

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 9, 2012
10:42 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL CLARKE
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN JAMES KENNEY
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS-BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

BILLS NO: 120164, 120165, 120166, 120173, 120174,
120175, 120230
RESOLUTION: 120167

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good morning. The hour
3 has come and the Committee will now come to
4 order. I would like to ask everyone to be
5 seated.

6 This is a continuation of the Public
7 Hearings of the Committee of the Whole regarding
8 Bills No. 120164, 120165, 120166, 120173,
9 120174, 120175, 120230 and Resolution No.
10 120167.

11 I would like to ask Ms. Lewis to read the
12 titles of the Bills and Resolutions.

13 MS. LEWIS: Bill No. 120164, an Ordinance
14 to adopt the Capital program for the six Fiscal
15 Years 2013 through 2018 inclusive.

16 Bill No. 120165, an Ordinance to adopt the
17 Fiscal 2013 Capital Budget.

18 Bill No. 120166, an Ordinance adopting the
19 Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2013.

20 Bill No. 120167, a Resolution providing for
21 the approval by the Council of the City of
22 Philadelphia of a Revised Five Year Financial
23 Plan for the City of Philadelphia covering
24 Fiscal Years 2013 through 2017, and

1 incorporating proposed changes with respect to
2 Fiscal Year 2012, which is to be submitted by
3 the Mayor to the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
4 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority") pursuant
5 to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement,
6 authorized by an ordinance of this Council
7 approved by the Mayor on January 3, 1992 (Bill
8 No. 1563-A), by and between the City and the
9 Authority.

10 Bill No. 120173, amending Section 19-1806,
11 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
12 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the Board
13 of Education of the School District of
14 Philadelphia to impose a tax on the use or
15 occupancy of real estate within the School
16 District of Philadelphia, under certain terms
17 and conditions.

18 Bill No. 120174, amending Chapter 19-1500
19 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Wage and Net
20 Profits Tax," by repealing Section 19-1508,
21 entitled "Refunds and Forgiveness for Poverty
22 Income."

23 Bill No. 120175, authorizing real estate
24 taxes for the City of Philadelphia and the

1 School District of Philadelphia for Fiscal Years
2 2013 and thereafter, by amending Chapter 19-1300
3 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate
4 Taxes," to provide for a tax and tax rate on
5 real property, for exclusions, and for an
6 established predetermined ratio; and by amending
7 Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code,
8 entitled "School Tax Authorization," to further
9 authorize the Board of Education of the School
10 District of Philadelphia to impose a tax on real
11 estate within the City of Philadelphia and
12 providing for a tax rate and for exclusions; all
13 under certain terms and conditions.

14 Bill No. 120230, authorizing real estate
15 taxes for the City of Philadelphia and the
16 School District of Philadelphia for Fiscal Year
17 2013 and thereafter, by amending Chapter 19-1300
18 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate
19 Taxes," to provide for a tax and tax rate on
20 real property; and by amending Chapters 19-1800
21 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "School Tax
22 Authorization," to further authorize the Board
23 of Education of the School District of
24 Philadelphia to impose a tax on real estate

1 within the City of Philadelphia and providing
2 for a tax rate; all under certain terms and
3 conditions.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Ms. Lewis.
5 And we have two departments today. That would
6 be Commerce Department and Capital Programs.

7 Will Capital Programs go first and approach
8 the witness table.

9 (Witnesses approach witness table.)

10 Good morning.

11 MS. RHYNHART: Good morning.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: State your name for the
13 record.

14 MS. RHYNHART: Rebecca Rhynhart, Budget
15 Director. Morning.

16 MR. JASTRZAB: Gary Jastrzab, Executive
17 Director of the City Planning Commission.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you and welcome.
19 There is no testimony; so therefore, I would
20 recognize Councilwoman Tasco.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very much.
22 I missed the day that you all were testifying.
23 And I have some questions I want on the record
24 relative to the Capital Projects Office. And

1 some of the experiences we've had in working
2 with that department on projects in my district.

3 I heard, and I don't know where I heard it
4 from, that this office, you all are looking at
5 trying to reorganize and/or probably
6 restrengthen the -- change the way you do
7 business in that Capital Projects' Office.

8 Is that true and what are you planning to
9 do?

10 MS. RHYNHART: What we are looking at
11 currently is the overall capital process. So,
12 the Mayor mentioned it in his budget address and
13 acknowledged that there is a problem with the
14 length of time it takes to complete capital
15 projects. And there's numerous reasons for why
16 that is. And it's been stated by certain
17 Council members as well as, I think, the Mayor
18 when he was a Council member.

19 So, we want to take that on and look at
20 that and say, why does it take so long to
21 complete? Could we do things faster? Could we
22 possibly do things cheaper while maintaining the
23 quality? And we -- in order to reach that goal,
24 we have established a working group with the

1 Council President's office to start to look at
2 how do other cities and counties organize their
3 capital process, their capital project's office.
4 How do they staff? How long does it take to get
5 things done? What are the legal impediments?
6 Procurement?

7 You know, there is various different
8 factors that go into why things might take a
9 long time. And we want to try to make it
10 faster. So at this point, we don't know the
11 answers yet, but we have started -- we have met
12 already.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, one -- one
14 example I want to give to you, which is very
15 troubling to me -- because once we put in a
16 request, we are constantly moving forward with
17 other Council business. So, to have staff, you
18 know, monitor the department we give work to is
19 a time waster for us.

20 We ask for -- we got -- the air conditioner
21 broke at Finley Rec Center. In 2009, the
22 request came to me with a cost of \$120,000 to
23 get the air conditioner repaired.

24 MS. RHYNHART: Okay.

1 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Now, I get a letter
2 April 12, 2012 for the same request. And now
3 the cost is \$262,000. And I would like somebody
4 to tell me why it's taken that long from 2009?

5 And the money was there because we
6 appropriated it -- I won't say we didn't
7 appropriate it. We gave permission for the
8 dollars out of my Rec Budget to buy the
9 air-conditioner. Every time I go to Finley I
10 say, well, where is the air conditioning. Well,
11 it's some excuse. So, now we are here April 12.

12 I don't know if the repairs or going to get
13 a new air conditioner, but it's now summertime.
14 Air-conditioner is still not installed. And I
15 don't know if it will be installed for 2013.

16 MS. RHYNHART: Let me ask someone else to
17 come up to help answer that question.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Dave. State your name
19 for the record, please.

20 Good morning.

21 MR. IFFRIG: Good morning. My name is Eric
22 Iffrig with the Department of Public Property.

23 The Finley Air-condition Project funding
24 request was done prior or previously with the

1 allocation, wasn't done back in '09. It was
2 either done by mid '10 or later.

3 The problem with the original estimate was
4 based on replacing the coils which were damaged.
5 The job that we had a contractor review under
6 requirements contract to include the replacement
7 of the coil, the compressors for the gym
8 air-conditioning and incidentally for the rest
9 of the compressors for the building, which were
10 going bad which were not part of the original
11 work, we received in February.

12 Those numbers were given before, and that's
13 the reason why the project cost more. We have
14 been trying to get the schedule. We can't order
15 all of it -- all the work right now, but what we
16 have done is split the work order under
17 Requirements Contract to order the equipment
18 with the available funds, and then when
19 allocated, will pay for the installation.

20 There is a lead time on the equipment. We
21 should be moving ahead already with the
22 equipment order when it comes in ready to
23 install it, and we should make it in June.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Just could you explain

1 to me if we put in the process for getting an
2 air-conditioner installed, because all of that
3 just doesn't make sense to me.

4 MR. IFFRIG: Well, it's a different
5 project, that's why. The original project or
6 the original expectation, and I didn't put in
7 for that, was that expectation only the coil
8 that's a split system. There's a compressor --

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, why does it take
10 years to get to the point of where we can
11 install. I mean, it's been --

12 MR. IFFRIG: For one thing --

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Even in 2010, my notes
14 say that we requested dating back to at least
15 the Summer of 2009.

16 MR. IFFRIG: Without funding we can't do
17 the job. And without the allocation, we can't
18 do the job.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: But we have the money.

20 MR. IFFRIG: We may have the money, but it
21 has to be allocated.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: We approved it based
23 on the funds in our budget.

24 MR. IFFRIG: And I agree and would like to

1 do that.

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: We sent you the
3 letter. We know that you say this is what it's
4 going to cost. We say, okay, we are okay'ing
5 this project. So, we give you the money. The
6 money is there, then it takes two years to even
7 find out you need something else.

8 That is my frustration.

9 MS. RHYNHART: Councilwoman, I think -- we
10 hear your frustration. I hear your frustration.
11 I think that's really one of the reasons why we
12 have said, look, there is an issue there. There
13 is definitely an issue. I agree with you.

14 And that is why we've established this
15 working group to work with Council to figure out
16 what are other cities and counties doing? What
17 are private sector entities doing, and how can
18 we do this faster? What's going on?

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, private industry
20 calls the company, tells them to give them a
21 price. They engage them, and then they do the
22 job and it's done.

23 I had some floors done. I called the
24 contractor. He said this is how much it's going

1 to cost. This is the day I'm going to do it,
2 and it's done in three weeks.

3 MS. RHYNHART: Well, we do have certain --
4 we do have certain procurement rules and rules
5 that are based on law that we have to follow.
6 But again --

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: It takes years to do
8 that?

9 MS. RHYNHART: I'm agreeing with you that
10 there is an issue to be worked on.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can we -- I know there
12 are other people that want to talk.

13 Go ahead, if she will yield.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I yield.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: First of all, with all
16 due respect to everybody in this area,
17 nothing -- I mean nothing ill willed about this.
18 Because everybody I come to and asked for help
19 have done their best for help.

20 But over two years ago I asked for one
21 thing, and that was a Matrix of Charter
22 Requirements, Code Requirements and Custom and
23 Practice. And what could we do to change the
24 charter or to change the code or to change the

1 practice. And we were actually making headway.

2 And all the sudden, it became a Black Ops
3 Operation. And it got pulled back and nobody
4 can talk to me in the Managing Director's
5 office. Nobody can talk to me here or there.
6 And we stopped. It all stopped.

7 Why does it take so long to find out why it
8 takes so long? It's like, it's been over four
9 years of trying to find out why it takes so
10 long. And on top of that -- you're talking
11 about Finley. I want to know when the great
12 pyramid of Murphy Recreation Center is going to
13 be started again, because that job is taking
14 like -- you can build a pyramid faster than you
15 can fix a rec center.

16 I understand the working group. I
17 understand -- but when? We were making
18 progress, and then the progress stops for
19 whatever reason. And I couldn't talk to anybody
20 anymore. We could have had legislation moving
21 through this Council, changing codes, changing
22 charters. Why do we have to wait till -- I
23 don't understand it.

24 138 steps, as I understand from my

1 educational process with the people in Capital,
2 137 steps or 38 steps, it's crazy. And it costs
3 more money.

4 The other -- frankly, the other problem is,
5 public gets frustrated because we allocate the
6 money, it don't get done. The City doesn't do
7 anything for us. And then we go do AVI on top
8 of it. It's like -- they see nothing or they
9 see very little for what they're spending
10 because it takes so long, people die before the
11 rec center gets built.

12 MS. RHYNHART: Okay. So, there is a few
13 different points that you've raised.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I've been raised them.
15 This is not like a new conversation.

16 MS. RHYNHART: Okay. But you -- you've
17 addressed it on the record, so I'll address --

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Ms. Rhynhart, can you do
19 me a favor.

20 MS. RHYNHART: Sure.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: One, in Councilwoman
22 Tasco's case, arguably I don't understand -- I
23 understand you said that there was no money or
24 it was not signed off. How -- and that cut down

1 a particular period of time.

2 But for the record, how long before the job
3 is put in, the mistake or whatever clerical
4 error was discovered till now? What is that
5 time -- what is that actual time frame?

6 MS. RHYNHART: I don't know the answer to
7 that question. This is very specific.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: So, when was the request
9 made -- yes. Her frustration is very specific.

10 MR. IFFRIG: And I can check on that
11 because I don't have the exact date. But there
12 is a difference between Council authorizing
13 funding for a project and the funds being
14 allocated, which allows Public Property to put
15 out a contract or a work order.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Who does the
17 allocation?

18 MR. IFFRIG: I'm sorry. Who does what?

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Who does the
20 allocation?

21 MR. IFFRIG: That's done through the
22 Finance Department approved by the Controller.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So, you're saying I
24 can say I want this air-conditioner in 2009, and

1 you're telling me it's going to cost \$120,000.

2 I sign off the letter, send it back to you and
3 somebody in Finance just holds it up?

4 MR. IFFRIG: That's -- nobody should be
5 holding it up. Like I said, I have to check the
6 time. I am under the impression it was a lag.
7 I'm not sure. I can get you the dates to find
8 out.

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: You're -- you and I
10 have had this conversation ever since I been
11 here, okay.

12 MR. IFFRIG: Almost.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Because of the same
14 conditions, the same problem. And by the time
15 we get to the end of the project to maybe get it
16 started, it's escalated in costs. And nobody
17 can tell me why. It's just very -- the people
18 over at this rec center -- we have basketball.
19 We have dancing. We have all these activities.
20 And these people in this building with no
21 air-conditioning.

22 What happened to the air-conditioning?
23 Well, they -- one lady told me -- she said they
24 say they don't have the money. I said, what do

1 you mean they don't have the money. I
2 appropriated the money for the project. So, I
3 get all this feedback. I am just really up to
4 here with it.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, it speaks to
6 Councilman Kenney's concern.

7 Ms. Rhynhart, can you explain if there was
8 a task that said here is the 138 steps to go
9 from concept approval to implementation, what
10 happened with that schematic so that all of us
11 can clearly understand and even track -- even
12 track where something is being held up so we
13 might inquire or assist or send over the other
14 piece of paper that is required?

15 We really do need to kind of understand the
16 black box of construction in a rec center.

17 MS. RHYNHART: Sure. I think to address
18 Councilwoman Tasco's point on this, I mean, I
19 think conceptually there should be no reason why
20 if money is allocated in 2009, why that
21 shouldn't get done much faster.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I don't have to wait
23 until the budget is passed. We have money from
24 back years.

1 MS. RHYNHART: I know. I know. That's why
2 I'm agreeing with you. And that's why I think
3 that this is a major issue that needs to get
4 resolved. And that's why --

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I hope it gets
6 resolved before 2015, and you all are gone.

7 MS. RHYNHART: I think -- I want to resolve
8 it -- in this next budget cycle, I want to get
9 it resolved. I do. I agree with you.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's like groundhog
11 day.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can we -- excuse me.
13 Can we do a little better than that?

14 Can we -- can we say that since this was
15 started, Councilman Kenney has told us that we
16 have walked this route before, can we get a
17 commitment of a time that we'll get an answer?

18 MS. RHYNHART: Sure. I mean, I think that
19 we have already had a Working Group meeting that
20 involved the Council President's office and also
21 Henon's office as a representative on that
22 committee. So, we are working with the Council
23 President's office on that so that there should
24 be good transparency with how we are moving

1 forward.

2 We had our first meeting, I think, a week
3 ago. We will continue to meet and work on this
4 over the summer. I will be happy to meet with
5 you in a month or two months and say this is
6 where we are so far.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: With all due respect
8 Mr. Chairman, that -- this is why I get mad.

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I'm glad I'm not the
10 only one.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We started working on
12 it a week ago. I been talking about this for
13 almost four years with this group.

14 Why can't we just make progress without
15 shutting the whole operation down and then
16 starting it back up again and meeting a week
17 ago?

18 MS. RHYNHART: I guess I don't --

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I don't understand.
20 The people sitting at the ta -- on that side and
21 over there, I don't blame them. They are stuck
22 -- they are handcuffed and ankle manacled. They
23 can't do anything. But we knew what all these
24 steps were. Why can't we just start putting in

1 legislation to change that? Why do we need --

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: So, can we do better
3 than let's meet a month from now, maybe over the
4 summer? Can we get this done this fiscal year
5 that we at least have -- now, wait a minute, I
6 didn't say fix it. At least have a road map.
7 That we should know what the process is, and we
8 should be able to commit it to a process
9 evaluation review chart, and we should be able
10 to get it.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I have that list. I
12 have the list.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: You have the list?

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But I don't know what
15 the list is whether it's mandated by charter or
16 by code or by custom. That is what I needed to
17 know so I can start changing the list and start
18 whittling the 137 steps down to maybe 10.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can we get a commitment
20 from the Working Group that -- 30 days
21 unrealistic?

22 MS. RHYNHART: To look at the 100 -- I
23 think there is actually 130-some steps to see
24 what is the restrictions on each? What legal

1 restrictions. I am not a lawyer, but I think
2 that sounds reasonable. I mean, honestly, I
3 don't know -- Councilman, I know you are
4 frustrated. At this point right now --

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We were making
6 progress. And then -- why did it stop?

7 MS. RHYNHART: I don't -- okay. We can
8 talk.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Managing Director's
10 office told me that we can't talk about this
11 anymore because we are doing something
12 internally. I was like, why?

13 MS. RHYNHART: Okay. I wasn't -- I will
14 look into that. But really, by working with the
15 Council President's office, we are trying to
16 work with Council. So, if you feel like there
17 is a communication breakdown, then we should
18 talk about that.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: No. I feel like for
20 some reason or another -- before the Council
21 Pr -- before this Council President was elected.
22 This is before Darrell Clarke became Council
23 President. We were working on this and were
24 told we can't work with you anymore. It's a

1 secret. It's not very transparent either. It's
2 just nuts.

3 (Discussion held off the record.)

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: I understand that
5 Council President is working with you on this.

6 MS. RHYNHART: Yes.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: And Councilman Henon is
8 working with you on this.

9 MS. RHYNHART: That's right.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: In light of the fact
11 that we're dealing with a whole bunch of other
12 priorities such as, you know, a major budget
13 small matter, but this is something that every
14 District Council person deals with every day.
15 And summer is-a coming.

16 If you've ever been in a gym like that, you
17 can't --

18 MS. RHYNHART: I know.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Play basketball or do
20 anything in an oven.

21 So Councilman Henon, do you think 30 days
22 is reasonable to get back to us with some kind
23 of scope of what the problem is as Councilman
24 Kenney has said, we can start to either

1 legislatively address these items?

2 COUNCILMAN HENON: I'll be happy to have
3 those discussions and come up with a timeline to
4 get these -- get this information and the
5 process down, yes.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. So, that beats
7 the summer.

8 MS. RHYNHART: Sure.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: So, we're down to 30
10 days. That gives us a clock.

11 Is that sufficient to you, Councilwoman?

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Listen -- listen, I
13 wish them well, but I don't think anything is
14 going to change. Okay.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I'll be in here next
17 year yelling and screaming about this.

18 So, I wish you well.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can we --

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: And I hope you can
21 change it.

22 MS. RHYNHART: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: But I will have a
24 conversation with you about that.

1 MS. RHYNHART: Okay.

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The other issue I want
3 to raise --

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Go ahead, Councilwoman.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: This is my time -- my
6 callback.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: This is your time. Yes,
8 ma'am.

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The other issue -- I'm
10 glad to see Commissioner of Rec here. It's
11 basically, these issues deal with the Rec
12 Department.

13 MS. RHYNHART: Okay.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I asked for -- I want
15 a spray park, Second and Reed, right? I want a
16 spray park. For some reason I can't get that
17 kind of spray park in my neighborhood.
18 Something -- well, we can't give you this, but
19 we will give you that. But I want this, you
20 know. And I have the money to do it.

21 It's not that the money is not there. I am
22 just laying this stuff out to you.

23 MS. RHYNHART: Okay.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Because I'll have a

1 conversation with you about it, all right?

2 MS. RHYNHART: Okay.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The other issue is --

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilwoman, I'm sorry,
5 I didn't understand. Is it a particular type of
6 spray park?

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Yes. And it's a
8 beaut -- go to Second and Reed and see that
9 spray park. Okay. Go down there and see that
10 spray park. You will never see a spray park
11 like that in our community. You won't see it.
12 And you can't get it. Because you never --
13 there's always some excuse why we can't have it.

14 MS. RHYNHART: I don't know about that, so
15 we should talk about it. It doesn't -- that
16 doesn't make sense on the surface.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I got three little
18 sparrows sprouting out some water. I don't want
19 that. I want a spray -- some reason, there is
20 always an excuse why we can't get it. And got
21 plenty of land. I got plenty of money, but I
22 can't get the pool that I want.

23 We built Dorothy Emanuel, five million
24 dollars. Never do that again in life. Ask for

1 a spray pool, I can't even find it. It says
2 it's there. The equipment, the flooring, the
3 kitchen is -- we haven't had that open for about
4 six years. The floor, the quality of material
5 is terrible. The floor is all torn up.

6 I go in the ladies bathroom, there is a
7 hole in the tile, okay? Tile in the kitchen is
8 gone. Now, we got to go back and redo the
9 kitchen. I want to know what kind of a
10 materials are we ordering?

11 The other thing is, who is monitoring these
12 projects? Who monitors them? Who oversees the
13 work with the contractor from the Department to
14 see that they are sticking to the
15 specifications, that the architect is involved
16 from the beginning and the whole drawing not so
17 that we will know what kind of -- what quality
18 of work equipment they are using because it
19 doesn't make sense to have that center five
20 million dollars and the kitchen for it, there
21 are young kids in the kitchen.

22 It's not an industrial floor. It's up.
23 It's gone. Okay. I mean, those are my
24 frustrations.

1 The other issue is we ask the -- we asked
2 about minority participation. So, we were told
3 that -- that they put it in the -- Procurement
4 puts it in the contract, but there is nobody to
5 oversee it. So, therefore, the only way you can
6 get the contractor is if somebody complains on
7 this project, they get flagged and can't do
8 another project for maybe two or three years.

9 I don't know if that's true, but that's
10 what --

11 MS. RHYNHART: Let me look into that. I
12 thought OEO had involvement in that. And that
13 there was a system coming into place.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Are they doing the
15 day-to-day monitoring to see if the contractor
16 has subcontracted out to minority contractors or
17 minority workers on the project?

18 That is the issue.

19 MS. RHYNHART: Okay. I can look into that
20 for you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Who is overseeing
22 that? Then I get the neighborhoods coming to me
23 saying we don't have any people from the
24 neighborhood or there is no diversity of work

1 force, and these cars are from Jersey.

2 MS. RHYNHART: Okay.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Just like one was
4 parked outside today in my parking space from
5 Jersey on that project downstairs. I'm angry.

6 Let me see. What's the next one.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilwoman, somebody
8 should be able to answer her monitoring
9 question. Who monitors our jobs.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Just point of
11 information.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilman.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: When you're talking
14 about materials, never ever allow them to put
15 anything down that is not a wood basketball
16 court, period. Because even though it's
17 \$100,000, if you maintain it, it lasts forever.
18 It's like the Palestra. You put in those crazy
19 rubber floors, within five years they are all
20 sticking up in the air.

21 Now you can't, at Shot Tower, for example,
22 you can't use it now because it's a liability
23 issue. All the District Council people, just
24 from my experience at Murphy Rec and at --

1 what's the other one? What's the one at 16th --
2 at Guerin. At Guerin wood floor only. Should
3 be in the Charter.

4 (Laughter)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you. Thank you,
6 Councilman.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I am venting my
8 frustration because I have been here a long
9 time. I have done Dorothy Emanuel. We did
10 Finley. It took -- I wasn't even elected when I
11 worked with John White and Gordon Linton, 1980
12 to 1990 to build an addition to Finley Rec
13 Center. And the only way I got that done was I
14 held up everything else on the project -- on the
15 project list and put all the money into the
16 project, so it can get done.

17 So, those are the frustrations you will get
18 and I get. So you know, I learned the way to
19 work it now. You don't get anything for
20 anything else until you finish this project.

21 So, it's -- I hope there is some change,
22 Councilman Henon. And I am going to have a talk
23 with you about it, okay, so you understand what
24 I'm talking about, all right. So when you go to

1 the Committee, then you will have my insight
2 into this because I am very, very annoyed with
3 this whole project. All of the projects I've
4 had to deal with. It's always been some stuff
5 with it.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Councilwoman.
8 Are there any other questions for this panel?

9 Hearing none, thank you very much. Thirty
10 days.

11 MS. RHYNHART: Sure.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Next will be.

13 Would you give us a second. We're checking
14 on President Clarke.

15 (Brief moment taken off the record.)

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Members of Commerce,
17 come to the witness table. I understand the
18 President is on his way.

19 (Members approach witness table.)

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, gentleman.
21 Again, we are back in session. This is the
22 Commerce Department.

23 Would you state your name for the record,
24 please.

1 MR. GREENBERGER: Is it not on? There we
2 go.

3 Alan Greenberger, Deputy Mayor for Economic
4 Development and Director of Commerce. Kevin
5 Dow, our Chief Operating Officer; Duane Bumb,
6 Senior Deputy Commerce Director are with me.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilman Clarke.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chair.

10 MR. GREENBERGER: Good afternoon.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

12 MR. GREENBERGER: Morning.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Morning. Get
14 you in before the morning.

15 Couple of quick questions and then get you
16 out of here. Talk to me about your
17 organizational structure.

18 MR. GREENBERGER: Okay.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: The Commerce
20 Department side of your ledger.

21 MR. GREENBERGER: Okay. We have several
22 operating divisions. Obviously, I am at the top
23 of that. We have an Office of Business
24 Services, which is -- you stop me if I'm not

1 answering your question. Office of Business
2 Services, which is sort of a concierge service
3 to small business throughout the City. People
4 spread out in various quarters of the city doing
5 that.

6 Office of Economic Opportunity. We know
7 about that.

8 Office of Neighborhood Economic
9 Development, which is specifically there to deal
10 with improvements to commercial corridors
11 throughout the city.

12 A business attraction and retention group.
13 Those groups --

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: If you can, as
15 you name them, can you tell me who is
16 responsible for -- who is the head person in
17 those particular.

18 MR. GREENBERGER: Sure. Office of Business
19 Services, Curtis Gregory; Office of Economic
20 Opportunity, Angela Dowd-Burton; Office of
21 Neighborhood Economic Development, Karen Fegely.
22 There is obviously a sort of in-house
23 administrative side that is headed up by Linda
24 House. All of those people answer to Kevin.

1 Dow, Chief Operating Officer.

2 Then there's another group in the office of
3 Policy headed up by Sara Merriman. A
4 Development Services Group headed up by John
5 Mondlak. And a Business Attraction Group headed
6 up by Karen Randal. All those people answer to
7 Duane Bumb.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. That's
9 the extent of --

10 MR. GREENBERGER: Did I leave anything out?
11 Okay. That's it.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Who does Brian
13 Flanagan work for?

14 MR. GREENBERGER: He works for me.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So where is he
16 in the chart?

17 MR. GREENBERGER: He's under -- he's under
18 the Deputy Mayor. He is within the Commerce
19 Department but he's specifically -- he my Chief
20 of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff Brian Flanagan
21 and a fellow name Jeremy Thomas work for me.

22 He specifically is there to assist in
23 redevelopment -- key redevelopment projects.
24 Because, as you know, these projects take a lot

1 of time. Some key projects take a lot of time
2 and kind of quiet effort to get done. That is
3 what he is in charge of, a few very specific
4 projects.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So, he reports
6 directly to you?

7 MR. GREENBERGER: He reports directly to
8 me. Obviously, coordinates with the rest of the
9 team, as well.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. In -- in
11 your office, how do you instruct members of your
12 team or how do they interact with Council
13 Members relating to the various aspects of the
14 operation? You know, every Administration has a
15 different way.

16 Fortunately, or some people might say
17 unfortunately, been here through a number of
18 administrations throughout my public service
19 life from Staff Person, Chief of Staff,
20 Councilman now.

21 How -- what's the relationship? Is it a
22 structure or informal process as it relates to
23 Council Members? Do you understand?

24 MR. GREENBERGER: Yeah. There's a lot

1 of -- I call them informal relationships that
2 are established between a given Council Member's
3 staff and my staff. There is usually a fair bit
4 of conversation that goes on related to specific
5 projects in districts staff to staff.

6 And then there are, I think just by a
7 matter of policy, we want a much limited -- more
8 limited number of people, myself, Kevin or Duane
9 typically. But occasionally, other senior staff
10 like Brian that might be talking to Council
11 Members directly.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. So, when
13 a -- I will just tell you -- when a -- because
14 sometimes I know that there is a process where
15 developers, they contact the Council person
16 first because they believe that that might be
17 the most difficult hurdle, at least politically
18 and community wise.

19 MR. GREENBERGER: I have heard that.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Solve that, then
21 go to the regulatory process of interacting with
22 the government.

23 MR. GREENBERGER: Yeah.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And sometimes

1 it's the other way around. Early on in my
2 tenure before the Mayor got everything staffed
3 up, when I would get a person -- get a call from
4 a major developer, and I'd say, okay, seems like
5 it's reasonable because I don't want to bother
6 the Mayor/Administration with every little thing
7 that comes before us. Because most of it's not
8 legit. I would call the Mayor or something like
9 that.

10 So when the other side of the ledger, when
11 a major developer comes to Commerce instead of
12 going to the Council person first, how does
13 that -- how does that work from your side of the
14 street, so to speak?

15 MR. GREENBERGER: We try to make sure that
16 District Council Members know what we are doing
17 on big projects.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: When you say
19 "try", what do you mean?

20 MR. GREENBERGER: Well, meaning it's on
21 mean typically. Because every major development
22 project ultimately has to run through me. So, I
23 need to take responsibility as does Senior
24 Staff, somebody like Brian, to make sure that

1 you -- let's say if it's you -- you personally
2 or your key staff members who are responsible
3 for development know what is going on.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

5 MR. GREENBERGER: The structure is -- you
6 and I have done this, whether it's meetings,
7 phone calls. Particularly with transactions,
8 it's typically best to do it as meetings and/or
9 phone calls. Because as you know, many
10 transactions have confidentiality/legal issues
11 associated with them that need to kind of play
12 out.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Correct. So
14 when you say major products, what do you -- how
15 do you characterize that? Like, what would you
16 call say, for instance, a strip mall? Would
17 that be characterized as a major contract?

18 MR. GREENBERGER: Oftentimes, those do show
19 up in front of me, but typically not. They are
20 more often showing up in front of somebody
21 either Duane in many cases, Brian Flanagan in
22 some cases or sometimes directly in front of
23 John Modlak, head of Development Services
24 because that's the kind of attention they need.

1 So, one way --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I mean for a new
3 strip mall.

4 MR. GREENBERGER: Yeah, yeah.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Development of a
6 new strip mall.

7 MR. GREENBERGER: One way to distinguish it
8 is projects show up that need entitlement:
9 Zoning Board Relief or Ordinance Relief. Those
10 obviously -- those show up in planning typically
11 because they have to go through the Planning
12 Commission. I'm not involved in every single
13 one of those. Some of those are pretty
14 straightforward things that staff deal with
15 directly.

16 Then there are increasing sizes of projects
17 in which it's not simply entitlements. There
18 might be financing issues that show up.
19 Sometimes the gateway for those projects turns
20 out to be PIDC because people know that PIDC is
21 a financial transactor.

22 It's hard to -- I've never made it a policy
23 to say there can only be one way in because it's
24 not realistic. Council Member may be the way

1 into a project for some things. Duane often
2 serves as a way in for projects on other things.
3 The ones that -- that I asked Brian Flanagan to
4 deal with are really related to three key
5 development areas in town: North Broad, Market
6 East, Hunting Park West. Those all stem from
7 plans.

8 So in my head, those are -- those are
9 places where we literally have to work to
10 extract projects out of a plan, so they're not
11 even regulatory yet. They are, like, let's get
12 a project to happen.

13 Does that make sense?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I mean, it makes
15 sense because you said it. I am just --

16 MR. GREENBERGER: Do I make sense? Let's
17 put it that way.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I am trying to
19 get a handle on who should be calling my office,
20 and who I should be calling.

21 MR. GREENBERGER: That's an easy answer. I
22 give you an easy answer on that one. If you
23 have a question, I want you to call me.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

1 MR. GREENBERGER: If there is a big project
2 out there you have issues with it or concerns or
3 questions, I would like you to call me. That's
4 the easiest.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And similarly,
6 if there is a big project out there, then you
7 will call me at the earliest possibility.

8 MR. GREENBERGER: Yes. That's what I --
9 that's what I should be doing. I believe that's
10 what I do, but I certainly admit there have been
11 times when I personally missed it.

12 Why? Because there's a whole lot of stuff
13 swirling around. And I'm getting distracted by
14 lots of different things.

15 So if what you're getting at is that I
16 missed something, I want to talk to you about
17 that.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I know you're
19 trying to figure out what I am getting at. I
20 will get you after the hearing.

21 MR. GREENBERGER: I have a guess.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All right. I
23 see Councilwoman Tasco, I don't want to abuse my
24 time.

1 Question came up to me at an event about
2 the Navy Yard. Who is responsible for the Navy
3 Yard.

4 MR. GREENBERGER: Navy Yard is managed on
5 behalf of the City by PIDC.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: What is the
7 City's relationship as it relates to that
8 management in terms of are they being directed,
9 or are they essentially we just turn the Navy
10 Yard over to PIDC and it is kind of --

11 MR. GREENBERGER: My office, meaning both
12 Deputy Mayor and Commerce and Planning work
13 collaboratively with PIDC. They generally take
14 the lead on things like planning and development
15 issues down there because a lot of it is related
16 to the land.

17 Is there, like -- for example, is there
18 infrastructure to support development X? And
19 they also have a full time manager of the land,
20 so that it's natural that many of those
21 questions go to them.

22 But in terms of broad strategy, overall
23 planning and, again, major project development,
24 we work on those things collaboratively. We are

1 probably -- we meet formally -- so called
2 formally, meaning a scheduled meeting every
3 week, 8:30 in the morning on Tuesdays with PIDC
4 that generally lasts two hours. It goes over
5 all major projects that are out there that
6 involve both of us.

7 But I would say in a given week between --
8 particularly between Duane and frequently with
9 me and frequently with other staff members, we
10 are working with them every single day, staff to
11 staff.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. And
13 what's your interaction with the Council person
14 or PIDC's interaction or you with the Council
15 person that represents that area?

16 MR. GREENBERGER: I can't speak
17 specifically to the -- what the exact status is
18 of the relationship with Councilman Johnson.
19 But I know that over the years there have been
20 many meetings to make sure that Council person
21 from that district knows what's going on.

22 Do they know --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Well, Council
24 person for last 12 years have been me, Council

1 President.

2 MR. GREENBERGER: Right. And do they --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Little
4 different. I am learning it's a little
5 different.

6 MR. GREENBERGER: Well, from my perspective
7 just for whatever it's worth, Council President,
8 but you're also District Councilman, Fifth
9 District. And we have the same obligations to
10 you as we have to the other nine District
11 Council Members to help make sure that they know
12 what's going on in their district.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I only say that
14 in relationship to my question about the
15 relationship between the Council person
16 currently and who they are and the former
17 Council person who also happened to be the
18 Council President.

19 What I am saying, it's a little different.
20 I know it's a little different now that I
21 experienced both roles. So, I am just saying
22 that I -- you said that over -- the history has
23 been that you have a relationship with the
24 District Council person there. That District

1 Council person was a little different than the
2 District Council person is now.

3 MR. GREENBERGER: Specifically, in regards
4 to the Navy Yard, I don't know exactly what the
5 status of the discussions are that anybody at
6 PIDC has had with Councilman Johnson. Be happy
7 to find out for you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. So, there
9 is really no oversight over PIDC beyond
10 transactional -- an occasional transactional
11 interaction?

12 MR. GREENBERGER: To the extent that it
13 involves the day-to-day management of the yard,
14 no, that is right. We are not sitting looking
15 at every decision they are making. We are
16 trusting them to manage it. But we are looking
17 at broader issues with them about what goes
18 there? What's going to go there? How do we
19 make a plan for the future? What are the
20 projects? How do we interact with them?

21 Those are all part of the collaborative
22 effort.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. Do you
24 have similar relationship with any other

1 quasi-government agency?

2 MR. GREENBERGER: We do. Particularly at
3 the moment with the Delaware Waterfront
4 Corporation is an example. They are, in
5 essence, acting as our agent in trying to get
6 projects developed on the Waterfront, so every
7 single of those projects because of my status on
8 the Waterfront Corporation on the Board as part
9 of the Executive Team and sort of key part of
10 the master plan effort, we are involved in every
11 single project that goes on, on the Waterfront.
12 That is an example of one.

13 It shows up at the neighborhood levels with
14 smaller development corporations. Those tend to
15 be managed through our office of Neighborhood
16 Economic Development.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. All
18 right. Thank you.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
21 Mr. President.

22 Are there any other questions for this
23 panel? These witnesses? No?

24 Seeing none, Council will break until 1

1 p.m., at which time we will have School Board
2 Public Testimony.

3 So, thank you very much.

4 (Council break taken at 11:30 a.m.)

5 - - - - -

6 (Council Hearing commenced at 1:04 p.m.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

8 We will resume our Public Hearings with regard
9 to the School District of Philadelphia.

10 We're going to ask Mr. Jerry Jordan,
11 President of Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
12 to come forward and testify. We thank him and
13 thank all of you for being here. We saw you
14 yesterday and saw you last night.

15 And one thing is for sure, there is plenty
16 of discussion. Solutions, that's one thing; but
17 discussion, at least that's good. But thank you
18 and thank you for all you are doing and all that
19 PFT does. Thank you.

20 MR. JORDAN: Thank you very much,
21 Councilwoman Blackwell.

22 Good afternoon. And to the members of City
23 Council, it's a pleasure to be here once again.
24 Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the

1 School District's Budget and its blueprint for
2 transforming Philadelphia's public schools.

3 The School District's mission is to deliver
4 a high quality education to 193,000 public
5 school students. And that is precisely what has
6 been overlooked in the School Reform
7 Commission's overly ambitious blueprint to
8 transform public schools. The SRC plan isn't a
9 plan about education.

10 In the name of fiscal responsibility, this
11 plan will cannibalize the School District, will
12 close 26 percent of the schools over five years,
13 force 40 percent of the City's children into
14 charter and cyber charter schools, divide the
15 city into achievement networks and through
16 competitive bidding, transfer responsibility for
17 educating Philadelphia's children to outside
18 managers for five years. Of all the experiments
19 that have been visited upon the City's children
20 over the past 12 years, this one is the most
21 cynical and destructive.

22 Destructive because there is absolutely no
23 evidence that this enormous shake up and
24 reorganization will improve student achievement

1 or give students access to the educational
2 opportunities they deserve.

3 And cynical because it was rolled out
4 without any dialogue or input from the major
5 stakeholders: Parents, educators and the
6 community on which this plan will have an
7 enormous impact.

8 The SRC Plan assumes that by virtue of
9 closing schools, expanding charter schools and
10 cyber charters and turning over management to
11 outsiders, that educational outcomes will
12 improve. There isn't a shred of research or
13 evidence to support this assumption. In fact,
14 like thousands of charter and EMOs, the research
15 so far is not showing these strategies to
16 contribute to widespread academic success.

17 It ignores research showing that two-thirds
18 of Pennsylvania's charter schools perform the
19 same or worse academically than district-run
20 schools. Ten of the state's twelve cyber
21 charters are costly failures. We are concerned
22 about the chaos and disruption that closing 40
23 schools in a single year will have on students
24 and communities.

1 Students will be forced to travel greater
2 distances to schools in unfamiliar
3 neighborhoods. Community programs based in
4 neighborhoods -- based in neighborhood schools
5 will suffer and blight will increase.

6 Communities deserve a voice in a process that
7 will result in the loss of central spaces for
8 community programming, closing playgrounds and
9 sports fields to community use and destroying
10 institutions that anchor neighborhoods.

11 It is clear to me and to my members and to
12 our community partners that the School
13 District's plan to destroy the School District
14 in order to save it is another misguided and
15 expensive experiment. There are better ways to
16 raise achievement and to improve graduation
17 rates. There are research-based programs and
18 strategies to prepare Philadelphia's children
19 for college and careers. Every successful
20 School District uses proven programs to educate
21 their children successful.

22 In Philadelphia, we use these strategies in
23 fits and starts. We implement half a program
24 and expect full results. We take every shortcut

1 to success. There are no shortcuts. Is there
2 an alternative to this SRC plan? Give children
3 the schools they deserve.

4 The PFT has identified several
5 research-based strategies that have proven to
6 raise student achievement without making
7 students the subjects of more experiments.
8 These strategies are used in all successful
9 schools; in Lower Merion, in Radnor, in Council
10 Rock. They are used because they work.

11 Every child deserves to get a good start.
12 We know that early childhood education, dollar
13 for dollar, is the best investment we can make
14 in children. So why has the School District cut
15 early childhood programs?

16 Starting at age three, we must provide
17 children with a high quality childhood -- early
18 childhood education to develop social and
19 emotional skills, provide health and nutrition
20 services, and offer an age-appropriate
21 curriculum designed to increase vocabulary, life
22 experiences and cognitive skills. Our support
23 for full day kindergarten must never waiver. It
24 is the best investment Philadelphia has ever

1 made in its children's futures.

2 Every child deserves small class sizes.

3 Every child deserves to learn in a safe and
4 secure environment. The School District will
5 never make all public schools safe as long as it
6 strips away resources we need. You cannot
7 reduce supervision and resources, nonteaching
8 assistant, counselors, nurses and school climate
9 staff and expect schools to be safer. Every
10 school needs anti-violence and anti-bullying
11 programs, peer mediation and restorative
12 practice program.

13 We need alternative schools for children
14 who are chronically disruptive and a variety of
15 educational options for students who are bored,
16 behind and acting out. School facilities must
17 be well maintained, bright and cheerful and show
18 respect for those who learn and work there. And
19 we must -- we have to work in partnership with
20 parents, faith communities and other schools to
21 help teach the values of self discipline,
22 teamwork, fair play, honesty and respect for
23 others.

24 Every child deserves high quality caring,

1 respected teachers and staff. Effective
2 teaching and school leadership are two of the
3 most important in school factors in a child's
4 education. But high poverty schools typically
5 have fewer applicants, high turnover and less
6 experienced educators. Give principals,
7 teachers and the staff the tools of training and
8 the latitude to work collaboratively and
9 creatively in their schools to deliver
10 instruction in ways that best meet their
11 students needs.

12 Schools should have access to focused
13 meaningful, professional development and support
14 for teachers and staff. To improve teacher
15 retention in high need schools, the District
16 should work with its union partners to develop
17 initiatives and programs to help those schools.
18 A child deserves a rigorous curriculum that
19 educates the whole child.

20 Every child needs a safety net when he or
21 she falters. Research is clear about the
22 warning signs of academic failure. Students who
23 have excessive absences or failing one or more
24 core subjects or exhibit behavioral problems are

1 at greater risk of academic failure and dropping
2 out. Fortunately, we can use research-based
3 programs and data gathered at schools to
4 diagnose academic weaknesses early and provide
5 resources to intervene immediately.

6 Every school must establish a culture of
7 high expectations for every child and address
8 educational inequalities including resources and
9 uneven discipline policies that push challenging
10 students out. The key points for interventions
11 are third grade if a child isn't reading at
12 grade level; fifth grade and sixth grade when a
13 child is failing, acting out or truant; and
14 ninth grade when students make the transition to
15 high school. Intervening with the right
16 resources at the right moment makes a
17 difference. And schools need comprehensive rap
18 around services.

19 Schools in high poverty neighborhood
20 schools need additional resources to be
21 successful. Community schools where a variety
22 of services are based in school buildings are an
23 effective way to address some of the nonschool
24 factors that can become impediments to high

1 academic achievement. Every child deserves
2 adequate, equitable and sustainable education
3 funding.

4 At the heart of the debate over the future
5 course of our schools is a real need for a
6 better and more equitable system for funding
7 public education. We can never stop fighting
8 for a fair and robust funding system.

9 Pennsylvania ranks 43rd in the nation in
10 investing in public education. And our schools
11 are more dependent than ever on local property
12 taxes. As a result, there are major disparities
13 in educational opportunities across the
14 Commonwealth with winners and losers separated
15 by as much as \$10,000 per child. As a
16 community, we cannot accept funding that puts
17 our children at a competitive disadvantage with
18 children in wealthier districts.

19 Together we must fight for a State funding
20 formula that levels the playing field for all
21 children. We must improve the Districts' fiscal
22 and educational transparency, accountability and
23 oversight and develop funding mechanisms that
24 are both equitable and sustainable. If you need

1 proof that these strategies will turn schools
2 around, you don't have to go far to find it.

