The projected deficit for the
14 2014-15 school year is both staggering
15 and frustrating. Staggering because it
16 means we are sending our children to what
17 can hardly be called schools, and
18 frustrating because when I sat here last
19 year, I noted that we would be in this
20 position again if Harrisburg did not step
21 up to its obligation to fully fund our
22 schools.

23 The state has once again come
24 up short, and our children will once
25 again pay the price.

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2 Throughout this crises, various
3 Councilmembers have put forth ideas for
4 generating sustainable revenue for our
5 public schools.

6 Today, I would like to speak
7 briefly about, and express the PFT's
8 support for, some of the significant and
9 oftentimes creative measures introduced
10 by this honorable body as sustainable
11 means of funding our schools.

12 We have submitted a summary of
13 these items for the record.

14 The PFT supports the passage of
15 Bill 140207, the coin-operated parking
16 meter rate hike introduced on March 20th
17 by Councilwoman Reynolds Brown for
18 Councilman Jones.

19 While the \$1 million in annual
20 revenue doesn't sound like much in the
21 face of a \$440 million deficit, these
22 funds could pay for non-teaching
23 assistants at two-thirds of our high
24 schools, which would greatly improve
25 school safety and climate.

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2 We also support Councilman
3 Kenney's Resolution 140211 co-sponsored
4 by Councilwoman Blackwell, Councilman
5 Jones, Councilman Greenlee, Councilman
6 Goode, Councilwoman Bass, Councilwoman
7 Reynolds Brown, and Councilman Squilla.
8 This would authorize the Committee on
9 Education to hold hearings regarding
10 installing slot machines at Philadelphia
11 International Airport.

12 While we understand that slot
13 machines are certainly a controversial
14 topic, the millions of dollars they
15 generate would be a tremendous help to
16 our School District.

17 As Councilman Kenney stated, we
18 can't expect the \$27 to \$30 million in
19 revenue recognized at Las Vegas Airport,
20 but we could achieve one-third of that,
21 around \$10 million. It would increase
22 the number of librarians in our schools
23 by more than 700 percent.

24 Instead of the 16 librarians,
25 16 librarians we have currently serving

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2 Philadelphia students, a woefully
3 inadequate number, we would be able to
4 have 116 librarians in our schools.

5 Bill 140132 introduced by
6 Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez and
7 co-sponsored by Councilman Jones and
8 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown would
9 authorize an additional percentage of
10 real estate taxes to be designated for
11 the School District of Philadelphia.

12 The estimated \$53 million per
13 year in revenue would not only provide a
14 full-time nurse at every single school,
15 it could also fund an additional staff
16 member for every school, whether it's a
17 counselor, a teacher, a non-teaching
18 assistant.

19 With a slight millage shift,
20 each and every school would be able to
21 recover two essential staff members.
22 This is a significant measure.

23 Councilman Goode's Bill No.
24 130724 calls for an amendment of the
25 current tax code to allow the SRC to

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2 determine whether certain tax abatements
3 can continue. This could net \$2 million
4 per year for our schools. We appreciate
5 Councilman Goode's recognition that the
6 very wealthy and big businesses should
7 certainly pay their fair share in taxes.
8 We recognize his efforts to fine tune an
9 abatement bill that would improve the
10 lives of Philadelphia's school children.

11 The estimated \$2 million in
12 annual revenue is funding that could
13 enable half of Philadelphia's schools to
14 enlist the support of an additional
15 supportive service assistant to help our
16 children in the classroom.

17 And, finally, the PFT stands in
18 support of an extension of the 1 percent
19 sales tax, and we will diligently lobby
20 our legislators in Harrisburg to pass the
21 cigarette tax.

22 We believe that an amount
23 totalling \$120 million should result from
24 this measure. A hundred and twenty
25 million dollars in additional funding

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2 would provide for more than five

3 additional full-time teachers at every

4 single school in the School District.

5 Schools could restore cuts to art, music,

6 world languages, special education

7 services, and extracurricular activities.

8 We recognize that the full \$120

9 million may come as part of a package

10 deal, and we also appreciate the fact

11 that a more significant percentage of

12 this funding will go towards schools in

13 the earlier years of the plan.

14 While our goal is to see \$120

15 million in sustainable annual funding go

16 towards schools as a result of this

17 arrangement, we also hope that by the

18 time a potential 50/50 split is realized,

19 that a weighted funding formula will have

20 been reinstated.

21 I would like to close by once

22 again thanking Council for the work you

23 all have been doing on the issue of

24 education funding and for continuing to

25 make yourselves visible and accountable

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2 to Philadelphia citizens. Perhaps if the
3 SRC was held equally accountable to
4 taxpayers, there would be a greater
5 desire on the part of the Commission to
6 accomplish its intended mission, guiding
7 us through fiscal crises and acting as an
8 advocate in Harrisburg for adequate and
9 sustainable education funding.

10 The PFT appreciates Council's
11 willingness to put forth new and creative
12 ideas to fund public schools and to
13 present them to the public for discussion
14 and debate. We hope that you will
15 continue to engage the PFT in these
16 discussions.

17 Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you, Mr. Jordan. You always have
21 excellent testimony on the point, and as
22 you know, we were at your press
23 conference where we talked about a change
24 and where we talked about trying to come
25 up with people who are involved with the

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2 School District to serve on the School
3 Board, and we certainly support that and
4 your point of view.

5 Thank you very much for your
6 consistent leadership. Thank you.

7 Mr. Palmer.

8 DR. PALMER: Good morning,
9 Council, Chairman Blackwell, and
10 Co-Council Curtis Jones, and other
11 Councilmembers. I'm here today as the
12 Director of the Palmer Foundation, the
13 founder of the Leadership Learning
14 Partners Charter School, and what I want
15 to do to save time is sort of paraphrase
16 my statements that I made to the SRC on
17 the 25th or so of last month. This deals
18 with the issue of the request by the
19 Superintendent for the revocation of the
20 Leadership School Charter.

21 To set the background, clearly
22 this is an issue around the budget. What
23 we find time and time again, that the
24 School District has constantly referred
25 to the charter school growth enrollment

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2 as a way of somehow undermining their
3 budget.

4 Historically, America has
5 provided public education for all
6 children. All unborn children have a pot
7 of money, if you want to make it that
8 way, sitting there for them to go to a
9 school of their choice. That is public
10 schools. The State Legislature created
11 the public schools as a creature of the
12 State Legislature. The State Legislature
13 created charter schools as a creature of
14 the State Legislature as a public school.
15 So, consequently, parents then are able
16 to make a decision for the child as to
17 what public school they want to go to,
18 and the money follows the child. So in
19 no way does in fact the charter school
20 impinge, infringe or deny the public
21 education or District money.

22 When charter schools were
23 established, they were established to be
24 able to create opportunities for parents
25 by school choice. It also meant that

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2 what would happen is, it would create
3 some opportunities for traditional public
4 schools to grow and improve based on best
5 practices.

6 Our school, which is sitting
7 down in North Philadelphia, between 2000
8 and 2015, '14, we've grown from 300
9 children to 1,300 children. They come
10 from 17 of the 18 poorest performing zip
11 codes. They are 75 percent are black, 20
12 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 5 percent
13 are white. They're 100 percent free and
14 reduced lunch, 75 percent of single
15 parents, 250 of those children are
16 special ed. We take the children that
17 nobody wants and, consequently, we will
18 always have a roller coaster in terms of
19 how they perform.

20 The idea that I want to address
21 too that came out in terms of revocation,
22 one was the fact that we had a budget of
23 \$2.9 million. Charter schools get 25 to
24 30 percent of every dollar taken off the
25 top. Since we were in this charter

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2 school operation, the School District has
3 saw fit to find a way in which to try to
4 deny us our own growth. We were renewed
5 in 2005. We were renewed again in 2010.
6 In each instance, the School District of
7 Philadelphia attempted to cap us so that
8 they would not allow us to grow, but
9 somehow thought they could use any money
10 that we would have gotten to inure to
11 their budget.

12 We then raised the question of
13 the cap and sued. We were able to win
14 \$1.3 million for a 1.7 million suit, but
15 in the meantime, the failure of us being
16 paid our money timely meant that the
17 District somehow was able to benefit from
18 some injury. So over the years, that 2.9
19 million has really been laid at the feet
20 of the District for failure to be able to
21 pay us our money and timely.

22 Another question they raised
23 was the fact that we had, they claim, a
24 \$700,000 shortfall in this past year
25 based on reconciliation. We were in the

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2 process of negotiating with them with the
3 consent of the Superintendent to find a
4 way, as all charter schools do, to do
5 reconciliation. We said 500. They said
6 700. We're not allowed to continue the
7 process and, consequently, they called
8 for a revocation of our charter.

9 I simply want to state this,
10 that in no way at all has our school ever
11 been -- not done things that were within
12 the code of ethics, nor have we made any
13 attempts to mismanage or misappropriate
14 funds, an illusion that was made towards
15 our school. And, consequently, we will
16 fight against those.

17 In my testimony -- and I said
18 then and I say it now -- we tried to hard
19 to talk about how we could find a pathway
20 towards resolution. Assistant
21 Superintendent Kihn met with me for two
22 hours, and at the end of that meeting
23 last month or two months ago, he found
24 that we were in fact prepared to sit down
25 and talk about ways to have resolution.

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2 I said that to Bill Green when he called
3 me on the 21st. I said it, not knowing
4 the fact that the court had already ruled
5 on the -- he called me on the 22nd. The
6 court already ruled on the 21st that it
7 was illegal for the SRC to put caps on
8 charters or to change the rules.

9 This is about how to punish one
10 charter school in order to force all
11 other charter schools to comply, and it
12 is patently unfair. We were never given
13 due notice. On the 22nd I get a call
14 from Bill Green, and in the course of the
15 day, they begin the process of having
16 press conferences, sending robo calls to
17 all of our families, trying to get
18 teachers to leave and come into the
19 District and disrupt the entire life of
20 these children. Patently unfair.

21 I still stand here before you
22 to try to find a pathway to resolution,
23 but let me make this very clear. I'm 80
24 years old. I've been in every major
25 fight in this nation for social justice.

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2 I have never retreated. And when I can
3 no longer talk, I'll spit. When I can no
4 longer punch, I'll scratch. When I can
5 no longer run, I will hop or skip. When
6 I can no longer do that, I will crawl.
7 But I will never crawl into the night. I
8 will never shrink. I will never resist
9 the chance to fight against what I
10 consider to be injustice.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you, Mr. Palmer. And as you know, we
15 believe in due process. It's what this
16 country was founded on. Everybody has a
17 right to due process, and we look forward
18 to you getting your opportunity. Thank
19 you, Dr. Palmer.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. DeCER: Good morning. My
22 name is Beverly DeCER and I am a nurse,
23 the mother of an adult child who is
24 allergic to fluoride, and I am here on
25 behalf of the residents of Philadelphia

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2 who do not want fluoride added to our
3 water system. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to speak while you're
5 considering the new budget.

6 An excellent way to save money
7 would be to end water fluoridation. How
8 did we arrive at the 60-year policy of
9 adding a chemical to our water that is so
10 toxic, a spoonful could kill an adult?
11 Why do we add a hazardous chemical to our
12 water when it does nothing to improve
13 water quality?

14 By looking at the history of
15 water fluoridation, we can understand how
16 this egregious policy came into
17 existence. As manufacturing of aluminum
18 and steel began to increase after the
19 turn of the century, industry began to
20 have a serious issue with fluoride.
21 Lawsuits over fluoride damage go back as
22 far as 1855 in Germany. The first
23 disaster was in Belgium in 1930 when
24 fluoride from factory emissions trapped
25 by a weather inversion killed 60 people

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2 and injured several thousand. The
3 lawsuits also began from the continuous
4 emissions of these factories which were
5 crippling cattle and people, damaging
6 vegetation and ruining health. Factory
7 workers were devastated and died young.

8 Scientists studied fluoride and
9 found it to be an aggressive poison.
10 There had been speculation since the 19th
11 century that since fluoride was deposited
12 in teeth and bones, it made them
13 stronger. But in 1925, Johns Hopkins
14 researchers fed fluoride to rats and
15 found it made their teeth weaker. The
16 leading Danish fluoride scientist saw the
17 same result. Workers' teeth with the
18 most fluoride were the weakest.

19 But corporate America had a
20 plan to combat their many lawsuits. The
21 titans of industry - DuPont, Alcoa, U.S.
22 Steel, Reynolds Aluminum - funded two
23 laboratories to produce the science to
24 protect and enhance their profits, the
25 Mellon Institute and the Kettering

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2 Laboratory. These labs also approved as
3 safe asbestos, leaded gas, and Freon,
4 which is made from fluoride.

5 After World War II, more
6 corporations formed the Fluorene Lawyers
7 Committee, which shepherded fluoride into
8 our water. Their premise was if the
9 Department of Health is putting it in our
10 water, how can fluoride be bad for you?
11 That is the strategy behind water
12 fluoridation, and lawyers have used this
13 in defense of industry in courtrooms for
14 fluoride poisoning of individuals.

15 There's documented proof that
16 in 1937 the American Dental Association
17 Chairman offered sufficient information
18 to General Motors in return for \$25,000.
19 The ADA continues to receive millions of
20 dollars from the consumption of fluoride
21 products.

22 Finally, when the Manhattan
23 Project needed vast amounts of fluoride
24 for their weapons, federal government
25 support of fluoride and water

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2 fluoridation was complete.

3 It is 2014, time to understand
4 fluoridation's corrupt history and end
5 the policy. Save money and protect the
6 residents of Philadelphia by ending water
7 fluoridation.

8 Thank you. And give the money
9 to the schools.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you.

13 Identify yourself. Thank you.

14 MS. HARMS: Hello. My name is
15 Leah Harms.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Can
17 you pull your mic closer. We can't hear
18 you.

19 MS. HARMS: Hello. My name is
20 Leah Harms and I'm also going to speak on
21 fluoride. First off, thank you for
22 allowing me to speak here today. And
23 just for the record, I'm a librarian and
24 a researcher. I will highlight several
25 concerns I have with adding fluoride

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2 chemicals to the public water supply and
3 why I think it must stop as soon as
4 possible.

5 First off, fluoride is a highly
6 toxic substance. Consider, for example,
7 the poison warning that the FDA now
8 requires on all fluoride toothpaste sold
9 in the U.S. or the tens of millions of
10 people in China and India who now suffer
11 serious crippling bone diseases from
12 drinking water with elevated levels of
13 fluoride. The FDA does not approve
14 fluoride as a drug for ingestion. The
15 CDC says on their website that it only
16 works topically; that is, you brush with
17 it, you do not need to drink it.

18 Fluoride is not a nutrient, and
19 the human body does not need it for any
20 biological function. In terms of the que
21 toxicity, the dose that can cause
22 immediate toxic consequences, fluoride is
23 more toxic than lead, but slightly less
24 toxic than arsenic. This is why fluoride
25 has long been used in rodenticides and

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2 pesticides to kill pests like rats and
3 insects. It is also why accidents
4 involving over-ingestion of fluoridated
5 dental products, including fluoride gels,
6 fluoride supplements, and fluoridated
7 water, can cause serious poisoning
8 incidents, including death. Illness and
9 death have also been documented in
10 communities where the water supplier
11 accidentally added too much and the
12 public was not alerted in time.

13 There is no reason we are still
14 adding this industrial waste product to
15 our public water supplies. In fact, only
16 5 percent of the world's population
17 consumes fluoridated water, and of those
18 350 million people, 200 million are
19 Americans. Virtually all of European
20 nations have stopped water fluoridation
21 or never started it because of concerns
22 over ethics and negative health impacts.
23 Their populations have the same or lower
24 rates of dental caries as fluoridated
25 nations. Therefore, it would seem

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2 something else must be the cause of
3 improved dental health over the last
4 several decades, such as better nutrition
5 and oral hygiene.

6 Fluoridated water is a great
7 waste of money when it appears to make no
8 difference to rates of dental decay in
9 developed nations.

10 You may like to hear the Dallas
11 City Council is currently considering
12 ending their fluoridation program to save
13 around a million dollars. Their
14 population is smaller than ours, so the
15 savings for a city the size of
16 Philadelphia could be even higher. So
17 not only can we save over a million
18 dollars a year, but we will also ensure
19 that our children, our elderly, and our
20 seriously ill citizens are not being
21 overdosed with fluoride chemicals.

22 There is no other drug that is
23 allowed in the water, because as every
24 good doctor knows, there is no way to
25 control the dose once it is in the water

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2 we drink, cook with, and bathe in. The
3 amount of fluoride someone gets per day
4 depends on their habits, and there is no
5 way to ensure people are not getting way
6 too much. In fact, approximately 41
7 percent of American youth now have dental
8 fluorosis, a clear sign that they have
9 way too much fluoride in their bodies,
10 including in their bones and soft tissue,
11 not just their teeth.

12 It is also considered now a
13 developmental neurotoxin based on a very
14 recent Harvard study.

15 And, finally, it is a civil
16 right to decide what medicines we take,
17 and that right is denied us when fluoride
18 is added directly into the public water.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 MS. LEWIS: Mary Dean, Julie
24 Slavet, Pete Matthews, Ted Kirsch, Amanda
25 McIllmurray, Rebecca Poyourow, Glenavie

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Norton.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
6 morning. Feel free to identify yourself
7 and begin your testimony. Thank you.

8 MS. POYOUROW: Thank you.

9 Thank you, members of Council,
10 for this opportunity to speak with you
11 about the upcoming year City education
12 budget. My name is Rebecca Poyourow. I
13 live in Roxborough, and both my sons
14 attend Cook-Wissahickon Elementary
15 School. As you know, especially those of
16 you who are parents yourselves, parents
17 have long memories. We remember our
18 children's first words, their first
19 steps, and their first days of school.
20 And public school parents in Philadelphia
21 have added some other memories as well.
22 We remember every single education budget
23 cycle since 2011 and the cumulative
24 impact they have had on their children's
25 lives.

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2 Now, it's absolutely the case
3 that the state level budget cuts enacted
4 in 2011 and continued ever since have
5 laid waste to Pennsylvania's schools and
6 made a travesty of Pennsylvania's
7 constitutional obligation to provide a
8 thorough and efficient system of public
9 education to the children of the
10 Commonwealth, and we have all been
11 lobbying and demonstrating and testifying
12 in Harrisburg regarding this point.

13 While we have yet to see a
14 state budget we like, we know that the
15 parent verdict on our governors and our
16 state legislators and transients will
17 come in this election year.

18 It is also true that Council
19 has raised funds for the schools in 2011
20 and 2012, faltering last year when you
21 depended upon cigarette tax legislation
22 that never materialized. However,
23 pointing fingers at Harrisburg, while
24 accurate, is not an actual solution to
25 the funding crisis leaving our children

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 bereft right now. We cannot depend upon
3 a magic rescue, and we would all do well
4 to remember that the City's brinksmanship
5 strategy last year left our kids
6 empty-handed. As one Councilwoman has
7 said, ultimately these are our kids. How
8 many more would-be first-generation
9 college students do we want to see not be
10 able to go to college because they had no
11 AP classes available, no opportunity to
12 take the PSAT, and no counselors to help
13 them through the process? How many more
14 situations will we countenance where our
15 children are not safe because of
16 inadequate adult supervision such at
17 Bartram High School? How many deaths are
18 we willing to witness for lack of nurses
19 in schools? The answer obviously has to
20 be none.

21 If the City of Philadelphia
22 wants to hold up its head and say it is a
23 world-class city, it needs to do right by
24 its youngest citizens. City Council
25 needs to dedicate recurring sustainable

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 funding to our children's schools.
3 There's 120 million in sales tax
4 exemption money on the table right now
5 and City Council needs to stop delaying
6 and dedicate all of it to the schools.

7 In addition, Council needs to
8 shift the millage rates in order to raise
9 50 million more, and any dithering and
10 finger-pointing on these matters right
11 now and our children are lost. This year
12 was brutal enough.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: For the
16 record, we've been joined by Councilman
17 Oh and Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds
18 Brown.

19 MS. McILLMURRAY: Honorable
20 City Council members, my name is Amanda
21 McIllmurray --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
23 pull your mic up. We can't hear you at
24 all. And we need you to talk louder.

25 MS. McILLMURRAY: Honorable

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 City Council members, my name is Amanda
3 McIllmurray and I am a victim of water
4 fluoridation.

5 The City needs to stop spending
6 money on a program that harms your
7 citizens. I have been poisoned by
8 fluoride and I have dental fluorosis.
9 The only reason I have fluorosis is
10 because I ingested too much fluoride as
11 my teeth were developing. My body
12 couldn't handle the copious amounts of
13 fluoride in my water and it damaged my
14 teeth.

15 My teeth have been unsightly
16 for as long as I can remember. My teeth
17 are yellowed and modelled and they're
18 sensitive to heat and cold. My fluorosis
19 affected my self-confidence and shaped
20 who I am today.

21 The ADA states that fluorosis
22 is simply a cosmetic issue, but I can
23 tell them otherwise. I live with it
24 every day of my life. Is the ADA or the
25 City going to pay for me to have my smile

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 back, untainted as I was born? Are they
3 going to restore what was robbed of me?
4 Is the Department of Public Health going
5 to pay for any related dental work? They
6 promote water fluoridation, but what
7 about me and my teeth?

8 According to the CDC, dental
9 fluorosis affects 41 percent of
10 teenagers, and the number is growing due
11 to the increased presence of fluoride in
12 our environment. The number could be
13 higher now in Philadelphia due to poorer
14 socioeconomic groups. African Americans
15 and Hispanics are genetically predisposed
16 to fluorosis. Philadelphia is an
17 ethnically diverse city. Obviously this
18 is a pressing issue.

19 Fluoride harms people more who
20 have poor nutrition, particularly diets
21 low in calcium and magnesium, which
22 competes with fluoride for uptake in the
23 body, so there are not sufficient
24 nutrients for more fluoride to be
25 absorbed.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 We are being robbed of our
3 healthy teeth, exactly the opposite of
4 what fluoride propaganda claims.

5 Please protect us from
6 fluoride. We are being harmed by too
7 much fluoride exposure, from fluoride
8 pesticides working their way into the
9 food chain and by water fluoridation.
10 Fluoride is a poison. It's not a
11 nutrient, and should be treated as such.
12 We should be protected from fluoride, not
13 dosed with it.

14 Please stop paying for a
15 chemical which has robbed me and
16 countless others of their smiles and good
17 health. Fluoridation is entirely
18 unnecessary. There is no sane reason to
19 spend millions of dollars to buy
20 neurotoxins every year. This money can
21 be allocated for better reasons. It does
22 so much harm. It shouldn't be added to
23 our water.

24 There are millions of things
25 that could be added too. There's people

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 here talking about giving the money for
3 the schools. I'm trying to present you
4 with a way to save millions of dollars a
5 year. I think it's something for you to
6 consider.

