

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, November 20, 2013
10:25 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTION 130638 - Resolution calling on the
Philadelphia City Council Committee on
Education to hold hearings concerning the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's approach to
education funding.

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COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good morning. We will begin our Education Committee hearing. We certainly thank all for being here. We want to apologize to Councilman Mark Squilla. We interrupted him. I hope you students from Masterman will forgive him and let us begin our hearing, but, again, we welcome you for being here, all who are here to testify, and certainly we acknowledge that Councilman David Oh is here as well as Mark Squilla, both of whom join us on the Education Committee.

We will now ask the Clerk to read the title of the resolution.

THE CLERK: Resolution 130638, calling on the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Education to hold hearings concerning the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's approach to education funding.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

We note on our list that

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2 Senator Vincent Hughes could not be here,
3 as could not State Representative James
4 R. Roebuck. They are in session today,
5 so they are both in Harrisburg.

6 We will now ask Dr. Lori Shorr,
7 Chief Education Officer, Mayor's Office
8 of Education. We thank her. She does a
9 great job for us. Mr. Matthew E.
10 Stanski, Chief Financial Officer, School
11 District of Philadelphia. And after they
12 speak, then we'll call forward our
13 concerned citizen, Ms. Bertha Simmons,
14 Mother Simmons as we call her.

15 (Witnesses approached witness
16 table.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you. Good morning and welcome again.

19 MR. STANSKI: Good morning.

20 DR. SHORR: Good morning. It's
21 good to be back again today. I enjoyed
22 particularly yesterday's hearing with
23 Linda Darling-Hammond and, again, thank
24 you to both the Chairwoman and Councilman
25 Oh for making that possible. That was

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2 refreshing and a good time to be able to
3 sit and think with her. So thank you on
4 that, as well as --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you. Pull your mike closer.

7 DR. SHORR: All right. Thank
8 you, Chairwoman Blackwell and members of
9 the Education Committee, for the
10 opportunity to testify today regarding
11 Resolution 130638, which was introduced
12 by the Chairwoman. My name is Lori
13 Shorr. I'm the Chief Education Officer
14 for Mayor Michael Nutter.

15 First, I would like to
16 sincerely thank the members of Council
17 for showing leadership by taking
18 difficult steps in recent years to raise
19 crucial funds for Philadelphia schools.
20 I shudder to think where we would be
21 without these funds. Now we need to see
22 the same leadership at the state level,
23 where we have seen massive cuts to
24 education over the last several years.

25 According to the Department of

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2 Education, Pennsylvania ranks 42nd out of
3 the 50 states in education funding
4 overall. Over the last few years, the
5 Philadelphia schools and their students
6 have lost nearly 300 million annually in
7 state revenue with the cut to basic ed
8 subsidy, state grant reductions, and the
9 cut to charter reimbursement.

10 Recurring funding is crucial to
11 sustain the Philadelphia schools, and a
12 formula is the way to ensure this.

13 Pennsylvania is one of only
14 three states that does not have a
15 statewide student-based funding formula
16 for public education. We need a funding
17 formula that considers the number of
18 students in a school and their varying
19 needs to determine that funding. The
20 formula should not be based on what can
21 be bargained, but rather on what it costs
22 to educate different types of students
23 well.

24 So our challenge at the state
25 is really twofold. One, there needs to

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2 be an increase in the allocation into the
3 education lines and, two, a sustainable
4 and predictable and fair formula is
5 necessary. And if we remember yesterday
6 when Linda Darling-Hammond was talking,
7 it was number one on her list of what's
8 needed in order to get to the outcomes we
9 want. You can't have what she called the
10 rubber band effect where year from year
11 you don't know how much state funding
12 you're getting. That doesn't lead to
13 stability.

14 This lack of student-based
15 funding formula pits the District also
16 against charter schools. While the
17 funding to charters has to flow from the
18 District to the charters on a per-pupil
19 basis, it does not flow from the state to
20 the District in the same manner. This
21 forces the District to make decisions
22 about charter growth always in relation
23 to its budget and not necessarily on
24 expansion of high-performing schools.
25 And I want to remind people that any

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2 state increase benefits all public
3 schools in Philadelphia, both District
4 managed and charter schools.

5 We are all here today because
6 we care about students. A fair way of
7 distributing adequate funding needs to be
8 resolved so that our students are not the
9 ones who are hurting at the end of the
10 day. I've been visiting schools and
11 seeing the effects of the funding cuts
12 firsthand as well as hearing from our
13 constituents, and this can't continue.
14 And I want to take a minute just to tell
15 you a bit of what I'm seeing in the
16 schools and the impact of the lack of
17 funding.

18 I was in a principal's office
19 talking to the principal about some of
20 the challenges she has faced this year
21 and saw her provide medication to two of
22 her students during our conversation,
23 because there was no nurse to help. I
24 was in a school two weeks ago and saw a
25 brand new beautiful library and a brand

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2 new computer lab, which made possible
3 through outside fundraising efforts from
4 parents and community members, that were
5 locked and not being utilized because
6 there was no librarian or technology
7 teacher to use those spaces.

8 Our office has received many
9 calls about the difficulty in obtaining
10 transcripts which are necessary for
11 college applications and scholarships.
12 Financial aid has been a barrier to
13 college access, but not obtaining a
14 transcript is now becoming one, and the
15 scarcity of counselors is one of those
16 reasons that we're getting the calls.

17 I've heard from many teachers
18 that safety in schools is an increasing
19 issue, especially with fewer adults who
20 are trained to appropriately handle
21 conflicts. Schools should be the number
22 one place where our youth feel safe. And
23 I should say I also see adults doing
24 double duty all over our -- in every
25 school I go to, putting in longer hours,

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2 doing twice the work, sometimes three
3 times the work that they were doing
4 beforehand, and I want to applaud them in
5 their efforts trying to get us through
6 this crisis.

7 I'm sure you're all receiving
8 similar calls and seeing similar things
9 as you visit your schools. Having
10 schools that are funded just enough so
11 they are safe to open should be no one's
12 goal. We need schools that are not just
13 surviving but excelling. While money is
14 not the only thing needed to make schools
15 great, it's a necessity. What I read in
16 the -- when I read in the paper that a
17 suburban school has a sushi chef on
18 Wednesdays and then I visit a school that
19 has to deny its students new computers
20 and books for lack of funding, I can't
21 help but think there's a better way for
22 the state to ensure fair and equitable
23 funding for all students regardless of
24 zip code.

25 So I encourage all of us to

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2 advocate for a state funding formula and
3 more funding in the education line so we
4 can be proud that we support our students
5 based on their needs so they can be the
6 adults we need them to be in the City.

7 And I thank Council for hearing
8 my testimony.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much.

11 MR. STANSKI: Good morning,
12 Chairwoman Blackwell and members of the
13 Education Committee. My name is Matthew
14 Stanski. I'm the Chief Financial Officer
15 for the School District of Philadelphia.
16 I appreciate the opportunity to testify
17 before you today.

18 The School District's finances
19 continue to pose challenges as we proceed
20 through the 2013-2014 school year. While
21 we are very grateful for the funds that
22 we have received from both City Council
23 and the state in recent weeks, it is
24 vital that we develop a long-term source
25 of recurring revenues for the School

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2 District. For months, Dr. William Hite,
3 Superintendent of the School District of
4 Philadelphia, has spoken about the need
5 for a fair funding formula that better
6 meets the needs of students, particularly
7 those that come from families that are
8 economically disadvantaged, those who are
9 English language learners or may have
10 special needs. State funding currently
11 provides the District with less money to
12 educate those students even though
13 Philadelphia has the largest share of
14 them statewide.

15 The School District of
16 Philadelphia educates approximately
17 200,000 students. Nearly 75 percent of
18 them are African American or Hispanic.
19 More than 80 percent are from families
20 that are economically disadvantaged. We
21 provide special education services to
22 nearly 20,000 students. On average, our
23 per-pupil spending is roughly \$11,000 per
24 student. We are investing far fewer
25 dollars in Philadelphia students than our

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2 peers in other cities and states.

3 Please consider the per-pupil
4 spending in other Pennsylvania school
5 districts. They are nearly 15,000 per
6 student in Lancaster County where 80
7 percent of the students are from
8 economically disadvantaged families and
9 19,634 in Pittsburgh where just under 70
10 percent of the students are from
11 economically disadvantaged families.

12 Based on our demographics and
13 student needs, we should be spending more
14 money to educate our students, not less,
15 and we should be expanding resources, not
16 limiting them. By attaching funds to
17 students and their needs, the District
18 would be better able to manage its budget
19 and provide its students with the
20 education that they deserve.

21 Facing a \$304 million
22 shortfall, the District was forced to
23 make significant cuts to schools,
24 administration, and staff. We've frozen
25 all charter expansion requests for this

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2 school year. With additional funding,
3 we've been able to restore some resources
4 to schools, including staff, music
5 programming, and athletics. Our schools
6 and students require additional resources
7 and support, and we still do not know
8 whether we will be able to access
9 recurring revenues next school year or
10 whether revenues will increase to counter
11 continued growth in charter schools and
12 other costs.

13 At the start of this school
14 year, we needed an additional \$304
15 million in savings and new revenue just
16 to get back to last year's service
17 levels. In future years, our major
18 expenses are expected to increase despite
19 the drastic cuts that we took to align
20 expenses to reduce revenues. Next year
21 our costs are expected to increase by \$75
22 to \$100 million due to higher pensions,
23 health benefits, utility expenses,
24 charter school payments, and salaries.

25 I cannot overstate the role of

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2 adequate funding to ensuring a quality
3 education. Increased per-pupil funding
4 would allow the District to make more
5 progress towards our dual goals in our
6 action plan: financial sustainability
7 and improved academic performance. More
8 funding would allow us to expand early
9 literacy programs and interventions for
10 special education students, increase
11 high-quality options for all students,
12 and offer world languages in every
13 elementary school. It is imperative that
14 we find a solution to this issue for no
15 reason less than the future of the great
16 City of Philadelphia and our children.

17 Again, thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify this morning.
19 We'll be happy to answer any questions.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you very much.

22 I would like to thank both of
23 you. In between talking, I was reminded,
24 Dr. Shorr, when you were speaking about a
25 school I went -- I'll even name it. It

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2 is a compliment to them. McMichael
3 School in Mantua. It was one of the
4 schools they were to close, and we've
5 been talking about it for two years,
6 because it's right across the street from
7 Mantua Square, brand new housing
8 development, and we knew we'd have more
9 children, not less students. And so
10 somehow, thank God, we survived the cut.

11 But I went in there the second
12 day of school. I went into a dozen
13 schools and I took boxes of materials,
14 many things we print. Once a school
15 teacher, always a school teacher. So we
16 took all this information in to donate to
17 the school, and a woman came over to me
18 and said, Good morning. Oh, Councilwoman
19 Blackwell, can we help you?

20 I said, Oh, don't disturb the
21 principal. I just wanted to give a gift
22 packet, welcome back to school and extend
23 my hand in partnership.

24 She was on a walkie-talkie. He
25 was there in two seconds, and she said --

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2 I said, Oh, really, you are the one
3 school secretary?

4 She said, Oh, no. I haven't
5 been called back, but children need a
6 friendly and familiar face. I'm
7 volunteering. I hope to get back, but
8 I'm volunteering here. And it is that
9 spirit that you mention where so many
10 people are volunteering to do things that
11 makes a difference.

12 And the other example I'd like
13 to mention of how people give is that I
14 spoke two Saturdays ago near the airport
15 at one of the hotels before this woman's
16 group called the Continental, the
17 Continental of Philadelphia. I think
18 they're in this region. And I asked them
19 that as they consider their philanthropic
20 activities, if they would consider
21 students who need -- not only -- first I
22 mentioned school libraries and that you
23 have libraries and beautiful new
24 libraries, but they don't have books on
25 the shelves. And they try to make it

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2 friendly by stuffed animals, but it just
3 doesn't do it. We need books. And I
4 said, Also I'm working with a school now
5 that needs coats. The principal called
6 me. She was the former principal at
7 McMichael. So although it's not in my
8 district, she's still my person. She
9 said, Councilwoman, we need coats, and
10 our girls and -- puberty hits and they
11 grow out of what they have. And do you
12 know on the spot -- and I didn't do it.
13 I just asked them consider in future
14 years. They took a donation. So we're
15 giving that to the Fire Department as
16 well, and we'll be giving -- we already
17 have 50 -- another 25 coats to a school
18 with students who need so much.

19 So I say that to say in spite
20 of all of our issues and all of our
21 problems, we are grateful for those who
22 work hard. And DHS has a program where
23 they're giving a few thousand dollars to
24 after-school programs. And we are
25 grateful for all who realize that we have

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2 to share what we have and everybody is
3 doing their part to give a little more so
4 that we may have positive education in
5 our city.

6 And one last thing. First, let
7 me mention that Councilman W. Wilson
8 Goode is here. We're grateful for him on
9 the Committee as well, and we are
10 certainly happy to have Councilman
11 Kenyatta Johnson. Thank you as well.

12 One last thing that I'd like to
13 mention for either of you and, that is,
14 that we did have this basic education
15 subsidy tight at one time and then they
16 changed it. With charter schools, whom
17 we support as well -- all are good for
18 public education. And when they opened
19 it and said it would be based on need, it
20 seems that it made it worse instead of
21 better. Am I right or wrong?

22 DR. SHORR: Actually, the state
23 passed an adequacy funding formula back
24 in '08 which would base school
25 reimbursement -- so what the school got

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2 from the state -- would be based on how
3 many students you were serving and the
4 characteristics of those students, and
5 that funding formula was in place until,
6 was it, '12 when Corbett came in. Within
7 the first six months of the new
8 administration, they took that funding
9 formula out of the school code.

10 So we did actually have an
11 adequacy funding formula. So we were
12 catching up with the other 47 states who
13 had gone there, but then took a step back
14 recently.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
16 Very, very sad, unfortunate, and
17 absolutely wrong.

18 DR. SHORR: Councilwoman, I
19 just wanted to say as you did, I've been
20 so impressed by how folks have stepped up
21 in this city around their local schools
22 and what they've done for their schools.
23 And, you know, we've done some things in
24 terms of an Education Supplies Fund,
25 which the Mayor raised a half a million

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2 dollars for that's going to go out to all
3 schools with 50 percent poverty or less,
4 and we've been doing free college
5 application workshops, doing all these
6 sort of things, which I think you feel
7 you have to do, because kids are
8 suffering, but we also have to remember
9 that's no replacement for recurring,
10 stable funding, because you just -- as
11 much as we love our volunteers, they also
12 have their lives and you can't count on
13 that year to year. And so, you know,
14 we've got to do both right now in this
15 crisis, but it's not the thing that's
16 going to get us through, and we have to
17 remember that.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you.

20 Mr. Stanski, you have any other
21 comments you'd like to make?

22 MR. STANSKI: No. I think just
23 to echo what Dr. Shorr said. I think the
24 outpouring of support and volunteering
25 has been wonderful, but, again, you need

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2 that and we again need the sustainable
3 funding moving forward in order to create
4 the world-class districts that we want in
5 the City.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you. Thank you both very much. Thank
8 you.

9 Any questions for them?

10 One moment, please.

11 Thank you. Councilman Squilla.

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

13 And thank you guys for
14 testifying. We really appreciate your
15 input.

16 Two things. One, the funding
17 formula that was previous in 2008, if
18 that was reinstituted, would that be a
19 formula enough to be able to sustain what
20 we need here in our city schools?

21 DR. SHORR: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So if we
23 just went back to the original formula
24 that was used -- and, Mr. Stanski, you
25 believe that to be the case?

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2 MR. STANSKI: Well, I think
3 what Dr. Shorr had said earlier, it's
4 really twofold. It's, one, the pot of
5 money needs to increase and it needs to
6 be distributed in a more equitable way.
7 So let's just say if the pot of money
8 stayed the same and it was distributed
9 differently, Philadelphia would probably
10 get more, but I still don't think it
11 would be enough for what we need. So I
12 think --

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So you're
14 saying the funding formula the way it was
15 in 2008 would not work?

16 MR. STANSKI: Well, it works in
17 the distribution of the funding, but you
18 also need funding -- you need enough
19 money in the pot statewide to adequately
20 serve.

21 DR. SHORR: Just to give
22 another piece of information. When that
23 formula was passed, there was a six-year
24 phase-in of increased funding that went
25 along with that formula. And so I think

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2 we got into year three and is when it
3 stopped. So you probably need a phase-in
4 over some years of increasing funding to
5 be able to meet the adequacy levels that
6 are needed. Not just in Philadelphia. I
7 have a map down in my office that lists
8 all the distressed and stressed school
9 districts that are about to go under.
10 It's across the entire Commonwealth. So
11 I think it's important for people to
12 remember, this isn't just a Philadelphia
13 problem. This is a problem across the
14 Commonwealth with rural and some suburban
15 school districts that are facing some of
16 these same issues and all raising their
17 local property taxes and doing what
18 you've had to do the last couple of
19 years, which is take hard votes to
20 increase taxes on our citizens, and it's
21 an unsustainable future.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And we
23 would agree with that on Council here.

24 Now, Mr. Stanski, you said that
25 the District gets \$11,000 per student.

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2 Is that what we spend or is that what we
3 get?

4 MR. STANSKI: That's what we're
5 spending. And to be clear, that is what
6 we spend on students that are in District
7 schools. So that excludes the charter
8 payments that we make and it also, for
9 the calculation purposes, it excludes the
10 debt payments that we make. So we look
11 at what sort of dollars are going into
12 operate the District essentially.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And how
14 much per student goes into charter
15 schools?

16 MR. STANSKI: So charters right
17 now for this year at a blended per-pupil
18 rate is around 10,600 a student.

19 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Ten
20 thousand six hundred for a charter
21 student?

22 MR. STANSKI: Yes.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And 11,000
24 for a District student. But if --

25 MR. STANSKI: I want to make

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2 sure I'm clear on the 11,000. The 11,000
3 includes the administration, the spending
4 on administration for the District as
5 well.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Well, the
7 charter, you don't count that
8 administration. You don't count that.

9 MR. STANSKI: Right.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So that
11 would include their administrative cost
12 also.

13 DR. SHORR: And the ten-six
14 would include their administrative costs.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay. So
16 when we talk about other school districts
17 getting more, our total income is really
18 more per student than we would get --
19 does the formula work saying that we get
20 close to 15 or 16? Because we were
21 hearing some other number earlier that
22 there was like -- or that takes out --
23 the \$15,000 per student gets taken out
24 with the administrative costs and --

25 MR. STANSKI: And charter

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2 payments and debt service, yeah. So if
3 you just took all the students we educate
4 in the District, including charters, and
5 everything we spend on charter payments,
6 debt service, it's about 14.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: About
8 14,000 per student.

9 DR. SHORR: And I think people
10 forget there's some costs that the
11 District bears that come -- money comes
12 from the state for bussing. So for all
13 the transportation, for out-of-county
14 placements, no matter where the child was
15 in school, whether a Catholic school, a
16 charter school, that you have to remember
17 to take that out when you look at what
18 money is actually going to schools that
19 the District is managing if you want to
20 have a one-to-one comparison. And lots
21 of times people just take the state money
22 and divide it by the amount of kids, and
23 you don't get the right number that way.

24 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And that's
25 why you came up with the figure of 11,000

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2 per student after you took everything
3 else out that we owed.

4 And our debt service, how much
5 do we pay a year?

6 MR. STANSKI: It's about 280
7 million.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Say
9 that again.

10 MR. STANSKI: 280 million.

11 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So we pay
12 \$280 million a year from the money that
13 we have borrowed to run the schools at
14 this point?

15 MR. STANSKI: Right.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So that's
17 a big nut that we have to come up with.

18 MR. STANSKI: It's a big
19 number, yeah.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And,
21 therefore, that takes away some of the
22 money that we would have to educate some
23 of the students, but we had to borrow
24 that money previously because of the
25 shortfall?

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2 DR. SHORR: Right.

3 MR. STANSKI: Well, yeah. So,
4 I mean, that debt number includes a lot
5 of things. It includes renovating
6 schools. But you're right, the District
7 entered into two deficit financings in
8 the last ten years, and so that has made
9 that number larger.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: If we were
11 to go into this funding formula
12 correction, if we would get the state to
13 pass this funding formula similar to 2008
14 with -- and you're right, I believe it
15 would have to be phased in. I don't
16 think there's any way they would be able
17 to go from this year to a full funding
18 next year. But if we were able to go
19 back to that situation and over a four-
20 or five-year period, do you think that
21 the School District of Philadelphia would
22 then be sustainable with the money that
23 also comes from the City and
24 municipalities taxes to be able to
25 perform at the level that it should be

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2 performing as far as having enough
3 teachers, supplies, counselors,
4 libraries?

5 MR. STANSKI: So I think,
6 again, it goes into how big the pot of
7 money is that the formula is
8 distributing. But, yeah. I mean, if the
9 formula is fully implemented and it's
10 based on, one, the number of students you
11 educate and, two, the needs of those
12 students, whether it's -- if there's a
13 poverty factor, a disability factor, an
14 English language learner factor, and if
15 the pot of money is adequate to support
16 all the schools, then once it's fully
17 implemented, along with recurring City
18 revenue, I think the District would be in
19 a much better position to, one, again be
20 fiscally stable but, two, to begin
21 investing not only just in the basic -- I
22 always like to remember folks that our
23 ask for this year was just to get us to
24 the levels we were last year, and it was
25 nothing about investing in new programs

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2 or ideas to get us moving forward. But,
3 yeah, it would go a long way to helping
4 get the District sustainable.

5 DR. SHORR: Because I think
6 there has to be a fundamental shift in
7 thinking from folks in Harrisburg who
8 decide how big the pot is and then you
9 distribute it to educators sitting down
10 and saying, This is what it takes to
11 educate a kid adequately, and now it's
12 the state's responsibility to grow a pot
13 of money that will meet all of those
14 needs. And it's a fundamentally
15 different way of thinking about how you
16 finance education and how you get the
17 money out.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And right
19 now I guess special ed, does the state
20 look at that differently? Do you get
21 more dollars for a special ed student
22 than you would get for a --

23 MR. STANSKI: There is a line
24 item for special education funding, but
25 not in the basic education subsidy.

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2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So not in
3 the basic?

4 MR. STANSKI: It's separate.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: That's
6 separate. And how much do you get extra
7 in special ed funding?

8 MR. STANSKI: I'll have to --
9 let me get back to you on that, but, I
10 mean, it's tens of millions, but I don't
11 have the specific number.

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: You don't
13 have that number?

14 MR. STANSKI: Yeah.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Now, that
16 number is added to the 11,000 per
17 student?

18 MR. STANSKI: No. That's
19 included in there.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: That's
21 included in there?

22 MR. STANSKI: It is, yes.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But that's
24 something that the District gets
25 separately?

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2 MR. STANSKI: Right.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Now, when
4 you also give money to the charter, do
5 you give money to the charter separately
6 for a special ed student?

7 MR. STANSKI: Yes. So when I
8 gave you the per pupil, it's what we call
9 a blended rate. We mix the regular
10 education rate with the special education
11 rate. If you separate them out, we pay
12 about 8,600 per regular ed student and
13 over 22,000 for a special education
14 student.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So 8,600
16 for -- this is for the charter?

17 MR. STANSKI: Yes.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And how
19 does that break down for the District?
20 Same way?

21 MR. STANSKI: It's hard to say,
22 because for special education, it really
23 depends on the disability that the
24 student has. And so one of the -- I
25 think one of the issues with the charter

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2 school payment around special education,
3 that it does not differentiate based on
4 disability. So you could have a
5 high-incident student that may need, you
6 know, a couple -- like speech therapy
7 twice a week versus a child that's
8 autistic, obviously those two have
9 different costs associated with them.
10 But for the charter payment, regardless
11 of the disability, you get the \$22,000
12 per student.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Is that
14 something that should be looked at also?

15 DR. SHORR: Yes.

16 MR. STANSKI: I believe the
17 state actually has --

18 DR. SHORR: The state has a
19 Special Ed Commission that is supposed to
20 hopefully by next month have a report
21 with recommendations on how to
22 differentiate special ed payments.

23 MR. STANSKI: And those per
24 pupils are based on what the District
25 spends on special ed and regular ed the

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2 previous year.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay. So
4 that's something, though, may change in
5 the formula, that if that does change,
6 that would probably allow more money --
7 or less money to be given -- it would be
8 diagnosis based? Is that how you think
9 it's going to work?

10 MR. STANSKI: That's how -- I
11 mean, one of the ways we would like for
12 them to look at it is -- I mean, because,
13 like I said, the cost ranges for a
14 special education student are pretty
15 dramatic.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right.

17 MR. STANSKI: And so, you know,
18 it would -- yeah. It would -- to really
19 truly educate that student, we'd want to
20 pay for what it really costs to educate
21 that student.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So there's
23 different levels of special education
24 that you have?

25 MR. STANSKI: Correct.

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2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Is like
3 attention deficit or something like that
4 considered special education?

5 MR. STANSKI: There's a whole
6 range of disabilities that -- if a
7 student is identified, they go through
8 what's called an individual education
9 plan, have teachers, principals, parents,
10 and then determine what the disability is
11 and determine the services that would be
12 required. And once that plan is
13 complete, you're required by federal law
14 to implement and fund that plan.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay.
16 Because that seems like something that
17 really needs to be changed the way it's
18 set up now. It doesn't make sense where
19 if you have some kids that maybe are ADD
20 and in a regular class, you're getting
21 26,000 for them, but maybe not even using
22 those type of resources. And it could
23 sort of make you think that some schools
24 may characterize some kids as more needy
25 than they are. So that's something that

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2 we need to look into also. But if
3 they're looking to change that already, I
4 think it would be fair to say that we
5 should not try to push that too much at
6 this point, but still concentrate on the
7 actual funding formula method that comes
8 in.

9 DR. SHORR: For the basic ed
10 funding.

11 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: For the
12 basic ed funding.

13 Okay. Thank you.

14 DR. SHORR: But there are also
15 other lines that have been cut that one
16 could look at, like the charter
17 reimbursement line was \$110 million.
18 That was cut. The Accountability Block
19 Grant, which we used for, I think,
20 kindergarten, that was cut. So there are
21 other -- so there's basic ed, which is
22 sort of the big pot of money that comes
23 to everybody, but then there are other
24 pieces of money that are substantial that
25 come to the District that have been cut

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2 in the past couple of years that could be
3 reinstated, and that's one of the ways
4 you could start to grow the education.
5 So there's kind of two separate issues.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Didn't the
7 state come up with the charter school
8 methodology of how it would work when
9 they first created them?

10 DR. SHORR: Yes.

11 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So they
12 came up with the methodology and told you
13 this is how it would work and then,
14 through the process, changed it?

15 DR. SHORR: Yes.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And said
17 now that -- they cut your charter school
18 funding based on what?

19 MR. STANSKI: I mean, I think
20 it was to balance the state budget, quite
21 frankly.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So it was
23 no mathematical --

24 MR. STANSKI: No. I mean, it
25 went from 110 million to zero.

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2 DR. SHORR: In one year.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So they
4 don't have any money, so you're not
5 getting it is basically what they said.

6 Okay. Thank you. Thank you
7 for your testimony.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
9 Councilman Oh, then Councilman Goode.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
11 much, Chairwoman.

12 So the issue of school funding,
13 as I look at it, is a vehicle to
14 high-quality education across the board.
15 That is part of the Constitution of
16 Pennsylvania, which guarantees a system
17 of thorough and efficient education.

18 So I want to go through some of
19 the issues about state funding formulas,
20 but I want to start kind of basically
21 putting some things into perspective for
22 our discussion.

23 As far as I know, Pennsylvania
24 is the 12th highest spending state in the
25 nation. We rank 22nd in terms of

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2 education, having dropped recently from
3 being 10th in the nation to 22nd.

4 Philadelphia ranks 60th out of
5 64 school districts in this region, and
6 overall we're in the bottom 20 percent of
7 the state. The U.S. is number 18 -- or
8 actually 17 in world rankings. So when
9 we look at Philadelphia and this current
10 region, we will find that the national
11 average for SATs in 2012 out of 2,400
12 with a minimum of 600 was 1,498. And out
13 of Philadelphia's approximately 63 public
14 and public charter schools, only two met
15 the national average or exceeded that.
16 Masterman was number one, 1,925 average.
17 Central was number two, 1,641. However,
18 of the ten lowest spending states in the
19 nation, eight of them surpass Central
20 High School's SAT average. So the issue
21 of quality education, while tied to
22 funding, is not absolutely tied to
23 funding.

24 So funding what, is my
25 question. What are you funding? And

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2 when you talk about reforming the state's
3 education model, which I support 100
4 percent, but I am really very interested
5 in what are you funding, because I don't
6 believe that simply providing equity in
7 funding, which is constitutionally
8 guaranteed and should happen, means that
9 kids are getting any kind of a better
10 education.

11 So if I look at the U.S.'s 25
12 major cities, Philadelphia ranks 22nd in
13 terms of education performance, and the
14 entire State of Illinois, Wisconsin,
15 Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri,
16 their SAT averages are 1,810; 1,767;
17 1,760; 1,777; 1,778; and 1,764, all of
18 which are better on a statewide average
19 than even our best magnet schools,
20 outside of Masterman.

21 So with that issue in mind, let
22 me start with the first point that I want
23 to get to and then the second point. The
24 first point is actually the quality of
25 education. I mean, Philadelphia's SAT

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2 average as a city is 1,154. You get 600
3 points just for signing your name or
4 taking a test. So there's clearly a
5 problem with the quality of education the
6 School District is delivering, aside from
7 any kind of funding. And so what is it
8 that you are going to do to fix the
9 quality of education so that the funding
10 is more likely to follow? Do you see it
11 that way, or what is the issue there?

12 MR. STANSKI: So I'll get to
13 the answer on quality in a second. I
14 think right now we have a twofold
15 situation. One, we have a funding
16 situation where we are unable to provide
17 basic educational services for students.
18 I mean, we still do not have a guidance
19 counselor in every school. We have
20 nursing services that are -- they're
21 staffed at the state minimum
22 requirements. We have class sizes that
23 are at the contractual requirements of 33
24 and 30. But we know that a lot of those
25 things -- getting to that point is one

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2 option, but then the second is now we're
3 going to talk about the quality. We are
4 a firm believer that you turn around
5 schools, you change schools at the point
6 where instruction improves. So the
7 interaction between the teacher and the
8 student. So it's not just getting the
9 class sizes down and getting funding to
10 get the class sizes down. It's getting
11 funding to implement an instructional
12 program at every school that allows for
13 high-quality instruction to be
14 implemented in every classroom in this
15 district, and we cannot do that given the
16 current funding situation. We need
17 professional development programs for our
18 principals. We need to be able to train
19 principals.

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Point of
21 information.