3 In December of 2010, the State Senate
4 directed the Joint State Government Commission
5 to study 82 school districts. And they found 82
6 districts that they found to be successful in
7 the costing-out study and to report to the
8 Senate Education Committee their best practices
9 and other factors that are believed to
10 contribute to their success. The study found
11 that resources matter. Only 7 of 82 successful
12 districts were both high performing and low
13 spending. So, let's dispense with the notion
14 that schools, especially charter schools, can do
15 more with less.

16 A study released Tuesday found that through
17 private funding -- private fundraising,
18 successful charter school companies like KIPP
19 and others spend up to \$4,300 more per student
20 to educate their children than surrounding
21 public schools. In addition, the Pennsylvania
22 Senate Report found the most frequently cited
23 best practices were offering full day
24 kindergarten, having reduced class sizes in the

1 lower grades, providing tutoring assistance and
2 increased instructional time, monitoring
3 individual student achievement, providing
4 teacher education and focused professional
5 development programs, offering dual enrollment
6 and other unique learning opportunities for
7 students. Remarkably, the study also concluded
8 that outsourcing isn't the answer for larger
9 districts.

10 And I quote: "The result of the survey
11 indicate larger school districts would be well
12 advised to consider providing employee benefits,
13 auxiliary services and special education
14 programs and services in-house rather than
15 through consortia arrangements."

16 Other key factors and success, not
17 surprisingly, are strong parent and community
18 involvement, fundraising through nonprofit
19 entities to cover costs that budgets cannot
20 cover and support of administrators and school
21 boards. However, the study found that favorable
22 social economic factors play, "a far more
23 significant role", than what superintendents
24 were willing to acknowledge.

1 "There are strong correlations between
2 District PSSA scores and the percentage of
3 economically disadvantaged students as well as
4 between District PSSA scores and the locale of
5 the district," meaning urban, suburban, rural or
6 town.

7 While correlation does not equate to
8 causation, it is probably safe to assume
9 districts with a higher economic disadvantage
10 population need to work harder to obtain PSSA
11 scores. Additionally, since nearly all cities
12 have a larger than average percentage of
13 economically disadvantaged students, it would be
14 logical to assert urban districts require
15 additional resources to obtain PSSA test scores
16 similar to districts with low poverty rates.

17 This latest reform proposal is a disaster
18 waiting to happen. Like clusters that provide a
19 costly and unmanageable outside managers who
20 came and went without significantly adding to
21 student achievement but cost more money. I
22 suspect this latest slew of reforms will be
23 looked upon as fad-ish and foolish five years
24 from now.

1 Successful reforms are research based,
2 carefully planned, data driven and student
3 focused. Our alternative strategies meet those
4 criteria. I urge you to send the School Reform
5 Commission and their Blueprint back to the
6 drawing board. It isn't right for education,
7 for children or families, for neighborhoods or
8 for Philadelphia as a whole.

9 Isn't it time to do what research says
10 works and stop experimenting on our children?

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
14 much. As always, your testimony is on point. I
15 wanted to ask you -- we mentioned these
16 questions yesterday to members of the School
17 Reform Commission.

18 Have you heard any details about cuts to
19 libraries, school nurses, school security staff,
20 arts and music that these -- when they will be
21 restored? Do you hear anything about it in your
22 travels as to what we can expect?

23 MR. JORDAN: We haven't had a sufficient
24 number of art teachers, music teachers,

1 nurses -- all of the categories that you
2 mentioned. However, in December there were
3 additional cuts. And many of the educators and
4 nurses were cut in December. We have not heard
5 anything, and this Blueprint does not state that
6 those positions are going to be restored.

7 If you recall in the District's testimony
8 yesterday, I heard more than one time that the
9 District has said that the school budgets are
10 not going to be cut. They have cut more than
11 enough out of the school budgets. They are
12 getting the same budgets for next year that they
13 have this year.

14 So I take that to mean that none of those
15 positions has been restored.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: What about --
17 also, this issue of 64 schools being closed.
18 Have you heard any information to indicate that
19 that is not the case in your circles?

20 MR. JORDAN: No, I have not. I have only
21 heard the consistent refrain that 40 schools are
22 going to be closed next June. And that 6
23 schools will be closed in each of the following
24 four years for another 24, which will add up to

1 64 schools.

2 The schools have not been identified.

3 There is a level of anxiety among my members as
4 well as parents in the school communities
5 because everyone is wondering is it going to be
6 our school? And if so, why?

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And when.

8 MR. JORDAN: And when.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Absolutely. Also,
10 I mentioned yesterday, excuse me, I am really
11 concerned about the whole summer school issue,
12 and that only seniors get a chance to catch up.
13 And it seems to me that it's going to be more
14 expensive with students getting left back
15 because we don't have summer school opportunity.

16 I just wanted to know your opinion on that
17 matter.

18 MR. JORDAN: Well, certainly summer school
19 makes a difference. It helps young people to,
20 hopefully, keep up. But not only is summer
21 school important, but I just testified to the
22 kinds of interventions that need to be in
23 schools during the school year. So that when we
24 have children who are having trouble in third

1 grade reading, that we have the personnel there
2 in order to help support that youngster.

3 Many times it's a matter of just people who
4 can do one-on-one work with a child. You know,
5 in fifth grade and sixth grade when we see the
6 children are struggling, whether it's
7 academically or with behavioral issues, you need
8 people to be able to talk to that child and to
9 find out what the problem is in order to try to
10 help support that youngster and the problems.
11 Of course, when we get kids in ninth grade, we
12 need to know and be able to support them because
13 we lose too many of our kids in ninth grade.
14 They fall through the cracks.

15 And so we have to really wrap our arms
16 around them, but you can't do it if you don't
17 have the personnel and the support personnel in
18 buildings in order to help kids.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Absolutely. And
20 my final question before I open it to Council to
21 ask their questions is, what about this whole
22 issue of \$156 million that PFT is asked to cut
23 in order to help deal with the budget?

24 Do you have any details about that, who

1 that affects and how that impacts all of this?

2 MR. JORDAN: Councilwoman, I learned about
3 the \$156 million when I read the report just as
4 everyone in the public read it. So, no, I do
5 not have any details. I will say that it was
6 last year around this time that the School
7 District publicly stated that they needed to
8 balance their budget and asked for the unions to
9 contribute \$75 million to allow the District's
10 Budget to be balanced. And in October, the
11 Federation made an agreement with the District.
12 And at that time, they told us this will balance
13 our budget, and we found \$58 million.

14 And now we are hearing that the Budget is
15 not balanced. And as you just asked, we are
16 reading that the District is saying we need \$156
17 million. Well, I question where -- who is
18 keeping the books? And I also question, whether
19 I can believe the numbers? Because I am not
20 getting -- someone is not telling me the truth.

21 Therefore, if I can't get a truthful
22 answer, there is no way that I am going to step
23 out on faith just because they say it's so.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Thank

1 you. We will now open the floor for questions.

2 First is Councilman Greenlee.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Madam
4 Chair.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you again.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just a real basic
7 question. You kind of alluded to this, so I
8 think I, unfortunately know the answer.

9 In the planning stages before this
10 Blueprint came up, was there any discussion with
11 the Teachers Union at all on asking opinions at
12 all from the School District?

13 MR. JORDAN: We were not a part of
14 designing this Blueprint, or else it wouldn't
15 have come out looking like it looks.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I know that. But I
17 am just wondering was there any discussion at
18 all? Anything like what do you think?

19 MR. JORDAN: No, there was not.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Just,
21 editorial, it doesn't seem to make a lot of
22 sense.

23 And as far as you know, I know you don't
24 represent the principals, but do you know -- was

1 there any -- did you hear of any discussion with
2 them at all?

3 MR. JORDAN: It's my understanding from
4 talking to their President, the President of
5 their Union, that there was no discussion.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Was no discussion.

7 MR. JORDAN: No. And you can ask the same
8 questions. Parents are here. I will let them
9 answer it for themselves.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

11 MR. JORDAN: And I'm sure that they will --

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. I don't
13 know what else to say. Thank you.

14 MR. JORDAN: You're welcome.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Next
16 is Councilman Jones.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Madam Chair.
18 I would say good afternoon, but I just don't
19 feel like it's a good afternoon.

20 The more we hear, the more we have angst
21 and concern about this process. On the other
22 side of it, we know the urgency that September
23 will come and that we have to do something. And
24 inaction is an action. If we don't do

1 something, something will or will not happen.
2 So, we are trying to garner as much information
3 from as many sources to make the right decision
4 possible.

5 Couple of quick questions. You mentioned
6 in your testimony the difference in some of the
7 counties and the product. And I think the first
8 question I asked yesterday was to the
9 Administration and the SRC is, what will we get
10 for what we obtain for. And you alluded to the
11 cost of what education truly costs and some of
12 the disparities.

13 Could you re-articulate that again by way
14 of the surrounding counties the difference
15 between what per child is appropriated and what
16 maybe you suggest in Philadelphia would be an
17 appropriate amount.

18 MR. JORDAN: I said in my testimony that up
19 to \$10,000 more per child is spent. And many of
20 the surrounding districts just across City Line
21 Avenue and Lower Merion, I think they are
22 spending somewhere between 23,000 and 26,000
23 dollars per child. Certainly, if you have those
24 kinds of resources, they expect then you are

1 able to offer children a much richer educational
2 program in schools.

3 And I really alluded back to the Costing
4 Out Study that the Legislature approved. And
5 for, I guess, the last two years of Governor
6 Rendell's Administration, they adhered to
7 that -- the State provided additional money to
8 Philadelphia and to all of the School Districts
9 around the Commonwealth as a result of that
10 study.

11 Last year, Governor Corbett reduced
12 education funding by a billion dollars in the
13 state. And of course, Philadelphia took a
14 tremendous hit. And the proposal for this
15 current budget year in the State is to flatline
16 everything, so it means that there will be still
17 no more money for the children. And you know, I
18 think that there has to be a greater effort by
19 all of us to push the State to provide more
20 money.

21 I read this morning that the Senate
22 Education Committee was suggesting
23 reappropriating some funds. But a lot of it was
24 going to higher ed. K to 12 is not getting as

1 much money in that proposal. And we need to
2 push very hard so that -- and to really make
3 sure that the Costing Out Study is followed.
4 Because the Blueprint they paid for it. And
5 they got the Blueprint. And the Legislature
6 followed it for two years. Because of that, it
7 was a huge drop in funds for the Philadelphia
8 School District.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you for that. And
10 we are keenly aware of the lack of commitment
11 from Harrisburg as it relates to what is dubbed
12 as a "Philadelphia problem". Somehow we've been
13 annexed out of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
14 by way of education. We are going to hold their
15 feet to a fire. And we are going to hold the
16 Governor's people accountable for helping our
17 children. But at this point, again, September
18 is coming.

19 The proposed reorganization of the Regional
20 School Districts, you -- I take from your
21 comments you are against that. But could you
22 articulate a little more because I, quite
23 frankly, didn't understand the -- all of the
24 nuances of the decentralization.

1 But what are your objections to it?

2 MR. JORDAN: I object to the -- they are
3 called Achievement Networks. It would be
4 dividing the School District into eight pieces.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Right.

6 MR. JORDAN: And then having an outside
7 manager, not a School District employee,
8 accountable to the public, to you. Outside
9 group of people or person to manage the Network.
10 That Network will provide services to the
11 schools.

12 Now, whether there will be equity in the
13 kind of services that are provided for schools
14 in West Philadelphia versus North Philadelphia
15 because of it being a different Network
16 operator, we don't know because the plan doesn't
17 spell that out, but that is certainly a
18 possibility. But because -- they are
19 outsourcing those services and the Network
20 provider will have the total control over the
21 hiring and firing of the principals in the
22 schools.

23 I have -- I not only have concerns, I am
24 opposed to privatizing the system.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Madam Chair, if I may
2 ask two quick questions?

3 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: No.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you. Thank you,
5 Madam Chair.

6 (Laughter)

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Number one, I asked
8 yesterday and I raised the analogy of classroom
9 violence. And gave a story about a young person
10 that I grew up with named Ray Ray. And I
11 listened carefully to how they plan on making
12 classroom environment safe.

13 Has the 91 school police being laid off put
14 your members at any additional risk? Have you
15 seen an uptake in classroom violence? What has
16 been your experience since the school police
17 have been laid off?

18 MR. JORDAN: It hasn't been good. And it
19 also means that, you know, the more you remove
20 support staff out of buildings, the people who
21 have day-to-day contact with the children, they
22 know them, they are there every day with them.
23 In many cases, they are people who live in the
24 community of that school.

1 And if there is something happening in the
2 community or something happened over the
3 weekend, they know it. And they are able to
4 help to maintain a safe and orderly environment.
5 For people who are not in that community who
6 walk in on a Monday and they don't know what
7 happened over a weekend, you know, you are at a
8 tremendous disadvantage. And so it does make a
9 difference when you have support staff in
10 buildings.

11 They get to know the kids and the kids know
12 them. And they will go to them and they will
13 tell them if something is about to occur, there
14 is going to be a fight of some sort, so that
15 they are able to intervene very quickly and pull
16 the children involved out and have a
17 conversation. You know, really stop, you know,
18 something from happening.

19 But when you don't have the support staff,
20 you open up the possibility of children roaming
21 the halls because they are unsupervised, being
22 in bathrooms when they should be in the
23 classroom, being outside of the school when they
24 should be in the school in the classroom, being

1 in the lunchroom two or three times a day when
2 they should be there only once because there is
3 not supervision. Children need supervision.

4 It's just that simple.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: I saw the police report,
6 news report of the young lady, a freshman at a
7 high school this morning that was taken into and
8 assaulted in one of our schools.

9 So as I look at these concerns, you know,
10 in order to learn you have to feel safe. You
11 have to feel like you don't have to guard your
12 own back. And it's just one of my concerns.

13 Finally --

14 MR. JORDAN: It's one of mine, too. And I
15 think it's the number one thing that the School
16 District must do a better job on. Every school
17 has to be safe for every child and for every
18 employee who works at that school to do their
19 jobs.

20 (Applause)

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: My colleague Councilman
22 Greenlee asked if you had been involved in any
23 of these restructuring plans. And the answer
24 came back no.

1 I guess the question I would pose, if we
2 were able to facilitate that kind of cooperation
3 with the SCR, would you be willing to sit down
4 and put some of these ideas together so we can
5 collaborate? Because at the end of the day, A,
6 September is coming. We are all concerned about
7 the end product, which are the young people.
8 And the true enemy, the true enemy at this point
9 in my mind is Harrisburg and their lack of
10 commitment to us. We all need to huddle up and
11 figure out a game plan to deal with that.

12 I would ask you publicly if that forum were
13 put together, you would a participant in that
14 with the SRC?

15 MR. JORDAN: You had several parts to your
16 question. Before I answer that, I need to know
17 which part you --

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: The only one that
19 matters is if we can get the SRC and their
20 planning folk along with the PFT to come up --
21 and the parents, because they are the end
22 product too, in a room where we can come up with
23 some idea exchanges, you would be willing to do
24 that?

1 MR. JORDAN: The Federation has always,
2 always been willing to sit at the table to talk
3 about improving the quality of education in the
4 School District of Philadelphia. We were not
5 asked, as I said earlier. And I don't want to
6 be caught in a situation where they already have
7 a plan and the end game, you know, has already
8 been established and we are asked to just rubber
9 stamp. Because if that's the case, then, you
10 know, I don't have time for that.

11 If you really want true input from the
12 Federation, from parents and from other
13 stakeholders, then we need to be a part of at
14 the beginning and not at the end.

15 (Applause)

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: I have my answer, Madam
17 Chair.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
19 much.

20 Councilman Oh.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Oh, thank you very much,
22 Chairwoman.

23 Good afternoon.

24 MR. JORDAN: Good afternoon.

1 COUNCILMAN OH: The situation that we are
2 in is pretty much set. And so regardless of
3 whatever we would like, we are faced with the
4 current situation. And we are trying to change
5 it. But given that it is the situation that it
6 is, that it is unlikely that we will get much
7 more money, and that we are debating and
8 thinking about alternatives to how we get this
9 \$94 million, that even with the \$94 million, we
10 are talking about closing schools, trying to get
11 some type of money or they are trying to get
12 some type of money from the unions, what does
13 the PFT -- what do you think you can do given
14 this situation to see that our schools do open
15 in September?

16 MR. JORDAN: I, first of all, have not been
17 under the impression that the schools are not
18 going to open in September. That has been an
19 expectation that I have had every September.
20 So, I don't think that we are ready to go over
21 the cliff, Councilman.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: So, that says to me that
23 you don't think that we need to raise this \$94
24 million.

1 MR. JORDAN: I didn't say that. I made it
2 very clear in my testimony that the District is
3 clearly underfunded. And that the State's cut
4 about a billion dollars last year. That money
5 hasn't been replaced. And it is not anticipated
6 that it will be when the State adopts its budget
7 next month. So, we don't have enough money.
8 Let me be clear about that.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: So, given that we don't
10 have enough money and we are being asked to
11 produce \$94 million for the School District, I
12 have to consider that the schools may not open
13 without the \$94 million.

14 Therefore, I have to ask what the PFT is
15 considering should that circumstance be true?
16 And I'm not saying it is true; but if it is
17 true, what do you think are some of the things
18 that the PFT is able to do in working with this
19 situation?

20 MR. JORDAN: As I said earlier, Councilman,
21 those are the numbers that are being talked
22 about now. In October of last year, I heard
23 different numbers and we acted. So, I don't
24 know whether I should trust that number. And

1 because of that, I am not prepared to respond
2 to -- the answer to your question.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I appreciate and I
4 respect your position. I want to make clear
5 that I was not here, but from what I am
6 understanding, there were Council people who
7 were also misled and who were told that they
8 voted for money, that this would be done. And
9 you know, so I know that basically, you know,
10 there is -- you're not the only one in this
11 situation.

12 But we cannot say because we were fooled as
13 a Body last year that we cannot consider all the
14 options. We do have to consider all the
15 options, but I respect what you are saying.

16 MR. JORDAN: Councilman, you know, I have
17 an expression that I use frequently. Bad facts
18 make bad law. And I haven't had -- I haven't
19 gotten the facts.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: I haven't gotten the facts
21 either.

22 MR. JORDAN: Well, I will not make law
23 without knowing what may facts are and that
24 they're correct.

1 (Applause)

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. That's fine because
3 you are an advocate. And I want to make it
4 clear, that I am not an advocate. I have to
5 make a decision and so do the people in this
6 room. So, we will make that decision based on
7 the information that we gain. And that will --
8 that will be true for everybody.

9 In terms of the SRC and how it has worked
10 in our city or not worked, what do you think
11 about the current system?

12 MR. JORDAN: The current government system
13 has been in place since 2001, and it functions
14 very similarly to a school board. And it's just
15 a matter of who is in charge of that governance
16 board. The Mayor or the Mayor and the Governor.

17 But they always set policy regardless of
18 whether it was a Board or an SRC.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: I will make it a little
20 more clear. One of the things that you are
21 talking about and we are talking about is
22 incorrect numbers and kind of inability to
23 access accurate information.

24 For example, having a outside entity audit

1 or be aware of the numbers of what is the actual
2 dollars, we -- it's very difficult for us to
3 begin a dialogue on resolving this if you do not
4 or we do not trust or believe in the numbers.

5 So, what I am looking for is your thoughts
6 on a better way of governing our School
7 District. A more accountable and accurate way,
8 a more responsive way and responsible way to the
9 parents and students of our City.

10 If you have thought about it, do you have
11 recommendations?

12 MR. JORDAN: No. I haven't thought about
13 it other than just really make a very basic
14 statement.

15 It's -- these are public funds and there
16 should be transparency regardless of whether
17 it's the School Board or whether it's SRC. It
18 really shouldn't be a guessing game about the
19 numbers.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Thank you very much.
21 Thank you, Madam Chairman.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you
23 Councilwoman Reynolds-Brown.

24 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Good

1 afternoon --

2 MR. JORDAN: Good afternoon.

3 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: -- Mr.

4 President. And welcome back to these

5 proceedings because it is important. And the

6 sad news is that sometimes it's only during

7 these proceedings that we learn new information

8 that is troubling. And I will say that it is

9 somewhat troubling that there have not been any

10 sit down, face-to-face authentic discussions

11 with the School District. We live in a Body

12 where we only get things down if we are willing

13 to compromise.

14 And so with that said, I am troubled by the

15 fact that the conversations haven't started.

16 But as Councilman Jones indicated, that has to

17 be a "must do". That goes in the "must do"

18 column if we are going to be in a different

19 place for September, so I appreciate hearing

20 your willingness towards that end.

21 I worked in Harrisburg when the United

22 States Senator Casey's father was Governor

23 Casey. And even then the distribution and

24 funding across the Commonwealth was uneven,

1 unfair and inequitable. Radnor was \$12,000 per
2 pupil. And at that point, I think Philadelphia
3 was \$7,000 per pupil. That equation has not
4 changed too dramatically X-number of years
5 later.

6 For eight years we enjoyed a governor who
7 got it, made education a priority in his
8 campaign. And then when he became governor,
9 funded education in ways that we had not
10 experienced before in Philadelphia. And then a
11 new day came and we got Governor Casey as you
12 indicated.

13 MR. JORDAN: Corbett.

14 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Corbett,
15 thank you. One billion dollars we've lost as
16 you know. I am not optimistic that we will
17 every see the kind of days that we enjoyed
18 during Governor Rendell. So given that reality,
19 as has been stated already, we have a difficult
20 chapter ahead of us as we look towards a
21 September.

22 And so my first question is -- and I've
23 learned the numbers since I been here because
24 I've had to. We now have 50,000 fewer young

1 people in our Philadelphia school system. So,
2 that forces any system to think, act, behave,
3 conduct themselves financially differently. So,
4 knowing that we now have 50,000 children in our
5 charter schools, fewer children in the public
6 schools, fewer buildings that are fully full,
7 what would be your recommendation to the School
8 District? Because I am hopeful that the plan is
9 not carved in stone.

10 What would be your recommendation to the
11 School District, one or two recommendations, on
12 what would fit well with the desires of the PFT?
13 And what would be your recommendation of items
14 they need to simply forget about because they --
15 we will never be able to find some common ground
16 or middle ground around that particular item?

17 So, I'm looking for recommendations on both
18 sides. What works already that you are okay
19 with as a membership, and items that are just
20 totally unacceptable where the idea of
21 compromise is just unrealistic.

22 MR. JORDAN: I gave in my testimony
23 strategies that deal with what happens in
24 schools and with kids. That's my priorities.

1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: State two of
2 them for me.

3 MR. JORDAN: Pardon?

4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: State one or
5 two that you know work, that matters, that you
6 care about.

7 MR. JORDAN: Early childhood programs --

8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Yes.

9 MR. JORDAN: -- for children, safe schools,
10 reducing class sizes, having sufficient services
11 from noninstructional staff such as nurses,
12 counselors, psychologists.

13 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay. All
14 right. I'm only stopping you there because we
15 learned yesterday in the testimony that the
16 School District is committed to under Title One,
17 which we know are mandated dollars, they are
18 committed to what I care about: Early childhood
19 education and kindergarten.

20 So, now let's go to the other side of the
21 column. What one or two items in their draft --
22 and we are going to view it as a draft, because
23 that is what Members of Council have been told
24 in Budget briefing -- draft proposal that are

1 completely unacceptable and never, ever could
2 the membership of the PFT get its arms around.

3 I am curious myself to find out where there
4 is some common middle ground.

5 MR. JORDAN: The Academic Networks are -- I
6 am totally opposed to it.

7 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay.

8 MR. JORDAN: Totally.

9 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay.

10 MR. JORDAN: There is no middle ground
11 there.

12 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: And
13 principally, because as you stated, an outside
14 group -- an outside group of people manage those
15 networks?

16 MR. JORDAN: That's right. And that there
17 will be privatization of positions. You are
18 going to hear testimony at some point following
19 today from George Ricchezza, who will really go
20 into detail on that point with you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay. All
22 right.

23 Also, in your testimony, you mentioned
24 that -- well, you actually illustrated the

1 example of experimentation. Your view is that
2 the outside managers -- okay. The work that
3 they have done has not proven to what the
4 predictions stipulated.

5 Is that fair to say?

6 MR. JORDAN: What I said is that the
7 outside managers that were brought in when they
8 had a diverse provider model that we went
9 through in the City, when you look at the data,
10 it will show you that they did not improve
11 student achievement the way that they promised
12 that they would.

13 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay. And my
14 only final observation, again, that I've learned
15 and it is as you stated in your testimony,
16 academically, charter schools -- and it varies
17 depending upon the charter schools just like it
18 varies in public schools. Where you got strong
19 principals, you got students excelling.

20 What I have learned in going and visiting
21 charter schools, many times young people --
22 parents move to the charter school experience
23 because of safety reasons. So, we are on the
24 same page with regards to academic prediction.

1 MR. JORDAN: I agree.

2 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: But too often
3 parents go for the need and hunger for one of
4 their children to be in safe environments.

5 MR. JORDAN: And I say all schools must be
6 safe. They should be. I don't think a parent
7 should --

8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Have to
9 wonder.

10 MR. JORDAN: -- wonder whether or not
11 they're going to get a call that their young --
12 their child has been harmed. All schools should
13 be safe.

14 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Agreed.

15 MR. JORDAN: There is no question about it.

16 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Agreed. I
17 had to make different decisions because of that
18 reason. Thank you. Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 MR. JORDAN: You're welcome.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Thank you,
22 Madam Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much. And we certainly agree on the whole issue

1 of privatization. Philadelphia is not the place
2 for it. That's my opinion on that.

3 MR. JORDAN: Thank you.

4 (Applause)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilwoman Bass.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: How are you?

9 MR. JORDAN: I'm fine. How are you?

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm very well. Good to
11 see.

12 MR. JORDAN: Good to see you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Just a couple of
14 questions. And I came in a little bit late, so
15 you may have asked these questions -- answered
16 these questions already.

17 Can you tell -- just give me an idea, how
18 many members do you have?

19 MR. JORDAN: About 15,000.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: About 15,000. Okay.

21 And how many schools would you say you
22 represent?

23 MR. JORDAN: 249.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And how long

1 have you been in your position with the PFT?

2 How many years, would you say?

3 MR. JORDAN: Twenty-five, not as the
4 President.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: But you've been -- I
6 know you've been around for a long time. So,
7 you've been --

8 MR. JORDAN: Well, if you want to phrase it
9 that way.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You have a lot of
11 experience. I'm sorry. Your experience, we'll
12 put it that way.

13 MR. JORDAN: Yes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Your experience. And I
15 just say that because you know what you're
16 talking about. You know our public education
17 system and what works and what doesn't work. I
18 think to have conversations that exclude you as
19 we are talking about such a significant overhaul
20 of public education is a big problem. And so I
21 just wanted to put that out there.

22 But I just really had one question about
23 the Achievement Networks. And I was at Enon
24 last night and you were there. I know that

1 somebody -- there was a question -- and
2 Councilwoman Blackwell you were there, as well.
3 There was a question that was asked last night
4 in terms of if there would be any outside
5 managers or consultants hired. And the answer
6 was no. And so, it really does call into
7 question the idea of these Achievement Networks
8 and the fact that there will be outside
9 consultants so it seems.

10 MR. JORDAN: Yes, there will be.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Because that was
12 certainly not the answer that was provided last
13 night. So, maybe I, you know, got the question
14 wrong. So I certainly would like to ask, you
15 know, the Administration or the School District
16 officials to come and clarify if I am incorrect
17 in that. But -- so, I just wanted to just be
18 certain on that.

19 The other question I had really briefly is
20 on poorly performing charter schools. And I
21 wanted to get your take on that in terms of
22 dismantling these charter schools for some
23 reason we've been supporting for a number of
24 years that have not performed up to par. I

1 wanted to get your thought and take on that on
2 how we should begin to dismantle some of those
3 schools.

4 MR. JORDAN: Well, certainly, the -- I
5 guess, let me preface it by saying that charter
6 schools were designed to be laboratories of
7 innovation. And some have not been that. In
8 fact, many of them are not.

9 The School Reform Commission approves the
10 charter schools and they have the oversight of
11 the charter schools. It's up to that Body to
12 look at the performance of them, and for them to
13 make the decision about how they are going to
14 handle the charter schools. I can only talk
15 about what I know relatively to the research.

16 But when it comes to the actual management
17 of them, that is solely the responsibility --
18 the oversight is solely the responsibility of
19 the School Reform Commission. And they are the
20 ones who approve the schools.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

22 MR. JORDAN: And it's -- they are the ones
23 who are responsible for sending the appropriate
24 amount of money for them.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. All right.

2 Thank you. That's all.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
4 much. Certainly, if anyone is here from the
5 School Administration or the SRC, Councilwoman
6 Bass has asked for clarification with regard to
7 this issue that comes down to privatization and
8 the Achievement Networks. And we will interrupt
9 our testimony to allow that issue to be
10 responded to should you be here or should you
11 come in or should you be contacted. Thank you
12 very much.

13 Are there any further questions for
14 Mr. Jordan from Members of the Council?

15 (Chair alerted to presence of SRC.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
17 Councilwoman Reynolds-Brown, were you trying to
18 raise another question, or just let me know
19 Ms. Nixon's here?

20 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Why don't you
21 follow through with your initial request.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: You're
24 welcome.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Good
2 morning. Please identify yourself for the
3 record.

4 MS. NIXON: Good morning. I'm Penny Nixon,
5 Chief Academic Officer.

6 So the question last night was asked of
7 Tom. And I think he responded no, but I'm not
8 sure what his interpretation of the question
9 was. I was trying to look at the question and
10 sort of go back to him and get his understanding
11 of -- of the question that was asked last night.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right. What
13 if you just respond to the issue that
14 Councilwoman Bass raised today.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Can you -- do you have
16 a copy of the question? Can you read the
17 question?

18 MS. NIXON: Yeah.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh, you're looking it
20 up?

21 MS. NIXON: We're looking it up.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: While we're
23 waiting for that, Councilwoman Reynolds-Brown,
24 did you want to say something?

1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Yes.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Wait a minute,
3 your mic is not on.

4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Thank you.
5 Since we have the benefit of your presence, can
6 you please correct the record or help us
7 understand what the record is around charter
8 schools. And you know in the interest of what,
9 what do you call that, transparency, I have my
10 own angst about cyber charter schools for a lot
11 of reasons. But -- so, I need to hear what is
12 the District's policy decision around charter
13 schools going forward.

14 MS. NIXON: When you mean policy decisions,
15 are you --

16 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Expansion of
17 charter schools and cyber schools. I am most
18 interested in cyber schools.

19 MS. NIXON: Okay. Can I get back to you on
20 that? Because I just don't have the -- I'm not
21 sure --

22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: With the
23 School Reform?

24 MS. NIXON: Yeah. I need to talk to the

1 School Reform Commission and also speak with
2 Thomas Darden who runs the Charter School
3 Office. The Charter School Office is not
4 directly under -- my office is under the
5 Superintendent's office, so I would prefer to
6 get you accurate information.

7 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay. All
8 right then. Okay, then, thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
10 Councilwoman.

11 And while she is looking up that
12 information, Councilman Oh, you had a question?

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes, I do, Madam
14 Chairwoman. Thank you very much.

15 Aside from looking at that very specific
16 question, are Achievement Networks planned to be
17 managed by outside entities? Each one of them?

18 MS. NIXON: So, the roll out of the
19 proposed plan had been managed by a variety of
20 organizations. So, if you -- the initial roll
21 out in the proposal stated that they could be
22 managed by District personnel. Another option
23 was to be managed by outside groups, as well.

24 So, there were a number of different groups

1 that could apply for the RFP around Achievement
2 Network. So, one was District and there were
3 also outside.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: So, as it is right now,
5 when -- when this plan of basically Achievement
6 Networks as it is right now, there is no
7 specific entity that is going to manage these,
8 but it's going to be an RFP that could be
9 answered by District personnel or by outside
10 groups or community, whomever; is that correct?

11 MS. NIXON: Yes. That is what is in the
12 proposed plan right now. Yes.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. In terms of if the
14 schools open their doors in September, who is
15 going to manage them? I mean, do we have
16 anybody that has -- you haven't done the RFP
17 yet?

18 MS. NIXON: No. So, for '12/'13, the plan
19 is not for the -- the proposed Achievement
20 Networks to be implemented in '13, it was for
21 '14.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: So, they will be still
23 managed by the School District, but it will be
24 put out for RFP for '14?

1 MS. NIXON: Yeah. That's the proposal.

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. All right. Thank
3 you.

4 MR. JORDAN: May I just add that the
5 explanation that was given to us regarding the
6 Achievement Networks is that, yes, District
7 personnel active or retired may very well choose
8 to apply through an RFP process. But they -- if
9 a person is an active employee, he or she would
10 have to separate himself or herself from the
11 District, and they would then enter into a
12 contract if selected with the SRC.

13 So it's not as if Teacher Mary Smith over
14 at Hopkinson can apply and continue being a
15 School District employee. She has to become
16 outside of the District.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: Point of information, just
18 for clarification.

19 When you say separate, they have to quit.
20 They have to leave their job.

21 MR. JORDAN: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: They can not be employed.

23 MR. JORDAN: That's correct.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. And is that

1 accurate?

2 MS. NIXON: That's accurate. For the RFP
3 Process, the managed group would not be District
4 personnel.

5 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. All right. Well,
6 thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. That
8 is certainly privatization by any sense of the
9 word. That's privatization.

10 (Applause)

11 MS. NIXON: But can I just -- I just want
12 to clarify that, again, the -- it is a proposal
13 that is subject to input from stakeholders, so
14 no final decisions have been made around a
15 reorganization.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We are glad to
17 hear that.

18 Councilwoman Bass, did you want to be
19 recognized?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I think, basically, you
21 just said my concerns. You know, it's very
22 troubling because it feels as if, you know, we
23 are not really being given all the information.
24 It's like pulling teeth to try to get

1 information and trying to really --

2 (Applause)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: To say that -- to say
4 that there are two options and one is that it
5 would be through the District and the other
6 option would be that it would be outside
7 management company, but then to find out that
8 those who are with the District would then have
9 to resign and terminate their employment and
10 then become a, you know, a contract employee, it
11 -- you can't work with it. So, it's not going
12 to be done by the District.

13 So, you know, it would probably just be
14 better to say, you know, exactly what it is so
15 that we can really get down to the bottom of the
16 information. And it's so critical when you are
17 trying to make an important decision like this.

18 You know, I have a two-year-old almost a
19 three-year-old. As someone who is, you know,
20 trying to figure out public education and what
21 is going to work and, you know, making the best
22 decision as a parent -- making the best
23 decision, I need all of the information. And
24 so, I am the same as every other parent in the

1 City of Philadelphia. We want a quality
2 education for our children.

3 So, when you feel like you are not getting
4 correct information from the District, it really
5 does do something to our confidence.

6 MS. NIXON: Yeah. And I think that's why I
7 wanted to sort of clarify again around proposal.
8 Because the final decision on the reorganization
9 has not been made. So, here is the District put
10 forth a proposal. I guess, the questions were
11 asked, where does it stand in the proposal
12 stage. And that's the proposal stage, which
13 well could change once we get input from the
14 community.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So, what is the
16 alternative then to this proposal? What's the
17 Plan B? If you don't do this, what will you do?

18 MS. NIXON: I think it depends on what -- I
19 think it depends on the input that comes in from
20 the community and to really go back to rule out
21 a plan that has community input. So, it depends
22 on what comes in. So, what are some of the
23 recommendations from the community input and
24 then a final -- something final would be put out

1 after that process takes place, which should be
2 a process that takes -- it will take a few
3 months.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So, if there hasn't
5 been a lot of input from, I would say,
6 stakeholders, parents, the community, PFT and
7 others in the decision making to this point, how
8 much confidence should we have then that there
9 is actually going to be public input if you
10 decided that you don't go with this and that you
11 want to try something else?

12 (Applause)

13 MS. NIXON: We began last night with a
14 Community Meeting to gather input. So, I want
15 to say that there is confidence that we are
16 going to come back out to the community and take
17 the information to come up with a final proposal
18 that includes input from all stakeholders. So,
19 I am confident that the District will come back
20 out.

21 Yes, I am.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. All right.
23 Well, we'll see. Thank you, Penny.

24 MS. NIXON: You're welcome.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. And
2 thank you, Councilwoman Bass, for inviting me to
3 that important meeting last night.

4 Councilman Greenlee.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just very quickly
6 just to -- Councilwoman Bass touched on it. And
7 I wonder if you can comment, maybe this is the
8 SRC's place to.

9 On my first question today, it just seems
10 almost logical that the teachers,
11 representatives of the teachers, representatives
12 of parents would be involved from the beginning
13 and not later. I mean, that just seems like --

14 (Applause)

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Despite what you
16 might think, I didn't do that for applause. I
17 am just talking about common sense. I mean,
18 maybe that is too strong. It's not too strong.

19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Point of
20 information.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It's not too strong.

22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Point of
23 information.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. Councilwoman

1 Reynolds-Brown.

2 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Councilman
3 Greenlee's important question goes very much to
4 a number of questions raised by Councilman Goode
5 yesterday, and that is who is in charge. As
6 best as I can understand, the role of Ms. Penny
7 Nixon has been that of the academic educational
8 structure operations of the institutions. And I
9 believe Mr. Nudsen --

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Knudsen.

11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Knudsen,
12 forgive me. Mr. Knudsen and SRC Chair person --
13 help me out --

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ramos.

15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Ramos, were
16 making many of the nonacademic operational
17 decisions. So, I am saying in her defense that
18 that is a question quite suitable for those who
19 are in charge of making the decisions; namely,
20 Knudsen and Ramos.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I understand that. I
22 was just wondering since she was here, if she
23 had any -- if there was any conversation or
24 thought about did you hear that mentioned? And

1 I certainly agree, that is why I start out by
2 saying I think the SRC is the best place to ask
3 this, but you were there. I just kind of --

4 MS. NIXON: I know. That happens a lot.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You showed up.

6 MS. NIXON: I am in the hot seat.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: But -- if you don't
8 have any comment, I understand.

9 MS. NIXON: I don't have a comment.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

12 Councilman Jones.

13 (Ms. Nixon gets up from witness table.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: You might want to stay
15 now that you're here.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: She might not want
17 to.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: This is -- were there
19 any consulting contracts put out or consultants
20 hired to develop this proposal? Was this done
21 internally by all District staff? Or were there
22 consultants or people hired to help formulate
23 the proposed re-org?

24 MS. NIXON: Well, everyone knows we have

1 the Boston Consultant Group working with us, but
2 they -- they were hired to help with a number of
3 different items.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Everybody doesn't know,
5 because I just asked the question.

6 But what I am concerned about is, again,
7 speaking to, you know -- I don't know, you know,
8 the qualifications of the Boston Group. But I
9 do know -- I may not agree with everything the
10 PFT has offered, you know, but after 25 years
11 they know -- I think, Jerry, you know something.

12 MR. JORDAN: A little something.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: If nothing more than how
14 to stay employed.

15 (Applause and laughter)

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yesterday I gave an
17 analogy of all of the superintendents who have
18 come on. And all of them had a slogan or catch
19 phrase from 2014 to Children's First and what is
20 important to me, and I raised the question to
21 the PFT. I'm going to raise it to you.

22 Is there a way even at this late juncture
23 you guys can get in a room and sit and exchange
24 ideas even if you don't agree? I mean, and I

1 say it in earnest because, believe it or not,
2 everybody in this Chamber doesn't always agree
3 with me. But you know what the good thing about
4 this Chamber, all of them will always talk to
5 me. Even in their disagreement, I learn
6 something from them.

7 And we have too much at stake. We have --
8 we have children living in uncertainty. We have
9 employees, valued employees, I would believe
10 living in uncertainty. You have parents making
11 a decision about whether -- which is probably
12 one of the most important decisions they are
13 going to make when it comes to investing in
14 their children.

15 And it pains me if both of you, if you're
16 asking me to vote for additional revenue and I
17 got to explain to a community group why their
18 taxes are going up, and you tell me they just
19 wouldn't talk to each other. That is
20 unacceptable.

21 You guys -- listen, you don't have to
22 agree. It's okay. But your positions need to
23 be clarified in a way that at least helps us to
24 decide in the favor that, you know -- there are

1 some people they may not say it, they are
2 talking about blowing this whole thing up and
3 letting it go into bankruptcy. I heard these
4 things. And these are scary propositions.

5 And, yeah, people are talking about, no, it
6 won't close; yes, it will open. But
7 children/parents sitting in living rooms
8 depending on us to be adults, you got to be able
9 to set the example that no matter what, you
10 talked to each other. That -- I know, I think
11 it's something that -- I don't care about the
12 people in Boston. They don't live in my
13 district. I care about what you think. I care
14 about what you think. And I care about getting
15 the best information so that I can make a good
16 decision in the next couple of weeks. That is
17 important to me.

18 So I ask the question to you, asking the
19 question to you. I would hope that you guys can
20 sit down and iron some of this stuff out to give
21 us -- give us some direction because you are the
22 experts.

23 MR. JORDAN: Councilman, I am going to
24 answer for her because in her defense, it's

1 above her. And so when orders are -- when
2 dealing with day-to-day issues, Penny is
3 accessible. We talk.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

5 MR. JORDAN: But in her position, if she's
6 not able to share information, she has to do
7 what she has to do. So that -- your sentiments
8 are very accurate. However, I think --

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Misplaced?

10 MR. JORDAN: Yes.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. I heard that
12 communication. We will just kick it upstairs
13 because let me say this to you. Tasco always
14 talks about it: Act in haste and repent in your
15 leisure. If she never said anything else to me
16 that stuck, you know that is what -- we are
17 going to make decisions based on information and
18 communication. So I, at least, want to know
19 that everybody got in a room. And even if they
20 didn't agree, they at least exchanged ideas.

21 That is where I am at. Thank you,
22 Ms. Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much. I believe that -- Councilwoman Bass.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

2 I was going to suggest also that we have
3 Mr. Knudsen come in and answer some of the
4 questions. Because, you know, rightfully, he
5 was the one who said last night that there would
6 be no outside contracts. There would be no
7 contracts, you know, in this process. That it
8 was all going to be done by the School District
9 personnel. So, I don't know -- I am assuming we
10 can get him back.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I am assuming we
12 can get him back, too. So, we are going to ask
13 you to make that request, Rodney, to contact
14 Mr. Knudsen about that regard. We also have
15 this question clarified. We will ask you to
16 read the question into the record, Ms. Nixon.

17 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Point of
18 information, Madam Chair.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. Point of
20 information, Councilwoman.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Just for the
22 record, the School District has already been
23 asked. At the end of yesterday's hearings, it
24 was stipulated that they -- it's not optional.

1 They will be back to answer further questioning
2 from Council.

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

5 Ms. Nixon.

6 MS. NIXON: I still would like to get some
7 clarity on his interpretation of the question.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Fine. But you can
9 just --

10 MS. NIXON: Would you allow me to do that
11 and I will get that back to Councilman Bass
12 before close of business.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Would
14 you like to read that question.

15 MS. NIXON: I can read the question, but I
16 would just ask that I get clarification around
17 his understanding of the question.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's fine. We
19 will let him answer, but we will put the
20 question on the record.

21 MS. NIXON: Okay. "Is there funding in
22 FY13 Budget to hire management companies to
23 implement any part of your proposed plan? Is
24 there a plan to outsource and/or privatize any

1 services currently being provided by School
2 District of Philadelphia workers?"

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right. So the
4 question is on the record, and we heard the
5 answer to be no. And we will wait for
6 Mr. Knudsen to come back to clarify a no answer,
7 if no did not mean no.

8 MS. NIXON: Okay. Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Questions? Are
10 there further questions for Ms. Nixon? For
11 Mr. Jordan? Any more questions by Members of
12 Council?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay. We thank
15 you both.

16 MR. JORDAN: Thank you.

17 MS. NIXON: Thank you.

18 (Applause)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Thank
20 you. And certainly, we thank again all those
21 who are here. We thank the PFT Team and all of
22 the other individuals who are here to testimony.

23 Let me remind you that your testimony
24 should be about the Budget and Proposed Spending

1 Priorities. Any information we have is
2 available on the table to my left from folks who
3 are here.

4 All speakers must sign up in order to
5 testify. If you have not signed up, please do
6 so by putting your name on the list. I will ask
7 Ben Brock, who is sitting next to you, he will
8 go join you on the side to sign up if you would
9 like to testify and you are not already on the
10 list.