7 So please don't allow another
8 generation of Philadelphians to be robbed
9 of their healthy teeth. Please do the
10 right thing and protect us from fluoride.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
14 for your testimonies.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Not
16 everybody at one time.

17 MS. LEWIS: Mary Dean.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. LEWIS: Julie Slavet.

20 (No response.)

21 MS. LEWIS: Pete Matthews and
22 Ted Kirsch.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 MS. DEAN: Good morning. Can

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 everyone hear me?

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

4 MS. DEAN: I'm Mary Dean. I'm
5 the principal of the West Philadelphia
6 High School.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. DEAN: My students,
9 teachers, and I have come to City Council
10 today to ask that you find an adequate
11 funding source that will continuously
12 fund our public schools.

13 There is no reason why City
14 Council in a city the size of
15 Philadelphia has to have a funding issue
16 in the public school system year after
17 year after year. You make it seem that
18 our students, our parents, and our
19 schools are not a priority in this city.

20 Again, it is important that we
21 fund our public schools and that we
22 become a priority in a first-class city
23 like Philadelphia. I ask Council to
24 consider our options and have a
25 continuous funding source that will make

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 our schools a priority in the City of
3 Philadelphia.

4 Thank you for your attention.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you, Ms. Dean, and we thank you for your
8 assistance in having your school open.
9 We know we had some guests from Africa,
10 and you've been very open and willing to
11 work with everyone. I'm hoping that
12 through all of this, that we can help our
13 students get all the help they need at
14 West Philadelphia High School, and we
15 thank you for your commitment and
16 leadership.

17 MS. DEAN: Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. DEAN: The delegation,
20 Councilwoman, the delegation from Africa
21 wants us to start an exchange program
22 with our West Philadelphia High School
23 students. So I just wanted to let you
24 know that.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 I'm on top of that, and thank you. We've
3 been talking about it for many years.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. DEAN: Thank you.

7 MR. MATTHEWS: Good morning,
8 Councilman Jones, Councilwoman Blackwell.
9 Thank you for this opportunity to testify
10 on the Mayor's proposed City budget. My
11 name is Pete Matthews and I'm President
12 of AFSCME District Council 33, the City
13 municipal workers union. I'm here as the
14 voice of 10,000 of the hardest working,
15 most dedicated union, women and men, who
16 work for the City.

17 District Council 33 has made
18 every effort to negotiate a fair contract
19 settlement over the years since I have
20 testified before this Council in the past
21 year. District Council 33 wants to take
22 this opportunity to thank City Council
23 for the letter of support to the Mayor on
24 February 24th of this year expressing
25 their gratitude to the heroes of this

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 harsh winter, the hard-working municipal
3 employees, braving freezing temperatures
4 and long hours to keep our streets
5 passable and our most vulnerable safe and
6 warm.

7 Despite our disagreements with
8 the City, our members in all departments
9 continue to work hard for the City and
10 our ultimate customers, the citizens of
11 Philadelphia, while enduring a five-year
12 wage freeze. We have contributed much in
13 terms of work output and crucial support
14 of legislative cost-saving measures the
15 City has availed itself to to balance its
16 budgets over the past five years.

17 During the national economic
18 meltdown, the Mayor asked and received
19 our help for the past five years.

20 District Council 33 has delivered for
21 this Administration. Working with the
22 Mayor in 2009, we saved the City \$35
23 million through staffing adjustments.

24 Our pension trustees helped get
25 the Legislature in Harrisburg to defer

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 payments to the pension plan in 2009 and
3 saved the City \$235 million.

4 Our union lobbied the
5 Legislature in Harrisburg in 2009 to
6 approve raising the sales tax to generate
7 new revenue that to date the 1 percent
8 increase has generated \$425 million
9 dollars. We support President Clarke and
10 City Council on the proposal to split the
11 1 percent sales tax between schools and
12 the City Pension Fund.

13 Our union reformed our Health
14 and Welfare Fund to self-insured in
15 December of 2009 and saved millions of
16 dollars, while instituting a member
17 payroll deduction co-pay. We have not
18 had a pay or health and welfare increase
19 for over five years, saving the City
20 millions of dollars.

21 The economy is rebounding and
22 2014 is filled with gleaming indicators
23 on the City's financial future. This is
24 in part with the help of District Council
25 33.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 The last time we met with the
3 City, we stated drop the furlough day
4 proposal and we can start negotiations.
5 The City delivered their best and final
6 offer, which included furlough days. It
7 was rejected by the union. The City
8 Administration has testified in City
9 Council. Furlough days do nothing to
10 alleviate healthcare costs and pension
11 contributions.

12 Overtime is an important
13 sticking point in these negotiations.
14 Overtime is not a collective bargaining
15 issue. Overtime is a management
16 prerogative and assigned solely by the
17 City. We have nothing to do with how
18 much overtime the City gives, and it can
19 be reduced by hiring more workers. The
20 City can stop assigning overtime any time
21 it wants.

22 As I have stated earlier, we
23 have reformed our health and welfare in
24 2009 by self-insuring millions. The City
25 Administration and other unions have

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 followed our health and welfare model.

3 You have many decisions to make
4 before the end of June on what course the
5 City should take going forward. From the
6 actions taken by City Council so far in
7 the formation of the Fiscal Year 2015
8 budget, I believe you would agree with me
9 that one of those decisions is to make
10 sure that the City budget includes enough
11 funding to settle a fair contract with
12 City workers.

13 It is only fair for each of you
14 to ask what it would take to settle our
15 contract. For the past five years, we
16 have been asking for a number to
17 determine that. Now a number can be
18 determined. We are willing to negotiate
19 within the parameter of that number.

20 I thank you for this time. I'm
21 willing to meet with any City Council
22 person either as a committee or
23 individually to discuss those numbers.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: We thank you

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 for last winter and for the years of
3 service. We support you in a fair
4 contract, as represented by a letter we
5 sent, and we just need to sometimes stop
6 making excuses and make more commitments,
7 and that's just what we plan to do.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. MATTHEWS: I would just --

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you.

12 MR. MATTHEWS: I'm not here to
13 negotiate a contract. That's between the
14 union and the City Administration. But
15 if we want to meet privately and go over
16 some numbers where we can show you how we
17 got to the determination of that number,
18 I'm sure you will agree with us that that
19 was more than fair.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

21 Mr. Matthews, we know over the years that
22 you've been fighting for a fair contract.
23 We have no doubt. There's no doubt in
24 our minds that you've done all that you
25 can and that you've sacrificed for the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 City of Philadelphia. So we want you to
3 know we support you, we're with you, and
4 we're willing to do whatever we can to
5 make sure that we get past this impasse.

6 MR. MATTHEWS: I appreciate
7 that and --

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. MATTHEWS: And just let me
10 say in closing to explain a little bit
11 more, you need that number so you can go
12 forward in the budget, so you know how to
13 deal with the budget. You never had that
14 number before. Factors have changed
15 where we can show you what that number
16 is, and if we -- we get in a meeting and
17 show you that we can negotiate with the
18 parameters of that number that has been
19 determined by the City Administration.
20 So there should be no problem in
21 negotiating this contract by the end of
22 the budget.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We'll

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 be happy to meet with you, Mr. Matthews,
3 at any time. We're happy to meet with
4 you to get the information we need.

5 MR. MATTHEWS: We appreciate
6 that. Probably within the next week,
7 because we can show you the figures, and
8 that would help us greatly in the factor
9 determined in the budget and to talk to
10 this Administration, Here are the
11 numbers, how come you don't settle this
12 contract, we got a budget to do, let's
13 get this contract settled.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you. Absolutely. We agree.

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: For the
19 record, Councilwoman Bass is here as
20 well, has joined us in Chambers.

21 MS. NORTON: Good morning. My
22 name is Glenavie Norton and I'm Chair of
23 the Americans for Democratic Action of
24 Southeastern Pennsylvania. Our ADA
25 chapter has had a long history of

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 supporting public education.

3 As an aside, I want to say that
4 the news this morning from Moody's
5 Investment Services certainly adds some
6 intensity and urgency to your
7 deliberations about the School District
8 budget.

9 ADA urges you to allocate all
10 120 million from the extension of the
11 sales tax to the School District, which
12 desperately needs this recurring revenue
13 source rather than sharing those revenues
14 with the Pension Fund.

15 Given the reluctance of the
16 Legislature to address Philadelphia
17 school needs, it would be most unwise to
18 turn down the agreement they agreed to
19 last summer, which required 100 percent
20 of the sales tax extension to go to the
21 schools. Asking them to change that
22 arrangement now surely risks the loss of
23 the entire revenue source.

24 Philadelphia's pension problem
25 is so vast and longstanding that 60

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 million from the sales tax extension will
3 address only a very small percentage of
4 it. Conversely, allocation of the full
5 120 million to the School District will
6 address a significant percentage of the
7 school's financial crisis. No retiree's
8 pension is in immediate danger, while
9 virtually every public school student,
10 including those in charter schools, has
11 suffered or will suffer devastating
12 losses in service if the 120 million is
13 not forthcoming.

14 Most of us never went to a
15 school without a counselor, a librarian,
16 a nurse, after-school activities, aides,
17 and adequate materials, but that is what
18 the majority of the 131,000 District
19 students have faced this year. Next year
20 many of the 60,000 students in charters
21 will face the same thing.

22 We cannot risk losing to the
23 suburbs families with options and the tax
24 revenues they bring to the City. We
25 cannot risk failing to give all our

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 children the resources they need to
3 succeed in school.

4 We urge you, City Council, to
5 do the right thing. We urge you to fund
6 our schools to the fullest extent
7 possible, thus sending our students,
8 their families, and all Philadelphians a
9 resounding message that you are committed
10 to their future and the future of the
11 City.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
15 for your testimony.

16 MS. LEWIS: The next group of
17 speakers, Adam Bachmann, Jeremy Estes,
18 Janae Robinson, Paul Thergartner, and
19 Robert Franklin.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you
22 please come to the witness table to
23 testify.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
3 much for your patience. Anywhere.

4 Good morning. State your name
5 for the record and begin your testimony.

6 MR. ESTES: My name is Jeremy
7 Estes. I'm a senior from George
8 Washington High School and I'm here to
9 share a personal experience to help shed
10 some light on why our School District
11 needs more funding.

12 I was contacted by Drexel
13 University for a full scholarship
14 interview on March 19th, and I was really
15 nervous and I didn't know what to do. It
16 was an exciting and major opportunity,
17 but I was lost and I wasn't sure what to
18 expect. I was scared. This was like my
19 future on the line. And at our school,
20 released due to the budget cuts, we went
21 from six counselors to one for 1,800
22 students. And I decided that I needed to
23 reach out to a counselor to help prepare
24 me for that interview, despite the fact
25 that I'm a nervous, insecure person and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 sometimes I was scared to speak up, and
3 our counselor, Mr. Bachmann, he is very
4 busy. You can tell just by walking by
5 his office. He always looks stressed.
6 But he works his hardest to try to
7 address every single student, but it's a
8 formidable task to speak to everybody.

9 However, at the end of the day,
10 the day before the interview, I went to
11 him, and he sacrificed 15 minutes to hear
12 me out. And during this little meeting,
13 he gave me questions to expect for the
14 interview, and he really helped bring out
15 everything from my brain to help succeed
16 in that interview. He gave me brilliant
17 ways to articulate my speech, and he
18 really got a chance to have me open up to
19 him so that he could get to know me as
20 well, because the whole process from the
21 months prior of applying to colleges and
22 everything, I didn't really get a chance
23 to sit down and talk to him because he
24 had to handle 400 other seniors and their
25 requests.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 And I came here today to share
3 this experience, because that next day,
4 thanks to his advice, he gave me the
5 courage to walk in there with my head
6 high and my mind confident. I nailed the
7 interview. The people from Drexel told
8 me that I was an inspiration and they
9 appreciated my story, and it was all
10 thanks to the help of one counselor.

11 But the reason I'm here is not
12 to brag about a scholarship. It's to
13 tell people that we need more counselors,
14 because we have 1,800 students and one
15 person. If you divide every single
16 person for that time to talk to our
17 counselor, it's physically impossible.
18 But I feel even though it might be hard
19 with your budget to allow everybody to
20 have more counselors, it's more about
21 looking at it from a human perspective.
22 People like me are nervous and scared to
23 reach out to other people, but that's the
24 job of a counselor, to help reach out and
25 take the time to get to know students and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 help them reach their full potential.
3 And I feel as though there's a solution
4 that's already existing within the School
5 District. The School District's website
6 has a My Learning program online, which
7 we use maybe twice a year. We have My
8 Learning program online that we use maybe
9 twice a year that we talk about our goals
10 and setbacks and open up to a computer
11 about how we can find ways to succeed,
12 and I feel if you hire more counselors
13 back and let them become advisors to
14 students on a personal level, that there
15 would be more stories about children like
16 me getting full scholarships to elite
17 universities like Drexel. And although
18 obviously there's a lot of financial
19 issues in calculating everything, you
20 have to look at it from everybody's
21 perspective.

22 We had 20 students here to talk
23 to you today and then we were informed
24 today only three could speak. I have one
25 story, and I know this is supposed to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 three minutes, but there's thousands of
3 minutes here to talk to you. I feel like
4 you have to let everybody be heard.

5 So I want to thank you for the
6 time to pick me personally to help talk
7 to you, and I hope that you understand
8 that everybody needs a little help from
9 others, and that's why we should bring
10 our counselors back.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: I wouldn't
13 have known you were ever nervous. So I
14 appreciate what your counselor has done
15 for you, and we need more people like you
16 to be coached to success. So thank you
17 for your testimony.

18 MR. ESTES: I appreciate it.
19 Thank you.

20 MISS ROBINSON-WRIGHT: My name
21 is Janae Robinson-Wright and I am a
22 senior at George Washington High School.

23 Since the beginning of my
24 senior year, I have been aiding in the
25 counselor's office for our counselor,

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Mr. Bachmann. I helped with issues
3 primarily during the college admission
4 time, which included me helping peers
5 meet college requirements, making sure
6 that they took their SATs or ACTs,
7 telling them how to apply and when to
8 apply and when were the deadlines.

9 Yes, this was a terrific idea
10 for our school to have peers aiding
11 peers, but I myself am going through the
12 college admission process and my
13 knowledge is limited. So why not have
14 people that go to college specifically
15 for this reason to help us?

16 Sorry.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: You're doing
18 good.

19 MISS ROBINSON-WRIGHT: The
20 decrease of counselors has become
21 detrimental to our students' education.
22 How can we as school students go on
23 efficiently with only one counselor?
24 There are approximately 1,800 students in
25 George Washington High School and there

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 is exactly one counselor.

3 Suburban schools such as
4 Council Rock or Lower Moreland have five
5 counselors and 200 students per
6 counselor. Why are we not treated as
7 equal as they are? Are we not worth the
8 same education as they are or the same
9 assistance as they have?

10 I am heavily invested in my
11 education. Why aren't you? This is an
12 immense subject to our education.

13 I'm sorry.

14 Do you all not realize how many
15 students or how many seniors this year
16 are not going to college because we do
17 not have a lot of counselors to help us
18 out at all? We only have one. There's
19 1,800 students that he has to assist.
20 And he does not even get to all of them,
21 not even most of them. It's so hard to
22 get his time and to talk to him. He does
23 a great job at what he does, but it's
24 hard to get to him. Maybe not even half
25 our seniors are going to college this

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 year, because they do not know what to do
3 and do not have the proper resources or
4 anything like that to go to college at
5 all.

6 I'm finished.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
8 much for your testimony.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Before you
11 go. Hello? Before you go, what schools
12 are you considering?

13 MISS ROBINSON-WRIGHT:
14 Bloomsburg University.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: What major?

16 MISS ROBINSON-WRIGHT: Physical
17 therapy.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
19 much.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
21 say thank you for your testimony as well,
22 but, remember, no matter what happens
23 with this debate, you've come this far.
24 You can still fight. People like Bill
25 Cosby and others, my brother, who is a

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Ph.D. psychologist, many of us have had
3 issues with counselors, but yet we can
4 make it. You can make it.

5 MISS ROBINSON-WRIGHT: Thank
6 you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you.

9 MR. FRANKLIN: I'm going to be
10 interpreting for him.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Can't
12 hear you.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Someone is
14 going to --

15 MR. FRANKLIN: I'm going to be
16 interpreting for him.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you
18 ask him to stand up so people can see
19 him.

20 MR. THERGARTNER (through Mr.
21 Franklin): Hello. My name is Paul
22 Thergartner. I attend the Rush High
23 School. I am in 10th grade.

24 I'm here to explain about the
25 sports program. The program is really

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 wonderful. The coaches are all good and
3 all too, but the equipment and the
4 communications need to be better. And
5 everyone needs to learn who needs to be
6 accepted, like him. He is deaf and it's
7 hard to communicate for him in sports.

8 But I need to ask for funding,
9 because it's really not good with the
10 equipment we have. And if we cut the
11 funding and we cut everything else, he
12 wouldn't be here today. I wouldn't be
13 here today interpreting to him and we
14 would have never met, and it wouldn't be
15 as fun.

16 Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
19 Did you state your name as well?

20 MR. FRANKLIN: No.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you
22 please.

23 MR. FRANKLIN: Robert Franklin.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
25 Mr. Franklin, for helping us to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 understand.

3 MR. BACHMANN: My name is Adam
4 Bachmann. I'm the counselor at George
5 Washington High School.

6 The students here spoke -- and
7 I have some notes, but I'm going to put
8 them aside after hearing the comment from
9 Councilwoman Blackwell.

10 The students here spoke about
11 the need for more counselors, but it's
12 really the need for more staff in
13 general, individuals in the hallways. We
14 have 1,800 students at George Washington
15 High School. About 150 of them are going
16 to end up going to good schools
17 regardless. We have a student went to
18 Harvard two years ago, one MIT last year,
19 three University of Penn this year. So
20 we have a group of students that
21 regardless of what you do with them,
22 they're go-getters. Their parents are
23 giving them a little bit of guidance.
24 They can come to. I can speak to them
25 for a brief period of time.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 But what I'm concerned about
3 with is that middle group, that thousand
4 students that are first-generation
5 possible college students. Now, when we
6 say we can have perseverance and we can
7 make it under any circumstances, I just
8 don't agree with that.

9 I lived in Philadelphia for
10 most of my life. I moved out four years
11 ago. We lived in South Philly at 10th
12 and Oregon. I live in a wealthy suburban
13 neighborhood now. The parents in that
14 community would not stand for, You need
15 to have perseverance, you need to make
16 it. The school district where I reside,
17 there's a thousand students --

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. BACHMANN: There's a
20 thousand students and there's six
21 counselors, and these students come from
22 high socioeconomic backgrounds. But the
23 parents there, whether you're democrat,
24 republican, they demand a level of
25 service, because all students need

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 guidance.

3 When we look at these young men
4 right here, this young man was
5 intimidated to come to George Washington
6 High School because he was deaf. The
7 program, lacrosse, allowed the
8 opportunity for this young man to meet
9 this young man and sign for him, and he
10 gained 20, 30 friends that love him now.
11 So this is just a microcosm of how we
12 need programs to allow students to
13 develop these bonds, which will enhance
14 the culture in our schools, which will
15 then lead to a development of their love
16 of learning. This is just one way to do
17 it.

18 Council Rock has a UN models
19 program where they take kids to New York
20 five times a year. It's 80 percent, 85
21 percent white. We have over 50
22 nationalities at George Washington High
23 School. They can learn more from each
24 other than those kids could ever learn
25 from a textbook, but we don't fund these

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 types of programs.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. BACHMANN: In the community
5 where I live, I'll have my daughters at a
6 softball game, and nothing bothers me
7 more than, Oh, what do you do?

8 I'm a counselor at George
9 Washington High School.

10 Oh, you're there. Oh, those
11 kids.

12 And I'm like, What, are you
13 delusional? What are you talking about?

14 If my daughter could grow up
15 and be like Janae, I've succeeded as a
16 parent. This is a fantastic kid.

17 (Applause.)

18 MR. BACHMANN: These kids here
19 and these kids over there -- stand up,
20 please. Stand up -- they are not
21 dysfunctional and dangerous.

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. BACHMANN: Sit down.

24 They are not dysfunctional and
25 dangerous. I had this conversation last

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Saturday at a soccer game. Somebody
3 said, Oh, well, they're dysfunctional and
4 dangerous. That's why they're not
5 funding the schools.

6 I said, No, no, no, no. The
7 funding is dysfunctional and dangerous.
8 The kids are not.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. BACHMANN: I sit here
11 before you today and I'm a 39-year-old
12 male Caucasian. Some may look at me and
13 say, Well, he lives in a wealthy suburb,
14 but some don't know I'm the youngest of
15 nine children, raise by a single parent,
16 raised in the Lindenfield Projects, which
17 have been ripped down now. So when I
18 wake up every morning and I have the
19 resources to move to a suburban
20 community, a lot of kids don't. Zip
21 codes should not determine the quality of
22 education that you deserve.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. BACHMANN: In closing, in
25 closing, when they talk about overwhelmed

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 and stressed, I'm not stressed because
3 the job is hard. I'm not stressed
4 because I have to take time to prep him
5 for an interview or Janae who wants to go
6 to out of state and apply to private
7 schools 40, 50 grand, but I made her
8 apply to state schools, because we can't
9 just apply to academically good fit
10 schools, we have to apply to financially
11 good fit schools. But if we take 1,800
12 kids, divided by five, that's 360 kids
13 per day. You're listening to 66 people
14 today in an organized manner. How could
15 I meet with 360 kids a day? How can I do
16 it?

17 So although these are success
18 stories and these are success stories, a
19 lot of lives have been lost by this
20 budget and we haven't even seen the real
21 impact of it yet.

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. BACHMANN: And I know that
24 you guys are advocates for students. And
25 if I seem passionate, it's not directed

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 at you, please. I'm passionate because
3 I'm so upset at what's going on with
4 these guys and their families.

5 So let's stop the nonsense.
6 Let's fund the schools and let's move
7 forward.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: One
11 moment, please. Let me say to you thank
12 you for your excellent testimony. If we
13 had all folks like you advocating, we
14 wouldn't have the trouble we have. Thank
15 you very much.

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. LEWIS: Theodosia Hall, Kim
18 Smith, Hydeia Trammel, Deandre Scott, and
19 Ashley Murray.

20 (Applause.)

21 (Witnesses approached witness
22 table.)

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
24 morning.

25 MISS TRAMMEL: Good morning.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Good morning. My name is
3 Hydeia Trammel and I'm going to be
4 telling you how IMHOTEK Institute Charter
5 High School has an impact on my life.

6 Dear members of City Council,
7 education is the key to unlock the golden
8 door of freedom, George Washington
9 Carver.