22 MR. STANSKI: We need
23 high-quality principals in our schools to
24 then get --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse

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2 me. Point of information. Excuse me.

3 Councilman Goode, point of
4 information.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair.

7 As a matter of policy, do you
8 measure student performance by SAT
9 scores?

10 MR. STANSKI: It's one of the
11 factors we look at for high school
12 performance.

13 COUNCILMAN GOODE: How do you
14 measure student performance, for the
15 record?

16 MR. STANSKI: How did we
17 measure? I'm sorry.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Student
19 performance.

20 MR. STANSKI: Overall
21 throughout the District? I mean, SAT
22 scores --

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: As related
24 to Councilman Oh's question.

25 MR. STANSKI: Okay. So SAT

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2 scores is one of the factors that we look
3 at. Obviously PSSA scores, Keystone
4 exams are items we look at, any sort of
5 benchmarking that we do internally from
6 other exams throughout the year. There's
7 a number of factors that we'll look at
8 both from K through 12 to look at
9 performance. I mean, we are going
10 through a process right now. We've had
11 six or seven community meetings where
12 we're developing school report cards that
13 will give the community, parents, elected
14 leaders a profile of each school to look
15 at performance on a variety of factors.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: I'll simply
17 state that on most of these universal
18 examinations, including the PISAs,
19 Philadelphia performs very poorly. And
20 so the issue ultimately is that while I
21 believe that it is a constitutional issue
22 that we have to get equity in funding, at
23 the same time the issue is in this
24 process of trying to get to better
25 education that you're going to fund, at

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2 this dismal rate of education, how will
3 you reform that or change that so that
4 you're providing a better quality of
5 education that will effectively use those
6 dollars in a way that will benefit the
7 children?

8 MR. STANSKI: So I think it's
9 being focused on outcomes. So I think,
10 one, if we get more dollars, we need to
11 focus on early intervention, get these
12 children -- start getting more children
13 into preschool Head Start programs, age
14 3, 4, so when they get to the School
15 District for kindergarten, they're
16 prepared and ready. It is ensuring that
17 by third grade that they are reading at
18 least at a proficient level and, if not,
19 advanced. And then as they move
20 throughout school, investing dollars, as
21 I said, and really training teachers,
22 training principals to provide
23 high-quality instruction, getting
24 programs in place that we know work into
25 more schools, getting students into

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2 schools that are higher performing, both
3 District schools and charter schools. I
4 mean, but while we are working -- we are
5 doing that right now, we'd like to do it
6 at a much more expanded level, and in
7 order to do that, we need additional
8 funding.

9 DR. SHORR: I'd like to,
10 Councilman Oh, to remember too that the
11 demographics of the students that
12 Philadelphia is educating, we have the
13 highest level of poverty of any city in
14 the country, and I think we've got to
15 remember that students who arrive at
16 school not ready to read and --
17 circumstances of poverty tend to have
18 negative impacts on learning. You have
19 all sorts of -- I know this isn't what
20 we're here to talk about today. So I'm
21 not talking about lowering expectations,
22 but to understand that to take kids who
23 are far below to get them where they need
24 to be takes tremendous resources. So you
25 can't just plunk them in a class and say

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2 if the teacher did a better job, that kid
3 could rise up. You have to make sure
4 that that individual child, people
5 understand where their strengths and
6 deficits are and there's programming and
7 supports that are more costly than for
8 the other kids.

9 So I think there's a tight line
10 we have to walk between lower
11 expectations, which I don't think we need
12 to do, but understanding that to bring
13 kids up who have come from circumstances
14 of poverty demands a lot of resources,
15 and they're not going to be able to catch
16 up in a room most times with 33 kids in
17 it. You've got to have some additional
18 supports there. And that's one of the
19 ways I think the District needs to spend
20 its money.

21 But I also think, to your
22 point, we need to be talking about
23 schools that have been failing forever,
24 what are we doing there as well. So to
25 fight for just status quo is probably not

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2 where we need to be. We need to also be
3 thinking about what else can we be doing
4 to make sure kids get the high-level
5 education, and I think it's going to cost
6 more money.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: So let me move
8 on. I'm sorry, Chairwoman.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse
10 me.

11 Thank you, Masterman teachers
12 and all who are here. Thank you,
13 students.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: So let me get
15 to then the funding issue. Ultimately
16 looking at New Jersey, which was
17 mentioned at yesterday's hearing, which
18 was an ongoing challenge of lawsuits and
19 Abbott versus Burke, going into seven
20 different Supreme Court decisions. The
21 Supreme Court said that all these
22 different plans of funding equity or --
23 not even funding equity, but
24 constitutional compliance with the
25 Constitution of New Jersey were violated

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2 by the State of New Jersey in not
3 providing equal levels of funding for
4 children from poor neighborhoods or
5 poorer sections, rural, urban. Really
6 didn't matter. So here on our own
7 region, we have Lower Merion, where the
8 household income is 335,000 per
9 household, where they're spending about
10 25,000 per student, and here in
11 Philadelphia, as you said, about 11,000
12 per student, where our household income
13 is about 37,000. And at the end of the
14 day, this huge discrepancy is in
15 violation of the constitutional guarantee
16 of thorough and efficient education.

17 What are you doing in terms of
18 dealing with the state to address the
19 issue of the constitutionality of the
20 funding gap?

21 DR. SHORR: Do you mean are
22 there legal challenges?

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Legal
24 challenges --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: One

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2 moment. Let me note we do see

3 Mr. Dworetzky in the back. We know he

4 didn't ask to speak. We thank you for

5 being here and certainly welcome you. We

6 know PILCOP will speak.

7 Thank you.

8 DR. SHORR: Currently, there

9 are no legal challenges pending, but I

10 know that there are folks that are

11 contemplating it.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: So what do you

13 see as the issues? I mean, I'm not --

14 there's a kind of -- I just wondered

15 about the legal situation, but as you are

16 looking, as we are considering whatever

17 it is that can be done about the school

18 funding, how do you frame the issue of

19 more resources for Philadelphia school

20 kids?

21 MR. STANSKI: Again, I think it

22 goes from an adequacy and equity

23 standpoint, it goes back to the number of

24 kids that we're educating and the

25 circumstances that those children are

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2 under. As Dr. Shorr alluded to, we have
3 a large number of students in
4 circumstances of poverty. We have a
5 large number of special education
6 students, and it takes more resources to
7 fund those students. I mean, if you just
8 look at an aggregate level from 2011 to
9 2012, both District and charter, we
10 increased our enrollment by about 1,500
11 students and lost \$300 million in state
12 revenue and have not made that up yet. I
13 mean, we were at \$1.5 billion in state
14 revenue back in 2011. We're at about 1.4
15 right now, with now over 200,000 kids
16 that we're educating.

17 So right away, you know, we've
18 had more kids -- we're educating more
19 students, but yet we have received --
20 we've had fewer resources to educate
21 those students with over the past two to
22 three years.

23 But, yeah, again, given the
24 number of students and given the
25 circumstances which our students come

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2 from, that's sort of how we have to frame
3 this in order to provide them a quality
4 education.

5 COUNCILMAN OH: I would simply
6 point out that the best performing school
7 districts on a global basis, whether in
8 the United States or abroad, have equity
9 in funding. They provide a basic amount
10 of equal access to quality education,
11 rich and poor alike, and that certainly
12 is in our Constitution. It's not the
13 time for speeches, but I will just make
14 this statement:

15 I do think that sometimes the
16 problem is, people say I worked hard, I
17 paid a larger share of taxes and,
18 therefore, I have a better school. Now
19 you want me, who is suffering to pay for
20 my kids, to pay for kids for people who
21 are lazy, don't work, those type of
22 things. The issue that we look at from
23 our Constitution is, the education is
24 not -- it is for the children, and if the
25 children are well educated, they are less

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2 likely to follow in those footsteps, if
3 you will. And so even the wealthy kids
4 and affluent kids will have a better
5 life, a better quality of life, and a
6 more competitive society if we are
7 educating all the kids, but it is a
8 constitutional guarantee that all kids
9 will have a thorough, adequate, and
10 appropriate high-quality education.

11 So certainly I thank you so
12 much for your testimony and dealing with
13 the tough questions.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you.

16 Councilman Goode.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 Excuse me if this has been
20 covered already. When we talk about the
21 funding formula, we are still talking
22 about a two-to-one ratio?

23 DR. SHORR: I'm sorry. What do
24 you mean, two-to-one?

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The state

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2 pays twice as much as the City.

3 DR. SHORR: I think it's in
4 that ballpark.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm just
6 asking, are we talking two to one or are
7 we not talking two to one?

8 DR. SHORR: I don't have the
9 exact numbers in front of me.

10 MR. STANSKI: It's 57 percent
11 state, 37 percent --

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm saying
13 as we propose a new funding formula, are
14 we talking about --

15 DR. SHORR: You're saying going
16 forward?

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Moving
18 forward.

19 DR. SHORR: I don't know. I
20 mean, I think two to one is where we were
21 headed under the adequacy funding formula
22 that was in '08, but I've got to go back
23 and look at it through that lens. I
24 don't remember exactly what the funding
25 formula was between the State and the

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2 City at that point.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And the
4 District's response?

5 MR. STANSKI: I'm sorry?

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The
7 District's response is what in terms of
8 what the formula should be, the City
9 versus State?

10 MR. STANSKI: I think it's less
11 of what the split between the City and
12 the State is and more of what share --
13 how big of the state pot is there and
14 what share the District gets out of that
15 pot.

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's not
17 the question I'm asking, but I'll get to
18 the other question I'm asking, which is
19 we started this year with a \$304 million
20 deficit. Your testimony says that that
21 will expand by \$75 to \$100 million. So
22 we're possibly talking about over \$400
23 million just to get back to where we
24 were. How much do you intend to ask from
25 the state to cover that gap?

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2 MR. STANSKI: For next year?

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Yes.

4 MR. STANSKI: We have not put
5 that -- we have not finalized that number
6 yet for next year.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So when are
8 you going to figure that out?

9 MR. STANSKI: It will be in the
10 winter sometime, January or February, as
11 we're putting our budget together.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: When are you
13 going to tell us?

14 MR. STANSKI: I will go back
15 and talk to the Superintendent about a
16 communication plan around when we
17 finalize the number, when we will tell.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: But you know
19 you need \$400 million just to get back to
20 where we were.

21 MR. STANSKI: Right. I think
22 we'll have to remember that we have -- we
23 did get 112 additional revenue both from
24 the State and the City for this year.
25 There's a potential for 120 million

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2 ongoing with the 1 percent for next year.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You notice I
4 did not mention the City.

5 MR. STANSKI: Right.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I only
7 mentioned the state on purpose. If there
8 was a two-to-one funding formula --

9 MR. STANSKI: Right. So we
10 asked for --

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Excuse me.
12 If there were a two-to-one funding
13 formula, then I would know what the City
14 portion would be, but I'm not asking
15 about the City portion. I'm asking about
16 the state portion. Do you know yet how
17 much you're going to ask the state for
18 for next year and when are you going to
19 tell us how much you're going to ask the
20 state for for next year?

21 MR. STANSKI: We don't know
22 what we're going to ask the state for for
23 next year as yet, and I don't know when
24 that decision will be made, so I can't
25 answer your second question.

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2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What's the
3 latest you're going to tell us how much
4 you're going to ask the state for?

5 MR. STANSKI: Obviously by the
6 City Charter, we have to make a formal
7 proposal to the City through a lump sum
8 statement by March 31st.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So you're
10 going to wait until March 31st?

11 MR. STANSKI: I'm not saying
12 that we would wait until March 31st, but
13 that is when we're legally obligated to
14 inform you of our ask.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What's
16 actually going to go into the decision
17 that needs to be made in terms of how
18 much you're going to ask the state for?

19 MR. STANSKI: I think --

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What does
21 that decision process look like?

22 MR. STANSKI: We get together
23 as a leadership team and include the
24 School Reform Commission. We look at
25 what we're currently spending. We also

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2 look at what we want the District to look
3 like, but we also know that there's got
4 to be a reasonableness in the request.
5 But then we determine how can we get to
6 the number we need to sustain us moving
7 forward, and that's how we'll determine
8 it.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Is the total
10 need likely to be over \$400 million?

11 MR. STANSKI: Well, again, the
12 300 million just got us back to where we
13 were operating last year. That would be
14 a success if we got to just back to where
15 we were operating last year, but that's
16 not where we want to have the District to
17 be. We want not only to where we are
18 operating last year, but we want to be
19 able to start investing as well in
20 education.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So do you
22 have any range of commitment that you
23 will ask for from the state?

24 MR. STANSKI: I do not right
25 now.

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2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You may not
3 have a final number, but do you have any
4 range of commitment?

5 MR. STANSKI: I can't give a
6 range.

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What's the
8 soonest you might know?

9 MR. STANSKI: Again, we will go
10 through that process through December and
11 January, and, again, I don't feel
12 comfortable giving you a date without
13 knowing what --

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: We know the
15 latest we might know is March 31st.

16 MR. STANSKI: That's when we're
17 legally obligated to tell you.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: What's the
19 soonest we might know?

20 MR. STANSKI: Again, I don't --
21 without knowing what the number is or how
22 we're going to get to that number, I
23 don't feel comfortable giving you a --

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So you're
25 not likely to know in 2013?

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2 MR. STANSKI: What's that? I'm
3 sorry.

4 COUNCILMAN GOODE: We're not
5 likely to know in 2013?

6 MR. STANSKI: No, not in 2013.
7 Probably not.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Why not?

9 MR. STANSKI: I think we don't
10 really kick off our budget process until
11 like the January timeframe.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Why?

13 MR. STANSKI: You know, we have
14 six months worth of data. We have more
15 data to help us make decisions around
16 costing, funding.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So we're
18 more likely to know closer to March 31st
19 because you'll be looking to make a final
20 decision; is that fair to say?

21 MR. STANSKI: I think it would
22 be fair to say that March 31st is our
23 absolute latest deadline. We'll try to
24 get you our number as soon as we know
25 what the number is and feel comfortable

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2 with the number and inform you that way.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And I was
4 asking about your comfort level in saying
5 that we're more likely to find out closer
6 to March 31st because you will want to
7 present us with a final number; is that
8 fair to say?

9 MR. STANSKI: Again, I don't
10 know a good date to give you. So I don't
11 know that it's fair to say.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
15 Councilman Johnson.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
17 Madam Chair.

18 I just wanted to -- what's your
19 name, sir?

20 MR. STANSKI: Matt Stanski.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: How you
22 doing, Matt?

23 MR. STANSKI: Good.

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just
25 following up on my colleague's comments.

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2 I think he's probably trying to get an
3 understanding if you have at least a
4 somewhat rough estimate of what the
5 deficit is going to be projected for for
6 next year, then it will probably be smart
7 to start engaging Council as early on in
8 this process. And y'all should already
9 at least have an idea of how much you're
10 going to advocate for on the state level
11 up front, rather it's 90 percent or 100
12 percent, because it gives us an idea, so
13 when we strategically plan and not have
14 to always focus on raising taxes, how we
15 need to operate as a body and then also
16 because we have a better relationship
17 with the state. I think we're looking
18 for more of a partnership as well,
19 because y'all work in silos and we work
20 in silos, and then at the last minute
21 when the budget process happens and then
22 all of the sudden, we get a proposal
23 asking for 60 million when no one said up
24 front or early on or gave an inclination
25 that the proposal was coming to Council,

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2 it doesn't seem genuine. It comes across
3 as disingenuous since we all were
4 planning. And I'm quite sure you have an
5 astute CEO who runs the School District
6 that understands planning from a business
7 perspective because you're running such a
8 large institution. So I just wanted to
9 follow up on what my colleague was
10 getting at, because at least that's what
11 I felt.

12 But I'm one of the co-sponsors
13 of this legislation, and my primary
14 concern regarding the funding formula is
15 serving in the House of Representative on
16 the state level and coming in under the
17 Rendell Administration and a costing-out
18 study, and I remember making the
19 transition from being a State
20 Representative to a candidate for Council
21 and doing some policy research on where
22 we stood as a state. Ackerman was the
23 Superintendent at the time. And I
24 remember the presentation that laid out
25 from the costing-out study a direct

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2 correlation between children achievement
3 and funding.

4 Now, I'm one who will always
5 say I believe in creating a culture of
6 achievement, because I come from South
7 Philadelphia and I don't consider myself
8 as the average elected official. I like
9 really come from the neighborhood, right?
10 And I recognize how if you take a person
11 out of one environment, you could put
12 them in another environment with high
13 expectations and that young person will
14 excel --

15 DR. SHORR: True.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: --
17 regardless of resources. But
18 nevertheless, when it comes to the
19 underfunding that this government has
20 done, not only to the Philadelphia School
21 District but also throughout the state,
22 it's on the borderline of criminal. So I
23 do understand you have 33 kids in one
24 school, that's a funding issue. You
25 don't have guidance counselors. You

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2 don't have nurses. That's a funding
3 issue. So I do understand that
4 component. And there is a direct
5 correlation between the resources through
6 funding to enable to provide young people
7 with a quality education.

8 So I'm one that believes that
9 there is a correlation, but it's a fine
10 line between how you hold individuals
11 accountable for how the money gets spent
12 and making sure the performance match up
13 with the dollars.

14 But give the audience the
15 background information on how the Rendell
16 costing study worked. And then also
17 Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell provided
18 all Councilmembers a study from the
19 Education Law Center. See, some states
20 use different formulas to fund different
21 school districts. And so, Lori, you're
22 right. Yes, we live in a high poverty,
23 and regardless of some people saying, I
24 mean, my kids are doing well, so why
25 should I have to pay for those kids, I

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2 don't know what that means personally for
3 me, but at the end of the day, everybody
4 pay taxes, rather it's the person that
5 live in Point Breeze or the person that
6 live in Rittenhouse Square, and so the
7 resources are equal, if you ask me
8 personally.

9 But give us an idea how the
10 costing-out study worked under the
11 Rendell Administration.

12 Two, from your knowledge,
13 different states that use a different
14 funding formula model. Now, the
15 information I got from the Education Law
16 Center, separate from special ed being
17 one factor, but there's another formula
18 that just talks about children that come
19 from certain zip codes of high poverty,
20 children that come from different
21 backgrounds with disabilities. And
22 there's a funding mechanism that adds up
23 to children that come from those types of
24 backgrounds. So can you elaborate on
25 that, please?

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2 DR. SHORR: So the costing-out
3 study started with focus groups across
4 the Commonwealth asking educators and
5 administrators -- and I think parents
6 were involved, but I don't remember. I
7 was a parent at the time. But asking
8 them what is necessary and what's
9 adequate, not what's pie in the sky, but
10 what does a school need in order for a
11 child to be successful, and then they
12 came up with that number, right? And I
13 think that's the difference that I'm
14 talking about. Right now it's, Here's
15 the pot, how much can everybody get out
16 of it. The costing-out study really
17 looked at how much does it cost, because
18 every year in appropriations in
19 Harrisburg, someone was asking, What does
20 it cost to adequately educate a child.
21 And through the costing-out study and
22 working primarily and first off with
23 educators, ask them what do you need.
24 So the list that Linda
25 Darling-Hammond had yesterday was pretty

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2 much what everybody said, right? You
3 have to make sure that there's decent
4 class size so students can have the
5 individual attention they sometimes need.
6 And the list yesterday -- we can go
7 through all of that, but that list came
8 out, and then it was adjusted for how
9 much it costs to purchase that service
10 some place like Philadelphia versus in
11 Wilkes-Barre, because you have a
12 different amount of money that it costs
13 for those things, right? And then that
14 became the adequacy funding target for
15 that district.

16 So we were seen as being \$5,000
17 below per student of what we needed to
18 adequately fund our school system. And
19 then that was the -- those were the
20 numbers that were used to phase in over
21 six years the growth of the budget so
22 that you could meet those adequacy
23 targets, along with increase in local
24 contribution over the six years.

25 So it started with -- and I

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2 think that that made great sense. It
3 started with conversations with educators
4 about what do you need, not pie in the
5 sky, but what do you need to make sure
6 that a kid gets the education he deserves
7 and she deserves.

8 MR. STANSKI: I just echo what
9 Dr. Shorr said. I mean, again,
10 student-based and need-based and even
11 there are some states that do like
12 geography-based. It just might be more
13 expensive just because it's Philadelphia,
14 because the cost of living is a little
15 bit higher than it is in other parts of
16 the state. And so maybe that should be
17 taken into account too. But all of this
18 equates to what does it take from a
19 resource standpoint to properly educate a
20 student, all students, in Philadelphia.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.
22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much.

25 I remember many years ago

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2 before I got involved in this life, I was
3 a school teacher in my neighborhood, and
4 I remember when we graduated from college
5 after I got my undergraduate degree and
6 we went to the School District as
7 teachers, we were given -- I was an
8 English teacher. And we were given
9 materials. For example, for 7th, 8th,
10 and 9th grade -- I taught 9th grade
11 English -- we were given books, various
12 different directories. One had spelling
13 for Grades 7th, 8th, and 9th. So I knew
14 what words my students needed to be able
15 to spell in 7th grade, in 8th grade, and
16 in 9th grade.

17 So, I mean, I wonder where we
18 are in terms of the connect between
19 teachers, prospective teachers who
20 graduate from college, who are accepted
21 by the School District after they take
22 their orals and all of that and you're
23 accepted, you're assigned a place. Some
24 place somewhere in the middle there
25 should be some connect. Do teachers no

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2 longer get information on what they
3 should teach? And I'm concerned about
4 that. Do either of you know any
5 information about that?

6 DR. SHORR: Do you mean is
7 there a shared curriculum across the
8 entire --

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

10 DR. SHORR: -- district? I
11 believe we've moved away from that now.

12 MR. STANSKI: Right. We have
13 given schools autonomy to -- controlled
14 autonomy through what sort of curriculum
15 that they would like to implement in
16 their individual school.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It's a
18 real concern, and I've been meeting with
19 people obviously across the board, and
20 they are saying that they don't know
21 what -- we hear today, and as Councilman
22 Squilla said, we hear different figures,
23 but if students are given -- if there's
24 \$11,000 per student -- and back to what
25 Councilman Oh and Councilman Goode said,

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2 I've been meeting with people who are
3 saying they don't see how money reflects
4 the education taking place in the
5 classroom. I mean, you say we're
6 spending \$11,000 a kid, yet there's no
7 money for our needs, given we know that
8 the economy and all of that, but how can
9 we be spending all this money and not
10 educating our children? As you all know,
11 in private industry anybody who does
12 anything 12 years, if you don't know what
13 you're doing, you'd have been fired years
14 ago. But in schools, we have students
15 who have gone through kindergarten to 12,
16 Grade 12, and they can't read and count,
17 and they certainly can't write either.
18 They can't do cursive.

19 So, frankly, I don't understand
20 why we can't work that out. I don't
21 understand either why given the fact the
22 School District knew this was about
23 Commonwealth funding, why we don't have
24 any information and no hope of
25 information, maybe by March, but yet

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2 we'll be asked to do the heavy lifting
3 and criticized if we don't come up with
4 monies needed when we're not sure how
5 money impacts learning.

6 And so I think it's important,
7 and that is what my colleagues have been
8 talking about this morning, and that we
9 really would like more clarity on that
10 issue.

11 Councilman Goode.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Just one
13 more question, because I can't help
14 myself. The School District is not going
15 to tell us how much money they will ask
16 the state for probably for several
17 months. Dr. Shorr, when do you expect to
18 know?

19 DR. SHORR: When the District
20 knows. When the District decides what it
21 is that they're going to be asking for
22 from the City and from the State, I'm
23 hoping they will tell me immediately.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So when will
25 we know?

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2 DR. SHORR: I hope as soon as
3 we can, because we have a lot of
4 mobilization to do.

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So if they
6 tell you, will you tell us?

7 DR. SHORR: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Immediately?

9 DR. SHORR: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

12 Councilman Oh.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
14 much, Chairwoman.

15 I do have to just follow up on
16 my colleague Councilman Goode. Last year
17 we went through the budget process where
18 there's not enough money for everything
19 from homeless kids to public safety, and
20 through this very difficult process,
21 we're trying to get 17 people to agree on
22 something. At the end of it, we were
23 told in an announcement by the Mayor that
24 the School District fortunately did not
25 need any money, and I breathed a sigh of

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2 relief and thought a good job had been
3 done. And then three weeks later, we
4 were asked to come up with \$90 million,
5 after we had been through denying lots of
6 important entities funding.

7 We really need to know ahead of
8 time how much money is necessary, and if
9 we're going to advocate with the state,
10 as many of us do and have and been to
11 Harrisburg and talked to our State Reps,
12 I would just throw out that, you know,
13 while the U.S. is the number one spending
14 nation when it comes to education per
15 pupil, we are third from the bottom among
16 economically developed nations when it
17 comes to paying teachers. But we are
18 number one in spending our money on
19 buildings, and that is an issue as to,
20 you know, are we spending money on
21 upkeeping old buildings or what are we
22 doing? The money is not getting into the
23 classroom. So two issues that we're
24 trying to understand, what kind of money
25 does the School District need, how can we

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2 help, what do we have to come up with.

3 What is a legitimate and not just a

4 pleading, begging request from the state,

5 but what is a grounded legal basis for us

6 to help in getting a sustainable funding

7 formula that improves education in

8 Philadelphia and across the Commonwealth,

9 and in order to do that, to ensure that

10 the money is being spent for educating

11 kids above all else.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

14 you, Councilman Oh.

15 Response?

16 DR. SHORR: I think the reason

17 we need a funding formula, so it isn't

18 year to year begging. So that there's a

19 knowability, if that's a word. I think

20 it is. I'm going to say it is. But

21 there's got to be a predictability. You

22 have to be able to know so it's not every

23 year a drama. And that's where we are

24 now, because there's no predicting what

25 happens in Harrisburg with the funding.

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2 And I think we need to get to a place
3 where that this isn't constant drama,
4 isn't constant crisis. Let's get to a
5 sane place with this.

6 MR. STANSKI: I just echo
7 Dr. Shorr's comments that the
8 predictability is key and that, yeah --
9 and I think the District is doing a good
10 job of what little resources we have
11 getting them into the classroom. Eleven
12 thousand dollars a student may sound like
13 a lot, but it really isn't when you
14 compare us to other districts around the
15 state and around the country. We need
16 more funding.

17 Yes. To your point, Councilman
18 Oh, we have a lot of older buildings that
19 do require a lot of maintenance. We do
20 have a capital budget that looks to
21 upgrade some of those facilities, but,
22 again, you have to balance that with the
23 amount of debt you're willing to pay to
24 invest those capital dollars. And so
25 right now unfortunately, I mean,

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2 budgeting is always a trade-off and
3 resource allocation is always a
4 trade-off, but given the limited
5 resources that we have, the trade-offs
6 are much more challenging right now.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
8 we still don't understand. We hear you,
9 but we don't understand. We don't want
10 to be in a position where the whole city
11 says, Where are you? You folks don't
12 want to fund education, when it's not
13 true, when we have no information and no
14 promise of any information.

15 So let me say thank you very
16 much, unless my colleagues want to make
17 another statement. Thank you very much.
18 We'll ask --

19 DR. SHORR: Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: --
21 that you will listen to testimony comes
22 through from here on.

23 Next we're going to ask our
24 concerned citizen and advocate, Mother
25 Bertha Simmons, to come forward. After

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2 that, we're going to ask Panel 2. I

3 think Darren Spielman, if he's here.

4 Otherwise, we'll get him when he comes.

5 President and CEO of the Education Fund.

6 Donna Cooper, Executive Director of PCCY,

7 Public Citizens for Children and Youth;

8 Sharon Ward, Executive Director of Budget

9 and Policy Center; and Helen Gym, Founder
10 of Parents United for Public Education.

11 That's Panel 2.

12 (Witness approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you. Thank you, Mother Simmons, for
16 coming. We appreciate you always being
17 here to speak for our children.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Good morning,
19 everybody.

20 (Good morning.)

21 MS. SIMMONS: Did you say your
22 prayers before you left this morning?
23 Did you say them last night before you
24 went to bed? Well, we got to teach our
25 youth. The youth is our future.

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2 My momma taught me my prayers
3 when I was three and four years old and
4 I've been teaching it to the kids in
5 church. And I want you, do not forget, a
6 prayer is the most important thing that
7 you can use in our life.

8 God loves all of us, but we got
9 to love him at the same time. Thank him
10 for everything he's doing for us.

11 Remember, don't forget to pray. When you
12 make your decision, talk with God, but
13 don't forget to talk with your children
14 every night. When they come from school,
15 ask them how was their day, who were
16 their friends they talked with. You will
17 be surprised what the kids will tell you.
18 They even tell me, My mom and dad curse
19 all the time. They don't ask me nothing.
20 So some of them, I said, Well, tell your
21 mom and dad what did you do today. Let
22 them know who you were associating with.

23 You all think you're grown, but
24 you're not grown, hear? All of you
25 sitting here looking big and all carrying

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2 on and shaking, but you're still not
3 grown. In your head and in your mind,
4 you are not doing the right thing for the
5 youth. The youth is our future. You got
6 to support the youth and do the right
7 thing.

8 Don't forget to ask the kids
9 how was their day. Always tell them.
10 And you can ask my daughter Jannie here.
11 I know she got tired of me telling her
12 when she was eight and nine years old in
13 Richard Allen Project, I was taking her
14 to school and we were going around. I
15 said, Wait a minute until the light
16 change. I had to hold her back. She
17 would be jiggling, trying to go across the
18 street. But look at her now.

19 I told her to pray and talk
20 with her family. And she married a nice
21 husband before he passed away.

22 You got to talk with the youth.
23 The youth is our future. Just because
24 you are old, you are still not grown.
25 You have a bad mind and a bad heart. So

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2 straighten up as of today and let
3 everybody know there's a God up above who
4 rules you, me, and everything you do.

5 And this young man who is our
6 speaker today in going to get to the
7 prayer back in school, we need it. Just
8 last week over in Overbrook, did you see
9 on the news where the kids was fighting?
10 The minute they stepped out of the door,
11 they were beating and cursing, because
12 the cameraman got a picture of it. Now,
13 how are the kids going to do if we don't
14 teach them and show them how we are
15 living?

16 The kids is our future. So you
17 all think you're grown. You old, but you
18 don't have good sense. You got to
19 straighten up and let the kids know. The
20 kids is our future. How long you think
21 we might be around? The kids is around
22 to direct us and show us which way to go.
23 And this young man here today that's
24 going to speak of the prayer back in
25 school, I hope in his heart and in his

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2 mind that he will say yes, because
3 Channel 10, Channel 6, Channel 3, there
4 are people all outside want to know will
5 he say the prayer will go back in school.
6 Because the kids is our future. You know
7 that. How many time I got to tell you?
8 You don't know whether tonight you going
9 to do right or do wrong. And if he pass
10 away, God forbid, right now, they will
11 have a prayer at his service.