11 We will now go through the list. And your
12 name will be called in the order of -- in which
13 you signed up.

14 Finally, you will have three minutes to
15 speak. In order to be fair, we have an
16 extensive list we hold to. We intend to hold
17 faithfully to the 3 minute limit. And we have a
18 timer here that you have heard. When the time
19 buzzes, please complete your sentence and allow
20 the next speaker to approach the microphone.
21 So, I hope that will help clarify our issues in
22 the interest of time.

23 The first person on the list to testify is
24 Shelly Yanoff, PCCY.

1 (Applause)

2 Welcome. Thank you. Please identify
3 yourself and begin your testimony.

4 MS. YANOFF: Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly.

6 MS. YANOFF: And good afternoon.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

8 MS. YANOFF: I'm Shelly Yanoff. And I'm
9 the Director of PCCY, which is the regions major
10 child advocacy organization. The button I am
11 wearing which says Fund Our Schools, is one that
12 I wore when my oldest child was a toddler. He
13 now is a lawyer in the City, and his daughter is
14 about to graduate from Central High School.

15 So, funding our schools has been worn many
16 times when we sought increased funding from the
17 State and City to support our schools, when we
18 sought a fair formula for public education in
19 the costing out study from the State, when we
20 sought to build on our strengths to provide
21 extra support for schools with large numbers of
22 low income kids, when we argued for the
23 Commonwealth to be responsible for more of the
24 cost of educating the children.

1 We did have some success, as has been
2 alluded to, and saw better State school funding
3 formula take hold. And indeed, we did begin to
4 see some progress. But as you well know,
5 conditions change and have changed.

6 I come to you today to urge support for
7 more funds for schools. In spite of some
8 advances, Pennsylvania School Districts are
9 still way over reliant on local funding to
10 support our schools. That is not so bad for
11 richer communities in the suburbs or other
12 cities such as Pittsburgh that are located in
13 counties with stronger tax bases. But it's very
14 hard in a city like Philadelphia, which does not
15 receive additional tax revenue from the county.

16 The taxes collected by this city have to
17 support functions such as libraries, recreation
18 centers, police and fire and general citizen
19 welfare in a way that is not common in the rest
20 of the Commonwealth. Those are usually paid for
21 by county not city costs. This municipal
22 overburden that our city and county endure along
23 with the increase in need of students with the
24 fact that Philadelphia's property taxes are far

1 lower, far lower than that of surrounding
2 communities plus a decline in support of public
3 services generally in the country and schools
4 specifically brings us to what may be considered
5 a perfect storm.

6 We know that we, neither the Philadelphia
7 community nor Federal nor State governments
8 provide enough funding to support our schools.
9 With all school problems, in recent years we
10 have seen student improvements -- not enough and
11 not quickly enough -- but increased dollars from
12 you, the State and the Feds have made a
13 difference. But as you know, we are now in
14 another crisis.

15 We know we cannot survive as a city without
16 support for schools. We know that people will
17 not choose to live here or expand business in a
18 city whose schools are in constant crisis. We
19 know the Philadelphia teachers, counselors,
20 nurses and administrative staff have been laid
21 off. It's ironic indeed that today I've been
22 informed is National School Nurse Day as
23 yesterday we celebrated Excellence in Teaching
24 in Philadelphia. Yet these professionals have

1 been laid off and are living under threat. We
2 face this difficult future for public education.

3 I come to you urging that you support the
4 Funds For Schools this year, that we support
5 building a better city by investing in what
6 matters, our kids, their education and our
7 future. We know we need to improve our real
8 estate assessment team -- assessment system, I'm
9 sorry, we know we need to support our schools.

10 We ask you to take this step: Provide
11 additional protections for low income people who
12 are homeowners, improve tax collections from
13 delinquent property owners, pass the AVI and
14 provide the 94 million in Funds For School.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
17 Ms. Yanoff. Any there any questions?

18 (Applause)

19 Thank you very much.

20 Mr. William Mackey, Citywide Alumni Group.
21 William Mackey.

22 Good afternoon. Welcome.

23 MR. MACKEY: Good afternoon. My testimony
24 is on the table.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please identify
2 yourself.

3 MR. MACKEY: My name is William Mackey,
4 Leadership 2000.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

6 MR. MACKEY: My testimony is on the table.
7 If I can just have remind Council, in 1981
8 brought a group of young people here. It was a
9 large school strike on at that time. And after
10 that, the District went back and put these
11 clusters offers together. I think the planning
12 we have now is like they found it in their
13 basement and brought it upstairs, cleaned it off
14 and put some new language to it.

15 I think it should not be funded. This
16 Council not aggressively try to fund that
17 without the right answers. It's just wrong.
18 Every time you go to the School District for
19 answers, it's like talking to the Supreme Court.
20 You got to pull teeth to get an answer from
21 them. It's not right.

22 And I want to propose that in this budget
23 whatever money is left after they spend, that
24 they consider putting a curriculum in, an

1 internship curriculum in the schools, Madam
2 Chairperson. A curriculum that deals preparing
3 young people to go to work. Because right now
4 these young people is coming out and they are
5 not prepared to go to work.

6 And the curriculum would -- the proposed
7 curriculum would consist of 504 hours per year
8 of career aspiration, youth leadership training,
9 community service and academic enrichment.
10 Because the generation we have of young people
11 now that is in this district are facing three
12 things for sure. It's drugs. It's debt. And
13 it's death. And if we don't prepare our young
14 people to go to work through the School
15 District, Madam Chair, I think we are going to
16 be spending money to be back here every four or
17 five years for a lot of more money and another
18 plan.

19 If I could just talk a little bit about
20 what Councilman Jones was saying about the
21 superintendents. I don't think it's a student
22 in the City of Philadelphia that went through K
23 through 12 under one superintendent. It's
24 always another superintendent. It's always

1 another plan. So we -- you cannot expect to
2 have a strong product to come out something that
3 is always changing. It's always a puzzle with
4 them.

5 This budget should not be passed. And
6 Council Person -- Council Chair, I recommend
7 that y'all set up a day just to vent the School
8 District to see what is really going on over
9 there. I bet you get four or five different
10 people that tell you four or five different
11 answers. Until you do a vent process on them,
12 you are never going to know. It's like y'all
13 going to pass a Budget, and it's going to be
14 like you bamboozled again.

15 David Oh said he wasn't here before, but
16 you're here now, Councilman Oh. And you're
17 absolutely right. Accountability. What's the
18 final product? And all this document they have,
19 what is they say? How strong is the student
20 going to be when they graduate under this new
21 plan? How strong are the students going to be.

22 I propose an internship curriculum in this
23 budget, Madam Chair. And I say hold off on it
24 because when they did the cluster offices, there

1 was no accountability. It's the same plan now.
2 Every time you turn around, somebody is
3 contracting the services for our students out.
4 They always contracting out. They got enough
5 specialists over there, they should be able to
6 put this thing together and run it.

7 (Applause)

8 Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
10 much, Mr. Mackey. Next will be Local 32BJ
11 District 1201, George Ricchezza. Did I say it
12 right?

13 (Applause)

14 MR. RICCHEZZA: Good afternoon, Madam
15 Chair.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.
17 Welcome.

18 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you. Again, good
19 afternoon. Council Members, Local 1201 -- the
20 Local 32BJ members, parents and taxpayers. My
21 name is George Ricchezza. And I'm the District
22 Leader of Local 32BJ District 1201.

23 We represent 6,500 school workers statewide
24 and 2,700 in Philadelphia. And I'd just like to

1 say one word about privatization, all 2,700 of
2 my members are being privatized. I've been an
3 officer of the union for 13 years, but I've been
4 a School District employee for 39 years. As a
5 result, I can say I'm very familiar with how the
6 non-academic part of our district operates.

7 The vast majority of Local 32BJ members are
8 female. They earn less than \$28,000 a year.
9 They are an older group of employees who will
10 find it difficult to find new employment if
11 their jobs are eliminated. They are your
12 constituents. And a large majority live in
13 Philadelphia. They pay Philadelphia taxes and
14 they vote in Philadelphia.

15 (Applause)

16 We understand with the loss of both Federal
17 and State funding, the School District has been
18 put in a difficult position and had to make some
19 tough choices, but making cuts on the back of
20 Philadelphia's most vulnerable commodity is not
21 a responsible way to balance the budget. We
22 should be clear what these cuts mean to school
23 workers and students. Philadelphia's classrooms
24 will not just be more over crowded but could be

1 less safe.

2 Without funding for skilled hard work and
3 maintenance employees, our school buildings will
4 slip into disrepair. What kind of message does
5 it send to students about the value of their
6 education if school bathrooms are filthy,
7 toilets are out of service, electrical wiring
8 goes exposed and sinks don't have hot water?
9 What kind of message are we sending our children
10 when fewer school buses are running and those
11 that are on the streets are poorly maintained.
12 It is not the message that we should be sending.
13 It is a message that every child should have the
14 best education possible and that our schools are
15 a top priority.

16 (Applause)

17 The negative impact of these cuts don't
18 stop at schools. Our communities can't afford
19 to lose these jobs. These school jobs have
20 allowed thousands of men and women to have
21 affordable healthcare and provide solid middle
22 class lives for their families. Losing their
23 jobs in a time when there is already high
24 unemployment will be devastating for these

1 families and for our City.

2 We understand that the School District is
3 in crisis, but short changing Philadelphia
4 students and Philadelphia's future is no way to
5 balance the budget. Mr. Knudsen, the Chief
6 Recovery Officer has a plan to save the School
7 District. That plan is a total dismantling of
8 public education by privatizing and/or layoffs
9 of all 2,700 workers in 32BJ District 1201.

10 (That's unacceptable.)

11 He wants to place the blame of eleven years
12 of fiscal mismanagement by the School Reform
13 Commission and ask the Unions to bail the
14 District out. We have risen to the task.
15 Concessions by the Union have saved the District
16 over \$60 million in Fiscal Year 2011/2012, the
17 PFT the largest stakeholders. Local 32BJ agrees
18 to concess -- agrees to concession of \$3.3
19 million by foregoing the contractual raise that
20 was scheduled for January 1 of 3 percent and
21 \$1.6 million from our Health and Welfare Fund,
22 which amounts to a loss of \$1,385 per member in
23 salary and benefits for the first half of this
24 year.

1 We bargained a contract in 2010. In an
2 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer dated April
3 14, 2010, a quote from myself, "This new
4 contract benefits workers and students." And a
5 quote from the School District, "This is a great
6 contract for our schools, for the children of
7 Philadelphia and our work force."

8 We have been meeting with the School
9 District for almost a year to find a resolution
10 to the budget crisis. We have offered many
11 concessions for Fiscal Year 2012/2013. We
12 proposed \$15 million in cost savings. Measures
13 like energy efficiency, work rule changes,
14 capital projects and advertising. We also gave
15 back -- in our last contract, we changed our
16 healthcare to save the School District millions
17 of dollars.

18 We also have laid out a plan to save
19 another \$10.6 million in raises, furlough days,
20 clothing allowances, training fund and wage step
21 increases saving the School District over \$4,000
22 per member. This is difficult when many of our
23 members make less than \$20,000 per year.

24 School workers do not deserve having to pay

1 the price of mistakes and reckless mismanagement
2 of school funds. These men and woman sacrifice
3 and ratify the contract in the spirit of
4 compromise and not be placed in a position of
5 losing their jobs while Dr. Ackerman walked away
6 with a golden parachute of \$1 million.

7 (Applause)

8 The District does not seem to have a plan
9 beyond the layoff of 27 hardworking and
10 dedicated employees. We will not remain silent,
11 and we are not going away. (No, no.)

12 We will continue to come to the table to
13 reach a resolution with the District. The
14 District's plan will put students, teachers,
15 administrators and staff out of work.
16 Eliminating this work force is tantamount to
17 declaring war on the public school system.

18 We call on the District to rescind these --
19 this unconscionable and reckless move, and meet
20 with us in the best interest of our City to
21 avoid what would amount to a devastating blow to
22 our school system. We perform these jobs
23 because we care about our children who attend
24 our public schools. I hope they do.

1 Thank you.

2 (Applause)

3 If there are any questions, I'd love to
4 entertain them.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
6 Mr. Ricchezza. We find it unconscionable and
7 immoral that people who earn the least should
8 suffer the most. That's not right.

9 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you.

10 (Applause)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we will ask
12 the SRC and Mr. Knudsen specifically to respond
13 to this issue when he comes back.

14 MR. RICCHEZZA: Can I just say one thing,
15 Madam Chair?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Absolutely.

17 MR. RICCHEZZA: We met with Mr. Knudsen
18 when he first came here. When he came to, he
19 said he was not there to privatize or contract
20 our jobs. Five days later he came back. And at
21 that meeting he told us an RFP was being
22 submitted to contract all 2,700 workers. So,
23 within a five-day period there was a big swing
24 and a turnaround. And what we were being told

1 while we're in concessions talking to the School
2 District about give backs, I just have some
3 reservation about the honesty that we are
4 getting.

5 (Applause)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 Councilman Oh. Councilman Oh.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much,
9 Chairwoman.

10 George, I will have some questions for you
11 if you --

12 MR. RICCHEZZA: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, sir.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: In what you talked about
14 and what you heard other speale -- people speak
15 about, ultimately, I think what is confusing for
16 the public is how complicated this system is.
17 That being here in City Council, we don't select
18 or have any participation in selecting the
19 superintendent, but maybe we should.

20 We don't have any ability to go and look at
21 their books, but maybe we should.

22 We have no way of ensuring that there is a
23 response to the people, to the parents, and
24 maybe we should because there doesn't seem a way

1 for anyone to get communication or response from
2 the School District. And I am very interested
3 in how we could make sure that we get accurate
4 information, accountability, responsiveness.

5 And in order to do that, I don't see how we
6 are going to do it with this SRC.

7 (Applause)

8 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Would you comment on what
10 you think would be a better leadership system
11 for us to get that kind of response from a
12 School District?

13 MR. RICCHEZZA: Well, I would like to start
14 by saying that when Dr. Ackerman became the
15 superintendent, there was a 44 Member Advisory
16 Committee. We sat at the main bidding as a
17 committee and gave input into her being hired or
18 not being hired.

19 In this process -- and I went before the
20 SRC in October and asked them why we don't have
21 that process now with a new superintendent. We
22 have a Chief Recovery Officer that's here for
23 six months at \$150,000, and we still don't know
24 who the superintendent is going to be.

1 As far as transparency, we are not involved
2 in any other negotiations with the School
3 District. We are invited to anything. As many
4 times as we ask for us to have meetings and talk
5 about, we are always blind sided and we get it
6 on the back end. A decision is made, and then
7 they will call me into a meeting and tell me
8 what it is.

9 For instance, the Renaissance schools.
10 They made a decision. A day later they called
11 me up, we need you in our building in 30
12 minutes. I went to the building and that's when
13 they told me that they were making the new
14 Renaissance schools. As far as Local 32BJ and
15 District 1201 is involved, we are not involved
16 in the process whatsoever. And we would welcome
17 to be there at the table as you said.

18 I believe City Council should be there and
19 so should we.

20 (Applause)

21 COUNCILMAN OH: All right. Thank you very
22 much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Any
24 other questions? Thank you very much.

1 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you.

2 (Applause)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: David Hardy, Boys'
4 Latin Charter. Good morning, welcome.

5 MR. HARDY: Good morning or good afternoon.
6 I have a copies of my testimony.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

8 MR. HARDY: Good afternoon, Councilwoman
9 Blackwell and Distinguished Members of Council.
10 My name is David Hardy. And I'm the CEO of
11 Boys' Latin Charter School.

12 I come to you today to speak about the
13 budget of the School District of Philadelphia
14 and the efforts of our school and most of the
15 charter schools -- the efforts that our school
16 and most of the charter schools in the city have
17 been making to accommodate the District in the
18 disaster we now face.

19 We understand the urgency of making the
20 District live within its -- the limits of its
21 budget. Charter schools must live within the
22 limits of their budgets. We have no taxing
23 authority to increase our revenues as the
24 District does. Our funding is inextricably

1 linked to their budget. Consequently, their
2 budget instabilities become ours, too.

3 Our predicament is that we don't have the
4 benefit of size that the District has. If the
5 District butts give them a head -- if the
6 District cuts give them a head cold, it gives us
7 pneumonia. Charter school administrators are
8 grappling with potential budget cuts that some
9 have predicted to be high as 17 percent.

10 Mr. Knudsen stated in the Philadelphia Inquirer
11 the charter school cuts would be 7 percent.
12 However, when I asked him about that number, he
13 quickly said it could be 9 or 10 percent.

14 After boys -- for Boys' Latin, a 3 percent
15 difference in the budget is equal to about
16 \$100,000. This may not be much in the
17 District's \$2.6 billion budget, for us it's a
18 teacher and a fully stocked laptop cart. We
19 have a serious problem when it comes to cutting
20 our budget because we use every penny to provide
21 a complete high school experience for our
22 students.

23 That means not only rigorous -- a rigorous
24 learning experience but co-curricular activities

1 like entrepreneurial classes and outward bound,
2 extracurricular activities like sports, drama
3 and music and a commitment to instructional
4 technology with a one-to-one laptop program. We
5 have mounting evidence that those activities
6 enhance our academic outcomes. Our college
7 enrollment rate of 74 percent, which is reported
8 by the National College Clearinghouse, exceeds
9 the averages for neighborhood, citywide and
10 charter high schools. And was within 1
11 percentage point of the City average for magna
12 schools.

13 When compared to the college attendance
14 results by race and gender, our school which is
15 99 percent African-American males exceeds all
16 defined categories including Asian girls. The
17 District budget woes may also impact our ability
18 to expand our successful program. We want to
19 extend our grades to include middle school. We
20 also want to create a program for girls by
21 creating a Girls Latin Charter School.

22 The District has announced that it will
23 increase the enrollment in a special admissions
24 high schools to provide more quality seats.

1 What about those young people who want to go to
2 a college preparatory school but cannot qualify
3 for a magna school? Our results demonstrate
4 that we have eliminated the gap in college
5 attendance for our students. We have earned the
6 opportunity to do more. That opportunity should
7 not be a victim of the Districts' financial
8 quagmire.

9 If we do not increase the quality of
10 options for those who do not qualify for magna
11 schools, we will not make an impact on the
12 college attendance rates in this city. We will
13 be using a term I learned growing up on the
14 streets of North Philly. We will be hustling
15 backwards.

16 I request that the Members of the Council
17 take two important actions. Number one, demand
18 a clear explanation of the methodology used to
19 determine charter school payments. The past
20 calculations have been increasingly aggressive
21 and expanding costs that are included as
22 overheard which lowers our per pupil amount.

23 Number two, insist that charter schools,
24 individuals schools, not just educational

1 management companies, are included in their long
2 term plan to provide high quality seats.
3 Despite their newfound interest in expanding
4 options, the District still has a systemic
5 orientation to their efforts. It is difficult
6 if not impossible to improve systems. Improved
7 schools will improve the system. We are ready,
8 willing and able to join in a citywide effort to
9 improve the educational outcomes for
10 Philadelphia public schools.

11 The fiscal crisis of the District provides
12 an excellent opportunity to reconfigure the
13 educational offerings in public education. For
14 the sake of all the children who depend on
15 public schooling to shape their futures, let's
16 not blow it.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Are
19 there any questions? Thank you very much.

20 Next is Rebecca Poyourow. Thank you.

21 Good afternoon. Please identify yourself
22 for the record and begin your testimony.

23 MS. POYUROW: Good afternoon. Thank you.

24 Members of City Council, thank you for this

1 opportunity to speak regarding the School
2 District of Philadelphia's funding request. My
3 name is Rebecca Poyourow. I live in Roxborough
4 in Councilman Jones' District. And I have two
5 children who attend our neighborhood elementary
6 school.

7 My husband and I have been very involved in
8 our children's school. Volunteering in the
9 classrooms and going on school trips. I have
10 led afterschool art and drama clubs on top of a
11 full-time job. We've organized fund and supply
12 drives this year to try and address the losses
13 we've experienced with the budget cuts. We love
14 our kids school. And we want to make sure you
15 get the message that there are many District
16 schools that do a great job of educating kids
17 and creating a nurturing community. Public
18 schools in Philadelphia are worth our investment
19 as a city.

20 I am here with a twofold request today.
21 One, our schools -- our children schools are
22 severely and I would say criminally underfunded
23 on the local and state level. And I ask you to
24 shoulder your responsibility to find money to

1 stabilize the District and to lobby for funding
2 at the state level. Public education is a
3 public good. And we cannot allow our schools to
4 flounder without sufficient resources. Even at
5 my kid's well-functioning school, I have seen
6 unsafe situations created by cuts to lunchtime
7 aides and our school police officer and our
8 assistant principal and our bus monitors and
9 other safety personnel. And I have seen a
10 decline in instructional quality due to
11 overcrowded classrooms. That is one part of the
12 twofold request.

13 The other part is, in addition to being
14 underfunded, it is also the case that the
15 District does not always spend the funds it has
16 wisely. So, I would ask you to provide funds
17 with stipulations on their use.

18 Last year you signed an Education
19 Accountability Agreement with the District. And
20 I believe that gives you some authority here.
21 The School District has proposed alongside its
22 budgetary plan several reorganization components
23 which are extremely problematic in terms of
24 oversight and accountability and potentially

1 fiscally disastrous, as well.

2 At a moment of massive fiscal instability,
3 to proposed an ill thought out restructuring
4 plan that will end up costing the District
5 hundreds of millions more seems very foolish.
6 The District has announced it will create
7 Achievement Networks in Philadelphia and
8 outsource the oversight of clusters of District
9 schools to private management entities that will
10 bid for five year contracts. This should sound
11 alarm bells in your heads. (Bell goes off) Just
12 like that. Exactly.

13 (Laughter)

14 Philadelphia tried this experiment -- did
15 somebody plan that? Okay. I am sorry. When I
16 signed up, they said three to five minutes.
17 I'll be done.

18 Philadelphia tried this experiment a decade
19 ago to no good results. And there exists no
20 peer reviewed study of such experiments
21 conducted in other cities. And there is no
22 evidence that such arrangements have produced
23 good results even in New York City, which
24 doubled its educational spending with the time

1 that it constituted this kind of scheme.

2 The oversight issues that such
3 privatization raises trouble me greatly. This
4 school year began with a release of the Markman
5 Report detailing how corrupt the process of
6 rewarding a school turnaround contract could be.
7 To think that large groups of District schools
8 will now be turned over to outside bidders makes
9 me very wary of potential ethics violations in
10 the RPF process.

11 (Applause)

12 Furthermore, what would be the oversight of
13 these organizations once they get five year
14 contracts? In contradiction, as somebody said,
15 they would be serving the schools. The schools,
16 the parents, the teachers, the kids they don't
17 get to pick these organizations. These
18 organizations come in and pick the schools.

19 Secondly, the District's proposal to
20 convert 40 percent of the District to charter
21 schools should also ring alarm bells to anyone
22 who's been following what's happening in Chester
23 Upland this year, which has been bankrupted --
24 which has been bankrupted by charter

1 overexpansion. Our District may say closing 40
2 schools will save 33 million, but its proposal
3 to charterize the District will cost it 270
4 million in per people payments.

5 (Applause)

6 And millions more in state mandated
7 transportation for these additional charter
8 students.

9 Furthermore, if we are concerned about
10 access and equity in ou city schools, and we
11 should be, it is important to understand that
12 overexpansion of charter schools will create a
13 two-tiered system that leaves out students who
14 need the most help.

15 Finally, the proposal to close 40 schools
16 this year and 24 more over the following few
17 years is horrifying. It will cause mass chaos
18 and overcrowding, disrupt neighborhoods and
19 communities and negatively impact student
20 achievement. And any money it could save will
21 be vastly overshadowed by the enormous cost of
22 charter expansion.

23 In closing, my message in brief is please
24 find funding to stabilize the District

1 financially and for classrooms and instruction.
2 But please say no to this reorganization plan,
3 and thank you for listening.

4 (Applause)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Would you wait,
6 Ms. Poyourow. Ms. Poyourow -- Ms. Poyourow, we
7 have questions for you, would you wait.

8 Councilman Oh.

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

11 I think it is -- I appreciate your coming
12 here in the middle of the day as everyone is
13 here very concerned. But I do think it is
14 important so that we could make progress not
15 just as a Council or a School District, but as a
16 City that we lay out exactly what we are doing
17 so that your advocacy and efforts could be well
18 spent.

19 What a lot of people don't understand is
20 that there is a \$2.6 billion budget, and there
21 is that money. That money does not come out of
22 City Council. That money is the portion that
23 people pay in the real estate taxes. And
24 despite that money, the School District is short

1 right now about 4 and a half or \$468 million.

2 So, the 94 million that it wants from City
3 Council is not locked up in a vault someplace.
4 It comes out of people's pockets. And without
5 the proper formula, we may end up taxing people
6 out of their homes. So, we don't want to do
7 that. We want to try to provide this money in a
8 responsible way. But even if we provide this
9 \$94 million, there is still 156 million that you
10 heard they want from the employees unions and
11 whatnot. And on top of that, there is, you
12 know, the 218 million that they got to borrow.
13 So, it's not that we're not going to try to do
14 something, we are going to try to do something.
15 But ultimately, there is a real issue with our
16 system.

17 One is that this School District is run by
18 and controlled by the SRC that was put in place
19 when we went broke and the State had to take it
20 over. But right now, it's with Harrisburg. And
21 when they cut the budget, we could not possibly,
22 no matter how much we taxed the people in the
23 city, make up the difference. Because our
24 funding comes from real estate taxes, and

1 there's really only about 60 percent of the real
2 estate that pays for this.

3 We better come up with another system. I
4 think that's important. And I think it is
5 important that we -- it's not that we're going
6 to prove their plan because it's a good plan,
7 but we have to find a way to fund and open. We
8 are not even talking about quality education,
9 just talking about education. So, we are faced
10 with the issue of either not opening or opening
11 the doors of our schools and providing a work
12 force and the hope of quality education.

13 And I appreciate all that you say. And I
14 hope that, you know, the people who are
15 listening will take that into account. I find
16 one of the issues is maybe since the dollars
17 come from you, 2.6 billion for the schools and
18 additional dollars come from you, that all that
19 we are doing in trying to close this gap to
20 allow the School District to make up the
21 difference in borrowing money is that we need
22 some accountability for the citizens of this
23 City, so they can be in control of their own
24 future.

1 So, thank you very much for listening.

2 MS. POYUROW: Did you want a response?

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Sure.

4 MS. POYUROW: No. I am absolutely with
5 you that we need accountability from the
6 District. But I do think that there needs to be
7 the political will in this Body to address this
8 issue. It's not just the facts as they are,
9 there are many proposals on the table to find
10 extra funding including going after unpaid
11 property taxes to the tune of 4-some million.

12 There are lots of different approaches.
13 And we need your creativity and your political
14 will, not just saying we have to accept it as it
15 is. My kids and our kids can't wait.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: You will have our political
17 will. And we are working, I guarantee you, very
18 hard around this issue. But no matter how much
19 work and how much we try, we have to be prepared
20 not only for the best situation but for the
21 worst in a realistic sense.

22 But I do take what you are saying, and I
23 think we all do. And those listening, that we
24 will give it extra effort and try to come up

1 with money funding and other things.

2 MS. POYUROW: There is one other thing I
3 want to add. About a month ago I went to the
4 volunteer log in our office to see how many
5 hours had been logged by parents and other
6 community volunteers. And this was maybe the
7 beginning of April. And it was at one thousand
8 for one school. One thousand volunteer hours,
9 and not everybody logs their hours, and that was
10 only the beginning of April. So, people in this
11 city are committed. That's just the story of
12 one school.

13 There are people all over the city and
14 parents and teachers and community members who
15 believe in our schools and are putting their
16 sweat equity into it. And we need, in addition
17 to the sweat equity, we need the financial
18 backup. And you guys are going to have to find
19 a way to step up. You can be creative.

20 (Applause)

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, I'm sorry. I'm going
22 to have to respond to that because, you know,
23 just saying we got to step up, what we do is we
24 raise your taxes. We may go find -- we may try

1 to find money from other places that raises your
2 taxes. But you know, we are going to do -- we
3 are going to have to, you know, do what we can.
4 But the 94 million has got to come from
5 someplace. When it is provided, if it is
6 provided, it does take away from police, fire,
7 arts, recreation and other things.

8 At the end of the day, you know, people
9 will have the thing that they want. But the
10 health of the city overall will require that we
11 look at all the priorities for this city and do
12 as best we can with realistic dollars. So, if
13 you want to be helpful, it would help if you
14 focus on not just saying come up with dollars
15 but come up with good ideas, help us with some
16 ideas.

17 I appreciate your volunteer hours. But
18 this situation in our nation, not just our city,
19 is we have increasingly every year declining
20 dollars for education. And we are challenged
21 not to come up with just dollars for this time,
22 but going far into the future.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much. And let me note that both of you should

1 address the Chair. That's just the rules.

2 MS. POYOUROW: I'm sorry.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's okay.

4 MS. POYOUROW: I need to learn that.

5 COUNCILMAN OH: I apologize.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
7 much. Not at all.

8 Councilman Greenlee.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Madam
10 Chair. Very quickly, I know there's a lot of
11 people that want to talk.

12 (Ms. Poyourow leaves witness table.)

13 That's okay. That's all right.

14 Just on the accountability issue, I think
15 we want to put on the record, last year, to use
16 the words that were used, a lot of us stepped up
17 and voted for a tax increase. Despite our
18 trepidation about some of the things we were
19 being told and despite the fact that I know I
20 went to a number of meetings where I thought I
21 was going to get thrown out in the street when I
22 talked about stepping up to vote for schools.

23 We thought we could get that
24 accountability. We made an agreement with the

1 School District. We were told by the State, who
2 seems to want to tell us what to do all the time
3 except to help us, told us that we did not have
4 the right to do that, to hold a official
5 accountability agreement with the School
6 District. We hope this time that at least we
7 will have informal agreements that they will do
8 certain things. But I just want you to know,
9 because you say in your testimony, "I believe
10 that gives you some authority here."

11 We wish -- we wish it did. We wish we had
12 a little bit more authority, I believe. At
13 least a lot of us, we may have a difference of
14 opinion of how much on the School District. But
15 it is what it is. I think Councilman Oh talked
16 about that. We are under some restraints, too.

17 You know, again, but I think -- I don't
18 mean to be here just defending us, but I think a
19 number of us have stepped up, and we are going
20 to step up this time. But we also have to step
21 up for the taxpayers of the city, which is what
22 I think Councilman Oh said.

23 That's it for me. Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

1 Councilman Jones.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: First of all, thank you
3 for living in the Fourth Councilmatic District.
4 I want to say that first and foremost. And
5 thank you for volunteering and being a positive
6 valued added influence in the public education
7 process. I think that is something that
8 throughout all this, I haven't heard as much of
9 as I would like to.

10 The pack between the parent teachers
11 associations and the education of our kids is a
12 critical part of education. It's a critical
13 part of education in its implementation, but
14 also its design. Like, people should talk to
15 the parents who have to deal with this.

16 But let me just say this for the record,
17 and I am very concerned about this. Being
18 around a couple years now, not as long as some
19 but a couple years, whenever there are tough
20 situations whether it's your household, whether
21 it's people who control corporate America, when
22 things start going around wrong, people start
23 pointing fingers.

24 It's them dog gone charter schools. If we

1 can just get rid of the charter schools. Or
2 it's the underperforming public schools. If we
3 can just somehow just blow them up. It's this
4 or it's that. It's the unions, it's the
5 non-unions. You know what it is, it's
6 underfunding.

7 (Applause)

8 I mean, we have -- we have produced magic
9 tricks where we made a dollar out of 50 cents.
10 So, at the end of the day whether it's -- I
11 understand the issue of privatization versus
12 public education. I get it. But at the end of
13 the day, when we stop all of the talking, we are
14 going to have to start doing some lifting. And
15 that's what I think my colleague is trying to
16 say.

17 Now, whether the State -- there are those
18 at the State that are voices, sometimes in the
19 wilderness, that want to try to do something.
20 There is a wage reduction proposal being
21 considered as we speak to try to give us some
22 relief. There was \$800 million in unanticipated
23 revenue discovered at the state level that it
24 was almost like manna from heaven. But until

1 some political will up in the western part of
2 the state starts remembering the kids in Philly,
3 we are going to have a problem with that.

4 I can assure you one thing and one thing
5 for certain, we will not let our Philadelphia
6 children not have school. You understand. Now,
7 we may not be able to afford the, you know --
8 you can tell my age -- the Cadillac version of
9 what we all like in education, but we will do
10 what is necessary with what we have. We will
11 do -- we will squeeze every bit of resources out
12 of places that you know of and that we have yet
13 to discover to make sure that happens. Because
14 I want my colleague Cindy Bass to make a
15 conscious decision which will be in the best
16 interest of her child to say I'm placing my
17 child in public school because it's the best
18 option. We got a long way to go before we do
19 that.

20 (Applause)

21 So, I want you to understand what I want us
22 to do less of is point fingers at charter versus
23 public. I want us to do more of communicating
24 with each other. There is some good public

1 schools, and there are some good charter
2 schools. But the idea is, you know, those
3 parents at home just want good schools. They
4 don't care about, you know, a lot of the other
5 ingredients of that. They want to have a good
6 product.

7 Again, in tough times, a lot of times we
8 point the fingers at each other. But I would
9 love to have us pointing fingers in unison
10 working together. I am going to hold the PFT
11 and I'm going to hold the SRC to at least
12 meeting with each other to talk about
13 possibilities. So if there is certain things
14 that are non-dealbreakers from the start, let's
15 put them in the parking lot and let's not talk
16 about them. But the ones that we can agree on,
17 let's get them out of the way.

18 I am telling you, the one thing about us,
19 we come from all different aspects of the city,
20 but we talk to each other. There is not a
21 colleague -- well, then, okay, I make two
22 exceptions -- but even they talk through other
23 people. They talk through other people. That
24 communication has to stay open.

1 That is all I ask. Thank you, Madam Chair.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
3 much. Let me remind my colleagues that we were
4 supposed to recess at 3:30 and we have 20 people
5 who have not yet spoken, so we -- let's keep our
6 time in mind.

7 Councilwoman Bass.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I just had a quick
9 question.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's okay. We don't
12 even have to go into it. I just wanted to know
13 what school that was that had a thousand parents
14 log in as volunteers. But since, you know, I
15 know you are in the Fourth District. Friendly
16 competition between the Councilman and I.

17 But that's okay. You don't have to say if
18 you don't want to. Was it in the Fourth
19 District or Eighth?

20 MS. POYOUROW: It's Cook-Wissahickon.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
23 much.

24 (Applause)

1 Susan DeJarnatt. Susan DeJarnatt.

2 MS. DEJARNATT: I apologize. I didn't
3 realize we were supposed to bring copies of
4 testimony.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's all right.

6 MS. DEJARNATT: I can give it to you
7 afterwards if you want.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

9 MS. DEJARNATT: My name is -- thank you for
10 the opportunity to speak. My name is Susan
11 DeJarnatt. I am here with two hats. I'm the
12 mother of a child in the School District. I've
13 had children in the School District since 1989
14 which does make my feel very old. And I am a
15 Professor at Temple Law School where I do
16 academic research on school reform.

17 What I want to share with you today is a
18 letter that I wrote to the members of the School
19 Reform Commission asking them about aspects of
20 the Transformation Plan. And the thing I want
21 to stress at the moment is the School Reform
22 Commission and Mr. Knudsen are presenting the
23 Transformation Plan as part and parcel of the
24 Budget. So, I don't think consideration of the

1 two, even though I firmly agree with everyone
2 who has spoken in favor of greater funding for
3 the schools, and I also agree with the people
4 who think we should be going after the State
5 more than anything, that we do have to think
6 about this plan.

7 So, here is the questions that I have. The
8 financial crisis that we have has been largely
9 caused by overspending in the Ackerman
10 Administration, financial pressures from the
11 growth of charter schools and the deep cuts in
12 State Funding. I understand this crisis
13 requires the serious short term solution while
14 we all continue to press for full funding of
15 public education.

16 But I have many serious questions about the
17 Transformation Plan, which appears to link the
18 financial crisis to a revamping of the School
19 District that will not do much at all, if
20 anything, to reduce the financial crisis.
21 Questions for them.

22 How is this plan substantially different
23 than 2002 Diverse Provider Experiment?

24 That experiment is analyzed by research for

1 action and the Rand Corporation reached the
2 following conclusion. In sum with four years of
3 experience, we find no evidence of differential
4 academic benefits that would support the
5 additional expenditures on private managers.
6 This has to be different if we are going to get
7 a different result. And so far, I see no
8 difference.

9 Number two, have you taken into
10 consideration the impact of the proposed
11 closures of 60 schools on neighborhoods and
12 communities? Again, there is a recent academic
13 study from Temple, the Geography Department, I
14 believe, that points out the costs to
15 neighborhoods of the shift from traditional
16 public schools to charters.

17 I have citations where these studies are
18 available. That study concluded that because
19 charters tend to be built on business corridors
20 in contrast to the traditional public schools
21 that are located in neighborhoods, that that
22 presents a serious impact on communities.

23 We have talked a lot about privatization.
24 And the only thing I will forward to you there

1 if you are interested is that I have an article
2 coming out in the Urban Lawyer that studies the
3 financial management of charter schools in
4 Philadelphia and raises some very serious
5 questions. If you are interested, I will go
6 into detail on that or provide you with the
7 article.

8 If we are going to rely on those same
9 entities to run networks of public schools,
10 somebody needs to be monitoring the finances.
11 And there doesn't appear to be any provision for
12 that now. I am concerned about who will run the
13 Networks since so far nobody has really
14 expressed an interest.

15 And finally and perhaps equally
16 importantly, there are several things the
17 Philadelphia School District currently does very
18 well. The Magnet schools like Conwell,
19 Masterman, Central, Gamp, Carver, Curtis, et
20 cetera, are universally praised as excellent.
21 The instrumental music program is also wonderful
22 although it's suffered from funding cutbacks.

23 These programs need to be district wide to
24 be available to all Philadelphia's children. If

1 these schools are separated out into a network,
2 how are they going to be available to the rest
3 of the children in the other networks? How are
4 we going to continue to have things like the All
5 City Music Program, which requires kids to learn
6 instrumental music in third grade so they can
7 get to that point. What about the sports
8 programs? None of these are discussed in the
9 slideshow, the PowerPoint that's on the School
10 District website that talks about the
11 Transformation Plan.

12 I have not gotten answers to these
13 questions from the School Reform Commission
14 although Commissioner Pritchett was kind enough
15 to call me to say that it is a plan and they
16 want input. I hope that Members of City Council
17 can help me get the answers to these questions
18 because I think we all need them.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
21 much. Thank you very much.

22 Next we will hear from the Philadelphia
23 Home and School Council, Delores Solomon, Helen
24 Gym, Maurice Jones.

1 Thank you for your patience. Please
2 identify yourself for the record and begin.

3 MS. SOLOMON: Good afternoon, Council
4 Education Madam Chairman Jannie Blackwell and
5 Members of the City Council.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 MS. SOLOMON: My name is Delores E.
8 Solomon. And I am the President of the Citywide
9 Home School Council. And with me is Vice
10 President Rose Marie Hatchard as well as Millie
11 Capetti. And also we have Helen Gym, who is
12 cofounder of the Right to Education. And thank
13 you for the opportunity to address you today.

14 I represent the parents, guardians and
15 caregivers of students in our school district
16 citywide. Many parents have come to the
17 Philadelphia Home and School Council with
18 concerns about the School District proposed
19 budget cut and how it will effect the health,
20 safety and education of their children.

21 This plan does not address any of these
22 concerns. Nowhere does it speak about improving
23 the education of our youngsters. It's a
24 business plan, and we are supposed to be about

1 children. Philadelphia maintains the largest
2 school district in the State of Pennsylvania
3 with high poverty rates, so cutting the budget
4 will effect the very children who need it the
5 most.

6 Our parents want to know who will be
7 keeping their children safe and protected from
8 bullying. The School District answered by
9 laying off school police officers and NTA.

10 Our parents wanted to know who would be
11 administering medication to students with
12 medical issues. The School District answered by
13 laying off school nurses.

14 Our parents wanted to know how the District
15 planned to provide enrichment for their kids.
16 The School District answered by proposing
17 drastic cuts in music, arts and athletic
18 programs.

19 Parents deserve to have a complete
20 information about all of the choices that could
21 and should been on the table. As their elected
22 representative, we are not invited. Our input
23 was not sought. We should be partners in
24 setting priorities, meaningful two ways

1 conversation with the District. We need a
2 commitment for full transparencies from the
3 District.

4 These children belong to us, not to the
5 highly paid consulting firms. We believe that
6 we need the following to build, maintain a
7 successful School District: Parents, teachers,
8 principals and support staff working together
9 with one goal in mind to prepare our children
10 for the future; equitable funding to level the
11 playing field so that every child is affordable
12 of the resources that need to be successful;
13 adult staff and building to ensure our
14 children's safety; a standardized curriculum in
15 line with the State standards.

16 We need to work to support legislation and
17 to promote public policies to secure the highest
18 standard of education for all children of all
19 ages from every economic background. These
20 repeated experiments on our children have not
21 worked in the past and will not work now and
22 must be -- not be tolerated. Our kids deserve
23 the best, and we have to offer this plan. It's
24 not the way and the answer.

1 We are dedicated to work with the School
2 District and all of the stakeholders in these
3 efforts. Please stand with the parents to stop
4 this experiment and hope this plan that
5 dismantles our schools.

6 Thank you for your time.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
8 much.

9 (Applause)

10 Does someone else here want to testify?
11 Someone else here want to testify?

12 MS. SOLOMON: Yes. Helen Gym.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please identify
14 yourself and begin your testimony.

15 MS. GYM: Good afternoon, Madam
16 Councilwoman.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

18 MS. GYM: My name is Helen Gym. And I'm
19 the co -- one of the cofounders of Parents
20 United for Public Education. For the new
21 members of Council, Parents United for Public
22 Education is a citywide collective of public
23 school parents who advocate for district, local
24 and state budgets that prioritize the needs of

1 students and classrooms first. So, we can have
2 a \$2.6 billion budget, but we may not be
3 spending it on the very things that we need to
4 do. So, it's more than just about the money.

5 The first thing I want to say is, I guess I
6 wanted to dispense with the notion that there
7 has not been any parent input into this plan or
8 this budget. Because I will guarantee you that
9 if you ask this audience behind us how many of
10 them have been to multiple district meetings,
11 they will have said that we have been to
12 multiple district meetings. We have talked
13 about the future of our schools. We have talked
14 about smart budget matters. And we have never
15 suggested that our top priority would be to
16 close 40 schools in one year.

17 We have never suggested that our best plan
18 for the future of the School District would be
19 to divide it up into Achievement Networks run by
20 third party operators under performance
21 contract. That has never been at the top of our
22 list.

23 What we have been talking about are the
24 things that we fail to talk about because we are

1 distracted by shuffling, fussing with big ideas
2 that have been tried before.

3 Parents United has a vote of No Confidence
4 on the current budget and plan presented by the
5 School District of Philadelphia before City
6 Council. It is our belief that this plan should
7 be withdrawn immediately. It has unfortunately
8 tainted conversations around AVI, important
9 conversations. It has also tainted important
10 conversation around necessary local funding for
11 our schools. It should not get in the way.

12 In January 2012, Mr. Tom Knudsen was brought
13 to the School District as a Chief Recovery
14 Officer without any prior dialogue. Parents
15 United raised questions about his role and
16 power, the limitations of his authority and his
17 expectation and assignments. We got very few
18 answers. What we settled for instead was
19 assumption.

20 We assumed Mr. Knudsen who came with a
21 strong representation for his work at PGW would
22 present a strict short term fiscal plan that
23 would tackle many of the concerns raised around
24 executive hires, contracting, no bid

1 professional services that have been raised and
2 last spring's Memorandum of Understanding with
3 the City. An MLU that we praised for its
4 thoroughness and focus on critical concerns that
5 parents and community have been addressing for a
6 while. We assumed Mr. Knudsen would also
7 understand the distinction between a short term
8 fiscal crisis and a long term plan for recovery.

9 We have had fiscal managers in 2001 and
10 2007 who focused on gap closing issues and
11 putting the District on the right financial
12 footing. But I hope you understand that when we
13 saw this plan, we felt like we got the bait and
14 switch. We felt like instead of getting a short
15 term fiscal plan, we got someone who decided to
16 play God and overhaul the entire school system.
17 Never let a crisis go to waste.

18 How else do you explain a complete absence
19 of dialogue about a hundred million dollars in
20 discretionary contracts included the fact that
21 the District does not bid out its professional
22 services. If the District has made advances on
23 this front, then they certainly have not told
24 the public about it.