10 Hello. My name is Hydeia
11 Trammel and I am a senior at IMHOTEK
12 Institute Charter High School. I've been
13 attending IMHOTEK since I was in 9th
14 grade, and I can really say this school
15 has changed my life.

16 IMHOTEK is not just a school.
17 It's another home to me. As a student, I
18 learn and obtain new things every day.
19 The teachers are not just here for a
20 paycheck. They are here to teach us and
21 make sure we understand everything we
22 learn.

23 IMHOTEK has hard-working,
24 dedicated, powerful teachers and staff
25 who do not want us to fail.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 IMHOTEK is an African-centered
3 school, so as a young African American
4 scholar, I learned so much about my
5 history and the culture of Africa.
6 IMHOTEK is a great and a powerful school
7 that I would recommend anyone to go to.
8 This school has a college resource center
9 and college counselor who helps every
10 senior with their next step after
11 graduation. If it was not for IMHOTEK, I
12 don't believe I wouldn't have been
13 accepted to 14 colleges and win a
14 thousand dollar scholarship.

15 (Applause.)

16 MISS TRAMMEL: This school has
17 resources for each student, not like many
18 other schools. Education is the most
19 powerful weapon which you can use to
20 change the world, Nelson Mandela. And
21 with the education, hard work, and
22 lessons IMHOTEK Institute Charter High
23 School has taught me, I believe I,
24 Hydeia, can change the world, and I am
25 proud and blessed to say I am a student

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 and soon-to-be graduate of IMHOTEP
3 Institute Charter High School.

4 (Applause.)

5 MISS TRAMMEL: So members of
6 the City Council, please fund my school
7 and other schools so the next generation
8 can get their education too.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
12 much for your testimony.

13 Please begin. State your name.

14 MISS MURRAY: Good morning. My
15 name is Ashley Murray. I'm a senior at
16 IMHOTEP Charter High School. I'm going
17 to talk to you about a personal
18 experience that I've had.

19 I have been a student at
20 IMHOTEP for three years, since 10th
21 grade. Prior to attending IMHOTEP, I
22 went to Delaware Valley Charter High
23 School. When I made the decision to
24 move, I realized that the environment was
25 a lot different from when I was at

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Delaware Valley. The teachers -- it was
3 more of a family. It wasn't just coming
4 to school every day to get an education.
5 I felt at home when I came over to
6 IMHOTEK.

7 While at IMHOTEK, I have
8 received ten scholarship offers. I am
9 the first female student athlete to get a
10 Division I scholarship to school.

11 (Applause.)

12 MISS MURRAY: I really
13 appreciate IMHOTEK and I appreciate what
14 they've done to help all of us succeed in
15 moving on past high school.

16 Not everybody can say that they
17 have a counselor to help them get into
18 college and do scholarships, look for
19 scholarships, and write college letters.
20 So I just wanted to let you know that.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
24 and congratulations.

25 MISS MURRAY: Thank you.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 MR. SCOTT: Good morning. My
3 name is Deandre Scott and I have been a
4 student at IMHOTEK Charter School for
5 four years. IMHOTEK has changed my
6 character completely. It made me a
7 better man, and my character wasn't so
8 bright. I wasn't pushing myself to be
9 the best I can be. IMHOTEK has pushed me
10 to be the best at all times.

11 IMHOTEK has a strong voice when
12 it comes to developing young African
13 males and females. I can honestly say
14 I'm very responsible, true to myself, and
15 respectable. Academically I went from
16 having a 1.2 GPA in 9th grade to a 3.0 at
17 IMHOTEK.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. SCOTT: I wasn't the only
20 one coming into IMHOTEK struggling with
21 grades. Myself and other students took
22 summer classes to bring up F's. We did
23 extra homework, extra class work, and had
24 extra credit to hit honor roll.

25 Academically, IMHOTEK do not

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 care whether you are an athlete or a
3 non-athlete in the school. It's the most
4 important substance a human can have,
5 knowledge. Education is the key.

6 IMHOTEK has one of the best
7 athletic programs in the City of
8 Philadelphia, basketball, football, and
9 track. We had one of the best athletic
10 programs because we are not just
11 athletes; we are student athletes. The
12 extra curriculum like football,
13 basketball, and track is what motivate us
14 to do better in school. It opens eyes to
15 those who want success in education and
16 sports. For us to keep up the good work,
17 we need funds, not just for sports but
18 for the needs to be the best we can be.

19 With that being said, IMHOTEK
20 has top colleges, Arizona State, Alabama,
21 Temple, University of Pittsburgh,
22 Florida, and Penn State, et cetera,
23 coming in and out to offer student
24 athletes that can help the university
25 academically and athletically. We also

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 have colleges coming in and out giving
3 out academic scholarships. I am a former
4 football player at IMHOTEP Charter High
5 School that has a 3.0 GPA. I have 37
6 football scholarship offers and I have 13
7 scholarships for academics.

8 IMHOTEP has --
9 (Applause.)

10 MR. SCOTT: IMHOTEP has a 91.3
11 percentage graduation rate and a zero
12 percent dropout rate, and all seniors go
13 to college to start their life on their
14 own.

15 Please give the generation
16 after me a chance to become the best they
17 can be by helping -- by the help of
18 hard-working staff at IMHOTEP Charter
19 High School. In addition, IMHOTEP vision
20 is to develop young successful African
21 Americans to be the best they can be. We
22 need more educated brothers and sisters
23 to motivate those who don't believe to
24 believe.

25 So please save school choices.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 I am because we are.

3 STUDENT BODY: And we are
4 because I am. When I shine, the nation
5 shines. When the nation shines, we all
6 shine. HOTEPE.

7 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
10 thank you, young people. We usually come
11 up there every summer when you have your
12 program. Dr. Corte is a part of the
13 Mayor's Commission on African and
14 Caribbean Immigrant Affairs and he
15 reports every year, We did it again, 100
16 percent of our students are going to
17 college.

18 So you make us all proud. We
19 wish you all the best, and God bless.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. HALL: Good morning, City
22 Council. My name is Theodosia Hall. I
23 am a facilitator at IMHOTEPE Institute
24 Charter High School.

25 Would the class of 6254 please

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 stand up.

3 (Students stand.)

4 MS. HALL: As I look around
5 this room, I'm reminded that one of our
6 most intangible rights is freedom and
7 choice. And my concern is that's up for
8 grabs. So I'm here today first because I
9 want to speak on behalf of IMHOTEP
10 Institute Charter High School having
11 their charter renewed. Because that's
12 what parents, students, the community,
13 and anybody that's interested in the
14 longevity of a child's success, that's
15 what they're looking for.

16 I'm reminded of the goals that
17 we should all have in common, and that's
18 to ensure that at any institution, a
19 school is working diligently to cultivate
20 the idealisms of citizenship and
21 participation, rights and roles and
22 responsibilities in society, and that's
23 what the students at IMHOTEP Institute
24 Charter High School have. So that means
25 despite how you come in, you leave out

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 differently. There is a metamorphosis
3 that occurs, and you cannot deny that.

4 Any reliable measurement, any
5 longitudinal measurement, I don't care
6 what statistics you have, if you look at
7 the contextual factors, you see that a
8 child's true sense of self is developed
9 when a culture and they are in a
10 protected environment and they have a
11 desire, a true sense desire, to give back
12 that cannot be measured. And that's what
13 we're looking for. That's what you want
14 as we sit in this Chamber. You're
15 looking for citizens, productive
16 citizens.

17 So let me tell you what my
18 students have done this year. This year
19 they've read The Mis-Education of the
20 Negro, the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, The
21 Other Boleyn Girl, The Invisible Man, and
22 they just finished their dissertation
23 prospectus doing a methodology that most
24 of you may not even understand what we're
25 talking about today.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. HALL: So before you
4 question what we are doing here, I ask
5 you to take a look, walk around, listen.
6 Statistics can't tell you everything.

7 Thank you. Asante sana.

8 (Applause.)

9 MAMA ADUWA: Good afternoon.
10 How are you? You have me listed as Kim
11 Smith. I am actually Mama Aduwa (ph).

12 I come first as a parent of
13 IMHOTEP Charter High School. I have two
14 roles, because I am an educator there now
15 as well. I have three graduates from
16 IMHOTEP Charter High School who have gone
17 on to -- one have received her Master's
18 Degree in psychology and social work. I
19 have one that is now presently in school
20 for psychology, and I have a son entering
21 the summer semester for business
22 education.

23 I am a product of
24 African-centered institutions. I come
25 from the Pan-African Movement, long

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 before charter schools even existed. I
3 truly understand the value in teaching
4 our children about themselves. Every
5 culture, ethnicity group in this city or
6 worldwide teaches their children about
7 themselves, about their rich history, not
8 the history that continues to make them
9 feel inferior.

10 We found out that the public
11 school system voted not to renew our
12 charter, and it puzzles me how the
13 checker, the Board of Education, who has
14 failed so many of our children
15 academically and socially, have the right
16 to pass judgment on an institution that
17 has proven themselves for nearly 15
18 years.

19 I have a grandson who wants to
20 enter IMHOTEP Institute Charter High
21 School, not because I decided that, but
22 that was because of his decision. How
23 could I look at that face and say there
24 will not be an IMHOTEP?

25 You have what's called AYP.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 They judge us for not meeting the
3 standard biyearly when actually we
4 receive our children two, three, four
5 grades below the grade average. How can
6 they expect a miracle when they have been
7 in charge of our children's education
8 throughout the history and they continue
9 to fail them?

10 I am here asking and begging
11 that you consider and investigate the
12 standards that IMHOTEP Charter High
13 School -- and not just us, because I will
14 not leave out the other charter schools
15 who fight so hard to educate our
16 children, but we should have the choice
17 to choose where our children go.

18 As an educator, when I see them
19 young faces come in and they don't even
20 be aware of who they are, when I say,
21 Good morning, black, and they want to
22 fight me the first day for calling them
23 black, yet they can accept being called
24 dog or nigger. And then months later
25 when I say, Good morning, black, and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 their shoulders stand up with pride, this
3 let's me know that it continually works.

4 So I come here as both parent
5 and educator begging that you take the
6 time and investigate that decision and
7 not close IMHOTEP Charter High School.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
11 say that we will certainly ask Dr. Hite
12 and his offices to respond to the need.
13 I know about you quite well. We followed
14 you over the years and certainly support
15 you, and certainly we will ask Dr. Hite
16 to respond to us with regard to your
17 continuing. You see Dr. Walter Palmer.
18 They're fighting, and they seem to have
19 gotten punished because they were the
20 ones who fought.

21 And so certainly we will ask
22 them to respond to us about you
23 continuing, because obviously you're a
24 wonderful place. I know personally, but
25 I'm sure everybody can see what a great

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 job you do, how motivated you are and how
3 your young people succeed.

4 Thank you very much. God bless
5 you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. LEWIS: Dr. Long, Jenny
8 Dong, Esmerelda Zere, and Angela Beqiri.

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 MISS BEQIRI: I am Angela
12 Beqiri, a 7th grader from Alexander
13 Adaire Elementary in Fishtown.

14 It's one thing to fight --

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Name
16 your school again.

17 MISS BEQIRI: Alexander Adaire
18 Elementary.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you.

21 MISS BEQIRI: It's one thing to
22 fight for what you believe in, another
23 thing to fight for what others believe
24 in, said the brilliant James Wilcott.

25 The Philadelphia School

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 District has been having financial
3 problems for years now. Every year we're
4 told that the financial problems are
5 going to be fixed. It's 2014 and our
6 financial problems are getting worse.
7 It's so bad that students like me are now
8 fighting for help.

9 Cuts have been a very serious
10 problem. In my old school, every 5th
11 grader was supposed to take ballroom
12 dancing. It was a tradition. However,
13 last year the 5th grade class couldn't
14 take ballroom because we didn't have
15 enough money.

16 Not only were they kept from
17 ballroom dancing, but also in the middle
18 of the year, they found out that our 6th
19 grade classes were getting cut. The
20 entire 5th grade had to go to local
21 schools that were inferior.

22 Central High School at one
23 point didn't have enough money to open
24 their library. An alumni donation helped
25 them open it up again, not the School

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 District. Also, Central has only two
3 counselors and 700 seniors. How are only
4 two counselors going to help 700 students
5 apply to college? That's unfathomable to
6 even process.

7 Extracurricular activities have
8 been cut from most schools in
9 Philadelphia. Seniors rely on
10 scholarships to get through college, but
11 no longer can. Sports have been cut from
12 schools and there's no after school
13 sports programs. I only get gym for 45
14 minutes once a week. It takes about five
15 minutes to settle down and we get 15
16 minutes taken off so the lunch tables can
17 be put out. That's only 25 minutes of
18 gym.

19 Let's face the facts. School
20 is not the most exciting place to be.
21 The activities were where children escape
22 from school. Now most schools don't even
23 have them, and the ones that do, watch it
24 get taken away from them as well.

25 Schools have very little

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 resources and equipment. My 7th grade
3 class didn't have textbooks for math.
4 Seventh grade, the year that counts for
5 high school, and we didn't have
6 textbooks. And we're expected to perform
7 well. Are you kidding me?

8 Don't let me get started on the
9 textbooks that we do have. They're like
10 eight years old, which lack new
11 information. The textbooks have
12 profanity written all over them. The
13 laptops that we do own are in such poor
14 quality, they are dirty, slow, and we
15 also don't have enough laptops for every
16 student to use. That means only a
17 limited amount of students can use a
18 laptop to work.

19 You might say I'm mad at the
20 lack of funding, but in reality I'm
21 fuming and seeing red. You know the
22 financial problems are at their worst
23 when kids are fighting as well. I'm sick
24 of hearing every year that the problems
25 are being fixed, but they're not. At

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 least inform us that you can't fix the
3 problem and stop lying to us. If schools
4 for us kids is this bad, I'm scared to
5 imagine it for my children and their
6 children.

7 Find the money and stop relying
8 on teachers to buy their own supplies. I
9 strongly believe that we need more
10 funding in Philadelphia public schools.

11 (Applause.)

12 MISS ZERE: I'm Esmerelda Zere,
13 a 7th grader from Alexander Adaire
14 Elementary in Fishtown.

15 Is education even taken
16 seriously to you? Maybe not, because
17 you're failing to fund our schools. You
18 and everyone say that education is key.
19 But how? How is it key if we students do
20 not even receive the education that we
21 need for our competitive world like this?

22 When you're cutting our
23 funding, you're cutting our education.
24 These decisions you make do not affect
25 you, adults or anybody else. They affect

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 us, the students.

3 We students are not always
4 going to be book smart, but we can be
5 musical, artistical, and athletical
6 smart. But how? How are we able to
7 succeed in growing these intelligence if
8 you don't provide the classes or help
9 students to grow in their abilities?

10 Find the money, because our
11 children are being cheated, says a former
12 teacher, a mother, and now a children's
13 homework helper. She was forced to
14 remove her two daughters out of public
15 schools because they were not receiving
16 the education they needed. We all
17 aren't. Teachers using their own money
18 out of their pockets to buy supplies?
19 Students aren't having textbooks? It's
20 sad. Also, the textbooks we have are
21 outdated, tattered, and covered in
22 profanity.

23 Our future is like a flower in
24 your palm and you all are picking the
25 petals off the flowers, and sooner or

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 later all that will be left is all your
3 sorrow and remorse.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much.

7 MISS DONG: My name is Jenny
8 Dong, a 7th grader representing Alexander
9 Adaire Elementary in Fishtown.

10 Whenever the School District
11 cuts our education funds, it leaves a
12 mental scar on us students and teachers,
13 a scar that will stay there forever. We
14 don't have much left, but they still
15 continue to take.

16 We're beyond grateful that
17 we're receiving a good education, despite
18 the fact that we don't have any textbooks
19 for math. And if we do have textbooks,
20 they're outdated. No workbooks for any
21 subject, laptops that barely function,
22 and there's just so much more.

23 Fortunately for us, we have
24 determined teachers who try their hardest
25 to create lesson plans with what they

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 have. However, not all schools are as
3 lucky as us, to have teachers that
4 actually care about their education.

5 We are not just protesting for
6 us to have a better education, but for
7 all the other public schools in
8 Philadelphia's education too. We are
9 just one little school with a small
10 voice. We have much to say, and we
11 demand to be heard.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you very much.

15 MS. LEWIS: Kathleen O'Neill,
16 Richard Migliore, and Mariusz Kielbowicz.

17 (Witnesses approached witness
18 table.)

19 MS. LEWIS: Is Lisa Haver here?

20 (No response.)

21 MS. O'NEILL: Good morning. My
22 name is Kathleen O'Neill and I have
23 school-age children in Philadelphia. I'm
24 not here to talk about the 1 percent
25 sales tax, the cigarette tax, the funding

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 formula, charter school reimbursements or
3 concessions people want from the unions.
4 You're going to hear from all kinds of
5 advocacy groups on those issues, and
6 you've already heard from those groups.

7 Although I attend school
8 meetings, read the paper and online
9 sources on school funding, I'm not sure
10 the best way to fund our schools, and
11 most parents I speak with don't know
12 either. You see, that's why we elected
13 you, and right now you are failing us.

14 I'm here to speak on behalf of
15 the parents who are angry. We're tired.
16 We're sick. We're sick of the blame
17 game. We don't want to hear any more
18 blame on Harrisburg and Corbett, on the
19 unions. We don't want to hear you blame
20 the SRC. In fact, we're even tired of
21 hearing your sympathy, your sympathy for
22 the plight of our children who face
23 unsafe schools, overcrowded classrooms,
24 schools with no nurses, counselors,
25 librarians or even basic supplies. Right

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 now we don't want your sympathy. We just
3 want you to fix it.

4 Restore our school budgets. We
5 can't live in crisis mode year after
6 year. We're at bare bones now.

7 The children of Philadelphia
8 are among the state's neediest, but
9 receive less for education than the
10 students of nearly every district in the
11 state. This is a disgrace.

12 Members of City Council, we
13 hold you accountable as an equal partner
14 in this funding mess. We are desperate
15 for good public schools. We are public
16 school parents, and we vote.

17 (Applause.)

18 MR. MIGLIORE: Hi. I am Rich
19 Migliore, a 34-year veteran of the School
20 District of Philadelphia who now serves
21 as an advocate for the best practices in
22 school governance, leadership, and
23 pedagogy. I am a strong advocate for
24 democracy in education and democracy in
25 the governance of what are supposed to be

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 our public schools. I am also a member
3 of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public
4 Schools and a civil rights attorney.

5 APPS has within our membership
6 parents of students who attend
7 Philadelphia's public schools and both
8 active and retired educators. APPS
9 members are primary stakeholders in our
10 schools.

11 I come before you to speak in
12 support of Dr. Hite and his request for
13 \$440 million in increased funding for our
14 schools. That figure is the minimum
15 necessary to provide Philadelphia's
16 school children with even a basic
17 education. It by no means enables the
18 District to provide a full 21st century
19 education for our children. It is merely
20 and sadly the bare minimum.

21 That is not to say that I agree
22 with the way the School District is
23 presently spending our money or intends
24 to spend our money. APPS certainly is
25 not in favor of wasting any more money on

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the privatization of the Philadelphia
3 schoolhouse and the misuse of
4 standardized testing which harms our
5 students and has caused the District's
6 budget to double since the inception of
7 the SRC, without any credible evidence of
8 achievement gains for our students.

9 For the record, I am also a
10 highly qualified and highly experienced
11 reading diagnostician and an expert on
12 standardized testing, its proper uses,
13 and its improper uses. I ran a high
14 school reading program at University City
15 High School for almost 20 years. And,
16 Councilwoman Blackwell, proudly, I love
17 Uni. There's no place like the Uni, born
18 out of the Civil Rights era of you and I
19 both know.

20 APPS certainly does not support
21 the District's attacks on teachers and
22 its efforts to impose working conditions
23 on our teachers, simply because the
24 teachers' working conditions are our
25 children's learning conditions.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. MIGLIORE: It is immoral
4 and counterproductive to balance the
5 budget on the backs of teachers, the very
6 same people who heroically hold our
7 schools together every day. That will
8 only drive many of our best and brightest
9 teachers away. They will be replaced
10 with temporary Teach for America
11 teachers, who most often have no real
12 commitment to our city or to our
13 children.

14 What we do have a consensus on
15 is that the present state of affairs is
16 immoral, is detrimental to our children,
17 and puts our children in harm's way
18 educationally, psychologically, and
19 physically. It is intolerable, and it is
20 our collective moral responsibility to
21 remedy the situation and fix our schools.

22 I will wrap up quickly.

23 Our first priority and our
24 collective moral imperative and legal
25 responsibility is to fund our regular

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 public schools adequately.

3 You know the politics. You
4 know the macro politics coming out of
5 Harrisburg and you know the micro
6 politics. Our public schools are
7 supposed to be about the best interest of
8 our children and the common good and not
9 those who wish to profit off of them.
10 This is what we need:

11 Harrisburg needs to ante up at
12 least \$350 million for our school
13 children, and we somehow must find the
14 rest to make up the difference for that
15 \$450 million. First, we need a fair and
16 equitable statewide funding formula which
17 provides a reliable source of revenue;
18 tax reform which requires the wealthy
19 Pennsylvanians and corporations to pay
20 their fair share and reduce real estate
21 taxes on our homes.

22 We need to tax our natural gas
23 resources, as is done in every other
24 state. That natural gas belongs to
25 Pennsylvania's citizens; a 1 percent

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 sales tax increase statewide dedicated to
3 our public schools.

4 I support Dr. Hite's request
5 for 440 million. I only ask that he and
6 the SRC adjust their priorities and end
7 the privatization of our schools, stop
8 allowing the Philadelphia School
9 Partnership and the Gates Compact
10 Committee to drive privatization and
11 profiteering from behind closed doors
12 and, most importantly, preserve true
13 public education and democracy in
14 Philadelphia.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much for the important things
19 you said. We're both sorry that
20 University City High closed, and now we
21 have so many other issues affecting that.

22 Let me note that the President
23 of Council has asked that we let you know
24 that he is not here because he is in
25 Harrisburg advocating for the money and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the programs we need and the approvals we
3 need to make school better.

4 But thank you, and thank you
5 for still fighting for the schools the
6 way you always do.

7 MR. MIGLIORE: I support them
8 and I support you, and as I told Dr.
9 Hite, I will go anywhere, I will say
10 anything, and I will do anything to get
11 the money for our children. And thank
12 you for allowing me a front row seat for
13 those kids, because they are the ones
14 that it is supposed to be about. Thanks.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you.

18 We know, Councilman Oh, that
19 you would like to speak. Do you want to
20 wait until this panel is finished or
21 would you like to speak now.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: I'll wait until
23 the panel is finished.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you, Councilman.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 We also thank Councilman
3 Squilla for being here as well.

4 MS. HAVER: Good morning. My
5 name is Lisa Haver. I'm a retired
6 Philadelphia teacher, a member of the
7 Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools.
8 Good morning to all City Council members
9 present here.