12 So don't forget to pray.
13 Prayer is an important thing in your
14 heart and in your mind. So I want this
15 young man to come up here. I wrote a
16 poem for him.

17 Let's not walk each day with
18 God not being blessed, because he heals
19 every wounded heart. When the road gets
20 rough, not knowing which way to go, he is
21 there in the darkest hour of the day and
22 night. He loves you. He will guide you.
23 So don't fail to trust in God, because he
24 will give you all of his blessings,
25 morning, noon, and night.

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2 Thank you, and go home and pray
3 tonight with your family and your kids
4 and ask them how was their day and let
5 them tell you something, because you
6 don't know what on their hearts and
7 what's on their mind to tell you.

8 Thank you. Thank you. Thank
9 you.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you. Mother Simmons, how old are you?
13 How old are you now? How old are you?

14 MS. SIMMONS: You really want
15 to know how old I am? I'm 85.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: 85
17 years old. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you very much.

21 Now we welcome our second
22 panel. We would like you to know that
23 Vanessa Brown Lowery -- Vanessa Lowery
24 Brown is also in Harrisburg. She left
25 her statement, and unless we have time,

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2 we will submit her statement, that of
3 Representative Roebuck and Senator Hughes
4 for the record. It will be as if it were
5 delivered here. Thank you very much.

6 (Witnesses approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
9 right. Donna Cooper.

10 MS. COOPER: Good afternoon.
11 Thank you so much for the time,
12 Councilwoman, and thank you for having
13 this hearing. Some of you may know that
14 I played a small role in helping
15 negotiate the school funding formula that
16 was passed in 2008 while working for
17 Governor Rendell in the Governor's
18 Office, and I do want to say in the years
19 from 2003 to 2010 in which the state
20 increased funding every year for school
21 districts, Philadelphia student
22 achievement rose every one of those
23 years. And, in fact, from 2003 to 2009,
24 the number of students in Philadelphia
25 that got to grade level grew -- the share

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2 of students that moved to grade level
3 grew larger than the number of students
4 in the second largest school district in
5 the state, Pittsburgh.

6 So to your point, Councilman
7 Oh, yes, investments matter. They can
8 drive results if they're targeted in the
9 right way. But we can't target things if
10 we don't have the resources to target.
11 But I just want to do -- ask you to look
12 at the data of the years in which we were
13 increasing annual state investment in the
14 states.

15 And to the question about the
16 funding formula, were we following that
17 formula today, the state would be
18 spending \$7.1 billion for public
19 education, and it's spending about 5.5
20 billion. So Philadelphia obviously picks
21 up a big sum of that if we were spending
22 at the level that we needed, and then we
23 could have these conversations rather
24 than are we having librarians, what are
25 we doing to really boosting the

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2 achievement of children falling behind.

3 You've asked me to come here
4 today to speak specifically about the
5 impact of early childhood and the state's
6 role in funding early childhood, and
7 while I am honored to do that and it's an
8 important thing for PCCY to focus on, and
9 we do, no amount of early childhood
10 education will compensate for a school
11 district where class sizes are large,
12 where classes do not have the support of
13 a well-prepared teacher, where there are
14 not the resources for children who face
15 particular struggles, and where there
16 might be chaos in the buildings. And so
17 while we need to focus on early childhood
18 education, it is not an either/or
19 proposition. We really need to do both.

20 What you might find interesting
21 is that the State of Oklahoma is now the
22 state that's providing the largest share
23 of investment in early childhood
24 education. They are providing free
25 full-day pre-K for every four year old in

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2 Oklahoma, a conservative southern state,
3 passed by state law, and every school
4 district gets those resources.

5 Florida, also a state where a
6 republican governor put in free pre-K for
7 three and four-year-olds, is also
8 expanding that opportunity for every
9 child. But not a state we would
10 necessarily want to emulate in practice,
11 but in theory, yes, but in practice
12 they're only spending about \$1,300 a kid,
13 which basically means they're offering
14 free child care, relatively stable child
15 care for every child as opposed to
16 high-quality pre-K that will prepare them
17 for school.

18 In Philadelphia, as a result of
19 the underfunding of pre-K in the state,
20 we have 40,000 children who are three and
21 four-year-olds who ought to be in
22 high-quality pre-K because it will ensure
23 greater access and opportunity in school,
24 access to taking advantage of
25 opportunity, the capacity of the student,

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2 but the state's funding for early
3 childhood education is about \$400 million
4 a year now. It was about 527 million
5 three years ago. So the state's
6 investment in early childhood education
7 is declining in the very period in which
8 we need students to be more prepared and
9 obviously declining in the same period
10 that the Philadelphia School District saw
11 the brutal blow of a \$300 million cut
12 from state funding.

13 In closing, I would say that I
14 would hope that Council would consider
15 acting on the 1 percent sales tax,
16 because as I said, directing that \$120
17 million over to the School District is
18 essential to improving the conditions,
19 where right now we have parents who are
20 volunteering as librarians, parents who
21 are acting as counselors, trained or
22 untrained. We have too few adults in
23 buildings and we're seeing violent
24 incidents rise. We need more boots on
25 the ground. The state needs to do more,

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2 and your hearing today is a very
3 important step in building the pressure
4 on the state, but so too must City
5 Council. So I urge you to act on the
6 \$120 million sales tax diversion from the
7 School District to the City and consider
8 other measures that you can take this
9 year to help bring more stability to the
10 District.

11 I have some small packs of
12 PowerPoint slides on some data on
13 full-day pre-K that will help you
14 understand the efficacy of the
15 investment.

16 And in closing, I will say you
17 wisely are asking this question today,
18 because when you look at the research,
19 you, in essence, get the biggest bang for
20 the buck. When you invest in pre-K, the
21 impact of pre-K is lasting over a
22 student's lifetime in school and it is
23 less expensive than later interventions
24 when you need to do much more intensive
25 wraparound services for kids who didn't

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2 get it right the first time.

3 So I thank you for this
4 opportunity to be here, and I really
5 appreciate you doing this hearing. PCCY
6 is releasing four reports this week.
7 Today I'm doing one at 1 o'clock with
8 Chester County on the state of public
9 education and the struggles that school
10 districts in the suburbs face as well as
11 a result of the absence of a school
12 funding formula.

13 We are not in this alone, and
14 we have a lot of work to do together.

15 So thank you very much.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you, Ms. Cooper. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 DR. SPIELMAN: Thank you,
20 Councilwoman Blackwell, for convening
21 this hearing and for the opportunity to
22 testify today. Thank you, Council, for
23 your commitment to the education of all
24 Philadelphia's children. Darren
25 Spielman, CEO of the Philadelphia

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2 Education Fund.

3 At the Fund, we are champions
4 for public education. We believe that
5 opportunities should be for all young
6 people, not only the lucky few. And this
7 is why we work with educators to
8 strengthen the quality of teaching and
9 learning and post-secondary pathways at
10 public schools across Philadelphia.
11 Every child deserves teachers,
12 educational leaders, and supports of the
13 highest order.

14 When these factors are in
15 place, students from the most challenging
16 circumstances can succeed. Just last
17 night, we granted our annual EDDY Award
18 to a student name Zoralis Ortiz. Just
19 three years ago, she moved in great
20 distress from Puerto Rico to
21 Philadelphia. With strong teachers and
22 support from her Ed Fund college access
23 coordinator, Zoralis is graduating high
24 school and will be going to college next
25 year. The benefits of this

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2 accomplishment are many.

3 Compared with people that have
4 dropped out of high school, on average
5 college graduates earn \$40,000 more per
6 year, with hourly wages about double.
7 Those who are in a high school credential
8 and stop there earn approximately \$20,000
9 more per year than dropouts.

10 Compared to those without a
11 high school credential, those with a
12 college degree have nearly one-third the
13 unemployment rate. In 2012, unemployment
14 for all high school dropouts was 12.4
15 percent. For those with a Bachelor's
16 Degree, it was 4.5 percent.

17 In the same year, the jobless
18 rate for recent high school dropouts age
19 16 to 24 was 49.6 percent. Give them a
20 high school degree, it goes to 34.4
21 percent. Recently graduating college, 7
22 percent.

23 Risk of incarceration also
24 increases dramatically. Estimates vary,
25 but dropping out of high school at least

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2 doubles the risk of landing in jail. In
3 the general U.S. population over the age
4 of 25, about 15 percent lack a high
5 school credential, whereas in prison 35
6 to 40 percent of the population are high
7 school dropouts.

8 Indeed, college graduates have
9 substantially lower obesity rates than
10 those that are high school dropouts.

11 Comparing those who drop out
12 with those who complete high school, the
13 average high school dropout is associated
14 with costs to the economy of
15 approximately \$240,000 over his or her
16 lifetime in terms of lower tax
17 contributions, higher reliance on public
18 assistance, higher rates of criminal
19 activity and -- I'm sorry; higher
20 reliance on Medicare and Medicaid, higher
21 rates of criminal activity, and higher
22 reliance on welfare.

23 Rest assured, as my colleague
24 from PCCY noted, resources make a
25 difference. Between 2003 and 2010, as

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2 investment increased every year in
3 Philadelphia schools, so did academic
4 proficiency from about 24 and 20 percent
5 in reading and math, respectively, in
6 2002 to 51 and 54 percent in 2010.
7 That's incrementally with investment.

8 Across the same years, the high
9 school graduation rate increased steadily
10 as well, from approximately 50 percent to
11 64 percent. This is real progress only
12 accomplished with real dollars.

13 No one argues our schools have
14 been good enough, that these results even
15 are adequate, nor that our use of
16 resources has been as efficient as it
17 could have been, but we cannot deliver
18 proper education without proper
19 resources.

20 And so for this reason, we urge
21 the following, as you have already heard:
22 The state needs to adopt a funding
23 formula that makes sense, based on real
24 numbers of kids served, as 47 other
25 states do, weighted for the cost of

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2 educating more challenging populations
3 such as English language learners, high
4 poverty, students with disabilities, as
5 37 states do; a formula that reduces
6 reliance and burden on property tax and a
7 formula that rationally funds charters so
8 that we stop pitting districts and
9 charter schools and parents against each
10 other.

11 In the immediate term, the
12 state, we would love if they would give
13 us our local control and approve the
14 cigarette tax that this body approved
15 unanimously and the Mayor also supports.
16 It's a question of local control.

17 At the same time, I do urge
18 Council to pass the sales tax for schools
19 and let us spend that 120 million. It's
20 in your hands to pass the 1 percent
21 extension. With deep respect to other
22 ideas of how to use the money, it's clear
23 our schools urgently need the support.
24 Passing it now will help advocate for
25 further funds in the upcoming budget

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2 season.

3 For 2014-15, I'm joining with
4 advocates statewide to call for the state
5 to increase the basic education subsidy
6 by 300 million. The districts across the
7 state need the funding. This benefits
8 all children across the Commonwealth.

9 Finally, since Philadelphia and
10 similar districts are in particularly
11 dire straits, we call upon the Governor
12 to restore state dollars to the programs
13 cut by his administration. Line items
14 such as Accountability Block Grant,
15 charter reimbursement were critical
16 components of the budget.

17 Thank you again for your time
18 and attention. I look forward to working
19 with you to make sure our children and
20 our economy receive the support they need
21 to flourish and succeed.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much. Thank you, Mr. Spielman,
24 Ms. Donna Cooper. This is Sharon Ward,
25 Executive Director, Pennsylvania Budget

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2 and Policy Center. Next will be Helen
3 Gym.

4 MS. WARD: Thank you for your
5 patience. My name is Sharon Ward. I'm
6 the Director of the Pennsylvania Budget
7 and Policy Center. Chairwoman Blackwell
8 and members of Council, thank you very
9 much for the opportunity to talk to you
10 today.

11 The Pennsylvania Budget and
12 Policy Center is a non-partisan,
13 non-profit organization. We do research
14 and policy. We're based in Harrisburg,
15 and we work to ensure adequate public
16 support for investments that build
17 communities and strengthen the economy,
18 including healthcare and education.

19 I'm here today to give you a
20 Pennsylvania perspective, talk a little
21 bit from 30,000 feet about what's
22 happening in Harrisburg, state funding at
23 large and a little bit about some options
24 for getting back to where we believe
25 Pennsylvania and Philadelphia need to be,

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2 which is adequate funding for our public
3 schools. And I hope to be able to answer
4 some of the questions that have been
5 raised earlier today.

6 So Pennsylvania has, from our
7 perspective, three funding problems. The
8 first problem is an overreliance on local
9 taxpayers to pay for education.
10 Education is an important state priority.
11 If you look at the state general fund
12 budget, more than one-third of all state
13 general fund dollars go to pre-K to 12
14 education. But still the crux of the
15 problem is this: Pennsylvania's share of
16 education funding is well below the
17 national average and it has been for a
18 generation. In 2012, we ranked 47th out
19 of the 50 states and the District of
20 Columbia in the state's share of
21 education and 8th in reliance on local
22 funds. In most communities, that means
23 local property taxes and local earned
24 income taxes. I believe all but 34
25 school districts actually also have

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2 earned income taxes.

3 So this system is underfunded,
4 and it creates great inequities, as
5 you've heard, with significant spending
6 gaps between school districts. And I
7 just want to relate a story, because I
8 think Councilman Johnson talked a little
9 bit about high expectations for students.

10 I remember going with my son's
11 5th grade class at CW Henry School to
12 Bala Cynwyd on an exchange program, and I
13 can tell you it was heartbreaking to
14 watch the children from that school walk
15 into -- from our school walk into that
16 school and see the vast difference in
17 resources that those students had
18 available to them in their libraries,
19 their buildings, their resource room,
20 their science labs. It was just painful
21 to watch the understanding and see how
22 kids internalized the buildings and the
23 resources that they had versus those that
24 other children had. Those are the types
25 of inequities that we have particularly

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2 here in Philadelphia, but indeed all
3 across the state.

4 So the problem with our
5 overreliance on local funds is that --
6 and with the cuts that we've seen in
7 state funding over the past several years
8 has resulted in property tax increases
9 here in Philadelphia, but all across the
10 state. In 2009, the number of school
11 districts that actually applied for
12 exceptions to the Act 1 Index -- that
13 means the school districts that needed to
14 raise taxes more than they were allowed
15 under the state law -- in 2009-10 there
16 were 61. In 2011-12, after the funding
17 cuts, that number rose to 228. So what
18 we have seen is a shift in state funding
19 onto local taxpayers, and I'm sure that
20 you know that, having to grapple with
21 these very difficult budgets over these
22 past few years.

23 So we are facing another
24 challenge in Harrisburg. This increased
25 reliance on local property taxes has fed

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2 a renewed effort to enact legislation to
3 completely eliminate all school property
4 taxes, which sounds like a very good
5 idea, except if you look at what that
6 might mean for the public schools. There
7 are two bills, House Bill and Senate Bill
8 76 that would dramatically reduce
9 education funding very quickly. An
10 analysis by the state's Independent
11 Fiscal Office has indicated that it would
12 reduce funding for public schools by \$2.6
13 billion in five years. So, again, we've
14 got to be careful at those cross
15 pressures.

16 The bill has not moved forward.
17 The House has been able to bypass the
18 legislation, but now in addition to the
19 very great need we have for school
20 funding, there is an increased cry across
21 the state for additional property tax
22 relief, and, as you know, there are
23 dramatically few resources at the state
24 level.

25 So there are several

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2 significant challenges that Philadelphia
3 faces, and I want to go through a little
4 bit about the state funding cuts.

5 You've heard a great deal about
6 the cuts in 2011-12, and I want to
7 provide to you some -- put some of the
8 claims that you've heard in perspective.
9 So, first, you may have heard that of all
10 of the cuts that were made in 2011, some
11 of them were due to the loss of federal
12 stimulus dollars. So what I want to
13 point out to you today, that more than 50
14 percent of the cuts that were made came
15 from programs like the reimbursement to
16 school districts for charter school
17 expenditures that were funded solely with
18 state dollars. I also want to point out
19 that the federal stimulus dollars that
20 went to education also went to prisons
21 and they went to healthcare programs. In
22 the first year, all of the federal
23 dollars that had been allocated to
24 prisons were fully restored with state
25 dollars, and certainly in the second

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2 year, all of the federal dollars to
3 healthcare programs were also restored
4 with state dollars, but about 80 percent
5 of the per-student cuts remain in
6 education.

7 And the third point that is
8 very problematic is that the cuts to
9 education were not equally distributed.
10 The total reduction in funding was about
11 nine and a half percent that year.
12 Philadelphia had 22 percent of the dollar
13 value of all of the cuts. And across the
14 board, the greatest cuts went to the
15 school districts that -- to poorer school
16 districts, as you can see right here.
17 The per-student cuts in Philadelphia were
18 about a little bit less than \$1,300. In
19 contrast, the per-student cuts in
20 suburban school districts were \$50 or
21 \$60. So the cuts were not evenly
22 distributed.

23 There are a variety of other
24 cost drivers that, as you've heard
25 earlier today, that are going to make

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2 this fiscal situation very difficult, and
3 what that means is that basic education
4 funding will need to be increased, but
5 also charter school costs have gone up,
6 pension costs have gone up, as you've
7 heard, energy costs have gone up, and all
8 of those are making it more difficult to
9 fund classroom services.

10 This destabilization of
11 education funding is happening across the
12 state. There are superintendents across
13 the Commonwealth who are saying in two
14 years we are simply going to run out of
15 money, and that is unprecedented. This
16 is our public education system that we
17 are talking about. We're not talking
18 about a "nice to have." We're talking
19 about something that's absolutely vital
20 to the state's economy.

21 So you can see here what this
22 has all meant in Philadelphia. This is
23 the 20-year history of basic education
24 funding to the School District of
25 Philadelphia, and what you see is this:

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2 In two years that were recession years in
3 the early '90s, there was no increase in
4 the basic education funding that was
5 allocated to the School District. But in
6 18 years, there was an increase every
7 year until 2011-12, and the cut there was
8 pretty dramatic. So there was no way for
9 the School District to have planned for
10 this level of cuts, and you've seen the
11 impact and what's happened over the past
12 three years, thousands of positions
13 eliminated, class sizes increased.

14 So I want to get to -- there
15 are a number of testifiers who have
16 talked about the need for a rational
17 transparent funding formula. It's
18 absolutely important. I won't go into
19 that in detail, because other testifiers
20 will probably do so as well. But you
21 asked a question about how much money do
22 we need. We're large. We probably need
23 at least \$3 billion statewide in order to
24 address the cuts in education funding,
25 the increases that are necessary in order

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2 to meet the adequacy targets that were
3 established under the costing-out study
4 and to help subsidize school districts
5 for some of their increased costs,
6 including pensions and various other
7 things.

8 So the question is, how do we
9 get there. As others on our panel have
10 asked, a first step for the School
11 District of Philadelphia, we urge City
12 Council to enact legislation that would
13 authorize the use of the 1 percent sales
14 tax for schools. Taking this step sends
15 a powerful message to Harrisburg that
16 Philadelphia is doing all it can for its
17 students and that it is time for the
18 state to step up, and we will need to be
19 unified in that position moving forward
20 over the next two years.

21 The state clearly has to do
22 more. They are in fact the cause of the
23 problem. There are a variety of revenue
24 streams that can help us to get to where
25 we want to go. Pennsylvania has had more

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2 than \$3 billion in business tax cuts,
3 comparable amount of funds since 2002,
4 and there is one business tax that is due
5 to be completely eliminated in 2015. So
6 ironically, Philadelphia businesses are
7 paying more in taxes for schools while
8 their counterparts in other parts of the
9 state are having tax reductions.

10 We could enact a tax on gas
11 drilling in the Marcellus Shale at the
12 same rate as West Virginia, which would
13 raise some significant amount of dollars
14 for public schools. And I do want to say
15 that Pennsylvania voters understand the
16 need for new funding and are very
17 concerned about the budget cuts that were
18 enacted. With Public Citizens for
19 Children and Youth, we conducted a poll
20 earlier this year about more than 80
21 percent of Pennsylvanians were worried
22 about the education funding cuts and more
23 than 50 percent of them are willing to
24 pay higher taxes, whether it's higher
25 personal income taxes or higher sales

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2 taxes. I don't believe we are there
3 right now, but there are changes that we
4 can make to reform our tax system that
5 will provide more funding for schools
6 while taking steps to ensure that people
7 that have difficulty paying are not
8 facing an increase in burden.

9 So let me just end by saying
10 that it is really hard to see any path
11 towards a more prosperous Pennsylvania
12 that does not begin with a world-class
13 public education system. We are moving
14 in the opposite direction. It is vital
15 that the Commonwealth get back on track.

16 Thank you very much for your
17 time.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much.

20 Any questions?

21 Councilman Oh.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
23 much, and thank you for your testimony.
24 I will say that I am familiar with the
25 numbers of AYP adequacy starting in 2009

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2 going up to about 2012. AYP adequacy was
3 about 9 percent before the increase in
4 funding and particularly the fact that
5 increased funding and particularly the
6 fact that schools were given financial
7 incentives to meet AYP. They went from
8 about 9 percent to up to like 45 percent,
9 as high as 65 percent to 55 percent to 42
10 percent. And when the cheating scandal
11 came out, they dropped suddenly from
12 those high rates to 13 percent.

13 So while I'm not saying that
14 they were true or untrue, it certainly
15 raises a question. And Oklahoma, which
16 is one of the ten least -- one of the
17 states that spend the least amount of
18 money per student, which was just
19 identified, is one of the higher
20 performing states in comparison to
21 Philadelphia. I mean, the entire State
22 of Oklahoma, which only has about 777,000
23 students, however, all of them on average
24 that are going to college score higher
25 than Central High School in their SAT

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2 averages, just one of many tests.

3 So I think we're all with you
4 and everyone here who is trying to get
5 adequate and fair funding and more
6 funding and we should spend more to
7 provide a good education to our children
8 and increase the amount of money
9 available. What I am concerned about is
10 that the conversation that I continually
11 hear, despite other experts like
12 Professor Linda Darling-Hammond, who
13 testified yesterday, that we have to
14 modernize and improve our education
15 system.

16 Is it your belief that
17 basically from what you're saying that if
18 we put more money into the existing
19 system, as it has continued to drop
20 through all that period of time from
21 being ranked 10th to now 22nd in the
22 nation, that we can continue to fund a
23 poorly performing school district that is
24 increasingly falling behind other
25 countries like Hong Kong and cities like

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2 Singapore and places like South Korea and
3 Finland, which are continuing to increase
4 PASA, that somehow that will be good for
5 our children in Pennsylvania?

6 MS. WARD: There are a lot of
7 questions in there, so I will try that.
8 I'll try to address them. I think the
9 first one is, you're absolutely right.
10 It's not about money. It's about money
11 and student performance. So let me say
12 two things. The first is that we have
13 set very high standards for students.
14 They are tested. They're held
15 accountable, but we have not given them
16 the resources that we need to get there,
17 and that is really the crux of the
18 problem. It's like an unfunded mandate
19 for students. You tell them that they
20 need to do certain things, perform, and
21 leave it, and then you take away the
22 resources that are necessary.

23 One -- and I'm sorry I did not
24 bring the slide, but I'd be happy to
25 share it with you. There's an absolute

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2 correlation between the increase in funds
3 that came to the City of Philadelphia, to
4 the School District of Philadelphia, and
5 Pennsylvania school districts and
6 improvements in student performance.

7 And, in fact, Pennsylvania was the state
8 that actually outperformed the nation.

9 We saw performance improvements at every
10 grade level in every subject tested
11 during those years. So I believe that
12 that is reasonable evidence that spending
13 money does make a difference.

14 With respect to the question
15 about how we spend the money, I think the
16 first thing that has to happen is, we
17 have to get out of crisis mode. We have
18 been here in Philadelphia and across the
19 state in crisis mode patching together an
20 education system. We have school
21 districts that have eliminated their
22 senior electives and advanced placement
23 classes and international baccalaureate
24 programs for study halls. That is not
25 going to help our students compete

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2 against students from Singapore, Hong
3 Kong. It just isn't. That is the
4 problem that we have.

5 And a third is that you're
6 absolutely right to say how and how much,
7 and one of the things that the
8 costing-out study did was to look very
9 carefully at what it will take to help
10 Pennsylvania students achieve
11 Pennsylvania's performance standards and
12 assign a dollar value to those things.

13 So it is not an unlimited sum
14 of money. There is an end point, and
15 there was a plan to get there and we were
16 showing progress. So I do have
17 confidence that that framework, if we can
18 get back to it, will ensure performance,
19 but also give the school districts the
20 breathing room they need to do the
21 innovation that is necessary to even
22 ensure that our students achieve more.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: I don't think
24 that report took into account higher
25 teacher pay with higher qualifications

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2 with more resources, which is typically
3 what other high-performing school
4 districts in the U.S. and around the
5 world do. In other words, the upper 25
6 percent of graduates becoming teachers,
7 being well paid, being provided autonomy
8 in the classroom outside of curriculum,
9 and having administrators that are
10 trained in the administration of running
11 schools, those are things that are common
12 and what experts do talk about, in
13 addition to the need for fairness in
14 funding and accessibility. But I don't
15 hear that reflected in conversation
16 oftentimes, not saying yours per se, but
17 funding formulas that I think are
18 reflecting better education would
19 incorporate the reforms and how to pay
20 for them. I do think that education
21 needs more funding for sure, but the
22 question once again is, are we funding
23 better education or are we funding the
24 same education? And that's what I'm
25 looking to hear in how we come up with a

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2 sustainable funding formula for funding a
3 competitive and adequate education system
4 since we're going to try to reinvent this
5 wheel.

6 MS. WARD: I think your point
7 is very well taken, and I think that a
8 funding formula could address the issues
9 that you've raised.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
11 much.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Are there any other questions?
15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you.

18 Ms. Gym.

19 MS. GYM: Hello, everybody.
20 Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

21 Councilman Oh, just to respond
22 very quickly to your comment, I do
23 believe, however, that if you were to
24 look at students of comparable wealth
25 between Finland, Singapore; in

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2 particular, Singapore, Malaysia and other
3 parts of the nations that do cite South
4 Korea, et cetera, that you will find that
5 the test data is remarkably similar and
6 that a lot of this doesn't correlate so
7 much with our nations as it does with
8 poverty. And on the level of poverty,
9 Philadelphia and Philadelphia schools are
10 off the chart in terms of the numbers of
11 students who are served in poverty, and
12 that is the more serious factor that is
13 worth a larger discussion. I'm sure that
14 if Linda Darling-Hammond were our
15 superintendent today, she would
16 understand that and be able to convey
17 that in a very clear way.

18 So I want to thank City Council
19 very much for inviting me to speak. My
20 name is Helen Gym. I'm with Parents
21 United for Public Education. Since the
22 start of the school year, we've
23 crisscrossed the City talking to parents
24 at schools all -- at dozens of schools
25 all across the City, from the Far

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2 Northeast, South Philadelphia, West
3 Philadelphia, parts of North
4 Philadelphia, Southwest, to talk to them
5 about what's been happening in their
6 schools, and what they're saying --
7 Ms. Ward talked about the 30,000 foot
8 view, but right at the ground level, the
9 situation is urgent and the consequences
10 for our children are enormous.

11 Many of us were distraught to
12 hear about the fight at Overbrook High
13 School this week, and while I'm not
14 excusing what had happened, I think it's
15 important to provide critical context to
16 what is also violent to our children.
17 According to the District's website,
18 Overbrook High School this year lost 32
19 percent of its budget and went from
20 \$11.48 million last year to \$7.8 million
21 this year. And what that meant was was
22 that they had a 116 staff people last
23 year and now they're down to 78 today.
24 It meant that they had 67 teachers last
25 year and they're down to 51 teachers this

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2 year. And it meant that they had 26
3 support staff last year and they went
4 down to 13 today.

5 Last year Overbrook had
6 \$330,000 to spend on materials and
7 supplies. Today they just had \$48,000 to
8 divide among a thousand students for the
9 entire year. In all, Overbrook High
10 School last year educated students at
11 about \$9,500 per child, and to me that's
12 the real money that exists in the school,
13 not the District overhead that includes
14 debt service, transportation,
15 administration and other services. And
16 this year, they are spending \$7,800 per
17 child.

18 The refusal to fund our schools
19 to basic sufficiency has not only failed
20 to address problems within our struggling
21 schools, it has dragged down every school
22 in this city, from the highest performing
23 to the most needy and every place in
24 between. This is not just a conversation
25 that's happening over dinner tables

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2 across schools. It's making the front
3 pages of every single media outlet.
4 Consider this opening statement in
5 Newsweek Magazine's cover story last
6 month: "At Feltonville School of Arts
7 and Science, a middle school in a poor
8 neighborhood of Philadelphia, the school
9 year begins chaotically as budget cuts
10 took effect. Lines of kids snaked out
11 the door with a single school secretary
12 trying to ensure 600 or so students
13 attending were even registered.

14 Classrooms were packed to their limits.

15 "This year with the cuts
16 meaning no school nurse or counselor,
17 teachers now fill the gaps, disrupting
18 lessons to help students in distress.
19 And the problems are not small. A boy
20 was stabbed in the head with a pencil by
21 a fellow student. A girl reported sexual
22 assault by an uncle. Another refused to
23 speak after the brutal murder of her
24 parent. And that was just the start of
25 the school year.

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2 "I had a kid in class today who
3 threatened to slash her wrist with a
4 broken ruler, said one teacher at
5 Feltonville. Most of us can't even
6 prepare lessons because we're all using
7 our time counseling children.

8 "Feltonville eliminated two
9 math teachers, two science teachers, and
10 a literacy teacher this year. Students
11 who used to get 90 minutes of math
12 instruction a day now only get half of
13 that."

14 And that is why so far this
15 year, I brought just a few of the more
16 than 900 complaints from parents at over
17 82 different schools in the School
18 District of Philadelphia who filed formal
19 complaints with the state Department of
20 Education about deficiencies within our
21 education system that violate the
22 Pennsylvania state code for a thorough
23 and efficient education.

24 The complaints continue to come
25 in steadily, detailing greater urgency

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2 and even more serious situations as the
3 school year marches on without
4 substantial relief. The complaints also
5 detail in stunning and in sometimes
6 demonstrating irreparable consequences to
7 children, staff, and families of a
8 district that is not just underfunded.
9 It is being deliberately starved into
10 dysfunction.

11 There's massive overcrowding, a
12 lack of desks, chairs, and workbooks
13 resulting across the district. Brand new
14 libraries and technology centers are
15 shuttered for children whose literacy
16 rates are low. Split grades were
17 reinstigated in primary grade classrooms.
18 Kindergartners are not being served in
19 their neighborhood schools and are forced
20 to travel at their own expense to other
21 schools. The lack of school nurses has
22 meant extremely risky situations for our
23 children's health and safety. All of us
24 still continue to mourn the tragic death
25 of Laporshia Massey, a 12-year-old at

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2 Bryant Elementary, but smaller incidences
3 of what happened to Laporshia Massey are
4 happening in schools all across the City
5 on a daily basis. In one week I talked
6 to two principals who have called 9-1-1
7 to address emergency situations at their
8 school that a school nurse could have and
9 should have handled.