1 The District spent a lot of time yesterday
2 talking about reality-based planning, so I will
3 talk about reality. I want to remind City
4 Council of the reality of our public schools at
5 this time.

6 This year alone we lost 115 English
7 teachers, 121 math teachers, 66 social teachers.
8 Out of our high schools, 22 biology teachers, 17
9 chemistry teachers, 3 physics teachers, 50 art
10 teachers, 8 music teachers, 31 ESL teachers and
11 323 special education teachers. We have a
12 medical care system that says that we will care
13 for only the most medically fragile of students
14 in this school district. And we have three
15 quarters of our elementary schools without a
16 librarian. That is the reality that we live in
17 .

18 So, what is the reality-based plan that
19 they present? That they are going to decimate
20 Central Office. So let's talk about when they
21 decimate Central Office, as if we people don't
22 do work there. During the most recent
23 downsizing of Central Office, we lost an AP
24 coordinator, someone who coordinated a robotics

1 program for schools. Those are the programs
2 that we lose.

3 It's not just about decimating Central
4 Office for the sake of doing so. It is
5 understanding that Central Office does provide a
6 certain amount of support for schools. We have
7 to talk about the reality-based idea of closing
8 40 schools, 15 to 20,000 arguably students in
9 chaos next year.

10 We still have not gotten a full criteria of
11 the standards for why we close schools. What
12 options were given to parents? The fact that
13 parents this year were told at the end of March,
14 after magnet schools, after transfers were
15 allowed, after private school applications are
16 allowed that they didn't have the option or the
17 timing to seek other options.

18 Creighton and Stanton were obvious mistakes
19 in the school closing process. If that was 2
20 out of 9, imagine the number of mistakes that
21 could come forth with 40 school closings next
22 year.

23 And then finally I want to talk about the
24 reality-based issue of finding a superintendent

1 because we are in need of a superintendent, I
2 assume. We are still looking for an academic
3 leader. But when we lay out a school plan for
4 five years that decimates the entire Central
5 Office, that lays out a system for closing 64
6 schools over five years, for moving 40 percent
7 of students into charters and for reorganizing
8 the entire School District, then the basic
9 question that I have asked before is are we
10 looking for an academic leader or are we looking
11 for an executioner?

12 I also want to talk about things that
13 matter. Councilwoman -- and I'll end here.

14 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds-Brown talked
15 about things that really mattered to her;
16 turnover, stability. And you look at a plan
17 that up ends the entire Central Office, that
18 reorganizes and reshuffles all of the school
19 districts. How does that help with teacher
20 stability? How does that help address classroom
21 supports? How does that -- why are we not
22 talking about educator led turnarounds?

23 So, we are asking City Council to tell the
24 School District to step back from the brink, to

1 remove and withdraw it's plan. And we need to
2 start again. We need to start again so we can
3 have real dialogue and real conversation about
4 the things that matter in our schools and in our
5 city. And until then, frankly, we are going to
6 be in a divide because there were thousands of
7 people at Enon Tabernacle. There have been
8 hundreds of people who have come out. We have
9 got angry parents, and this city should not be
10 divided. We should be unified over our schools.
11 This plan is dividing our city, and there is no
12 reason for it.

13 So I want to thank City Council very much
14 for your time.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

16 (Applause)

17 Thank you very much. Ms. Bertha Simmons,
18 Community Leader. Ms. Bertha Simmons.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Hello everyone.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Hello.

21 MS. SIMMONS: My name is Bertha Simmons.
22 And that's my daughter, Jannie Blackwell.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

24 MS. SIMMONS: I raised her when she was a

1 little child, and you should have seen her
2 jiggling trying to get across the street before
3 the light changed. I used to have to hold her
4 back and say, wait, honey. Before you cross the
5 street, we got to wait for the light. And look
6 at her now.

7 She stayed in school. She was a good
8 child. And I have to tell you all, she was a
9 good child because I talked with her, prayed
10 with her and told her to step up and do the
11 right thing. And now I am looking at her now.
12 I'm 85, and she's doing the right thing.

13 (Applause)

14 And I want to let you all know I am here to
15 get the prayer back in schools. Because you
16 do -- every child and every mother prays a
17 different prayer, but every child know what to
18 say. They do not have to pray a prayer. Have
19 the room open where they can walk in and greet
20 each other, say how are you, go about their
21 business and do what they have to do.

22 Even the teachers in that room needs some
23 prayer. They can pray. They don't have to pray
24 out loud. Just walk to each other and say,

1 hello, honey. How are you. Have a good day.
2 That is a prayer for everybody right then and
3 there. You don't have to walk up and pray, oh,
4 Lord this and that. The Lord knows you are
5 there. He's watched over you all night and
6 brought you out to that same prayer that he
7 helped you with.

8 Don't forget how you were brought into this
9 world. How are you going to live if you don't
10 have a little bit of security in your heart and
11 in your mind to keep you going. You were not
12 put in this world by yourself to do what you
13 want to do. There are nice, good things in your
14 heart and in your mind that we should do.

15 The kids tell me now who are working, they
16 do not plan on staying in Philadelphia because
17 it's not any good guidance in the school. We
18 want to keep the people here who are working.
19 Do not let them leave Philadelphia. Keep their
20 kids here. But the kids have nothing to go to
21 school for.

22 So let us step up, wake up, jump up and
23 say, Lord, help us to get some type of guidance
24 back into the school. You don't have to pray.

1 Just walk in and just, like I said, hello, how
2 are you. How are you doing today. We are glad
3 to see each other. Because God will help you
4 make a way. So, whoever taking the prayer out
5 of schools need to get on the telephone,
6 newspaper, whoever they are or whoever working
7 together. Let everybody know this is
8 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We got to step up
9 and do the right thing.

10 And I have a little poem I wrote.

11 "Let us trust in God to be our guidance.
12 We don't have to speak to everybody what we do.
13 But let Him be in our mind and in our hearts and
14 work together and do the right thing because God
15 will lead us whether you know it or not. You
16 got to listen to what He says. Because He will
17 give us all blessings every day."

18 (Applause)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
20 Ms. Simmons. And we do love you. We thank you.
21 You're always here and always focused.

22 Let me say to those who represent the
23 School District, the SRC, we have asked for the
24 policy in writing. We've been asking for it

1 through our -- through the nine-hour hearing and
2 through our other five deliberations we have had
3 in recent months. School District has to have
4 it in writing. It's not too much to ask for
5 that.

6 So, we thank you very much. We love you
7 Mother Simmons, and we thank you for being here
8 and for taking up and -- for speaking to all of
9 us.

10 Mr. Brian Armstead, Philadelphia
11 Educational Fund. After Mr. Edwards, we will
12 have the students from Excel South and from
13 Excel North. You will be next after
14 Mr. Edwards. Thank you.

15 Welcome. Please identify yourself and give
16 your testimony.

17 MR. ARMSTEAD: Thank you very much,
18 Councilwoman Blackwell.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

20 MR. ARMSTEAD: And all the Members of
21 Council. My name is Brian Armstead. I am the
22 Director of Civic Engagement for the
23 Philadelphia Education Fund. And I am here
24 today to encourage you to support the Actual

1 Value Initiative.

2 I want to be brief about this because, you
3 know, I really feel this is something that has
4 to be done regardless of your previous
5 interactions with other district leaders or the
6 push back that you might get from some of your
7 constituents because the need is just that
8 urgent. You know, a number of people have
9 spoken or probably will in a little bit about
10 the importance of the AVI, bringing fairness
11 back to property taxes. The fact the District
12 sorely needs the \$94 million.

13 This is key regardless of any reform
14 efforts that they may started to try to broach.
15 This is critical. This \$94 million is critical.
16 And I think, you know, to explore and examine
17 and really probe any kind of reform initiative
18 that are being proposed is crucial and is vital
19 and has to happen. But I think we have to keep
20 that separate from the immediate question before
21 us, which is the AVI.

22 So, I think that you have to really work
23 hard, of all of you Council. I really employ
24 you all to get nine votes for this for one

1 simple reason. As much as some of your
2 constituents may push back at the idea of paying
3 higher taxes, almost all your constituents will
4 scream bloody murder if the School District has
5 to make even more Draconian cuts this fall, has
6 to delay their opening or has to officially go
7 down the path laid by Chester. A bankrupt
8 School District is bad for your neighbors and my
9 neighbors. It's bad for the small mom and pop
10 business. And it's certainly a train wreck for
11 big business in the city. In fact, it would
12 make it extremely hard to keep a number of those
13 businesses in the city and would stop others
14 from moving into town and hiring the residents
15 that live in our neighborhoods.

16 I agree with you that the major culprit
17 this drama is the Governor. But right or wrong,
18 if the District collapses under its own weight
19 this fall, the citizens of the city, both as
20 resident and as businesses, will be looking to
21 you, Council, for an explanation about why you
22 didn't save it when you could. Especially when
23 the solution is something that is fair and has
24 protections built in to help safeguard the

1 citizens if their property taxes should rise.

2 I ask you to put aside lingering issues you
3 may have with the previous District leadership,
4 and also to focus your questions about the
5 reform efforts and really look squarely at the
6 bigger picture when it comes to the funding and
7 the AVI initiative. The City is in need of your
8 best leadership at this time.

9 And so, I am going to be optimistic and
10 applaud you in advance of your decision because
11 I know and believe that you will rise to this
12 occasion once again, because it's simply the
13 right and only thing that you can do.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
16 Mr. Armstead.

17 Next we will have Amber Austin from Excel
18 South, Alex Nunez, ex -- another student from
19 Excel South. We'll have Alexis Williams, a
20 student from Camelot Excel North and certainly,
21 Ozzie Watson, Excel North. Thank you. Welcome.

22 Please identify yourself for the record.
23 We're glad to see you again. And begin your
24 testimony.

1 MR. NUNEZ: Good afternoon.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

3 MR. NUNEZ: My name is Alex Nunez. I'm
4 speaking on behalf of Excel Camelot South. I am
5 a senior executive in student government. I am
6 here to today to support Excel South and to
7 fight to maintain schools like this open. Excel
8 South has given hundreds of young men and women
9 the hope and support and faith so they can move
10 towards success in life.

11 When I first moved to Philadelphia, I went
12 to a large public high school. I was lost
13 there. I did not learn anything due to lack of
14 support from teachers and general staff. All
15 they did was put me in ISS and make me clean
16 because I did not attend class. I had a
17 horrible attendance record. I did not care.

18 Excel South has made the difference in my
19 attitude and view of life. There is always
20 someone there for you to support you and guide
21 you down the right path. I came from a
22 checkered past of poor attendance and behavior.
23 Then had been transformed to 100 percent
24 attendance, A's and B's, and my Executive

1 status.

2 I am even planning on going to college,
3 which is something I never thought was possible.
4 I've already been accepted to ITT Tech and now
5 waiting on a response from Thaddeus Stevens. I
6 even plan on going to the military in the
7 future.

8 There are many other students like me in
9 the City of Philadelphia that could use a
10 supportive program like this. I have
11 received -- like the one I received at Excel
12 South. There is a staggering amount of dropouts
13 in the U.S. which is due to the absence of
14 schools like Excel Academy South. There are not
15 many options for young adults that did not
16 attend school or take advantage of their
17 education. I just want to leave a bright future
18 for our upcoming generation.

19 The District should reconsider cutting the
20 funds for a program like this one. Camelot
21 schools are a wonderful environment for
22 everyone. I give great thanks to Excel programs
23 and all their staff for the future I now have.
24 Thank you for your consideration. Have a

1 wonderful day.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: What is your name
3 again?

4 MR. NUNEZ: Alex Nunez.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. Okay.
6 You're the first gentleman I called. Alex
7 Nunez. All right. Thank you.

8 MS. AUSTIN: Good afternoon.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

10 MS. AUSTIN: My name is Amber Austin. And
11 I am speaking on behalf of Excel -- Camelot
12 Excel Academy South. I would like to start off
13 by explaining my experience with my first two
14 years of high school.

15 In 2009, I started out at a large public
16 school. In a year, I witnessed incidents I
17 couldn't imagine happening in a school. I saw
18 fights every day and witnessed race wars. The
19 worst part was the lack of support towards
20 meeting my academic needs. The teachers didn't
21 seem to care what you did or if you passed or
22 even if you went to class.

23 I didn't cut school much, but I did it a
24 few times. And it didn't help my grades

1 neither. I didn't want to get up in the morning
2 for school because being at school wasn't safe.
3 I didn't feel like it was worth getting up and
4 wasting a whole day in some building that didn't
5 seem like a school at all. I didn't -- it was
6 like being at a playground.

7 I was absent from school a few times a week
8 and I was barely passing. This was not an ideal
9 learning environment. People walked in and out
10 of school and the security did nothing. I knew
11 I needed a change in my life, but didn't think
12 it would happen. But then I heard about Excel
13 Academy South.

14 Since I started attending Excel, I became a
15 part of the student government and have almost
16 100 percent attendance. I know I am getting a
17 good education. I went from being a D student
18 to having straight A's. The teachers have
19 taught me so much and encouraged us students to
20 come to school every day.

21 There is no chance of a fight breaking out
22 or definitely no chance of a riot. Staff is
23 always watching around to keep -- to watch the
24 school and keep it safe. This is a -- there is

1 a sense of pride within the school and a mutual
2 respect between staff and students. Excel is a
3 second chance for everyone. And if the budget
4 is cut and you take away Excel, I can assure you
5 it would be a terrible mistake.

6 At Excel, students get the education they
7 deserve. I am currently applying at Temple
8 University. I always wanted to be a lawyer.
9 And Excel is helping me earn the grades to go
10 forward with that dream. Excel has helped me
11 turn my life around.

12 Have a good day, and thank you for your
13 time.

14 (Applause)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
16 much. We thank you for coming and remember you
17 from before. And thank you for your excellent
18 testimony.

19 Is Alexis Williams or Ozzie Watson here?

20 (No.)

21 All right. That was from Excel North.

22 Okay. We will now have -- we'll now have OIC of
23 America Creative Learning Academy. Tim Tilman
24 Site Director, Edward Cephas and Danielle

1 Hammond.

2 After they testify -- is John Krol here?

3 MR. KROL: Right here.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You will be next.

5 Thanks.

6 (OIC group approach witness table.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Do you coach
8 basketball?

9 MR. TILMAN: I do.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

11 MR. TILMAN: Actually, I started up a team.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

13 Please identify yourself.

14 MR. TILMAN: Good afternoon, everyone. My
15 name is Timothy Tilman from the OIC of America's
16 Creative Learning Academy in South Philadelphia.

17 Just a quick note, I was born and raised in
18 Philadelphia. I have a passion for this because
19 I used to be similar to these young people,
20 chronically truant, not going school. Fortunate
21 enough for me, my family cared enough to send me
22 down south with my grandmother where I got back
23 on the right path, obviously.

24 A graduate of Drexel University, so I just

1 want to thank you all for this time. And like
2 to introduce my two students, Edward Cephas and
3 Danielle Hammond.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

5 MR. CEPHAS: All right. Good afternoon,
6 Councilwoman Blackwell, esteemed Members of City
7 Council, visitors and fellow students. I would
8 like to introduce myself. My name is Edward
9 Cephas, Ed. I am an 11th grade student at OIC
10 of America's Creative Learning Academy. And
11 that's located at South Philadelphia High School
12 Creative Learning Academy, CLA. It's an
13 accelerated program that provides a high school
14 education to students between the ages of 17 to
15 21 who are -- because -- who are undercredited
16 and over aged.

17 This school -- sorry about this. But this
18 school helps students like us obtain their high
19 school diploma. When I started at Creating
20 Learning Academy in November, I was upset
21 because I was kicked out of Roxborough High
22 School because of my attendance, which unabled
23 me to continue being a student there.

24 But after I was orientated and started my

1 classes at CLA, I felt comfortable and more
2 welcome by my classmates and my teachers. I
3 think that CLA is a great school because it
4 helps you better your future by giving you a
5 chance to bring up your credits and graduate.
6 Because that means even if you too old or have
7 too low credits, the school has given people the
8 chance to better their futures by letting them
9 finish school with accelerated classes and
10 teachers that take pride in teaching the student
11 the lesson that they need to succeed.

12 CLA should not close because I see students
13 who are sad about graduating and going to
14 college. And without CLA they would not really
15 be able to have that chance.

16 In my conclusion, I really am happy that I
17 am student at Creative Learning Academy. And I
18 hope that it stays open so that students in the
19 coming years can graduate and they can become
20 successful and productive people. And
21 because -- I'd like to say thank you for
22 allowing me to address you today.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much. Thanks for being here.

1 (Applause)

2 MS. HAMMOND: Good afternoon, Councilwoman
3 Blackwell, esteemed Members of City Council,
4 Visitors and fellow students. My name is
5 Danielle Hammond. And I am a 12th grade student
6 of OIC of America Creative Learning Academy
7 located at South Philadelphia.

8 The Creative Learning Academy serves
9 students who are over age and under credited
10 through an accelerated learning program that
11 allows students to receive their high school
12 diploma at a faster pace than a traditional high
13 school while still adhering to the educational
14 requirements of the Philadelphia School
15 District. CLA means the world to me.

16 Before I came to CLA, I was a troubled
17 teen. I had no goals, no aspirations and no
18 interest. I basically had no purpose in life.
19 I had so much anger in me that it gradually ate
20 me up. My anger showed in everything I did. I
21 lost all my friends, family and I even lost
22 faith in myself.

23 My teachers in my previous school thought I
24 had a lot of potential, but they didn't think I

1 would make it through life. I came to CLA to
2 support my younger sister. There I gained so
3 much knowledge. They weren't ready to give up
4 on me, and they were willing to do anything to
5 put me back on the right track.

6 Of course, I was stubborn so I gave them a
7 hard time, but they didn't give up on me. And I
8 started to believe that they really cared
9 because I was treated like family.

10 At CLA I met people who cared about not
11 just my education but me as a person, also.
12 When things got hard, I had someone to turn to.
13 When things got personal, there was always
14 someone to talk to. When I got so scared and
15 lost all my faith, I had someone to lift me up
16 and say, hey, it gets like this, but now is not
17 the time to give up.

18 When I broke down due to financial
19 situations, there was a helping hand. I had
20 people who told me how proud they were of me and
21 how much I had improved. And that was something
22 that most of us did not get every day. There
23 words made me work harder and harder every day
24 because I didn't want to let them down just like

1 they didn't let me down.

2 The staff at -- the staff at this school
3 brought out the best of me. Now here I am,
4 proud to call myself in 2012 graduate this June
5 all thanks to the staff, or should I say, the
6 family at CLA. Without them I would have been
7 nothing just like everyone else told me. The
8 staff at CLA did more than anyone could ever do
9 for me in my entire life. And I am so grateful
10 to have been part of the CLA family.

11 Please give these other kids the
12 opportunity that I have. Thank you for allowing
13 me address you today.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
15 much.

16 (Applause)

17 We thank Phylis for bringing you again.
18 Thank you. We missed you last -- thank you for
19 bringing them. Thank you very much.

20 Mr. John Krol.

21 MR. KROL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

23 MR. KROL: If I can just put for the
24 record, I am a member of District Council 32BJ

1 District 1201.

2 Earlier this afternoon I had all my
3 executive board here. They are gone. The only
4 two coworkers left are on my far right. That
5 just goes to show you the cooperation we get
6 from our Union and the School District, and that
7 was not in my testimony. But I want to put it
8 into the record today. Thank you.

9 Good afternoon.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

11 MR. KROL: I thank you once again to speak
12 here. I am John J. Krol, a proud Union Member
13 of District 1201 32BJ, an employee of the School
14 District of Philadelphia, working as a general
15 construction carpenter in the maintenance
16 department for over 19 years.

17 I am concerned for all the members of my
18 union and myself who have been served with
19 layoff notices. These layoff notices are set to
20 begin in three waves: July 1 of 2012, September
21 of 2012, followed by the last group in December
22 of 2012 at which time, all the members will be
23 laid off in the -- all the members will be laid
24 off if the School District follows through on

1 their layoff plan. All building engineers, all
2 cleaners, all maintenance mechanics, all bus
3 drivers.

4 Question: How can this happen when we are
5 under a binding contract until August of 2013?
6 How can the School District bring in an outside
7 contractor when we are under a binding contract?
8 Is this what is known as union busting in a city
9 that is union town?

10 Currently, the School District is taking
11 bids RFP 321 from outside vendors to provide the
12 services of professional facilities management
13 firm to operate, manage and maintain
14 approximately 400 buildings comprising of 10
15 million square feet of space. These outside
16 contractors will be overseen by the Senior VP of
17 Facilities or his designee.

18 So, one person within the School District
19 is going to make sure these contracts are doing
20 the proper job. It seems to me the way this is
21 set up, it's set up to fail having only one
22 person to oversee this proposal. For has not
23 the School District learned its lesson when the
24 former Superintendent Ms. Ackerman was the sole

1 overseer. Look at this debt she has put us in.
2 Ms. Ackerman has also received a generous buyout
3 on the backs of the Union members.

4 I ask the City Council to take a stand to
5 make sure a plan like this does not happen.
6 There is no way one person can oversee all the
7 district facilities by themselves. In this RFP
8 Proposal there is a section, work above the
9 \$3,000 thresholds. Let me explain.

10 If a door knob is broke on a door and is in
11 need of repair, the cost and labor and material
12 is under the 3,000 threshold limit. So what
13 will happen? To get above the 3,000 threshold
14 limit in order for the contractor to be paid, he
15 will have to replace the door, the doorknob, the
16 door frame and any other items needed to be over
17 the threshold.

18 Question: If this proposal is implemented,
19 how is this cost effective that the District
20 will be spending and wasting more money for the
21 long and short haul?

22 There is no way in today's economy a
23 contractor can make a profit if he is constantly
24 absorbing this material and labor costs under

1 the \$3,000 threshold. I ask all the Council
2 Members to join with my Union executive boards
3 to help our union reach an acceptable agreement
4 with the School District. We are in need of
5 your help.

6 For these layoffs in June are weeks away.
7 The overall moral of my union members is at an
8 all time low. For there is much uncertainty
9 wondering when the agreement can be reached, and
10 are we still going to have a job.

11 Couple other notes. A person in management
12 has given me this. The School District has
13 requested \$94 million in AVI tax assessments.
14 If these 2,700 people are let go, 25 to 30
15 million will have to be paid to those 2,700
16 members in exit payments for their employment be
17 it personal days, vacation days and built up
18 sick time.

19 What is the Union going to do in School
20 District -- I apologize. Give me one minute.

21 Also, on April 18, I made a public
22 statement at an SRC meeting. I spoke at three.
23 I spoke three times here. I asked the SRC to
24 make a public statement if the layoffs are going

1 to occur. They wouldn't tell me. Five days
2 later on a Tuesday, that's when Knudsen came an
3 papered -- they're outsourcing our work. They
4 wont' tell it to my face as you witnessed here
5 before in prior testimony.

6 Let me close with this, please. Councilman
7 Jones and some of you heard this, but I feel a
8 need to do this.

9 This incident happened with me and my
10 daughter Casey last September 29, 2011. My
11 daughter's Back To School Night. A night to
12 meet my daughter's teachers. When we were done,
13 I asked my daughter if she would like to go get
14 something to eat. Ladies and gentlemen, my
15 daughter said to me, Daddy, do you have the
16 money? Daddy, do you have the money?

17 My daughter's effected by this layoff
18 notice I received. My whole family is effected
19 wondering am I still going to be employed.
20 Wondering where daddy will work and if I can
21 keep a job that I like so much.

22 Thank you. If there is any questions, I
23 will gladly answer.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,

1 Mr. Krol. I think we made our feelings known
2 earlier about 1201 and 32BJ and how we find it
3 unconscionable that all of these people could be
4 laid off and some of the people have the lowest
5 paying jobs. Thank you.

6 MR. KROL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank
7 you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Next,
9 we're going to have this El Centro -- El Centro
10 School. We have a teacher Helen Rowe. We have
11 Zeelyna Wise. We have Nekeata Pagan, Casey
12 McAndles, Joshua Velazquez. I assume that
13 Forrest Laws and Anyeah Stover are there. And
14 then we have David Bromley from El Centro High
15 School.

16 So, El Centro come forward. You can
17 testify in any order you choose. We welcome
18 you. Just identify yourself for the record and
19 begin your testimony. Thank you.

20 MR. BROMLEY: Good afternoon.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

22 MR. BROMLEY: My name is David Bromley.
23 I'm the Executive Director of Big Picture
24 Philadelphia. We are a nonprofit organization

1 that is part of the nationally acclaimed Big
2 Picture Learning Network. We started in support
3 of over 90 innovative schools around the
4 country.

5 I had the honor of four years ago funding
6 Big Picture Philadelphia with our goal being
7 part of the City's larger education reform
8 efforts.

9 Two and a half years ago, Big Picture
10 Philadelphia --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse me. Could
12 we have it quiet, please.

13 MR. BROMLEY: I'll speak up.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Sorry. No, you're
15 fine. It's not you.

16 MR. BROMLEY: Two and a half years ago Big
17 Picture Philadelphia founded El Centro de
18 Estudiantes. It's an alternative school in the
19 Norris Square neighborhood of Kensington. El
20 Centro has become a school and a second home to
21 145 young men and women and in turn an important
22 part of the City's efforts to reduce the dropout
23 rate and increase the college graduation rate.

24 Thanks to the support that you, our City

1 Council representatives provided to the School
2 District of Philadelphia almost a year ago, El
3 Centro is now completing it's third year and we
4 are enormously proud of our accomplishments.
5 starting any new school or program is immensely
6 difficult. It requires years of dedication from
7 highly talented adults. It requires painstaking
8 self analysis and organizational analysis to get
9 better on behalf of the youth we serve.

10 So, what makes us so different from the
11 schools that these students came? What have we
12 learned?

13 The out-of-school student population
14 benefits tremendously from close student/adult
15 relationships. And as such, we have implemented
16 an advisory system where students remain with
17 the same teacher until graduation. We have
18 learned that students need to learn how to live
19 peacefully and respectfully in a community. And
20 as such, we've implemented a school-wide
21 restorative justice practice.

22 We have learned that when students are
23 engaged in educational opportunities that are
24 relevant and meaningful, they become more

1 motivated and committed to their education. As
2 such, we had implemented a comprehensive
3 community-based internship program where
4 students engage in challenging authentic work.

5 We have implemented intimate literacy and
6 numerous seminars to further development of
7 students' core academic skills. We have learned
8 that when students are provided the opportunity
9 to think about their future, they will rise to
10 the occasion. As such, every student has
11 completed a post-secondary plan that includes
12 higher education in the world of work.

13 This summer, El Centro will graduate its
14 second cohort of students. We are proud to say
15 that of all the students who will be eligible to
16 graduate this summer, over 80 percent will
17 receive their diploma. Big Picture Philadelphia
18 is honored to be part of this collective work
19 around educating our youth.

20 We hope that next year with your collective
21 support, we can stand before you and boast of El
22 Centro's third graduating class. Thank you for
23 your time and support. Now you're going to hear
24 students testifying on behalf of El Centro.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
2 much.

3 MR. LAWS: My name is Forrest Laws. And I
4 am a student at El Centro.

5 From the two years that I attended El
6 Centro, there have been a major change in my
7 life. I used to want to finish high school to
8 get it over with. But I wish to finish high
9 school now. But now I wish to finish high
10 school because to better myself in life. In
11 fact, I am graduating in July and have been
12 accepted to Bucks County Community College for
13 the fall semester. And will be working on
14 getting my business -- degree in business.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Congratulations.
16 (Applause).

17 MR. LAWS: Thank you. The idea of being
18 somebody in life, to have people looking up to
19 you is priceless. This is a feeling I am
20 willing to work on as long as I have to. It's a
21 reason that I am here today. El Centro isn't
22 just a school, it's a home. It's a place you
23 can come to be yourself and nobody will judge
24 you.

1 El Centro is a school that's helped you
2 better -- to help you better yourself as a
3 person and does a great job at it. But it's not
4 just about me, this is the student -- this is
5 for the students that have plans to graduate in
6 December 2012, March 2013 and so forth. There
7 is a whole bunch of students just like me that
8 are planning to graduate from El Centro.

9 How do you think these students will feel
10 if their school is no longer there? Where will
11 they graduate from?

12 To wrap it up, how do you think the
13 students will feel if they can't come back to El
14 Centro to achieve their goals? I hope you think
15 about this question with deep thought and
16 consider finding the money to keep accelerated
17 schools open. Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
19 much.

20 MR. VELAZQUEZ: Hello. My name is Joshua
21 Velazquez. And I attend El Centro de
22 Estudiantes.

23 Before I attended El Centro, I was at
24 Frankford High School. When I was at Frankford

1 High School, I missed a lot of school.
2 Sometimes I missed school for weeks. The reason
3 I missed school was because I was having
4 problems and the school didn't help.

5 Once I heard about El Centro and what it
6 offered, I became very interested. I wanted to
7 attend because of smaller classrooms, teachers
8 that care and what they referred to as real
9 world learning. Schools such as El Centro help
10 young people to see a future they once thought
11 was impossible.

12 I ask you today to think about what
13 students like me are going through. If I was
14 your child, 19 years old without a diploma and
15 the school that is actually helping me is
16 getting closed down, what school would you send
17 me to? A school like Frankford where they
18 focused on every student all at once, or would
19 you want me to go to a school where the advisers
20 care and go one on one with you to help you
21 achieve your goal?

22 Thank you.

23 (Applause)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very

1 much. Thank you for your great testimony.

2 Please identify yourself for the record and
3 begin.

4 MS. WISE: Hi. My name is Zeelyna Wise. I
5 am the Director of Student Support at El Centro.
6 First, I'd like to say thank you for your time
7 and for your ear. I don't have my glasses, so
8 this is going to be really fun to read this.

9 I have had the opportunity to attend many
10 hearings here at City Council regarding
11 education. After listening to students
12 testimonies, I found a common thread that
13 connected them all. Relationships. We will
14 hear each student testify how relationships they
15 form with teacher and school has allowed them to
16 create a trusting and respectful bond.

17 Many students that attend accelerated high
18 schools have experienced educational trauma.
19 Many will not return to a regular high school
20 and are distrusting of an educational system
21 that has not put their best interest at heart.
22 Some even feel the system was never designed for
23 them. It was never designed for their success.
24 It was designed for the other kids who live in

1 the suburbs.

2 In an accelerated high school many students
3 have changed their views of adults and the world
4 around them because the relationships born from
5 individual mindful interactions. This
6 individual interaction enables students to see
7 the possibilities of a brighter future with
8 ability to obtain their dreams. What has
9 allowed this transformation in many of their
10 lives, I believe, is the key. Smaller size
11 classrooms where relationships can be fostered.

12 Sounds simple. It's simple. I ask this
13 question. How do you study in a chaotic room
14 full of people? I imagine overwhelmed, scared
15 and closed down. In an accelerated school,
16 students are not overwhelmed. They feel
17 supported and not lost by the classroom size.

18 Many of our young people need more
19 individual care because of the life issues they
20 face daily. We must be responsible for how we
21 proceed in this very crucial time in history. I
22 say this because America is no longer number
23 one. The U.S. has lost ground from where she
24 once stood. I don't understand why it's been so

1 difficult for those in power to understand a
2 simple truth. An educated community is
3 empowered to change.

4 Imagine what an educated American can
5 accomplish. We owe it to the future of our
6 young people to care and find the funds that
7 will support accelerated schools such as El
8 Centro and others that offer mindful
9 interactions through smaller classroom size.

10 I thank you for your time.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
12 much.

13 MS. MCANDLES: Hi. My name is Casey
14 McAndles. I am 17-year-old, and I'm a student
15 El Centro.

16 I'm in the 11th grade. I am a mother of
17 two, and it's hard to take care of kids and try
18 to get an education at the same time. But since
19 I came to El Centro, it gave me a chance to keep
20 going to get my education.

21 I just came to El Centro this year, but I
22 like it a lot. It's real helpful and positive
23 place. The teachers that really care about the
24 students, they help us any way they can. They

1 encourage you to come to school and do better.

2 There is not violence in our school like
3 public schools. The schools give its students
4 opportunities to find something we are
5 interested in and try it out through
6 internships. We learn in a different way
7 through real world learning, but it works for
8 us.

9 If El Centro wasn't here, I wouldn't be in
10 school because it was too much drama in public
11 schools. I want to thank you for keeping our
12 school open for us. We really appreciate it. I
13 hope you continue to keep our school open in the
14 future for the kids that need it.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

17 MS. STOVER: Good afternoon, City Council.
18 My name is Anyeah Stover. And I attend El
19 Centro de Estudiantes.

20 First and foremost, we all at El Centro
21 including myself, we like to thank you the
22 financial support that you have given us to
23 achieve the remainder of the year.

24 At El Centro, each and every student

1 becomes not one but two steps ahead in the
2 future. With support and special effort from
3 all of our advisers, all our students have to do
4 is want a bright future for themselves instead
5 of the ones that they are living now. Speaking
6 in experience, this is my third year at El
7 Centro. And I refuse to go anywhere else.

8 I can't imagine leaving El Centro behind
9 for a public school with no caring teacher, no
10 communication and no professionalism. I refuse
11 to leave El Centro because it's not just a high
12 school, it's an opportunity to reflect on my
13 myself and what I want to be.

14 And now I'm interning for business
15 consulting. Now I have the knowledge of a
16 college graduate. However, I am not the only
17 one. There are others just like me fighting to
18 keep El Centro open. And without support, it
19 would be impossible.

20 I strongly urge you to keep your support
21 going so that my school can keep changing lives
22 and education. Keeping other students
23 achievements and passing on knowledge to other
24 leaders of the world. Without support you give

1 us, how can we -- how will we achieve our
2 vision.

3 Keep El Centro alive. Thank you.

4 (Applause)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
6 much. Please identify yourself for the record
7 and begin your testimony.

8 MS. ROWE: Good afternoon.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

10 MS. ROWE: My name is Helen Rowe. And I
11 testify before you today as a very proud teacher
12 at El Centro de Estudiantes an accelerated high
13 school serving students who have dropped out of
14 high school, but who have made the decision to
15 return to school to obtain their diploma.

16 Last year in the midst of the budget
17 crisis, City Council saved 11 accelerated
18 schools from being closed. One of those schools
19 was El Centro. And so today I want to start by
20 thanking you for your leadership and commitment
21 to accelerated schools.

22 As is so often the case, it is hard to
23 appreciate what you have until you face the
24 prospect of its loss. Last year together and in

1 these halls the El Centro community faced down
2 the prospect of losing our school. In the fight
3 to keep it open, we learned just how deeply we
4 believe in our school.

5 I can promise you that hardly a day goes by
6 at El Centro where we do not remind one another
7 of our fight to keep our school open. In fact,
8 I am sure many of you remember it, as well.
9 Long afternoons last spring when countless
10 parent, students, teachers, community members
11 testified before you. Those afternoons often
12 extended into evening at times as late as 8:30
13 p.m. We were there.

14 I am sure you remember that nothing
15 deterred our students who testified even on the
16 evening of their prom. Indeed your actions last
17 year showed that you listened to us. That you
18 heard our voices. But I would like to talk
19 about this year, as well. To share with you
20 what I fear will happen if the City is unable to
21 provide additional funds to support education in
22 this city.

23 Without your support, we again face the
24 prospect of being back in the battle to save our

1 school, to demonstrate once again that our
2 students rights, needs and voices matter, to
3 face the anxiety, the fear, the uncertainty that
4 comes when students and parents don't know what
5 will happen to their children's school in the
6 fall. It is vitally important that we -- that
7 you truly wrestle with what it would mean to
8 shut our school. That we take a moment to
9 ponder whose lives will be affected if we are
10 forced to close the doors on a school that has
11 in three short years become a living, breathing
12 vibrant community.

13 Like any school in the city, El Centro is
14 filled with stories that matter. But unlike
15 other schools, at El Centro we know each others
16 stories. We know the struggles and triumphs
17 that occur every day in every room of our
18 school. That matters.

19 This matters to me as a teacher because it
20 allows me to teach in a way that reaches my
21 students, that helps them connect some for the
22 first time in school. Because they know that
23 the adults care about them and know who they
24 are. And it matters to our students, as well.

1 By the way, I don't just expect you to take
2 my word for that. I invite you to come visit
3 our school any day at any time. In fact, I urge
4 you to come. Sit in my classroom, if you like,
5 and talk with my students. So as you consider
6 decisions that will affect the future of our
7 school, you spend time to honestly grapple with
8 the consequences of your decisions and get to
9 know the lives of the people whose lives would
10 be most affected.

11 I am going to end by thanking you for your
12 time. I look forward to seeing you in the halls
13 of El Centro. And to say on behalf of the El
14 Centro community, that if need be, we will see
15 you again right back in these chambers to fight
16 for the future of our school. Thank you.

17 MS. PAGAN: Hello. My name is Nekeata
18 Pagan. I'm a student at El Centro, an
19 accelerated school on Kensington.

20 I would like to start off by saying since I
21 been coming to El Centro this fall, my learning
22 experiences have been more positive than my
23 experience in my previous school, Kensington
24 Culinary. When I was in my previous school, I

1 didn't do any work, and I hardly stayed the
2 whole day. I had about 100 cuts and more
3 because I wasn't motivated at all. What made me
4 unmotivated in my old school was the lack of
5 support I felt from everyone in there. But here
6 at El Centro I get support and motivation from
7 the staff and the students.

8 For example, the students in my advisory
9 are very supportive and helpful when I need
10 them. They are like a second family. A month
11 ago when I lost my mother, they were there for
12 me from the start. And they motivated me to
13 come to school and keep doing my work.

14 So as you can see, El Centro is not only a
15 school that we students go to, it's also a home
16 and a community like a family that you can turn
17 to you when you are unmotivated and you feel
18 like you need support or when you are alone or
19 overwhelmed. Because with the help of the
20 people that care at this positive school, people
21 who struggle are encouraged to succeed.

22 I believe that the city should protect
23 schools like El Centro because students like me
24 that have no place to go, can possibly turn to a

1 wonderful and helpful place like my school so
2 they can make new goals and reach them.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
5 much El Centro. We appreciate your commitment
6 to your school.

7 Ron Whitehorn, Occupied Philadelphia, are
8 you here? Thank you. Did Lynette Lazarus
9 speak? Your next and then Madeline Shikomba.
10 Okay.

11 Thank you, welcome. Thank you for your
12 patience.

13 MR. WHITEHORN: Good afternoon.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

15 MR. WHITEHORN: My name is Ron Whitehorn.
16 I taught in Philadelphia public schools for over
17 20 years, sent my children to them and paid
18 taxes to support them. In various roles, I
19 worked to improve our schools for over 40 years.
20 Today I am here as a member of the Occupied
21 Philadelphia Labor Work Group.

22 The SRC is adopting an austerity budget
23 that asks Philadelphia family to get used to a
24 second rate education for their children.

1 Reduced spending on schools mean that most
2 neighborhood schools will not have full time
3 nurses, libraries, art and music instruction and
4 smaller class size. The very things which
5 middle class families in affluent suburbs take
6 for granted.

7 They are not going to be available here, we
8 are told, because we can't afford them. Of
9 course we have never had fully resourced schools
10 in this city. But as a result of years of
11 struggle, we made some gains which now have been
12 reversed. We cannot and will not accept the
13 system in which working class families in
14 Philadelphia, the majority of whom are people of
15 color, are consigned to the back of the bus.

16 Of course, the mantra we hear from our
17 leaders is there is no money. But this is
18 false, there is money. To get money for schools
19 we have to reorder priorities at every level.
20 And we have to tax the profits of corporations
21 and the income of the super rich.

22 (Applause)

23 We need to cut back military's spending,
24 stop building prisons and subsidizing energy

1 companies. In Pennsylvania, 70 percent of the
2 corporations pay no state taxes. In
3 Philadelphia, there are tax rebates for
4 corporations and commercial interests and
5 institutions like the University of Pennsylvania
6 consume city services while paying nothing.

7 Instead, schools are to be funded by
8 slashing wages and benefits for school workers
9 and busting their unions. This plan which hits
10 blue collar workers particularly hard will drive
11 down the already living standards of school --
12 the already low living standards of school
13 employees down further, increasing poverty and
14 the numbers of people without decent health
15 care. Heaven forbid the SRC should ask banks
16 who raise \$331 million in interest of vault
17 swaps from the City and the School District to
18 give up something.

19 Secondly, the Knudsen Plan actually
20 suggests schools will improve under these
21 conditions. How? Somehow we will get rid of
22 so-called "bad seeds" and replace them with
23 something called "good seeds". Good seeds
24 appear to be seeds in charter or magnet schools.

1 Bad seeds are underperforming schools in poor
2 neighborhoods. Close the ladder and expand the
3 former is the plan.

4 This simplistic analysis ignores all that
5 we have learned about urban education. It
6 ignores the research about student achievement
7 and public versus charter schools. It ignores
8 the role of poverty and institutional racism in
9 shaping educational outcomes. It ignores the
10 role of empowering school communities and staff
11 to bring about school improvement.

12 This plan from the farming out of school
13 management to outside interest to the promotion
14 of charter schools is a privatization of the
15 School District. It suggests that if schools
16 are run as businesses, they will do better.
17 Where is the evidence? Instead, we need to draw
18 on our own resources: Principles, teachers,
19 parents, students and communities to develop
20 genuinely democratic forms of school
21 governments.

22 Moreover, this momentous change is being
23 rushed throughout without any opportunity for
24 meaningful democratic engagement by the

1 citizenry. There is no need for this.
2 According to the proponents, it is revenue
3 neutral; and thus, does not have to be passed to
4 meet budget requirements.

5 We ask Council to join us in voting No
6 Confidence and demanding the SRC go back to the
7 drawing board.

8 (Applause)

9 Council in my view should commit the \$94
10 million pledged to address the deficit but
11 sequester it pending the SRC adopting a better
12 plan and fighting for equitable funding. As a
13 taxpayer, if I am going to pay more, I expect
14 two things.

15 One, that the money be spent on a
16 well-considered plan that meets our needs.

17 And two, that the 1 percent pay their
18 share. Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
20 much and thanks for your patience. And thanks
21 for your services to the School District.

22 MR. WHITEHORN: Thank you, Councilwoman.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: My pleasure.

24 Ms. Lynette Lazarus. Thank you for your

1 patience.

2 MS. LAZARUS: Thank you, Chairman
3 Blackwell. And I've been in your District for
4 the past almost 38 years. Hi -- and City
5 Council.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 MS. LAZARUS: I have been -- I'm a retired
8 school nurse for the City and PFT member. And I
9 am now teaching at Thomas Jefferson University
10 putting students in -- nursing students in
11 schools. And what I am going to say is, why are
12 our children Inner City children worth less?
13 Why do they keep getting less.

14 When Dr. Ackerman came, I had been to a PFT
15 Conference -- may have been in Chicago, but the
16 nurse from San Francisco say wait till she
17 comes. And we knew what she was going to do
18 ahead of time. I went to a conference earlier
19 this year, and it happened to be on City Arts.
20 And Jeremy Nowak from the William Penn
21 Foundation spoke, which had nothing to do with
22 art, but he was saying public money and
23 education is not doing well. We need to
24 privatize.

1 Why would these children -- if you imagine
2 a race where you have one child having a ball
3 and chain and the other children being
4 unencumbered with the latest sneakers, and this
5 is what you are doing to our children, funding
6 them with less. Less things that work that are
7 research based, small size, extracurricular
8 activities, adults who care. With a cut in
9 school nurses -- 101 school nurses were cut this
10 past year.

11 The Inner City Comprehensive High School,
12 some of them have three different nurses. And
13 if you want someone to relate for something that
14 happens -- from the school that I retired, she
15 was at the high school that I was at one day a
16 week. And one of the children had a problem.
17 When I worked there at Vernon's for ten years,
18 we had a very high suicide depression rate. And
19 one of the children had a problem. She had to
20 spend hours at the other school she was at
21 because she couldn't finish it there.

22 And I know Councilman Blackwell, the
23 medication issue has been a serious one. It is
24 not just you hand out medication to a child. Is

1 the child on the right medication? Are they
2 having side effects? There are just so many
3 issues that you have to do. We are even having
4 bus attendants, teachers, principals give out
5 medications that they don't know anything about.

6 I think I have a colleague this afternoon,
7 she will be speaking more on this. People, why
8 are we in this unlevelled playing field with
9 charter schools, also. Charter schools are
10 public schools. They should be working with us
11 and the funding should be equal. Nurses work
12 for decreasing the barriers to care and getting
13 access.