10 I was here Monday when School
11 Reform Commission Chairman Bill Green and
12 Superintendent William Hite spoke to City
13 Council about the desperate situation the
14 District faces. There is no doubt that
15 the District needs money and our
16 political leaders could do more to get
17 that money. Unfortunately, the District
18 continues to spend on unnecessary and
19 questionable programs when it does not
20 have the money for basic necessities
21 right now.

22 There are 16 total certified
23 librarians in the entire District. Our
24 students' futures are compromised by the
25 fact that there are not enough

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 counselors, as so many students just
3 eloquently testified, to help them fill
4 out college applications or apply for
5 financial aid. Lack of support staff has
6 created dangerous climates in many
7 schools, Bartram High being just the
8 latest.

9 So why is the District spending
10 money on new charter schools, on three
11 brand new high schools, on newly created
12 positions in newly created departments,
13 and significant raises for those at the
14 top of 440?

15 Dr. Hite testified that there
16 are no programs in schools right now that
17 can be cut. Members of our organization
18 who have attended SRC meetings regularly
19 since that body was created know that
20 this is not the case.

21 Dr. Hite and the SRC are
22 committed to expanding the Renaissance
23 Charter program, where a public school is
24 given over to a private provider, such as
25 Mastery schools, even though per-pupil

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 funding is significantly higher in those
3 schools. The most recent case shows the
4 determination of the District through
5 questionable and inappropriate methods to
6 hand Steel Elementary over to Mastery
7 Schools.

8 The District also has created
9 an Office of Teacher Evaluation, although
10 teacher evaluation has always been the
11 responsibility of each school's
12 principal.

13 The District has recently
14 created a new position, Director of
15 Recruitment at 90,000 a year, even though
16 there are still to over a thousand people
17 who are laid off last year, including
18 assistance principals, secretaries,
19 counselors, nurses, and teachers waiting
20 to be called back.

21 Monday night after listening to
22 Dr. Hite and Chairman Green lay out the
23 apocalyptic future of the District in
24 this room, members of our organization,
25 including me, attended an SRC meeting

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 about those three new innovative high
3 schools to be open in September. I heard
4 in Council that neighborhood schools may
5 have 40 students in a class, but I was
6 told at that SRC meeting that the new
7 schools could have only 20, that these
8 new schools would be able to offer
9 students personalized learning and
10 stronger relationships, after hearing
11 earlier that day already that schools
12 already in existence would have even
13 fewer support staff. We were not told --
14 what we were not told is how much money
15 these schools would cost over the next
16 four years or where that money was coming
17 from.

18 I'm going to skip to the end
19 here.

20 Many Councilmembers on Monday
21 expressed the view shared by many of
22 their constituents, that the SRC, far
23 from reforming the School District, has
24 plunged us into massive debt because of
25 its lack of oversight and its

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 unwillingness to advocate for funding
3 needed to maintain a thriving District.
4 Philadelphia should have the same rights
5 as every other Pennsylvanian, to have its
6 own elected School Board and to control
7 its own schools. Members of an appointed
8 body such as the SRC are accountable to
9 no one, except the politicians who put
10 them there. Chairman Green was appointed
11 by Governor Corbett, who is running for
12 reelection. Mr. Green said Monday that
13 he's met with the Governor to ask for
14 more funding, but what we really need is
15 for Mr. Green to lead a movement of
16 parents, teachers, community members who
17 will go to Harrisburg and demand that the
18 Governor restore the funding he slashed
19 and to ensure that the General Assembly
20 fulfills its obligations as stated in the
21 State Constitution to provide every
22 student in the state, including
23 Philadelphia, with a thorough and
24 efficient system of education.

25 Every time we figure out

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 another way for the people of
3 Philadelphia to pay more for schools, we
4 give Corbett another reason not to.

5 May I say that the members of
6 the Alliance, our Alliance, second
7 Councilman Clarke's call for City Council
8 to have meaningful oversight of the
9 School District.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you, Ms. Haver. And may I note, whenever
14 we're everywhere fighting for education,
15 you're always there. Thank you.

16 MS. HAVER: Thank you,
17 Councilwoman. I appreciate that.

18 MR. KIELBOWICZ: May I have
19 your attention, please. May I have your
20 attention, please. This is emergency in
21 the City.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you
23 state your name.

24 MR. KIELBOWICZ: Thank you for
25 your time --

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Sir.

3 MR. KIELBOWICZ: -- and I
4 appreciate your cooperation.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Sir, I need
6 you to say your name.

7 MR. KIELBOWICZ: I am talking
8 right now. Why are you talking, Mister?
9 Tell me why. Why?

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: We didn't
11 get your name.

12 MR. KIELBOWICZ: Excuse me.
13 This is the way I witnessed in the school
14 when start talking to a kindergarten
15 student.

16 I'm sorry. How are you doing,
17 sir?

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm good.
19 Just tell me your name.

20 MR. KIELBOWICZ: I will tell my
21 name.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, sir.

23 MR. KIELBOWICZ: Comparing to
24 you, we are talking about a little kid.
25 We are talking about a little kid. You,

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 sir, have a (unintelligible) and you have
3 the power to take care of yourself. They
4 have none.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

6 MR. KIELBOWICZ: Next is third
7 grade teacher cry because of this
8 behaviors, bad behaviors, where they are
9 in class. Next you are shot down your
10 mouth to the freak on the street. Next,
11 person who wants to stop fighting the
12 class is knocked down.

13 I don't blame teachers. They
14 have 30-plus kids to take care of, where
15 some of the students need one-to-one
16 attention. I don't blame parents,
17 others. They have their weaknesses,
18 limitations. I don't blame students.
19 They have example from us.

20 I understand that they are --
21 we are all create this situation. I
22 understand that this situation are the
23 best what we have right now. We need to
24 act together united and change.

25 So in my first demonstration,

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 try a direct message, which I hear every
3 day when I work in a Center City
4 building, they have three points -
5 attention, emergency, and cooperation.

6 May I continue? May I
7 continue?

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: You can
9 continue. Just tell me your name.

10 MR. KIELBOWICZ: My name is
11 Mariusz Kielbowicz. I am a parent of
12 three children in public schools and I
13 represent most, I think, families in the
14 City.

15 So I get your attention. Now
16 about cooperation. To do, we need
17 cooperation and communication. I see at
18 least six main groups of public school,
19 parents, students, teachers, school
20 officials, City officials, community
21 organization, and group supports.
22 Parents need to have to be involved in
23 the school of our children, need to not
24 only to be welcomed, but encourage to
25 participate. City and school officials

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 or their representatives need to
3 participate and to make the time and
4 support in every school in their
5 jurisdiction. They need to know what's
6 going on.

7 Teachers with parents and
8 students from 5th grade need to meet
9 weekly to communicate and act together on
10 any important problems, all at the time
11 need to be open communication, meet
12 between all parties, with meetings to
13 obtain and exchange information and check
14 progress and renew goals. This is not to
15 school, it's not always the same. We
16 need to change it.

17 All community organization and
18 support group must be welcomed with
19 cooperation and gratitude for their
20 efforts to help. United as one,
21 we can -- unite as one, so we can reach
22 and maintain every goal. With one voice,
23 everyone will listen.

24 Let's talk about the money and
25 how to spend it effective.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

3 MR. KIELBOWICZ: Tax

4 cigarettes. It seems so hopeless and
5 hurtful only to smokers. They look like
6 valuable to all of you. It doesn't look
7 right. Same with soda tax. We need
8 clubs. We need service. Here are
9 solution:

10 I propose soda tax, tax for
11 sodas with sugar, artificial and
12 unhealthy ingredient; most candies, gums
13 with aspartame, which damage our brain;
14 cheap energy drinks; e-cigarettes. All
15 this product have our permission to harm
16 us, much as we choose to consume them for
17 free, without any contribution to the
18 future health.

19 What about big companies, like
20 Target. USA Today --

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you
22 conclude your testimony, please, sir.

23 MR. KIELBOWICZ: I'm sorry.

24 One minute. Thank you.

25 Create to us and then slap in

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the face and rewrote ousted CEO with
3 possibility 55 million. We all know it
4 is not unusual.

5 (Unintelligible) institution
6 (unintelligible) media starts, and they
7 promote -- some of them promote just
8 (unintelligible) what we stand for, drugs
9 abuse, and money takes from them goes to
10 lawyers and victims without any share to
11 community. TV media not share enough air
12 time and attention to promote good
13 example and action. They are free to
14 choose as though we not show that we
15 actually care.

16 Yesterday 48 teachers are
17 rewarded from local school. Last week
18 students from the Masterman win a
19 national championship in the chess.
20 Behind them are great stories of
21 successful achievement that can change
22 and motivate a lot of people. We need
23 the resources to share the success, to
24 ask many residents as possible.

25 One of the greatest master of

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 all the time said, Good leaders show
3 great people do better. And, therefore,
4 the master concerns himself with the
5 dips, not the (unintelligible). We're
6 the (unintelligible) and not the flower.

7 One sentence more.

8 Do you recognize some quality
9 in some of the leaders? President
10 Washington, President Lincoln, Dr. King.
11 Do not be afraid. Dear Councilman, do
12 not be afraid Dr. Hite to be a good
13 leader. Lead us to change public school.
14 Unite us. Be good example, and we will
15 do rest.

16 Thank you very much.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. LEWIS: Jamie Kuder, a,
21 Elizabeth Moffitt, and Eric Knight.
22 Jamie Kuder, Elizabeth Moffitt, and Eric
23 Knight.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 MS. LEWIS: Is Denis, Denise
3 Devine here?

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 MS. KUDERA: Hello. My name is
7 Jamie Kuderer, and thank you for listening
8 to us speak today. I am here today to
9 speak on behalf of funding for the School
10 District of Philadelphia. I am a
11 graduate of the Philadelphia schools, of
12 the Philadelphia High School for Girls
13 specifically, and I'm the parent of two
14 children in the public schools.

15 We talk about how the schools
16 need money and where that money might
17 come from. I think sometimes we forget
18 who we are talking about. We are talking
19 about children, children who trust
20 schools and adults to do right by them.
21 We are talking about five- and
22 six-year-olds at Jackson Elementary whose
23 kindergarten classroom is missing a
24 circle time rug because it got ruined in
25 a flood and there is no money to replace

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 it; first graders at McClure who don't
3 have the necessary level reading books to
4 learn to read; special ed students at
5 Carnell who need basic math materials to
6 help them meet their IEP goals; 5th
7 graders at Spring Garden whose classroom
8 has laptops, but they can't use them
9 because the batteries need to be
10 replaced; 2nd graders at Nebinger who
11 need paper, yes, paper and many more.

12 My kids attend a great school,
13 yet still they know school as a place
14 where the nurse only comes on a few days.
15 There used to be a police officer. There
16 are no after-school clubs or activities.
17 The musical was cancelled due to budget
18 cuts, and parents buy paper and pencils
19 and spend a lot of time -- and I mean a
20 lot of time -- fundraising to support
21 academic programs.

22 This is what we now call
23 normal. And for next year, we are
24 talking about the possibility of 40 kids
25 in a classroom? It is appalling that we

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 would even consider less funding than the
3 current unacceptable state.

4 We all agree that the state is
5 a big part of the problem. We are not
6 asking the City to contribute the state's
7 portion. We are asking the City to
8 contribute the City's portion. We
9 appreciate very much Council's past
10 support, but we are still not where we
11 need to be. Too many past solutions have
12 been patches. We need long-term,
13 sustainable, adequate funding.

14 Schools are central to our
15 city's success and our city's reputation.
16 Philadelphia, a city which we all love,
17 is developing a national reputation as a
18 city whose leaders are letting the
19 schools sink, a city where our hopes for
20 our children are so low that we do not
21 prioritize investment in their education.

22 I urge you to approve the sales
23 tax to be used for school funding and
24 work to identify other long-term,
25 sustainable solutions. Our children

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 deserve good public schools. We all
3 deserve a city that cares about our
4 children.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
8 say thank you, Ms. Kudera and thank you
9 also for the work you do in the
10 community, 46th Ward. Thank you.

11 MS. MOFFITT: Hi. Good
12 morning. My name is Elizabeth Moffitt.
13 I'm here also to speak about funding for
14 public schools.

15 Ultimately all schools are
16 affected by the funding issue, charter
17 and public schools, and charter schools
18 are public schools. I just need to say
19 that for the record.

20 I'd like to thank you for
21 holding this hearing, this forum, and
22 allowing this opportunity for me to speak
23 on this issue. I'm here to ask that the
24 sales tax extension be passed to generate
25 the 120 million for our schools.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Like many parents and guardians
3 of students in the Philadelphia school
4 system, I'm aware and concerned that the
5 situation regarding education in our city
6 is critical. Schools, which are
7 essential to our communities and also
8 provide educated, qualified young adults
9 for the City's workforce as well as the
10 entrepreneurial community, are worsening
11 under the burden of trying to do more
12 with less. This year with not enough
13 personnel in the building, schools are
14 struggling to handle everyday operations,
15 like supervising children during lunch or
16 recess. They're having to do without
17 counselors and nurses. Some schools have
18 seen an increase in violence and a
19 decrease in academic progress.

20 Every year for the past few
21 years, the District has operated at a
22 deficit. While the City has increased
23 its share over the past few years, more
24 is needed. Additional recurring funds
25 are needed from both the City and the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 State so that the question of how schools
3 will be funded each year will be
4 addressed, and then plans can be made to
5 at least stabilize the educational crisis
6 in our city.

7 The sales tax extension is
8 something that the City does have control
9 over and something that can happen right
10 away. While this is not, I know, the
11 only fiscal crisis in the City, it does
12 have a long-term negative effect if it is
13 not addressed.

14 So, again, I thank you for
15 hosting this forum to hear our concerns
16 and also about how this tax extension can
17 be used to improve education in the City.

18 Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. MOFFITT: And I do want to
23 say my grandson attends Mastery Charter.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: I recognize
25 that we've been joined by Kenyatta

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Johnson, Councilman.

3 MR. DEVINE: Hi. My name is
4 Denis Divine. I'm a parent obviously and
5 I'm here representing Friends of Adaire.

6 And I'm sorry. This seemed
7 like a better idea a few hours ago.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: It's true
9 multi-tasking.

10 MR. DEVINE: Yeah, you said it.

11 So in fact you heard from some
12 great Adaire students earlier. We're in
13 Fishtown. We're a new group of parents
14 whose kids -- most of us are parents
15 whose kids aren't yet of school age, and
16 so we formed to, like all the other
17 friends groups, to try to support the
18 great education going on in the public
19 education system and our local
20 neighborhood school in particular.

21 I want my kids -- they would be
22 kindergarten 2018, I believe -- to go to
23 the local school. It's my dream. It's
24 what we want. And I'm not an issue
25 expert. I can't tell you better than

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 some of the people that have just spoken
3 to you about the politics and the issues.
4 What I am an expert on is being a parent,
5 being an advocate for public schools, and
6 the message that you guys are sending by
7 doing things like not devoting the entire
8 \$120 million earmarked for the schools to
9 the schools from the 1 percent sales tax
10 extension.

11 I will say that -- excuse me.
12 I'm sorry. I will say that at this key
13 moment where we need to invest in
14 schools, where we need -- I'm sorry.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: I think he's
16 more upset than you.

17 MR. DEVINE: So the message
18 you're sending to folks like us, who are
19 not only trying to send our kids but
20 we're trying to talk to our neighbors to
21 have all of us send our kids to the local
22 elementary school, to invest, to
23 strengthen our communities, is that
24 schools aren't the top priority. As so
25 many people have said so eloquently

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 before, pensions are a crisis, and I
3 recognize that. I've looked into it, and
4 I don't envy you, the decisions you guys
5 have to make, but the message you're
6 sending to parents, some of whom have
7 options, some of whom have means or some
8 of whom will scrimp and save to send
9 their kids to private school or to move
10 their kids out of the City altogether --
11 and these are discussions we have all the
12 time -- you're saying the schools are not
13 our top priority. That has cascading bad
14 effects for the tax base. Philadelphia
15 becomes a place whose renaissance is
16 really at risk, because so much of the
17 good demographics of the population going
18 back up and all the resurgence you see in
19 Center City and the surrounding
20 neighborhoods, all of that is at risk if
21 the foundation, the schools, are not
22 strong enough to retain the people who
23 move here in their 20's, 30's, 40's and
24 then decide to have kids and they see it
25 as only a temporary option.

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2 So I just urge you to, A, put
3 the entire \$120 million towards the
4 School District as they asked, as the
5 Legislature approved. Please find
6 another \$75 million of recurring funding.
7 That \$195 million is what we need to keep
8 coming back here. I certainly can't
9 afford to keep coming back here. And I
10 know you guys have a lot on your plate.
11 I appreciate you taking the time to
12 listen to all these testimonies and mine
13 as well.

14 Thank you very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
17 much for your diligence and
18 multi-tasking, but also please know that
19 the reason why we have these hearings is
20 to hear from you. Sometimes we need folk
21 to remind us constantly what our
22 priorities are, and this is a budget
23 process, so you're a part of that. So
24 thank you for coming.

25 (Applause.)

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 MS. LEWIS: Eric Knight.

3 (No response.)

4 MS. LEWIS: Milton Street,
5 Nikki Adeli, Darren Spielman, and Donna
6 Cooper.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: It's now
10 afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone.

11 Whichever one. Just please,
12 the only thing I ask is that you state
13 your name.

14 MISS ADELI: Good afternoon.
15 My name is Nikki Adeli and I am here on
16 behalf of the Philadelphia Youth
17 Commission.

18 Just some background of the
19 Philadelphia Youth Commission. We began
20 in 2008 with the purpose of representing
21 Philadelphia's youth in public hearings
22 and providing testimony that reflects the
23 youth perspective.

24 We work with the City,
25 non-profits, community organizations, and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 private entities to develop strategies to
3 improve the lives of Philadelphia's
4 youth.

5 We hope that the testimony that
6 we provide today will shed light on the
7 thoughts and concerns of thousands of
8 young people we represent. I'd like to
9 thank the distinguished members of City
10 Council for allowing me to testify on
11 behalf of the Commission.

12 I think it goes without saying
13 that we have reached a state of emergency
14 regarding education in Philadelphia, with
15 the District facing an unprecedented
16 structural deficit. As highlighted by
17 last year's events where the School
18 District was facing similar financial
19 circumstances, I lost a peer. Last
20 October, 12-year-old Laporshia Massey
21 died after an asthma attack her school
22 was unable to treat because of the lack
23 of school nurses on staff.

24 There has been much dispute on
25 who is negligent in the death of

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Laporshia, but what we will never know is
3 had she -- there was a nurse on staff,
4 would Laporshia have been here today.

5 It's rocket science for anyone
6 to really understand that the lack of
7 funding is truly holding back the most
8 important part of our city, and that's
9 the students.

10 Our long-term economic and
11 societal goals we set as a city depends
12 on the future of leaders, boosting the
13 City's economy and reducing crime and
14 making Philadelphia a world-class city.
15 But the question we are to ask ourselves
16 is, can we do this without education?

17 In 2009, only 38 percent of
18 Philadelphia's 11th graders scored
19 proficient or higher in reading. Only 50
20 percent of Philadelphia high school
21 students graduated on time. More than 40
22 percent dropped out altogether. Only 10
23 percent of the kids who enter
24 Philadelphia public school in the 9th
25 grade will graduate from college. Black

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 men who drop out of high school have a 50
3 percent chance of being incarcerated
4 during their lifetime. And increasing
5 high school graduation rates by 10
6 percent will prevent 75 murders, 2,030
7 assaults in Philadelphia each year, and
8 150 murders and 5,900 assaults all per
9 year statewide. Those statistics
10 represent why it is imperative that we as
11 a city, state, and country take funding
12 education seriously.

13 I applaud our City leaders who,
14 like me, understand the importance of
15 education to the lives of Philadelphia
16 youth. The ask for funding doesn't stop
17 here, because we have to continue to
18 engage the state and demand that it
19 implements a student-weighted funding
20 formula, which can help to ensure
21 long-term equal funding for students in
22 Philadelphia.

23 We can no longer have students
24 and parents in the state of uncertainty.
25 We must put politics aside and place

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 students first.

3 Another student should not fail
4 to pursue his or her dream of going to
5 college. Students should not feel
6 disengaged or drop out of high school,
7 and another student cannot be fed into
8 the pipeline to prison because of their
9 leaders' failure to act and provide basic
10 resources.

11 The youth of the City are
12 incredibly resilient, and giving them a
13 chance is an investment in our city's
14 future. We are to invest in the present
15 to see a bright future.

16 Therefore, as a student at the
17 Science Leadership Academy, I ask that we
18 provide the \$195 million that Dr. Hite
19 requests in sustainable annual funding
20 for our youth. It's my hope that this
21 funding will help to stabilize the School
22 District and kick-start the rebirth and
23 transformation of Philadelphia into a
24 truly world-class city.

25 Thank you for allowing me this

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 opportunity to present on behalf of the
3 Philadelphia Youth Commission.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
6 much.

7 MR. STREET: Good afternoon.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
9 afternoon.

10 MR. STREET: I'm sitting here
11 listening to the testimony all morning,
12 and I said, Wow, you must be clairvoyant.
13 I want to take you back 30 years. We had
14 this exact conversation 30 years ago when
15 we couldn't get funding for our schools,
16 and at that time, I can recall having a
17 conversation with some of our elected
18 officials in Harrisburg, and they seemed
19 to be puzzled. And I remember saying,
20 Look, guys, we are legislators. We're
21 supposed to be intelligent. We're
22 supposed to be intelligent. Let me
23 define that for you. Intelligence is the
24 act of knowing, understanding,
25 comprehension, knowledge. It is the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 mental faculty that produces acting,
3 judging, thinking. It is the capacity
4 for higher forms of knowledge and
5 superior action.

6 So we as elected officials have
7 to come up with a formula to fund our
8 schools. Now, if we don't -- this is on
9 record. If we don't, 25 or 30 years from
10 now, there's not going to be enough money
11 to fund our schools and this is going to
12 be a crisis that surpasses this one by
13 light years. There's not going to be
14 enough money. This is 30 years ago.

15 So in my effort to do something
16 about that, I said we can't raise taxes
17 anymore. So we need a voluntary tax, and
18 I put a piece of legislation in, and it's
19 right in here. It's all a matter of
20 record, called video bingo. Some of you
21 may remember that. I went to Bally's,
22 had a machine made, brought the machine
23 down here and showed City Council people
24 how it worked. It was approved
25 unanimously. It was approved. People

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 said, You can't get it out of committee.
3 Two weeks later I passed it out of
4 committee in Harrisburg to the floor of
5 the Pennsylvania Senate.