10 There are children in desperate
11 need of financial and emotional support.
12 Families at two high schools in the City
13 weren't even offered a chance for their
14 11th graders to take the PSAT. There was
15 no coordinated guidance counselor. They
16 had a brand new principal. And they're
17 now eliminated from even the opportunity
18 to access significant collegial
19 scholarships.

20 Parents at at least two
21 different schools were asked to give more
22 than \$600 per child to buy not
23 floodlights or a green roof or new
24 windows for their school, but they were
25 just asked to buy a secretary to answer

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2 the phones in the office and a guidance
3 counselor. This is not parental
4 involvement. It's not boosterism. This
5 is an example of parents making up for a
6 total abdication of state responsibility
7 in the adequate funding and care of our
8 schools.

9 And I just wanted to read to
10 you just a few examples of some of the
11 complaints from children. This is -- or
12 from the parents. This is from a student
13 at a high school: Each of my classes has
14 at least 40 students. The amount of
15 noise that goes on from time to time
16 makes me crazy. It's ridiculous. We
17 have one counselor. We do not have a
18 full-time fitness teacher. We do not
19 have a library. Students cannot borrow
20 books or study with any level of
21 quietness around them. Every day schools
22 starts and we have to start our class by
23 borrowing desks from other classrooms.

24 This is from a parent whose
25 child was just diagnosed with leukemia,

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2 who has no full-time school nurse. This
3 is from a parent whose child had his
4 father die after a long-term illness and
5 has no access to a guidance counselor.
6 Another parent from Overbrook High School
7 regarding a bullying incident on
8 September 27th: My son has not returned
9 to Overbrook due to fear for his safety.
10 Unfortunately there's not enough staff
11 due to budget cuts to efficiently handle
12 the situation and he has now been out of
13 school for seven days.

14 Another parent wrote that, My
15 son was sick in school. I was not
16 notified of this matter. No one called
17 me until he began to vomit at dismissal
18 time. He came home and was taken to
19 Children's Hospital to the ER and was
20 admitted later that day.

21 Another parent wrote about her
22 child who's in third grade who suffers
23 from ADHD and extreme anxiety. In the
24 past, he received school support,
25 assistance, and guidance counselors. Due

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2 to the budget cuts, these services are no
3 longer available. There are 33 students
4 and more in his class, and in the past
5 the amount was below 25. His anxiety
6 this year is extremely bad. It has
7 returned. He bites his nails until they
8 bleed. He bites his shirt and comes home
9 with it soaking wet. I've spoken with
10 his doctor about my concerns to reach out
11 to the school. They say that they do not
12 have enough money to provide him even
13 with an aide. The counselor is only at
14 the school on Thursdays. How can my
15 child get the proper services one day a
16 week? My son does not want to go to
17 school anymore, and he is only
18 experiencing this anxiety within school.

19 I say all of this because I
20 want to caution us about getting so lost
21 in the abstract details of a funding
22 formula during the legislative process.
23 I also want to emphasize the urgency of
24 situations that don't have to wait for a
25 funding formula that need to be addressed

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2 today.

3 I actually believe that
4 adequacy in a funding formula is a
5 relative term. I believe that the State
6 of Pennsylvania can enact a funding
7 formula that institutionalizes
8 deprivation and dysfunction if adequacy
9 is our target, and that's why a key
10 component of Parents United for Public
11 Education's mission has been to establish
12 a baseline level of services and staff in
13 schools that meets a thorough and
14 efficient standard per the state
15 Constitution.

16 I actually care less about what
17 happens to numbers on paper, which buy
18 less and less resources with each passing
19 year, than in figuring out a mandate for
20 the basic staff, level of programs and
21 activities, and supports that warrants
22 calling a school a school. We have to
23 institute a funding formula that doesn't
24 just hit a relative money target. It
25 must ensure responsible class size, a

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2 well-rounded curriculum in the arts and
3 sciences, a counselor for every school at
4 an appropriate ratio, full-time nurses,
5 librarians, green space, adequate
6 facilities. We know the drill, but what
7 we have not been able to do is compel the
8 District to outline it themselves clearly
9 for us, and I think that that is a
10 mistake on the District's part not to
11 adequately outline what it would cost to
12 bring these things to our schools.

13 I guess I would conclude by
14 saying -- taking a look at just a few
15 myths. One, I just want to say this is
16 not a shrinking school district. This is
17 a district that is massively expanding.
18 We've got 200,000 children and more than
19 300-plus schools.

20 Two, I want to suggest that
21 quality schools and these outcome numbers
22 that I know people are concerned about,
23 they're not static. They do not exist
24 independent of funding and resources that
25 go into them, much as failure is not

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2 static as well. We actually do not
3 appreciate school report cards as
4 parents. That's something that
5 Mr. Stanski brought up. It does not seem
6 right to take a look at the resources
7 that are in schools and begin giving our
8 schools an A to F kind of rating. They
9 are doing away with it in New York.
10 Philadelphia doesn't need to pick up what
11 New York calls a big mistake.

12 And I want us to consider that
13 it's not just about a funding formula
14 that matters. Today, for example, Senate
15 Bill 1085 on charter school reform will
16 remove charter school caps and allow for
17 a statewide authorizer. Those things
18 also matter. They will kill us in terms
19 of funding sustainability.

20 And the final thing that I want
21 to say is that City funding does not have
22 to rely on the state either. I know this
23 is an extremely difficult conversation,
24 but we need to be proactive at the City
25 level as well. Taxes are happening all

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2 across the state. We're not the only
3 ones that are looking at taxing our
4 citizens and making up for the state's
5 mistakes. But other localities are doing
6 it thoughtfully, aggressively, and I feel
7 like in the last couple of years, we've
8 kind of ad hocked and mish-mashed our way
9 at the last minute to figuring out
10 solutions that would be best started at
11 an early level and projected forward.
12 You'll hear later from a colleague,
13 Mr. Churchill, from Public Interest Law
14 Center of Philadelphia, who will say that
15 the state funding formula -- or the
16 costing-out study dictates that there's a
17 huge amount of money that needs to come
18 in from the state, but it also says that
19 275 million should have come in in the
20 past few years from the City of
21 Philadelphia and we've only been able to
22 approximate 79 million of that.

23 So this is a hard conversation
24 on a lot of levels, and I appreciate the
25 authority to bring them to you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Any
6 questions for Ms. Gym?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much.

10 The next panel.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: I think I do
12 have a statement.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
14 Councilman Oh.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
16 much.

17 I do appreciate your testimony.
18 I would like to say that in terms of the
19 comparisons of South Korea and Finland
20 and places like that, that their literacy
21 rate and success rate is far above ours
22 in Philadelphia at least and that they do
23 prove, because they were far behind us in
24 the 1960s, far, far behind us, that --
25 and Finland being a rurally poor country,

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2 what they prove is that quality education
3 is transformative. So, yes, you know,
4 poverty is a great identifier, but
5 quality education does transform even the
6 poor into very productive and successful
7 people. I'm sure you don't disagree with
8 that.

9 The issue that I continue to
10 have is that putting more gas into a car
11 that has a big leak in its gas tank
12 doesn't get the car any further. The
13 issue of adequate funding, I think we're
14 all with you on that. We want to deal
15 with the funding formula. What I am
16 concerned about, again, is are you
17 satisfied with the performance of the
18 school system here, not in terms of --
19 I'm not talking about theoretical things.
20 I'm just talking about in best practices.
21 There are no changes or reforms or
22 improvements you believe are important to
23 providing for those kids?

24 MS. GYM: Thank you very much
25 and also thank you, Councilman Oh, for

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2 bringing Linda Darling-Hammond to
3 Council. I thought that was incredibly
4 enlightening, and, you know, I think
5 we're definitely on the same wavelength.

6 I think that, you know, again,
7 poverty isn't just an identifier. It's
8 actually a factor in looking at
9 achievement. So that a number of
10 different studies have come out that show
11 that children of wealth or who come from
12 where wealth is -- where we factor in
13 wealth, those achievements scores are on
14 par with all other nations. So that when
15 we bring in all children and include
16 impoverished students as well, then the
17 numbers begin to drop.

18 And so I think that it's not
19 saying that poor children are not smart
20 or anything, but that poverty is more
21 than just -- it's a significant factor,
22 and, in fact, in many cases, and
23 especially for Philadelphia, I think it
24 needs to be a defining factor. It
25 doesn't mean that our children can't

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2 achieve. It means that we need to create
3 and understand what are the resources
4 that are needed to offset those things of
5 children in poverty. And I think that
6 there is significant research that shows
7 that you can offset factors of poverty
8 with significant investment in a number
9 of different areas, whether it's early
10 childhood, kindergarten, full-day
11 kindergarten, high-quality teaching, and
12 supports.

13 The other thing that I would
14 say in terms of -- I agree with you 100
15 percent on quality investments with the
16 money that we have, and that for the last
17 12 years under state takeover, we have
18 pursued an education reform agenda that
19 it's taken us about as far away as you
20 can get from the fundamentals of teaching
21 and learning and the value and craft and
22 profession of teaching --

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. GYM: -- and into wildly
25 experimental areas that have absolutely

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2 no basis and no track record of success,
3 whether they be outsourcing and whatever
4 you want to call privatizing of
5 children's education, whether you want to
6 call an increased level of money and
7 emphasis into vouchers and/or EITC, OSTC
8 that has no real impact on student
9 achievement and progress. We don't
10 actually have to look to Finland and
11 South Korea to talk about what turns
12 schools around. You can look at Union
13 City, New Jersey and a school district
14 of, you know -- it's not exactly like
15 Philadelphia, but there are elements of
16 it that are more attractive in terms
17 of -- not more attractive; more
18 comparable to Philadelphia in terms of
19 poverty, diversity, and other needs than
20 they would be to go look at other
21 countries. But Union City, New Jersey
22 invested its work in the craft of
23 teaching and learning. They focused in
24 on professional development. They set
25 targets in terms of not just test scores

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2 and outcomes, but in terms of what
3 teachers should be able to teach, the
4 curriculum, and the depth and breadth of
5 the curriculum that they cover in
6 classrooms. I mean, I talked to a
7 student on Monday night who is in her
8 third school and her fourth year of
9 Algebra 1. So, yeah, if we are going to
10 have her repeat Algebra 1 at -- she went
11 to a charter school -- two charter
12 schools, a public school, and a magnet
13 school. And if she's going to repeat
14 Algebra 1 and that's defined as the top
15 level of education that you'll get in
16 Philadelphia, then we're never really
17 going to have a good conversation about
18 quality education.

19 But we cannot have a
20 conversation about quality education when
21 you've got a school district that's
22 obsessed over ranking schools A to F,
23 overly obsessed with test scores, and has
24 completely lost control and focus over
25 what's happening within classrooms.

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2 That's the thing that our organization
3 cares about the most. It's what parents
4 care about the most. And I think that if
5 you wanted to, we would enjoy and engage
6 in a conversation about teaching and
7 learning, because I think we've thought
8 about it frankly more than a lot of the
9 reformers who are heading up parts of our
10 district have been thinking about it in
11 significant ways. I just don't think
12 that they have a serious track record. A
13 number of them do not have a serious
14 track record around transforming schools,
15 and I think that we've looked at areas
16 where it's actually worked in other
17 cities. And we can't do it here because
18 we're chasing another shining quick fix
19 down the road that will promise us
20 something we don't know.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN OH: So I will say
23 everything that you have said is
24 exemplified by the school systems in
25 Finland and South Korea, and what you

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2 have identified has been done there very
3 successfully. And any time we're looking
4 at reforming our system, I can look at
5 Massachusetts. I can look at Union City,
6 New Jersey or any other such place, but
7 why wouldn't I look at the best
8 performing models to implement? They're
9 not doing anything different than what
10 you said, but they have done it
11 successfully over the last 30 years,
12 which gives them a track record, which
13 allows us to look at how we create a
14 depoliticized education system that will
15 provide some consistent effort in
16 achieving that. And then that issue will
17 have to go to changing our governance
18 structure. That's what I would think, as
19 I know that the Councilwoman has had
20 hearings on different types of governance
21 structures to basically take back our
22 School district.

23 MS. GYM: No, no. I'm not
24 saying that I don't think you should not
25 look at South Korea and Finland. I'm

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2 just saying that Finland has a fully
3 unionized teacher thing. It's not in
4 question. Union City is in the middle of
5 Chris Christie's New Jersey. You know,
6 it's a school district that is taking a
7 look at challenges, statewide rhetoric
8 about -- and it's operating under Chris
9 Cerf as the New Jersey Department of Ed
10 Chair who formerly ran Edison schools.
11 And they've been still able to turn it
12 around. I think Finland is just a
13 different kind of world. They don't
14 question a whole host of issues that we
15 are debating right now, should teachers
16 have any level of job security, should
17 they even be like certified in their
18 field, does five weeks count as being
19 highly -- that's not even a discussion in
20 Finland.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: They have had
22 that discussion years ago, and all I'm
23 saying --

24 MS. GYM: And moved beyond.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Yeah. I will

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2 say with my closing statement, I don't
3 disagree with anything you're saying.

4 All I am saying is that discounting the
5 experiences, hard experiences, of other
6 successful public school models, some
7 having gone through ten years of bitter
8 fighting to get to the model of success
9 they're at, I think there's no reason for
10 us not to give them the credit that they
11 are due.

12 MS. GYM: Oh, I agree, and I'm
13 not discounting any of them. In fact,
14 thank you very much for continuing to
15 raise that as a standard.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you.

19 Councilman Squilla.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
22 then we'll move on.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Just a
24 quick question. And I know Mr. Stanski
25 was in earlier, and I have a hard time

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2 understanding why Overbrook would only
3 get \$7,600 per kid when he had said that
4 the average was \$11,000.

5 MS. GYM: Right. So I'll
6 explain my numbers. In 2006 and 2007,
7 one of the things that we fought for
8 under Mayor Street was to make sure that
9 all the school budgets were posted
10 online. You can go to it by looking at
11 the school budget website and you can
12 actually look it up per school, and you
13 can see multiple budgets over multiple
14 years.

15 The number that Mr. Stanski has
16 given and the number that the state puts
17 up on its website and the numbers that a
18 lot of people throw out factor in a
19 number of different things; for example,
20 administrative overhead, central office
21 administrative overhead, you know,
22 transportation, school nurses that go out
23 to parochial schools as well as to
24 charter and private schools. It includes
25 debt service and a whole host of factors,

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2 and out of that number, you can arrive at
3 a per-pupil figure. The thing that I'm
4 looking at is the amount of money that
5 actually goes -- that makes its way to
6 the specific school. So it includes the
7 full cost of the teachers, the full cost
8 of those aides, the full cost of a lot of
9 materials and supplies and money that has
10 been allotted, Title I supports and any
11 additional grant money that is given to
12 the school.

13 So to me, it's -- we can go
14 back and forth about what the accurate
15 per-pupil number, but to me it's a very
16 realistic portrayal of how much of the
17 overall District money actually makes its
18 way into a school.

19 The number that I am giving you
20 does not count things like -- it doesn't
21 count any of central office. It's not
22 counting transportation. So students who
23 get free TransPasses would not get it.
24 It doesn't include the building and
25 facilities maintenance, for example. But

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2 it does include the cost of the building
3 engineer, et cetera, aides, school police
4 officers.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But he had
6 stated that that number wipes out all
7 administrative costs and District costs
8 and debt services, because if not, it
9 would be upwards of over \$14,000 per
10 student.

11 MS. GYM: Well, the numbers
12 vary dramatically across the School
13 District too, just so you know.
14 Overbrook that I gave you is dramatically
15 different from Central High School, for
16 example. Central High School is closer
17 to 5,000 a student, believe it or not,
18 because the number -- the amount of
19 students over a broader section is
20 actually less. So it could be made up
21 for in other cases. For example, we've
22 got promise academies and other kind of
23 turnaround schools where there's a
24 significant more amount of money
25 investment.

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2 Mr. Stanski is the CFO of the
3 School District of Philadelphia. I would
4 be very cautious personally for me to get
5 into a -- I'm not saying that he's wrong.
6 I would just also like to put thought
7 that there's another set of numbers that
8 are very specific to each school. So if
9 you wanted to look at what happened to
10 all the schools in your particular
11 district, you could actually go online
12 and see the exact consequences of the
13 budget.

14 It's one thing to say that the
15 District lost \$300 million. It's another
16 thing to look at Overbrook High School
17 and see 300 million translate into a 32
18 percent drop, the loss of staff. It's
19 much more clear about what the
20 consequences are at the school level.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But us on
22 Council and we're having these hearings,
23 we have to -- we ask the people from the
24 District to come up with numbers and you
25 guys to come up with information. If

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2 everybody has all different numbers of
3 what's going on, it just goes to show you
4 that it's chaos out there, that nobody
5 really knows what's going on. So maybe
6 that's a reason why we need to really
7 look at the system more so than the money
8 situation, which we all agree to we need
9 more, but we need more depth look at how
10 everything is running and how the money
11 is being spent. Because if we cannot get
12 straight numbers from the people who are
13 running the organization, then how do you
14 expect us to react and know where to put
15 our emphasis on when we're looking to do
16 things like this and obviously find
17 funding? Because then we could say, We
18 got you so much more funding.

19 You say, Yeah, but that's not
20 enough because they're using the money
21 for this, they're using the money for
22 that, and really not getting to the kids
23 again anyway.

24 So, I mean, I know Councilman
25 Oh has reiterated that and Councilwoman

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2 Blackwell, the Chair. We need to get
3 down to the dirty numbers and get down to
4 the facts. And if we don't, then we're
5 just going to spin our wheels constantly
6 no matter how much money we get, and
7 that's something that we really need to
8 consider. And I know right now we're
9 just talking about state funding and
10 school funding, but we need to do more
11 work internally to find out where this
12 money is going.

13 MS. GYM: And thank you very
14 much for allowing the opportunity. The
15 only thing I would say is that school
16 funding is a complicated area and I think
17 that it needs a lot of different kinds of
18 inputs and a number of different
19 perspectives, one from the School
20 District level down to the basic school
21 level. The only thing that I think that
22 I hope that we can all agree upon is that
23 the level of underfunding is -- it's not
24 just being underfunded. It's literally
25 just being deliberately crushed, and that

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2 students and young people have severe
3 consequences that cannot wait for a new
4 funding formula. They can't wait for the
5 state to fix itself. In some ways it's
6 an appeal to City Council to think
7 proactively about what we can do this
8 year as well and continue to pound on the
9 state for what we want to see.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you very much.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you very much. We'll try to move along
16 more quickly. Our next panel will be
17 Mr. Michael Karp, President of Belmont
18 Charter School; Joe Grace, Director of
19 Public Policy, Greater Philadelphia
20 Chamber of Commerce; Hillary
21 Linardopoulos representing Jerry Jordan,
22 President of the PFT; and Dr. Matthew P.
23 Steinberg, Assistant Professor of
24 Education, University of Pennsylvania.
25 Mr. George Ricchezza, Area Leader,

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2 District 1201, 32BJ, SEIU had a
3 scheduling conflict and cannot attend.

4 (Witnesses approached witness
5 table.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much. Thank you very much.
8 Mr. Karp. Thank you.

9 MR. KARP: Yes. Thank you very
10 much for inviting me to be here. I'd
11 first like to comment on what Ms. Gym
12 just recently described at Overbrook High
13 School and the problems with Philadelphia
14 schools. I'd like to say that I
15 understand there's overcrowding. There's
16 as many as 40 students in a class.
17 There's a problem with violence
18 sometimes, which is all very, very
19 unfortunate.

20 I'd like to contrast that with
21 what we have at our school. Our class
22 size is 20 students in a classroom. We
23 do have a full-time not only a nurse, we
24 have a nurse practitioner in our school.
25 We have a very, very significant

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2 after-school program with sports. We
3 have -- probably 120 of our kids are in
4 sports programs, maybe more. We have a
5 significant after school. Sixty percent
6 of our kids are in after school. We have
7 a summer school program. We have all
8 these programs, and we're given \$8,600
9 per year for funding. This is every
10 other charter school. And whether the
11 District's per capita is 12,000 a student
12 or 11,000 for the basic education piece,
13 whatever it is, it's at least \$3,000 more
14 than it is to the charters, and yet
15 there's a waiting line of charters
16 wanting to go into business and to
17 provide education. There are many
18 parents who -- there's no vacancy in the
19 charter schools. Many parents want to
20 switch over to that.

21 So our first thing is, we
22 recognize there will always be a public
23 school system in Philadelphia. We'd like
24 to see that right sized, so to speak, and
25 we think the need is to say realistically

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2 how many parents want to have their kids
3 in charter schools versus public schools.
4 And if we get on with that job early on
5 instead of saying we have 132,000
6 students in the publics now and about
7 50,000 in the charters or 55, whatever
8 the number is, and we started to right
9 size it and said going down the road,
10 we're looking at probably a more
11 realistic number of 90,000 to 100,000
12 kids in charters and maybe 80,000 to
13 90,000 in the public school system and
14 start to align our costs and our numbers
15 that way, we'll avoid a lot of the
16 problems we have, that parents will get
17 what they want, and we can be more
18 effective.

19 I've seen so many charter
20 schools that do a great job with \$8,600.
21 The difference is, you've got a lot --
22 fortunately, fortunately for the kids,
23 there are many, many providers, whether
24 it be Scott over at Mastery, whether it
25 be myself, whether it be Loretta Byers.

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2 There's just so many good providers. We
3 are dedicated to the kids.

4 All of you guys know all of us.
5 We are dedicated. And when you've got a
6 group of small, so to speak, small
7 independent school operators who are
8 dedicated with a mission of excellence
9 for our children, it's really hard to
10 match that with the bureaucracy where
11 it's a job in a bureaucracy. So we see
12 the coming together of those two forces
13 is a great benefit to the kids.

14 Now, we also feel -- we're the
15 neighborhood school. So in our school,
16 we have -- our students, you must go
17 there if you live in the area. We do not
18 solicit applications. We do not have
19 students enrolling from outside the area
20 to come to our school. It's the same
21 catchment area, 39th to 44th, Lancaster
22 Avenue north up to Mantua Avenue, the
23 same catchment that's been there for
24 probably 30, 40 years. So we are the
25 local school, and yet we're doing a great

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2 job with small classes, no violence. The
3 kids love being in the school. And we
4 invite you to come. Just ask our kids.
5 Here's a question I ask when I walk into
6 the school so often. I say to the kids,
7 What do you think of Belmont? Do you
8 like being here? The kids would tell you
9 yes. I asked them, What do you like
10 best? And you know a critical thing the
11 kids will say -- one of two things, and
12 they'll say both. It's a question of
13 what order. They'll say, We're learning
14 here. The kids will say, We are learning
15 here. And number two the kids will say,
16 The teachers are nice to us or we like
17 our teachers. When you have students say
18 we're learning and the teachers are nice
19 to us, that tells you the whole story.
20 That tells you the whole story.

21 But that's just -- I'm telling
22 you, so it's doable. We'd like to see --
23 so we're not battling the District, the
24 charters versus the District. Let's just
25 align it and say how many people want to

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2 do charters. Let's be realistic about it
3 and let's get on with it. Number one.

4 Number two, my big advocacy --
5 and many of you know this is -- we have
6 to integrate social services with
7 education. And you talk about other
8 countries. We all know that the primary
9 provider of the education for kids and
10 the incentive to learn is in the home.
11 The home is the primary place, and that's
12 where it starts.

13 However, we also know where you
14 have poor families, you often don't have
15 the ability to provide those same kind of
16 factors for the kids. So our challenge
17 as educators is, how do we bridge that
18 gap. And we have a social service
19 institutional set up in Philadelphia
20 Department of Human Services. We have
21 CBH, Community Behavioral Health. We
22 have many, many programs, but they're all
23 separate from the School District. We
24 believe the critical missing piece today
25 is to integrate the social services with

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2 the District.

3 I'll give you an example of
4 last week. We had a child -- about two
5 weeks ago. A child had missed two days
6 out of five days in school. In our
7 school, we're on top daily, daily of
8 attendance, daily of kids not coming. So
9 that week, we went out there, brought the
10 mother into the school. We told her,
11 Your kids missed two days in school this
12 week. Over the last couple weeks, they
13 missed a number of other random days.
14 You can't do that. We're going to have
15 to go -- we work with the District
16 Attorney's Office on truancy. We're
17 going to have to report you. This is an
18 accelerated problem. The mother said, I
19 have no place to live. I live day by day
20 in different places. And, therefore, I
21 have trouble bringing my kid to school.

22 We said, Your number one
23 responsibility is, your child must come
24 to school every day. Okay? We said, We
25 don't want to report you to DHS, but we

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2 may -- we are so proactive. We're on top
3 of it immediately. But there's a message
4 to this. By the way, the next day we
5 spoke to the child. We said, We're glad
6 you're here in school today. How are you
7 doing?

8 The child says, I don't know
9 where I'm sleeping tonight. It's
10 heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking when a
11 kid does not know where he's going to
12 sleep. This is last week's story. This
13 was last week's discussion.

14 We as a school, we want to be
15 the provider of all the social services.
16 We want to have a model where we can take
17 the responsibility for that child, where
18 we can have a foster care home. It could
19 be just an emergency shelter home, but we
20 want to be able to say we know the needs.
21 And we do in our case, because we're not
22 a bureaucracy. We're a little school.
23 We have a community, Belmont, of 4,000
24 people, but we want to be able to have
25 already set up foster care facilities so

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2 a child like that, we can say to the mom
3 and to the child, while you're working
4 out your issues, we have a safe haven for
5 your child to sleep in.

6 She told us, the mother did,
7 all her possessions were in her backpack.
8 It's really, really a sad, crushing,
9 terrible situation, but we believe --
10 now, everybody cannot do social services.
11 We can. We do have social workers at our
12 school, but we have no power to do things
13 like foster care.

14 So we would beg you as Council
15 to have in your legislation the ability
16 for us to do a pilot project where we
17 integrate it. And people often hold
18 teachers accountable for all the ills of
19 the home. You can't hold the teachers
20 accountable for the ills of the home
21 because they have no input into that.
22 The teacher is in the classroom.

23 Now, in our school, separate
24 from the teachers who are blamed for
25 these problems, separate from that, we do

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2 have social workers. I have a whole crew
3 of social service people in our school,
4 but we're not able to do something as
5 simple as helping that child, because we
6 are not allowed to provide DHS services,
7 CBH services. So we'd like to see that
8 change where there can be that
9 comprehensive program. We think that's
10 the simple, most important effect that we
11 can do to stabilize families. And by the
12 way, in our school, in Belmont, we have
13 People's Emergency Shelter. Our
14 percentage of children that live in
15 homeless shelters, living in shelters
16 today or have in the past been homeless,
17 is almost 20 percent. So in our school
18 population, when you look at our test
19 scores, you look at the environments in
20 our school, 20 percent of those kids are
21 or have been homeless. And we also will
22 tell you, those are not the worst-off
23 kids, because in the homeless shelters,
24 there is a structure. So the worst-off
25 kids come from families who don't even

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2 have the structure of a homeless shelter.

3 So we embrace these students.

4 We embrace these families. We'd like to

5 go the next step, the next step. And by

6 the way, with that kind of population,

7 last year of our 8th grade graduates --

8 we're K to 8th grade -- approximately 25

9 percent went to Girls High, Central,

10 Franklin Institute Charter School, and

11 one got a full scholarship to Penn

12 Charter School. So these are our

13 graduates.

14 I was at the school last week.

15 I went into the computer science class

16 and I said to a couple kids -- it was

17 really nice. I said, If we had a high

18 school here, would you guys go to our

19 high school? And the kids said yes,

20 except one girl said to me, I'm not sure.

21 And I said, Why aren't you

22 sure?

23 She said, Well, I'd like to go

24 to Central High School. If I get into

25 Central, I would probably go to Central,

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2 which is, of course, Central and
3 Masterman are the two best schools in the
4 City, and they're public schools, of
5 course. But to have our kids say, I want
6 to take that trolley and go all the way
7 from West Philly up to Central, got to do
8 two changes or one change, I mean, this
9 is really heart-rendering that we're able
10 to get that kind of excitement.

11 The girl said to me also, she
12 said, Mr. Karp, she said, are you the
13 boss here?

14 I said, Well, I said,
15 sometimes.

16 And she says, I didn't ask you
17 sometimes. I asked you yes or no, are
18 you the boss?

19 And you get a 7th grade kid
20 that that's precise. The girl was a
21 cracker jack. She was awesome. And that
22 makes you feel great.

23 But this thing with social
24 services I think is important. And the
25 final thing is, I'd like to say in a high

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2 school program, I feel there's a very big
3 disconnect, and, that is, we keep talking
4 about college, college, college as if
5 everybody is going to go to college.

6 Now, we all know that's not going to
7 happen, but we're oriented to sit, there
8 is no option. I was at Mercy Vocational,
9 which is operated by the Archdiocese,
10 about three weeks ago. Vocational
11 programs are for kids who don't have to
12 go to college. I spoke to kids in their
13 carpentry program, and I said to them,
14 What are you guys going to do when you
15 graduate from Mercy? They're 11th grade,
16 10th, 12th grade.

17 And the kids tell me, We hope
18 to get jobs as carpenters.

19 The next question was, What did
20 your dad do? And most of them, the dad's
21 a carpenter and the dad's encouraging
22 them. And I contrast that with, So we
23 have a system where you can be encouraged
24 to be a carpenter like your dad. In our
25 regular school district, we're saying,

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2 Don't be like your dad as a carpenter.

3 You got to go get a college degree to
4 succeed. We're actually taking people
5 away from what would be in most societies
6 encouragement.

7 If we look at Europe, in Europe
8 they start to say in high school or even
9 before high school, we're going to say
10 what do you want to do career-wise, and
11 they're going to have career programs,
12 which are not college programs. And I
13 think we have to start looking at high
14 school as being a place where instead of
15 saying you must go to college, you must
16 have a good -- jobs, right? Jobs is the
17 key issue. And we don't have this
18 discussion, because if you don't look at
19 test scores to go to college, that's how
20 everybody is judged, and for most of our
21 students, that's not in Philadelphia what
22 we need. We need jobs for students and
23 we need to start having not just
24 vocational but mentor programs,
25 internship programs, and start to

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2 identify with students' success. We need
3 job counselors in our schools. We need
4 to work with kids after they graduate
5 from high school for a transition period
6 of several years to make sure they're
7 able to hold those jobs and get new jobs
8 when they have problems. But there's a
9 lack of this cohesive program and
10 understanding the kids' needs.