14 For example, the first year that I worked,
15 I sent out notices on vision. And I wasn't
16 getting parents. They didn't respond. I got
17 this in the mail for health services. How many
18 of our parents actually can read this and can
19 access care without someone to help them?

20 And with research base, we need to sustain
21 programs. I will end with the bullying because
22 I was involved with a couple bullying programs.
23 And now nurses and other personnel are so short,
24 they won't be able to do that. I think they had

1 had Good Shepherd do a bullying program. That
2 was before my time. They fund something. The
3 funding stops, it's gone.

4 I was with Project Peace. It worked. I
5 was the mentor for it. We did it in the school.
6 I am gone. It's gone. And that is the same
7 with the Olweus Bullying Program. We need --
8 children need people. They need resources.
9 They need afterschool activities. The summer
10 programs, these children even with the food,
11 they think the children won't be getting the
12 food in the summer that they are with the past
13 summer programs.

14 So I urge you not only to help fund the
15 School District in a responsible manner, but
16 also to help us lobby Harrisburg to realize that
17 our children are not less than. Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you so much.
19 Thank you for your commitment. Thank you very
20 much. Is Madeline Shikomba still here?

21 MS. SHIKOMBA: I'm still here.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
23 much. Thank you for your patience. I know you
24 been here a long time, as well.

1 Is Gloria Thomas and Mary Goldman, are they
2 still here?

3 (Yes)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay. Gloria,
5 okay. All right. Gloria Thomas is next. And
6 Mary Goldman might have gone. Okay. Thank you.
7 You two are next.

8 Thank you, Ms. Shikomba.

9 MS. SHIKOMBA: Councilpersons Jannie
10 Blackwell and Members of City Council who are
11 still remaining, I am here to testify against
12 proposed Actual Value tax being proposed by
13 Mayor Nutter to help pay the deficit incurred by
14 the School Reform Commission.

15 We will not allow you to use our children
16 as ploys in this maneuver. I agree with
17 Councilman William Green that these are two
18 separate issues.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse me.
20 Identify yourself for the record, please.

21 MS. SHIKOMBA: I'm sorry. Madeline
22 Shikomba.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

24 MS. SHIKOMBA: Okay. There are two

1 different issues here. The funding of the
2 School District and Actual value Initiative Tax,
3 in order words, the real estate hike.

4 The children of Philadelphia are currently
5 not getting a good education and now you want to
6 make them and their families homeless. Be they
7 renters or owners, this real estate tax will be
8 passed onto them. Our property taxes and rents
9 will double if not more. We are damned if we do
10 and damned if we don't. But I'll be dammed
11 because you are not going to tax us to continue
12 paying for a failing school system.

13 The School Reform Commission has received
14 their fair share of taxes and has failed to live
15 within their budget. They have been a total
16 failure since they replaced the Board of
17 Education of Philadelphia. They are
18 unanswerable to the citizens of Philadelphia.

19 The School Reform Commission needs to be
20 replaced by an elective school board that is
21 answerable to the citizens of this city who are
22 paying the bills and not just to the Mayor and
23 to the Governor. They want to use our money to
24 make the school system a private school system.

1 That is going from the frying pan into the fire.

2 We will definitely have no control over
3 these charter schools. They are in it for
4 profit. No profit, no schools. Charter schools
5 like the SRC, will be using our money to educate
6 our children, no fiscal oversight, no control,
7 answerable to no one and with no guarantee they
8 will do any better than the public schools we
9 currently have. Charter schools are not the
10 answers, but it's simply another disaster
11 waiting to happen.

12 Are you really -- I am talking to City
13 Council -- looking for solutions, or is this
14 just a ploy to pass an Actual Value Initiative
15 Tax. Mayor Nutter has been pushing for this tax
16 since he took office. There are other ways of
17 paying money without hitting the homeowners and
18 property owners of Philadelphia.

19 One, the SRC needs to pull the safe for
20 more money. Put the Governor on record that he
21 is refusing to subsidize our schools and provide
22 the money. They are having a Crash Your Party
23 governor thing on May 15. I suggest we all show
24 up and express our desire to Governor Corbett,

1 we want money for our schools.

2 Secondly, the city needs to put forth
3 greater effort to collect money from tax
4 dodgers. The article in the Public Ledger put
5 forth this solution. As of 2011, these tax
6 dodgers owe the \$470 million. That is more than
7 enough money to meet the city's financial
8 problems. When Mayor Nutter came to office, he
9 said he was going to go after tax dodgers. The
10 first tax dollars he went after, he cooled his
11 heels because he wound out he was a campaign
12 contributor so he backed off.

13 Thirdly, we need to get rid of tax
14 abatements. Do you realize how the astronomical
15 amount of money we are losing with these tax
16 abatements? They got ten years of not paying
17 any taxes. My suggestion, and I've given it to
18 you before, rewrite the law. Have it so that
19 these tax abatements are reduced 10 percent per
20 year instead of 100 percent for ten years.

21 I am tired of these people coming in here,
22 buying these houses and not paying taxes and you
23 come to me for my taxes. I pay my taxes every
24 year. I'm not getting any tax abatements. But

1 you refuse to do this talking about it brings
2 jobs into the city. If you reduce this thing 10
3 percent per for ten years, you will not lose any
4 construction job. Besides, the construction
5 jobs you are getting are nothing but temporary
6 jobs anyway. They are gone before the tax
7 abatements are even over with. And we are still
8 losing money and no jobs around. I am tired of
9 this playing games and acting like you bringing
10 in a lot of money. If we were bringing in a lot
11 of money, we wouldn't be in the situation we are
12 in now.

13 Fourthly, there needs to be some fiscal
14 oversight of the School Reform Commission.
15 Right now they have no fiscal oversight. That
16 is why they are in the hole we are in right now.
17 I am sick and tired of tax owners being taxed.
18 We already have had two years of so-called
19 temporary tax increases. Stop placing more
20 burden on us, the homeowners. Start collecting
21 taxes from tax deadbeats.

22 That is all I have to say. Right now, if
23 you were to increase our tax collection from up
24 from the 81 percent to the 95 percent we got

1 right now, we would have \$470 million.

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Thank
4 you, Ms. Shikomba.

5 Ms. Thomas, Gloria Thomas.

6 MS. THOMAS: Good afternoon, Chairman.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.
8 Would you identify yourself for the record.

9 MS. THOMAS: Yes. My name is Gloria
10 Thomas. I am an advocate in the City of
11 Philadelphia. I happen to function with an
12 organization called Parent Power. We advocate
13 within the School District with parents to help
14 them navigate the system, to help settle
15 disputes. We do a little bit of everything
16 within the city. But I stopped by today not
17 with a pre-written statement, but just to tell
18 you what I believe really, really needs to
19 happen for the City of Philadelphia.

20 I agree that not having solutions to our
21 problems aren't the way to go. I also agree
22 with the last person who just -- there are some
23 organizations within our city that we don't tax.
24 If we taxed them by 1 percent, and they're big

1 organizations that pull our children and take
2 them to school and maybe they give them a
3 scholarship, maybe they don't.

4 But if we took 1 percent of money from
5 those organizations like Drexel, University of
6 Penn, we wouldn't be in such a crisis as we are
7 in right now. And you would not have to raise
8 income property taxes for the citizens of
9 Philadelphia.

10 But back to the school issue. Right now
11 our schools are being cut and underfunded to the
12 degree that it's just -- it's just intolerable.
13 They are not being offered a valid education.
14 It says that the State is to provide our
15 children with a quality education. And I am in
16 a high school every day. To have a child tell
17 me that they don't know how to write a research
18 paper, for them to think that it's so
19 overwhelming just to do a senior project, is
20 unacceptable.

21 My child is not going to feel like that in
22 12th grade because I am an active parent. But
23 what about all these children who don't have
24 active parents? I feel as though City Council

1 does need to make sure if at all possible that
2 there is accountability on every level with
3 regards to our students. There is no back and
4 forth conversation. And the District's Title
5 One policy says that there is going to be
6 meaningful two-way conversation.

7 How do I know that? Because I helped write
8 it. Okay. There is no meaningful two-way
9 conversation going on between the District and
10 its parents or stakeholders. They are not even
11 talking to you, so you know that they are not
12 talking to us. I ask you to hold them
13 accountable.

14 And whether we go to a system of autonomy
15 within our schools or not, people still need to
16 be held accountable. And right now that is why
17 our system has broken down to the point that its
18 broken down to. Nobody was watching the bank.
19 Nobody was watching what anyone else was doing.
20 If we don't start watching what everyone else is
21 doing, then we are going to continue to fail our
22 children.

23 Right now I feel like the City of
24 Philadelphia is functioning in insanity with

1 regards to how we educate our children. We keep
2 trying to do the same thing over and over again.
3 And doing the same thing and expecting a
4 different outcome is insanity.

5 So, I beg you to ask them to stop doing the
6 same thing. I'm not for privatization. I want
7 the right to send my child to a public school.
8 I graduated from a public school. And I feel
9 that every child in the City of Philadelphia, no
10 matter what the parents' income levels, they
11 have a right to a good education. They have a
12 right to teachers that care.

13 The PFT, I'm not fond of them because they
14 keep teachers that are not teaching. We need
15 accountability. If a teacher is not teaching,
16 then they get fired. If you don't do your job,
17 you get fired. People don't reelect you. It
18 has to be some accountabilities because why else
19 are our children failing? They are not failing
20 because they are not showing up. They are
21 failing because they are not being taught.

22 It's just -- I am in a building every day,
23 so I can speak from experience that they are not
24 being taught to the levels that they should be.

1 And I think it's time for us to start educating
2 our children. Find the funds that we need to
3 make sure our schools stay open, that they do
4 not privatize and start to hold people
5 accountable.

6 If the SRC is not accountable to the City
7 Government of Philadelphia, then why are they
8 running our schools? Why? I mean, they can't
9 just be accountable to the State. We see how
10 the State ran Chester. Okay. They ran Chester
11 straight into a hole and then gave it back to
12 them. Don't let them run us into a hole and
13 give it back to us.

14 I do think my solution with those people
15 who don't pay any taxes at all but can afford to
16 pay at least one percent and not even sweat
17 about it, that should be looked into. I know
18 that's a legal issue that I don't know all the
19 technicalities on. But I encourage you to look
20 at that 1 percent. I think if we take 1 percent
21 from those entities that I mentioned earlier,
22 then we can probably have \$500 million easily,
23 easily. And therefore, we would alleviate a lot
24 of deficits in the City of Philadelphia not just

1 with education but every where.

2 And I thank you very much for the
3 opportunity Ms. Blackwell -- Chairman Blackwell
4 to allow me to speak in front of you. And I
5 spoke here for the first time as a high school
6 student. And Ms -- chairman Blackwell was a
7 Council Member at that point in time. At that
8 time, I was speaking to speak about Girls High
9 and Central. They wanted to -- girls wanted to
10 go to Central. I tell you, those girls
11 graduated with me. They walked down my same
12 aisle I walked down at the end of the day at
13 Girls High.

14 But I think it's excellent that you allow
15 students to come and express themselves. I
16 think it's excellent that you hear from the
17 community, but I really do think that the School
18 District is doing a lot of things behind closed
19 doors and you need to start asking them to
20 actually hear from the community because our
21 voices aren't being heard.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
24 Ms. Thomas. Thank you very much.

1 Is Ruth Rodriguez here by chance? Tyra
2 Dawson? Tina Johnson? Tyesha Ross?

3 (This is for Mary Goldman.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please come
5 forward.

6 (She had to leave.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. We
8 will take -- please get that.

9 Thank you. Those who are left to testify,
10 please come forward. Welcome and thank you.

11 While they are coming forward, we will note
12 that Mary Goldman's testimony will be given to
13 the stenographer and read as if she had been
14 here as well as that of Alexis Williams, Camelot
15 Excel Academy North; Ozzie Watson, Camelot Excel
16 Academy North and Ruth Rodriguez who has also
17 submitted testimony. And all that testimony
18 will be submitted as if they had read it here in
19 person.

20 Thank you very much. All right. In any
21 ordinary, identify yourself for the record and
22 begin your testimony.

23 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you so much for the
24 opportunity to speak.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

2 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Tina Johnson. I
3 am a parent of a Mastery Charter School junior
4 from the Lenfest Campus. We come here today to
5 speak on behalf of our experiences as parents.
6 And what we also want to encourage is that what
7 the most important thing is as we are all
8 speaking, is our children and their quality of
9 education.

10 Having gone through the charter school
11 process with my son, my older son went through
12 the public school process and magnet school as
13 well. Then having to go through the charter
14 school experience, I am a parent that pulled her
15 child out of the public school. He had a speech
16 impairment, and I wasn't getting what I needed
17 by way of support for him. So, I did make the
18 decision to move to charter.

19 It has been an amazing experience. My son
20 as he sits in his 11 grade year is looking at
21 his GPA and wanting to get it up because he's
22 interested in college. He wants to go for law.
23 Years ago, three years ago, if you had told me
24 that this was going to be my child, I would have

1 told you you were crazy.

2 So, I am excited about the Mastery Program
3 and what it does. And I am excited to share
4 that this needs to happen for every child in
5 Philadelphia. We need to give the same quality
6 of education. We need to provide the same small
7 classrooms and attention that the teachers give.
8 This is something that every child should
9 afford.

10 MS. ROSS: Good afternoon. My name is
11 Tyesha Ross. I am from West Philadelphia. My
12 children go to Mastery Harrity. My son was at
13 the Mastery Harrity before Mastery took it over.
14 And I won't say anything about that.

15 Mastery Charter was the best thing that
16 happened to my son. The teachers are excellent.
17 The principal and the staff are excellent. They
18 share the same educational goals that I share
19 with my children. They are with my children
20 more than I'm with my children. And we don't
21 need a school police at our school. We don't
22 need metal detectors. I feel like my children
23 are safe.

24 All children deserve a quality education

1 regardless of race, social economic status, ZIP
2 code, county, suburban -- if you're in the
3 suburbs, wherever. The children are the future.
4 If we fail them now, what is society going to
5 look like. And I just wanted to have a quote
6 from Albert Einstein who said, "doing the same
7 thing over and over again and expecting
8 different results in insanity."

9 We are failing our children. We need to
10 sit back and figure out how to fix this
11 educational disaster. We need to hold everyone
12 accountable for our children's lack of
13 excellent. We need to hold everyone's feet to
14 the fire. Charter schools are in existence
15 mainly because of the failing of the
16 Philadelphia public schools. We need to go back
17 to the drawing board. We need to set the
18 politics aside. Charter schools are indeed
19 public schools.

20 Google Mastery Charter and its achievements
21 and their dedication to the students of
22 Philadelphia. Thank you.

23 MS. DAWSON: Good afternoon, Madam
24 Councilwoman and Councilmen and women. My name

1 is Tyra Dawson. And I am the parent of what
2 will be Cleveland Mastery School students. I am
3 filled with honor and privilege to sit and speak
4 before you and here the wonderful testimony of
5 concerned citizens, so I am also a concerned
6 citizen. And these are my points.

7 The situation we all know with the
8 Philadelphia School District did not happen
9 overnight. So some of the earlier testimony in
10 terms of the SRC's involvement in the reform and
11 the city leaders or just understanding or
12 awareness of it, we are all aware of the
13 condition of our schools in Philadelphia. So
14 that being said, right now seems to be an
15 environment of fear and panic in terms of your
16 decision about continuing to fund public
17 schools.

18 And I am just asking you please not to make
19 a decision based on fear and panic in regards to
20 the education of our children in Philadelphia
21 for September.

22 Philadelphia is a great city, and we have
23 great leaders here who can make great decisions
24 and who are creative in finding in ways to get

1 monies to continue to fund our schools. So, I
2 am support of Mastery Charter. I think it was a
3 good choice for us. And unless you plan to
4 expand that model, then please, I am asking you
5 to consider saving the Philadelphia public
6 schools and not to privatize the remaining
7 schools.

8 We spoke about violence in classrooms.
9 Violence in the classrooms is a direct extension
10 of the violence outside in the community. So as
11 you think about education, I am asking Council
12 to please consider the violence in our
13 communities where drugs saturate our
14 neighborhoods. So, I am bringing to you a
15 message from community members, parents, my
16 children and teachers. This message is one that
17 my father and my children worked on.

18 It is simply to please wake up. Wake up and
19 stop the madness. We all want the same end. We
20 all want quality education for our children.
21 Please let not money determine whether that can
22 happen. The Council, we're asking everyone to
23 just do their part. The community is willing by
24 way of raising taxes or approving the AVI plan,

1 whatever behind it, we are willing to say and
2 willing to do our part if that is what you need
3 to do.

4 The District wants to sit down and say,
5 okay, we will do our part. Also, hold them
6 accountable to doing a good job. The PFT is
7 saying, yes, we want to do our part. I am
8 asking Council to please do your part. Okay.
9 If you need to raise taxes or find ways, then if
10 you do that, I am asking you to also appeal to
11 your higher powers or to the higher powers, as
12 well. Make them also share in the
13 responsibility. The one billion dollars that
14 was taken from the State, okay. And you wonder
15 where the money is.

16 So, you are in power and position to do
17 that. I am asking you to also as you hold us
18 accountable, the community and everyone else,
19 that you also hold the powers that be
20 accountable, as well.

21 And I thank you for the opportunity to
22 speak with you. And I appreciate all that you
23 are doing. Philadelphia is a great city and we
24 have great leaders. Let us continue to be

1 leaders.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
3 much. We thank you for your patience. Thank
4 you for testifying.

5 Is there anyone else who would like to
6 testify at this session?

7 (I am signed up for 5:30.)

8 Bernard, yes, you are signed up for 5:30,
9 but you are welcome to come now. There is a
10 session at 5:30.

11 (I'll wait.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right. Seeing
13 none, then we will recess this hearing until
14 5:30. Then we will have the rest of those who
15 want to testify who chose that time. Thank you
16 very much.

17 (Public Hearing recessed at 4:33 p.m.)

18 - - - - -

19 (Public Hearing resumed at 5:46 p.m.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good evening. We
21 will resume our Budget Hearings. We are talking
22 about the School District of Philadelphia. And
23 I don't know how many are here who would like to
24 testify, but we will know in a moment. Is Fight

1 for Philly here?

2 (No response.)

3 Okay. What about Amara Rockar, West
4 Philadelphia Coalition for Neighborhood Schools?

5 (Hand raised.)

6 Come forward. Come forward. You can
7 testify first this evenin.

8 Is Christine Carlson here?

9 (Acknowledged hand.)

10 Okay. You'll be second. Thank you. Thank
11 you for being here and for your patience and for
12 hanging in this evening.

13 Please identify yourself and begin your
14 testimony.

15 MS. ROCKAR: Sure. My name is Amara
16 Rockar, and I'm with the West Philly Coalition
17 for Neighborhood Schools. Thank you, City
18 Council for allowing me to speak today.

19 My name is Amara Rockar. And I head the
20 West Philly Coalition for Neighborhood Schools,
21 a grass roots group that seeks to bring the
22 community and all of its resources into our
23 neighborhood schools. Henry C. Lea Elementary
24 at 47th and Locust is our current focus.

1 Every Tuesday I volunteer at Lea as part of
2 the West Philadelphia's Alliance for Children's
3 volunteer library program as the school lost its
4 staff librarian in last year's budget cuts.

5 Yesterday in the library, a third grader -- was
6 actually a second grader -- became sick to her
7 stomach and barely made it to the restroom.
8 There was no nurse on duty to treat her, so the
9 teacher and staff helped her as best they could.

10 When I think of Chief Recovery Officer
11 Knudsen's statement that he sees the District's
12 long term budget only growing as the result of
13 philanthropy or the economy recovering, it makes
14 me ill. It is one thing to pair down
15 temporarily the District Budget to weather a
16 fiscal crisis, and another to tell Philadelphia
17 to get used to volunteer librarians and
18 part-time nurses until perhaps a rich uncle
19 comes along and cross our fingers that the funds
20 don't come with too many string.

21 It is this secession of community control
22 and school autonomy that makes Knudsen's
23 Blueprint so incongruous with the stated goals
24 of Chief Academic Officer Nixon's

1 decentralization plan and this year's budget.

2 The Achievement Networks are basically the
3 Education Management Organizations all over
4 again but with more authority, more schools to
5 manage at once and stricter performance goals,
6 which if not met could result in an entirely
7 different provider being brought in in short
8 order. We are not even a year from the
9 cancellation of the last EMO contracts still
10 standing, including Penn's management of Lea.

11 To use the Budget's own language, how do
12 the Achievement Networks align with the SRC's
13 stated policy of placing decision making
14 authority as close to the classroom as possible?
15 Real school autonomy does not translate into
16 schools being chosen by as opposed to choosing
17 for themselves Achievement Networks and lumped
18 into groups of 25.

19 I suggest all of you read the Notebook's
20 interview with the former head of Penn's EMO,
21 Professor James "Torch" Lytle who says of the
22 Achievement Networks that he wouldn't do it that
23 way or he wouldn't do it they way. Of course,
24 if not philanthropy or economic recovery, then

1 where could funding come from?

2 At the City level, Mayor Nutter promised
3 two years ago to bring real estate tax lien
4 sales up to 600 a month. Yet, here we are
5 averaging a mere 202 properties a month, and his
6 Revenue Commissioner proudly calls this
7 progress. There are roughly 111,000 tax
8 delinquent accounts in the City that
9 collectively owe the City and School District
10 \$472 million in principal, penalties and
11 interest.

12 As for the State, there has been a constant
13 refrain not only from Mayor Nutter but many
14 others that who should know better that
15 elections has consequences, and the City has no
16 friends in Harrisburg, so we all should just
17 shut up and accept this budget austerity for the
18 next four years. When Rendell was governor and
19 smiled upon Philadelphia, did the leaders of
20 rural, suburban or western or Republican parts
21 of Pennsylvania tell their constituents to drop
22 dead?

23 And then there is City Council. If not
24 AVI, and I understand why City Council may be

1 reluctant to fund through AVI, then certainly
2 additional funding through the District in some
3 other manner for a similar amount. The schools
4 are sick, there is no nurse available, and you
5 have to help as best you can.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
8 much. Thank you. Lea School was my first
9 school where I taught, so I'm always happy to
10 hear about progress at Lea School. Spent six
11 years there.

12 Christine Carlson. Is Eileen Duffey here?
13 What about Cathy Roccia --

14 (Yes.)

15 Okay. Welcome, good evening.

16 MS. CARLSON: Hello, Councilwoman
17 Blackwell.

18 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Glad to have you.
19 Please identify yourself for the record and
20 begin your testimony.

21 MS. CARLSON: Yes. My name is Christine
22 Carlson. I'm a public school parent. I am also
23 the founder of an organization called the
24 Greater Center City Neighborhood Schools

1 Coalition. And I'm basically here tonight to
2 just talk about the budget.

3 If you care to know my opinions about the
4 Blueprint, I will be happy to give them to you,
5 but I know you are focusing on the budget right
6 now.

7 In urban school districts throughout the
8 country, it seems that legislatures no longer
9 view public education as a civic responsibility
10 and great equalizer. Rather, public schools are
11 seen as no different from programs like public
12 assistance and housing. The State is cutting
13 back its funding on these and education whether
14 we like it or not.

15 Financially, the City has weathered the
16 recession better than most. It is now in the
17 position to take back more responsibility for
18 its own public schools. It's unfortunate that
19 the School District has linked additional
20 funding for schools with the AVI. Personally, I
21 believe the City needs to implement AVI
22 immediately. And I'm one of those whose taxes
23 will go up. I'm not upset about it because my
24 taxes, I believe, are unfairly low.

1 Now, there have been some Council persons
2 that have stated that they don't support
3 increased funding of public schools because
4 their constituents don't attend public schools.
5 Unfortunately, I don't see any of them here.
6 Perhaps they assume that their constituents send
7 their children to private or parochial schools
8 out of choice and not perceived necessity. Or
9 that it's okay to view their constituents as
10 short term residents who will leave the City
11 when their children become school aged.

12 They are not serving their entire
13 consistency and they are not serving the city.
14 They are not serving constituents like me who
15 rely on sending my children to a good public
16 school. There are a lot of people like me out
17 there. We want to live in the City. We want to
18 send our children to public schools where they
19 will receive an education for a multicultural
20 21st Century. We have been fighting and working
21 hard to make our schools successful and will
22 continue to do so.

23 Increasing the revenue as a result of
24 increasing property values is not a tax increase

1 especially when the city share of school funding
2 has been historically low. Initiating AVI as
3 revenue neutral doesn't make sense. Those who
4 will be angered by higher taxes will be angered
5 regardless of whether it's revenue neutral or
6 the City collects the additional funds it truly
7 needs.

8 Whether or not Council uses AVI or some
9 other means to increase funding for schools, the
10 fact is that every constituent deserves to be
11 able to send their child to a public school that
12 meets their educational needs. Philadelphia
13 can't grow if its public schools cannot serve
14 all of its citizens. Council needs to ensure
15 that this happens.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
18 much. Any questions? Thank you very much.

19 Eileen Duffey? Eileen Duffey?

20 Cathy -- is it Roc -- say it again.

21 MS. ROCCIA-MEIER: Roccia-Meier.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

23 MS. ROCCIA-MEIER: Italian German.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,

1 welcome. Please identify yourself and begin
2 your testimony.

3 MS. ROCCIA-MEIER: Thank you. My name is
4 Cathy Roccia-Meier. I'm a parent of a child in
5 the School District of Philadelphia, a volunteer
6 advocate for special education students, and a
7 product of a plain old public school education
8 at South Philadelphia High School, which I
9 proudly represent, as well.

10 Good evening and thank you for the
11 opportunity to share my view as a parent of a
12 child in the District. Council has been asked
13 to approve additional funding for the District
14 and has offered both a financial plan and a
15 restructuring plan. While the District is truly
16 in need of funding, I fear the restructuring
17 plan in its current form is at best
18 unsustainable and proposes a plan that the
19 District does not have the infrastructure to
20 implement successfully.

21 At worst, it is a plan that does not serve
22 all Philadelphia children. And on that basis
23 alone, it needs to be rejected. I speak not
24 only of children with disabilities from autism

1 and learning disabilities to mentally fragile
2 children and children with ADHD, but also for
3 English language learners and families in
4 poverty and the working poor. This plan will
5 divide the Philadelphia School System further
6 into the have and have nots, the desirable and
7 undesirable students.

8 A tenant of this plan is to close 64
9 schools, 40 next year, and turn them over to
10 charters. We are told by District
11 representatives that this is what families want
12 and their implication is that this type of
13 turnaround is the only way to make schools
14 higher performing. Yet, two-thirds of
15 Pennsylvania charter schools perform no better
16 or worse than comparable district-manage based
17 schools based on the national study.

18 What parents want our choice, safe schools
19 and quality education. Most charters that
20 achieve this do so because they pick and choose
21 the students. Disciplinary problems are not
22 kept nor are special education students or
23 English language learners. Even amongst the
24 turnaround charters currently operating, there

1 are constant reports of students canceled out
2 and told the District could handle these
3 children better. Some operators are even
4 allowed to return entire classrooms of
5 multidisabled students back to the District.

6 Charter schools can choose to accept only
7 10 percent special education students, cap
8 enrollment and require parent participation and
9 attendance at meeting for students to remain
10 enrolled. Public district schools do not have
11 this luxury. This plan will cause increased
12 cost as the most neediest and costly students
13 will be those that remain or return to the
14 district run schools.

15 It will increase transportation cost, and
16 the District must foot the bill for this
17 service. It will increase the use of
18 consultants when we currently have 200 million
19 and no bid professional services contracts, which
20 are questionable. And it will add to a system
21 that does not have an infrastructure to manage
22 the contracts that already exist. It's based on
23 a New York City model where per people spending
24 doubled to implement that model, and that model

1 has still been changed numerous times in New
2 York City to date and has been very problematic.

3 In contrast, our District is in financial
4 disarray. It does not reduce the bureaucracy,
5 but it spreads it among numerous administrative
6 networks, which will be contracted and creates a
7 whole new type of bureaucracy posing such
8 question as to who is accountable to who ensures
9 equity across all areas of the city and for all
10 types of students.

11 We do need to transform our schools by
12 going back to the core mission of the District
13 to serve all students with lower class sizes and
14 resources and supports in the schools and by
15 avoiding costly contracts that do not support
16 this mission. It is also the District's duty to
17 only accept a plan that works for all children
18 in Philadelphia. Funding for the District is
19 needed and is crucial.

20 I urge City Council to approve funding only
21 with ties and send the District back to the
22 drawing board until they come up with a plan
23 that supports all students in this city. Go
24 back to the Educational Accountability Agreement

1 an ensure the souls in our community remain
2 intact after this restructuring. Until this
3 plan is offered that does not just do that, I
4 join Parents United and others on a vote of No
5 Confidence in this plan. We can and must do
6 better.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
9 much. Any questions? Thank you.

10 MS. ROCCIA-MEIER: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Tina Sutton, The
12 More You Learn The More You Earn. No Tina
13 Sutton.

14 Sabra Townsend. It's Sabra. All right.
15 Welcome.

16 MS. TOWNSEND: Welcome. How are you all
17 this evening?

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, great.

19 MS. TOWNSEND: Thank you for opportunity to
20 testify at Council Hearing this evening. My
21 name is Sabra Townsend. And I'm a
22 Philadelphian. My mother was a public
23 schoolteacher in Philadelphia. My father a
24 Philadelphia Police Detective. My son is a

1 student in public schools at Dobson in
2 Philadelphia.

3 I have to be honest. I had a hard time
4 finding a definition of public education, so I
5 went with public school. An elementary or
6 secondary school in the United States supported
7 by public funds and providing free education for
8 children of a community or district.

9 I'm not entirely sure how we got here, but
10 I reviewed the Transformation Plan. I don't see
11 anything on the plan that identifies high
12 performing safe schools. Investigates what that
13 high performance is, what's high performance
14 about them and go and -- the part of the plan
15 that goes about the job of duplicating those
16 high performance schools. They do exist.

17 We have schools that met adequate yearly
18 progress on a consistent basis. I don't see
19 anything that provides for the continuity of
20 education for students and the supposedly
21 unnamed 40 schools that are to be closed by
22 September 2012. I don't understand the plan for
23 more charter schools when justification for
24 charter schools has not been shown.

1 Does the management of public education not
2 involve paying outside contractors to make a
3 profit from schools that are no better than the
4 identified problem schools? I don't see
5 anything in the plan that addresses funding from
6 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There is a
7 document that the District paid for back in
8 2007, the title of which was "State Takeover,
9 School Restructuring, Private Management and
10 Student Achievement in Philadelphia." That was
11 published in 2007.

12 In summary, this document said with four
13 years of experience we find no evidence of
14 differential academic benefits that would
15 support the additional expenditures on private
16 managers.

17 I don't see a plan that identifies how
18 children who learn differently will be provided
19 the necessary supports and services that they
20 need to access the core curriculum to the best
21 of their abilities. I don't see anything in the
22 plan that provides a voice for parents and
23 community members that is taken seriously and
24 valued as a real partner in educating our

1 children.

2 What concerns me and concerns me deeply is
3 that this plan seems to be a part of a larger
4 plan to dismantle public education for
5 Philadelphia children. Here in this city where
6 a college exists for almost every interest, we
7 can't seem to provide a decent public education
8 for all of our citizens.

9 So, my main question is, what do we do now?
10 It appears that either you aren't asking or the
11 State isn't giving funds for public education in
12 Philadelphia. The State does have -- the City
13 does have or won't collect the needed funds to
14 support public education. The School Reform
15 Commission in its various incarnations have
16 commissioned numerous studies and plans. I'm
17 not clear on the reformed part of their mission.

18 So, who holds the power to provide public
19 funds and provide a free education for children
20 in Philadelphia?

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
23 much. Thank you very much.

24 Do we have Robin Jones, Teacher/Building

1 Rep. for Clara Barton School? Is Robin Jones
2 here?

3 (No response.)

4 All right. I see Bernard Johnson. Bernard
5 you're up. And is Nicole Hunt here? You are,
6 okay.

7 Is there anyone else here who would like to
8 testify after Ms. Hunt. If Fight for Philly
9 comes in, please, let us know you're here or we
10 will assume they moved on and this will be
11 pretty much it for this evening.

12 Thank how, Mr. Johnson.

13 MR. JOHNSON: How are you Councilwoman?

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Just fine.

15 MR. JOHNSON: So, I heard someone mention
16 the -- my name is Bernard Johnson.

17 I heard someone mention your efforts around
18 dispensing the medication. That was a very long
19 time ago, wasn't it?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. that's been a
21 long battle, hasn't it?

22 MR. JOHNSON: It's been a long battle.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. We fought
24 that together.

1 MR. JOHNSON: So my remarks are based
2 around the longevity in terms of our struggle
3 around public education in Philadelphia. This
4 year seemed to be one of the worst years that I
5 can remember. And the schools are in disrepair.
6 I'm just saying some things that are right up
7 front with me.

8 The schools are in disrepair. The lunch
9 program, the breakfast program is lousy. And at
10 the same time, we say that we have children in
11 Philadelphia who are -- who are going hungry.
12 Summer lunch programs someone alluded to earlier
13 today, the summer school programs someone
14 alluded to today will reduce the number of kids
15 that we can feed in Philadelphia.

16 We still don't have books. We are fighting
17 for books every day. And I think that's
18 absolutely ridiculous that we don't have books.
19 So, one of the things I would hope that we can
20 look forward to next year is students being able
21 to take books home or have enough books in the
22 classroom for them to be able to study with each
23 other in the classroom.

24 I wanted to show you this paper. I will

1 give it to you. It talks -- it's a Chester
2 paper. Paul Bennett is the editor. It says,
3 "Can Philly's Drastic Plan for Public Schools
4 Happen Here."

5 We keep throwing stones at Chester, which
6 happens to be my wife's home. And I know that
7 they are actively engaged in going to Harrisburg
8 and asking for dollars. The Southeast DelCo
9 School District is actively engaged. The Upper
10 Darby School District is actively engaged.
11 There are school districts where we have family
12 and friends, so we know that they are actively
13 engaged going to Harrisburg asking for money.

14 We gave a copy of Representative Roebuck's
15 plan for success for all students to the SRC
16 just before the election. I can't remember the
17 date, but just before the election. And we've
18 asked to meet with them around having a
19 conversation around the Representative Roebuck's
20 Plan for success for all children which I think
21 we can probably build off of here in
22 Philadelphia. So, they are the basic things
23 that I wanted to say.

24 Someone was asking yesterday who runs

1 Philadelphia public schools, so I thought I
2 would bring a copy of that for my friend
3 Council -- Councilman Jones, who I really
4 respect.

5 And I gave a copy of this, our concern
6 around children in Philadelphia and lots of
7 other places that are traumatized. And
8 sometimes their behavior is associated with
9 their trauma. We'd be happy to sit in another
10 kind of forum and talk about how we think you
11 can address that. There is a doctor over at
12 Drexel, John Rich, who is an expert on trauma.
13 And we'd certainly be happy to bring folks
14 together so we begin to look at our students in
15 another way.

16 Because when you are in a classroom and you
17 ask a class of 33 students who -- you start out
18 talking about good things, nice things. Then
19 all the sudden you end up talking about death.
20 And 30 out of 34 students raise their hand, said
21 they experienced some type of violent death in
22 their life. It's kind of very shaky. So, I
23 just wanted to come forward and make those
24 comments.

1 This is -- a principal friend of mine gave
2 me this. I don't have if you have it, but I
3 would like to share it with you. If I can get a
4 copy of it back tomorrow. This is the School
5 District's -- out of Penny Nixon's office, the
6 School District's Plan for academic clusters.
7 And the clusters are all laid out. They say
8 it's a draft, but they are all laid out to
9 include the clusters in our neighborhood. And I
10 would like for you to be able to look at this
11 and read it and share it with your colleagues.

12 And I will close by saying this. The
13 District has presented -- I've been in about ten
14 meetings with the District with different groups
15 of people. Every time they present a plan,
16 there is a change in the plan. And the last
17 time they presented a plan, they caught us by
18 surprise. They presented this plan around
19 academic clusters. And the RPF and out the
20 management of those clusters. And I will say
21 this in closing.

22 In 2001, this Council chambers was full of
23 people. I think you probably remember that day.
24 My family and Ms. Allen and other families who

1 were looking for change, supported the Diverse
2 Service Model. And the union was all the backs
3 in this room. We can no longer support that
4 type of model. It hasn't worked. Common was a
5 failure. Shaw was a failure. Alcorn was a
6 failure. The beat can go on and on. And you
7 don't even see any signs of --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You said based on
9 what? Program clusters?

10 MR. JOHNSON: The diversified -- what they
11 call the Diversified Model back in 2001, when
12 they brought in the EMOs to the Edison Model.
13 We supported that model. We tried to work with
14 that model. And the schools that we were active
15 in and my children were in school then, by the
16 way who are both public high school graduates.

17 The model didn't work then. We don't
18 believe it work now. We are suggesting to the
19 District -- we being my family and the families
20 of friends of ours have suggested and people
21 that we served -- have suggested to the District
22 that they need to have a baseline of general
23 education, baseline of good quality general
24 education. Then if you want to build on that

1 baseline and develop your portfolio, go ahead
2 and build and develop your portfolio. But this
3 model doesn't speak to the children most at
4 risk, the children that we service.

5 We service all children, but basically the
6 poorest of the children, financially and
7 educationally and their families have been doing
8 so for years. We don't see where this model
9 addresses that. We said it very clearly to
10 the -- to the superintendent and to Ms. Nixon.

11 So, that's my comments. We're available.
12 Let me say this to you, if I can just -- be
13 patient with me for one more minute. They are
14 selling our school buildings right now. They
15 told us -- they mentioned that yesterday here.
16 I was really surprised.

17 They told us through the -- they being
18 Mr. Nunary, who I think you might want to bring
19 here when you call the School District back to
20 talk about the changes in the intermediate unit.
21 Intermediate unit is where the services for the
22 District come through. They developed an
23 intermediate unit to look more like the counties
24 intermediate units now where people have to

1 qualify to provide services through those
2 intermediate units.

3 And we are afraid that minority
4 organizations, organizations of color,
5 African-American organizations, community-based
6 organizations are going to get left out of that
7 process. We are really concerned about that.
8 But Mr. Nunary has his hands on this plan. His
9 name is in here. The names of the people who
10 make up the committee are in this plan. I
11 counted maybe 142 names. And out of those
12 names, it's been about ten community people that
13 were involved in the development of this plan.

14 Then when they bring us a plan, it changes
15 and it changes and it changes. So where you do
16 want to support, possibly support, it makes it
17 very difficult for you to do. So, at this
18 point, we go back to the days of the old
19 educational advocate. I say hold up on the
20 money. I realize that's a hard thing to say.
21 But hold up on the money until we can get some
22 guarantees that the District is going to spend
23 the money in the appropriate ways to benefit the
24 least of all students. We got the two penny on

1 the sales tax. Who knows where that money goes.
2 There is just no answer to where all this money
3 is going.

4 That's my comments. Thank you,
5 Councilwoman.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
7 Mr. Johnson. Thank you for struggling over the
8 years. We've been talking about books for years
9 and years and years and years and students
10 having the ability to take them home. But thank
11 you for your commitment to education and all
12 that implies.

13 Nicole Hunt. Is there anyone else here to
14 testify after Nicole Hunt? Thank you.

15 MS. HUNT: Hello, my name is Nicole Hunt.
16 I'm secretary/treasurer of Unite Here Local 634
17 School Cafeteria Employees and Noon Time Aides.
18 I am speaking on behalf of our members and
19 myself as a taxpayers, a homeowner and a voter
20 in the City of Philadelphia. I urge City
21 Council to look at the School District's Plan
22 very carefully. They are asking us to
23 contribute to that budget, but what will we
24 actually be paying for? To have outside

1 management groups running our schools or rather
2 putting our kids up for sale is outrageous.

3 This plan will cause drastic layoffs for
4 hundreds of school workers who live in the city
5 and pay taxes by adding to the already high
6 unemployment rate in the City of Philadelphia.
7 The budget should not be balanced on the backs
8 of workers who are already receiving low wages
9 and struggle to survive in this already hard
10 economy. The money should be put into the
11 schools to find a better way to educate the
12 students and enhance the community with higher
13 performing schools.

14 Closing schools will leave abandoned
15 buildings in low income neighborhoods and
16 further add to the blight that's already
17 plaguing our city. We all know the proposed
18 schools that they would like to close would be
19 in the poorer parts of the city. We don't need
20 a list to tell us that.

21 There are hundreds of students who would be
22 directly impacted by this. Some look forward to
23 going to school every day to learn. Some may
24 just need to get away from some of the issues

1 they may be facing at home such as knowing will
2 they receive their next meal. As a food service
3 worker, I have seen kids come early in the
4 morning excited about what is for breakfast or
5 asking about lunch. I have also seen kids that
6 linger around the lunch table for extras since
7 this may be the only meal they will eat.

8 I have noticed students pack food in their
9 bags for their siblings at home. As a mother
10 and as a human being, it's heartbreaking for me
11 to see kids worry about food when they should
12 just have to enjoy being a kid. School should
13 also find a way to improve the quality of food
14 given to the students by investing in locally
15 grown fruits and vegetable. Some of our kids go
16 to school and receive the only meal they will
17 eat for the day, so we should at least be able
18 to give them healthy food, not pre-plated frozen
19 food.

20 I'm asking City Council to demand the
21 School District get back to the basics and
22 educate these students, not close school which
23 will eventually tear families and communities
24 down. If City Council votes on giving the

1 School District money, please make them
2 accountable on how they will spend the money.
3 The lowest paid workers that are in the schools
4 every day with the kids that depend on them,
5 should not be the ones suffering due to massive
6 layoffs because of this plan.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
8 much. We certainly agree.

9 Are there any questions? Let me thank my
10 colleagues Councilman Greenlee and Majority
11 Leader Jones, who have been here all day. Let
12 me thank Councilwoman Sanchez who is here and
13 all. Thank you Matt. Thank you certainly Ben
14 who are staff and all of you who have come this
15 evening.