6 This is the sad part about it.
7 This is what happened. That piece of
8 legislation would have raised on the low
9 end \$100 million a year dedicated to the
10 public School District. I think
11 Councilwoman Blackwell may remember when
12 I brought that machine down here, and
13 Councilman Coleman and all the
14 Councilpeople used the machine.

15 And it was approved at that
16 time by the lobbyists for the School
17 District, by everybody. And I'm saying
18 to you, this piece of legislation was
19 only for the City of the First Class,
20 only for the City of the First Class.

21 When I passed it to the floor
22 of the Senate, the elected officials from
23 the democrat side of the aisle -- because
24 I was sitting with the republicans at the
25 time. I was a democrat in Philadelphia,

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 but it was expedient for me to be a
3 republican in Harrisburg.

4 So what happened was, it was on
5 the floor and the democrats, the people
6 that we elected at that time, told the
7 leaders of the Senate that if you pass
8 it, then it's dead on arrival over here.
9 It's dead on arrival. It goes nowhere.

10 Scandalized by the Inquirer,
11 the Daily News, got the articles, Senator
12 Street is out of his mind. We don't
13 need -- we need money for the schools,
14 but the last thing we need is gambling.
15 Video bingo will give birth to casinos.
16 Well, here we are. We got casinos, but
17 we still don't have any money for our
18 schools. We have casinos in Jersey. We
19 have casinos in Pennsylvania. We have
20 video online gambling in Jersey, but we
21 don't have any money for the schools.

22 In the Pennsylvania State
23 Legislature, I have an experience that no
24 other legislator has that's ever been to
25 Harrisburg from Philadelphia. In the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 House of Representatives, I sat with the
3 liberal democrats. In the Senate, I sat
4 with the conservative republicans. So I
5 had an opportunity to study the mindset
6 of the legislators in the Pennsylvania
7 State Legislature.

8 Now, we can get money from the
9 Legislature. It's not what we do. It's
10 the way we do it. I'm going to put a
11 proposal for you, because I have the
12 experience. I've seen it work. I made
13 it work.

14 You have four classes of minds
15 in the Pennsylvania Legislature. If you
16 don't understand this, you'll run to
17 Harrisburg and ask for something you can
18 never get. You have the mind that is
19 closed and will never open. That's the
20 mind of the bigot. You have the mind
21 that is open, will never close. Those
22 legislators are characterized by
23 indecision. You have the mind that's
24 open on the bright side and closed on the
25 dark side. That's your optimist. And

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2 you have the mind that's closed on the
3 dark side and open on the bright side.
4 That's your pessimist.

5 So we know that the bigots are
6 finished. We get nothing from them. So
7 our core of people in the Legislature is
8 the optimist, the pessimist, and the
9 worthless. The worthless are those guys
10 that they have no decision about
11 anything. Some of them been up there for
12 25 years and never had an original
13 thought, but we can use them because
14 they're followers. Sometimes you don't
15 need a lot of thinkers. You need some
16 people that need to be told what to do.
17 So we can use those with no decisions.

18 Now, here's what I did when I
19 passed that piece of legislation out of
20 the Senate. Comments that are made in
21 the -- from the bigots are not worthy of
22 repeating here, but I will tell you this:
23 There's a group of people in Harrisburg
24 that see Philadelphia School District as
25 a bunch of ruthless, violent hoodlums.

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2 That's a perception. A lot of times, and
3 as many of us know, our perception is our
4 reality. Okay? You're going to talk to
5 the conservatives and they'll say, I'm
6 not going to take my hard-working
7 constituents' money and send it to
8 Philadelphia to educate the offsprings of
9 those -- well, let me be nice -- coons.
10 They use another word. So that is a
11 reality up there.

12 So what I did, I said to them,
13 I don't want your money. I don't want
14 you to give me anything, but I have an
15 either/or proposal for you. Either you
16 give me the money or you give me the
17 enabling legislation to raise my own
18 money. By giving me the enabling
19 legislation, it don't cost you anything.
20 Go do your own thing. Fine.

21 Six thousand video bingo
22 machines in the Airport, in beauty shops,
23 in barber shops, train stations would
24 have raised at a minimum -- this is 30
25 years ago -- \$100 million dedicated to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the Philadelphia school. On the high
3 end, our projections were as much as 350
4 million.

5 That proposal is still alive.
6 It's right here. The book was so
7 interesting, if you go to the legislative
8 museum out in Ohio, there's a copy of it,
9 of that proposal on record. Go online,
10 find it. You can find it on record.

11 We can fund the schools. This
12 is what we have to do:

13 One, we have to get a dynamic
14 program, double-digit program, with the
15 Mayor, City Council, the Council
16 President, the State Senators, the House
17 of Representatives, all the members, that
18 we have a no-nonsense policy in our
19 schools that is second to none in the
20 country. There will be no violence in
21 our schools. Those children who want to
22 learn will have an opportunity to learn.
23 Those teachers who want to teach will be
24 in an atmosphere than will be conducive
25 for them to maximize their teaching

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 skills.

3 Now we have an atmosphere in
4 Harrisburg -- well, you've already
5 stripped the bigots of those
6 pre-conceived ideas of our School
7 District. So now what you do, you go
8 there with an either/or. Either you fund
9 us or you give us the enabling
10 legislation to fund ourselves.

11 It's very difficult,
12 Councilman, for them to say no to
13 everything, but it's not easy for them to
14 say no when we go there with cup in hand.
15 We go there with cup in hand, accordion,
16 a monkey on the back, Will you please
17 help us.

18 We have to help ourselves. We
19 have to have the initiative to put them
20 in the position where they can't say no,
21 where they can't say no. This is what I
22 would propose if I was in Harrisburg
23 today. I would be up there and I would
24 have a piece of legislation, that I want
25 you to pass this piece of legislation for

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 sports betting in the City and County of
3 Philadelphia, with all the money
4 dedicated to the Philadelphia School
5 District, and you would have more than
6 enough money. You know how much money is
7 spent on sports betting? It would be a
8 fight. Well, if you don't want to give
9 us that, give us money. Can't say no to
10 everything. Can't say no to everything.

11 So sometimes -- and I share
12 that with you because I think the
13 experience that I've had down through the
14 years is valuable to the legislators and
15 the Councilpeople who are sitting in
16 office now if they would look at it in
17 its totality. Look at it in its
18 totality. We have money, you know. You
19 have 75,000 black students, 25,000
20 Hispanic students, 19,000 Caucasian
21 students and others. If we don't be
22 creative enough and approach this with
23 foresight, insight, mental perception and
24 come up with superior knowledge and
25 action to resolve this problem, all of us

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 are probably going to be six foot under
3 and our children and our grandchildren
4 will be sitting here arguing the same
5 issue over and over.

6 We need a steady flow of
7 income, and it can't be real estate taxes
8 because we don't own enough real estate
9 taxes. The parents and the people in the
10 School District don't own enough real
11 estate taxes to supply. And you run into
12 a problem with other elected officials
13 when they say, I'm not going to raise my
14 constituents' taxes, real estate taxes,
15 to educate your children.

16 Thank you for listening. I
17 appreciate it. You've been kind.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
21 for your testimony.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you, Senator Street.

24 MR. STREET: If anybody wants a
25 copy of my legislation, that you might

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 want to give it to some of your
3 legislators and say, Hey, man, this can
4 still work. Incidentally, just a couple
5 months ago, the Legislature just
6 passed -- and I have the numbers of the
7 bills -- small games of chance for the
8 bars, for the casinos. It's all for the
9 suburban areas, chances and all that. So
10 it's not so farfetched today as it may
11 have been 30 years ago when there was no
12 gambling at all.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
14 Senator.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you. Again, we would love to have it.

17 MR. SPIELMAN: Thank you,
18 Councilwoman Blackwell and Councilman
19 Jones, for the opportunity to testify
20 today. Thank you, Council, for your
21 commitment to the education for all
22 Philadelphia's children. My name is
23 Darren Spielman and I am the Chief
24 Executive Officer of the Philadelphia
25 Education Fund. Many of you know me and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the Ed Fund. We have served our City's
3 students, teachers, and schools for
4 nearly 30 years. In all that time, we
5 have rarely, if ever, witnessed a moment
6 as critical as this one. We face a
7 District budget that should be acceptable
8 to no one who cares about kids, education
9 or the future of our economy and our
10 region.

11 As you know, we are \$216
12 million away from opening schools in the
13 same woefully inadequate manner we opened
14 them last year. Already caring,
15 committed, competent teachers and
16 principals are hanging on by their
17 fingernails trying to do the best for our
18 children.

19 The following facts are clear:
20 We are here today, first and foremost,
21 because of state cuts to education
22 funding, cuts that impacted poorer
23 districts, most -- and Philadelphia most
24 of all.

25 The state needs to act now to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 fund our schools in the long term, to
3 build a fair funding formula that
4 supports education across our state.

5 Second, when we have had more
6 reasonable resources, we have improved.
7 From 2002 to 2010, as investment
8 increased, so did performance. On-time
9 graduation rate increased from 52 to 64
10 percent. Proficiency in math and reading
11 more than doubled, from 20 to 51 percent
12 and 24 to 57 percent, respectively.

13 We are only beginning to
14 understand the impact of the massive cuts
15 enacted since 2011, including laying off
16 3,885 employees. Cutting our way from
17 bad to worse is not a strategy for
18 success.

19 Since 2010, the City's annual
20 contribution to public education has
21 risen by approximately \$155 million.
22 City Council deserves credit for this.
23 So thank you.

24 Similarly, districts across the
25 state have been forced to raise taxes to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 cover education cuts at the state. The
3 difference here is our District does not
4 have taxing authority. They need to come
5 to you.

6 It is now the City's time to
7 step up again to get us where we need to
8 go in a way that is sustainable. City
9 Council needs to approve the use of the
10 120 million from the 1 percent sales tax
11 extension for our schools, and we will
12 need the 75 million Dr. Hite and the
13 Mayor have requested.

14 Crucially, under the current
15 deal, the 120 million from the sales tax
16 extension provides desperately needed
17 recurring dollars for our public schools
18 and fund our pensions at 80 percent by
19 year 2030. Further splitting the sales
20 tax between schools and pensions, as
21 Council has suggested, makes very little
22 difference in the health of our pensions,
23 getting us to 80 percent by 2028, a mere
24 two years earlier, but extracts a
25 terrible toll on our public schools,

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 students, families, educators, and even
3 the long-term viability of our school
4 system and economy. It's just not worth
5 it.

6 Given the above, I am concerned
7 that to the City -- sorry. Given the
8 above, I am concerned that at the City we
9 may be waiting to act until the state
10 acts, and up at the state, they want
11 Philadelphia to go before they do.

12 These are understandable
13 sentiments to be clear, but at the end of
14 the day, they're adult issues and adult
15 political assessments.

16 It is certain that the State
17 and the City need to put more funds into
18 the public schools this year and ongoing.
19 We need all sides to see this reality and
20 get down to the business of doing what
21 needs to be done for children, families,
22 educators, and the economy of our region.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
25 for your testimony.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. COOPER: I want to thank
4 Councilmembers for their attention. My
5 name is Donna Cooper. I am the Executive
6 Director of Public Citizens for Children
7 and Youth, and I know that it's been a
8 long morning and I'm proud of the
9 Councilpeople who are here. You really
10 show a strong interest in the challenges
11 before the City. So thank you.

12 I am here actually to speak to
13 something that Senator Street spoke
14 about, which is we have enabling
15 legislation to fund \$120 million of
16 school expenses, and I want to talk about
17 utilizing that enabling legislation
18 that's already been passed by the state.

19 We are here in this Chamber
20 today in the midst of a crisis because,
21 as Darren said, the state cut nearly 300
22 million from the Philadelphia School
23 District three years ago. We are not
24 here because this Council has failed to
25 act. We are here because the state took

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 action to make our situation worse. And
3 as a result, we are faced with a tough
4 local decision, whether we permit our
5 School District to disintegrate further
6 and dash the hopes and dreams of our
7 children. And, of course, no one in this
8 room, I know, wants that to happen.

9 But while you debate the
10 shortsighted proposal of shifting more
11 sales tax collections to fund the
12 pensions instead of the schools, the real
13 perpetrators of our school funding crisis
14 sit back with Cheshire cat smiles,
15 because simply having this debate puts
16 you on the hot seat, not them.

17 Even suggesting that you need
18 to divert more sales tax revenues to the
19 pension debt is a red herring. Why?
20 Because the current state law that
21 directs 120 million in sales tax revenue
22 to the School District also provides \$800
23 million for City pension payments through
24 2030. So the fact of the matter is that
25 by passing an ordinance to authorize the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 existing state law, when you do that, you
3 will be making a big dent in the \$5
4 billion pension liability.

5 The Council and the Mayor's --
6 Council President's and Mayor's proposal
7 to reduce the share of the sales tax
8 funds to the District only helps meet our
9 pension debt two years sooner than the
10 current law. And while sitting here
11 today I was handed a letter in response
12 to my letter and that of many education
13 advocates to the Council President, and
14 it further demonstrates in this letter
15 that with the Council President's
16 actuarial assumptions, the 80 percent
17 pension liability debt will be hit in
18 approximately 2030, and under the current
19 law, that will be hit in 2027 or 2028.
20 That is not a material difference. To
21 meet your pension obligation two years
22 sooner in 2028 by decreasing the School
23 District's resources now and every year
24 until then by a half a billion dollars
25 robs the educational futures of our

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 children for rhetorical rather than
3 substantive gain.

4 Instead, we urge the Mayor and
5 members of Council to work with advocates
6 like PCCY and others, the many who have
7 been here today, to build support for the
8 state to pass the cigarette tax increase
9 so that our schools can avoid the layoffs
10 of hundreds of teachers.

11 On top of that, we should be
12 working together to build political
13 support in Harrisburg to restore the cuts
14 to the District, starting first with a
15 full restoration of the charter school
16 reimbursement.

17 At Monday's Council hearing,
18 some members of Council questioned why
19 the School District's performance is so
20 poor. Think about it. Lower Merion has
21 twice the number of students who score
22 proficient and advanced on state
23 assessments. That's not a surprise. But
24 they do so in part because Lower Merion
25 spends twice the amount of money per

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 student than Philadelphia has available.
3 If it costs that much for Lower Merion
4 students to reach proficiency, most who
5 have parents with a college education,
6 it's simply not reasonable to expect that
7 our District can do much better with less
8 than half the funds of Lower Merion.

9 In fact, none of the successful
10 school districts in this state are
11 talking right now about how to find the
12 funds for nurses, counselors, school
13 administrators or teachers. These staff
14 are a given in high-performing districts
15 like Lower Merion.

16 If our District was to receive
17 the full amount of funds requested for
18 its budget, or \$440 million, we would
19 enter the ranks of the well-run and
20 high-achieving districts in the state
21 that have a librarian, a nurse, a
22 counselor or two, an art or music teacher
23 in every building. Our District would
24 have enough teachers to reduce class
25 sizes where needed and help special

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 education students achieve to their
3 fullest potential.

4 Our schools would be safer
5 places, with enough administrative
6 support, security staff, because the
7 funds would enable every large school to
8 have an assistant principal, the number
9 of security staff they need, and conflict
10 resolution specialists, as well as
11 noontime aides. These are the very
12 things that the counselor in Northeast
13 High talked about this morning.

14 And we would give every child a
15 chance to be in a club or a sport because
16 we would have the funds to pay teachers
17 and meet the personal growth and
18 enrichment needs of our children, spoken
19 to you today by the children of Adaire
20 Elementary, my neighborhood elementary
21 school.

22 To us, this all sounds like pie
23 in the sky, but it's exactly what the
24 parents in nearly all of the 61
25 surrounding school districts take for

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 granted.

3 What's the difference about
4 Philadelphia? First, those districts
5 have taxing power. The Philadelphia
6 School District does not.

7 Second, those communities have
8 rising real estate values, while
9 Philadelphia's real estate market is
10 sluggish, and where there is growth, the
11 tax is abated. And I appreciate
12 Councilman Goode's efforts to change
13 that.

14 This Council has been a strong
15 supporter of this School District.
16 However, our School District needs more
17 than your moral support this year. It
18 needs the full 120 million from the sales
19 tax revenue and 75 million more. It's
20 time for Council to be strategic and
21 enact the ordinance to enable the state
22 legislation that permits the full sales
23 tax transfer so that we can work together
24 to put the focus back on the state to
25 persuade the Commonwealth to do what is

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 right by our schools.

3 Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
6 for your testimony. I guess we all can
7 say collectively we miss Governor Ed
8 Rendell.

9 MS. LEWIS: Terrilyn McCormick,
10 Rebecca Johnson, Christina Diaz, Danya
11 Lingle.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Just for
15 everyone's edification, we ran a little
16 long. We are supposed to start again at
17 1 o'clock. Obviously that will be pushed
18 back a bit and we will try to be out of
19 here by 1 o'clock for the first session
20 and with a 1:45 restart for the second.

21 MS. MCCORMICK: Good afternoon.
22 My name is Terrilyn McCormick. I'm the
23 parent of children at two Philadelphia
24 public schools, Penn Alexander in West
25 Philadelphia and CAPA in South

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2 Philadelphia.

3 From listening to Monday's
4 testimony and your discussion with Dr.
5 Hite and Green, it feels like you feel
6 like you're being held hostage by the SRC
7 for the \$200 million ransom, with a gun
8 pointed directly at our children, and you
9 are not alone. I sympathize with the
10 position you are in. You must respond to
11 the ever-increasing request for funding
12 from the District, with little oversight
13 or input on how it's run or spends its
14 money.

15 Public school parents are also
16 funding our schools at ever-higher rates.
17 This year parents provided thousands of
18 reams of papers to our schools. In
19 addition, parents who were able, raised
20 money to fund clubs, secretaries,
21 counselors, and nurses. Basic
22 functioning of our schools are being paid
23 for by parents in this city right now.
24 And yet we parents continue to be left
25 out of discussions about budget

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 priorities and about School District
3 decision-making.

4 I have personally been asking
5 the SRC since January to provide its
6 deficit projections and begin a
7 transparent budget process that engaged
8 all stakeholders, including
9 Councilmembers. The deficit has been
10 ever-shifting from the School District.
11 It was 80 million in March. It's 200
12 million today. Without participation or
13 transparency, it is very hard to trust
14 the SRC.

15 But the problem is, they have
16 our kids in the balance. And while I'd
17 like to think this latest Plan B of
18 increasing classes to 37 five-year-olds
19 in a class with one teacher is as part of
20 political gamesmanship, I am scared to
21 death after witnessing up close what
22 happened this year over the summer at the
23 start of the school.

24 Our schools were not prepared
25 to open. They were not ready to teach

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 our children. My child sat on a ledge in
3 a room with 40-plus children for over two
4 weeks while his roster continued to
5 change for two months. Counselors roamed
6 six to seven schools covering 1,800
7 children. Safe walks for children to
8 school were closed. Going to new
9 receiving schools were not safe.
10 Leveling removed teachers from classrooms
11 after two and a half months of school, 20
12 percent of the school year, was lost to
13 churn and chaos. So when Dr. Hite and
14 the SRC threatened to lay off a thousand
15 staff and increase class sizes to insane
16 levels if they don't receive the funding,
17 I think they will do it. They proved
18 this year that there is no bottom to how
19 low they will go.

20 So even though it is not your
21 jurisdiction over our School District, as
22 the locally elected body representing
23 Philadelphia, I have to ask you anyway.
24 Please find a way to provide the School
25 District with the funding required to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 avoid mass layoffs and increasing class
3 sizes. There are many solid proposals
4 for how to do this.

5 I make this ask today with the
6 commitment to fight hard to regain local
7 control for our District, to push for a
8 fair funding formula, and greater charter
9 oversight and charter reimbursements.
10 While the School District is facing a
11 budget deficit, this is no excuse for a
12 leadership deficit here in Council.
13 These are our kids. These are our city's
14 future. We really have no choice.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 MS. DIAZ: Good afternoon. My
20 name Tina Diaz. I too am a parent of two
21 children in the public schools in
22 Philadelphia. I was born and raised in
23 Germantown, and while I was growing up,
24 my mother was largely unemployed, and so
25 we were on welfare and food stamps for

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 much of my life. But I went to the
3 public schools in Philadelphia. I went
4 to Masterman and Girls' High and
5 graduated, and that education provided me
6 with the foundation to succeed in
7 college.

8 And so when I moved back to
9 Philadelphia in 1990 to become a lawyer,
10 I thought about where should I raise my
11 children. Should I move out to the
12 suburbs like my peers, the other
13 professionals, lawyers, were doing so
14 that they could take advantage of the
15 schools? I said no. I have lived in
16 rural Connecticut for years as a chemist,
17 and when I came back to the City, it was
18 vibrant, it was alive, and I wanted --
19 and I felt like I could finally breathe.
20 And so I decided to stay in Philadelphia
21 so that my children could have the same
22 education that I had, the diversity of
23 thought that the City of Philadelphia can
24 offer students today.

25 And so my husband and I, we've

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 done that. We've committed to the City
3 of Philadelphia. He opened a business
4 here 20 years ago. He pays ungodly
5 taxes, and he's often thought about
6 moving out to the suburbs, but we have
7 stayed because the pros, until now, have
8 really outweighed the cons. But that
9 balance is starting to shift, and it's
10 being pushed so hard that it's about to
11 crack.

12 My daughters now are at
13 Masterman and Henry, and I think as
14 everyone has testified this morning, all
15 of the schools in Philadelphia are
16 suffering. They are suffering immensely.
17 My kids, they ask me, you know, where is
18 the nurse? In Masterman they didn't have
19 a guidance counselor to help the kids
20 apply to college. This is just the tip
21 of the iceberg there. There are so many
22 other schools that are not magnet schools
23 that have it far worse.

24 So how is Masterman -- and
25 let's look at that in particular -- going

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 to remain the number one high school in
3 the state? Isn't that an accolade that
4 the City of Philadelphia wants to
5 preserve? Isn't that important to the
6 City? That's important to the reputation
7 of the City, I can tell you that.

8 And how are our children going
9 to compete and go to college and be able
10 to succeed and come back and add to the
11 tax base of Philadelphia as I've done?

12 So the schools -- and everyone
13 has said here, this is the fabric of the
14 life for all of us here in Philadelphia.
15 And now is where I'm looking -- my
16 friends are turning to me and they're
17 saying, How do you do it? How do you
18 stay in the City of Philadelphia and
19 manage to navigate these schools? What
20 should we do? Should we move out to the
21 burbs? Should we stay in Philadelphia?
22 And I want to keep telling them they
23 should stay in the City, that there are
24 so many different options, but I feel
25 like I would be misleading them at this

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 point.

3 I don't know how anybody,
4 anybody who is working in the City, can
5 afford to live here if you can't send
6 your kids to the school. How can you do
7 it? My husband and I work. We work all
8 the time so that we can stay in the City
9 and we can provide a good education and a
10 good life for our children, but we're at
11 the breaking point.