11 So in summation, what I'd like
12 to see is that we are child-centered
13 rather than institutionally-centered.
14 And we can sit down around the table and
15 say if we were reinventing the system,
16 what works for the kids, what works for
17 the families, how do we take all the
18 massive money, 600 million a year for
19 DHS, over a billion dollars for CBH,
20 besides the School District money, how do
21 we -- plus there's job training, there's
22 all kinds of other money too, but how do
23 we reallocate these pools of money, how
24 do we focus on how kids can succeed, how
25 we can work with parents so we can be a

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2 partnership, the school and the parent is
3 partners to help the kids. This is not
4 being discussed even today. We have to
5 do that to be successful.

6 I thank you very much. If you
7 have any questions, I'll be happy to
8 answer them.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you, Mr. Karp. Belmont is one of my
11 schools, and we thank you for that. And
12 I remember when Mr. Karp started when he
13 had younger children at the West
14 Philadelphia Counseling Center, he found
15 out that children who didn't have
16 sneakers, he bought a child sneakers, and
17 then the brothers and sisters, they
18 shared them. So he was still losing. So
19 he found out through hands-on experience
20 of what it takes to educate a child and
21 training children. He was given 11,000 a
22 student that he was paying for to find
23 out what helped children to learn and
24 what their needs were in terms of food
25 and clothing and basic needs in the

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2 community.

3 So we thank him for his
4 commitment. He's been talking about this
5 a couple years trying to get the School
6 District to allow him to provide social
7 services, and I commend him for his
8 commitment to these youngsters. He's
9 always fighting for them and always
10 giving extra, having summer programs
11 where they go in the suburbs where they
12 feel safe and where they learn and enjoy
13 an environment and see a community
14 they've never seen before, because it's
15 his own private property.

16 But we thank you for your
17 commitment, Mr. Karp.

18 He went from developer to just
19 a committed educator, because he wanted
20 to save this community where he does so
21 much other work.

22 And let me note that the Vice
23 Chair of the Committee, Blondell Reynolds
24 Brown, is also here, and she wants to
25 make a comment.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
3 very much.

4 Good morning. As a former
5 resident of Mantua, I've continued to pay
6 a lot of attention to what happens in the
7 community where I got started, and I want
8 to echo everything that Councilwoman,
9 Chair of the Committee, has said. What
10 has been a delight for me is not only
11 your recognition of the non-academic
12 needs of those children, but then putting
13 in place solutions, fixes to make it
14 happen.

15 My question is, who is picking
16 up the tab for the professionals on the
17 social service side of that equation?

18 MR. KARP: On the social
19 service side, we have only four full-time
20 social workers. We have a contract with
21 DHS to do preventive services. It's
22 about \$250,000 a year, which in our
23 school we have a total of 760 students,
24 so it's only about \$300 per student, \$330
25 we receive per student. All the other

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2 expenses, we do have the federal money,
3 the Title I money for being a poverty
4 school. There is prime agricultural
5 money for lunches, which everybody gets
6 that money also. This year -- we try to
7 get some grants for other programs like
8 after school, but the majority of our
9 money is from our basic City money. I
10 think the total money that's not within
11 that budget, it might be another half a
12 million dollars in grants that's coming
13 in. We've been able to pretty much at
14 our size break even as a school.

15 The nurse practitioner that we
16 have, it's a practitioner. It costs us
17 about \$90,000 a year, which will come out
18 to roughly about \$85 per student, \$90 per
19 student across our system of 760
20 students.

21 So you do have to have scale of
22 enough students. If you have only 200
23 kids in school, you couldn't have a
24 nurse. But we have the two buildings,
25 but the total enrollment in our pre-K

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2 through our 8th grade is about 760.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
4 growing enormously.

5 Two more questions. Any
6 linkages with University of Pennsylvania
7 or Drexel in that community?

8 MR. KARP: We unfortunately
9 have not had a linkage. We've been
10 hoping to get some of the social workers.
11 The issue is, we have to be more in a
12 teaching program mode, and there's an
13 issue about whether the students were
14 interning there under a person who was
15 going to supervise them to be part of
16 their Master's and Ph.D. program. So we
17 have Master's. We have four people with
18 Master's Degrees as social workers, but
19 they're not able to be covering as
20 teachers, so to speak, in the program.
21 But we do not have -- and we'd like to do
22 a formal relationship. We do have a lot
23 of students from Bryn Mawr and Haverford
24 College, however, that come to our school
25 one day a week for the after-school

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2 program.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So your
4 principle ask is for us as a city or as a
5 district to do better and get better at
6 linking DHS non-mandated services,
7 because there are mandated dollars at DHS
8 that you get no wiggle room. Those
9 dollars have to be used specifically for
10 those designated services.

11 MR. KARP: Actually, the
12 mandated dollars, we feel that we can do
13 a far better job --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And "we"
15 is whom?

16 MR. KARP: Our school. In our
17 school. And we realize -- you can't, by
18 the way, you can't say over night that
19 any school is going to start doing social
20 services. We've been doing it now for
21 about, a contract with DHS, probably
22 eight years, nine years. There's a
23 reporting requirement. There's an audit
24 procedure they go through. There's a
25 strict accountability for the money.

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2 Even though we're not providing mandated
3 services, we provide preventive services.
4 But they come in. They audit us every
5 year, and there's a whole lot of rules
6 and regs that they have on how we do our
7 case file.

8 So we know how to do it, and we
9 feel we can go to the next level of doing
10 now the mandated services. We'd like to
11 be the pilot so we can have other schools
12 also gradually over stages, as a model,
13 over stages go up.

14 I'll give you an example you
15 take mandated, like homeless shelter --
16 not homeless shelter kids. Foster care
17 is a mandated service. There's a woman
18 called Bernice Mercer, who Councilwoman
19 Blackwell knows. Bernice Mercer just
20 retired from our school. She's been
21 there for probably 35 years. I said to
22 Ms. Mercer about -- it was in June just
23 before she retired. I said, Ms. Mercer,
24 we're hoping to do foster care in our
25 community. We want the foster care kids

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2 to stay in Belmont, not to have to go to
3 placements all over the City and all over
4 the suburbs, but stay in the school. And
5 if the kids stay in the school, our
6 teachers see those kids every day. We
7 hear so many problems about foster care
8 where kids are not treated well, and
9 there's a problem in the home.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Have you
11 put that type of -- it's better than an
12 idea. That concept in writing to the
13 DHS?

14 MR. KARP: Yes. I met with
15 Anne Marie many times. I met with
16 Councilwoman Blackwell on it and with
17 you. You may have been there also.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Oh,
19 absolutely.

20 MR. KARP: And they just
21 stonewall us because they're their own --
22 they've come back to me and they said,
23 Okay, we divided the City into ten
24 regions, would you want to work with some
25 other people and take over a region?

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2 I said, A region is 150,000
3 people. My community is only 4,000. I
4 can do a great job. You guys heard me.
5 I can do a great job with 4,000 people,
6 but 150,000 is bigger than the City of
7 Harrisburg, bigger than the City of York,
8 a third the size of the City of
9 Pittsburgh. I can't do that many people.
10 I don't want to be a social service
11 professional. I just want to be an
12 educator. I just want to do my little
13 area of Belmont. And they won't break it
14 down so I can do that.

15 But with Ms. Mercer, I said to
16 Ms. Mercer, I said, I know you're
17 retiring, but you'd be the best foster
18 mom in the world. She's a sweetheart.
19 She loves the kids. I said, I'd like to
20 have a house right near the school and
21 have you have four or five kids staying
22 with you, and it could be transition. It
23 could be they're there for a couple days,
24 for a couple weeks, for a year, whatever
25 it is. But she would be the kind of

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2 foster mom -- and she said to me, she
3 says, I'm retiring.

4 I said, I know you're retiring,
5 but I need you. If I can do foster care,
6 will you come back?

7 And she turned to me -- Jannie
8 knows her -- and she said, Okay, for you
9 I'll do you a favor and come back.

10 But she's the kind of -- and we
11 want to do it. And those kids will be in
12 our school if there's a problem. We
13 would ask those kids every day, How is it
14 going? How is it going? There would be
15 no -- and if there was any problem in the
16 home, that day we can speak to the foster
17 parent and say, We want to work out the
18 problem.

19 So we need that kind of
20 holistic approach that they kids are our
21 kids, the services are all part of the
22 school. That's what's missing. And
23 today a kid who needs foster care could
24 be placed who knows where, in a strange
25 environment, a strange home, removed from

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2 what they know, and there's no control
3 over the quality of care in the home,
4 except an occasional visit by somebody.

5 But we would see every day
6 what's happening. So this is the kind of
7 difference between holistic and
8 institutional, and we feel to really
9 reach these families and kids -- we want
10 to just be a small pilot. The community
11 is 4,000 people in Belmont. But Belmont,
12 as you know, is a very poor community
13 with a lot of needs. If we can be
14 successful there, we can have a pilot to
15 do elsewhere. But we really so much want
16 to help the kids and the families
17 locally. And we just want to locally, we
18 want to do our little thing in our little
19 part of the world.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
21 for your testimony. I'd like to revisit
22 this with you offline probably during the
23 budget process.

24 MR. KARP: I'd love to. Thank
25 you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you, Mr. Karp. Thanks for all you do.

5 MR. KARP: Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you.

8 Mr. Grace.

9 MR. GRACE: I'd be happy to
10 defer to Hillary, but whatever you'd
11 like, Councilwoman.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you.

14 MR. GRACE: Thank you. Good
15 afternoon, Councilwoman, Chair of the
16 Committee, and Vice Chair Councilwoman
17 Reynolds Brown and Councilman Oh. I'm
18 Joe Grace, the Director of Public Policy
19 for the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of
20 Commerce, and thank you for the chance to
21 be here today to testify about the state
22 of public education funding in
23 Pennsylvania and its impact on
24 Philadelphia.

25 The future of our city and

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2 region depend on high-quality schools
3 that prepare every student for success in
4 the workplace or college. Ensuring our
5 schools receive the funds they need to
6 prepare our students is the concern of
7 every parent, school administrator,
8 teacher, and employer in our city.

9 The Chamber strongly supports
10 public education in Philadelphia. It's
11 one of our highest public policy goals.
12 The Chamber is in its 10th year of
13 operating Read to Me, a successful
14 program aimed at encouraging early
15 literacy among the youngest children in
16 our schools. Business leaders make
17 donations and volunteer their time to
18 read to more than 3,400 children now in
19 30 different schools.

20 We are vigorous participants in
21 the Mayor's 10,000 Summer Jobs program,
22 and the Chamber annually helps to create
23 among our members more than 1,000 paying
24 summer internships -- so I was glad to
25 hear Mr. Karp raise the importance of

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2 that issue -- for young men and women in
3 our city, teaching valuable career
4 skills.

5 The Chamber participated in the
6 search that led the School Reform
7 Commission to select Dr. Hite as the new
8 Superintendent of schools in
9 Philadelphia. We strongly support Dr.
10 Hite and his agenda to improve outcomes
11 for every child in our schools.

12 The Chamber has worked very
13 closely with the SRC on many fronts. We
14 helped the District last year secure
15 approval for a \$300 million financing, as
16 the SRC was taking many steps to deal
17 with its budget deficit that you've heard
18 much about already today.

19 Last June, the Chamber and a
20 number of our business leaders worked
21 closely with legislative leaders in
22 Harrisburg on a funding package for
23 Philadelphia's schools. While the plan
24 is not perfect and all of us may not like
25 every element of the plan, the package

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2 helps Philadelphia's 200,000 students in
3 our city schools right now.

4 It includes, as you know, a
5 one-time infusion of \$45 million in state
6 funds that has now been accomplished, 15
7 million in additional state funds through
8 the basic education subsidy, 30 million
9 in City funds through increased
10 collection of delinquent City taxes, and
11 120 million in recurring revenue to the
12 District through extending the 1 percent
13 City sales tax that had been set to
14 expire next summer.

15 The increased collection of the
16 delinquent City taxes still requires
17 approval of the State Senate, a step that
18 we support. The extension of the 1
19 percent City sales tax, as you know, was
20 approved by the Legislature, but still
21 requires approval of this Council.

22 One of the measures to improve
23 the collection of delinquent City taxes,
24 HB 390, was given final approval in the
25 Senate yesterday in Harrisburg. It now

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2 heads to the Governor's desk. So that's
3 good news to report to you. This measure
4 will permit the City to use age and
5 financial need when considering property
6 tax relief for long-term owner-occupants.
7 HB 388, which would authorize the City to
8 file liens against any property statewide
9 owned by delinquent City taxpayers, still
10 awaits final Senate approval, and we do
11 support that.

12 We know Council and the Mayor
13 support a new tax on cigarettes sold in
14 Philadelphia to create a second
15 sustainable revenue source for
16 Philadelphia schools.

17 While the business community
18 supports the advocacy of the Mayor and
19 Council to tax cigarettes to provide this
20 additional funding, unfortunately
21 majority support for this idea has not
22 yet materialized in the General Assembly.
23 We still believe this idea has merit to
24 create an additional source of recurring
25 revenue and to free up a portion of

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2 future sales tax revenue for other
3 issues, such as City pension reform. The
4 business community remains committed to
5 working with the leadership here in this
6 Chamber and in Harrisburg to try to
7 accomplish these objectives.

8 It's also important to note, we
9 believe, that when the School District
10 laid out its budget needs earlier this
11 year to you and to the Mayor, it asked
12 for more City funding, more State
13 funding, and for its larger labor
14 organization, the Philadelphia Federation
15 of Teachers, to be part of the solution
16 as well through wage and benefit
17 agreements. We support the District's
18 call for every partner and organization
19 to be part of the solution of the school
20 system's financial problems.

21 Lastly, I'd say that we also
22 support the call for a much broader
23 conversation in Pennsylvania now around a
24 new basic public outlay, not only for
25 Philadelphia but for every one of the 500

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2 public school systems in the state. We
3 support a thoughtful, non-partisan
4 dialogue among all parties that have a
5 stake in these issues, local and state
6 elected officials, civic leaders, the
7 business community, home and school
8 associations, parents, and, of course,
9 school leaders.

10 To this end, the Chamber's
11 President and CEO, Rob Wonderling, has
12 initiated these kind of conversations
13 with these stakeholders in communities
14 across Pennsylvania, and we will be
15 continuing that work in the months ahead.
16 We welcome the opportunity to be part of
17 that conversation, and we welcome the
18 opportunity to continue working with you
19 to execute reforms to close the School
20 District's budget gap once and for all
21 and to make sure that a quality public
22 education is afforded to every child in
23 our city.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

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2 you very much.

3 Councilman Oh.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Thank you
5 very much, Chairwoman.

6 So you may not have an answer
7 today, but the question that we would
8 like to get answered is, if we are going
9 to increase the funding for schools in
10 Pennsylvania, how are we going to get it
11 funded? In other words, if it is an
12 increase in taxes -- I don't know that it
13 is, but if it is, what source of tax
14 increase would the Chamber recommend or
15 support?

16 MR. GRACE: I understand your
17 question, and I don't think I have an
18 answer for you today, Councilman. I'd
19 say two things, very briefly, given your
20 time. I'd say that we think it's
21 important to have this conversation with
22 stakeholders all across Pennsylvania and
23 not just, respectfully, in Southeast
24 Pennsylvania. This problem affects
25 school districts statewide, not just in

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2 Philadelphia. There's financially
3 stressed school districts -- and I know
4 you know all this -- in places such as
5 Reading, Allentown, Harrisburg, other
6 school districts in Pennsylvania in the
7 Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area. Those
8 parties ought -- business leaders, school
9 leaders, local electeds, parents all need
10 to be part of the conversation as we try
11 to think through what's the best way to
12 come up with a funding formula that's
13 equitable and makes sense to all the
14 school districts in Pennsylvania.

15 And I would add quickly, since
16 you did ask the tax question, that in
17 response to just adding information for
18 you in response to some of the earlier
19 testimony, in the last four years, this
20 Council, facing hard choices, has had to
21 increase the sales tax, the real estate
22 tax three times, and the U&O tax to a
23 cumulative amount of \$275 million in the
24 last four budget cycles. This Council
25 has grappled with the tax question

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2 already, and I did want to just put those
3 additional facts on the record.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Yeah. I'd like
5 to add that we see another employer
6 closing its doors in the Northeast,
7 Mondelez, losing about 300 or 200-some
8 jobs. I mean, we can't keep raising
9 taxes. It's also tough on, you know, the
10 residents of our city, and I know that
11 you know that. But I will point out
12 that -- I'm not making this up, but the
13 data and best practices show that we are
14 not paying our teachers an adequate
15 amount, that we have to increase teacher
16 pay and also increase their training and
17 also increase the pool from which we're
18 selecting from.

19 So that would indicate to me
20 that we are going to have to increase the
21 pool of money to lift the bottom portion
22 of public education in our state. And
23 ultimately we're trying not to chase any
24 more jobs out of here, but we're going to
25 have to look and see what public

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2 education is worth to our state, to the
3 quality of life, to the future of this
4 state, to its revenues, and come up with
5 some idea of what an adequate and
6 sustainable funding formula is to comply
7 with the state Constitution. And I'd
8 love your input at some point in time.

9 MR. GRACE: Thank you,
10 Councilman. We'd like to provide it.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you.

13 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds
14 Brown.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

16 Good morning. Good morning,
17 Joe.

18 MR. GRACE: Good morning,
19 Councilwoman.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
21 very much for succinctly laying out what
22 we've done over the past three years in
23 terms of raising needed revenues for the
24 School District. In all of those cases,
25 none of those were new revenue streams,

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2 and so --

3 MR. GRACE: Correct.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- the
5 question is, has the Chamber considered
6 maybe statewide looking to see what new,
7 untapped, innovative, unorthodox revenue
8 streams we should consider to find new
9 revenue dollars to do exactly what
10 Councilman Oh has just articulated, lift
11 this boat for funding Philadelphia public
12 schools in a more equitable way?

13 MR. GRACE: We have not done so
14 yet, but I will tell you to augment
15 briefly my testimony, the allusion that I
16 made at the end of the testimony is that
17 the President and CEO of the Chamber, Rob
18 Wonderling, has recently begun a series
19 of meetings. I know he had one in
20 Butler, Pennsylvania with school
21 officials, local school board members,
22 local business leaders, some parents
23 groups as well to begin the conversation
24 about listening -- and, of course, this
25 is in the west, but truly listening to

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2 the problems that those school districts
3 are confronting -- they may not be the
4 same in scale as the financial problems
5 that we're facing in Philadelphia, but
6 they are similar problems -- to hear
7 their views on what they need and to
8 begin a dialogue that we truly believe
9 needs to be a statewide dialogue.

10 We don't disagree with some of
11 the earlier testimony today about the
12 need for this conversation to happen and
13 for action to happen. We don't want to
14 rush to judgment about what those actions
15 are, and we do think that voices have to
16 be brought to the table, not just from
17 Southeast PA but voices across the state.
18 Business voices have to be part of that
19 conversation and each of the other
20 stakeholders that I mentioned.

21 So to directly answer your
22 question, Councilwoman, we haven't
23 considered what those revenue sources may
24 be yet. I think we need to hear a lot
25 more from these different kinds of

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2 stakeholders, from here to Pittsburgh and
3 from here to Erie and back, before
4 consensus can rise up.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'm
6 encouraged to hear that, because I had
7 the good fortune to work in Harrisburg on
8 the Senate Education Committee when
9 Governor Casey was Governor, and even
10 then there were conversations,
11 discussions, debate about how we get to
12 an equitable funding formula. And unless
13 there is statewide conversation, we will
14 be 20 years from now grappling with the
15 same issue.

16 Sandra Dungee Glenn talks about
17 this all the time in how we move to a
18 funding formula that's going to be
19 equitable statewide, which means we
20 cannot operate as an island. So to know
21 that those conversations are beginning --

22 MR. GRACE: Have begun.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- is
24 going to be absolutely essential as we
25 look to May 2014.

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2 MR. GRACE: We agree.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
4 very much.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much.

7 Any other questions?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you.

11 We do note that Sandra Dungee
12 Glenn is here, former head of the Board.
13 We thank you.

14 Hillary Linardopoulos for Jerry
15 Jordan, President of the Philadelphia
16 Federation of Teachers.

17 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Good
18 afternoon.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
20 afternoon.

21 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: My name is
22 Hillary Linardopoulos. I'm a staff
23 representative at the Philadelphia
24 Federation of Teachers. I'm here once
25 again testifying on behalf of our

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2 President, Jerry Jordan, who apologizes.

3 Due to his negotiation schedule, he was
4 not able to be present today. So thank
5 you for this opportunity. Thank you to
6 Councilwoman Blackwell and the rest of
7 the City Council Education Committee for
8 continuing to hold public discussions
9 about education funding in Philadelphia.

10 We would also like to commend
11 Council for consistently showing its
12 commitment, leadership, and initiative on
13 giving our school children the resources
14 they need.

15 For the past three years, as
16 some of the previous folks have
17 testified, the City has stepped up to
18 meet its obligation to fund public
19 education, and this year, even in an
20 unprecedented fiscal crisis, has been no
21 exception.

22 It's good to know that our
23 city's leaders value our neighborhood
24 schools and can work together to find
25 creative solutions to get through

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2 challenging times. But we can no longer
3 afford to fund public education on a
4 year-by-year, emergency-to-emergency
5 basis.

6 We must shift our focus to a
7 model of education funding that is both
8 sufficient to provide our children the
9 tools and conditions they need in school
10 and sustainable so that economic
11 downturns don't result in catastrophic
12 cutbacks to student services and
13 programs.

14 This year the School District
15 opened schools without sufficient
16 counselors, school nurses, school
17 secretaries, libraries, and
18 non-instructional personnel. And it's
19 been a number of years since our school
20 budget has been enough to provide basic
21 classroom materials, like books, paper,
22 and other supplies for our children.

23 In too many of our schools, the
24 classroom teachers and school staff
25 provide children with the tools and

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2 materials that they need to participate
3 in the learning process.

4 Though many in the room may
5 tire of us repeating this, PFT members
6 are spending hundreds, even thousands of
7 dollars every year to provide children
8 with basic learning materials.

9 In spite of this, it is a
10 well-publicized fact that the School
11 District and state think that our
12 educators' pockets should be the primary
13 source of funding to fix our deficit.
14 They want PFT members to continue these
15 in-the-classroom contributions even as
16 they are proposing a 5 to 13 percent
17 reduction in their pay.

18 Reducing educators' salaries to
19 fix a deficit is a short-term fix that
20 will have long-term consequences for our
21 schools and our students. Philadelphia's
22 teachers are already amongst the lowest
23 paid in the tri-county area. In the long
24 term, a pay reduction will only partially
25 fund a district that cannot recruit,

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2 retain, support or develop its teachers.

3 Not only is this proposed
4 solution unfair to teachers who educate
5 our children, it also reduces our
6 district's ability to provide
7 high-quality instruction to
8 Philadelphia's school children.

9 Our school's funding problem is
10 more than an educational issue. It's an
11 economic development issue for our city.
12 The education we are able to provide our
13 children today will determine
14 Philadelphia's ability to have citizens
15 who have the knowledge, skill, and talent
16 to take advantage of future economic
17 opportunities. This means we must stop
18 looking at our neighborhood schools as a
19 challenging line item in a budget year,
20 but as a long-term, long-range investment
21 in the future strength of our city.

22 This starts with a sustainable
23 funding formula, which needs to be
24 implemented by Harrisburg immediately.
25 Don't be fooled by Governor Corbett's

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2 reelection commercials. He has done away
3 with the sustainable formula we had under
4 Governor Rendell, and his cuts to key
5 education line items have crippled
6 cash-strapped school districts like
7 Philadelphia.

8 When we had a funding formula,
9 the schools that most needed additional
10 resources were getting them. Students in
11 those schools were beginning to show
12 academic gains. By taking away that
13 funding formula, Governor Corbett has
14 jeopardized the future of our most
15 vulnerable students.

16 For the past few years,
17 Harrisburg's solution to funding our
18 schools is to leave it Philadelphia's
19 taxpayers and school employees. They
20 view adequate public education funding as
21 an option. It is not. It is a
22 constitutional obligation, and the
23 Corbett administration has been derelict
24 in meeting this obligation.

25 The tax loopholes for

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2 corporations are another example of the
3 Governor's negative impact on education
4 spending. Business tax breaks will cost
5 our state over \$2 billion this year. The
6 70 percent of companies that do business
7 in Pennsylvania and pay no income tax
8 will cost the Commonwealth \$500 million
9 this year.

10 While we understand the desire
11 to make our state attractive to
12 businesses, something must give. We
13 shouldn't ask more from our state's
14 taxpayers than we do from corporations
15 that are making millions at the expense
16 of our schools.

17 Fixing the way our schools are
18 funded is a huge first step, but
19 investing in public education goes beyond
20 revenue streams. There are some
21 fundamental problems with our spending
22 priorities as a state and as a school
23 district.

24 As our school district
25 struggles with its finances, we cannot

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2 overlook the hundreds of millions of
3 dollars the District loses to fund the
4 expansion of charter schools. The \$1.6
5 billion that our district will spend on
6 expanding charter schools over the next
7 five years should be invested back into
8 making improvements and innovations at
9 existing neighborhood schools.

10 We have for too long gone down
11 the path of identifying struggling
12 schools, closing them, then funding
13 charter schools in their place. This
14 model of education reform has been a
15 failure in Philadelphia and across the
16 country.

17 Instead of asking ourselves
18 what can we replace these schools with,
19 it's time to ask ourselves what will it
20 take to make these schools great.

21 Too much of the conversation
22 around public education centers on what
23 we can't do for our children because of
24 the budget crisis, with not enough
25 emphasis on creative solutions that

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2 improve both schools and communities.

3 Last year, the PFT, along with
4 its community allies in PCAPS, released a
5 community plan for education, a report
6 that outlines a number of ideas for
7 getting our schools back on track. One
8 of the ideas was the use of the
9 "community schools model." Using that
10 concept, school buildings could be
11 utilized as schools, but also serve as
12 neighborhood hubs where students,
13 families, and community members could
14 receive a variety of services, such as
15 health screenings and employment
16 counseling.

17 This is a much better
18 alternative than simply shutting them
19 down or turning them into charter schools
20 that the District must still pay for.

21 Cities such as Cincinnati and
22 Saint Paul that have employed this model
23 have seen improvements in student
24 attendance and academic performance. And
25 instead of inheriting abandoned,

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2 dangerous buildings, neighborhoods gain
3 thriving centers of community.

4 Concepts like the "community
5 school model" are not overnight fixes.
6 There are none when it comes to improving
7 public education. But it is the kind of
8 idea that is worth the investment of time
9 and resources.

10 Let's keep Philadelphia's
11 children out of Pennsylvania's new \$400
12 million prison. Instead of investing in
13 warehousing of our children who are
14 failed by the system, let's invest in a
15 system that will help our youth avoid the
16 pitfalls and take advantage of the
17 opportunities of the future.

18 Thank you again for this
19 opportunity to address the Council.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you very much.

23 Councilman Oh.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: I think it's
25 unfair to ask you these questions.

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2 You're standing in for President Jerry
3 Jordan. But I will say, I will have a
4 series of questions that I'd like
5 answered, maybe offline.

6 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Sure.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: One is that I
8 have stated continuously that we need to
9 pay teachers better, but I've also stated
10 that we need to have better teachers,
11 which is just part of what education
12 improvements have manifested across the
13 country and across the world.

14 The issue that I'm not clear on
15 as to where the PFT stands is on the
16 issue of seniority as it exists in
17 Philadelphia and why that is good for
18 education as opposed to relaxing the
19 seniority so that there is more input
20 from newer, younger teachers into our
21 system.

22 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Sure. I
23 think that's a fair question and
24 something that I'm happy to discuss with
25 you further at any point. I think that

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2 currently that issue distracts from the
3 real problems. It distracts from a lot
4 of the true issues at hand, and I think
5 that we also --

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: If we
8 simply shift our rhetoric and start
9 talking about seniority as experience,
10 then it makes it seem, Oh, well, yeah, I
11 do want my child to have an experienced
12 teacher. And there's a place in the
13 system for a brand new teacher and
14 there's a place in the system for a
15 30-year veteran, and they thrive off of
16 one another. I mean, I taught for nine
17 years in the District, and every year the
18 brand new teachers would come up with a
19 different idea or something they had
20 learned in grad school that I thought,
21 Oh, I could try that. And I could offer
22 the brand new teachers a lot of things
23 that I had learned sometimes the hard way
24 through my experience in the District.

25 So I think that focusing at

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2 this moment on seniority is the wrong
3 conversation, but I do think that it's a
4 fair one to have and we do think that
5 experience matters with our teachers.

6 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. We'll
7 have that conversation.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

10 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Sure.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much. Thank you as always for
14 being here.

15 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Thank you
16 again.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you.

19 Mr. Steinberg.

20 DR. STEINBERG: Yes. So I want
21 to thank Council for providing us the
22 opportunity to present evidence from
23 early findings. My name is Matthew
24 Steinberg. I'm an Assistant Professor of
25 Education Policy at the University of

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2 Pennsylvania's Graduate School of
3 Education, and with my colleague, Rand
4 Quinn, we present at the request of
5 Councilwoman Blackwell initial findings
6 from an assessment of adequacy in
7 education spending.

8 So our investigation is
9 comprehensive and ongoing and looks at
10 the legislative, legal, and policy
11 context shaping education funding both
12 locally and nationally; funding trends,
13 both the distribution of funding by
14 source - local, state, and federal - and
15 the per-pupil expenditures in real
16 dollars both locally and nationally. And
17 what we're here to discuss succinctly
18 today are issues related to equitable and
19 adequate funding on a per-pupil basis
20 throughout the Commonwealth, with a focus
21 on the School District of Philadelphia.

22 So what did we find? Statewide
23 the adequacy gap -- so this is the
24 difference in what we actually spend
25 minus what we should be spending per

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2 pupil -- during the 2009-10 school year
3 was the largest in the poorest and the
4 lowest-achieving districts. On average
5 statewide for all non-charter school
6 districts, the adequacy gap was \$751 per
7 student, which amounts to in aggregate in
8 '09-10 a billion three shortfall in
9 spending.

10 With respect to the School
11 District of Philadelphia, our evidence
12 suggests that rather than a story of
13 failure, the District is frankly a story
14 of possibility. When comparing the
15 District to peer districts in
16 Pennsylvania, these districts that serve
17 very similar students on the input side
18 with respect to poverty and produce very
19 similar levels of outputs in terms of
20 academic proficiency, we find that the
21 District is not only doing more per pupil
22 with its current resources, but presents
23 what we believe is an opportunity for
24 investment given the return, the
25 potential return to human capital here in

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2 this district and in this city.