16 This Hearing will be recessed until Monday,
17 May 14, at 1 o'clock p.m. Thank you.

18 (Public Hearing adjourned at 6:14 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence noted are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me in the foregoing matter, and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

ANGELA M. KING, RPR, Notary Public

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A				
abandoned 260:14	227:15,16 accelerated 180:13 181:9	achieve 195:14 196:21 200:23 202:1 244:20	added 146:6 adding 57:20 260:5	56:20 123:15 129:7
abatements 219:14,16,19,24 220:7	182:10 195:16 197:17 198:2,15 199:7 202:12,17 202:21 205:19	achievement 47:15,24 49:16 50:6 54:1 56:3 57:21 68:3 84:11 87:23 88:7 90:8 93:16 94:1,5,19 95:6 135:7 137:20 160:19 210:6 237:2,12,17,22 249:10	addition 29:12 55:21 134:13 142:16 additional 53:20 57:15 59:3 66:7 69:14 104:16 112:15 114:11 137:7 140:18 153:5 203:21 239:2 240:19 242:6 243:13 249:15	admissions 130:23 admit 40:10 adopt 2:14,16 adopting 2:18 207:22 211:11 adopts 75:6 adult 158:13 adults 105:8 175:15 192:7 198:3 204:23 213:8
abilities 249:21 ability 125:20 130:17 198:8 259:10	accept 54:16 141:14 208:12 238:17 245:6 246:17 acceptable 188:3 accepted 175:4 194:12 access 48:1 52:12 77:23 137:10 214:13,19 249:20	achievements 201:23 230:20 Ackerman 123:5 126:14 152:9 186:24 187:2 212:14	address 6:12 14:17 17:17 23:1 53:7,23 133:12 141:7 144:1 156:13,21 165:20 181:22 184:13 211:10 254:11	advance 173:10 advances 112:8 162:22 advantage 175:16 advertising 122:14 advised 56:12 advisers 196:19 201:3 advisory 126:15 192:16 206:8 advocacy 111:10 138:17 advocate 77:3,4 159:23 221:10 221:12 243:6 258:19
able 20:8,9 28:8 61:8,12 66:1 70:3,15 72:2 75:18 81:15 105:8 106:6 118:5 132:8 148:7 181:15 214:24 242:11 252:20,22 255:10 261:17	acclaimed 191:1 accommodate 128:17 accomplish 199:5 accomplishments 192:4 account 140:15 accountabilities 224:18 accountability 54:22 117:17 118:1 126:4 134:19,24 140:22 141:5 144:14,24 145:5 223:2 224:15 246:24	acknowledge 56:24 acknowledged 6:13 235:9 act 81:2 106:14 acted 75:23 acting 45:5 51:16 53:13 220:9 action 64:24 153:1 actions 131:17 203:16 active 95:7,9 222:22,24 256:14 actively 253:7,9 253:10,12	addressed 14:17 addresses 249:5 257:9 addressing 162:5 adequate 54:2 248:17 ADHD 244:2 adhered 66:6 adhering 182:13 adjourned 262:18 administering 157:11 Administration 34:14 65:9 66:6 88:15 90:5 152:10 administrations 34:18 administrative 32:23 113:20 246:5 administrators	affordable 120:21 158:11 afraid 258:3 African-Ameri... 130:15 258:5 afternoon 31:10 46:7,22 64:18 64:19 73:23,24 79:1,2 111:6,7 114:22,23 118:14,16,19
absence 162:18 175:13 absences 52:23 absent 177:7 absolutely 47:22 60:9 61:19 117:17 124:16 141:4 252:18	accountable 67:16 68:8 78:7 223:13,16 225:5 225:6,9 230:12 233:6,18,20 246:8 262:2 accounts 238:8 accurate 77:23 78:7 93:6 96:1,2 106:8 126:3 accurately 263:6	actual 15:5 78:1 89:16 170:24 216:12 217:2 218:14 add 59:24 95:4 142:3 245:20 260:16	ADHD 244:2 adhered 66:6 adhering 182:13 adjourned 262:18 administering 157:11 Administration 34:14 65:9 66:6 88:15 90:5 152:10 administrations 34:18 administrative 32:23 113:20 246:5 administrators	advocate 77:3,4 159:23 221:10 221:12 243:6 258:19 affect 205:6 affluent 208:5 afford 120:18 148:7 208:8 225:15 229:9 affordable 120:21 158:11 afraid 258:3 African-Ameri... 130:15 258:5 afternoon 31:10 46:7,22 64:18 64:19 73:23,24 79:1,2 111:6,7 114:22,23 118:14,16,19

128:5,8 132:21 132:23 156:3 159:15,17 174:1 174:2 176:8,9 179:12,14 180:5 182:2 185:2,9 185:10 190:20 190:21 200:17 202:8,9 207:13 214:6 221:6,7 229:10 230:23 afternoons 203:9 203:11 afterschool 133:10 215:9 age 50:16 148:8 182:9 aged 180:16 241:11 agency 45:1 agent 45:5 ages 158:19 180:14 age-appropriate 50:20 aggressive 131:20 aggressively 115:16 ago 12:20 19:3,12 19:17 135:19 142:3 191:5,9 191:16 192:2 206:11 228:23 228:23 238:3 251:19 agree 10:24 11:13 18:9 85:1,24 102:1 103:9,24 104:2,22 106:20 149:16 152:1,3 172:16 216:16 221:20,21 262:8 Agreed 85:14,16 agreeing 12:9 18:2 agreement 3:5 62:11 134:19	144:24 145:5 188:3,9 246:24 agreements 145:7 agrees 121:17,18 ahead 9:21 12:13 24:4 80:20 201:1 212:18 257:1 aides 134:7 259:17 air 7:20,23 8:10 8:13 28:20 Air-condition 8:23 air-conditioner 8:9,14 10:2 15:24 air-conditioning 9:8 16:21,22 aisle 226:12 Alan 31:3 alarm 135:11 136:21 Albert 230:6 Alcorn 256:5 alerted 90:15 Alex 173:18 174:3 176:4,6 Alexis 173:19 178:19 227:14 align 237:12 alive 202:3 Allen 255:24 alleviate 225:23 Alliance 236:2 allocate 14:5 allocated 9:19 10:21 15:14 17:20 allocation 9:1 10:17 15:17,20 allow 28:14 62:9 90:9 108:10 110:19 134:3 140:20 216:15 226:4,14 allowances	122:20 allowed 120:20 164:15,16 197:15 198:9 245:4 allowing 181:22 184:12 235:18 allows 15:14 182:11 204:20 alluded 63:7 65:10 66:3 112:2 252:12,14 alongside 134:21 alternative 50:2 51:13 58:3 98:16 191:18 alternatives 74:8 Alumni 114:20 Amara 235:3,15 235:19 amazing 228:19 Amber 173:17 176:10 ambitious 47:7 amending 3:10,18 4:2,6,17,20 America 146:21 178:23 182:6 198:22 American 199:4 America's 179:15 180:10 amount 65:17 89:24 123:21 131:22 164:6 175:12 219:15 239:3 amounts 121:22 analogy 69:8 103:17 analysis 192:8,8 210:4 analyzed 152:24 anchor 49:10 and/or 6:5 37:8 108:24 121:8 263:20	Angela 32:20 263:13 anger 182:19,20 angered 242:4,4 angry 28:5 166:9 angst 64:20 92:10 ankle 19:22 annexed 67:13 announced 130:22 135:6 annoyed 30:2 answer 8:17 15:6 18:17 28:8 32:24 33:6 39:21,22 56:8 62:22 63:8 64:9 71:23 72:16 73:16 76:2 88:5 88:12 105:24 107:3 108:1,19 109:5,6 115:20 158:24 189:23 259:2 answerable 217:21 218:7 answered 86:15 94:9 157:8,12 157:16 answering 32:1 answers 7:11 115:17,19 117:11 155:12 155:17 161:18 218:10 anticipated 75:5 anti-bullying 51:10 anti-violence 51:10 anxiety 60:3 204:3 anybody 13:19 44:5 94:16 Anyeah 190:13 200:18 anymore 13:20 21:11,24	anyway 220:6 AP 163:23 apologize 144:5 151:2 188:20 appeal 233:10 appear 154:11 209:24 appears 152:17 250:10 applaud 173:10 applause 58:12 71:20 73:15 77:1 86:4 96:10 97:2 99:12 100:14,16 103:15 109:18 111:1 114:18 118:7,13 119:15 120:16 123:7 124:2,10 125:5 126:7 127:20 128:2 136:11 137:5 138:4 142:20 147:7 148:20 150:24 159:9 166:16 167:13 169:18 178:14 182:1 184:16 194:16 196:23 202:4 208:22 211:8 applicants 52:5 applications 164:15 apply 94:1 95:8 95:14 263:18 applying 178:7 appreciate 76:3 79:19 138:11 140:13 143:17 200:12 202:23 207:5 233:22 approach 5:7,9 30:19 110:20 179:6 approaches 141:12
--	--	---	---	--

appropriate 8:7 65:17 89:23 258:23	86:15 88:3 90:6 91:6,11 98:11 103:5 107:23	assumption 48:13 161:19	autism 243:24	195:13 203:24
appropriated 8:6 17:2 65:15	103:5 107:23 126:20 129:12	assure 148:4 178:4	autonomy 223:14 236:22 237:15	205:15 208:15
approval 2:21 17:9	165:9 169:23 188:23 189:13	astronomical 219:14	auxiliary 56:13	208:23 211:6
approve 89:20 243:13 246:20	243:12 253:18	ate 182:19	available 9:18 110:2 153:18	222:10 223:3
approved 3:7 10:22 15:22 66:4	asking 63:11 104:16 105:18	athletic 157:17	154:24 155:2	225:11,13
approves 89:9	151:19 165:23 169:24 226:19	attend 123:23 133:5 174:16	208:7 239:4 257:11	230:10,16
approving 232:24	231:18 232:4,11 232:22 233:8,10	175:16 195:21 196:7 197:9,17	Avenue 65:21	240:13,17 245:5
approximately 186:14	233:17 250:10 253:8,13,24	200:18 241:4	average 57:12 130:11	246:12,21,24
April 8:2,11 122:2 142:7,10 188:21	259:22 261:5,20	attendance 130:13 131:5,12	averages 130:9	249:7 255:4
architect 26:15	asks 207:23	174:17,22,24	averaging 238:5	256:11 257:19
area 12:16 42:15	aspects 34:13 149:19 151:19	177:16 180:22	AVI 14:7 114:13	258:18 261:21
areas 39:5 246:9	aspiration 116:8	245:9	161:8 171:10,21	backed 219:12
arguably 14:22 164:8	aspirations 182:17	attendants 214:4	173:7 188:13	background 158:19
argued 111:22	assaulted 71:8	attended 194:5 195:23	232:24 238:24	backs 125:2 187:3
arms 61:15 83:2	assert 57:14	attending 177:14	239:1 240:20,21	256:2 260:7
Armstead 170:10 170:17,20,21 173:16	assessment 114:8 114:8	attention 37:24 229:7	242:2,8	backup 142:18
arrangements 56:15 135:22	assessments 188:13	attitude 174:19	avoid 123:21	backwards 131:15
art 58:24 133:10 163:9 208:3 212:22	assignments 161:17	attraction 32:12 33:5	avoiding 246:15	bad 9:10 76:17,18
article 122:2 154:1,7 219:4	assist 17:13 33:22	audience 160:9	aware 67:10 78:1 231:12	112:10 172:8,9
articulate 67:22	assistance 56:1 240:12	audit 77:24	awareness 231:12	209:22 210:1
arts 58:20 143:7 157:17 212:19	assistant 51:8 134:8	August 186:5	A's 174:24 177:18	bags 261:9
Asian 130:16	associated 37:11 254:8	austerity 207:22 238:17	a.m 1:7 46:4	bail 121:13
aside 93:15 173:2 230:18	associations 146:11	Austin 173:17 176:8,10,10	B	bait 162:13
asked 12:18,20 24:14 27:1 39:3 61:22 62:8,15 65:8 69:7 71:22 73:5,8 75:10	assume 57:8 165:2 190:12 241:6 251:10	authentic 79:10 193:4	B 1:17 98:17	balance 62:8,12 119:21 121:5
	assumed 161:20 162:6	authority 3:4,4,9 128:23 134:20 145:10,12 161:16 237:4,14	back 9:1 10:14 13:3 16:2 17:24 19:16 22:22 26:8 30:21 58:5 60:14 66:3 71:12,24 79:4 91:10 92:19 98:20 99:16,19 107:10,12 108:1 108:11 109:6 115:10 116:16 119:19 122:15 124:13,20 127:6 165:24 167:4,15 168:24 171:6,11 172:2 179:22 183:5 189:11	balanced 62:10 62:15 260:7
	assumes 48:8	authorization 3:11 4:8,22		ball 213:2
	assuming 107:9 107:11	authorize 3:12 4:9,22		bamboozled 117:14
		authorized 3:6		bank 223:18
		authorizing 3:23 4:14 15:12		bankrupt 172:7
				bankruptcy 105:3
				bankrupted 136:23,24
				banks 209:15
				barely 177:8 236:7
				bargained 122:1
				barriers 214:12
				Barton 251:1
				base 214:20
				based 9:4 10:22 12:5 49:3,4 53:22 58:1 77:6

106:17 213:7 231:19 244:16 244:17 245:22 252:1 256:8 baseline 256:22 256:23 257:1 basement 115:13 bases 112:13 basic 63:6 78:13 165:8 253:22 basically 24:11 76:9 94:5 96:20 182:18 237:2 240:1 257:5 basics 261:21 basis 243:22 248:18 basketball 16:18 22:19 28:15 179:8 Bass 1:12 86:5,6,8 86:10,13,20,24 87:5,10,14 88:11 89:21 90:1,6 91:14,15 91:19 96:18,20 97:3 98:15 99:4 99:22 100:2,6 106:24 107:1 108:11 148:14 150:7,8,11,21 bathroom 26:6 bathrooms 70:22 120:6 battle 203:24 251:21,22 beat 256:6 beats 23:6 beaut 25:8 beg 224:5 began 99:13 136:4 beginning 26:16 73:14 100:12 142:7,10 behalf 41:5 174:4 176:11 192:9	193:24 205:13 228:5 259:18 behave 81:2 behavior 174:22 254:8 behavioral 52:24 61:7 belief 161:6 believe 35:16 40:9 62:19 78:4 101:9 104:1,9 106:24 127:18 134:20 142:15 145:9,12 153:14 158:5 173:11 183:8 198:10 203:4 206:22 221:18 240:21 240:24 256:18 believed 55:9 Bell 135:11 bells 135:11 136:21 belong 158:4 Ben 110:7 262:13 benefit 92:5 129:4 258:23 benefits 56:12 121:23 122:4 153:4 192:14 209:8 249:14 Bennett 253:2 Bernard 234:8 251:4,4,16 Bertha 166:17,18 166:21 best 12:19 37:8 50:13,24 52:10 55:8,23 97:21 97:22 101:6 102:2 105:15 120:14 123:20 141:20 143:12 148:15,17 158:23 160:17 173:8 184:3 197:21 229:15	236:9 239:5 243:17 249:20 bet 117:9 better 18:13 20:2 49:15 54:6 71:16 78:6 97:14 112:2 114:5 126:10 140:3 181:4,8 192:9 194:10 195:2,2 200:1 210:16 211:11 218:8 238:14 240:16 244:15 245:3 247:6 249:3 260:11 beyond 44:9 123:9 bid 135:10 161:24 162:21 245:19 bidders 136:8 bidding 47:16 126:16 bids 186:11 big 36:17 40:1,6 87:20 124:23 161:1 172:11 190:23 191:1,6 191:9,16 193:17 221:24 bigger 173:6 bill 1:13 2:13,16 2:18,20 3:7,10 3:18,23 4:14 245:16 billion 66:12 75:4 80:15 129:17 138:20 140:17 160:2 233:13 bills 1:19 2:8,12 217:22 binding 186:5,7 biology 163:8 bit 35:3 86:14 116:19 145:12 148:11 168:10 171:9 221:15	black 13:2 17:16 Blackwell 1:12 46:7,21 58:13 59:16 60:7,9 61:19 62:24 63:5 64:15 73:18 78:22 85:23 86:5,7 88:2 90:3,16,22 91:1,12,22 92:2 93:9 96:7,16 100:1,24 102:11 106:23 107:11 107:19 108:4,8 108:13,18 109:3 109:9,14,19 111:5,7 114:16 115:1,5 118:9 118:16 124:5,11 124:16 125:6 127:23 128:3,7 128:9 132:18 138:5 143:23 144:3,6 145:24 150:2,10,22 151:5,8 155:20 156:4,6 159:7 159:13,17 166:15,20,22,23 169:19 170:18 170:19 173:15 174:2 176:2,5,9 178:15 179:4,7 179:10,12 180:4 180:6 181:23 182:3 184:14,22 185:10 189:24 190:8,21 191:11 191:14 194:1,15 195:18 196:24 199:11 200:16 202:5,9 207:4 207:14 211:19 211:23 212:3,6 213:22 215:18 215:22 216:4,10 216:19,23 221:3	221:7 226:3,3,6 226:23 227:4,7 228:1 234:2,12 234:20 239:7,17 242:17,22,24 247:8,11,18 250:22 251:14 251:20,23 256:8 259:6 262:7 blame 19:21 121:11 blessings 169:17 blight 49:5 260:16 blind 127:5 Blondell 1:16 165:14 bloody 172:4 blow 123:21 132:16 147:3 blowing 105:2 blue 209:10 blueprint 47:1,7 58:5 59:5 63:10 63:14 67:4,5 236:23 240:4 board 3:12 4:9,22 38:9 45:8 46:1 58:6 77:14,16 77:18 78:17 185:3 211:7 217:16,20 230:17 246:22 boards 56:21 188:2 boast 193:21 BOBBY 1:14 Body 76:13 79:11 89:11 141:7 bond 197:16 books 62:18 125:21 252:16 252:17,18,21,21 259:8 bored 51:15 born 179:17 198:4 borrow 139:12
--	---	--	--	--

borrowing 140:21	191:13,16	61:18 69:20	40:3,7 85:11	69:11 259:22
Boston 103:1,8	brought 84:7	70:10 81:6	88:6 92:9	caregivers 156:15
105:12	115:8,13 168:6	120:3 186:14	123:18 127:7	caring 51:24
bother 36:5	168:8 184:3	257:14 260:15	155:15 184:4	201:9
bottom 97:15	237:7 256:12	built 14:11 25:23	256:11 257:19	Carlson 235:8
bought 161:12	Bucks 194:12	153:19 172:24	callback 24:6	239:12,16,21,22
bound 130:1	budget 2:17,19	188:17	called 11:23 42:1	carpenter 185:15
box 17:16	5:14 6:12 8:8	bullying 157:8	68:3 110:12	cars 28:1
boys 128:3,11	10:23 17:23	214:21,22 215:1	127:10 176:6	cart 129:18
129:14,14	18:8 22:12 47:1	215:7	209:23 221:12	carved 81:9
break 45:24 46:4	61:23 62:8,10	Bumb 31:5 33:7	239:23	Carver 154:19
breakdown 21:17	62:13,14 66:15	bunch 22:11	calling 39:19,20	case 14:22 59:19
breakfast 252:9	75:6 82:24	195:7	calls 11:20 37:7,9	73:9 134:14
261:4	108:22 109:24	burden 220:20	238:6	202:22
breaking 177:21	115:22 117:5,13	bureaucracy	Camelot 173:20	cases 37:21,22
breathing 204:11	117:23 119:21	246:4,7	174:4 175:20	69:23
Brian 33:12,20	121:5 122:10	bus 134:8 186:2	176:11 227:14	Casey 79:23
35:10 36:24	128:13,21 129:1	208:15 214:4	227:15	80:11 189:10
37:21 39:3	129:2,8,15,17	buses 120:10	campaign 80:8	190:11 199:13
170:10,21	129:20 130:17	business 6:7 7:17	219:11	Casey's 79:22
brief 30:15	133:13 138:20	31:23 32:1,3,12	Campus 228:4	catch 60:12
137:23 171:2	139:21 151:24	32:18 33:5	canceled 245:1	103:18
briefing 82:24	156:19 157:3	108:12 113:17	cancellation	categories 59:1
briefly 88:19	160:2,8,14	153:19 156:24	237:9	130:16
bright 51:17	161:4 178:3	167:21 172:10	cannibalize 47:11	Cathy 239:13
175:17 201:4	202:16 207:22	172:11 194:14	cap 245:7	242:20 243:4
brighter 198:7	211:4 217:15	194:14 201:14	Capetti 156:11	caught 73:6
bring 151:3 181:5	234:21 236:4,12	businesses 172:13	capital 2:14,17	255:17
186:6 210:11	236:15 237:1	172:20 210:16	5:6,7,24 6:7,11	causation 57:8
235:21 238:3	238:17 240:2,5	busting 186:8	6:14 7:3,3 14:1	cause 137:17
254:2,13 257:18	259:23 260:7	209:9	122:14	245:11 260:3
258:14	budgetary 134:22	but 129:5	care 82:6,18	caused 152:9
bringing 171:10	budgets 56:19	button 111:10	105:11,13,13,14	celebrated 113:23
184:17,19 220:9	59:9,11,12	buy 8:8	123:23 149:4	center 7:21 13:12
220:10 232:14	128:22 159:24	buying 219:22	163:12,12	13:15 14:11
brings 113:4	Budget's 237:11	buyout 187:2	174:17 176:21	16:18 17:16
220:1	build 13:14 29:12	buzzes 110:19	196:8,20 198:19	26:19 29:13
brink 165:24	111:20 158:6	B's 174:24	199:6,17,23	239:24
broach 171:14	253:21 256:24		204:23 206:20	centers 112:18
broad 39:5 41:22	257:2		209:15 213:8	central 49:7
broader 44:17	building 9:9	C	214:12,19	111:14 154:19
Brock 110:7	16:20 114:5	C 235:23 263:1,1	224:12 240:3	163:20,21,23
broke 7:21 139:19	127:11,12	Cadillac 148:8	cared 179:21	164:3,5 165:4
183:18 187:10	158:13 177:4	Cafeteria 259:17	183:8,10	165:17 226:9,10
broken 223:17,18	186:1 208:24	calculations	career 116:8	Centro 190:9,9,14
Bromley 190:14	224:22	131:20	careers 49:19	190:16 191:17
190:20,22,22	buildings 53:22	call 35:1 36:3,8	carefully 58:2	191:20 192:3
		37:16 39:23		

193:13,24 194:4 194:6,21 195:1 195:8,14,21,23 196:5,9 197:5 199:8,15,19,21 200:9,19,20,24 201:7,8,11,18 202:3,12,19 203:1,6 204:13 204:15 205:13 205:14,18,21 206:6,14,23 207:5 Centro's 193:22 cents 147:9 Century 241:20 CEO 128:10 Cephas 178:24 180:2,5,9 certain 3:16 4:13 5:2 6:16 12:3,4 88:18 145:8 148:5 149:13 164:6 certainly 40:10 60:18 65:23 68:17 85:24 88:12,14 89:4 90:4 96:8 102:1 109:20 111:5 150:10 162:23 172:10 173:20 239:1 254:13 262:8,13 certification 263:17 certify 263:5 certifying 263:20 cetera 154:20 chain 213:3 Chair 31:9 45:19 63:4 64:17 69:1 69:5 73:17 85:22 86:6 90:15 101:12 106:22 107:1,18 108:3 116:15	117:6,23 118:8 118:15 124:15 127:22 144:1,10 150:1 184:21 190:6 chairman 19:8 78:21 96:6 156:4 212:2 221:6 226:3,6 Chairperson 116:2 Chairwoman 73:22 93:14 125:9 138:10 challenged 143:20 challenging 53:9 193:4 Chamber 104:2,4 chambers 205:15 255:22 chance 60:12 177:21,22 178:3 181:5,8,15 199:19 227:1 change 6:6 12:23 12:24,24 20:1 23:14,21 29:21 74:4 98:13 112:5 177:11 194:6 199:3 210:22 255:16 256:1 changed 80:4 112:5 122:15 167:3 198:3 246:1 changes 3:1 122:13 257:20 258:14,15,15 changing 13:21 13:21 20:17 117:3 121:3 201:21 chaos 48:22 137:17 164:9 chaotic 198:13	chapter 3:18 4:2 4:7,17 80:20 Chapters 4:20 characterize 37:15 characterized 37:17 charge 34:3 77:15 101:5,19 chart 20:9 33:16 charter 12:21,24 20:15 29:3 47:14,14 48:9 48:14,18 55:14 55:18 81:5 84:16,17,21,22 88:20,22 89:5 89:10,11,14 92:7,10,12,17 93:2,3 128:4,11 128:15,16,21 129:7,11 130:10 130:21 131:19 131:23 136:20 136:24 137:7,12 137:22 146:24 147:1 148:22 149:1 152:11 154:3 209:24 210:7,14 214:9 214:9 218:3,4,9 228:3,10,13,18 229:15 230:14 230:18,20 232:2 244:15 245:6 248:23,24 charterize 137:3 charters 13:22 48:10,21 153:16 153:19 165:7 244:10,19,24 cheaper 6:22 check 15:10 16:5 checkered 174:22 checking 30:13 cheerful 51:17 chemistry 163:9	Chester 136:22 172:7 225:10,10 253:1,5 Chicago 212:15 Chief 31:5 33:1 33:19,20 34:19 91:5 121:5 126:22 161:13 236:10,24 child 50:11 51:2,3 51:24 52:18,19 52:20 53:7,11 53:13 54:1,15 61:4,8 65:15,19 65:23 71:17 85:12 111:10,12 120:13 148:16 148:17 151:12 158:11 167:1,8 167:9,16,17 196:14 213:2,24 214:1 222:16,21 224:7,9 228:15 228:24 229:4,8 242:11 243:4,12 childhood 50:12 50:15,17,18 82:7,18 children 47:13,17 47:19 49:18,21 50:2,14,17 51:13 54:17,18 54:21 55:20 58:7,10 60:24 61:6 66:1,17 67:17 69:21 70:16,20 71:3 81:4,5 82:9 85:4 98:2 104:8,14 111:24 120:9 122:6 123:23 132:14 133:5,21 148:6 151:13 154:24 155:3 156:20 157:1,4 157:7 158:4,9 158:18,20	207:17,24 212:12,12 213:1 213:3,5,16,19 215:8,10,11,17 216:15 217:4 218:6 222:1,15 222:23 223:22 224:1,19 225:2 228:8 229:12,19 229:19,20,22,24 230:3,9 231:20 232:16,17,20 241:7,11,15,18 243:22,24 244:2 244:2 245:3 246:17 248:8 249:18 250:1,5 250:19 252:10 253:20 254:6 256:15 257:3,4 257:5,6 children's 51:1 103:19 133:8 158:14 204:5 230:12 236:2 children/parents 105:7 child's 52:3 choice 232:3 241:8 244:18 choices 119:19 157:20 choose 95:7 113:17 190:17 244:20 245:6 choosing 237:16 chose 234:15 chosen 237:16 Christine 235:8 239:12,21 chronically 51:14 179:20 Cindy 1:12 148:14 circles 59:19 circumstance 75:15
--	--	--	--	---

citations 153:17	212:4,8,12,19	39:14,18,24	204:10 210:2	colleagues 150:3
cited 55:22	213:11 216:10	40:5,18,22 41:6	237:14 244:8	255:11 262:10
cities 7:2 11:16	217:21 218:12	42:12,23 43:3	255:12 260:18	collect 219:3
57:11 112:12	219:2 220:2	43:13 44:8,23	261:22	250:13
135:21	221:10,16,19,23	45:17	closed 59:17,22	collected 112:16
citizen 112:18	222:24 223:23	class 51:2 55:24	59:23 196:16	collecting 220:20
231:6	224:9 225:6,24	82:10 120:22	198:15 202:18	collection 220:23
citizenry 211:1	231:11,22	174:16 176:22	226:18 248:21	collections 114:12
citizens 140:22	233:23 235:17	193:22 208:4,5	closing 48:9,22	collective 159:22
172:19 173:1	238:2,8,9,15,23	208:13 246:13	49:8 74:10	193:18,20
217:18,21 222:8	238:24 239:24	254:17	137:1,23 162:10	collectively 238:9
231:5 242:14	240:15,21	classes 130:1	164:7,19 165:5	collects 242:6
250:8	241:10,13,17	181:1,9	255:21 260:14	college 49:19
city 1:2,6 2:21,23	242:1,6 245:23	classmates 181:2	closings 164:21	130:6,8,13
3:8,24 4:11,15	246:2,9,20,23	classroom 69:8,12	closures 153:11	131:2,4,12
5:1,17 14:6 32:3	250:5,12 259:20	69:15 70:23,24	clothing 122:20	175:2 181:14
32:4,11 41:5	259:20 260:4,6	165:20 198:17	clubs 133:10	191:23 194:12
46:22 47:15	260:17,19	199:9 205:4	cluster 117:24	201:16 228:22
65:20 77:10	261:20,24	237:14 252:22	clusters 57:18	250:6
78:9 84:9 98:1	citywide 114:20	252:23 254:16	115:11 135:8	color 208:15
111:13,17	130:9 132:8	classrooms	255:6,7,9,19,20	258:4
112:14,16,21,22	156:8,16 159:22	119:23 133:9	256:9	column 79:18
113:15,18 114:5	city's 41:7 47:13	134:11 138:1	coach 179:7	82:21
116:22 121:1	47:19 191:7,22	160:1 196:7	Coalition 235:4	come 2:3,3 8:17
123:20 125:17	219:7	198:11 229:7	235:16,20 240:1	12:18 23:3
127:18 128:16	civic 170:22 240:9	232:8,9 245:4	code 3:19 4:3,7,18	30:17 46:12
130:11 131:12	CLA 180:12	clean 174:15	4:21 12:22,24	63:15 64:23
132:24 133:19	181:1,3,12,14	cleaned 115:13	20:16 230:2	72:20,22 88:16
135:23 137:10	182:15,16 183:1	cleaners 186:2	codes 13:21	90:11 99:16,17
138:16,22 139:2	183:10 184:6,8	clear 49:11 52:21	cofounder 156:12	99:19 103:18
139:23 140:23	184:10	75:2,8 76:4 77:4	cofounders	107:3 109:6
142:11,13	Clara 251:1	77:20 119:22	159:19	112:6 114:3
143:10,11,18	clarification 90:6	131:18 250:17	cognitive 50:22	117:2 123:12
145:21 149:19	95:18 108:16	Clearinghouse	cohort 193:14	128:12 136:18
155:5,16 156:5	clarified 104:23	130:8	coil 9:7 10:7	138:21 140:3,17
161:5 162:3	107:15	clearly 17:11 75:3	coils 9:4	140:18 141:24
163:3 165:23	clarify 88:16	257:9	cold 129:6	143:4,14,15,21
166:5,9,11,13	96:12 98:7	clerical 15:3	collaborate 72:5	149:19 156:16
172:11,13,19	109:6 110:21	Cleveland 231:2	collaborative	164:21 166:8
173:7 175:9	clarity 108:7	cliff 74:21	44:21	177:20 190:16
180:6 182:3	Clarke 1:11 21:22	climate 51:8	collaboratively	194:23 195:13
186:8 187:4	30:14 31:7,8,11	clock 23:10	41:13,24 52:8	200:1 205:2,4
191:24 197:10	31:13,19 32:14	close 47:12 105:6	collapses 172:18	206:13 219:23
200:17 202:17	33:8,12,15 34:5	108:12 137:15	collar 209:10	226:15 227:4,10
203:20,22	34:10 35:12,20	140:19 160:16	colleague 71:21	228:4 234:9
204:13 206:22	35:24 36:18	164:11 181:12	147:15 148:14	235:6,6 236:20
208:10 209:6,17	37:4,13 38:2,5	189:6 192:14	149:21 214:6	238:1 246:22

254:23 257:22 261:3 262:14 comes 9:22 36:7 36:11 89:16 90:7 98:19,22 104:13 124:13 129:19 139:4,24 173:6 204:4 212:17 236:19 251:9 comfortable 181:1 coming 22:15 27:13,22 67:18 72:6 116:4 138:11 154:2 178:16 181:19 205:21 219:21 227:11 commenced 46:6 comment 100:7 102:8,9 126:9 comments 67:21 254:24 257:11 259:4 Commerce 5:6 30:16,22 31:4,6 31:19 33:18 36:11 41:12 commercial 32:10 209:4 Commission 5:17 38:12 55:4 58:5 58:17 89:9,19 93:1 121:13 151:19,22 155:13 216:14 217:13,19 220:14 250:15 commissioned 250:16 Commissioner 24:10 155:14 238:6 Commission's 47:7 commit 20:8	211:9 commitment 18:17 20:19 67:10 72:10 130:3 158:2 202:20 207:5 215:19 259:11 committed 82:16 82:18 142:11 193:1 committee 1:3 2:3 2:7 18:22 30:1 55:8 66:22 126:16,17 258:10 commodity 119:20 common 81:15 83:4 100:17 112:19 197:12 256:4 Commonwealth 54:14 66:9 67:13 79:24 111:23 112:20 249:6 communicating 148:23 communication 21:17 106:12,18 126:1 149:24 201:10 communities 48:24 49:6 51:20 60:4 112:11 113:2 120:18 137:19 153:12,22 210:10,19 232:13 261:23 community 25:11 35:18 48:6 49:3 49:8,9,12 53:21 54:16 56:17 69:24 70:2,5 94:10 98:14,20 98:21,23 99:6	99:14,16 104:17 113:7 116:9 133:17 142:6,14 162:5 166:18 192:19 194:12 199:2 203:1,10 204:12 205:14 206:16 226:17 226:20 232:10 232:15,23 233:18 235:22 236:21 247:1 248:8 249:23 258:12 260:12 community-bas... 193:3 258:5 companies 55:18 108:22 132:1 209:1 company 11:20 97:7 comparable 244:16 compared 130:13 competition 150:16 competitive 47:16 54:17 complains 27:6 complete 6:14,21 110:19 129:21 157:19 162:18 completed 193:11 completely 83:1 completing 192:3 complicated 125:16 components 134:22 comprehensive 53:17 193:2 213:11 compressor 10:8 compressors 9:7 9:9 comprising 186:14	compromise 79:13 81:21 123:4 concept 17:9 conceptually 17:19 concern 17:6 64:21 254:5 concerned 48:21 60:11 72:6 103:6 137:9 138:13 146:17 154:12 185:17 231:5,5 258:7 concerns 40:2 68:23 71:9,12 96:21 156:18,22 161:23 162:4 250:2,2 concess 121:18 concession 121:18 concessions 121:15 122:11 125:1 concierge 32:2 concluded 56:7 153:18 conclusion 153:2 181:16 condition 231:13 conditioner 7:20 7:23 8:13 conditioning 8:10 conditions 3:17 4:13 5:3 16:14 112:5 209:21 conduct 81:3 conducted 135:21 conference 212:15,18 confidence 98:5 99:8,15 161:3 211:6 247:5 confident 99:19 confidentiality/l... 37:10 confusing 125:15	Congratulations 194:15 connect 204:21 connected 197:13 conscious 148:15 consequences 205:8 238:15 Consequently 129:1 consider 56:12 75:12 76:13,14 115:24 195:16 205:5 232:5,12 consideration 151:24 153:10 175:24 considered 113:4 147:21 considering 75:15 consigned 208:15 consist 116:7 consistency 241:13 consistent 59:21 248:18 consortia 56:15 constant 113:18 238:12 245:1 constantly 7:16 187:23 constituent 242:10 constituents 119:12 171:7 172:2,3 238:21 241:4,6,9,14 constituted 136:1 construction 17:16 185:15 220:4,4 Consultant 103:1 consultants 88:5 88:9 102:19,22 245:18 consulting 102:19 158:5 201:15 consume 209:6
--	---	---	---	---

contact 35:15 69:21 107:13	219:12	correlation 57:7	108:2 109:12	43:8 44:6 45:20
contacted 90:11	control 68:20	correlations 57:1	115:7,16 117:6	63:2,3,6,16,20
contacts 245:19	140:23 146:21	corridors 32:10	117:6 118:19	64:6,10,12,16
contained 263:6	218:2,6 236:21	153:19	125:17 127:18	64:17 67:9 68:5
continuation 2:6	263:20	corrupt 136:5	128:9 131:16	69:1,4,7 71:5,21
continue 19:3	controlled 139:18	cost 7:22 8:3 9:13	132:24 138:15	71:21 72:18
95:14 123:12	Controller 15:22	11:4 12:1 16:1	138:22 139:3	73:16,20,21
152:14 155:4	conversation	57:21 65:11	155:16,23 156:3	74:1,21,22 75:9
180:23 200:13	14:15 16:10	111:24 122:12	156:5,9,17	75:20 76:3,16
217:11 223:21	23:24 25:1 35:4	137:3,21 187:11	159:21 161:6	76:20 77:2,19
232:1 233:24	70:17 101:23	187:19 245:12	163:4 165:23	78:20 79:16
241:22	158:1 161:10	245:15	166:13 170:21	93:12,13 94:4
continuing	166:3 223:4,6,9	costing 66:3 67:3	171:23 172:21	94:13,22 95:2
231:16	253:19	111:19 135:4	180:7 182:3	95:17,22,24
continuity 248:19	conversations	costing-out 55:7	184:24 187:4	96:5 100:4,5,15
contract 9:6,17	79:15 87:18	costly 48:21 57:19	188:1 192:1	100:21 101:2,4
15:15 27:4	161:8,9	245:12 246:15	197:10 200:17	101:10,14,21
37:17 95:12	convert 136:20	costs 14:2 16:16	202:17 211:5,9	102:5,7,10,12
97:10 122:1,4,6	Conwell 154:18	56:19 65:11	212:5 216:10	102:14,16,18
122:15 123:3	Cook-Wissahic...	112:21 131:21	218:13 222:24	103:4,13,16
124:19,22 136:6	150:20	153:14 187:24	226:7 232:11,22	105:23 106:4,9
160:21 186:5,7	cooled 219:10	Council 1:2,11	233:8 235:18	106:11 108:11
contracted 246:6	cooperation 3:4,5	2:21 3:6 6:17,18	238:23,24 241:1	116:20 117:16
contracting 118:3	72:2 185:5	7:1,17 11:15	242:8,14 243:12	125:7,7,8,13
118:4 161:24	coordinated	13:21 15:12	246:20 247:20	126:9 127:21
contractor 9:5	163:24	18:20,22 21:15	254:3 255:22	133:4 138:8,9
11:24 26:13	coordinates 34:8	21:16,20,21,22	259:21 261:20	141:3,16 142:21
27:6,15 186:7	coordinator	22:5,14 28:23	261:24	144:5,8,9
187:14,23	163:24	31:8,11,13,19	Councilman 1:11	145:15,22 146:1
contractors 27:16	copies 128:6	32:14 33:8,12	1:13,13,14,14	146:2 150:16
186:16 249:2	151:3	33:15 34:5,10	1:15,15,17 2:2	189:6 213:22
contracts 102:19	copy 91:16 253:14	34:12,23 35:2	5:4,12,18 8:18	216:17 239:18
107:6,7 135:10	254:2,5 255:4	35:10,12,15,20	12:11,15 14:14	254:3 262:10
136:14 162:20	Corbett 66:11	35:24 36:12,16	14:18,21 15:8	Councilmatic
186:19 237:9	80:13,14 218:24	36:18 37:4,13	17:5,6 18:10,12	146:3
245:22 246:15	core 52:24 193:7	38:2,5,24 39:14	18:15 19:7,11	Councilmen
contractual	246:12 249:20	39:18,24 40:5	19:19 20:2,11	230:24
121:19	corporate 146:21	40:18,22 41:6	20:13,14,19	Councilpersons
contradiction	Corporation 45:4	42:12,13,14,20	21:3,5,9,19 22:4	216:9
136:14	45:8 153:1	42:23,23,24	22:7,7,10,19,21	Councilwoman
contrast 153:20	corporations	43:3,7,11,13,15	22:23 23:2,6,9	1:12,12,16,16
246:3	45:14 208:20	43:17,18,24	23:15,19 24:4,7	1:17 5:20,21
contribute 48:16	209:2,4	44:1,2,8,23	25:4 28:7,10,12	7:13 8:1 9:24
55:10 62:9	correct 37:13	45:17,24 46:4,6	28:12,13 29:5,6	10:9,13,19,22
259:23	76:24 92:6	46:23 50:9	29:22 30:7,12	11:2,9,19 12:7
contributor	94:10 95:23	61:20 76:6	30:16,20 31:7,7	12:14 14:21
	98:4 263:8	82:23 90:14	34:20 42:18	15:16,19,23

16:9,13 17:18 17:22 18:5 19:9 23:11,12,16,20 23:23 24:2,4,5,9 24:14,24 25:3,4 25:7,17 27:14 27:21 28:3,7 29:7 30:7 40:23 46:7,21 58:13 59:16 60:7,9 61:19 62:2,24 63:5 64:15 69:3 73:18 78:22,23 78:24 79:3 80:14 82:1,4,8 82:13 83:7,9,12 83:21 84:13 85:2,8,14,16,21 85:23 86:5,5,6,7 86:8,10,13,20 86:24 87:5,10 87:14 88:2,11 89:21 90:1,3,5 90:16,17,20,22 90:23 91:1,12 91:14,15,19,22 91:23 92:1,2,4 92:16,22 93:7,9 93:10 96:7,16 96:18,20 97:3 98:15 99:4,22 100:1,2,6,19,22 100:24,24 101:2 101:11,15 102:11 106:23 106:24 107:1,11 107:17,19,20,21 108:4,8,13,18 109:3,9,14,19 111:5,7 114:16 115:1,5 118:9 118:16 124:5,11 124:16 125:6 127:23 128:3,7 128:8 132:18 138:5 143:23 144:3,6 145:24	150:2,7,8,10,11 150:21,22 151:5 151:8 155:20 156:6 159:7,13 159:16,17 165:13,14 166:15,20,23 169:19 170:18 170:19 173:15 174:2 176:2,5,9 178:15 179:4,7 179:10,12 180:4 180:6 181:23 182:2 184:14,22 185:10 189:24 190:8,21 191:11 191:14 194:1,15 195:18 196:24 199:11 200:16 202:5,9 207:4 207:14 211:19 211:22,23 212:6 215:18,22 216:4 216:19,23 221:3 221:7 226:23 227:4,7 228:1 230:24 234:2,12 234:20 239:7,16 242:17,22,24 247:8,11,18 250:22 251:13 251:14,20,23 256:8 259:5,6 262:7,12 counselors 51:8 82:12 113:19 counted 258:11 counties 7:2 11:16 65:7,14 112:13 257:23 countless 203:9 country 113:3 191:4 240:8 county 112:15,21 112:22 194:12 230:2 couple 31:15 65:5	86:13 105:16 146:18,19 188:11 214:22 course 54:5 61:11 66:13 183:6 208:9,16 237:23 court 28:16 115:19 cover 56:19,20 covering 2:23 coworkers 185:4 co-curricular 129:24 cracks 61:14 Crash 218:22 crazy 14:2 28:18 229:1 create 130:20 135:6 137:12 197:16 created 134:6 creates 246:6 creating 130:21 133:17 180:19 creative 142:19 178:23 179:16 180:10,12 181:17 182:6,8 231:24 creatively 52:9 creativity 141:13 credited 182:9 credits 181:5,7 Creighton 164:18 criminally 133:22 crisis 113:14,18 121:3 122:10 132:11 152:8,12 152:18,20 162:8 162:17 202:17 222:6 236:16 criteria 58:4 164:10 critical 97:16 146:12,12 162:4 171:15,15 cross 167:4	236:19 crowded 119:24 crucial 171:18 198:21 246:19 Culinary 205:24 culprit 172:16 culture 53:6 curious 83:3 current 66:15 74:4 77:11,12 161:4 235:24 243:17 currently 6:11 43:16 109:1 154:17 178:7 186:10 217:4 218:9 244:24 245:18 curriculum 50:21 52:18 115:24 116:1,2,6,7 117:22 158:14 249:20 Curtis 1:11 32:19 154:19 custom 12:22 20:16 cut 14:24 50:14 59:4,10,10 61:22 75:3 139:21 156:19 176:23 178:4 208:23 213:8,9 222:11 cutbacks 154:22 cuts 58:18 59:3 119:19,22 120:17 129:6,8 129:11 133:13 134:6 152:11 157:17 172:5 206:2 236:4 cutting 129:19 157:3 175:19 240:12 cyber 47:14 48:10 48:20 92:10,17	92:18 cycle 18:8 cynical 47:21 48:3 D D 1:16 177:17 daddy 189:15,16 189:20 daily 198:20 damaged 9:4 dammed 217:10 damned 217:9,10 dancing 16:19 Danielle 178:24 180:3 182:5 Darby 253:10 Darden 93:2 Darrell 1:11 21:22 data 53:3 58:2 84:9 date 15:11 246:2 253:17 dated 122:2 dates 16:7 dating 10:14 daughter 111:13 166:22 189:10 189:13,15 daughter's 189:11,12,17 Dave 8:18 David 1:15 117:15 128:3,10 190:14,22 Dawson 227:2 230:23 231:1 day 5:22 12:1 18:11 22:14 42:10 50:23 55:23 69:22 71:1 72:5 80:11 113:22 117:7 127:10 138:12 143:8 147:10,13 168:1 169:17 176:1,18 177:4
---	---	---	---	---