12 So I think as somebody else
13 mentioned earlier, for the first time in
14 years, in decades, the City of
15 Philadelphia has seen a growth. People
16 are moving back to the City. But that is
17 going to change, I can guarantee you
18 that, if we can't do something for our
19 schools.

20 So I echo what everyone here is
21 saying. Please fund the schools. Make
22 it so that my kids have books, they have
23 rugs for their circle time, et cetera, et
24 cetera.

25 Thank you.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
4 much.

5 MS. LINGLE: Hello. My name is
6 Danya Lingle and I'm a concerned parent
7 of a 16-year-old daughter and a
8 10-year-old son. Our family moved here
9 three years ago, and having the youngest
10 diagnosed with learning disability, we
11 entered him into the Philadelphia school
12 system. He was placed in all-day
13 learning support class with one teacher
14 and one aide and was moving on track,
15 heading academically in the right
16 direction. Then came the first round of
17 cuts and layoffs.

18 The next school year he was
19 placed in mainstream class, being removed
20 from learning supports several times a
21 day, thus began the bullying. He was
22 bombarded with slurs, name calling, and
23 tormented, causing him to go from a happy
24 and social child to a quiet, stressed,
25 and academically regressing student.

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2 Before the start of the next
3 school year, we moved from Roxborough to
4 Fishtown, in hopes that a new school
5 would bring new changes, all positive.
6 However, after starting the first of the
7 school year, two months went by, more
8 cuts. Two 4th grade classrooms were
9 combined into one, mostly boys, 35-plus
10 students. This overly large class
11 situation did not blend well, alarming
12 the principal to call in counselors to
13 try and diffuse the situation amongst the
14 students. All the while my child is now
15 being pulled back and forth to learning
16 support as well as preps, and the
17 bullying continues. He has further
18 regressed educationally.

19 Having dealt with this
20 continuing situation, spending family
21 time and money for outside tutoring to
22 help get him back on track educationally
23 and working with healthcare professionals
24 so that he can speak to somebody about
25 the stresses he's dealing with on a

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 day-to-day basis at school, I looked for
3 other options. Charter school is what I
4 was told would be the answer.
5 Unfortunately, with the application
6 process as archaic as it is and the
7 overabundance of applicants, meaning more
8 people applying and not enough seats, I
9 quickly realized that was not the answer.

10 And then it happened. A
11 situation that started as harassment of
12 our child by another student during lunch
13 escalated due to the lack of supervision.
14 Then at the close of the day as the
15 teachers opened the door and some 400
16 children go to leave for the day, all the
17 while a woman, the principal, half my
18 size, is in charge -- I'm sorry; is there
19 to ensure that 400-plus students are kept
20 safe. My son was assaulted in the school
21 yard, thrown to the ground and kicked by
22 the same student that harassed him at
23 lunch, not understanding what he did to
24 deserve this and knowing that he was
25 taught never to harm anyone. During this

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 assault, not one school employee was
3 there to help him. It was up to a
4 ten-year-old boy and a mother who was
5 there to pick up her own child to come to
6 his aid. Again, not one school employee.

7 With the overcrowded classes,
8 lack of supervision and, quite frankly,
9 ineffective consequences, we're sending
10 them down the wrong path. Our task is to
11 create a safe learning environment, and
12 it lies with all of us.

13 So what I'm here to ask is
14 bring back the arts, the library, the
15 counselors, the school officers and let's
16 put in some playgrounds so that these
17 children can channel their energy and
18 negativity in other directions.

19 It makes me sad, but I am here
20 to say in public that at this point in
21 time, I will be sending my 16-year-old
22 daughter out of state to complete her
23 high school education with family, and if
24 it continues down the path that it
25 appears to be heading down, I will be

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 teaching my son at home.

3 Thank you for your time. Have
4 a good afternoon.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
7 for your testimony. There are no words
8 about how a mother has expectations at
9 least for safety for their child.
10 Education comes far after the expectation
11 that your child should be in a safe
12 environment, is just the minimum.

13 MS. LINGLE: What I read in the
14 newspaper, as sad as this is to say, it's
15 a minor incident what he's gone through.
16 There are other children out there that
17 are just subjected to this every day, and
18 it's got to stop. Safety, education.
19 We're molding the leaders of the future,
20 and right now we're not doing a good job.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

22 MS. LINGLE: Thank you.

23 MS. LEWIS: Rebecca Johnson,
24 Dee Dee Risher, Mama Gail.

25 (Witness approached witness

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 table.)

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you say
4 your name?

5 MS. RISHER: My name is Dee Dee
6 Risher.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.
8 Is that it?

9 MS. LEWIS: That's it.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
11 You'll be the last. We will take a break
12 until -- it's 1 o'clock now -- 1:45,
13 unless you want to try to sneak in right
14 under the wire. We'll let you do it.
15 Come on up. Come on up now. One person
16 from the school, you and one student.
17 Pick one.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mama
19 Gail is still here. I think she just
20 stepped out of the room for a second.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.
22 State your name and begin your
23 testimony, please.

24 MS. RISHER: My name is Dee Dee
25 Risher. I live in Lower

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Germantown-Nicetown, and I thank you all
3 for your attention. It has really been a
4 long morning and I appreciate how you're
5 listening to everyone.

6 My neighborhood is working
7 class, middle class, and low income.
8 We're a family who couldn't probably
9 choose income-wise to use anything with
10 the public schools, but we're also
11 committed to the public schools and
12 public education. It's the cornerstone
13 of democracy in a civilized nation, in my
14 mind.

15 I have two children, 6th and
16 9th grade, who have attended and
17 graduated from public charter schools.
18 That's Wissahickon Charter and they're
19 now in Masterman and SLA.

20 Two years ago -- and I would
21 like to say that we have had amazing
22 teachers and amazing and responsive
23 administrators. I think the Philadelphia
24 public schools are amazing, what people
25 are continuing to do in the face of the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 stress.

3 Two years ago budget cuts
4 forced my children's school to lose its
5 honors program, no foreign languages, no
6 music. This year they lost both school
7 counselors, extracurricular activities,
8 gifted curriculum, support, nursing
9 staff. We all know this story. Next
10 year it seems they will lose more.

11 This is the thing that makes me
12 passionate. I am not angry at you, but I
13 feel like we have enough money to fund
14 our schools. We have enough money to
15 fund our schools. The median household
16 income this city is \$37,000. I'm not
17 dizzy, but the average public servant
18 wage is well above \$70,000 once you get
19 into the management level. I don't know
20 how you make all that money work, but I
21 am frustrated that we're here every year
22 wondering if we can fund our schools, and
23 I think we lack political will and
24 courage.

25 In recent years -- and many

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 people have said this -- for the first
3 time in decades of my time in
4 Philadelphia, blue collar and
5 professional families are moving to the
6 City. They're drawn to it. They're
7 drawn to the culture, the green vibe.
8 They're drawn to the unique neighborhoods
9 and the diversity. And why are they
10 leaving? These families, the only reason
11 they move and take their tax dollars into
12 the suburbs, which other parents have
13 said, is because they get very worried
14 about whether their children can get a
15 good education. This is not about
16 funding some cesspool. This is about
17 building Philadelphia's future. We're at
18 a moment where we have more possibility
19 for a diverse and vibrant city than we've
20 seen in decades here, but instead we're
21 locked in this system which is fueled by
22 increasing polarities of economics, which
23 has kind of fueled the kind of
24 educational apartheid.

25 I won't really go around the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 room and ask people how many of you have
3 actually chosen to send your kids to the
4 public schools, but I would like to point
5 out that we'd like to say we're funding
6 the schools for our children, but for
7 many of us who are making decisions about
8 funding at the state level or local
9 level, it really means other people's
10 children, not my children. And the
11 reason -- when my son started his public
12 charter kindergarten class, it was 15
13 percent white, 85 percent African
14 American. By the time he graduated
15 middle school, he was the only white kid
16 in the whole middle school, and that was
17 a gift for him and a gift for us.

18 But what I'm saying is, if
19 Governor Corbett's kids, if people's kids
20 were in these schools, we would not be
21 here every year asking could we fund our
22 schools. We would have found the money.
23 I don't know where the money is. You
24 understand this more, but if our kids
25 were on the line, all of our kids, we

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 would not be doing this.

3 So I'm asking you to do the
4 simple things. Certainly extend the
5 dedicated sales tax. Certainly. You
6 know, if you want people to go out and
7 get those deadbeat property owners and
8 collect those unowed property taxes, I
9 know a lot of parents who would volunteer
10 to at least be the first line of defense.
11 But I think we have to have more creative
12 solutions, more sacrificial solutions,
13 and more innovative solutions.

14 As leaders in Philadelphia, you
15 are trying to envision how do we build a
16 strong city two decades from now, and I
17 believe the strongest Philadelphia will
18 be a raising class, diverse, mixed-income
19 city with green spaces that exploits its
20 beauty. It will be like Philadelphia is,
21 gritty and savvy and wise, and these
22 schools are our path there. It's not a
23 cesspool.

24 Marge Percy has this idea about
25 courage, that courage isn't something we

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 have or don't have, but it's something we
3 call upon and we can draw into us, and
4 this is the time where we need political
5 courage and we need creativity.
6 Leadership certainly involves diplomacy
7 and working through the political
8 polarizations in this state that you guys
9 are always working with by knowing that
10 our parents do have a piece of the truth
11 in trying to work together, but I also
12 think leadership in this situation
13 involves courage. Yes, our schools are
14 flawed and they reflect in a way our own
15 societal wholeness. In fact, I think our
16 schools right now are the primary
17 institutions that we are building raising
18 income apartheid in this country rather
19 than breaking it down, and I believe that
20 we can be a prophetic and long-view city
21 that can -- by funding our schools,
22 figuring it out, how do you put together
23 the 37,000 median household income with
24 the ways we are compensating across the
25 board in our government, even City

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 government, that we can find a way to
3 have a more transformative future. And
4 if we don't, what we do, we're
5 perpetuating poverty, hopelessness,
6 racial discrimination, and we're teaching
7 the kids, which are really other people's
8 kids, not ours, that no one cares. And
9 if you want to lead us toward the most
10 dangerous Philadelphia in the world, you
11 teach them that.

12 I believe in your creativity,
13 in your courage. I believe in
14 innovation. I respect many of you, and I
15 believe in your courage.

16 So thank you for listening.
17 Pass the 1 percent sales tax and then
18 stay up at night thinking of more
19 creative things to do, more sacrificial
20 things to do.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

24 For the record, grandfather, Central
25 grad. Mother met father after an

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Overbrook and West football game. And if
3 you know about that rivalry, there's no
4 question why they later divorced. My
5 children, public school. Their children,
6 public school. It's my children too.

7 MS. RISHER: Amen. Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Amen.

9 Thank you kind, sir, for your
10 patience. Please state your name.

11 MR. FOSTER: Ni hao. (Witness
12 speaking Mandarin.) This means I greet
13 you in peace in Mandarin. I'm Jatori
14 (ph) Foster and I often ask myself what
15 is a day like in the Philadelphia public
16 school. I often hear the horror stories
17 from my close cousin. He tells me of all
18 the bullying, the drug use, the bad food,
19 the dirty environment and then, worst of
20 all, the lack of updated school
21 materials.

22 So I'm asking you, the Council,
23 doesn't the children of Philadelphia need
24 a better learning environment too? See,
25 personally I've been home-schooled all my

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 life, and since I was 12, Mandarin

3 Chinese has been my second language.

4 Now, do you think I would have been able

5 to have learned this second language in a

6 Philadelphia public school?

7 Now, my home-schooling

8 experience has been the best experience

9 of my life. Since I was in first grade,

10 I was reading on an 8th grade level, and

11 now I'm a sophomore in high school and

12 I'm at a college level and I'm advanced

13 in math, algebra, and trigonometry.

14 Where I was going, I often question

15 myself is the public school system a day

16 late or a dollar short?

17 Xie xie. Thank you, and thank

18 you for your time.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Ni hao and

20 xie xie to you. I've been to China as

21 well.

22 Who is this young man?

23 MR. BROWN: My name is Jabril

24 Brown and I'm from John Wister

25 Elementary.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
3 and begin your testimony.

4 MR. BROWN: I won't eat my
5 lunch because it's not cooked right. We
6 need more recess and we need more
7 education and supplies, and we need to
8 stop bullying. And I will not use the
9 bathroom.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: We got to
11 fix that. We have to fix that. Thank
12 you for your testimony.

13 MR. BROWN: Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: The Chair
16 recognizes Councilman Johnson.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yeah.
18 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know we're
19 wrapping up on testimony. We have a
20 couple other individuals who will be
21 giving testimony. You know, it's
22 disheartening when we're about to
23 celebrate Brown versus the Board of
24 Education, thinking about all that has
25 been sacrificed for us to make sure that

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 all young people get a quality education,
3 and you have the actual students that
4 have to come out and advocate for funding
5 for their own schools and thinking about
6 what that means to their psyche when
7 they're supposed to be enjoying
8 themselves as young people and really
9 looking at the big picture. And as we
10 have done in the past in Council, we'll
11 figure out a way to be supportive of our
12 educational system, but our young people
13 shouldn't even -- we shouldn't even have
14 to be in the predicament where we're
15 actually picking and choosing.

16 And I was listening to the
17 testimony that was given prior to this
18 panel. You're talking about educational
19 apartheid and the dynamics that goes into
20 the mind state in Harrisburg and how, to
21 be quite frank, there's a certain level
22 of lack of value when it comes to those
23 who don't support the educational systems
24 in urban environments, not only in the
25 City of Philadelphia but this is a

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 national problem and it's something that
3 always has -- it's something that's
4 always been going on. And I make no
5 mistake about it, rather an elected
6 official or just as a man in general, the
7 dynamics that have played that, you know,
8 we're building more prisons and not
9 supporting schools, and that's done by
10 design. And I usually measure my
11 comments in this context, but I recognize
12 clearly sitting here looking at these two
13 African American young men who the system
14 pretty much calculates their future based
15 upon their third grade reading level,
16 which it should be the opposite. If you
17 understand that a young person isn't
18 doing good in their third grade and you
19 calculate how many prisons that should be
20 built, then why not reverse that same
21 process and start figuring out how you
22 invest in our children in the third grade
23 so they can focus on going to college.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And so, I

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 mean, again, we will continue to advocate
3 and think outside the box, but it is
4 disheartening to sit here, see young
5 people come to City Council advocating.
6 But I hope they also recognize that this
7 is -- to the two young men that are
8 sitting here -- that there is a role of
9 advocacy. This is a fight for social
10 justice. Getting adequate funding is
11 your human right, and continue because
12 two of you are our future. And so
13 continue advocating, continue challenging
14 us as elected officials, continue
15 challenging this system that pretty much
16 really -- a system that really put things
17 in place that are designed for
18 specifically African American young men
19 to not succeed.

20 And so I applaud the two of you
21 for being here. It is what it is. And
22 so as I sit here and I'm like, yeah,
23 we're about to celebrate the Civil Rights
24 Movement, Brown versus the Board of
25 Education, you know, but I clearly

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 understand the importance of education.
3 And even beyond the School District, I
4 encourage you to continue learning on
5 your own. When you go home, make sure
6 you continue reading. In your spare
7 time, continue making sure you're going
8 to the library and educating yourself,
9 because that's pretty much what you're
10 going to use as your weapon to combat
11 this type of injustice.

12 So I just want to commend the
13 two of you just for stepping up to the
14 plate.

15 William Mackey -- and it's
16 ironic that he's bringing the two of you
17 down here, because I remember fresh out
18 of college -- and I'm a public school
19 graduate as well, Penn graduate as well,
20 but it was William Mackey who had the
21 Citywide Youth Agency who recruited me to
22 work with him and start teaching me how
23 to organize at a young age, and I would
24 never think that I'll be sitting here in
25 the City Council Chambers as a former

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 State Rep focusing on this particular
3 issue. And so thank you, William, for
4 the hard work that you're doing. I just
5 wanted to acknowledge that.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
7 Councilman.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. MACKEY: If you give me 30
10 seconds real quick, please. Thanks for
11 taking us on early. And I just wanted to
12 say, I heard people -- my name is William
13 Mackey. I'm the Youth Coordinator for
14 the House of Promise youth program in the
15 Wister section of Lower Germantown.
16 We're in Councilwoman Bass's district,
17 and she's been very supportive. Thank
18 you, Councilwoman. And behind me is the
19 pastor and the church administrator.

20 Will you please stand up,
21 please. And two of our other students
22 back there.

23 Now, I don't know how -- first,
24 thank you, Councilman.

25 I don't know how the School

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 District could take 40 of these young
3 people in the room together. The other
4 two young people please stand up, Khalil
5 and -- we could not -- it's impossible to
6 take 40 of them students at one time.
7 It's impossible. Because I know what my
8 son do in school alone.

9 But anyway, in the after-school
10 program, these young come tell me they
11 don't use the bathrooms in school.
12 There's no toilet paper in the bathroom.
13 I mean, how did we allow to get so low?

14 And my recommendation to this
15 Council is that it's time that we go to
16 Harrisburg and advocate to bring control
17 back to Philadelphia. This Council and
18 this Mayor under the Home Rule Charter
19 needs to have control of that School
20 District. We should have been had buses
21 going to Harrisburg full of young people
22 like this articulate young man to go to
23 Harrisburg, go to the Governor Mansion,
24 go wherever you got to go. And like I
25 said, 30 years ago, the late Lucien

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Blackwell and the late John C. Anderson
3 would not have tolerated what's going on
4 now. I'm not putting no bones at this
5 Council at all. I'm just telling you the
6 way it is. That Council fought and made
7 people accountable with this school
8 stuff.

9 Somebody is playing political
10 football with these kids' life. If we do
11 not restore the proper level of integrity
12 at the SRC and the District, is this
13 thing just going to be sending our young
14 people to prison. I mean, what you do,
15 you're responsible for, but when young
16 people don't have adequate books,
17 adequate lunch -- I mean, food is
18 important. He said the food is not
19 eatable, edible, how you mean -- I mean,
20 the right way. And this young man is
21 home-schooled. He could speak Chinese
22 for a long time if we let him go. This
23 is Lawrence Clark's son. He ran for
24 Council before. This is his son, very
25 articulate.

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2 And we have a great
3 after-school program in the Wister
4 section. We reached out to Dr. Hite and
5 SRC and that administration several times
6 to come support our after-school program.
7 No avail. Unheard of. I don't
8 understand it.

9 But the Harrisburg leadership
10 is different now than it was when they
11 took it over. It's time to strike
12 Harrisburg now to bring control back.
13 Because I don't see the math. I don't
14 see the math. How you going to fund DC33
15 and fund the School District increase? I
16 don't see it. You know, I don't see it.

17 Mr. Chair, I strongly recommend
18 that this Council put together a think
19 tank and a strategy how we go to
20 Harrisburg to bring control back to
21 Philadelphia. And I also invite this
22 Council to take a look at after-school
23 programs that are working.

24 So I just want to say thanks
25 for your time. And it is sad. And I

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 want to say to the Councilman, I'm very
3 proud of you, Councilman. When I read
4 your bio, all them degrees you got, wow.
5 That's impressive. And I stress that to
6 my young people all the time. I would
7 not be William Mackey if I didn't bring
8 articulate young people here to do their
9 thing here.

10 This is y'all's. They work for
11 y'all. Okay. These Councilpeople is
12 elected under the Home Rule Charter, and
13 we got to hold them responsible, all of
14 them. And they nice people, but they got
15 to be held accountable.

16 And this Council need to hold
17 the state accountable. I don't
18 understand why we don't go to Harrisburg
19 to get control back. People over there
20 maneuvering that want to run for Mayor,
21 want to be the Chair over there. We see
22 what's going on. That's a game, but
23 don't play the game with these kids'
24 life. If you want to run for Mayor, go
25 run for Mayor. You got to be the Chair

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 to run for Mayor? Come on, not on these
3 kids. We need to stop that. We will
4 stop it.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
8 for your testimony.

9 Mr. Kirsch.

10 Will you join him at the
11 witness table.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: So after
15 this panel, we will break. The
16 stenographer has been a trooper. Every
17 word -- and there was a lot of words in
18 here -- she has put on the record. So
19 we're going to break.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
21 afternoon.

22 MAMA GAIL: Good afternoon. If
23 you don't mind, is there a rule that I
24 can't stand?

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: You can

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 stand. That's fine.

3 MAMA GAIL: Thank you.

4 Several months ago I decided
5 I'm not sitting to speak about our
6 children. I'm standing. I'm not
7 fighting. I'm not battling. I'm not
8 struggling. I'm standing.

9 I am named 38 years ago when I
10 got married Gail Clouden, took on my
11 husband's name, but later God named me
12 Mama Gail. So that's what I go by.

13 Before I begin, I'd like to say
14 I'm hosting a Solutions Council meeting
15 on Friday at 440. I told the District we
16 have people in our community that know
17 the answers to all our issues. So 5:30
18 at 440, I believe we're in Room 1173.
19 For anybody that wants to come and talk
20 about schools and education, please come.
21 We're there every week.

22 I've been involved in education
23 in Philadelphia for almost 30 years, and
24 one of the things that keeps coming to my
25 mind is my daughter, who is 37, and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 daughter, who will be 41, in a few
3 months. They came to the Philadelphia
4 public school from private school, and I
5 became a very, very involved parent,
6 because I was involved in the private
7 school system. So I started -- I put
8 them in elementary school. One went to
9 elementary, one went to middle, which one
10 was Daroff and the other one was Sayre.
11 And I mention that because my daughter's
12 first year in Sayre, she was attacked.
13 This is the 41-year-old. Leah went to
14 Daroff, and in 5th grade, we were told
15 that they were not going to change the
16 system to the middle school system.

17 In going to Bell Telephone as a
18 high school student starting to work
19 there, I knew that any time Bell did
20 something and it didn't work, they
21 changed it, if it didn't work
22 immediately. So I spent 14 and a half
23 years there learning from them. So
24 coming into the District and asking
25 questions -- I want to say this because

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 this is important -- the ego and the
3 arrogance that didn't just start now. I
4 spoke to a regional superintendent that
5 was telling us the District was changing,
6 and my daughter, being in 5th grade, now
7 she was going to go to 6th grade, 7th,
8 8th in the middle school, and I said,
9 Well, is there a time period set aside if
10 it doesn't work that you'll go back to
11 the way it is?

12 And the man told me, God rest
13 his soul, Your question is so ludicrous,
14 I'm not even answering you. And that was
15 my introduction in the public school
16 system. So I became an advocate and have
17 been one all these years.