3 The evidence. So we first look
4 at education spending by looking at
5 comparable district with respect to
6 poverty. We look at the 24 poorest
7 districts in the state. This represents
8 the bottom 5 percent of the distribution
9 in terms of economic resources, and on
10 average, those 24 school districts serve
11 77 percent of students on free and
12 reduced price lunch. In 2009-10, the
13 School District of Philadelphia also
14 served 77 percent of districts -- pardon
15 me; 77 percent of students in receipt of
16 free or reduced price lunch.

17 Among those highest poverty
18 districts, these 24 most disadvantaged
19 districts in the State of Pennsylvania in
20 2009-10, on average those districts spent
21 \$13,308 in current per-pupil
22 expenditures, which includes expenditures
23 on instruction, instruction-related
24 services, support services, and other
25 elementary and secondary current

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2 expenditures, excluding capital
3 expenditures and interest on long-term
4 debt. In Philadelphia in that same year,
5 average per-pupil spending in
6 Philadelphia was \$11,417.

7 The story doesn't stop there,
8 right? Because we're interested not only
9 in what's actually being spent, but what
10 is adequate, as has been discussed so far
11 today, to provide educational services so
12 that all students in the District can
13 reach proficiency benchmarks. In these
14 highest poverty districts, on average the
15 adequacy estimates from our study
16 suggests an adequate level of per-pupil
17 funding at \$15,189, again, among these 24
18 highest poverty districts. In
19 Philadelphia in 2009-10, our estimates
20 suggest that an adequate per-pupil
21 expenditure should have been \$16,895.

22 So while the highest poverty
23 districts require additional resources on
24 the order of \$1,881 on average across
25 these 24 highest poverty districts, the

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2 adequacy gap, the difference in what is
3 actually spent and what is required to be
4 spent to provide adequate resources for
5 our kids in Philadelphia, is nearly three
6 and a half times as great as the adequacy
7 gap in these peer districts.

8 What about on the outcome side?

9 We also looked at the lowest achieving 5
10 percent of the distribution of districts
11 in the State of Pennsylvania on the 2010
12 PSSAs both for math and reading. I'm
13 going to present the math results. The
14 reading results tell the exact same
15 story.

16 On average across the 23
17 lowest-performing districts in the State
18 of Pennsylvania, in 2009-10 54 percent on
19 average of their students in grades 3
20 through 8 and 11, the tested grades on
21 the PSSAs were proficient in math.
22 Fifty-six percent of students in
23 Philadelphia in that same year were
24 proficient in math.

25 Let's look at what these

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2 districts were spending. The
3 lowest-achieving math performing
4 districts in the State of Pennsylvania in
5 2010 spent on average \$13,837 per pupil.
6 Again, Philadelphia in that same year
7 spent \$11,417. So when we look at the
8 adequacy difference, we said on average
9 an adequate level of spending for the
10 lowest-achieving 23 districts in the
11 State of Pennsylvania was \$15,233.
12 Again, our adequacy estimates account for
13 many of the characteristics that folks
14 have spoken about today, district size,
15 the number of free and reduced price
16 lunch students, the number of special ed
17 students, the number of English language
18 learner students, as well as for
19 differences in geographic cost of living.
20 In Philadelphia we've already
21 stated that the adequacy amount was
22 \$16,895. So the School District of
23 Philadelphia's adequacy gap with respect
24 to the lowest achieving distribution of
25 districts was more than four times as

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2 great.

3 So why do we think that this
4 district is a district with possibility?
5 The District did more with less compared
6 to peer districts. Still only half,
7 right, only half, one in two students in
8 the District were proficient in math and
9 reading. Therefore, adequate levels of
10 resources are necessary so that all
11 students in the District can be
12 successful academically.

13 I thank the Council for giving
14 us the opportunity to do this work and
15 present these findings.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you, Mr. Steinberg.

18 Questions or comments?

19 Councilman Oh.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
21 much.

22 Thank you, Professor. In your
23 comparisons, when you look at the bottom
24 performing states in the United States --
25 not bottom performing; the lowest funded

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2 states, 1 through 10, and the amounts of
3 money that they're spending, which is all
4 below 7,000 per student --

5 DR. STEINBERG: Lowest states
6 or lowest districts?

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Lowest states,
8 the entire states, all the districts
9 combined within those states.

10 DR. STEINBERG: So we didn't
11 look across states yet on the achievement
12 side.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. So I'll
14 tell you that eight out of ten states
15 performed better than our second best
16 public high school in Philadelphia, which
17 is Central High School.

18 DR. STEINBERG: And those
19 achievement measures are based on state
20 tests?

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Based on SAT
22 averages for the states.

23 DR. STEINBERG: Okay.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Now, Central is
25 a magnet school. Everyone is going to

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2 college there, you know.

3 So the question then that I
4 have -- that was one question. The
5 question is, when you look at these
6 lower-performing school districts such as
7 whatever county, probably some rural
8 county in Pennsylvania, have you looked
9 at their dropout rates compared to the
10 City of Philadelphia dropout rates? Are
11 those comparables?

12 DR. STEINBERG: That's an
13 excellent question. So we were presented
14 with this request three weeks ago, so
15 we've only gotten a chance to look at the
16 achievement measures, but I think
17 dropouts is an important outcome as well,
18 which we haven't looked at yet.

19 On the SAT issue, certainly we
20 know that students select into taking
21 SATs, right, as opposed to being mandated
22 by the state that all 3rd through 8th and
23 11th graders take the test. So I think
24 those comparison like cross-state
25 comparisons on state tests, we know

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2 that -- there was evidence that came out
3 a few years ago that 80 percent or so of
4 Mississippi students were proficient on
5 their state benchmark test. When the
6 they look at NAEP results, less than 15
7 percent of those students. So making --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: When they
9 look at which results?

10 DR. STEINBERG: The NAEP was
11 the National Assessment of Educational
12 Progress, which is a test that all
13 students -- a random sample of all
14 students in grades 4, 8, and 12 take
15 every year. So the point there is that
16 making cross-state comparisons on state
17 tests is not sort of an apples to apples
18 comparison because of the differences in
19 sort of the rigor and the difficulty
20 across states in the test.

21 But on the SAT side, again, we
22 want to be careful with those
23 comparisons, because students are
24 selecting into taking those tests. So we
25 don't -- so it's not, again, an apples to

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2 apples comparison. It's not the case
3 that all 11th graders in the state are
4 taking the SAT. So I think we want to be
5 careful to make those sort of comparison.

6 COUNCILMAN OH: That's a point
7 well made. However, what I would say is
8 that that test is self-selecting. So if
9 you don't want to go to college or you
10 don't think you can, you don't take the
11 test. But I'm drawing from Central High
12 School, which has the second highest
13 score in Philadelphia, which is a magnet
14 school. In that sense, it's not just
15 your average high school. You have to
16 have A's and take a test to get in there,
17 and yet on a statewide average, states
18 like Mississippi and Oklahoma, Alabama
19 and Missouri are either performing
20 similarly or above. That means across
21 the state. And that's hard to
22 understand.

23 DR. STEINBERG: So I'm not
24 familiar with that data, so I would
25 certainly welcome a look at the evidence

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2 that you're describing, but given what we
3 know about performance in Mississippi,
4 for example, relative to state benchmark
5 tests and also to nationally normed
6 exams, that is rather surprising to me
7 compared to Central High School.

8 So, again, I am not familiar
9 with the evidence. I would have to take
10 a look at that to comment.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. But I
12 really appreciate your research, and if
13 you could share that with us, I'm sure
14 we'd --

15 DR. STEINBERG: So it is, I
16 believe, in Councilwoman Blackwell's
17 hands. She has the evidence, yes.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
19 much.

20 DR. STEINBERG: Your welcome.
21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you. We'll make sure that members of the
24 Committee and whomever else has a copy.
25 We'll have our staff send it out.

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2 Thank you, Mr. Steinberg.

3 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds

4 Brown.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Having
6 done a lot of studies, a graduate student
7 in education, I'd be remiss not to say
8 thank you. I have enormous appreciation
9 for research, data, evidence which drives
10 a conclusion we're trying to get to, and
11 all of your work underscores and affirms
12 what many of us believe intuitively, that
13 when you have equity in dollars, young
14 people, children actually do better. And
15 so to have it backed up in a way with
16 recent data, as recent as 2010, is for us
17 ammunition, if you will, for what's
18 needed to make sure there's a statewide
19 discussion and conversation about how we
20 move to equitable funding.

21 You mentioned that the request
22 was made three weeks ago. You're talking
23 about the request to provide testimony?

24 DR. STEINBERG: To appear
25 today, yes.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: From Chair
3 Lady Blackwell's office?

4 DR. STEINBERG: Yes, ma'am.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right,
6 then. Well, it's exceedingly clear that
7 funding statewide, equitable funding
8 statewide, you say one out of two,
9 getting it to be all young people moved
10 to a level where they're performing
11 appropriately, the evidence is just
12 simply clear. So I thank you for the
13 data.

14 DR. STEINBERG: Sure.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very much.

16 DR. STEINBERG: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much.

19 If there are no further
20 questions, then this committee will be in
21 recess, five minutes only. It's just a
22 restroom break. Five minutes. And we
23 will be back here shortly. Thank you.
24 Thank you all. Thank you for your
25 patience.

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2 (Short recess.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: May I
4 we have your attention. We'd like to
5 resume our hearings.

6 We want to resume our hearings.
7 We don't want to hold folks up all day.
8 May we have your attention. We want to
9 resume our hearings.

10 Next we'll have Mr. Michael
11 Coard, Esquire, Steering Committee,
12 Heeding Cheyney's Call; Professor E.
13 Sonny Harris, Steering Committee, Heeding
14 Cheyney's Call; Ms. Quanisha Smith,
15 Co-Executive Director of Action United.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much. Thank you for your
20 patience, and we appreciate all of you.
21 This is our action-packed folks right
22 here. We are grateful.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
25 right. We appreciate all you do, and

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2 thank you for being here.

3 Mr. Coard.

4 MR. COARD: Thank you. Good
5 afternoon to the Councilmembers, the
6 Councilmembers of the Education
7 Committee, especially to the Chairperson,
8 Madam Jannie L. Blackwell, the 3rd
9 District, and certainly Madam Co-Chair
10 Blondell Reynolds Brown and certainly
11 Councilman David Oh.

12 Let me start by saying to my
13 left is Professor E. Sonny Harris, a
14 retired Professor of Mathematics at
15 Cheyney University and a proud alum of
16 Cheyney. And he's here in case you have
17 questions about this funding formula
18 issue.

19 Having said that, let me say
20 this: My name is Michael Coard and I'm a
21 proud alumnus of historic Cheyney
22 University. I'm also the attorney for a
23 recently formed organization known as
24 Heeding Cheyney's Call, which consists of
25 and/or is actively endorsed by Cheyney

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2 University alumni, current, prospective,
3 and former students, current and retired
4 faculty members, current and retired
5 staff persons, federal, state, and
6 elected officials, and many civic and
7 religious community leaders, as well as
8 several of our members who are here in
9 the Council Chambers today supporting our
10 efforts.

11 In our effort to save and
12 enhance Cheyney University, we are
13 considering all options, including civil
14 rights litigation in federal court to
15 attain our ultimate goal of what we call
16 parity through equity in order to finally
17 have traditionally and predominantly
18 black Cheyney University placed on a
19 level playing field with Pennsylvania's
20 13 traditionally and predominantly white
21 state-owned institutions. I am here
22 today to speak briefly, and I do mean
23 briefly, about the Commonwealth of
24 Pennsylvania's funding formula relative
25 to Cheyney University.

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2 Each of you have the five-page
3 statement, and I'm not going to read the
4 entire five pages. You certainly can
5 digest it at your convenience. I'm going
6 to highlight the pertinent parts,
7 including the third paragraph of that
8 statement.

9 As you are aware, the majority,
10 I repeat, the majority of Philadelphia's
11 African American high school students who
12 matriculate to college enroll at Cheyney
13 University. Moreover, many of Cheyney
14 University's graduates live, vote, work,
15 and pay taxes in Philadelphia.
16 Furthermore, many of Cheyney University's
17 faculty and staff are from Philadelphia.
18 In other words, Philadelphia has a direct
19 political and legal connection to
20 Cheyney. Also, Philadelphia, as the
21 largest among the state's 67 counties,
22 has a powerfully direct political and
23 legal connection to the Commonwealth of
24 Pennsylvania.

25 The next paragraph pretty much

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2 talks about the history of Cheyney
3 University from its beginnings in 1837 as
4 the African institute then called the
5 Institute for Colored Youth. Then we
6 fast forward to 1983 when it became
7 Cheyney University. That information
8 there is important, but not directly
9 relevant to what we're here to talk about
10 today.

11 The next paragraph is a similar
12 paragraph. It talks about what Cheyney
13 has to offer as the oldest black
14 institution of higher learning, and we
15 highlight its 33 majors, its Master's
16 Degree programs and specifically we point
17 out something called the Call Me Mister
18 Teacher Leadership Program that
19 encourages African American men to
20 dedicate their lives to becoming role
21 models. We also highlight the
22 outstanding Teach STEM Scholarship
23 Project, which prepares African American
24 women to become highly qualified
25 teachers.

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2 One of the problems that we
3 have at Cheyney I think pertains to this
4 STEM issue, because this great program,
5 this outstanding program, this impressive
6 program has on moratorium for about three
7 years. In addition, there's the
8 extraordinary Aquaculture Research and
9 Education Center, the distinguished
10 Keystone Honors Academy, and the
11 Bond-Hill Scholarship Program. It's all
12 laid out here, and you can read it at
13 your leisure.

14 But I want to jump to something
15 I think is critically important to
16 today's hearing. That's the next
17 paragraph that states, However, despite
18 all these great things going on at
19 Cheney, however due to decades-long
20 racial discrimination by the
21 Commonwealth, Cheyney University, an
22 all-time great institution, currently has
23 an all-time high budget deficit and an
24 all-time low student enrollment. Let me
25 repeat that. Due to decades-long racial

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2 discrimination by the Commonwealth,
3 Cheyney University, an all-time great
4 institution, currently has an all-time
5 high budget deficit and an all-time low
6 student enrollment. And things are going
7 from bad to worse, significantly due to
8 the implementation of no new developed
9 and attractive programs such as
10 engineering, healthcare, et cetera, and
11 primarily due to the Commonwealth's
12 inequitable funding formula.

13 But before specifically
14 addressing this important funding formula
15 issue, I must put it all in context. I
16 previously mentioned the Commonwealth's
17 decades-long racial discrimination, and I
18 mention that not because it sounds good,
19 it sounds exciting, it sounds
20 interesting. I mention it because it's
21 factually true. For example, in 1969,
22 which was 44 years ago, the Commonwealth
23 was officially found by the precursor to
24 the United States Department of Education
25 to have been one of just ten states still

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2 operating a racially discriminatory
3 system of higher education. Let me just
4 expand upon that a little bit. This is
5 1969, within the lifetime of most of the
6 people who are here. And when the United
7 States government looked around the
8 country to see which states were still
9 discriminating against black students in
10 higher education, you would normally
11 expect the usual suspects, Mississippi
12 and Alabama and Georgia, but included in
13 that was the Commonwealth of
14 Pennsylvania, just 44 years ago in 1969.

15 In 1980, which was 33 years
16 ago, a successful racial discrimination
17 lawsuit was filed against the
18 Commonwealth by Cheyney University
19 students, faculty, and staff, some of
20 whom are here in this room today.

21 In 1983, which was a mere 30
22 years ago, the Commonwealth, for the
23 first time ever, submitted a formal
24 anti-racial discrimination plan that was
25 finally deemed acceptable by the United

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2 States Department of Education's Office
3 for Civil Rights. Let me just spend a
4 second explaining what I mean there.

5 This is 1983. This is just 30
6 years ago. And for the first time since
7 Pennsylvania's existence, they submitted
8 a program, a program or a plan dealing
9 with anti-racial discrimination that the
10 Office for Civil Rights finally deemed
11 acceptable. That's absolutely shocking.

12 Then we fast forward to 1999,
13 which was a mere 14 years ago, when the
14 Commonwealth signed a formal agreement
15 with and at the request of the Office for
16 Civil Rights in order to resolve
17 then-unresolved and still-unresolved
18 issues regarding Cheyney University in
19 connection with Title VI of the Civil
20 Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal
21 Protection Clause of the Fourteenth
22 Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

23 In regard to what I'm here for,
24 that's this funding formula issue, in
25 regard to the funding formula, I must

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2 state at the outset that it is based on a
3 complex and esoteric 25-page document
4 consisting of algebraic equations,
5 standard deviations, square roots, Z
6 Scores, and even the Bell Curve. By the
7 way, anybody who knows anything about the
8 Bell Curve knows that that has been
9 rejected in all academic circles as
10 racist in its foundation.

11 But I will not bore you with
12 all the details about algebraic
13 equations, standard deviations, square
14 roots, Z Scores, and the Bell Curve.
15 Quite the contrary, I'll make it very
16 simple, and it goes like this: The
17 Commonwealth's funding formula is an
18 ostensibly objective process designed to
19 determine how much or how little funding
20 each of the 14 state-owned universities
21 receives based on awards and on
22 penalties. And we use the word
23 "penalties" here, but a better word might
24 be "punishments." I'll explain that
25 later.

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2 It is interesting to note that
3 this formula negatively affects Cheyney
4 University -- by the way, Pennsylvania's
5 only predominantly black school,
6 state-owned black school -- much more
7 than it does any of Pennsylvania's 13
8 predominantly white institutions. The
9 legal term for this is "unconstitutional
10 racial discrimination" resulting from, at
11 worst, malicious intent and, at relative
12 best, adverse impact. This explains why,
13 for example, West Chester University
14 received nearly \$6 million in Fiscal Year
15 2013-2014 from the Commonwealth while
16 Cheyney University received a paltry
17 470,000. West Chester 6 million, Cheyney
18 470,000. And to add insult to injury,
19 Cheyney University had its aforementioned
20 unarguably successful Keystone Honors
21 Program for academically talented
22 students cut by 25 percent. Now, you're
23 talking about the academic cream of the
24 crop, a program that everybody, from an
25 objective standpoint, agrees was

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2 successful, but unfortunately was cut by
3 one-fourth by the Commonwealth of
4 Pennsylvania. And in Fiscal Year
5 2012-2013, the aforementioned Bond-Hill
6 Scholarship Program, which is designed to
7 make sure that more students from Cheyney
8 go on to study law, medicine, and other
9 professions at state institutions, well,
10 that Bond-Hill Scholarship Program was
11 reduced in the amount of \$524,000; in
12 other words, over half a million dollars,
13 both of which are extremely successful
14 programs. It also explains why West
15 Chester University was determined by the
16 Commonwealth to have just one
17 penalty/punishment while Cheyney was
18 charged with several.

19 By the way, I'm mentioning West
20 Chester because it's a large institution.
21 It's very close to Cheyney. And one of
22 the shocking things that we learned --
23 and I mean shocking -- is that West
24 Chester University has more black
25 students than Cheyney University has

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2 students. Let me repeat that. West
3 Chester University has more black
4 students than Cheyney has students.

5 The funding formula penalties
6 or punishments are assessed to schools
7 based on such categories as low
8 enrollment. You're punished for that.
9 Insufficient retention. In other words,
10 keeping students from freshmen to
11 sophomore to junior to senior inadequate
12 scholarship resources, et cetera. But
13 how can a university increase enrollment
14 without additional state funding or
15 retain students without academic support
16 systems from the state or raise
17 scholarship money without specialists
18 hired by the state?

19 I must elaborate on this low
20 enrollment issue. Any school's
21 enrollment is obviously determined to a
22 large extent by its tuition amount, and
23 such amount is oppressively high for
24 Cheyney University students, because the
25 average household income of their

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2 families is less than \$40,000 and more
3 than 80 percent of these students are on
4 financial aid. Increases in tuition
5 automatically equal decreases in
6 enrollment. That is precisely why the
7 school's 1977 enrollment of about 3,000
8 students is now down a shocking 60
9 percent to less than 1,200 FTE, full-time
10 equivalent students. And when enrollment
11 drops, the school loses funding due to
12 FTE enrollment requirements in the
13 funding formula. This is the major
14 factor underlying the University's
15 massive \$14 million accumulated debt with
16 a structural deficit of an additional \$5
17 million more in Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

18 As noted in a May 4, 2011
19 letter from the Office for Civil Rights
20 to Governor Tom Corbett, the
21 aforementioned 1999 agreement with OCR --
22 that's what I referred to earlier in my
23 presentation that OCR and the
24 Commonwealth sat down to figure out how
25 to treat Cheyney fairly. The

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2 aforementioned 1999 agreement with the
3 Office for Civil Rights, which is the
4 federal agency responsible for enforcing
5 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,
6 quote, "requires Pennsylvania to take
7 steps at Cheyney, including those, inter
8 alia, that provide the funding and other
9 resources necessary to ensure the
10 successful implementation of these and
11 other measures." In other words, the
12 U.S. government said, hey, you have an
13 obligation under Title VI to treat
14 Cheyney equitably in connection with
15 funded. Not only is Cheyney not treated
16 equitably, it's treated poorly and a
17 racial discriminatory way.

18 One example of this inequity of
19 this funding formula is how things have
20 gotten worse instead of better. In
21 Fiscal Year 2000 to 2001, the funding
22 indicators led to basically similar
23 performance funding payments to each of
24 the 14 universities. Let me repeat that.
25 In Fiscal Year 2000 to 2001, the funding

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2 indicators led to basically similar
3 performance funding payments to each of
4 the 14 universities. However, since
5 then, the performance funding disparity
6 has expanded. As a result, in Fiscal
7 Year 2012-2013, Cheyney University
8 received the lowest, I repeat, the lowest
9 performance funding payment of about
10 \$320,000 compared with West Chester
11 University which received about
12 \$5,230,000. From the time that the
13 funding formula began in the 1980s until
14 2012 -- and this might be one of the most
15 important stats that I'm going to mention
16 today. From the time that the funding
17 formula began in the 1980s until 2012,
18 Cheyney has received approximately
19 \$7,240,000. That's \$7,240,000 compared
20 to an average of about 25 million for
21 each of the other 13 universities.

22 A reasonable person would
23 assume that the Commonwealth of
24 Pennsylvania has an arguably legitimate
25 basis for its funding formula despite its

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2 negative effect on Cheyney University.
3 But, surprisingly, it does not.

4 And, again I'm not going to go
5 through everything here. I'm just going
6 to light the pertinent parts. So I
7 should be finished in the next five, six
8 minutes.

9 In fact, the Commonwealth of
10 Pennsylvania in an October 3, 2012 letter
11 from the Governor's Office of General
12 Counsel to Heeding Cheyney's Call,
13 because this group, Heeding Cheyney's
14 Call, has reached out to the Governor's
15 legal staff. So the legal staff for the
16 Governor in October 3, 2012 letter
17 responded, and in that response, the
18 Governor's legal counsel contended that
19 Cheyney University, quote, "currently
20 receives almost three times as much in
21 state appropriations per student as the
22 other 13 universities within the
23 Pennsylvania State System of Higher
24 Education." That's almost three times
25 more than other places. So when you see

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2 this letter on the stationery of the
3 Governor's Office of General Counsel, you
4 assume that not only is Cheyney not being
5 treated poorly, it's treated better than
6 any other university. However, that
7 contention is mathematically and
8 fundamentally flawed.

9 As an illustration, if a school
10 with a student population of just one
11 student receives \$100 from the
12 Commonwealth, it could be disingenuously
13 argued that that school gets more per
14 capita than the school with a student
15 population of ten that receives \$300 from
16 the Commonwealth. The former would get
17 100 per capita while the latter would get
18 only 30 per capita. However, in total
19 dollars, the latter nonetheless has
20 gotten more than three times the former.
21 Furthermore, this per capita
22 characterization deceptively ignores the
23 vastness of the larger school's
24 facilities and resources relative to the
25 smaller school's.

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2 The Commonwealth's second
3 contention that Cheyney University,
4 quote, "is in the midst of several major
5 capital projects, including a new
6 residence hall and state-of-the-art
7 science building funded entirely by a \$70
8 million commitment made by the Governor
9 and the Pennsylvania -- PASSHE is what we
10 call it, P-A-S-S-H-E. It completely
11 disregards the fact that the two
12 so-called new buildings on Cheyney
13 University's campus are the first in
14 about three decades, while the 13
15 traditionally white institutions
16 continued and continue to build genuinely
17 new ones.

18 By the way, the living
19 conditions in the older dormitories on
20 Cheyney University's campus are, in a
21 word, deplorable. As a matter of fact,
22 that very same word was used in an
23 official 2010 report to describe some of
24 the University's physical facilities.
25 Additionally, because of the antiquated

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2 sewer system, hot water is often
3 unavailable for days at a time for
4 students in the dormitories and for
5 employees throughout the campus. In
6 addition, Waring Hall is literally a
7 boarded up eyesore with its door hanging
8 off the hinges as if it were in a
9 poverty-stricken slum area. That's 2013.
10 That's November. That's today. That
11 would not be tolerated in any of the 13
12 traditionally white institutions. And
13 speaking of those 13 institutions, their
14 student athletes justifiably complain
15 about the squalid conditions at the Cope
16 Hall gymnasium on Cheyney's campus, so
17 much so that many of those athletes
18 simply refuse to use the facility's
19 repulsive showers and locker room when
20 they compete against Cheyney University.
21 Once again, that would not be tolerated
22 at any of the other 13 institutions.
23 The Commonwealth's third
24 contention that, quote, "its investment
25 of \$118,000 per pupil in capital projects

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2 at Cheyney is more than ten times that of
3 the other state universities" is not only
4 delusory, but is also based on fuzzy math
5 and is, therefore, absolutely incorrect.
6 Moreover, it suffers from a malady
7 similar to that of the first contention.

8 As U.S. District Judge
9 Catherine C. Blake ruled on October 7 of
10 this year, it was a major case in
11 Maryland that's been going on for about
12 seven or eight years. The case is
13 captioned Coalition for Equity and
14 Excellence in Maryland Higher Education
15 versus Maryland Higher Education
16 Commission. Interesting thing about that
17 case is that it tracks almost word for
18 word the same type of things going on at
19 Cheyney, and that lawsuit actually
20 involved Maryland's four black
21 universities, and it included allegations
22 of racial discrimination remarkably
23 analogous to those raised by Heeding
24 Cheyney's Call here in Pennsylvania.

25 The judge ruled on October 7 of

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2 this year that, quote, "a state's funding
3 formula is a traceable and thereby
4 unlawful policy when it is rooted in or
5 is a continuation of the funding
6 practices that disadvantaged historically
7 black institutions during a state's de
8 jure era," unquote. Accordingly, she
9 noted -- and she based this on a major
10 U.S. Supreme Court case. That case is
11 called United States versus Fordice from
12 1992. She ruled that a state, quote, "is
13 liable for inequities that flow from
14 current funding formula policies rooted
15 in the prior system."

16 Now, unfortunately for the four
17 black schools in Maryland, they were not
18 able to show that the funding formula was
19 racial discriminatory. However, the
20 shortcomings they had in their evidence
21 don't apply here in Pennsylvania. And
22 proof of that is what I mentioned
23 earlier. In Maryland, they couldn't go
24 back and show that this bad thing
25 happened on a certain date, that bad

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2 thing happened on a certain date, and
3 these bad things were racially motivated.
4 But I already told you about what
5 happened in Pennsylvania in 1969, in
6 1980, and 1983. So as strong as the
7 Maryland case was -- and they won most of
8 their claims -- Cheyney's case here in
9 Pennsylvania is even stronger.

10 The next paragraph goes into
11 some academic treatises. There's been
12 some scholars, some academics who studied
13 all of this, and based on what they
14 conclude, Cheyney has a very, very strong
15 case in regard to this inequitable
16 funding formula.

17 Accordingly, there's an urgent
18 need to revise the Commonwealth's
19 inequitable funding formula to take into
20 account Cheyney University's historic
21 mission, its unique contributions to
22 Pennsylvania, and its immediate
23 exceptionally positive potential. Equity
24 demands that such a revision include not
25 only what is currently due, but also

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2 retroactive compensation as well.

3 As a result of all of this,
4 we're hoping and requesting that this
5 committee do all it can to help save and
6 enhance historic Cheyney University, not
7 only because of Philadelphia's direct
8 political and legal connection to Cheyney
9 University, but also because it's the
10 right thing to do. When I say "the right
11 thing to do," what am I saying? I'm
12 saying we can have additional and
13 follow-up hearings as we're having today.
14 We can suggest or you all can initiate
15 "sense of" resolutions. When I say
16 "sense of resolutions," maybe not actual
17 law, but certainly the sense of the
18 Council relative to what's going on at
19 Cheyney. Or maybe actual bills, meaning
20 legislation or -- I shouldn't say or. I
21 should say and/or, because it's not an
22 either/or proposition. Whatever this
23 committee and Council can do, including
24 any method it can ingeniously conceive
25 would be helpful.

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2 That's essentially my
3 presentation today, but I just wanted to
4 add something that's not part of what's
5 scripted here. When we talk about
6 Cheyney University's historic mission, we
7 have to take into account that Cheyney
8 University is the oldest black
9 institution of higher learning in
10 America, 1837 when slavery was alive and
11 well. And because of schools like
12 Cheyney University, me, Michael Coard, a
13 kid from North Philly, born to a single
14 parent, was able to go to a school and
15 get an excellent education. But not just
16 an excellent education, but to see black
17 professors and black administrators and
18 black role models that provided me what I
19 needed such that I was able to get a full
20 academic scholarship to law school. Not
21 because I'm some great person, but
22 because Cheyney opens its doors to people
23 who might not be able to succeed or excel
24 anywhere else.

25 If we allow Cheyney to continue

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2 to go down the path it's going, it will
3 be a horror, absolutely horror, and we
4 hope that you all do whatever you can,
5 whether it's to hold additional meetings,
6 additional hearings or issues "sense of"
7 type resolutions or legislation or
8 anything.

9 But we must not only save
10 historic Cheyney University, we must
11 enhance Cheyney University. And I'm
12 hoping that in future years, there will
13 be other folks like Michael Coard, like
14 anybody else, sitting 10, 15, 20, 50
15 years from now where you are doing what
16 needs to be done, not just for the
17 African American community but for
18 America and the world.

19 Thank you very much.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. COARD: And I'm certainly
22 available to answer any questions, and
23 also I have Professor Sonny Harris to go
24 into the details of the funding formula,
25 if there are any questions pertaining to

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2 that. But I thank you all for inviting
3 me and thank you all for listening so
4 attentively.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much.

7 Are there questions?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: As
10 some of you may know, Cheyney is also my
11 alma mater, and it's --

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
14 it's historic. It's in my family.
15 Lucien's granddaughter, my sister, my
16 sister-in-law, we all -- there are
17 Cheyney grads that go back historically
18 and move forward as well. And we are
19 grateful to have the opportunity to bring
20 this issue -- it's still state funding --
21 to this Council, and we're committed to
22 do all that we can. We all know, and
23 you've told us and all the information
24 and documentation is here. What did you
25 say, parity is equity?