177:20 178:12 183:22,23 203:5 204:17 205:3 206:2 213:15 222:16 224:22 226:12 252:17 255:23 260:23 261:17 262:4,11 days 20:20 22:21 23:10 30:10 80:17 122:19 124:20 188:17 188:17 189:1 258:18 day-to-day 27:15 44:13 69:21 106:2 de 191:17 195:21 200:19 202:12 dead 238:22 deadbeats 220:21 deal 24:11 30:4 32:9 38:14 39:4 61:23 72:11 81:23 146:15 dealing 22:11 106:2 deals 22:14 116:2 death 116:13 254:19,21 debate 54:4 debating 74:7 debt 116:12 187:1 decade 135:18 December 55:3 59:2,4 185:21 195:6 decent 209:14 250:7 decentralization 67:24 237:1 decide 104:24 decided 99:10 162:15 decimate 163:19 163:21 decimates 165:4	decimating 164:3 decision 44:15 65:3 77:5,6 89:13 92:12 97:17,22,23 98:8 99:7 104:11 105:16 127:6,10 148:15 173:10 202:14 228:18 231:16 231:19 237:13 decisions 85:17 92:14 96:14 101:17,19 104:12 106:17 205:6,8 231:23 declaring 123:17 decline 113:2 134:10 declining 143:19 decreasing 214:12 dedicated 123:10 159:1 dedication 192:6 230:21 deep 152:11 195:15 deeply 203:3 250:2 defending 145:18 defense 101:17 105:24 deficit 211:10 216:13 deficits 225:24 defined 130:16 definitely 11:13 177:22 218:2 definition 248:4 degree 194:14 222:12 DeJarnatt 151:1 151:1,2,6,9,11 Delaware 45:3 delay 172:6 DelCo 253:8	deliberations 170:2 delinquent 114:13 238:8 deliver 47:3 52:9 Delores 155:23 156:7 demand 131:17 261:20 demanding 211:6 democratic 210:20,24 demonstrate 131:3 204:1 DENNIS 1:15 department 5:6 6:2 7:18 8:22 15:22 24:12 26:13 30:22 31:20 33:19 153:13 185:16 departments 5:5 depend 132:14 262:4 dependent 54:11 depending 84:17 105:8 depends 98:18,19 98:21 depression 213:18 Deputy 31:3,6 33:18,20 41:12 deserve 48:2 49:6 50:3 122:24 157:19 158:22 178:7 229:24 deserves 50:11 51:2,3,24 52:18 54:1 242:10 design 146:14 designed 50:21 89:6 197:22,23 197:24 designee 186:17 designing 63:14 desirable 244:6	desire 218:24 desires 81:12 despite 100:15 132:3 138:24 144:17,19 destroy 49:13 destroying 49:9 destructive 47:21 47:22 detail 83:20 154:6 detailing 136:5 details 58:18 61:24 62:5 Detective 247:24 detectors 229:22 determine 131:19 232:21 deterred 203:15 devastating 120:24 123:21 develop 50:18 52:16 54:23 102:20 210:19 257:1,2 developed 45:6 257:22 developer 36:4,11 developers 35:15 development 31:4 32:9,21 33:4 36:21 37:3,23 38:5 39:5 41:14 41:18,23 45:14 45:16 52:13 56:5 193:6 258:13 diagnose 53:4 dialogue 48:4 78:3 161:14 162:19 166:3 die 14:10 difference 15:12 53:17 60:19 65:6,14 70:9 113:13 129:15 139:23 140:21 145:13 153:8	174:18 different 7:7 10:4 14:13 34:15 40:14 43:4,5,19 43:20 44:1 68:15 75:23 79:18 85:17 93:24 103:3 117:9,10 141:12 149:19 152:22 153:6,7 167:17 192:10 200:6 213:12 217:1 224:4 230:8 237:7 240:11 255:14 differential 153:3 249:14 differently 81:3 249:18 difficult 35:17 78:2 80:19 114:2 119:10,18 122:22 132:5 192:6 199:1 258:17 diploma 180:19 182:12 193:17 196:14 202:15 direct 232:9 263:19 directed 41:8 55:4 direction 105:21 directly 34:6,7 35:11 37:22 38:15 93:4 260:22 Director 5:15,17 31:4,6 111:9 170:22 178:24 190:23 197:5 Director's 13:4 21:9 disabilities 243:24 244:1 disadvantage 54:17 57:9 70:8
---	--	--	--	---

disadvantaged 57:3,13	161:1	152:19 154:17	49:13 59:7 62:9	113:11 122:17
disagreement 104:5	distribution 79:23	154:23 155:10	92:12 123:14	140:16,18
disarray 246:4	district 3:13,16	156:15,18 157:2	129:17 136:19	143:12,14,20,21
disaster 57:17	4:1,10,16,23 6:2	157:8,12,14,16	223:4 236:11	162:19 219:10
128:18 218:10	22:14 28:23	158:1,3,7 159:2	246:16 255:5,6	233:13 253:8
230:11	36:16 42:21	159:23 160:10	259:21	door 187:10,10,15
disastrous 135:1	43:8,9,10,12,24	160:12,18 161:5	district-manage	187:16
Disciplinary 244:21	43:24 44:2 46:9	161:13 162:11	244:16	doorknob 187:15
discipline 51:21	47:11 49:13,20	162:21,22 163:1	district-run 48:19	doors 94:14
53:9	50:14 51:4	163:14 165:8,24	distrusting	140:11 204:10
discover 148:13	52:15 57:2,4,5	169:23 170:3	197:20	226:19
discovered 15:4	59:9 62:7,11,16	171:5,11 172:4	diverse 84:8	Dorothy 25:23
147:23	63:12 67:8 68:4	172:8,18 173:3	152:23 256:1	29:9
discretionary 162:20	68:7 71:16 73:4	175:19 182:15	diversified 256:10	double 217:9
discuss 46:24	75:2,11 78:7	184:24 185:1,6	256:11	doubled 135:24
discussed 155:8	79:11 81:8,11	185:13,14,24	diversity 27:24	245:24
discussion 22:3	82:16 88:15	186:6,10,18,23	divide 47:14	Dow 31:5 33:1
46:16,17 63:10	93:22 94:2,9,23	187:7,19 188:4	160:19 166:6	Dowd-Burton
63:17 64:1,5,6	95:6,11,15,16	188:12,20 192:2	244:5	32:20
discussions 23:3	96:3 97:5,8,12	209:17 210:15	divided 166:10	downsizing
44:5 79:10	98:4,9 99:19	211:21 212:3	dividing 68:4	163:23
dismantle 89:2	102:21 105:13	215:15 217:2	166:11	downstairs 28:5
250:4	107:8,22 109:2	221:13 223:9	divisions 31:22	Dr 123:5 126:14
dismantles 159:5	110:7,8,22 109:2	226:18 231:8	Dobson 248:1	212:14
dismantling 88:22 121:7	115:10,18	233:4 234:22	doctor 254:11	Draconian 172:5
disparities 54:12	116:11,15 117:8	236:15 238:9	document 117:18	draft 82:21,22,24
65:12	118:11,21,22	239:2 240:19	249:7,12	255:8
dispense 55:13	119:4,6,17	243:5,12,13,15	dodgers 219:4,6,9	drama 130:2
160:6	121:2,7,9,14,15	243:19 244:10	dog 146:24	133:10 172:17
dispensing 251:18	122:5,9,16,21	245:2,5,10,14	doing 11:16,17	200:10
disputes 221:15	123:8,13,18	245:16 246:3,12	21:11 27:14	dramatically 80:4
disrepair 120:4	125:2 126:2,12	246:18,21 248:8	32:4 36:16 40:9	drastic 157:17
252:5,8	127:3,15 128:13	249:7 253:9,10	46:18 138:16	253:3 260:3
disrupt 137:18	128:17,20,24	255:13,14	140:19 147:14	draw 210:17
disruption 48:22	129:4,5,6	256:19,21	164:4 167:12	drawing 26:16
disruptive 51:14	130:17,22 132:4	257:19,22	169:2 186:19	58:6 211:7
distances 49:2	132:11 133:2,4	258:22 261:21	206:13 212:23	230:17 246:22
distinction 162:7	133:15 134:1,15	262:1	213:5 223:19,21	dream 178:10
distinguish 38:7	134:19,21 135:4	districts 35:5	224:3,5 226:18	dreams 198:8
Distinguished 128:9	135:6,8 136:7	54:18,21 55:5,6	230:6 233:6,23	Drexel 179:24
distracted 40:13	136:20 137:1,3	55:12 56:9,11	257:7	222:5 254:12
	137:24 138:15	57:9,14,16	dollar 50:12,13	drive 209:10
	138:24 139:17	65:20 66:8	147:9	driven 58:2
	140:20 141:6	67:20 112:8	dollars 8:8 25:24	drivers 186:3
	145:1,6,14	131:7 165:19	26:20 65:23	drives 133:12
	146:3 150:15,19	240:7 253:11	66:12 75:4 78:2	drop 67:7 238:21
	151:12,13	District's 47:1,3	80:15 82:17	dropout 191:22

dropouts 175:12	57:3,13	222:15 224:11	173:5 191:8,22	employ 171:23
dropped 202:13	economy 187:22	226:1 228:9	251:17	employed 95:22
dropping 53:1	236:13 260:10	229:6,24 231:20	eight 68:4 80:6	103:14 189:19
drugs 116:12	ed 66:24 180:9	232:11,20 237:3	Eighth 150:19	employee 56:12
232:13	Edison 256:12	240:9,13 241:19	Eileen 239:12	68:7 71:18 95:9
dual 56:5	editor 253:2	243:6,7 244:19	242:19,19	95:15 97:10
Duane 31:5 33:7	editorial 63:21	244:22 245:7	Einstein 230:6	119:4 185:13
35:8 37:21 39:1	educate 49:20	248:4,7,20	either 9:2 22:1,24	employees 104:9
42:8	55:20 218:5	249:1 250:4,7	37:21 76:21	104:9 119:9
dubbed 67:11	224:1 260:11	250:11,14,19	140:10 250:10	120:3 123:10
due 12:16 19:7	261:22	252:3 256:23,24	El 190:9,9,14,16	139:10 209:13
134:10 174:13	educated 199:2,4	259:11	191:17,19 192:2	259:17
175:13 183:18	educates 52:19	educational 14:1	193:13,21,24	employment 97:9
262:5	educating 47:17	48:1,11 51:15	194:4,5,21	119:10 188:16
Duffey 239:12	111:24 133:16	53:8 54:13,22	195:1,8,13,21	empowered 199:3
242:19,19	193:19 225:1	66:1 101:7	195:23 196:5,9	empowering
duplicating	249:24	131:24 132:9,13	197:5 199:7,15	210:10
248:15	education 3:13	135:24 170:11	199:19,21 200:9	enables 198:6
duty 236:8 246:16	4:9,23 47:4,9	182:13 192:23	200:18,20,24	encourage 170:24
	50:12,18 52:4	197:18,20 210:9	201:6,8,11,18	200:1 225:19
E	54:2,7,10 55:8	229:18 230:11	202:3,12,19	228:6
E 156:7 263:1	56:4,13 58:6	242:12 246:24	203:1,6 204:13	encouraged
ear 197:7	65:11 66:12,22	258:19	204:15 205:13	177:19 206:21
earlier 73:5 75:20	67:14 73:3 80:7	educationally	205:13,18,21	ends 165:17
185:2 190:2	80:9 82:19	257:7	206:6,14,23	endure 112:22
212:18 225:21	87:16,20 97:20	educator 165:22	207:5	enemy 72:8,8
231:9 252:12	98:2 111:18	educators 48:5	elected 21:21	energy 122:13
earliest 40:7	114:2,6 120:6	52:6 59:3	29:10 157:21	208:24
early 36:1 50:12	120:14 121:8	Edward 178:24	election 253:16,17	engage 11:21
50:15,17 53:4	132:13 134:2,18	180:2,8	elections 238:15	193:4
82:7,18 261:3	140:8,9,12	Edwards 170:11	elective 217:20	engaged 192:23
earn 119:8 124:7	143:20 146:6,11	170:14	electrical 120:7	253:7,9,10,13
178:9 247:12	146:12,13	effect 156:19	elementary 133:5	engagement
earned 131:5	147:12 148:9	157:4	163:15 235:23	170:22 210:24
earnest 104:1	152:15 156:4,12	effected 189:17	248:5	engineers 186:1
easiest 40:4	156:20,23	189:18	eleven 121:11	English 163:6
easily 225:22,23	158:18 159:20	effective 52:1	eligible 193:15	244:3,23
East 39:6	159:22 163:11	53:23 187:19	eliminated 119:11	enhance 130:6
easy 39:21,22	170:23 175:17	effects 214:2	131:4	260:12
eat 189:14 261:7	177:17 178:6	efficiency 122:13	Eliminating	enjoy 261:12
261:17	180:14 183:11	effort 34:2 44:22	123:16	enjoyed 80:6,17
economic 31:3	191:7 193:1,12	45:10 66:18	Emanual 25:23	Enon 87:23 166:7
32:6,8,19,21	197:11 199:18	132:8 141:24	Emanuel 29:9	enormous 47:23
45:16 56:22	199:20 201:22	201:2 219:3	EMO 237:9,20	48:7 137:21
57:9 158:19	203:21 207:24	efforts 128:14,15	EMOs 48:14	enormously 192:4
230:1 237:24	210:5 212:23	132:5 138:17	256:12	enrichment 116:9
economically	217:5,17 222:13	159:3 171:14	emotional 50:19	157:15

enrolled 245:10 enrollment 56:5 130:7,23 245:8 ensure 158:13 242:14 247:1 ensures 246:8 ensuring 125:22 enter 95:11 entertain 124:4 entire 162:16 165:4,8,17 184:9 241:12 245:4 entirely 237:6 248:9 entities 11:17 56:19 93:17 135:9 154:9 225:21 entitled 3:11,19 3:21 4:3,8,18,21 entitlement 38:8 entitlements 38:17 entity 77:24 94:7 entrepreneurial 130:1 environment 51:4 69:12 70:4 175:21 177:9 231:15 environments 85:4 equal 129:15 214:11 equalizer 240:10 equally 154:15 equate 57:7 equation 80:3 equipment 9:17 9:20,22 26:2,18 equitable 54:2,6 54:24 158:10 211:12 equity 68:12 137:10 142:16 142:17 246:9	Eric 8:21 error 15:4 escalated 16:16 ESL 163:10 especially 55:14 172:22 242:1 essence 45:5 essentially 41:9 establish 53:6 established 4:6 6:24 11:14 35:2 73:8 estate 3:15,23 4:3 4:11,14,18,24 114:8 138:23 139:24 140:2 217:3,7 238:3 esteemed 180:6 182:3 estimate 9:3 Estudiantes 191:18 195:22 200:19 202:12 et 154:19 ethics 136:9 evaluation 20:9 evenin 235:7 evening 203:12,16 234:20 235:12 239:15 243:10 247:17,20 251:11 262:15 event 41:1 eventually 261:23 everybody 12:16 12:18 77:8 103:4 104:2 106:19 142:9 168:2 169:7,12 everyone's 230:13 evidence 47:23 48:13 130:5 135:22 153:3 210:17 249:13 263:6 ex 173:18 exact 15:11 42:17	exactly 44:4 97:14 135:12 138:16 examine 171:16 example 7:14 28:21 41:17 45:4,12 77:24 84:1 105:9 206:8 214:14 exceeds 130:8,15 Excel 170:12,13 173:17,19,20,21 174:4,6,7,18 175:11,14,22 176:11,12 177:12,14 178:2 178:4,6,9,10,21 227:15,15 Excellence 113:23 excellent 132:12 154:20 178:17 226:14,16 229:16,17 230:13 excelling 84:19 exceptions 149:22 excessive 52:23 exchange 103:23 exchanged 106:20 exchanges 72:23 excited 229:2,3 261:4 exclude 87:18 exclusions 4:5,12 excuse 8:11 18:12 25:13,20 60:10 191:11 216:19 executioner 165:11 executive 5:16 45:9 161:24 174:5,24 185:3 188:2 190:23 exhibit 52:24 exist 245:22 248:16 existence 230:14 exists 135:19	250:6 exit 188:16 expand 113:17 130:18 210:2 232:4 expanding 48:9 131:21 132:3 expansion 92:16 137:22 expect 49:24 51:9 58:22 65:24 117:1 205:1 211:13 expectation 10:6 10:7 74:19 161:17 expectations 53:7 expecting 224:3 230:7 expenditures 153:5 249:15 expensive 49:15 60:14 experience 28:24 69:16 84:22 87:11,11,14 129:21,24 153:3 176:13 201:6 205:23 224:23 228:14,19 249:13 experienced 43:21 52:6 80:10 133:13 197:18 254:21 experiences 6:1 50:22 205:22 228:5 experiment 49:15 135:14,18 152:23,24 159:4 experimentation 84:1 experimenting 58:10 experiments 47:18 50:7	135:20 158:20 expert 254:12 experts 105:22 explain 9:24 17:7 104:17 162:18 187:9 explaining 176:13 explanation 95:5 131:18 172:21 explore 171:16 exposed 120:8 express 218:24 226:15 expressed 154:14 expression 76:17 extend 130:19 extended 203:12 extension 232:9 extensive 110:16 extent 33:9 44:12 extra 111:21 141:10,24 extract 39:10 extracurricular 130:2 213:7 extras 261:6 extremely 134:23 172:12
F				
F 263:1 face 114:2 128:18 189:4 198:20 202:23 203:23 204:3 faced 74:3 140:9 203:1 face-to-face 79:10 facilitate 72:2 facilities 51:16 186:12,17 187:7 facing 116:11 261:1 fact 22:10 48:13 79:15 88:8 89:8 112:24 144:19 162:20 164:12				

171:11 172:11 194:11 203:7 205:3 242:10 factors 7:8 52:3 53:24 55:9 56:16,22 facts 76:17,19,20 76:23 141:8 fad-ish 57:23 fail 160:24 186:21 223:21 230:4 failed 217:14 failing 52:23 53:13 217:12 224:19,19,21 230:9,15 failure 52:22 53:1 217:16 256:5,5 256:6 failures 48:21 fair 35:3 51:22 54:8 84:5 110:15 111:18 172:23 217:14 fairness 171:10 faith 51:20 62:23 174:9 182:22 183:15 faithfully 110:17 fall 61:14 172:5 172:19 194:13 204:6 205:21 false 208:18 falters 52:21 familiar 119:5 families 58:7 120:22 121:1 208:5,13 217:6 244:3,11 255:24 256:19 257:7 261:23 family 179:21 182:21 183:9 184:6,10 189:18 206:10,16 207:23 253:11 255:24 256:19	far 19:6 48:15 55:2 56:22 63:23 112:24 113:1 127:1,14 143:22 153:7 154:13 185:4 farming 210:12 faster 6:21 7:10 11:18 13:14 17:21 182:12 father 79:22 232:17 247:23 favor 14:19 104:24 152:2 favorable 56:21 fear 203:20 204:3 231:15,19 243:16 February 9:11 Federal 113:7 119:16 Federation 46:11 62:11 73:1,12 Feds 113:12 feed 252:15 feedback 17:3 feel 21:16,19 64:19 71:10,11 98:3 151:14 171:3 177:3 189:7 195:9,13 197:22 198:16 206:17 222:21 222:24 223:23 224:8 229:22 feeling 194:19 feelings 190:1 feels 96:22 feet 67:15 186:15 230:13 Fegely 32:21 fellow 33:21 180:7 182:4 felt 162:13,14 181:1 206:5 female 119:8 fewer 52:5 80:24	81:5,6 120:10 field 54:20 158:11 214:8 fields 49:9 fifth 43:8 53:12 61:5 fight 54:19 70:14 174:7 177:21 203:2,7 205:15 234:24 251:8 fighting 54:7 201:17 211:12 241:20 252:16 fighths 176:18 figure 11:15 40:19 72:11 97:20 230:10 filled 204:14 231:3 filthy 120:6 final 61:20 84:14 96:14 98:8,24 98:24 99:17 117:18 finally 71:13 110:14 137:15 154:15 164:23 Finance 15:22 16:3 finances 154:10 financial 2:22 38:21 131:7 142:17 152:8,10 152:18,20 154:3 162:11 183:18 200:22 219:7 243:14 246:3 financially 81:3 138:1 240:15 257:6 financing 38:18 find 11:7 13:7,9 16:7 26:1 44:7 55:2 61:9 81:15 83:3 97:7 119:10,10 122:9 124:6 133:24	137:24 140:7,15 141:9 142:18,24 143:1 153:3 190:2 199:6 200:4 225:2 233:9 249:13 260:11 261:13 finding 164:24 195:16 231:24 248:4 fine 77:2 86:9 108:8,18 191:15 251:14 fingers 146:23 148:22 149:8,9 236:19 finish 29:20 181:9 194:7,8,9 213:21 Finley 7:21 8:9,23 13:11 29:10,12 fire 67:15 112:18 143:6 218:1 230:14 fired 224:16,17 firing 68:21 firm 186:13 firmlly 152:1 firms 158:5 first 5:7 12:15 19:2 35:16 36:12 63:2 65:7 74:16 80:22 100:9 103:19 110:23 121:23 124:18 146:2,4 160:1,5 174:11 176:6,13 197:6 200:20 204:22 214:14 219:10 226:5 235:7 239:8 fiscal 2:14,17,19 2:24 3:2 4:1,16 20:4 47:10 54:21 121:12,16 122:11 132:11	135:2 161:22 162:8,9,15 218:6 220:13,15 236:16 fiscally 135:1 fit 81:12 fits 49:23 five 2:22 25:23 26:19 28:19 47:12,18 57:23 116:17 117:9,10 124:20 135:10 135:16 136:13 165:4,6 170:2 189:1 five-day 124:23 fix 13:15 20:6 230:10 flagged 27:7 Flanagan 33:13 33:20 37:21 39:3 flatline 66:15 floor 26:4,5,22 29:2 63:1 flooring 26:2 floors 11:23 28:19 flounder 134:4 focus 143:14 162:4 173:4 235:24 focused 52:12 56:4 58:3 162:10 169:21 196:18 focusing 240:5 folk 72:20 folks 110:2 254:13 follow 12:5 90:21 followed 67:3,6 185:21 following 59:23 83:18 136:22 137:16 153:2 158:6 follows 185:24
---	---	--	---	---

fond 224:13	46:12 92:13	fruits 261:15	191:5 211:12	game 72:11 73:7
food 215:10,12	153:24 178:10	frustrated 14:5	213:5 214:11	78:18
261:2,8,11,13	190:16 205:12	21:4	215:3 217:1	games 220:9
261:18,19	227:5,10,11	frustration 11:8	238:1 239:2	Gamp 154:19
fooled 76:12	235:6,6 252:20	11:10,10 15:9	240:13,20 241:3	gap 131:4 140:19
foolish 57:23	254:23 260:22	29:8	242:1,9 243:13	162:10
135:5	fostered 198:11	frustrations	243:16 246:18	garner 65:2
foot 245:16	fought 251:23	26:24 29:17	246:20 249:5	Gary 5:16
footing 162:12	found 55:5,6,10	frying 218:1	fundraising 55:17	gateway 38:19
forbid 209:15	55:16,22 56:21	full 41:19 49:24	56:18	gather 99:14
force 28:1 47:13	62:13 115:12	50:23 55:23	funds 9:18 10:23	gathered 53:3
122:7 123:16	197:12	81:6 152:14	15:13 66:23	gender 130:14
140:12	Foundation	158:2 164:10	67:7 78:15	general 112:18
forced 49:1	212:21	198:14 208:2	112:7 114:4,14	174:14 185:14
204:10	founded 191:17	255:22	123:2 134:15,16	256:22,23
forces 81:2	founder 239:23	fully 81:6 129:18	175:20 199:6	generally 41:13
foregoing 121:19	four 13:8 19:13	208:9 263:6	203:21 225:2	42:4 113:3
263:7,17	59:24 116:16	full-time 133:11	236:19 242:6	generation
foremost 146:4	117:9,10 153:2	fun 197:8	248:7 250:11,13	116:10 175:18
200:20	191:5 238:18	function 221:11	250:19	generous 187:2
forever 28:17	249:12	functioning	furlough 122:19	gentleman 30:20
forget 81:14	Fourth 146:3	223:24	further 3:12 4:8	176:6
168:8	150:15,18	functions 77:13	4:22 90:13	gentlemen 189:14
forgive 101:12	Fourthly 220:13	112:17	108:1 109:10	genuinely 210:20
Forgiveness 3:21	fragile 163:13	fund 111:11	193:6 209:13	Geography
form 197:15	244:1	115:16 121:21	244:5 260:16	153:13
243:17	frame 15:5	122:20 133:11	Furthermore	George 83:19
formally 42:1,2	187:16	140:7 170:11,23	136:12 137:9	118:11,21
former 43:16	Francisco 212:16	215:2,14 231:16	fussing 161:1	125:10
186:24 210:3	Frankford 195:24	232:1 239:1	future 44:19 54:4	German 242:23
237:20	195:24 196:17	funded 80:9	114:2,7 121:4	getting 10:1 40:13
forms 210:20	frankly 14:4	115:15 209:7	140:24 143:22	40:15,19 59:12
formula 54:20	67:23 166:5	funding 8:23	158:10 160:13	60:14 62:20
111:18 112:3	free 248:7 250:19	10:16 15:13	160:18 175:7,17	66:24 98:3
139:5	frequently 42:8,9	54:3,6,8,16,19	175:23 181:4	105:14 125:4
formulate 102:22	55:22 76:17	54:23 55:17	193:9 196:10	162:14 177:3,16
Forrest 190:13	freshman 71:6	66:12 79:24	198:7 199:5	194:14 196:16
194:3	friend 254:2	108:21 111:15	200:14 201:2,4	212:13 214:12
forth 98:10	255:1	111:16 112:2,9	205:6,16 230:3	214:16 215:11
164:21 195:6	Friendly 150:15	113:8 119:17	futures 51:1	217:5 219:24
219:2,5 223:4	friends 182:21	120:2 128:24	132:15 181:8	220:5 228:16
Fortunate 179:20	238:16 253:12	133:2 134:1	FY13 108:22	girls 130:16,20,21
Fortunately	256:20	137:24 139:24		226:8,9,10,13
34:16 53:2	front 37:19,20,22	141:10 142:1	G	give 7:14,18 11:5
forum 72:12	162:23 226:4	152:2,12,14	gain 77:7	11:20 24:18,19
254:10	252:7	154:22 158:10	gained 183:2	30:13 39:22
forward 7:16 19:1	frozen 261:18	161:10 173:6	gains 208:11	48:1 50:2 52:6

86:17 105:20,21 125:2 129:5,6 141:24 147:21 151:6 169:17 170:15 175:22 183:3,7,17 184:11 188:20 200:3 201:24 209:18 214:4 222:2 225:13 229:5,7 240:4 253:1 261:18 given 9:12 35:2 42:7 74:5,13 75:9 80:18 95:5 96:23 164:12 174:8 181:7 188:12 200:22 219:17 227:12 261:14 gives 23:10 129:6 134:20 145:10 giving 181:4 250:11 261:24 glad 19:9 24:10 96:16 169:2 173:23 239:18 gladly 189:23 glasses 197:7 Gloria 216:1,4,5 221:5,9 go 5:7 7:8 8:9 12:13 14:7 17:8 24:4 25:8,9 26:6 26:8 29:24 31:2 35:21 38:11 41:21 44:18 55:2 70:12 74:20 82:20 83:19 85:3 91:10 98:20 99:10 105:3 110:8,11 115:18 116:3,5,14 125:20 131:1 142:24 148:18 150:12 154:5	162:17 167:20 168:20 172:6 178:9 188:14 189:13 196:19 196:20 201:7 206:15,24 211:6 219:9 221:21 223:14 226:10 228:13,22 229:12 230:16 240:23 246:23 248:14 256:6 257:1 258:18 261:15 goal 6:23 158:9 191:6 196:21 goals 182:17 195:14 207:2 229:18 236:23 237:5 God 162:16 169:3 169:11,14 goes 35:4 42:4 44:17 45:11 79:17 101:3 120:8 135:11 185:5 203:5 248:15 259:1 going 8:12 9:10 11:4,18,24 12:1 13:12 16:1 23:14 29:22 36:12 37:3 42:21 43:12 44:18 46:10 59:6,10,22 60:5 60:13 62:22 66:24 67:14,15 70:14 74:18 79:18 82:22 83:18 84:20 85:11 89:13 92:13 94:7,8,15 97:11,21 99:9 99:16 103:21 104:13,18 105:23 106:17	107:2,8,12 116:15 117:8,12 117:13,13,20,21 123:11 126:6,24 133:9 139:13,14 140:5 141:10 142:18,21 143:2 143:3,22 144:21 145:19 146:22 147:14 148:3 149:10,11 152:4 153:6 154:8 155:2,4 163:19 166:5 168:9,11 173:9 175:2,6 179:20 181:13 186:19 188:10 188:19,24 189:19 190:9 193:23 196:13 197:8 199:20 201:21 205:11 208:7 211:13 212:11,17 217:11 218:1 219:9 222:21 223:5,9,21 228:24 230:4 246:12 252:11 253:7,13 258:6 258:22 259:3 260:23 golden 123:6 Goldman 216:1,6 227:3 Goldman's 227:12 good 2:2 5:10,11 8:20,21 18:24 31:10,11 46:7 46:17,22 50:11 64:18,19 69:18 73:23,24 78:24 79:2 86:10,12 91:1,4 104:3 105:15 111:6,7 114:22,23	118:14,16,18 128:4,5,5,8 132:21,23 134:3 135:19,23 140:6 143:15 148:24 149:1,3,5 156:3 159:15,17 167:7 167:9 168:1,13 168:17 174:1,2 176:8,9 177:17 178:12 179:12 179:14 180:5 182:2 185:9,10 190:20,21 200:17 202:8,9 207:13 209:23 209:23 215:1 217:5 221:6,7 224:11 229:10 230:23 232:3 233:6 234:20 239:15 241:15 243:10 254:18 256:23 Goode 101:4 Google 230:20 Gordon 29:11 gotten 76:19,20 155:12 164:10 governance 77:15 governing 78:6 government 35:22 55:4 77:12 174:5 177:15 225:7 governments 113:7 210:21 governor 66:5,11 77:16 79:22 80:6,8,11,18 172:17 217:23 218:20,23,24 238:18 Governor's 67:16 GPA 228:21 grade 53:11,12,12 53:12,14 61:1,5	61:5,11,13 155:6 180:9 182:5 199:16 222:22 228:20 grader 236:5,6 grades 56:1 130:19 176:24 178:9 gradually 182:19 graduate 111:14 117:20 179:24 181:5,19 184:4 193:13,16 195:5 195:8,11 201:16 graduated 224:8 226:11 graduates 256:16 graduating 181:13 193:22 194:11 graduation 49:16 191:23 192:17 grandmother 179:22 granted 208:6 grapple 205:7 grappling 129:8 grass 235:21 grateful 184:9 great 13:11 122:5 133:16 175:22 181:3 195:3 197:1 231:22,23 231:23 233:23 233:24 240:10 247:18 greater 49:1 53:1 66:18 152:2 219:3 239:24 greatly 136:3 GREENLEE 1:13 Green 1:13 216:17 Greenberger 31:1 31:3,10,12,18 31:21 32:18
---	--	--	---	---

33:10,14,17 34:7,24 35:19 35:23 36:15,20 37:5,18 38:4,7 39:16,21 40:1,8 40:21 41:4,11 42:16 43:2,6 44:3,12 45:2 Greenlee 63:2,3,6 63:16,20 64:6 64:10,12 71:22 100:4,5,15,21 101:10,14,21 102:5,7,10,16 144:8,9 262:10 Greenlee's 101:3 greet 167:19 Gregory 32:19 grew 69:10 ground 81:15,16 83:4,10 198:23 groundhog 18:10 group 6:24 11:15 13:16 18:19 19:13 20:20 32:12 33:2,4,5 68:9 83:14,14 96:3 103:1,8 104:17 114:20 115:8 119:9 179:6 185:21 207:21 235:21 groups 32:13 93:23,24 94:10 136:7 237:18 255:14 260:1 grow 242:13 growing 131:13 236:12 grown 261:15 growth 152:11 guarantee 141:17 160:8 218:7 guarantees 258:22 guard 71:11 guardians 156:14	Guerin 29:2,2 guess 19:18 40:21 66:5 72:1 89:5 98:10 160:5 guessing 78:18 guidance 168:17 168:23 169:11 guide 174:20 guys 103:23 104:21 105:19 142:18 gym 9:7 22:16 155:24 156:11 159:12,15,18,18 H half 49:23 121:23 139:1 191:9,16 Hall 1:6 halls 70:21 203:1 205:12 Hammond 179:1 180:3 182:2,5 hand 183:19 213:24 235:5,9 254:20 handcuffed 19:22 handle 39:19 89:14 245:2 hands 258:8 hanging 235:12 happen 39:12 57:18 65:1 171:19 177:12 186:4 187:5,13 203:20 204:5 218:11 221:11 221:19 229:4 231:8 232:22 253:4 happened 16:22 17:10 43:17 70:2,7 189:9 212:19 229:16 happening 70:1 70:18 136:22 176:17	happens 81:23 102:4 148:13 213:14 242:15 253:6 happy 19:4 23:2 44:6 181:16 239:9 240:4 254:9,13 hard 38:22 67:2 112:14 120:2 141:18 171:23 172:12 183:7,12 199:17 202:22 209:10 241:21 248:3 258:20 260:9 harder 57:10 183:23,23 hardworking 123:9 Hardy 128:3,5,8 128:10 harmed 85:12 Harrisburg 67:11 72:9 79:21 139:20 215:16 238:16 253:7,13 Harrity 229:12,13 haste 106:14 Hatchard 156:10 hats 151:11 haul 187:21 head 32:16 37:23 39:8 129:5,6 235:19 237:20 headed 32:23 33:3,4,5 heads 135:11 headway 13:1 health 50:19 121:21 143:10 156:19 209:14 214:17 healthcare 120:21 122:16 healthy 261:18 hear 11:10,10	58:21 64:1,20 83:18 92:11 96:17 101:24 155:22 193:23 197:14 208:16 226:16,20 239:10 heard 6:3,3 35:19 58:18 59:4,8,18 59:21 75:22 105:3 106:11 109:4 110:18 125:14 139:10 146:8 177:12 189:7 196:5 203:18 226:21 251:15,17 hearing 30:9 40:20 46:6 62:14 79:19 170:1 234:13,17 234:19 247:20 262:16,18 hearings 2:7 46:8 107:23 197:10 234:21 heart 54:4 168:10 168:14 197:21 heartbreaking 261:10 hearts 169:13 heaven 147:24 209:15 heels 219:11 held 17:12 22:3 29:14 223:16 Helen 155:23 156:11 159:12 159:18 190:10 202:10 hello 166:19,20 168:1 169:1 195:20 205:17 239:16 259:15 help 8:17 12:18 12:19 43:11 51:21 52:17	61:2,10,18,23 70:4 92:6 101:13 102:22 103:2 110:21 137:14 143:13 143:15 145:3 155:17 165:19 165:20 168:23 169:3 172:24 176:24 188:3,5 195:2 196:4,9 196:20 199:24 206:19 214:19 215:14,16 216:13 221:13 221:14 239:5 helped 168:7 178:10 195:1 223:7 236:9 helpful 143:13 199:22 206:9 207:1 helping 67:16 178:9 183:19 196:15 helps 60:19 104:23 180:18 181:4 204:21 Henon 1:14 22:7 22:21 23:2 29:22 Henon's 18:21 Henry 235:23 hey 183:16 Hi 197:4 199:13 212:4 high 47:4 50:17 51:24 52:5,15 53:7,15,19,24 55:12 71:7 111:14 120:23 129:9,21 130:10 130:24 132:2 157:3 163:8 174:12 176:14 180:11,13,18,21 182:11,12
--	---	--	---	--

190:14 194:7,8 194:9 195:24 196:1 197:17,19 198:2 201:11 202:12,14 213:11,15,18 222:16 226:5,8 226:13 243:8 248:11,13,13,16 256:16 260:5 higher 57:9 66:24 172:3 193:12 233:11,11 242:4 244:14 260:12 highest 158:17 highly 158:5 192:7 high 52:4 hike 217:3 hire 108:22 hired 88:5 102:20 102:22 103:2 126:17,18 hires 161:24 hiring 68:21 172:14 historically 242:2 history 43:22 198:21 hit 66:14 hits 209:9 hitting 218:17 hold 67:14,15 110:16,16 112:3 117:23 145:4 149:10,11 167:3 223:12 225:4 230:11,13 233:5 233:17,19 258:19,21 holding 16:5 holds 16:3 250:18 hole 26:7 220:16 225:11,12 home 149:3 155:23 156:9,17 191:20 194:22	206:15 252:21 253:6 259:10 261:1,9 homeless 217:6 homeowner 259:19 homeowners 114:12 218:17 220:20 homes 139:6 honest 248:3 honestly 21:2 205:7 honesty 51:22 125:3 honey 167:4 168:1 honor 191:5 231:3 honored 193:18 hope 18:5 23:20 29:21 105:19 110:21 123:24 140:12,14 145:6 155:16 159:4 162:12 174:9 181:18 193:20 195:14 200:13 252:19 hopeful 81:8 hopefully 60:20 Hopkinson 95:14 horrible 174:17 horrifying 137:17 hot 102:6 120:8 hour 2:2 hours 42:4 116:7 142:5,8,9 143:17 213:20 House 32:24 household 146:20 houses 219:22 housing 240:12 huddle 72:10 huge 67:7 human 261:10 hundred 162:19	hundreds 135:5 166:8 174:8 260:4,21 hunger 85:3 hungry 252:11 Hunt 251:5,8 259:13,14,15,15 Hunting 39:6 hurdle 35:17 husband 133:7 hustling 131:14 I idea 72:23 81:20 86:17 88:7 149:2 164:7 172:2 194:17 ideal 177:8 ideas 72:4 103:24 106:20 143:15 143:16 161:1 identified 50:4 60:2 249:4 identifies 248:11 249:17 identify 91:2 111:2 115:1 132:21 156:2 159:13 170:15 173:22 179:13 190:18 197:2 202:6 216:20 221:8 227:21 235:13 239:19 243:1 Iffrig 8:21,22 10:4,12,16,20 10:24 15:10,18 15:21 16:4,12 ignores 48:17 210:4,6,7,9 ill 12:17 135:3 236:14 illustrated 83:24 imagine 164:20 176:17 198:14 199:4 201:8	213:1 immediate 171:20 immediately 53:5 161:7 240:22 immensely 192:5 immoral 124:7 impact 48:7 120:17 130:17 131:11 137:19 153:10,22 impacted 260:22 impacts 62:1 impairment 228:16 impediments 7:5 53:24 implement 49:23 108:23 240:21 243:20 245:24 implementation 17:9 146:13 implemented 94:20 187:18 192:15,20 193:2 193:5 implication 244:12 implies 259:12 importance 171:10 important 52:3 60:21 79:5 97:17 100:3 101:3 103:20 104:12 105:17 131:17 137:11 138:14 140:4,5 161:8,9 191:21 204:6 228:7 importantly 154:16 impose 3:14 4:10 4:24 impossible 132:6 196:11 201:19 impression 16:6 74:17	improve 47:24 48:12 49:16 52:14 54:21 84:10 114:7,12 132:6,7,9 207:19 209:20 261:13 improved 132:6 183:21 improvement 210:11 improvements 32:10 113:10 improving 73:3 156:22 inability 77:22 inaction 64:24 incarnations 250:15 incident 189:9 incidentally 9:8 incidents 176:16 include 9:6 130:19 255:9 included 131:21 132:1 162:20 includes 99:18 193:11 including 53:8 130:16 141:10 200:21 237:10 inclusive 2:15 income 3:22 111:22 114:11 208:21 222:8 224:10 260:15 incongruous 236:23 incorporating 3:1 incorrect 77:22 88:16 increase 49:5 50:21 112:23 128:23 130:23 131:9 144:17 191:23 220:23 241:24 242:9
--	---	--	--	--

245:15,17 increased 56:2 111:16 113:11 241:3 245:11 increases 122:21 220:19 increasing 38:16 209:13 241:23 241:24 increasingly 131:20 143:19 incurred 216:13 indicate 56:11 59:18 indicated 79:16 80:12 individual 56:3 198:5,6,19 individuals 109:22 131:24 industrial 26:22 industry 11:19 inequalities 53:8 inequitable 80:1 inextricably 128:24 influence 146:6 informal 34:22 35:1 145:7 information 23:4 28:11 59:18 65:2 77:7,23 79:7 93:6,12 95:17 96:23 97:1,16,23 98:4 99:17 100:20,23 105:15 106:6,17 107:18,20 110:1 126:4 157:20 informed 113:22 infrastructure 41:18 243:19 245:21 ingredients 149:5 initial 90:21 93:20 Initiating 242:2	initiative 171:1 171:17 173:7 217:2 218:14 initiatives 52:17 Inner 212:12 213:11 innovation 89:7 innovative 191:3 input 48:4 73:11 96:13 98:13,19 98:21,23 99:5,9 99:14,18 126:17 155:16 157:22 160:7 inquire 17:13 Inquirer 122:2 129:10 insanity 223:24 224:4 230:8 insight 30:1 insist 131:23 instabilities 129:2 instability 135:2 install 9:23 10:11 installation 9:19 installed 8:14,15 10:2 instance 37:16 127:9 institutional 210:8 institutions 49:10 101:8 209:5 instruct 34:11 instruction 52:10 138:1 208:3 instructional 56:2 130:3 134:10 instrumental 154:21 155:6 intact 247:2 intend 110:16 interact 34:12 44:20 interacting 35:21 interaction 42:13 42:14 44:11	198:6 interactions 171:5 198:5 199:9 interest 92:8 110:22 123:20 132:3 148:16 154:14 182:18 197:21 209:16 210:13 238:11 250:6 interested 92:18 126:2 154:1,5 196:6 200:5 228:22 interests 209:4 Intergovernme... 3:3,5 intermediate 257:20,21,23,24 258:2 internally 21:12 102:21 interning 201:14 internship 116:1 117:22 193:3 internships 200:6 interpretation 91:8 108:7 interrupt 90:8 intervene 53:5 70:15 Intervening 53:15 interventions 53:10 60:22 interview 237:20 intimate 193:5 intolerable 222:12 introduce 180:2,8 Investigates 248:12 investing 54:10 104:13 114:5 261:14 investment 50:13 50:24 133:18	invite 205:2 invited 127:3 157:22 inviting 100:2 involve 42:6 249:2 involved 18:20 26:15 38:12 45:10 70:16 71:22 100:12 127:1,15,15 133:7 214:22 258:13 involvement 27:12 56:18 231:10 involves 44:13 in-house 32:22 56:14 iron 105:20 ironic 113:21 ISS 174:15 issue 11:12,13 12:10 18:3 24:2 24:9 25:3 27:1 27:18 28:23 59:17 60:11 61:22 85:24 90:7,9 91:13 124:13 139:15 140:10 141:8,18 144:14 147:11 164:24 213:23 222:10 225:18 issues 24:11 37:10 38:18 40:2 41:15 44:17 61:7 106:2 110:21 136:2 140:16 157:12 162:10 173:2 198:19 214:3 216:18 217:1 260:24 is-a 22:15 Italian 242:23 item 81:16	items 23:1 81:13 81:19 82:21 103:3 187:16 ITT 175:4 J J 185:12 James 1:14 237:21 Jannie 1:12 156:4 166:22 216:9 January 3:7 121:20 161:12 Jastrzab 5:16,16 Jefferson 212:9 Jeremy 33:21 212:20 Jerry 46:10 103:11 Jersey 28:1,5 jigging 167:2 job 9:5 10:17,18 11:22 13:13 15:2 71:16 95:20 133:11,16 186:20 188:10 189:21 195:3 220:4 224:16 233:6 248:15 jobs 28:9 71:19 119:11 120:19 120:19,23 123:5 123:22 124:20 190:5 220:2,5,6 220:8 John 29:11 33:4 37:23 179:2 184:20 185:12 254:12 Johnson 42:18 44:6 227:2,23 228:2,2 239:18 251:4,12,13,15 251:16,22 252:1 256:10 259:7 join 110:8 132:8 188:2 211:5
---	---	---	---	---