18 I want to talk about the
19 contracts. We watch millions of millions
20 of dollars wasted -- we listen every
21 month. I'm there every month -- wasted
22 on contracts. We ask questions, and I'm
23 saying that because to no avail. We
24 don't get answers. And I asked and I
25 pushed and helped to increase minority

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2 business. I even helped a man get over a
3 million dollars in contracts, only to
4 have problems as a black man keeping --
5 dealing with the District. So I ask you
6 to ask questions again about the
7 contracts.

8 We have schools in the
9 Northeast while they're closing schools
10 in other areas that are 200 to 800
11 students over in capacity, and you need
12 to ask questions about that. While on
13 one hand they say we have empty seats
14 over here, well, you have schools that
15 the capacity should be about 800 and it's
16 1,600.

17 When you hear these young
18 people talk about having one counselor,
19 we thought that's how it was all across
20 the City. We thought the same thing was
21 happening all over. If it wasn't for the
22 issues around economics, we never would
23 have known that other people in other
24 parts of the District was getting what
25 they were getting.

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2 Parents and guardians are not
3 encouraged to get involved in their
4 children's education. I need to say
5 that. SACs are not operating as they
6 should. As a parent involvement
7 consultant, I can tell you there has not
8 been work for a whole year.

9 I want to talk about Science
10 Leadership Academy, which there's a \$2
11 million leasing, plus utilities.
12 Constitution, I believe \$2 million is
13 paid yearly to lease it. We've got empty
14 buildings. Doggone it, put those
15 children in those buildings. Why are
16 some children worth more than other
17 children? I don't understand that.

18 Putting public against charter
19 schools -- and I watched that at the
20 District. Those children, many of them
21 that are in charter schools are there
22 because they were not served well in
23 public schools. And I'm told -- as I say
24 it, Dr. Hite will correct me -- well,
25 charter schools are public. Well, guess

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2 what. I say public schools, charter
3 schools, because that's how I say it all
4 the time. And I'm saying that because
5 many parents -- and people don't know
6 this -- many parents were even banned
7 from their child's school. So I have a
8 problem with autonomy for principals,
9 because that gives them the right to do a
10 lot of things without folks knowing it.

11 I want to mention engineers,
12 safety and training. When you're talking
13 about helping and giving money, please
14 have oversight. That's the word that
15 keeps coming to mind. Ask about the two
16 men that lost fingers this year. Two men
17 lost two fingers, I was told, as a result
18 of accidents with snowblowers. Many are
19 working so hard that they have so many
20 health issues. Please, oversight on
21 every dollar.

22 Colleges and universities are
23 not doing what they could do for our
24 children. I have to say that. I'm so
25 tired of our children being the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 experiment. I am so tired of our
3 children being used. I am so tired of us
4 not getting what we should get. Our
5 ancestors suffered long enough. They
6 suffered hard enough. They died for us
7 to have what we're supposed to get. And
8 I'm saying, please do not give one dollar
9 without knowing what's been given and
10 also knowing what they're going to do
11 with it. Again, millions and millions go
12 out monthly.

13 One example, one example,
14 someone said the reason why a contract
15 was granted, because the company was
16 going to give -- was going to take the
17 recyclables. We were told recycled items
18 are taken by the City for free. We sit
19 there at the SRC meetings as these
20 contracts come over, and the SRC members
21 don't have a clue. We've showed how
22 money could be saved over and over and
23 over, and we've shown that they don't
24 know what they're voting on.

25 Please make sure that you ask

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 these questions. And there are advocates
3 around that can sit with you and talk to
4 you about what we know. We can go line
5 by line. We watch money thrown away.

6 And I'm going to say this last
7 thing, please. How is it that -- and I'm
8 at the UN often. I graduated 41 years
9 ago in June from West Philly High. I've
10 traveled the world as a high school
11 graduate, and I'm going to tell you
12 something. If our children get the
13 basics -- and I know this -- the basics
14 they can do well, but doggone it, make
15 sure they at least get the basics,
16 because they're not even getting that
17 now.

18 Why is it that when a black
19 woman comes to Philadelphia and tries to
20 make a difference, that the hole becomes
21 so big and so deep that it seems that it
22 can never be filled? Why is that? That
23 the debt keeps getting bigger and bigger
24 and bigger. And I'm saying that -- God
25 bless your soul, Dr. Ackerman, who was

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2 not perfect, and we know that, because we
3 ain't either. But I'm going to tell you
4 something. This woman gave people jobs
5 with benefits, people that had not worked
6 and couldn't find jobs, and I think it's
7 appalling that people are coming from all
8 over the world as tourists in
9 Philadelphia and we see all these nice
10 signs and stuff about the Constitution.
11 When are we going to live the
12 Constitution? When are our children
13 going to benefit from the Constitution,
14 while people can afford to come here from
15 all over the world. And I've been at
16 third-world countries. How is it that
17 people from the third-world countries can
18 come here and teach our children? How is
19 that? And they don't have anything more
20 than a table and a chair, doggone it, and
21 they can be 50 in the class because they
22 understand education is the key. They
23 get that.
24 When are we going to let our
25 children know and really be that? Not

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 just say it, but let them know that we
3 can be what we see people coming from all
4 over the world to do, sitting in those
5 chairs.

6 And last, last, last. Black
7 people, we need more black people in
8 front of our children. And I mean
9 qualified black people. We have
10 unqualified people from other races in
11 front of our children. We have black
12 people that are culturally connected.
13 They should be in those classes. Why is
14 it in Philadelphia we can't find people?

15 That's all. Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
17 Mama Gail.

18 MAMA GAIL: Peace. Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 MAMA GAIL: This is Brother
22 Jamier.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Brother
24 Jamier.

25 MAMA GAIL: He's a student at

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Latin -- go ahead, tell him. He's
3 shadowing me for a month, so I just
4 wanted him to tell you who he is, if you
5 don't mind.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: I don't
7 mind. He's why we're here.

8 MAMA GAIL: That's why I wanted
9 him to sit here.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Kind of
11 tall, though. You fooled me. Go ahead.

12 MR. MARKS: I'm Jamier Robinson
13 Marks coming from Boys' Latin Charter
14 School and Mr. Hardy, that's the CEO of
15 my school.

16 So I'm actually doing my
17 internship right now and -- well, my
18 opinion on everything here is, I find it
19 really amazing how many different
20 opinions that people have about charter
21 schools and public schools and the money
22 that's going around and everything. And
23 what I think is -- I just think everybody
24 should just have patience and...

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Out of the

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 mouths of --

3 MR. MARKS: And learn each
4 other and actually not fight, but
5 understand the struggles of each other.
6 And that's what...

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: I appreciate
8 that. Thank you.

9 MAMA GAIL: And this is
10 (unintelligible).

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh, that's
12 right. I met him. So I think I'm going
13 to be at Boys' Latin, when, tomorrow
14 night?

15 MR. HARDY: Monday.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Monday
17 night. So I'll see you then.

18 MAMA GAIL: Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

20 Is that in the 3rd District?

21 I'll allowed. I get a pass.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You get a
23 pass?

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilwoman
25 Blackwell allows me in her district from

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 time to time.

3 Thank you for your patience.

4 I'm glad you got a chance to hear a lot
5 of the testimony.

6 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you. Good
7 afternoon. Education Chairwoman
8 Blackwell, Councilman Jones, and
9 colleagues of City Council who are here,
10 thank you. I am Ted Kirsch, proud
11 graduate of Philadelphia public schools,
12 former history teacher in Philadelphia
13 public schools, and President of AFT
14 Pennsylvania. I want to thank you for
15 this opportunity to speak to you today.

16 You've heard a great deal of
17 testimony about the financial plight of
18 Philadelphia schools, which have
19 sustained cuts that are destroying our
20 public schools and sending young families
21 fleeing. You know the toll the cuts are
22 taking on students, teachers, and the
23 educational opportunities being deprived
24 from your neighborhood schools.

25 On behalf of the AFT

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Pennsylvania's 35,000 members statewide,
3 I wholeheartedly support the Philadelphia
4 Federation of Teachers' call for the
5 passage of several key bills before this
6 Council that would increase revenues. It
7 would restore personnel, programs, and
8 services to our schools and children.
9 And you heard my colleague and friend,
10 Mr. Jerry Jordan, speak to you this
11 morning about these bills.

12 Today, I want to talk to you
13 about the key role that the public school
14 system plays in the future of our city.
15 You've heard about the plight of the
16 schools. I'm not going to go into that.
17 But in Philadelphia, we pride ourselves
18 on the fact that so many of us have moved
19 from working class to middle class and
20 more. Like my parents, many of your
21 parents were working people. What helped
22 us get ahead, finish high school, enroll
23 in college, and become successful was
24 Philadelphia's excellent public school
25 system. Public schools gave us

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 opportunities to be successful
3 financially and join the middle class.
4 The children growing up today deserve the
5 same opportunities that we have had.

6 As a South Philadelphia kid
7 growing up on Second Street and a teacher
8 who taught in every neighborhood, Thomas
9 Middle School, Overbrook High, Ben
10 Franklin, Martin Luther King, Mastbaum
11 and George Washington High School, I know
12 that strong communities are built around
13 strong neighborhood schools. I've been
14 there.

15 As Philadelphians, we are proud
16 of the City's transformation. The
17 population is stabilizing and
18 neighborhoods are being revitalized,
19 including Center City, the Avenue of the
20 Arts, Northern Liberties, Queen Village,
21 areas surrounding the University of
22 Pennsylvania and Drexel. But that
23 progress is unlikely to continue without
24 great public schools in every
25 neighborhood.

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2 Too often we hear that young
3 people, the energetic, forward-thinking
4 people, who are rehabbing City
5 properties, starting new businesses and
6 reviving older commercial areas, start
7 talking about leaving the City as soon as
8 their children are born. We cannot
9 continue to build Philadelphia unless
10 every community is anchored by excellent
11 neighborhood public schools.

12 Neighborhoods that are anchored
13 by great public schools are safer, more
14 inviting places to live. And great
15 public schools create jobs in schools and
16 throughout the community. And good jobs
17 and thriving businesses build our tax
18 base. In short, great neighborhood
19 schools are the lifeblood of vibrant
20 communities. We must do everything
21 within our power, including passing
22 revenue-generating bills, to give our
23 schools the resources they need to become
24 a public school system that is great once
25 again.

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2 Neighborhoods around good
3 public schools like Meredith, Jackson,
4 Powell and others are the proof that we
5 need our economic and social future is
6 tied to strong neighborhood public
7 schools.

8 And in conclusion, I urge you
9 to join parents, teachers, clergy, and
10 concerned citizens to fight for a fair
11 and equitable state funding formula, for
12 additional funding from Harrisburg
13 immediately, and for an end to the School
14 Reform Commission and a return to local
15 control of our public schools. The
16 future of our city and our children
17 depends on rebuilding a successful public
18 school system.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
21 you, Mr. Kirsch. Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Certainly we thank you for your
3 leadership at AFT. We thank Jerry
4 Jordan, and we thank you for your
5 leadership for the PFT, and certainly we
6 concur with your statements. Thank you,
7 Mr. Kirsch.

8 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
10 you.

11 We're going to take a 15-minute
12 break.

13 How many people here want to
14 testify on the list? All right. Let's
15 call it 2 o'clock. Two o'clock we'll be
16 back in session.

17 (Short recess.)

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
19 afternoon. This is a continuation of our
20 public hearing. Please read the title of
21 the bills.

22 We don't have to do that?
23 Okay.

24 We're going to skip with the
25 traditional calling of the bills or

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 reading of the bills. We've done that.
3 We're going to call the next set of
4 witnesses.

5 MS. LEWIS: Garland Sigler.

6 (No response.)

7 MS. LEWIS: William Mackey --
8 I'm sorry. He already spoke. Judith
9 Robinson.

10 (No response.)

11 MS. LEWIS: Diane Menio.

12 (No response.)

13 MS. LEWIS: Karen Buck.

14 (No response.)

15 MS. LEWIS: Jamie Gauthier.

16 (No response.)

17 MS. LEWIS: Patricia Cruice.

18 (Witness approached witness
19 table.)

20 MS. LEWIS: Julie Slavet.

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Come on up
23 to the witness table, please.

24 MS. LEWIS: David Hardy,
25 Lurline Jones.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 (Witnesses approached witness
3 table.)

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm sorry
5 for the interruption we had. In between
6 hearings life happened, and we had a
7 major fire drill. I really don't know if
8 it was a drill or not, but you don't have
9 to tell me. I'm like Pavlov's dog. You
10 ring that fire bell, I'm out of here.
11 We'll figure it out afterwards.

12 So good afternoon. Please
13 state your name and begin your testimony.

14 MS. CRUICE: Good afternoon,
15 Councilman. My name is Patty Cruice and
16 I am the principal of the James Dobson
17 public school in Manayunk. You're very
18 familiar with it. I'm here to talk about
19 the urgency around funding for the public
20 school system. And, you know, my K to 8
21 school in Manayunk is a small
22 neighborhood school. Do you walk a mile
23 and a half? Can you walk a mile and a
24 half if you had to?

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 MS. CRUICE: Well, most of my
3 students in my upper school could that.
4 My 4th through 8th graders probably
5 could. All they would need to do would
6 be to walk across the Green Lane Bridge
7 and they would come upon Belmont Hills
8 Elementary School, and they would come
9 upon the great inequity that is going on
10 here.

11 So in my school I have 300
12 students from K to 8. I have a half-time
13 counselor that I share with another
14 school, and I have \$29,000 for the entire
15 year next year for my students. That
16 equates to about \$97 a child for the
17 year, which is about less than a dollar a
18 day. Meanwhile, in Belmont Hills, let's
19 see, they have a counselor for a K to 5
20 school, full-time counselor. Their class
21 size is 20 or 22. Fourth and 5th grade
22 is 25. My class size is 30 and 33. And
23 if we don't get this funding, it's going
24 to go up to 40. Their enrollment is 469
25 students. Mine is 300.

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2 For general supplies, books and
3 periodicals, they have \$85,200 for next
4 year. I have 29,000. It is
5 unconscionable -- it's just
6 unconscionable that we have a
7 second-class thing going on here in the
8 21st century, simply because the children
9 live on this side of Green Lane -- of the
10 Green Lane Bridge, they have roughly a
11 dollar a day for their funding, and if
12 they were to live across the river, they
13 would have everything they needed. And
14 it's not -- in the 21st century, this is
15 not what should be happening. We can do
16 better than that, and we need to do
17 better than that.

18 We are a city with a history,
19 and it's just -- I'm here to speak on
20 behalf of the students that I serve.

21 That's it.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just
23 want --

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm going to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 clap for you too. It's in my district.

3 I want to thank you for the
4 priceless attention that you give those
5 young people. Whether it is engagement
6 in the community or engagement in civic
7 understanding, you do that well. And it
8 isn't fair that depending on the zip code
9 depends on the quality of education a
10 child gets. And we hear you, and
11 whether -- you know, we're not going to
12 make excuses. We're going to do what we
13 have to do to make sure that you get the
14 funding and supports that you need.

15 MS. CRUICE: Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

17 Thank you. You can state your
18 name.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

20 Mr. Hardy.

21 MR. HARDY: My name is David
22 Hardy. I'm CEO of Boys' Latin Charter
23 School. I'm here today to talk about the
24 budget, like everybody else.

25 Esteemed members of City

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 Council, when I read the report of the
3 District's presentation on Monday, I
4 began to worry. SRC Chairman Green and
5 Superintendent Hite came in with the
6 sobering reality of the current fiscal
7 condition and asked for enough money to
8 keep it that way. They were only telling
9 the truth. This situation is
10 unprecedented. It is May 7th and we have
11 no idea what amount of resources will be
12 available to open school in September,
13 and we seem to be asking for just enough
14 to survive.

15 It was not inspiring. That was
16 clear from the responses from Council.
17 What I found particularly troubling was
18 when my dear friend, Councilman Kenyatta
19 Johnson, questioned the reasoning for
20 opening up the three new high schools
21 proposed for next year. I know
22 Councilman Johnson is a supporter of
23 public education, but when all you hear
24 is gloom and doom, requests for
25 investments in new programs are never

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2 warmly received.

3 I am here today to ask for more
4 funding for public education because
5 there are schools in this city that are
6 working, schools where children are safe
7 and cared for and educated, schools that
8 produce meaningful results. Boys' Latin
9 is one of those schools. We graduate 99
10 percent of our students, with a 97
11 percent college acceptance rate. More
12 importantly, only the five top selective
13 admissions high schools have a higher
14 college matriculation rate than our 81
15 percent. Our last graduating class, the
16 Class of 2013, had an 84 percent
17 matriculation rate. We do not believe
18 that there is another public high school
19 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that
20 graduates more than 25 African American
21 boys who can say that they send more than
22 eight out of ten to college.

23 We have seen these amazing
24 results from our young men, but these
25 results would never have been achieved

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2 had they not been given the opportunity
3 to experience a rigorous curriculum and
4 challenging extracurricular activities.
5 This is why I believe the investment in
6 the three new high schools is important.
7 While I know it's not the popular
8 position, I think it is next to
9 impossible to turn around a poorly
10 performing District high school. That
11 may be why the Renaissance program has
12 been their reform of choice. However, in
13 a new school, you can establish a new
14 culture and new expectations. The
15 creation of new schools is essential to a
16 redefined School District. The
17 development of new schools allows for the
18 closure of ineffective schools.

19 I know that at both the City
20 and the State levels there are those who
21 feel like we suffer from
22 under-performance, both District and
23 charters schools. While this may be true
24 in some cases, it will not help the
25 situation by limiting dollars directed to

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2 public education. The scarcity of funds
3 has placed all public schools, good and
4 bad, District or charter, in peril. It
5 is time for all those responsible for
6 funding our schools to step up.

7 The current rate of funding is
8 excruciatingly insufficient. Yes, the
9 state can and should do more. That is a
10 fight that we must engage, but we need
11 additional City funding too.

12 The recent demands for more
13 accountability and better results are
14 valid, but whoever is tasked with the
15 duty of making those improvements cannot
16 do so without the resources necessary to
17 do the job. Sadly, we have reached the
18 point where that will not happen without
19 more money.

20 Members of Council, you are in
21 a difficult situation. In your role of
22 having fiduciary responsibility for City
23 funds, you have the responsibility of
24 ensuring the City gets value for the
25 funds allocated. This is an important

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2 job. Anyone familiar with the
3 demographics of those attending public
4 schools knows that they serve the
5 children who are the neediest. Wasted or
6 ineffective educational spending is
7 dangerous in an environment of limited
8 dollars. Yet you must provide enough
9 funds to educate the children of this
10 city who are dependent on public schools.

11 Please help us help the
12 children. Hold us accountable. Hold us
13 to the highest of expectations, but give
14 us the resources to do the job. The job
15 is to redefine public education in
16 Philadelphia. This may require some
17 difficult decisions, but without your
18 action, our city will not survive.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much. You all know Boys' Latin
23 is one of the best schools in the City.
24 Thank you.

25 MR. HARDY: Thanks.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you.

4 And Lurline Jones. All of you
5 know her with her sports program at
6 University City. Phenomenal. Thank you.
7 Welcome.

8 MS. JONES: Good afternoon.
9 I'm Lurline Jones. I've been with the
10 School District of Philadelphia for 42
11 years, 42 wonderful years. I've been
12 retired how for five years, and I felt
13 the need for you to hear my thoughts on
14 this educational crisis.

15 2014 marks the 60th anniversary
16 of Brown versus the Board of Education
17 where the Supreme Court deemed that
18 schools that were inherently unequal was
19 unconstitutional. Isn't it ironic today
20 the City of Philadelphia, we have such
21 institutions where the quality and
22 equality of education is not the same as
23 our counterparts all over the state? We
24 have a system that is poor and we have an
25 elite system. The SRC, in my opinion, is

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2 quietly and secretly operating business
3 their way. Dr. Shirley Parham must be
4 turning over in her grave, because
5 decades ago she wrote about the history
6 of Philadelphia public schools where they
7 had Ward schools, where it was the have's
8 and the have not's, and we are still
9 doing that same thing today. We are
10 embarking on this road due to the
11 undermining, underreporting,
12 behind-the-scenes deals that I feel the
13 SRC does. The SRC just closed three high
14 schools and now they are opening four new
15 high schools. Somewhere in my mind that
16 does not compute. They are advertising
17 for new teachers, but yet they gave
18 teachers layoff notices. So how is the
19 opening of new schools going to help the
20 crisis that we're in?

21 The SRC accepts money from
22 outside sources for the "have" schools,
23 while the "have not" schools go begging.
24 It is amazing that we probably are the
25 only school system run by politicians,

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2 lawyers, and non-educators. Our
3 counterparts in the five-county area
4 would not think of dismissing a nurse. I
5 was appalled when I questioned the
6 Superintendent about the needless death
7 of a young girl from asthma, only to have
8 him say to me, She did not die in school.
9 Had there been a nurse, she would have
10 taken the necessary steps to aid her.
11 How do you allow a teacher to man the
12 nurse's office two days a week? It
13 sounds like a lawsuit to me.

14 Montgomery County would not
15 allow high school students to navigate
16 the college programs without a counselor.
17 Not only do our children miss out on the
18 college procedure, but athletes miss out
19 on obtaining athletic scholarships.

20 This brings me to another
21 point. The athletic programs for girls
22 are lacking in the School District of
23 Philadelphia. In 1980 I sued the School
24 District because of this very same thing.
25 I hope I don't have to do it again.

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2 My other question is, with so
3 many school buildings closed, why is the
4 School District still leasing buildings?
5 All of us in this room, whether we're
6 professional, blue collar, white collar,
7 we all must thank a teacher. A teacher
8 is one of the lowest paid professionals
9 in America, and the SRC wants the
10 teachers to give back 17 percent of their
11 salary or else they get threatened with
12 job security.

13 I have purchased for my
14 granddaughter's school three cases of
15 paper, rolls of toilet paper, paper
16 towels, 24 boxes of tissues. The
17 teachers did not create this crisis.

18 So what is the solution? It
19 seems to me that City Council should
20 demand accountability from the SRC. They
21 do not serve the children of
22 Philadelphia. They serve the Governor,
23 the lawyer, the politicians who run this
24 city. Isn't it amazing that there are no
25 educators on the SRC? That's like having

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the plumbers and the electricians running
3 the American Medical Association.

4 And most of them have had very
5 little experience with the urban school
6 system, and we know that Bill Green is a
7 Penn Charter graduate, whose background
8 is private, is in the private school
9 sector.

10 City Council, it's time for you
11 to demand to have a local board of people
12 who have some educational background. It
13 seems to me that you should be aware of
14 the backroom deals that go on. There has
15 not been an educator in charge of the
16 Philadelphia schools since Dr. Constance
17 Elaine Clayton, and it has been a
18 downward spiral since then. Was this on
19 purpose? Did the SRC think the
20 electorate in Philadelphia would sleep as
21 they make deals?