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2 MR. COARD: Actually, parity
3 through equity. And I'm glad you asked
4 about that. That whole notion of parity
5 through equity is the fundamental goal of
6 what we're trying to do. Parity meaning
7 putting us on a level playing field, and
8 equity means more than just equality.
9 The state can't say, for example, we're
10 giving Cheyney as much as we're giving
11 other schools, so what are you
12 complaining about?

13 If I just may for the next 30
14 seconds use an analogy. It's like for
15 the last ten years, the Commonwealth of
16 Pennsylvania gives the other state
17 schools 99 percent of the pie, gives
18 Cheyney 1 percent. The second year, 99
19 to everybody else, 1 percent to Cheyney.
20 For the last nine years, they give 99
21 percent of the pie to the other schools,
22 1 percent to Cheyney. And then we get
23 here to the tenth and final year and the
24 state finally says, Oh, yeah, that has
25 been bad in the past, so now we'll make

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2 it equal. We'll give you 50 percent and
3 give them 50 percent. That's equality.
4 That's insufficient. What we need is
5 equity. So the term we use, parity
6 through equity, explains exactly what
7 we're about, and thanks for asking.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. COARD: And if I just may,
12 Professor Harris, I wanted him just to
13 say a few words in connection with this
14 discussion.

15 PROFESSOR HARRIS: I'd like to
16 give an example of what Michael talked
17 about, the penalties and we call it
18 punishment. The Keystone Program
19 consists of about 50 percent of the
20 student body of students with a grade
21 point average of 3.1 to 3.8 to 3.9. The
22 other 40 percent of the student body have
23 grade point averages of 2.4, 2.5 up to
24 2.8. Now, what the formula does is
25 punishes Cheyney for bringing in students

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2 with 2.4 to 2.5 to 2.8. This is how they
3 do it. If you bring in four, five
4 hundred students in their freshman year
5 that have a grade point average from high
6 school of 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, Cheyney is
7 punished for that.

8 Cheyney has a historical
9 mission that thousands of graduates from
10 Cheyney have graduated with 3.5, 3.6,
11 3.7, 3.8. Many of them are doctors,
12 lawyers, teachers, superintendents,
13 engineers. So what happens is that
14 because of the formula, it's so racially
15 discriminatory that those students that
16 you bring in with 2.5, 2.6 from high
17 school, they need some help in math,
18 science, and English. Now, they're not
19 poor in those areas. They need to just
20 be brought up to par. So, therefore, you
21 need the support services.

22 Cheyney has had a history of
23 always having support services where you
24 can bring in other people to help those
25 students to bring up their math skills,

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2 their English skills, and their reading
3 skills. Well, Cheyney was not allotted
4 the money necessary to bring in those
5 support services. So what happens, when
6 you have a freshman class of 400 and then
7 by their junior year you only have 200,
8 then what the state says, We're going to
9 punish you. Therefore, what they do,
10 they take off a certain amount of money,
11 and they do this for several areas.
12 That's why you end up with West Chester
13 having almost \$6 million and Cheyney only
14 has \$470,000. You're constantly punished
15 for so many things at this historical
16 black university.

17 Now, if you look at the 25-page
18 document, they use the Bell Curve as one
19 of the remedies for this formula, knowing
20 good and well that the Bell Curve
21 considered by most mathematicians and
22 scientists is racially discriminatory.
23 But the State of Pennsylvania, the State
24 System of Higher Education, and the
25 Governor's Office uses this Bell Curve as

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2 one of the techniques to prove why this
3 formula should exist.

4 This is just one example, and
5 as Michael said, there's several
6 punishments they have for Cheyney in
7 which West Chester only had one
8 punishment. Because West Chester -- see,
9 the formula is built on the more FTE
10 students you bring in -- the difference
11 between FTEs and head count is this, that
12 if you bring in 2,000 students, you got
13 to have at least 1,800 FTEs. FTEs is
14 full-time equivalents. That student is
15 taking 15 hours or more. So, therefore,
16 the budget is based on not how many
17 students you bring in, but how many
18 full-time equivalent students you bring
19 in with 15 hours or more. And you can't
20 bring in students that may need support
21 services and tell them you have to take
22 15 hours when somebody else with a 3.1,
23 3.2 grade point average takes 15 hours.
24 Maybe those other students need to take
25 12 hours and need the support services

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2 during the year to bring them up to par.

3 So, therefore, we are penalized for those
4 kind of things.

5 One other penalty. They told
6 Cheyney you must raise \$4 million in
7 scholarships money. Well, when you're
8 having the same kind of problems that
9 Michael just explained, it's hard to
10 raise \$4 million in scholarship money.
11 So Cheyney was unable to raise \$4 million
12 in scholarship money, so the state says
13 we're going to punish you for not
14 bringing in \$4 million, so, therefore,
15 we're going to take some more money out
16 of your budget.

17 So, for example, let's say
18 Cheyney was supposed to get \$3 million.
19 By the time they used those punishments,
20 so much money is taken off that instead
21 of Cheyney getting \$3 million, they get
22 \$470,000. Now, what are you going to do
23 with \$470,000? Which causes those kind
24 of problems.

25 And you can't expect -- one

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2 other thing. Cheyney has got no new
3 programs in the last five years. That
4 means that in order to encourage students
5 to come to Cheyney, you got to have
6 programs that meet the need of the
7 market, as Michael said, in engineering,
8 the health services, and other areas. So
9 when the other 13 schools are getting new
10 programs constantly and Cheyney is not
11 getting new programs, what do you expect?
12 This is why we are in this dilemma today.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. COARD: And in closing -- I
15 do mean closing, because we've taken up
16 enough of your time and you have many
17 other things you need to do -- I would
18 hope that folks who want more information
19 about all of this go to our website,
20 which is www.heedingcheyneyscall.org,
21 www.heedingcheyneyscall.org and get all
22 the pertinent information.

23 Once again, thank you very,
24 very much for having us here and for
25 listening so attentively. We truly

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2 appreciate it.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you both. Thank you for coming.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 all who are here with regard to this
8 issue.

9 Thank you. Okay, Action
10 United.

11 MS. SMITH: All right. Well,
12 thank you for having us here. Thank you,
13 Madam Chairwoman and Councilman Oh and
14 the rest of the members of the Committee.
15 My name is Quanisha Smith. I'm the
16 Co-Executive Director of Action United.
17 As many of you know, Action United is the
18 largest community organization of poor
19 and working families working to improve
20 communities and, most importantly, our
21 public school system. Action United is
22 also a founding member of PCAPS, the
23 Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for
24 Public Schools.

25 Over the past year and a half,

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2 PCAPS has gathered extensive input from
3 thousands of parents, teachers, students,
4 and other community members through
5 surveys, full-day conferences, and town
6 hall meetings, and we took that feedback
7 and combined it with proven strategies
8 successful in other districts similar to
9 Philadelphia and we publicized that
10 research last December in our ten-point
11 plan, the Philadelphia Community
12 Education Plan: Excellent Schools for
13 All Children, which we hand-delivered to
14 Council at that time.

15 PCAPS has now grown to over 17
16 groups, a little bit more, and we're a
17 collaboration of the major community,
18 student, labor, and faith organizations
19 in the City. Though our group continues
20 to grow, we have been consistent in
21 emphasizing two major and very simple
22 ideas, that, one, the District needs to
23 prioritize best practices in education
24 and, two, the state needs to adopt
25 sustainable streams of education funding.

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2 And I want to modify my
3 testimony a little bit to address some of
4 the things that Councilman Oh has brought
5 up and that, okay, we get these funding
6 streams. What are we going to do with
7 it? What type of education are we
8 funding? And one of our major
9 recommendations have been -- and we've
10 been working over the past year to put
11 this system in place -- is to adopt a
12 holistic approach to meeting students'
13 needs and transform local schools into
14 community hubs that exist as partnerships
15 between the school and the social -- the
16 community resources that are available.
17 And we call that the community schools
18 model and strategy, which in Jerry
19 Jordan's testimony he mentioned that
20 model.

21 And the community schools
22 strategy integrates academic, health and
23 social services, youth and community
24 development, civic engagement to improve
25 student learning and to develop stronger

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2 families and healthier communities. So
3 just to give you a brief, I guess, image
4 of what this looks like. So I'm a mother
5 walking in. I might have my small child
6 go over to the early learning. There is
7 a place in the school for me called a
8 Parent Resource Center where I can get
9 help in being a parent as well as social
10 needs that I might have. If my
11 school-age child is sick, instead of me
12 having to miss work or my child miss
13 school, there's a health center component
14 in the school where the nurse -- the
15 certified nurse acts as a liaison to the
16 doctor that's available to tend to my
17 child's needs. Also in this area of the
18 school there are social workers and
19 guidance counselors and other people to
20 attend to the other issues that my might
21 child have. And then my child goes to
22 class. So say my child is in its math
23 class. Now my child is also having
24 integrated resources, because the math
25 teacher has worked with the after-school

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2 program that specializes in math to make
3 sure that there's a seamless integration
4 on the needs that my child and other
5 students need.

6 So they really analyze in the
7 school community, which has a school
8 leadership team made up parents and
9 teachers and community members, they do a
10 needs assessment to find out what are the
11 particular needs of that school community
12 and how do we align all of our resources
13 so that we meet those students' needs.

14 And this model has been
15 successfully used around the country, but
16 particularly in one district that's very
17 similar to Philadelphia, Cincinnati,
18 where their whole school system has
19 modified so that they're community
20 learning centers. They provide
21 year-round programming during and beyond
22 the school day, including after school,
23 summer enrichment, and comprehensive
24 health services.

25 But I know we're more

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2 interested in, okay, what does is model,
3 what are the results, what are the
4 outcomes. So in Cincinnati, since their
5 program began in 2000, their high school
6 graduation rates there have climbed from
7 51 percent to 83 percent. The
8 achievement gaps have narrowed
9 considerably, and Cincinnati has become
10 the highest performing urban school
11 district in Ohio. And in Pennsylvania we
12 actually have models of this. So the
13 Roosevelt School, which has become a
14 COMPASS community school in the Greater
15 Lehigh Valley -- it's an individual
16 school, so it's not a system, but to give
17 you some numbers, in 2010 they received
18 the PA Keystone Award for meeting AYP
19 three consecutive years. And their
20 advanced and proficiency reading scores
21 rose from 33.8 percent in 2006 to 46
22 percent in 2010, and then their math
23 scores rose -- the advanced and
24 proficiency math scores rose from 50
25 percent in 2006 to 65 percent in 2010.

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2 So in one school just in three years of
3 adopting some of these major strategies
4 have done this.

5 And one thing that's really
6 important about the community schools
7 model is that it leverages resources. It
8 leverages dollars. So it's used the
9 Title I money, the federal, state, and
10 local money that's there, and it has the
11 community repurpose some of its resources
12 so that you have different leverages.
13 And when you look at the model -- and I
14 can provide some data to Council -- some
15 of the dollars are being leveraged in a
16 one-to-four or one-to-three ratio.

17 So this individual school that
18 I just named, the Boys and Girls Center
19 actually acts as their lead agency to
20 help redirect some of the community
21 resources to that school, to that local
22 hub. And Cincinnati has done this
23 successfully where all the community
24 partners that come into the school, one
25 of the rules is that they have to be

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2 sustainable, so that district dollars are
3 spent on education and that health center
4 or that after-school program, whatever it
5 is that's coming into the school, they
6 are self-sustaining. So it's not
7 draining resources from the district
8 dollars.

9 And then PCAPS also believes
10 that there's a better way to fund
11 education. As many of the previous
12 presenters have said, we need to
13 implement an equitable funding formula
14 that distributes state education dollars.
15 And we know that formula needs to account
16 for numbers of families living in
17 poverty, number of English language
18 learners and special needs students, and
19 the capacity of the local district to
20 pay. So many have gone into that, so I
21 won't go into details about that.

22 But most importantly, we need
23 to increase the revenue for public
24 education and human services. Because if
25 we're going to have for hybrid models

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2 where we're relocating resources, we need
3 to make sure there's enough money to
4 support these resources in the first
5 place.

6 So full funding requires
7 reordering state priorities in a way that
8 will make more revenue available for
9 schools, healthcare, and vital human
10 services. Corporations and the super
11 rich must pay their fair share. It's
12 really that simple for us. We need an
13 end to corporate tax loopholes and
14 subsidies. For example, the Delaware tax
15 loophole, which enables 70 percent of the
16 corporations that do business in
17 Pennsylvania to avoid paying taxes, need
18 to be closed.

19 We need to enact a fair tax on
20 gas drillers. Pennsylvania is last when
21 it comes to taxing the Marcellus Shale
22 drilling. A tax in line with what other
23 states have passed would raise 200
24 million annually. And recently that
25 number has changed. Someone even told me

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2 some of the data was if it's just 5
3 percent, we can bring in \$300 million
4 annually.

5 And we need to stop new prison
6 construction. There's a huge capital
7 investment in new prisons, and it's
8 costly, and it should be ended. We need
9 to invest in education. As we know, that
10 reduces the need to incarcerate people.

11 Also, we need charter school
12 accountability. Unchecked, unregulated
13 charter school expansion is creating
14 fiscal instability in districts like
15 Philadelphia and driving the closing of
16 neighborhood public schools. Legislation
17 that would eliminate local monitoring of
18 charters and vest all supervision in the
19 state will further weaken districts and
20 undermine democratic governance. So
21 instead we need a level playing field for
22 charters. For many of the charters, not
23 all, there's some significant barriers to
24 entry, and charters that persistently
25 underperform or mismanage public funds

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2 should be closed. Right? We're doing it
3 with our schools. Why not do it with the
4 charters? And charters should be
5 expected to innovate and produce. That
6 was the purpose of charters in the first
7 place.

8 And we need to end this whole
9 cyber school charade. For-profit cyber
10 charter schools are funded at the same
11 level as brick and mortar charters even
12 though their operating costs are
13 significantly less, costing local
14 districts millions. Moreover, these
15 schools are close to the bottom in terms
16 of academic performance.

17 And we need to strengthen local
18 control. Local districts need to be able
19 to regulate charter school growth,
20 monitor performance, and be able to shut
21 down low performing in a timely fashion.

22 Pennsylvania was the only state
23 in the country with rising PSSA test
24 scores at all grade levels from 2003 to
25 2010. Additionally, the learning gap for

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2 poorer and students of color and their
3 classroom peers was reduced by more than
4 50 percent during that time. The
5 eight-year record of the Rendell
6 Administration, which provided
7 unprecedented increased aid to local
8 school districts, has a demonstrated
9 record of classroom success as a result
10 of these investments.

11 So funding education is pivotal
12 to properly supporting proven strategies
13 for education reform, what I just named.
14 And we need reforms that are going to
15 sustain our efforts for a high-quality
16 education for all children, but
17 particularly Philadelphia children.

18 So thank you for the time.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you very much.

22 Any questions?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you.

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2 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mark
4 Mannella, CEO, KIPP; Scott Gordon, CEO,
5 Mastery Charter School; Susan Gobreski,
6 Executive Director, Education Voters of
7 Pennsylvania; Rhonda Brownstein,
8 Executive Director of Education Law
9 Center; Michael Churchill, Counsel,
10 Public Interest Law Center of
11 Philadelphia, or PILCOP.

12 So in any order. All of you
13 may feel happy to sit inside the gate.
14 We're sorry that Lawrence Jones couldn't
15 be here. He had pressing issues in
16 court. And Lisa Haver. Did we call you,
17 Lisa?

18 MS. HAVER: You want me to come
19 now?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
21 (Witnesses approached witness
22 table.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much, and we thank you for your
25 patience. We're sorry to have held you

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2 up so long, and we're grateful for what
3 you do. We do believe in our charter
4 schools. Thank you.

5 All right. Feel free to begin.
6 Mark, you want to begin?

7 MR. MANNELLA: Sure. Good
8 afternoon, Councilwoman Blackwell,
9 members of the Committee on Education and
10 Councilmembers. Before I begin, I'd just
11 like to thank the Committee for convening
12 the hearing and, in particular, I'd like
13 to thank Councilwoman Blackwell for both
14 inviting me to speak and for her
15 longstanding support of District and
16 public charter schools, including KIPP
17 Philadelphia. We're proud to operate in
18 her district and value our continued
19 partnership with her and her office.

20 Today, I want to speak for a
21 moment about the impact of the
22 Commonwealth's current approach to
23 education funding on the four public
24 charter schools I operate and oversee in
25 North and West Philadelphia, as well as

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2 an idea or two to improve the current
3 approach.

4 My name is Mark Mannella and
5 I'm the CEO and Founder of KIPP
6 Philadelphia Schools. I was the
7 principal of our first middle school we
8 opened in North Philadelphia in 2003. We
9 currently operate four schools with 1,500
10 students under two separate charters,
11 KIPP Philadelphia Elementary Academy,
12 KIPP Philadelphia Charter School, KIPP
13 the Boys, and KIPP West Philadelphia.

14 One of our priorities is
15 serving students who most need our
16 services. Last school year, 87 percent
17 of KIPP Philadelphia students qualified
18 for free or reduced lunch. One out of
19 five students received special education
20 services, 96 percent were African
21 American or Hispanic, and in addition,
22 many of our students in our schools are
23 an average of two to three grade level
24 behind.

25 There are a number of

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2 statistics and studies that speak to the
3 gains that we've made with our students
4 in Philadelphia over the past decade, but
5 I firmly believe a school's success
6 should be measured by how it sets up
7 students to have happy and independent
8 lives. At KIPP, we believe that while
9 college may not be for every child,
10 college-ready skills are. We teach a
11 college preparatory curriculum to all of
12 our students, and we hold ourselves
13 accountable not just to the rate at which
14 our students graduate high school, but to
15 how many of our students go to and
16 through college.

17 Nationally, only 8 percent of
18 students from low-income families
19 graduate from college, but the college
20 graduation rate for KIPP alumni, which we
21 define as someone who completed 8th grade
22 in one of our schools, is 44 percent.
23 While we are not satisfied with this
24 percentage, we are proud of the work of
25 our students from across the country who

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2 have earned their college degree at a
3 rate that is more than five times what
4 the statistics might expect.

5 Here in Philadelphia a study of
6 our city's public schools showed that
7 only 10 percent of students who started
8 high school in 1999 had graduated from
9 college ten years later. At KIPP
10 Philadelphia, our oldest cohort of alumni
11 are currently juniors in college. So we
12 don't have completion rates yet, but what
13 we do know is that 74 percent of the
14 students who finished 8th grade with us
15 have matriculated to college, and we
16 project that between 45 to 50 percent of
17 our alumni are on track to graduate.
18 KIPP works on a national level and KIPP
19 works in Philadelphia.

20 Though we are proud of what
21 we've accomplished so far, everyone in
22 this room knows that many children in our
23 city are still being deprived of a
24 high-quality education. We applaud Dr.
25 Hite for acknowledging the need to create

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2 more high-quality seats and soliciting
3 public input on how to do just that at
4 Monday night's SRC meeting. According to
5 Dr. Hite's presentation, 64 percent of
6 Philadelphia students attend a
7 poor-performing District or public
8 charter school.

9 Dr. Hite posed a question to
10 the audience on Monday night: What
11 actions should we take to give more
12 students attending schools where at least
13 50 percent of students are reading and
14 doing math on grade level? I understand
15 there is no easy answer to that question,
16 but I don't understand how the District
17 can do any real work towards answering it
18 without knowing how much money they will
19 have to implement whatever solution they
20 come up with.

21 It's no secret that the School
22 District is trying to solve for a complex
23 set of challenges caused by a perfect
24 storm of shrinking revenue and escalating
25 costs. This is only exacerbated by a

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2 current education funding structure, and
3 particularly the uncertainty of its
4 revenue picture, that prohibits the
5 School District from having the ability
6 to budget and plan for future years.

7 This is a very real and serious
8 challenge, which has a ripple effect on
9 all public schools operating in our city,
10 including high-quality District and
11 public charter schools. The revenue for
12 charter schools in Pennsylvania is based
13 on previous year's District expenditures.
14 So the pain that is being felt from this
15 budget in this fiscal year for the School
16 District will be coming next year for all
17 of the charters. And just like it
18 required Draconian measures for the
19 School District to balance its budget
20 this year, it will be difficult, if not
21 impossible, for the charter schools,
22 including our four, to balance our
23 budgets next year.

24 But in this post-recession
25 economy, everyone in every sector is

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2 being expected to do more with less. The
3 real issue that I call on the
4 decision-makers in Harrisburg to address
5 is the unpredictability of this revenue
6 structure. When any enterprise, no
7 matter what field, does not know how much
8 revenue it can expect, the exercise of
9 multi-year budgeting and planning becomes
10 an exercise in guesswork. Other states
11 have funding formulas that allow for
12 public schools to budget and plan around
13 their priorities in a predictable and
14 thoughtful way. According to a recent
15 report by the Education Law Center,
16 Pennsylvania's funding formula is
17 obsolete. The accountability provisions
18 in Pennsylvania code have been repealed,
19 and the funding formula is now superseded
20 by an undetermined budgeting process
21 every school year.

22 Now let's turn back to Dr.
23 Hite's question from Monday night's SRC
24 meeting. What actions should we take to
25 get more students attending schools where

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2 at least 50 percent of students are

3 reading and doing math on grade level? I

4 believe that there are some answers to

5 this question that can be implemented.

6 At KIPP we believe the actual proves the

7 possible, and you can look at public

8 schools all across this city, whether

9 they be District or charter, that are

10 helping their students to achieve and

11 grow at levels that far exceed this

12 stated goal of 50 percent on grade level.

13 The answer I would encourage everyone in

14 the City to rally behind is to invest in

15 the expansion of these high-quality

16 schools that have a proven track record

17 of success.

18 Everyone at KIPP Philadelphia

19 Schools, myself, our school leaders, our

20 teachers, our parents, we stand ready and

21 willing to do whatever it takes to

22 provide additional high-quality education

23 experiences for our city's children. The

24 School District has repeatedly told us

25 they cannot allow us to be a larger piece

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2 of the solution by serving more students
3 until they have a handle on their
4 finances and a reliable projection of
5 their revenue picture. It appears that
6 it is the ambiguity of the future that
7 keeps KIPP on the bench and others like
8 us on the bench waiting for the chance to
9 play the bigger role in the bigger
10 problem, and it is the ambiguity in the
11 future that is going to prohibit Dr. Hite
12 and his team from executing on whatever
13 answer to their question they end up
14 coming up with.

15 Our cash-strapped district is
16 faced with a daunting task. In essence,
17 it has an unfunded mandate. It needs to
18 improve performance for the students in
19 Philadelphia without knowing whether
20 additional resource will be available to
21 catalyze the progress now, tomorrow or
22 ever. I believe that implementing a
23 funding formula would allow the School
24 District's leadership to plan a smart
25 path forward based on what we know works

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2 for families and students. Additionally,
3 I believe the opportunity exists to
4 leverage KIPP and other high-performing
5 schools to be a significant part of this
6 solution.

7 Therefore, I encourage any
8 decision-maker who is listening to the
9 hearing to take the necessary steps to
10 allow all of us working to educate the
11 children of Philadelphia to plan for our
12 futures by implementing a fair and
13 reliable funding formula.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much. We do appreciate all you
17 do and look forward to expansion.

18 Any questions?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you.

22 Scott Gordon.

23 MR. GORDON: Councilwoman
24 Blackwell, Councilman Oh, thank you so
25 much for having me here and I appreciate

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2 your ongoing support of public education
3 in Philadelphia.

4 My name is Scott Gordon. I'm
5 the CEO of Mastery Charter Schools.
6 Mastery has a unique perspective I'd like
7 to share with you today. We have both
8 traditional charters, we have
9 neighborhood independent charters, and we
10 have renaissance charter schools that
11 were formally School District of
12 Philadelphia schools.

13 I want to share that the cuts
14 from the state have impacted all schools,
15 including Mastery. The insufficient
16 funding and inequitable funding formula
17 has resulted in increased class sizes at
18 Mastery, cuts to support programs, cuts
19 to extracurriculars and technology. It
20 is impacting all public school students
21 in Philadelphia.

22 It makes a difference. The
23 state has an inequitable formula that
24 does not follow the number of students
25 nor their poverty status, and it makes an

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2 enormous difference to schools like
3 Mastery.

4 I also want to share our
5 perspective on the way the funding
6 formula comes down in the City in terms
7 of difference between the District and
8 charter schools and renaissance charter
9 schools.

10 So as you may be familiar,
11 charter schools in Philadelphia receive
12 the same amount as the School District
13 does the previous year when the School
14 District removes the amount of money they
15 spend on buildings, transportation, and
16 adult education. So this year that's
17 \$8,596 per student. So that is the
18 average that is supposed to be spent on
19 every child in public education.

20 The renaissance schools have a
21 unique perspective on how this formula
22 translates to student achievement,
23 because we receive as the average, a
24 renaissance school has the exact same
25 building, the same students, the same

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2 conditions, same enrollment rules, and
3 the question is, can we do better with
4 the same average funding, and the answer
5 has been a resounding yes at the
6 renaissance schools that Mastery
7 operates. Student achievement has
8 skyrocketed in schools that have been as
9 troubled as Gratz. Scores on the PSSAs
10 have doubled across all of our
11 renaissance schools, which there are 11.
12 Scores have increased between 20 and 40
13 points on both reading and math.

14 It's important to note this
15 occurred at the same time that we
16 maintain neighborhood catchment areas and
17 actually increased the number of
18 neighborhood kids attending that school.
19 That is the result of two factors. One,
20 more neighborhood kids are attending that
21 school and, second, less students are
22 leaving the school. So concerns that
23 renaissance schools would kick out kids
24 who are more troubled has turned out to
25 be not only false, but the exact opposite

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2 has happened. Exit rates from our
3 schools have dropped between one-third
4 and two-thirds compared to when they were
5 run by the School District. So these
6 have become true neighborhood schools.

7 So Mastery would like to add
8 our voice and the nearly 10,000 parents
9 in the fight for an equitable funding
10 formula. We also want to urge the City
11 Council to pay attention to how that
12 money is being spent and the impact on
13 student achievement as we think about the
14 best form for public school students to
15 be served.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much. Again, excellent
19 presentation, and we're always happy to
20 have Mastery in our area.

21 Any questions?

22 Councilman Oh.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: For the both of
24 you actually. So you have taken over a
25 catchment area school, the management of

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2 it. There's no lottery. You just get
3 the kids that come in. Is that the
4 situation?

5 MR. GORDON: For a renaissance
6 school, it is the same enrollment rules
7 as the School District, with one
8 exception. There's a cap that's put on
9 the charter. So once we hit that cap,
10 students are put on a waiting list, but
11 only students from the neighborhood.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: And did you
13 talk about the dropout rate at, for
14 example, Simon Gratz? And since the time
15 you've taken over, what has happened with
16 the dropout rate there?

17 MR. GORDON: So it's been
18 nearly halved.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Halved. So
20 half the kids that used to drop out are
21 not dropping out now?

22 MR. GORDON: That's right.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Would you
24 attribute that to the fact that they feel
25 more engaged, they're more interested in

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2 learning? What is the reason that you
3 believe it has been halved?

4 MR. GORDON: I would say it's a
5 combination of many things. The first I
6 would say is creating a sense of safety.
7 When we talked to students in student
8 focus groups, safety was the number one
9 thing that comes up. The second is
10 feeling like this is a valuable use of
11 time; i.e., that there's a quality
12 education and adults that believe in
13 them, pushing them.

14 So I would say most students if
15 you spoke to them would complain that
16 it's much harder, that it's much
17 stricter, but believe it's being done
18 with their best interest in mind.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
20 much.

21 Thank you, Chairwoman.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you. Thank you very much.

24 PILCOP, Mr. Churchill.

25 MR. CHURCHILL: Thank you. I'm

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2 Michael Churchill from the Public
3 Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and
4 I'm glad to be able to address a few
5 remarks to you on the issue of school
6 funding formulas.

7 I think the important thing to
8 start with is that there is no state
9 funding formula at the moment. It's not
10 even obsolete. It's just non-existent.
11 What happened last year, for instance, is
12 a decision of how much money the state
13 would put out in appropriations for
14 public education was determined not on
15 the basis of need, not on the basis of
16 cost, not on the basis of any surveys of
17 districts of what they thought they
18 needed, not on any study of any sort. It
19 was simply a matter of convenience to the
20 state legislators as to how they want to
21 distribute revenues they had without
22 bothering to see whether they needed any
23 more.

24 And so what you had was \$90
25 million which they thought was available

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2 in the Governor's budget, and they
3 distributed that according to a very
4 simple formula of counting students and
5 distributing it by the aid ratio, the
6 most simpleminded distribution system
7 that Pennsylvania could really allow.

8 But then they discovered that
9 they wanted -- they had another \$30
10 million that they could do something
11 with. That went to 21 selected
12 districts, distributed on the basis of 12
13 separate formulas that literally picked
14 out individual districts around the state
15 for additional funding. Those districts
16 didn't get the funds because they were
17 any more needy than anybody else. They
18 were essentially indistinguishable from
19 any place else, except for the fact that
20 they were represented by republican
21 legislators in leadership positions.

22 That is not a system, by any
23 definition of the word.

24 Determining what school
25 districts need in order to educate their

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2 students and setting a fair division
3 between state and local sources is what
4 is meant by a funding formula. It's not
5 just a distribution formula. It is about
6 how do you determine adequacy.

7 So let's look -- and I'm going
8 to limit the number of numbers, because
9 you've heard so many today, but one
10 number is -- there's a couple of very
11 crucial numbers. One is that the state
12 pays currently on average 34.2 percent of
13 the cost of public education. Depending
14 on which census report you look at, this
15 is either the fourth lowest or the eighth
16 lowest in the country. We are an
17 outlier. We have been in the lowest 5
18 percent for as many years as I've been
19 studying -- actually, for the 20 years
20 that I've been studying these figures and
21 formulas. What consequently happens is,
22 it puts enormous pressure on local
23 funding sources.

24 In 2007, the state conducted a
25 study, which you've heard discussed

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2 before, called the costing-out study to
3 see what was necessary in order to
4 adequately bring students in each
5 district in the state to meet state
6 proficiency standards, a very sensible
7 goal. That study, which you heard
8 described as based on professional
9 research panels of educators, it also was
10 based on looking at what successful
11 school districts do around the state and
12 how much they pay. It was a combination
13 of both those methods. And it ended up
14 saying that the state needed to spend
15 \$4.4 billion more. Philadelphia's share
16 of that analysis was approximately \$900
17 million. If you applied the aid ratio of
18 the state to that amount, Philadelphia
19 would receive somewhere in the range of
20 \$638 million out of that from the state.

21 What has happened? Actually,
22 state funding since that year has gone
23 down for Philadelphia. According to
24 figures that Senator Hughes had last week
25 and which you may have seen, the funding

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2 from the basic education formula from
3 tutoring, from the Accountability Block
4 Grant, from charter reimbursements, and
5 from all the lines that go to
6 instructional purposes was 1 billion 78
7 million dollars in 2007-8. This year it
8 is 1 billion 5 million. That is \$48
9 million less for the School District now,
10 six years later, than it had then.
11 That's the source of the problem. That's
12 at least one of the principal sources of
13 the problem.

14 So you've heard eloquent
15 testimony from Helen Gym and others as to
16 what have been the consequences and how
17 it's being felt here in Philadelphia.
18 The important thing to remember here is,
19 one, we do know the adequacy target or at
20 least a place to start. We do know how
21 to turn that into a formula that
22 recognizes the higher costs of students
23 in poverty, the higher costs of students
24 in special ed, the higher costs of
25 English language learners. We can do it.

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2 The state can do it. We need the state
3 to restore the formula that was used so
4 that it can meet its constitutional
5 mandate of beginning to meet the needs of
6 all Commonwealth citizens.

7 But there's one other piece
8 that's really important to say here.
9 Whatever the formula, it will require a
10 local share, and based on that
11 costing-out study and the aid ratio for
12 the state's share, Philadelphia needed to
13 increase its local funding by about \$275
14 million. Local funding for the School
15 District has increased approximately \$80
16 million in that period. So there's a
17 continuing amount of additional locally
18 raised revenue, almost \$196 million, that
19 will be needed at some point.

20 These numbers are
21 approximations because of the changing
22 number of students enrolled and the
23 changing aid ratios over the years, but
24 it's within a very close and a reasonable
25 range.

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2 To move to that goal, the state
3 needs to give Philadelphia the right to
4 tax cigarettes, as City Council has
5 already authorized. That would indeed
6 provide more local funding. And Council
7 for its part now needs to enact the 1
8 percent sales tax dedicated to school
9 funding as the Legislature has already
10 authorized.

11 These amounts are essential if
12 the District is to be anything more than
13 surviving on life support as it was last
14 year after the Corbett's cuts.

15 Let me explain why we should
16 not and cannot be satisfied with just
17 putting in back the \$300 million that the
18 School District said it needed this year
19 in order to be able to do what it did
20 last year.

21 I calculated that if they had
22 that \$300 million and spent it,
23 expenditures in the School District of
24 Philadelphia would still be less \$2,000
25 less per student than the average of the

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2 surrounding school districts in the four
3 counties, the 61 other school districts.
4 These are students who are in the same
5 labor market competing for the same jobs,
6 and the average is \$2,000 more per
7 student. And that's not even beginning
8 to adjust for the higher costs of
9 educating Philadelphia students because
10 of the different poverty factors and the
11 increased numbers of English language
12 learners in this district.

13 So just to have the same amount
14 of money as the other districts did per
15 child, we would need \$400 million more.
16 That's why the \$300 million is not
17 enough, and we can't fool ourselves that
18 putting ourselves just back in that place
19 will be adequate.

20 So I'm calling on the Council
21 to act as quickly as it can to take
22 advantage of the fact that the
23 Legislature did authorize the sales tax
24 extension. Students cannot wait another
25 year. They are in school now. They are

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2 however old they are only once and every
3 day deprives them of the support they are
4 entitled to and need to succeed.

5 You heard from many of the
6 complaints that Helen Gym had collected.
7 We cannot afford to allow that situation
8 to continue, and I hope Council can find
9 a way to act as quickly as possible.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
12 you very much, Mr. Churchill.

13 Any questions?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much.

17 Councilman Oh.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: So following
19 what happened in New Jersey starting in
20 February 1970 with Robinson versus Cahill
21 and then the April 1973 decision by the
22 New Jersey Supreme Court and going on to
23 Abbott versus Burke and the entire line
24 of cases that have guided New Jersey
25 through and continue to affect New

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2 Jersey's education formula, we although
3 having the exact same language, I
4 believe, in our Constitution in
5 Pennsylvania, which is in the Section 14
6 of the public schools, thorough and
7 efficient system, yet we don't have
8 anything like that in Pennsylvania to
9 provide the impetus of the courts in
10 guiding the compliance to the
11 constitutional standards. And the
12 question is, will it occur outside of the
13 court's unbiased, non-political,
14 third-party oversight intervention? What
15 do you think as the attorney in this
16 matter?

17 MR. CHURCHILL: I'm glad you
18 brought that up, and it's an important
19 difference between Pennsylvania and New
20 Jersey. The New Jersey experience is
21 important because that shows that court
22 supervision, court mandates can work.
23 There's been enormous accomplishments in
24 increasing academic achievement in New
25 Jersey in the previously lowest-funded

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2 districts. But I do want to say that
3 it's not the only way it can happen.
4 There are other states where they have
5 acted and increased their funding
6 formulas without the need for court
7 intervention.

8 So I believe in the political
9 process. I am frankly heartened by the
10 fact that polling in this state continues
11 to show -- and maybe Susan Gobreski later
12 on can talk more about it, because she
13 conducted some of that polling, but it
14 essentially shows enormous support for
15 increased funding in the state. And it's
16 important for political leaders like
17 yourselves to begin to use the political
18 process to get the State Legislature to
19 do what they are hesitant to do, which is
20 the same thing, frankly, that you're
21 hesitant to do, which is the vote to
22 raise sufficient revenues for schools.
23 It is a difficult issue always, because
24 frequently there's not enough
25 understanding of why, but the good thing

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2 now is, the polls show that the public
3 seems to understand and is willing to
4 support that as long as there's
5 sufficient explanation and support.

6 So I encourage you to do that.
7 Pennsylvania on the front of the
8 litigation did go a different course. It
9 was the only state -- there are five
10 states, Councilman, who have identical
11 constitutional clauses. We all borrowed
12 it from Ohio. And Pennsylvania was the
13 only state where the Supreme Court said
14 we will not find this clause enforceable,
15 we don't think that there are sufficient
16 standards for a court to be able to
17 manage and review this issue.

18 The Education Law Center, who
19 is here with us today, and my
20 organization are actively reviewing
21 whether there have been sufficient
22 changes since 1999 when the Supreme Court
23 said that, particularly in the
24 introduction of standards-based
25 education, very clear standards that are

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2 now applying, including Keystone exams,
3 which are coming up and which will
4 control graduation rates, whether that
5 now provides the legislative direction
6 that the court seemed to think was so
7 important in determining what thorough
8 and efficient means. We really have the
9 Legislature telling us what it means. It
10 means proficiency at this level.

11 So that we are actively
12 reviewing whether it is possible to ask
13 the court -- to get the court to be
14 helpful on this problem, but meanwhile,
15 until that happens, this really is a
16 legislative issue and requires as much
17 public pressure as we can put together.
18 So that's why we're very thankful that
19 you're holding these hearings.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
21 much.

22 Thank you, Councilwoman.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much. Thank you all, gentlemen.
25 Thank you.

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2 Susan Gobreski, Executive
3 Director of Education Voters; Rhonda
4 Brownstein, Executive Director of
5 Education Law Center; Lisa Haver, thank
6 you very much, concerned citizen.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you, ladies. Thank you for your
11 patience. I'm so glad you're here and so
12 glad you stayed.

13 If there's someone else who
14 would like testify after them, would you
15 step over to my left, the side of
16 Council, and Ben will meet you there and
17 take your name, if there's somebody else
18 who would like to testify.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. GOBRESKI: Thank you very
21 much for having me. My name is Susan
22 Gobreski. I'm the Executive Director of
23 Education Voters of Pennsylvania. We're
24 a grassroots organization and we do
25 statewide advocacy work, some local work.

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2 I want to thank you for
3 inviting me to speak today and for
4 holding the hearing. And I think that
5 normally that's a perfunctory comment,
6 but I actually really want to emphasize
7 it today, because I think that the more
8 that we talk about this issue, the more
9 that we talk about state funding, and the
10 more you as policy-makers and
11 decision-makers use the opportunities
12 that you have to talk about this issue
13 and highlight and illuminate it and
14 actually even just to understand it, the
15 more we're actually going to be able to
16 move things forward in the state. So as
17 a citizen, as a mother, and as an
18 education policy person, I'm extremely
19 grateful that you are doing this today.

20 Education Voters has been
21 working on a funding formula since 2007,
22 and for too long this issue has been left
23 unattended. We took it for granted for a
24 long time. We're going to have public
25 schools that will do funding. We'll give

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2 them some money. Everything will be
3 ducky. But what we've learned is that
4 when we do that, when we are subject to
5 politicians just making decisions, things
6 can go terribly, terribly wrong, and
7 that's what's happened in Pennsylvania.

8 I've actually distributed
9 packets that include some material on how
10 money matters, our summary of developing
11 a sensible approach to funding, an
12 education declaration put out by the
13 National Opportunity to Learn campaign,
14 and some facts on education and the
15 economy and crime. You've heard an awful
16 lot today, but -- and I think Helen Gym
17 this morning talked about the fact that
18 there are real children experiencing real
19 consequences right now. I think we can
20 probably -- it's fair to say that there
21 are children who literally will not go to
22 college, and everyone who is descended
23 from them will suffer for the economic
24 damage that we're doing to them today.

25 So there needs to be enough

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2 money, and money does matter. Every
3 child is constitutionally entitled to an
4 education that allows them to meet
5 standards. So we know how much it takes.
6 We know what the kids are supposed to
7 learn, and we have experts and things
8 like Excel that allow us to figure out
9 the costs of what it takes to provide an
10 education.

11 We need to do a better job
12 acknowledging as a matter of public
13 policy that money impacts the educational
14 opportunities that they receive. So we
15 need to provide each child with a
16 reasonable set of supports, including
17 class size, highly trained teachers, arts
18 and music, early learning, a chance for
19 individual support when they need it,
20 access to take technology, safe and
21 healthy learning environments, supplies,
22 books, libraries, nurses, counselors.
23 Actually, I'll throw a little odd one in
24 here. My husband is a teacher. So toner
25 that -- school districts, every now and

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2 then they run out toner. And so toner.

3 Then he has to figure out without a book
4 how he's going to get copies to every
5 student in his class.

6 It was mentioned here today
7 that the majority of funds distributed
8 for the current year in Pennsylvania were
9 based on statistics from the 1989 to '90
10 school year. One of the things I was
11 asked to address is a couple of
12 historical facts. That was the last time
13 funds were distributed when we had a
14 funding formula until we applied a new
15 funding formula, and one of the things
16 that happened is when we eliminated and
17 eviscerated the funding formula language
18 that we have, all of the improvements
19 that had been made -- one of the reasons
20 that poor districts got hit so hard, all
21 of the improvements that were made when
22 we went back a few years, we eliminated
23 not just the funding that they had gotten
24 but the fairness that had been put into
25 place over time, which is one of the

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2 reasons that things in Philadelphia and
3 other districts across the state went so
4 badly wrong. And as a lot of people in
5 Philadelphia are aware, when you're
6 living close to the edge and close to the
7 margins, cuts are less easily absorbed.
8 So when you have more money, it's a
9 little bit easier to take a hit as well.

10 So special education funding
11 has been flat. We have been spending
12 more money over the past ten years. One
13 of the common things is, Well, we've been
14 spending more money on education and
15 performance hasn't changed, but we've
16 been spending a lot more money on things
17 like testing and accountability. So not
18 all of the resources have been going into
19 the classroom and directed at the student
20 opportunities. And I think one of the
21 things we really want to emphasize is
22 that it is an opportunity gap and an
23 achievement gap.

24 That said, a lot of progress
25 has been made. We've made progress in

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2 Philadelphia. We've made progress as a
3 nation, but we continue to have a gap
4 because as some people -- if we keep
5 things the way they are and everyone
6 improves, we will continue to see a gap
7 even though everyone starts to move up a
8 little bit.

9 So if we want -- and what we do
10 in the United States here, as we do in
11 Pennsylvania, is we do it exactly bass
12 ackwards, as I was taught to say, which
13 is that the poorest kids who have the
14 greatest educational needs get the least
15 amount of money. So it's a completely
16 inverse relationship.

17 So supports matter. You have a
18 handout in your packets that lists a
19 number of the ways that money makes a
20 difference.

21 And one of the things I want to
22 encourage you to do, like one of the
23 action steps I would ask you guys to
24 take, is to do more to educate yourselves
25 and to have a public conversation about

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2 the ways in which money matters, class
3 size, arts, recess, space for children,
4 counselors, things like that.

5 One of the things that we're
6 not doing in Pennsylvania and that we
7 need to do and that we need to do more of
8 in Philadelphia is really make sure that
9 we continue to focus on what an education
10 costs. Again, understanding what those
11 supports costs, what the proper level
12 that children need is. And really we've
13 been doing it by allocation, like how
14 much money do we feel like putting in the
15 budget? All right. Well, that's how
16 much we spend. Divide it according to
17 what you did sometime in the past. And
18 City Council by doing this, again, can
19 play a role in that.

20 The other thing is, I thought
21 about telling you, you know what you
22 should do? You should summon the
23 District here and ask them to explain to
24 you how what they're doing to train and
25 develop principals and teachers to

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2 stabilize the teaching force in the
3 schools that have -- the poorest schools.
4 These are the things that actually -- for
5 those of us who want the District to
6 improve, these are the things we want
7 them to be doing. But I felt bad
8 thinking about telling you to do that,
9 and I still think you should, but they
10 have to spend all of their time figuring
11 out how to make ends meet, how to explain
12 budgets, how to explain their needs. So
13 all they're doing is putting all of their
14 time and effort into the wrong set of
15 things, when we should be having them
16 spend time on professional development,
17 restructuring schedules, even those
18 things. So money hurts us. The lack of
19 money hurts us in yet this other way.

20 So they're focused on begging
21 and explaining constantly. Calling them
22 to question on these issues would put
23 them in a really difficult position.
24 That said, we need to do it. You guys
25 need to be asking, What do Philadelphia

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2 children deserve? How much art should
3 they have? How much class size -- you
4 know, how many kids should be in a class?
5 What size is the right size for a school?
6 How many phys ed teachers do we need if
7 we have a school of 600 kids? That's one
8 of the ways that you can move this
9 conversation forward.

10 So I have a short list that
11 I'll just add too that are in your
12 packets of things that we think that you
13 should do. One of the things that's been
14 mentioned here is the fact that since
15 money matters, Philadelphia needs to
16 continue to do more. I realize that
17 Philadelphia City Council has made great
18 strides over the past couple years to
19 improve the level of support that
20 Philadelphia has given to the District
21 and to our children, but because we've
22 made -- just because we've made progress
23 doesn't mean we've made enough progress.
24 So the City of Philadelphia is going to
25 have to find more ways to support our

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2 schools financially. And I've heard it
3 referred to as a virtuous cycle. We
4 invest in our schools. Neighborhoods get
5 stronger. People move in. They pay
6 taxes. So I think we really need to see
7 this as an investment.

8 I think I'm going to say one
9 new thing today, which is that the City
10 should consider whether or not it's
11 appropriate when giving out tax
12 abatements whether or not you should be
13 giving away the School District's share
14 of the tax abatement. When you guys
15 decide to do the tax abatements, you're
16 making a decision right now that that's
17 good for the School District. It
18 actually may very well be the right thing
19 for the City of Philadelphia to do that,
20 but I'm not entirely convinced. In fact,
21 I'm not convinced that giving away the
22 School District's share is the right way
23 to do it. That may not be a huge dollar
24 amount, but as we know, little bits can
25 matter a lot.

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2 And we're going to need to look
3 for additional sustainable funding. I
4 realize that you passed the cigarette
5 tax, and thank you for that. We're going
6 to need to press elected officials, many
7 of whom are your colleagues and many of
8 whom you work with in other ways, to
9 continue to fight at the state level.

10 In your packet is something
11 called Developing a Sensible Approach to
12 Funding Schools, and it highlights
13 basically three principles for funding.
14 One, what an education costs. Two,
15 what's fiscally responsible and
16 sustainable for communities. And, three,
17 what's legal and ethical and meets our
18 constitutional obligation.

19 We have a small sign for you.
20 We gave this out in Harrisburg when we
21 did an event on the funding formula, but
22 it does actually -- we do have
23 constitutional language in Pennsylvania
24 citing the educational obligation that we
25 have.

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2 The final thing I'll say --
3 there's a number of other things listed,
4 but we need to continue to eliminate the
5 way that the broken funding formula
6 impacts children. With charter schools
7 in Philadelphia, this is a big issue.
8 And I just want to qualify my statement.
9 I'm actually a parent of a child in a
10 charter school. I served on the charter
11 school board for five years. I support
12 charter schools. They're part of the
13 public education landscape. It is not
14 charter schools' fault that they take
15 money away from the current schools, but
16 they do. Now, that is the fault of the
17 Legislature. They adopted a funding
18 formula that did that, and we need to
19 figure out how to change it. We're going
20 to need to figure out how to attack that
21 locally and at the state level. So
22 advocating for fixes to the funding
23 formula so that we stop pitting groups of
24 children against each other. Each side
25 in all of that has a real argument to

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2 make about where they're coming from, but
3 those are all good-faith people who are
4 trying to educate children, and if we had
5 a good funding formula, what we would
6 have is a system that said these are the
7 means of delivering public education, so
8 these are the things that -- we need a
9 funding formula that does that.

10 I'm actually going to stop,
11 although on the last page of my
12 testimony, I want to highlight we have
13 some concerns about Senate Bill 1085,
14 which is moving in Harrisburg, which does
15 actually address some of the charter
16 school issues. It creates a private
17 authorizer system and eliminates
18 enrollment caps, which we believe would
19 be deeply, deeply harmful to
20 Philadelphia's fiscal stability when it
21 comes to funding our schools.

22 And I'm going to stop there.
23 Although the -- actually, the last thing
24 I want to highlight is, in your packet as
25 part of the National Opportunity to Learn

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2 Campaign is an education declaration that
3 provides a framework for how we should be
4 thinking about education moving forward.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much.

7 The Chair notes that Councilman
8 Bill Green is here. We thank him for
9 being here as well.

10 Questions?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much. Thank you for that
14 insightful testimony.

15 Rhonda Brownstein.

16 MS. BROWNSTEIN: Thank you.

17 Good afternoon, Councilmembers. My name
18 is Rhonda Brownstein. I'm the Executive
19 Director of the Education Law Center.
20 We're a statewide organization that works
21 to ensure that all of Pennsylvania's
22 children have access to quality public
23 schools. I'm also a native
24 Philadelphian. I attended and graduated
25 from Philadelphia public schools.

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2 I have a lot to say, but
3 actually I know you've heard pretty much
4 everything I would say. That's one of
5 the problems with going last. So I'm
6 actually going to -- I'm not going to
7 read anything from my testimony. I'm
8 going to put it down. I'm going to make
9 a couple of very quick points.

10 First, it's very important that
11 you do what you're doing, which is to try
12 to generate more local revenue for our
13 schools. However, as many other people
14 have testified, the real problem here is
15 the state's failure to step up and do its
16 responsibility to Pennsylvania school
17 children.

18 We have -- the Education Law
19 Center has put out a report that I think
20 you have a copy of earlier this year that
21 shows that Pennsylvania is one of only
22 three states that doesn't have a funding
23 formula.

24 And I am happy to answer any
25 questions. I'm going to stop right

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2 there.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you very, very much.

5 Questions?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you so much.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: I'm sorry.
10 Could you comment as -- the Education Law
11 Center is the entity that brought the
12 lawsuit in New Jersey. Are you the same
13 entity?

14 MS. BROWNSTEIN: We actually
15 were at many one point many, many years
16 ago at our genesis. We split off maybe,
17 I don't even know, 30 or something years
18 ago, but we work very closely with the
19 Education Law Center.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: So without
21 making you go through a long diatribe,
22 could you succinctly just state from the
23 Law Center's perspective what is the
24 issue around the constitutionality of
25 thorough and efficient funding for the

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2 State of Pennsylvania?

3 MS. BROWNSTEIN: Mike Churchill

4 I thought explained this really well, but
5 let me just add one thing. It actually
6 kind of shocked me when I moved back to
7 my city, because I've been away for a
8 number of years. I was working in the
9 deep south in Alabama, which has a very
10 poor public education system, and my son
11 went to school there K through 12 and
12 they just -- it was very similar to how
13 Philadelphia is now actually. And I came
14 back to my hometown less than two years
15 ago and I felt like I was in Alabama.
16 And interestingly, Alabama is one of the
17 other states where the Supreme Court
18 refused to hear a challenge under their
19 state's Constitution. Slightly different
20 words. It's not thorough and efficient
21 as it is in New Jersey, Ohio, I think
22 Maryland, Pennsylvania, but it had a
23 similar type clause, and the Supreme
24 Court said the same thing. We can't hear
25 this. This is a political question for

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2 the Legislature. And it was just a way
3 for the Legislature to wash their hands.

4 It kind of shocked me to see
5 that that's where we were at in
6 Pennsylvania. I think I agree with Mike
7 that now is the time to take another
8 crack at that. Things have changed
9 dramatically. Not only has the condition
10 of public education gotten worse, but as
11 Michael said, we now have state standards
12 that were not in effect 14 years ago,
13 which is essentially what the state
14 Supreme Court relied on. So we don't
15 have any standards, we really can't tell
16 you what a thorough and efficient
17 education is. Well, now we have plenty,
18 plenty of standards.

19 So we are working on developing
20 litigation. And I agree with the premise
21 of what your question was to Mike
22 Churchill earlier where you said don't
23 you need that sort of outside independent
24 part of government, and I think that,
25 yes, that we see throughout this country,

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2 starting even before the Civil Rights
3 Movement, but all throughout the Civil
4 Rights Movement in this country where you
5 had to have the courts get involved,
6 because you could not rely on the
7 government, state or federal, to protect
8 people's rights. And so we're at the
9 point now where we have to turn to the
10 courts and ask them to step up, do their
11 duty, and enforce the Constitution.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
13 much.

14 Thank you, Chairwoman.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much.

17 Lisa Haver.

18 MS. HAVER: Good afternoon.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
20 afternoon.

21 MS. HAVER: If I talk fast,
22 everybody can go home.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It's
24 okay.

25 MS. HAVER: Thank you so much

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2 for having me. Good afternoon. My name
3 is Lisa Haver. I'm a retired
4 Philadelphia school teacher and
5 co-founder of the Alliance for
6 Philadelphia Public Schools. I am really
7 going to be brief because, Councilwoman
8 Blackwell, you were so gracious to meet
9 with members of our organization last
10 week.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It was
12 important.

13 MS. HAVER: I just have to say
14 to Councilman Oh, every time I come to an
15 education hearing, you are here all day.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: With the
17 Chairwoman.

18 MS. HAVER: I really appreciate
19 that. Of course.

20 I wanted to talk a little bit
21 about how the lack of equitable state
22 funding is actually leading to more
23 inequity in Philadelphia. A recent
24 headline of salon.com article proclaimed
25 that privatization is undoing Brown v.

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2 Board of Education. Inequitable funding
3 for children in cities across the
4 country, including Philadelphia, is at
5 the heart of this matter. How is this
6 happening? How are some schools in the
7 City getting more than others? Why do
8 some students benefit from more funding
9 than others?

10 One of the problems is that
11 more and more school funding is being
12 decided by private organizations who meet
13 behind closed doors. Parents and
14 community members continue to be shut out
15 from having almost anything to say about
16 funding and other crucial decisions which
17 affect our schools and our children.

18 In November 2011, the School
19 Reform Commission, which is controlled by
20 the Governor, approved the adoption of
21 the Great Schools Compact without benefit
22 of any public discussion. The program as
23 formulated by the Bill and Melinda Gates
24 Foundation called for what they as
25 non-educators call reform. The mandates

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2 included in this Compact signed by the
3 Mayor and then Superintendent Leroy
4 Nunery and a number of charter school
5 operators called for more charter
6 schools, more turnaround schools such as
7 renaissance schools, which means most of
8 the faculty and even the principal is
9 forced out, and it calls for school
10 closures. The Compact also gave birth to
11 the Philadelphia School Partnership, also
12 a private organization, and the Compact
13 called for adoption of the common core
14 standards. This is two years ago, before
15 most people even knew what they were.

16 The Great Schools Compact
17 Committee, which is chaired by the
18 Mayor's representative but does not
19 include any representative from City
20 Council, meets on a regular basis, but
21 does not admit the public. It makes
22 decisions about the mandates I just
23 mentioned, which are then passed by the
24 SRC, again, with almost no public
25 discussion.

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2 The Compact's promise to,
3 quote, "eliminate barriers to
4 collaboration and share information" has
5 yet to be carried out. In fact, members
6 of our organization, the Alliance for
7 Philadelphia Public Schools, has over the
8 past year hand-delivered letters to
9 leaders of both the Great Schools Compact
10 Committee, which is Dr. Lori Shorr, and
11 the Philadelphia School Partnership,
12 along with the William Penn Foundation,
13 which donated -- passed along \$5 million
14 from their foundation to the School
15 Partnership. Our letters, which were
16 hand-delivered, requested that the public
17 be admitted to all meetings in which
18 crucial policy decisions are decided,
19 obviously including funding, but we have
20 yet to get answers from any of them.

21 Members of these organizations,
22 the Board members are elected by no one
23 in the City and, therefore, are
24 accountable to no one. Decisions about
25 which schools receive funding, which

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2 should be made by public officials in
3 public meetings, have increasingly become
4 the purview of these private
5 organizations and particularly the School
6 Partnership. And our organization had a
7 serious problem with the School
8 Partnership when they actually lobbied
9 the Governor to withhold the \$45 million
10 in federal funding as part of what they
11 called a rescue package.

12 The School Partnership has
13 received millions over the last two years
14 from many private donors, in addition to
15 the William Penn Foundation. They've
16 allotted money to the schools of their
17 choice, most of them charters. The
18 ramifications of this are clear. Schools
19 which receive additional funding above
20 that of those who struggle with what they
21 get just from the District budget will be
22 able to hire more staff and acquire more
23 resources. These schools thrive while
24 others continue to struggle. Their
25 chances of staying open while others get

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2 the ax are obviously much better.

3 There's nothing wrong with
4 affluent individuals and corporations
5 from donating money to public schools,
6 but why are we allowing them to decide
7 who gets that money and who doesn't? In
8 just two years we've watched a district
9 devolve into a system of haves and
10 have-nots.

11 And as I said -- I'm going to
12 jump to the end. I just want to say
13 another thing which concerned us that I
14 believe Helen touched on, was schools
15 kind of asking parents to donate money.
16 Any child -- my three boys graduated from
17 public schools here in Philadelphia. If
18 this were happening, would I give money?
19 Yeah, I would. I wouldn't feel good
20 about it, but, you know, it's my child in
21 that school. We're very concerned about
22 that adding to the inequity of how
23 schools are funded, and it's a very
24 tricky thing. Any parent wants their
25 child to thrive and wants the school to

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2 be a good school. But, you know, I
3 taught at Harding Middle School in
4 Frankford. Those parents don't have --
5 these are parents who are struggling to
6 keep food on the table and to not have
7 the utilities shut off this winter. They
8 don't have \$60 a month.

9 So I appreciate Council having
10 this. I appreciate both of you for being
11 here. The state needs to step up and
12 honor its constitutional responsibility
13 to fund our schools.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much.

17 Thank you all very, very much.
18 We appreciate your patience and your
19 excellent testimony.

20 Mr. Eric Knight. Thank you.

21 (Witness approached witness
22 table.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you, Mr. Knight, for your patience as
25 well.

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2 MR. KNIGHT: Thank you. I know
3 it's been a long day. I want to thank
4 you for the opportunity to speak.

5 I want to applaud the Education
6 Committee for basically holding the
7 Philadelphia School District, the Mayor's
8 feet to the fire. I come to you today as
9 a parent, as an advocate for my son's
10 education, and I feel as though parents
11 should have a right to fight for their
12 child's education, whether they decide
13 it's a public school, a charter school, a
14 Catholic school, whatever the case may
15 be. And I've been hearing the rumblings
16 about school funding. We've gone up to
17 Harrisburg. We've gone to Mayor's
18 Office, things of that nature. And my
19 displeasure with the School District
20 asking for the money that they needed
21 time and time again is that nowhere in
22 that conversation did I ever hear from
23 the Philadelphia District is, number one,
24 this is how much we need, but, more
25 importantly, this is how things are going

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2 to change. And what's going to stop you
3 from coming to Harrisburg next year
4 asking for the same amount of money or
5 more.

6 And for a representative of the
7 School District to sit here and you ask
8 them how much do you think you'll need
9 the next coming year and they really
10 don't have any answers for that, can't
11 tell you when they'll have an answer for
12 that, I think that's something the School
13 District needs to basically go back and
14 do their homework and come up with some
15 type of report, because they have to
16 do -- they have to assess what they have
17 and what they need. And I really, really
18 don't -- I hear all this talk about
19 money, money, money, money. But in fact
20 you are -- you got enough money to do
21 basically -- you got the money to do what
22 you did last year with the money that you
23 have now. So on that sense, since you
24 don't know what your revenue is coming,
25 at that point I think you should operate

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2 as though that's all you're going to get
3 next year at that point.

4 Now, I hear about these schools
5 are performing well, these schools aren't
6 performing well, their crowning jewel is
7 Masterman and Central, and I have no
8 problem with that, but if those are your
9 crown jewels and you have these charter
10 schools that are either turning around
11 schools or creating schools and having
12 high-performing students and turning
13 around those proficiency grades, I'm not
14 saying that the Philadelphia School
15 District has to embrace these charter
16 philosophies lock, stock, and barrel, but
17 apparently they're doing something you're
18 not doing. And there's something going
19 on at Masterman and that's going on
20 Central that's not going on at these
21 other schools. And I really don't
22 think -- I realize some of it is money,
23 but I don't think it's a lot of it. I
24 think a lot of it goes back to the kind
25 of curriculum. And I just would welcome

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2 City Council and anybody involved with
3 the state level, whatever, is constantly
4 hold the School District to the fire and
5 make them do an introspective of
6 themselves. This is where we are, this
7 is what we need, this is why we need it,
8 and if you give us this money, this is
9 how things are going to change.

10 And for the most part, that's
11 basically my testimony. I just wanted to
12 thank you for all your work and my chance
13 to speak, and glad the parents have an
14 opportunity to be a part of this
15 discussion and debate.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you, Mr. Knight.

18 Any questions?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
21 much.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much.

24 Is there anyone else here who
25 would like to testify?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
4 we thank you all for being here. I think
5 we will conclude our hearing, our
6 Education hearing, and we will recess
7 subject to the call of the Chair.

8 Let me say a special thanks to
9 Councilman Oh who is, as has been said,
10 very diligent and committed on this
11 issue.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you all very much, and this hearing is
15 recessed.

16 (Committee on Education
17 adjourned at 3:25 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
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