22 More schools are going to close
23 and new ones are going to open. City
24 Council, I am counting on you to make
25 this ship upright again. Please demand

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2 that the SRC be dissolved. Let's get a
3 new one that will find ways to improve
4 our schools. And just in case you need a
5 staunch stakeholder in the education
6 process, here I am, ready to serve.

7 Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
10 much. The name of the author you
11 referenced on the education.

12 MS. JONES: Dr. Shirley Parham.
13 She wrote the history of the Philadelphia
14 School District from 18-something up
15 until 1914.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
17 Thank you for your testimony.

18 MS. LEWIS: Garland Sigler.

19 (No response.)

20 MS. LEWIS: Judith Robinson.

21 (No response.)

22 MS. LEWIS: Diane Menio.

23 (No response.)

24 MS. LEWIS: Karen Buck.

25 (No response.)

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2 MS. LEWIS: Jamie Gauthier.

3 (No response.)

4 MS. LEWIS: Julie Slavet.

5 (No response.)

6 MS. LEWIS: Leslie Mason.

7 (Witness approached witness
8 table.)

9 MS. LEWIS: Christina Diaz
10 already spoke. And Pamela Williams.

11 (No response.)

12 MS. LEWIS: George Ricchezza.

13 (Witness approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Did they
16 make you absolutely last?

17 MR. RICCHEZZA: I guess so.
18 Saved the best for last, I guess.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.

20 MS. MASON: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Leslie Mason. I am the very
22 proud principal of Thomas Mifflin School.
23 I come to you today with 27 years in the
24 School District of Philadelphia as an
25 educator. In 27 years, I cannot recall

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2 any time like this.

3 What we're facing this

4 September is even worse than what I faced

5 last September. When I say we had

6 nothing last September, it's not

7 hyperbole. It's fact. No secretaries,

8 no counselors, no books, no paper, no

9 pencils. I spent the summer going to

10 "going out of business" sales, going to

11 the Share Warehouse on Hunting Park and

12 begging for supplies.

13 I lost teachers. My class

14 sizes last year were over 40 students,

15 only to be told we don't have teachers

16 that we can afford, split the classes and

17 make split grade classes. So then I had

18 to make the classes into split grades,

19 which has no basis in good practice. My

20 decisions weren't driven by what I know

21 to be best for my students. It was

22 driven by the lack of funding.

23 I have children in my building

24 that have had three different teachers

25 this year, all because they got switched

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2 around from teacher to teacher because we
3 didn't have enough teachers. Next year I
4 am projected to have two less than I have
5 in my building right now and they're
6 cutting two more teachers. So I'm
7 looking at next year with over 40 again,
8 and if you've ever housed 46 first
9 graders in a classroom, it's no small
10 feat. That's what we're looking at next
11 year.

12 Next year I'm looking at
13 \$11,000 for 300 students for the entire
14 year. With that \$11,000, which is about
15 \$36 per child per year, which, just like
16 my counterpart, is less than a dollar a
17 day for my children, I am expected to buy
18 everything they need. I can go out and I
19 can get donations for paper and office
20 supplies and I can work with the
21 community to get what we need that way,
22 but I can't bring bodies into the school.
23 I can't bring teachers into the school.
24 I can't bring books into the school. I
25 don't know that people understand that

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2 for one student to have what they need
3 curriculum-wise, we're talking at least a
4 hundred dollars, at least, per child. I
5 haven't been allotted that. Neither have
6 my children.

7 In conclusion, with the help of
8 City Council, I'm hoping we can obtain
9 the funding we need to put the bodies
10 back in the building, because right now
11 it's just me. And if you're in a school
12 and you have just the principals, the
13 only person who can tend to anything, as
14 you can well imagine, the principal
15 spends their day running and nothing
16 really gets accomplished.

17 My school is making gains, but
18 they're making gains because of the
19 dedication of the staff. I have no
20 school police. At dismissal you'd have
21 300 children leaving at the same time.
22 If the teachers didn't stay after school
23 and monitor outside, I would have a
24 problem. I don't have a problem. You
25 don't see Mifflin in the news for a

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2 problem because we have people who are
3 dedicated, both in the school and
4 outside. My parents, I have a big group
5 of parent volunteers.

6 And my point is this: Everyone
7 is doing their part. They're doing above
8 and beyond what we expect of teachers,
9 what we expect of parents, what we expect
10 of community members, but now we need the
11 state to get on board and give what they
12 are expected to do.

13 I didn't enter education with
14 any other reason than you probably
15 entered politics - to serve. That's my
16 job, to serve my children. That's why
17 I'm here, and the reason you're here is
18 you also chose to serve the people of
19 Philadelphia, and we need to do a better
20 job.

21 I brought a letter with me that
22 I'd like to leave with you, if I can
23 approach, from one of my students. His
24 name is Phillip. And Kariyah put her
25 name on it too, but that's because she

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2 likes Phillip.

3 Phillip is a big thinker, and
4 Phillip brought me this letter because --
5 unfortunately, they're not going to get
6 to see it. My kids, we were going to
7 make a civics lesson about the
8 responsibility of citizens in government,
9 but Phillip had some ideas for you on how
10 you could raise funds. He also wanted to
11 tell you his idea about selling tickets
12 to see famous people. The only famous
13 person he knows is his mother.

14 So Phillip has sent you some
15 ideas. But my seven-year-olds worry
16 about fundraising and that that is their
17 concern? Phillip is very smart and a
18 very good kid, but Phillip shouldn't be
19 thinking about how we're going to buy
20 books. That's for the grownups. So I
21 hope you hear me when I say please
22 approve anything you need to approve to
23 put people and resources back in schools.

24 Thank you.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: I love some
3 of their ideas to raise money. A Rainbow
4 Loom fundraiser, Minecraft game day. So
5 we're going to put this letter in the
6 official minutes and --

7 MS. MASON: I told Phillip.
8 He's so excited.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Tell him
10 it's a part of the testimony.

11 MS. MASON: I will tell him.
12 Thank you so much.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
14 much.

15 Thank you for your patience.
16 State your name and begin your testimony.

17 MR. RICCHEZZA: Good afternoon.
18 My name is George Ricchezza. I'm the
19 President of Local 32BJ District 1201 and
20 I represent School District employees. I
21 want to thank you, Councilman Jones,
22 Councilwoman Blackwell and our two
23 Councilmen, Council Oh and Councilman
24 Greenlee, for hanging in there so long.
25 I will be brief.

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2 I didn't come with an army, as
3 you can see. I came by myself today,
4 because I think things need to be said,
5 and what I mean by that is, I also am an
6 employee of the School District and I
7 will be starting my 42nd year next month.
8 I've kind of seen it all, and the horror
9 stories that I've been hearing today from
10 principals, from students, from everyone,
11 it's wrong and it's got to be corrected.
12 And I want to thank this body, because
13 you are the one body that we could come
14 to and air out our differences all the
15 time. You could get anybody from
16 community groups to single parents to a
17 parent to a child to come here and you
18 will listen to them, and I especially
19 appreciate that from you.

20 I have some testimony that I'd
21 like to just say.

22 As I sat here on Monday -- and
23 I was here Monday for the School
24 District's presentation -- I listened to
25 the presentation from the School District

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 regarding the budget. What I heard was
3 "show me the money." We need the money
4 here. There's no doubt about that. But
5 it was a little bit disturbing, and I'll
6 get into that.

7 This Council has done their
8 part increasing revenue to the District
9 over the past few years in excess of \$125
10 million. We personally came here for the
11 real estate tax. Hard decisions to make,
12 but they got made by this Council, and it
13 was appreciated.

14 It was refreshing to hear
15 President Clarke tell the District that
16 there must be transparency and oversight
17 by Council and more accountability.
18 That's the first time that I've really
19 ever heard someone tell the School
20 District that they need to have
21 accountability, and this body did that.

22 When Councilmembers asked the
23 District are there alternative revenue
24 streams, there was no definitive answer.
25 They talked about the cigarette tax and

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 the 1 percent tax. I also support our
3 PFT brothers and sisters, the community
4 parents and all in approving that tax.

5 When asked what is Plan B, I
6 believe they were perplexed and the only
7 answer was lay off 1,059 members or
8 employees and negate the contracts, which
9 we worked hard to get, as you know, two
10 years ago. Where is the plan to educate
11 the children of Philadelphia and how will
12 that happen with less teachers,
13 counselors, nurses, school police? You
14 heard stories today from the counselor
15 from Washington High School with his
16 students. You heard a parent come in
17 today and talk about her child being
18 bullied in a schoolyard. These are
19 issues because of the staffing levels
20 that we now have within the School
21 District.

22 The support staff that I
23 represent, 32BJ members, made concessions
24 of \$100 million to avoid the layoffs of
25 2,700 workers in 2012. How is the money

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2 being spent? No accountability.

3 Two years later, 32BJ members
4 number less than 2,200. And I think the
5 actual number is 2,135. We've lost over
6 600 members in the last two years due to
7 attrition and because the School District
8 just does not want to hire.

9 Two years ago, we were at 2,700
10 of bus drivers, cleaners, engineers, bus
11 attendants, maintenance workers who
12 clean, heat, cool, and maintain our
13 buildings. I heard Pete Matthews come
14 here today from DC33 and talk about the
15 excellent job that his members did during
16 this cold winter, but let me tell you,
17 our members came in at midnight to start
18 buses, to make sure they were warm for
19 students. Our building engineers came in
20 4 o'clock in the morning to make sure
21 that buildings were free and safe and
22 heated. We had other staff come in, our
23 maintenance, when we had freeze-ups at
24 Edison High and other schools and worked
25 around the clock for weeks to get those

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 schools back online.

3 So I hear Pete Matthews, and I
4 think our members also deserve some
5 credit for the work that they did this
6 winter, worst winter we've had in
7 probably 20 years.

8 The District has not hired
9 staff. The District continues to hire
10 management positions, which you heard
11 also today.

12 We will not be receiving raises
13 in the foreseeable future, although some
14 upper management have. In eight years
15 from 2008 to our contract expiring in
16 2016, my members will have received a 3
17 percent increase. Eight years, 3
18 percent. If you put that on top of the
19 money that we are giving back in
20 contributions to the School District
21 every pay -- and my members give a range
22 of \$40 a month to \$180 a month back in
23 contributions to the School District
24 because of the contract that we signed.
25 We know the importance of children. We

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2 know the importance of education, and my
3 members and the School District employees
4 are willing to bend and sacrifice for
5 them.

6 The SRC was formed to install
7 financial stability to the District.
8 Twelve years later we are in the worst
9 financial shape than I have seen in my
10 40-plus years. It is time to disband the
11 SRC and deliver it back to local control.

12 We can do better. We can't do
13 worse.

14 Governor Corbett is using the
15 SRC as education assassins, converting
16 public schools into corporate-run
17 charters, drawing increased taxpayer
18 dollars.

19 The Governor's plan is to not
20 fully fund education not only in
21 Philadelphia but in the poorest districts
22 throughout the Commonwealth of
23 Pennsylvania. Rather than tax the
24 Marcellus Shale and close the Delaware
25 loopholes, he is starving our children of

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 their civil rights, a proper education.

3 Ultimately his plan is to

4 dismantle education as we know it. You,

5 City Council, have the power to ask

6 questions, and Mama Gail said it today.

7 She has asked. She has gotten no

8 response back. I have asked, have gotten

9 no response back. Jerry Jordan has

10 asked.

11 I think this body needs to

12 question and needs to get answers back.

13 I know, Councilman Jones, you asked the

14 question on Monday about procurement. We

15 heard here, no toilet paper, no paper

16 towels, no supplies in buildings. Well,

17 there's an RFP out there right now for

18 vendors to supply those goods to the

19 School District, and I ask you to look

20 into it and make sure that they're doing

21 it properly so that we're not

22 overspending and not giving it to

23 somebody that they just want to give it

24 to.

25 We have the power, the people.

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2 We must stand up for our children. They
3 are our future. All of us in this room,
4 parents, clergy, community leaders,
5 education and all of us, the time now is
6 to say fund our schools. Fund education.

7 I just would like to mention
8 that student from Washington High who
9 said that he was on the lacrosse team and
10 he couldn't get supplies and he couldn't
11 get uniforms, well, we've been
12 donating -- my members have been donating
13 for 15 years to the School District
14 \$400,000 to the sports program in
15 schools. I've asked for an accounting of
16 where the money is being spent and I
17 cannot get it. The money was designed 15
18 years ago out of an increase that we did
19 not take to help the students get the
20 resources they need in the sports
21 program. The last accounting I got, it
22 was for them for physical therapy. It
23 was for the teachers to get paid. It was
24 not designed for that.

25 We, years ago, provided

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 uniforms to high schools. Overbrook, we
3 talked about earlier, was one of the
4 schools, and they had a patch on their
5 shoulder that actually said "sponsored by
6 Local 1201." So I would like to see
7 something done in regard to the 400,000
8 that we are still contributing today to
9 the School District.

10 I would hope the School
11 District today, when that parent came up
12 about the bullying part of it, that they
13 at least had a conversation with that
14 parent to try to resolve what is going on
15 at that school. There aren't enough
16 school police. We know that. She said
17 parents have to take the initiative to
18 get in between. That could be a recipe
19 for disaster in schools, especially when
20 you get to the middle schools and kids
21 that are much larger.

22 In closing, I would just like
23 to say in our contract talks in the last
24 two contracts, we've asked the School
25 District to put a delegation together to

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2 Harrisburg. We told them that we should
3 partner with the Superintendent, with the
4 SRC, with you, City Council, with clergy,
5 with anyone who wanted to get involved to
6 go to City Council [sic] as a group and
7 lobby for more funding. We've made that
8 proposal seven times to the School
9 District. No response from the School
10 District whatsoever.

11 I think it's imperative that if
12 we're going to make this system work and
13 we're going to need funding, we need to
14 get all our resources together and we're
15 going to need to fight and fight and
16 fight harder.

17 Thank you for your attention.
18 I appreciate it.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
21 for your testimony.

22 Are there any other folk here
23 to testify?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are there

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 any other people here to testify?

3 Come on. You're the last ones.

4 We're only taking three.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 MS. TAYLOR: Hi. My name is
8 Liz Taylor and I'm a teacher at Masterman
9 and also, as importantly, I'm a parent at
10 Houston Elementary. I'm here with my
11 colleagues from Masterman as well as some
12 of my students from Masterman who have
13 some things that they'd like to tell
14 Council today. And I know we've heard a
15 lot of narrative of why give money to,
16 you know, failing schools, what are we
17 doing, but here are students from the
18 best school, not just in Philadelphia but
19 in the state. All of these students I've
20 taught and I can attest that they're
21 extraordinarily hard workers, and they
22 are where they are because largely of
23 their hard work.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

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2 State your name and please
3 begin your testimony.

4 MISS DOWNING: My name is
5 Arnell Downing and I'm a senior at
6 Masterman High School.

7 I really just want to say my
8 senior class this year, we got into
9 Harvard, Yale, Princeton, some of the top
10 colleges in the United States, and I
11 think that's mainly because of the
12 dedication of the staff that were at our
13 school. Even with one counselor, we had
14 counselors that came in to volunteer, and
15 I think because of those volunteering
16 counselors that we were able to work and
17 have the support to help us get into
18 schools such as Harvard.

19 I'm going to Northeastern
20 University, and I know if I didn't have
21 the support of my counselor, I probably
22 would have never heard of the school,
23 because I hadn't -- you know, counselors
24 help you look into schools that are good
25 for you, and I probably wouldn't have

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2 gotten into the school that I'm very
3 happy that I got into.

4 I also want to talk about lack
5 of resources. I know we saw a budget for
6 our school where there's like no money
7 for supplies, and today that reminded me
8 when I go into the bathrooms at my
9 school, there's no soap. So how are
10 there four soap dispensers and there's no
11 soap to wash your hands in? And I just
12 feel like with the decrease in funds, if
13 there's not soap now and we have more
14 money this year than we will next year,
15 then what is going to happen?

16 There's broken water fountains.
17 The floor -- the ceiling has fallen.
18 There's leaks everywhere, and we can't
19 afford to fix it, but the only reason
20 that we can keep going is because we have
21 the motivation from our parents,
22 motivation from our staff and from our
23 teachers who want to see us do good. And
24 I feel like it's sad, like they brought
25 up before, lower-performing schools, they

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 need that support, because they may not
3 be getting it from home. They might be
4 coming from a rough background. So not
5 giving them money or helping them build
6 up some way to get motivation, by cutting
7 their staff, by cutting their counselors,
8 someone who could help them get into the
9 Harvards and the Yales of colleges,
10 what's going to happen to Philadelphia
11 students' futures? And I just want to
12 leave it at that.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
15 for your testimony.

16 Please state your name and
17 begin yours.

18 MR. HAGANS: Hello. My name is
19 Otamosi Hagans (ph) and, as she was
20 saying, I go to Masterman. I am a junior
21 this year, and so next year, I'm going to
22 be relying on counselors to get into the
23 college that I need to get into for my
24 future. And like Masterman currently is
25 like one of the lucky schools, like we

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 have a good amount of teachers. We have
3 extracurriculars. There are so many
4 other schools that don't have anything,
5 like they have like the bare minimum
6 amount of teachers. They don't have -- I
7 think they may have one counselor for the
8 entire high school. Like here at
9 Masterman, there are -- we have a huge
10 base of parents who are able to help, but
11 like at other schools, there is nothing
12 there to help them.

13 So like not just focusing on my
14 future, but like all the other juniors or
15 rising seniors in the City, they need --
16 if we don't have that amount of money to
17 fund the schools, like it's putting their
18 futures in jeopardy and then, in turn,
19 the future of the City in itself.

20 That's all I really want to
21 say.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: That was a
23 lot.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 much for your testimony.

3 MS. THOMPSON: Good afternoon.

4 My name is Cecilia Thompson. Thank you

5 so much for this opportunity.

6 I'm requesting that City

7 Council fund the School District because

8 one of the things that's a passion to me

9 is special education. And although I was

10 not here Monday because I was working,

11 Thursday when they presented their

12 budgets, they said if the District does

13 not get the funds that they need, one of

14 the things that they will cut was special

15 education.

16 My son lives with autism, and

17 every service he has, he truly needs to

18 be successful. They did not explain what

19 they were going to cut, but I do not want

20 nor do I want other parents having to

21 fight for the services they currently

22 have, and I'm worried that those students

23 coming in or those students newly

24 diagnosed or those students who just need

25 a little bit of help, now we have to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 fight more because the catch phrase will
3 be, Well, the District doesn't have any
4 money, so we can't get your child that
5 intervention that they need or we can't
6 get your child to speech therapy or the
7 OT or whatever service that they need to
8 be successful in a school setting.

9 So whatever you can do. And I
10 thank City Council, because every year or
11 at least the past five years that I've
12 been coming here, you've always done your
13 part, and that's hard to do, especially
14 when you know, okay, they're probably not
15 going to spend the money right, but you
16 keep giving them money anyway with the
17 faith that they're going to do right by
18 our children, not just for the
19 Mastermans. Every school should be like
20 a Masterman.

21 My son personally goes to MYA,
22 and while MYA is not that bad, I have
23 family members that go to Overbrook, and
24 Overbrook is terrible, in my opinion.
25 I've gone in there several times. You

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 smell smoke, and I'm just going to leave
3 it at that. That principal, he's a nice
4 person, but he needs at least two
5 assistant principals just to help manage
6 the 900-plus students that he has in that
7 building. Again, he's a nice person. He
8 has good ideas, but he needs some help.

9 I think what you can do as a
10 Council is, you can't dictate to the
11 District how they spend the money, but
12 you can slow boat the money, meaning you
13 can give them money in increments and
14 say, Okay, we'll give you the rest, but
15 you need to give us a bimonthly
16 accounting of how you're spending the
17 money. And each Councilperson in their
18 respective district can say, Okay, this
19 is what's going on in my district, how
20 was this money spent in my particular
21 councilmanic district. So that is
22 something that you can do. You don't
23 have to give them money at one time, but
24 you can say, Okay, in order for you to
25 get the rest of the money for December to

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 February, you need to come to us in
3 November and say what are you doing. It
4 can be a public hearing. It can be here.
5 It can be at the SRC. But we believe the
6 families, the educators, the staff, the
7 community believe that since they're not
8 going to answer us, they will probably
9 answer you guys and say, Okay, this is
10 what we're doing with the money.

11 Like I said, I appreciate
12 everything that City Council has done.
13 It's very hard to give money when you
14 know they're going to mess it up, but we
15 as families appreciate that you keep
16 doing your part to make sure that our
17 children at least have the funds
18 available, and hopefully the School
19 District of Philadelphia would do what
20 they need to equitably distribute the
21 funding.

22 Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you very much. Let me say that President

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 Darrell Clarke is in Harrisburg today
3 because we're trying to come up with some
4 oversight mechanism to deal with the
5 whole issue of funding.

6 People like me are for an
7 elected School Board, because I think we
8 have a better shot with people from the
9 community who see what's going on. But
10 what I'm trying to say and going a long
11 way around is that the law allows us to
12 appropriate money, but it does not allow
13 us to tell the School District how to
14 spend it, and that's a problem for us as
15 well.

16 But we're trying to deal with
17 it. We're trying to see if we can't
18 change the law or influence state and
19 local policies so that we do have the
20 kind of oversight.

21 When I first came here a
22 hundred years ago, if you even asked them
23 or raised the issue, you were viewed as
24 an enemy of education. So we've come a
25 long way to even have the majority of our

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.

2 discussions about it, because we used to
3 be severely criticized.

4 So it's a big issue. We
5 certainly agree that we need
6 accountability. So I guess we're both in
7 the same place at the same time.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just want
10 to say it's been an experience today.
11 It's been an experience because I saw
12 students that care, administrators that
13 care, that are fighting for the minimal
14 maximum. And it hurts my heart to think
15 that we're arguing about the minimum as
16 opposed to be pushing the envelope for
17 even better.

18 And I want to say about autism,
19 that Councilman Denny O'Brien is not
20 here, because he would still be talking
21 about that issue right now, because it's
22 near and dear and passionate to his
23 heart. And I guarantee you, if he
24 doesn't ask any other question about
25 education, it will be about continuing

1 5/7/14 - WHOLE - BILL 130489, etc.
2 that service for your child and others.

3 I also wanted to say that I
4 want to thank my colleague Jannie
5 Blackwell who has taught me a great deal
6 about the education process and fights
7 for it each and every year, and to my
8 colleagues that stuck this out all day,
9 thank you. And I think I can speak for
10 them and say we've all learned a lot
11 because you guys care, and at the end of
12 the day, we're going to fight for you,
13 and I can guarantee you that.

14 So are there any others to
15 testify?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing none,
18 this Committee will stand at recess until
19 Tuesday, May 13th, 2014 at 10:00 a.m., at
20 which time we will reconvene in Room 400,
21 City Hall.

22 Thank you all.

23 (Committee of the Whole
24 adjourned at 3:55 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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