247:4	Joshua 190:12	53:10 56:16	21:3,3 22:12,18	213:22 214:5
Joint 55:4	195:20	171:13 198:10	24:20 25:14	215:23 222:17
Jones 1:11 2:2 5:4	JR 1:11	kick 106:12	26:9,17 27:9	223:7,11 225:17
5:12,18 8:18	judge 194:23	kicked 180:21	29:18 32:6	225:18 231:7
12:11 14:18,21	July 185:20	kid 261:12	33:24 34:14	234:23,24
15:8 17:5 18:12	194:11	kids 26:21 61:11	35:14 36:16	238:14 240:3,5
20:2,13,19 22:4	jump 168:22	61:13,18 70:11	37:3,9 38:20	251:9 253:6,12
22:7,10,19 23:6	juncture 103:22	70:11 81:24	40:18 42:19,22	260:17
23:9,15,19 24:4	June 9:23 59:22	111:22 114:6	43:11,20 44:4	knowing 76:23
24:7 25:4 28:7	184:4 188:6	133:14,16	50:12 60:16	81:4 261:1
28:12 29:5 30:7	junior 228:3	136:16 141:15	61:4,12 63:8,16	knowledge 183:3
30:12,16,20	justice 192:21	141:15 146:11	63:23,23,24	201:15,23
31:7 45:20	justification	148:2 155:5	64:13,22 66:17	known 186:8
64:16,17 67:9	248:23	157:15 158:22	68:16 69:19,22	190:1
68:5 69:1,4,7		168:15,20,20	70:3,6,7,11,11	knows 42:21
71:5,21 72:18	K	184:11 197:24	70:17,17 71:9	102:24 168:4
73:16 79:16	K 66:24 116:22	199:17 200:14	72:16 73:7,10	259:1
102:12,14,18	Karen 32:21 33:6	252:14 260:2	75:24 76:9,9,9	Knudsen 101:10
103:4,13,16	keenly 67:10	261:3,5,11,15	76:16 80:16	101:11,12,20
106:4,9,11	keep 60:20 150:5	262:4	82:5,17 87:6,15	107:3,14 109:6
116:20 133:4	168:11,18,19	kid's 134:5	87:16,24 88:13	121:5 124:12,17
146:1,2 155:24	171:19 172:12	kind 17:15 22:22	88:15 89:15	129:10 151:22
189:7 250:24	177:23,24	24:17 26:9,17	90:18 92:8	161:12,20 162:6
251:1 254:3	189:21 195:16	34:2 37:11,24	96:21,22 97:10	189:2 209:19
262:11	199:19 200:13	41:10 63:7	97:13,14,18,19	Knudsen's 236:11
Jordan 46:10,20	201:18,20,21	68:13 72:2	97:21 102:4	236:22
58:23 59:20	202:3 203:3,7	77:22 80:17	103:4,7,7,7,9,10	Krol 179:2,3
60:8,18 62:2	206:13 212:13	102:3 120:4,9	103:11,11 104:3	184:20,21,23
63:13,19 64:3,7	224:1,14 253:5	126:11 136:1	104:24 105:10	185:11,12 190:1
64:11,14 65:18	keeping 62:18	155:14 171:17	106:16,18 107:4	190:6
68:2,6 69:18	157:7 200:11	254:10,22	107:7,9 112:4	
71:14 72:15	201:22	kindergarten	113:6,13,15,16	L
73:1,24 74:16	Kenney 1:14	50:23 55:24	113:19 114:7,9	labor 187:11,24
75:1,20 76:16	12:15 14:14	82:19	117:12 126:23	207:21
76:22 77:12	18:10,15 19:7	kinds 60:22 65:24	139:12 140:14	laboratories 89:6
78:12 79:2	19:11,19 20:11	KING 263:13	142:22 143:2,3	lack 67:10 72:9
80:13 81:22	20:14 21:5,9,19	KIPP 55:18	143:8 144:10,19	174:13 176:19
82:3,7,9 83:5,8	22:24 28:10,13	kitchen 26:3,7,9	145:8,17 147:5	206:4 230:12
83:10,16 84:6	Kenney's 17:6	26:20,21	148:7,12 149:2	ladder 210:2
85:1,5,10,15,20	Kensington	knew 19:23	149:4 150:12,14	ladies 26:6 189:14
86:3,9,12,19,23	191:19 205:19	177:10 212:17	150:15 157:6,10	lady 16:23 71:6
87:3,8,13 88:10	205:23	knob 187:10	157:14 167:14	lag 16:6
89:4,22 90:14	kept 244:22	know 6:3 7:7,10	167:17 169:7,15	laid 69:13,17
95:4,21,23	Kevin 31:4 32:24	7:18 8:12,15	171:3,8,16	113:20 114:1
103:12 105:23	35:8	11:3 12:11	173:11 177:16	122:18 172:7
106:5,10 109:11	key 33:23 34:1	13:11 15:6 18:1	204:4,15,16,22	185:23,23 190:4
109:16	37:2 39:4 45:9	18:1 20:7,14,17	204:23 205:9	255:7,8

land 25:21 41:16 41:19	Lea 235:23 236:1 237:10 239:8,10	led 133:10 165:22	177:11 178:11	105:12 113:17
language 115:14 237:11 244:3,23	lead 9:20 41:14 169:15	ledger 31:20 36:10 219:4	182:18 183:1	119:12 128:20
laptop 129:18 130:4	leader 118:22 165:3,10 166:18 262:11	left 60:14 110:2 115:23 185:4 227:9 258:6	184:9 194:7,10 194:18 198:19 254:22	128:21 133:3 163:16 168:9 172:15 192:18 197:24 217:14 241:17 260:4
large 111:21 115:9 119:12 136:7 174:12 176:15	leaders 171:5 201:24 208:17 231:11,23 233:24 234:1 238:19	legal 7:5 20:24 225:18	lift 183:15	lives 120:22 198:10 201:21 204:9 205:9,9
largely 152:8	leadership 52:2 115:4 116:8 126:10 173:3,8 202:20	legislation 13:20 20:1 158:16	lifting 147:14	living 104:8,10 105:7 114:1 146:3 201:5 204:11 209:11 209:12
larger 56:8,11 57:12 191:7 250:3	learn 51:3,18 71:10 79:7 104:5 144:4 155:5 174:13 192:18 200:6 247:12 249:18 260:23	legislatively 23:1	light 22:10 167:3 167:5	lobby 134:1 215:16
largest 121:17 157:1	learned 29:18 62:2 80:23 82:15 84:14,20 131:13 186:23 192:12,18,22 193:7 203:3 210:5	Legislature 66:4 67:5	limitations 161:16	local 54:11 112:9 118:10,19,20,22 119:7 121:17 127:14 133:23 159:23 161:10 259:16
lasts 28:17 42:4	learners 244:3,23	legislatures 240:8	limited 35:7,8	locale 57:4
late 86:14 103:22 203:12	learning 43:4 56:6 129:24 177:9 178:23 179:16 180:10 180:12,20 181:17 182:6,8 182:10 191:2 196:9 200:7 205:21 244:1	legit 36:8	limits 128:20,22	locally 261:14
latest 57:17,22 213:4	leave 33:10 95:20 168:19 175:17 201:11 227:6 241:10 260:14	leisure 106:15	Linda 32:23	located 112:12 153:21 180:11 182:7
Latin 128:4,11 129:14 130:21	leaves 137:13 144:12	Lenfest 228:4	line 65:20 158:15	locked 139:3
latitude 52:8	leaving 201:8	length 6:14	linger 261:6	Locust 235:24
laughter 29:4 69:6 103:15 135:13		lesson 181:11 186:23	lingering 173:2	log 142:4 150:14
law 12:5 76:18,22 151:15 219:18 228:22		letter 8:1 11:3 16:2 151:18	link 152:17	logged 142:5
Laws 190:13 194:3,3,17		letting 105:3 181:8	linked 129:1 240:19	logical 57:14 100:10
lawyer 21:1 111:13 154:2 178:8		let's 20:3 37:1 39:11,16 55:13 82:20 132:15 149:14,15,17 150:5 163:20	Linton 29:11	logs 142:9
lay 138:16 165:3		level 53:12 60:3 133:23 134:2 147:23 158:10 208:19 223:2 238:2	list 20:11,12,13,15 20:17 29:15 110:6,10,11,16 110:23 160:22 260:20	long 6:20 7:4,9 8:4 13:7,8,10 14:10 15:2 29:8 51:5 86:24 87:6 132:1 146:18 148:18 162:8 187:21 194:20 203:9 215:24 236:12 251:18 251:21,22
laying 24:22 157:9,13		levels 45:13 54:20 224:10,24	listen 23:12,12 104:21 169:16	longer 195:10 198:22 240:8
layoff 123:9 185:19,19 186:1 189:17		Lewis 2:11,13 5:4	listened 69:11 203:17	
layoffs 121:8 188:6,24 260:3 262:6		liability 28:22	listening 138:3 140:15 141:1,23 197:11	
lays 165:5		librarian 163:16 236:4	literacy 193:5	
Lazarus 207:8 211:24 212:2,7		librarians 236:17	literally 39:9	
		libraries 58:19 112:17 208:3	little 14:9 18:13 25:17 36:6 43:3 43:4,19,20 44:1 67:22 77:19 86:14 103:12 116:19 145:12 167:1 168:10 169:10 171:9 221:15	
		library 236:3,5	live 69:23 79:11	
		lien 238:3		
		life 25:24 34:19 50:21 174:10,19		

256:3	99:5 102:4	85:22 86:6	mall 37:16 38:3,6	262:5
longevity 252:2	116:17 138:19	93:13 96:6	manacled 19:22	master 45:10
look 6:19 7:1	144:10,16	107:1,18 108:3	manage 44:16	Masterman
11:12 20:22	145:13 149:4,7	116:1,15 117:23	68:9 83:14 94:7	154:19
21:14 27:11,19	149:15 153:23	118:8,14 124:15	94:15 186:13	Mastery 228:3
71:9 80:20 84:9	163:1 182:24	127:22 144:9	237:5 245:21	229:2,12,13,13
89:12 91:9	196:1 199:22	150:1 156:4	managed 41:4	229:15 230:20
125:20 143:11	220:10,10	159:15 184:21	45:15 93:17,19	231:2 232:2
165:16 167:5	225:23 226:18	190:6 230:23	93:22,23 94:23	material 26:4
173:5 187:1	241:16	Madeline 207:9	96:3	187:11,24
205:12 225:19	lots 40:14 141:12	215:20 216:21	management 41:8	materials 26:10
230:5 252:20	254:6	madness 232:19	44:13 48:10	28:14
254:14 255:10	loud 167:24	magic 147:8	89:16 97:7	math 163:7
257:23 259:21	lousy 252:9	magna 130:11	108:22 132:1	Matrix 12:21
260:22	love 124:3 133:13	131:3,10	135:9 154:3	Matt 262:13
looked 57:23	149:9 169:20	magnet 154:18	186:12 188:11	matter 22:13 35:7
225:17	170:6	164:14 209:24	210:13 237:3,10	55:11 60:17
looking 6:4,10	low 55:12 57:16	228:12	249:1,9 255:20	61:3 77:15
44:14,16 63:15	111:22 114:11	mail 214:17	260:1	105:9 139:22
78:5 81:17	181:7 188:8	main 126:16	manager 41:19	141:18 165:13
91:19,21 93:11	209:12 240:24	250:9	68:7	166:4 204:2,14
93:15 165:2,10	242:2 260:8,15	maintain 28:17	managers 47:18	224:10 263:8
165:10 167:11	lower 50:9 56:1	70:4 158:6	57:19 84:2,7	mattered 165:15
172:20 194:18	65:21 113:1,1	174:7 186:13	88:5 153:5	matters 72:19
218:13 228:20	246:13	maintained 51:17	162:9 249:16	82:5 114:6
256:1	lowers 131:22	120:11	Managing 13:4	160:14 204:18
looks 63:15	lowest 190:4	maintaining 6:22	21:9	204:19,24
Lord 168:4,4,23	262:3	maintains 157:1	mandated 20:15	Maurice 155:24
lose 61:13 120:19	lumped 237:17	maintenance	82:17 137:6	Mayor 3:3,7 6:12
164:2 220:3	lunch 252:8,12	120:3 185:15	maneuver 216:16	6:17 31:3 33:18
losers 54:14	261:5,6	186:2	manna 147:24	36:2,8 41:12
losing 120:22	lunchroom 71:1	major 18:3 22:12	manner 215:15	77:16,16 216:13
123:5 203:2	lunchtime 134:6	36:4,11,21	239:3	217:22 218:15
219:15 220:8	luxury 245:11	37:14,17 41:23	mantra 208:16	219:8 238:2,13
loss 49:7 119:16	Lynette 207:8	42:5 48:4 54:12	map 20:6	Mayor/Admini...
121:22 202:24	211:24	111:9 172:16	March 164:13	36:6
losses 133:12	Lytle 237:21	194:6	195:6	ma'am 24:8
lost 80:15 163:6		majority 119:7,12	MARIA 1:16	McAndles 190:12
163:23 174:12	M	208:14 262:10	MARIAN 1:17	199:13,14
182:21,21	M 263:13	making 13:1,17	Marie 156:10	meal 261:2,7,16
183:15 198:17	Mackey 114:20	21:5 44:15 50:6	MARK 1:17	mean 10:11 12:17
198:23 206:11	114:21,23 115:3	69:11 97:21,22	Market 39:5	17:1,18 18:18
236:3	115:3,6 118:10	99:7 101:16,19	Markman 136:4	21:2 26:23
lot 33:24 34:1,24	mad 19:8	104:10 119:19	Mary 95:13 216:1	36:19,21 38:2
40:12 41:15	Madam 63:3	127:13 128:17	216:6 227:3,12	39:14 59:14
63:21 66:23	64:17 69:1,5	128:19 237:13	mass 137:17	92:14 94:15
87:10 92:10	73:16 78:21	males 130:15	massive 135:2	100:13,17

103:24 109:7 119:22 145:18 147:8 204:7 208:1 225:8 meaning 36:20 41:11 42:2 57:5 meaningful 52:13 157:24 192:24 210:24 223:6,8 means 66:16 69:19 129:23 181:6 182:15 242:9 263:19 Measures 122:12 mechanics 186:2 mechanisms 54:23 mediation 51:11 medical 157:12 163:12 medically 163:13 medication 157:11 213:23 213:24 214:1 251:18 medications 214:5 meet 19:3,4 20:3 42:1 52:10 58:3 123:19 189:12 211:4 219:7 253:18 meeting 18:19 19:2,16 42:2 99:14 100:3 122:8 124:21 127:7 149:12 176:20 188:22 245:9 meetings 37:6,8 42:20 127:4 144:20 160:10 160:12 255:14 meets 211:16 242:12 member 6:18 38:24 121:22	122:22 126:15 184:24 185:12 207:20 212:8 226:7 members 6:17 30:16,19 34:11 34:13,23 35:11 36:16 37:2 42:9 43:11 46:22 49:11 58:16 60:3 69:14 82:23 86:18 90:14 109:11 118:19,20 119:2 119:7 122:23 128:9 131:16 132:24 142:14 151:18 155:16 156:5 159:21 170:20 180:6 182:3 185:17,22 185:23 187:3 188:2,7,16 203:10 216:10 232:15 249:23 259:18 membership 81:19 83:2 Member's 35:2 Memorandum 162:2 men 120:20 123:2 174:8 191:21 mentally 244:1 mention 251:15 251:17 mentioned 6:12 58:15 59:2 60:10 65:5 83:23 101:24 225:21 257:15 mentor 215:5 mere 238:5 Merion 50:9 65:21 Merriman 33:3 message 120:4,9	120:12,13 133:15 137:23 232:15,16 met 7:11 124:17 183:10 237:6 248:17 metal 229:22 methodology 131:18 mic 92:3 microphone 110:20 mid 9:2 middle 81:16 83:4 83:10 120:21 130:19 138:12 208:5 midst 202:16 military 175:6 military's 208:23 Millie 156:10 million 25:23 26:20 61:22 62:3,9,13,17 74:9,9,24 75:11 75:13 114:14 121:16,19,21 122:12,19 123:6 137:2,4 139:1,2 139:9,9,12 141:11 143:4 147:22 162:19 171:12,15 186:15 188:13 188:15 209:16 211:10 219:6 221:1 225:22 238:10 245:18 millions 122:16 135:5 137:6 mind 72:9 150:6 158:9 168:11,14 169:13 mindful 198:5 199:8 mine 71:14 255:1 minority 27:2,16	27:17 258:3 minute 20:5 92:2 110:17 188:20 257:13 minutes 110:14 127:12 135:16 misguided 49:14 misled 76:7 mismanagement 121:12 123:1 Misplaced 106:9 missed 5:22 40:11 40:16 184:18 196:1,2,3 mission 47:3 246:12,16 250:17 mistake 15:3 178:5 mistakes 123:1 164:18,20 MLU 162:3 model 84:8 232:4 245:23,24,24 256:2,4,11,12 256:13,14,17 257:3,8 Modlak 37:23 mom 172:9 moment 30:15 45:3 53:16 135:2 151:21 204:8 234:24 momentous 210:22 Monday 70:6 262:16 Mondlak 33:5 money 8:5 10:19 10:20 11:5,6 14:3,6,23 16:24 17:1,2,20,23 24:20,21 25:21 29:15 57:21 66:7,17,20 67:1 74:7,11,12 75:4 75:7,10 76:8	89:24 115:23 116:16,17 133:24 137:20 138:21,21,22,24 139:7 140:21 142:1 143:1 160:4 187:20 189:16,16 195:16 208:17 208:18,18 211:15 212:22 217:23 218:5,17 218:20,22 219:1 219:3,7,15 220:8,10,11 222:4 232:21 233:15 253:13 258:20,21,23 259:1,2 260:10 262:1,2 monies 232:1 monitor 7:18 monitoring 26:11 27:15 28:8 56:2 154:10 monitors 26:12 28:9 134:8 month 19:5 20:3 75:7 142:3 206:10 238:4,5 months 19:5 99:3 126:23 170:3 moral 188:7 morning 2:2 5:10 5:11,15 8:20,21 31:11,12,13,14 42:3 66:21 71:7 91:2,4 128:4,5 177:1 261:4 mother 151:12 167:16 170:7 199:16 206:11 247:22 261:9 motivated 193:1 206:3,12 motivation 206:6 mounting 130:5
--	---	--	--	--

move 84:22 123:19 174:9 228:18 moved 174:11 251:10 moving 7:16 9:21 13:20 18:24 165:6 172:14 multicultural 241:19 multidisabled 245:5 multiple 160:10 160:12 municipal 112:21 murder 172:4 Murphy 13:12 28:24 music 58:20,24 130:3 154:21 155:5,6 157:17 163:10 208:3 mutual 178:1	259:15 named 69:10 names 258:9,11 258:12 nation 54:9 143:18 national 113:22 130:8 244:17 nationally 191:1 natural 41:20 navigate 221:14 Navy 41:2,2,4,9 44:4 nearly 57:11 necessary 148:10 161:10 249:19 necessity 241:8 need 11:7 17:15 20:1 36:23 37:11,24 38:8 51:6,13 52:15 53:17,20 54:5 54:24 57:10 60:22 61:7,12 62:16 67:1 71:3 72:10,16 73:13 74:23 81:14 85:3 92:11,24 97:23 104:22 112:23 114:7,9 127:11 137:14 140:21 141:5,13 142:16,17 144:4 154:23 155:18 157:4 158:1,6 158:12,16 160:3 165:1 166:1,2 169:5 171:7 173:7 181:11 187:11 188:4 189:8 192:18 198:18 200:14 205:14 206:9,18 208:23 210:17 211:1 212:23 214:20 215:7,8 215:8,9 219:13	223:1,15 224:14 225:2 226:19 229:5,6,21,22 230:9,11,13,16 230:17 233:2,9 243:16 246:11 249:20 256:22 260:19,24 needed 20:16 62:7 177:11 187:16 228:16 246:19 250:13 neediest 245:12 needs 18:3 51:10 52:11,20 141:6 154:10 159:24 167:22 171:12 176:20 204:2 211:16 217:19 218:19 219:2 220:13 221:18 229:4 240:21 242:7,12,14 243:23 negative 120:17 negatively 137:19 negotiations 127:2 neighborhood 24:17 27:24 32:8,21 45:13 45:15 49:4 53:19 130:9 133:5 191:19 208:2 235:4,17 235:20,23 239:24 255:9 neighborhoods 27:22 49:3,4,10 58:7 137:18 153:11,15,21 172:15 210:2 232:14 260:15 neighbors 172:8,9 neither 113:6 177:1 Nekeata 190:11	205:17 net 3:19 52:20 network 68:9,10 68:15,19 94:2 155:1 191:2 networks 47:15 68:3 83:5,15 87:23 88:7 90:8 93:16 94:6,20 95:6 135:7 154:9,13 155:3 160:19 237:2,12 237:17,22 246:6 neutral 211:3 242:3,5 never 25:10,12,24 28:14 38:22 50:23 51:5 54:7 81:15 83:1 106:15 117:12 160:14,17,21 162:17 175:3 197:22,23 208:9 new 8:13 14:15 38:2,6 79:7 80:11 115:14 117:20 119:10 122:3 126:21 127:13 135:23 159:20 192:5 207:2 245:23 246:1,7 newfound 132:3 news 71:6 79:6 newspaper 169:6 nice 168:13 254:18 Nicole 251:5 259:13,14,15 night 46:14 87:24 88:3,13 91:6,11 99:13 100:3 107:5 168:5 189:11,11 nine 43:10 171:24 nine-hour 170:1 ninth 53:14 61:11	61:13 Nixon 91:4,4,18 91:21 92:14,19 92:24 93:18 94:11,18 95:1 96:2,11 98:6,18 99:13,24 101:7 102:4,6,9,13,24 107:16 108:5,6 108:10,15,21 109:8,10,17 257:10 Nixon's 90:19 236:24 255:5 nonacademic 101:16 noninstructional 82:11 nonprofit 56:18 190:24 nonschool 53:23 nonteaching 51:7 non-academic 119:6 non-dealbreake... 149:14 non-unions 147:5 Noon 259:17 Norris 191:19 North 39:5 68:14 131:14 170:13 173:20,21 178:21 227:15 227:16 Notary 263:13 note 143:24 179:17 227:11 Notebook's 237:19 noted 263:6 notes 10:13 188:11 263:7 notice 189:18 noticed 261:8 notices 185:19,19 214:15 notion 55:13
---	--	---	---	---

160:6 nots 244:6 November 180:20 Nowak 212:20 NTA 157:9 nuances 67:24 Nudsen 101:9 number 34:17 35:8 58:24 69:7 71:15 75:24 88:23 93:24 101:4 103:2 129:12 131:17 131:23 144:20 145:19 153:9 164:20 171:8 172:12 198:22 252:14 numbers 9:12 62:19 75:21,23 77:22 78:1,4,19 80:23 111:21 209:14 numerous 6:15 193:6 246:1,5 250:16 Nunary 257:18 258:8 Nunez 173:18 174:1,3,3 176:4 176:4,7 nurse 113:22 212:8,16 236:8 239:4 nurses 51:8 58:19 59:1,4 82:11 113:20 157:13 208:3 213:9,9 213:12 214:11 214:23 236:18 nursing 212:10 nurturing 133:17 nutrition 50:19 nuts 22:2 Nutter 216:13 218:15 219:8 238:2,13	O O 263:1 object 68:2 objections 68:1 obligations 43:9 observation 84:14 obtain 57:10,15 65:10 180:18 198:8 202:15 obvious 164:18 obviously 31:22 32:22 34:8 38:10 179:23 occasion 173:12 193:10 occasional 44:10 occasionally 35:9 occupancy 3:12 3:15 Occupied 207:7 207:20 occur 70:13 189:1 204:17 October 62:10 75:22 126:20 OEO 27:12 offer 50:20 66:1 158:23 199:8 offered 103:10 122:10 196:6 222:13 243:14 247:3 offering 55:23 56:5 offerings 132:13 offers 115:11 office 5:24 6:4,7 7:1,3 13:5 18:20 18:21,23 21:10 21:15 31:23 32:1,6,8,18,19 32:20 33:2 34:11 39:19 41:11 45:15 93:3,3,4,5 142:4 163:20,21,23 164:4,5 165:5	165:17 218:16 219:8 255:5 officer 31:5 33:1 91:5 119:3 121:6 126:22 134:7 161:14 236:10,24 officers 157:9 offices 117:24 official 145:4 officially 172:6 officials 88:16 Oftentimes 37:18 oh 1:15 73:20,21 73:21 74:1,22 75:9 76:3,20 77:2,19 78:20 91:19 93:12,13 94:4,13,22 95:2 95:17,22,24 96:5 117:15,16 125:7,7,8,12,13 126:9 127:21 138:8,9 141:3 141:16 142:21 144:5 145:15,22 168:3 OIC 178:22 179:6 179:15 180:9 182:6 okay 7:24 11:4 14:12,16 16:11 21:7,13 23:6,14 24:1,13,23 25:2 25:9 26:7,23 27:19 28:2 29:23 31:18,21 33:8,11 34:10 35:12 36:4 37:4 39:24 42:12 44:8,23 45:17 63:20 64:10 76:3 77:2 78:20 81:18 82:13 83:7,9,21 84:2 84:13 86:20,24 88:11 89:21	90:1 92:19 93:7 93:8 94:13 95:2 95:24 96:5 99:22 102:10 104:22 106:4,11 108:21 109:8,14 115:5 135:15 144:3,13 149:21 150:11,17,21 176:5 178:22 179:10 207:10 216:4,5,6,24 223:8 225:10 233:5,8,14 235:3,10 239:15 241:9 242:22 251:6 okay'ing 11:4 old 151:14 181:6 196:14 206:4 243:7 258:18 older 119:9 228:11 oldest 111:12 Olweus 215:7 once 7:15 46:23 71:2 98:13 136:13 173:12 185:11 196:5,10 196:18 198:24 204:1 237:5 ones 39:3 89:20 89:22 149:16 201:5 262:5 one-on-one 61:4 one-to-one 130:4 open 26:3 61:20 63:1 70:20 74:14,18 75:12 94:14 105:6 140:7 149:24 167:19 174:7 181:18 195:17 200:12,13 201:18 203:3,7 225:3 opening 140:10	140:10 172:6 operate 186:13 operates 119:6 operating 2:19 31:5,22 33:1 244:24 operation 13:3 19:15 34:14 operational 101:16 operations 101:8 operator 68:16 operators 160:20 245:3 opinion 60:16 86:2 145:14 opinions 63:11 240:3 opportunities 48:2 54:13 56:6 192:23 200:4 opportunity 32:6 32:20 46:24 60:15 131:6,6 132:12 133:1 151:10 156:13 184:12 193:8 197:9 201:12 210:23 226:3 227:24 233:21 243:11 247:19 opposed 68:24 83:6 237:16 Ops 13:2 optimistic 80:16 173:9 option 93:22 97:6 148:18 164:16 optional 107:24 options 51:15 76:14,15 97:4 131:10 132:4 164:12,17 175:15 order 2:4 6:23 9:14,16,17,22 15:15 49:14
---	---	---	---	---

61:2,9,18,23 71:10 110:4,12 110:15 126:5 187:14 190:17 217:3 237:8 ordering 26:10 orderly 70:4 orders 106:1 ordinance 2:13,16 2:18 3:6 38:9 ordinary 227:21 organization 111:10 190:24 221:12 239:23 organizational 31:17 192:8 organizations 93:20 136:13,17 136:18 221:23 222:1,5 237:3 258:4,4,5,6 organize 7:2 organized 133:11 orientated 180:24 orientation 132:5 original 9:3,10 10:5,6 ou 137:10 outcome 224:4 outcomes 48:11 130:6 132:9 210:9 outrageous 260:2 outside 28:4 47:17 57:19 68:6,8 70:23 77:24 83:13,14 84:2,7 88:4,8 93:17,23 94:3,9 95:16 97:6 107:6 136:8 186:6,11,15 210:13 232:10 249:2 259:24 outsiders 48:11 outsource 108:24 135:8	outsourcing 56:8 68:19 189:3 outward 130:1 out-of-school 192:13 oven 22:20 overall 6:11 41:22 143:10 188:7 overburden 112:22 overcrowded 134:11 overcrowding 137:18 overexpansion 137:1,12 overhaul 87:19 162:16 overheard 131:22 overlooked 47:6 overly 47:7 overnight 231:9 oversee 27:5 186:22 187:6 overseeing 27:21 overseen 186:16 overseer 187:1 oversees 26:12 overshadowed 137:21 oversight 44:9 54:23 89:10,18 134:24 135:8 136:2,12 218:6 220:14,15 overspending 152:9 overwhelmed 198:14,16 206:19 overwhelming 222:19 owe 199:5 219:6 238:9 owners 114:13 217:7 218:18 220:17	Ozzie 173:21 178:19 227:15 O'BRIEN 1:15 o'clock 262:17 P pace 182:12 pack 146:10 261:8 Pagan 190:11 205:17,18 page 84:24 paid 67:4 112:20 158:5 187:14 188:15 207:17 249:7 262:3 pains 104:15 painstaking 192:7 pair 236:14 Palestra 28:18 pan 218:1 panel 30:8 45:23 panic 231:15,19 paper 17:14 222:18 252:24 253:2 papered 189:3 par 88:24 parachute 123:6 parcel 151:23 Pardon 82:3 parent 56:17 85:6 97:22,24 146:10 160:7 203:10 221:12 222:22 228:3,14 231:1 239:22 243:4,11 245:8 parents 48:5 51:20 60:4 64:8 72:21 73:12 78:9 84:22 85:3 99:6 100:12 104:10 118:20 125:23 136:16 142:5,14 146:15 149:3 150:13	156:14,16 157:6 157:10,14,19 158:7 159:3,19 159:21,23 161:3 161:14 162:5 164:12,13 166:9 204:4 210:19 214:16,18 221:13 222:24 223:10 224:10 228:5 232:15 244:18 247:4 249:22 park 24:15,16,17 25:6,9,10,10 39:6 parked 28:4 parking 28:4 149:15 parochial 241:7 part 9:10 44:21 45:8,9 63:13 72:17 73:13 108:23 119:6 134:11,13 146:12,13 148:1 151:23 176:19 177:15 184:10 191:1,7,22 193:18 232:23 233:2,5,7,8 236:1 248:14 250:3,17 participant 72:13 participation 27:2 125:18 245:8 particular 15:1 25:5 32:17 81:16 particularly 37:7 42:8 45:2 209:10 partner 249:24 partners 49:12 52:16 157:23 partnership	51:19 parts 72:15 238:20 260:19 party 160:20 218:22 part-time 236:18 pass 114:13 117:13 218:14 passed 17:23 117:5 176:21 211:3 217:8 passing 177:8 201:23 passion 179:18 path 172:7 174:21 179:23 patience 156:1 207:12 211:20 212:1 215:23 234:3 235:11 patient 257:13 Paul 253:2 pay 9:19 119:13 122:24 138:23 209:2 211:13,17 216:13 219:23 225:15,16 260:5 paying 172:2 190:5 209:6 217:12,22 218:17 219:16 219:22 249:2 259:24 payments 131:19 137:4 188:16 pays 140:2 PCCY 110:24 111:9 Peace 215:4 peacefully 192:19 peer 51:11 135:20 penalties 238:10 pending 211:11 Penn 212:20 222:6 Pennsylvania 1:6 3:3 54:9 55:21
--	--	---	---	--

67:13 112:8 157:2 169:8 209:1,5 238:21 244:15 249:6 Pennsylvania's 48:18 penny 91:4 99:23 101:6 106:2 129:20 255:5 258:24 Penn's 237:10,20 people 12:12 14:1 14:10 16:17,20 19:20 27:23 28:23 32:3,24 33:6 34:16 35:8 38:20 60:19 61:3,8 67:16 68:9 69:20,23 70:5 72:7 76:6 77:5 81:1 83:14 84:21 102:22 105:1,5,12 113:16 114:11 115:8 116:3,4 116:10,14 117:10 124:7 125:14,23 131:1 137:4 138:19,23 139:5,22 140:14 142:10,13 143:8 144:11 146:14 146:21,22 149:23,23 150:4 152:3 163:21 166:7,8 168:18 171:8 177:9 179:19 181:7,20 183:10,20 188:14 190:3,4 194:18 196:10 198:14,18 199:6 205:9 206:20,20 208:14 209:14 214:7 215:8 219:21 223:15 224:17 225:4,14	241:16 245:23 255:15,23 256:20 257:24 258:9,12 people's 139:4 perceived 241:8 percent 47:12,13 121:20 129:9,11 129:13,14 130:7 130:15 136:20 140:1 165:6 174:23 177:16 193:16 209:1 211:17 219:19 219:20 220:3,24 220:24 221:24 222:4 225:16,20 225:20 245:7 percentage 57:2 57:12 130:11 perfect 113:5 perform 48:18 123:22 244:15 performance 89:12 160:20 237:5 248:13,13 248:16 performed 88:24 performing 55:12 88:20 244:14 248:12 260:13 period 15:1 28:16 124:23 permission 8:7 person 22:14 32:16 34:19 35:15 36:3,12 42:13,15,20,24 43:15,17,24 44:1,2 68:9 69:9 95:9 101:12 110:23 117:6 183:11 186:18 186:22 187:6 188:11 195:3 221:22 227:19 personal 183:13	188:17 personally 37:1 40:11 240:20 personnel 61:1,17 61:17 93:22 94:9 95:7 96:4 107:9 134:9 214:23 persons 241:1 perspective 43:6 PFT 46:19 50:4 61:22 72:20 74:13 75:14,18 81:12 83:2 87:1 99:6 103:10,21 109:21 121:17 149:10 212:8,14 224:13 233:6 PGW 161:21 Philadelphia 1:2 1:6 2:22,23 3:14 3:16,19,24 4:1,3 4:7,10,11,15,16 4:18,21,24 5:1 46:9,11 49:22 50:24 58:8 65:16 66:8,13 67:7,12 68:14 68:14 73:4 80:2 80:10 81:1 86:1 98:1 109:2 112:14 113:6,19 113:24 116:22 118:24 119:13 119:13,14 121:3 122:2,7 128:13 129:10 132:10 133:18 135:7,14 135:18 148:5 154:4,17 155:22 156:17 157:1 161:5 168:16,19 169:8 170:10,23 174:11 175:9 179:16,18 180:11 182:7,14 185:14 190:24	191:6,10,17 192:2 193:17 207:7,16,21,23 208:14 209:3 217:4,17,18 218:18 221:11 221:19 222:9 223:24 224:9 225:7,24 229:5 229:11 230:16 230:22 231:8,13 231:20,22 232:5 233:23 234:22 235:4 236:16 238:19 242:12 243:5,8,22 244:5 246:18 247:23,24 248:2 249:10 250:5,12 250:20 252:3,11 252:15 253:22 254:1,6 259:20 260:6 Philadelphian 247:22 Philadelphia's 47:2,17 49:18 112:24 119:20 119:23 121:4 133:2 154:24 236:2 philanthropy 236:13 237:24 Philly 131:14 148:2 235:1,16 235:20 251:8 Philly's 253:3 phone 37:7,9 phrase 87:8 103:19 Phylis 184:17 physics 163:9 pick 136:17,18 244:20 picture 173:6 190:23 191:2,6 191:9,17 193:17	PIDC 38:20,20 41:5,10,13 42:3 44:6,9 PIDC's 42:14 piece 17:14 pieces 68:4 Pittsburgh 112:12 place 27:13 77:13 79:19 86:1 99:1 100:8 102:2 121:11 139:18 194:22 199:23 206:24 207:1 placed 123:4 places 39:9 143:1 148:12 254:7 placing 148:16 220:19 237:13 plaguing 260:17 plain 243:7 plan 2:23 39:10 44:19 45:10 47:8,9,11 48:6,8 49:13 50:2 68:16 69:11 72:11 73:7 81:8 93:19 94:5,12 94:18 98:17,21 108:23,24 116:18 117:1,21 118:1 121:6,7 122:18 123:8,14 132:2 134:22 135:4,15 138:2 140:6,6 151:20 151:23 152:6,17 152:22 155:11 155:15 156:21 156:24 158:23 159:4 160:7,17 161:4,6,22 162:8,13,15 163:18 165:3,16 166:1,11 168:16 175:6 186:1 187:5 193:11
---	--	--	---	--

209:9,19 210:3 210:12 211:12 211:16 232:3,24 237:1 243:14,15 243:17,18,21 244:4,8 245:11 246:17,22 247:3 247:5 248:10,11 248:14,22 249:5 249:17,22 250:3 250:4 253:3,15 253:20 255:6,15 255:16,17,18 258:8,10,13,14 259:21 260:3 262:6 planned 58:2 93:16 157:15 planning 5:17 6:8 38:10,11 41:12 41:14,23 63:9 72:20 115:11 163:2 175:2 195:8 plans 39:7 71:23 195:5 250:16 play 22:19 37:11 51:22 56:22 162:16 playground 177:6 playgrounds 49:8 playing 54:20 158:11 214:8 220:9 please 8:19 30:24 91:2 92:6 110:5 110:19 111:2 115:1 132:21 137:23 138:2 156:1 159:3,13 170:15 173:22 179:13 184:11 189:6 191:12 197:2 202:6 216:20 227:4,8 227:10 231:18 232:4,12,18,21	233:8 235:13 239:19 243:1 251:9 262:1 pleasure 46:23 211:23 pledged 211:10 plenty 25:21,21 46:15 ploy 218:14 loys 216:16 plus 113:2 pneumonia 129:7 pockets 139:4 poem 169:10 point 7:10 10:10 17:18 21:4 28:10 58:14 67:17 72:8 80:2 83:18,20 95:17 99:7 100:19,22 107:17,19 130:11 148:22 149:8 155:7 223:17 226:7 258:18 pointing 146:23 149:9 points 14:13 53:10 153:14 231:6 police 69:13,16 71:5 112:18 134:7 143:6 157:9 229:21 247:24 policies 53:9 158:17 policy 33:3 35:7 38:22 77:17 92:12,14 169:24 223:5 237:13 political 141:7,13 141:16 148:1 politically 35:17 politics 230:18 ponder 204:9 pool 25:22 26:1	poor 174:22 210:1 244:4 poorer 260:19 poorest 257:6 poorly 88:20 120:11 pop 172:9 population 57:10 192:13 portfolio 257:1,2 portion 138:22 pose 72:1 posing 246:7 position 76:4 87:1 106:5 119:18 123:4 233:16 240:17 positions 59:6,15 83:17 104:22 positive 146:5 199:22 205:22 206:20 possibilities 149:13 198:7 possibility 40:7 68:18 70:20 possible 65:4 120:14 175:3 223:1 237:14 possibly 6:22 139:21 206:24 258:16 post-secondary 193:11 potential 129:8 136:9 182:24 potentially 134:24 poverty 3:21 52:4 53:19 57:16 157:3 209:13 210:8 244:4 power 161:16 199:1 221:12 233:16 250:18 PowerPoint 155:9 powers 233:11,11	233:19 Poyourow 132:20 132:23 133:3 138:6,6,6 141:2 141:4 142:2 144:2,4,12 150:20 Pr 21:21 practice 12:23 13:1 51:12 192:21 practices 55:8,23 praised 154:20 162:3 pray 167:18,23,23 168:3,24 prayed 167:9 prayer 167:15,17 167:18,23 168:2 168:6 169:4 prays 167:16 precisely 47:5 predetermined 4:6 predicament 129:3 predicted 129:9 prediction 84:24 predictions 84:4 preface 89:5 prefer 93:5 preparatory 131:2 prepare 49:18 116:13 158:9 prepared 76:1 116:5 141:19 preparing 116:2 presence 90:15 92:5 present 1:10 161:22 163:19 255:15 presented 161:4 255:13,17,18 presenting 151:22 presents 153:22	President 1:11 21:21,23 22:5 30:14,18 31:8 31:11,13,19 32:14 33:8,12 33:15 34:5,10 35:12,20,24 36:18 37:4,13 38:2,5 39:14,18 39:24 40:5,18 40:22 41:6 42:12,23 43:1,3 43:7,13,18 44:8 44:23 45:17,21 46:11 64:4,4 79:4 87:4 156:8 156:10 President's 7:1 18:20,23 21:15 press 152:14 pressures 152:10 pretty 38:13 74:2 251:11 previous 171:4 173:3 182:23 205:23,24 previously 8:24 pre-plated 261:18 pre-written 221:17 price 11:21 123:1 priceless 194:19 pride 178:1 181:10 principal 134:8 229:17 238:10 255:1 principally 83:13 principals 52:6 63:24 68:21 84:19 158:8 214:4 Principles 210:18 prior 8:24 161:14 189:5 priorities 22:12 81:24 110:1
--	---	--	---	--

143:11 157:24 208:19 prioritize 159:24 priority 80:7 120:15 160:15 prisons 208:24 Pritchett 155:14 private 11:17,19 55:17,17 135:9 153:5 164:15 217:24 241:7 249:9,15 privatization 83:17 86:1 90:7 96:8,9 119:1 136:3 147:11 153:23 210:14 224:6 privatize 108:24 124:19 212:24 225:4 232:6 privatized 119:2 privatizing 68:24 121:8 privilege 231:3 probably 6:5 42:1 57:8 97:13 104:11 171:9 225:22 253:21 255:23 probe 171:17 problem 6:13 9:3 14:4 16:14 22:23 61:9 67:12 87:20 129:19 148:3 213:16,19 249:4 problematic 134:23 246:2 problems 52:24 61:10 113:9 196:4 219:8 221:21 244:21 proceed 198:21 proceedings 79:5 79:7 263:5 process 6:11 7:3	10:1 14:1 20:7,8 23:5 34:22 35:14,21 49:6 64:21 95:8 96:3 99:1,2 107:7 117:11 126:19 126:21 127:16 136:5,10 146:7 164:19 228:11 228:12 258:7 procurement 7:6 12:4 27:3 produce 75:11 produced 135:22 147:8 product 65:7 72:7 72:22 117:2,18 149:6 243:7 productive 181:20 products 37:14 professional 52:13 56:4 162:1,21 186:12 245:19 professionalism 201:10 professionals 113:24 Professor 151:15 237:21 profit 187:23 218:4,4 249:3 profits 3:20 208:20 program 2:14 49:23 51:12 66:2 130:4,18 130:20 154:21 155:5 164:1 175:10,20 180:13 182:10 192:5 193:3 215:1,7 229:2 236:3 252:9,9 256:9 programming	49:8 programs 5:6,7 49:3,17,20 50:15 51:11 52:17 53:3 56:5 56:14 82:7 154:23 155:8 157:18 164:1 175:22 214:21 214:22 215:10 215:13 240:11 252:12,13 progress 13:18,18 19:14 21:6 112:4 138:14 238:7 239:10 248:18 project 8:23 9:13 10:5,5 11:5 15:13 16:15 17:2 27:7,8,17 28:5 29:14,15 29:16,20 30:3 36:22 39:1,12 40:1,6 41:23 45:11 215:4 222:19 projects 5:24 6:2 6:7,15 26:12 30:3 33:23,24 34:1,4 35:5 36:17 38:8,16 38:19 39:2,10 42:5 44:20 45:6 45:7 122:14 project's 7:3 prom 203:16 promise 203:5 promised 84:11 238:2 promote 158:17 promotion 210:13 proof 55:1 proper 139:5 186:20 properties 238:5 property 4:5,20	8:22 15:14 54:11 112:24 114:13 141:11 171:11 173:1 217:8 218:18 222:8 241:24 proponents 211:2 proposal 57:17 66:14 67:1 82:24 93:21 95:1 96:12 98:7 98:10,11,12,16 99:17 102:20 136:19 137:2,15 147:20 186:22 187:8,18 proposals 141:9 propose 115:22 117:22 proposed 3:1 67:19 93:19 94:12,19 102:23 108:23 109:24 116:6 122:12 134:21 135:3 153:10 156:18 171:18 216:12 216:12 260:17 proposes 243:18 proposing 157:16 propositions 105:4 prospect 202:24 203:2,24 protect 206:22 protected 157:7 protections 114:11 172:24 proud 183:20 184:4 185:12 192:4 193:14 202:11 proudly 238:6 243:9 prove 140:6 proven 49:20 50:5 84:3	provide 4:4,19 50:16,19 53:4 57:18 66:19 68:10 111:20 113:8 114:10,14 120:21 129:20 130:24 132:2 134:16 139:7,8 154:6 157:15 164:5 186:11 203:21 218:21 222:14 229:6 250:7,18,19 258:1 provided 66:7 68:13 88:12 109:1 143:5,6 192:1 193:8 249:18 provider 68:20 84:8 152:23 237:7 provides 132:11 180:13 248:19 249:22 providing 2:20 4:12 5:1 56:1,3 56:12 140:11 248:7 provision 154:11 PSSA 57:2,4,10 57:15 psychologists 82:12 public 2:6 8:22 14:5 15:14 34:18 46:2,8 47:2,4,8 51:5 54:7,10 55:21 62:4 68:8 78:15 81:5 84:18 87:16,20 97:20 99:9 111:18 113:2 114:2 121:8 123:17,24 125:16 132:10 132:13,15
---	--	--	--	--

133:17 134:2,3 146:6 147:2,12 148:17,23,24 152:15 153:16 153:20 154:9 158:17 159:20 159:21,22 162:24 163:4 174:12 176:15 188:21,24 200:3 200:10 201:9 207:16 210:7 212:22 214:10 218:8 219:4 224:7,8 228:12 228:15 230:16 230:19 231:16 232:5 234:17,19 239:22 240:9,10 240:11,18 241:3 241:4,15,18 242:11,13 243:7 245:10 247:22 248:1,4,5,7 249:1 250:4,7 250:11,14,18 252:3 253:3 254:1 256:16 262:18 263:13 publicly 62:7 72:12 published 249:11 pull 70:15 115:20 218:19 222:1 pulled 13:3 228:14 pulling 96:24 pupil 80:2,3 131:22 purpose 182:18 pursuant 3:4 push 53:9 66:19 67:2 171:6 172:2 pushing 218:15 put 7:15 10:1,6 15:3,14 27:3	28:14,18 29:15 39:17 69:13 72:4,13 87:12 87:21 94:24 98:9,24 102:19 108:19 115:10 115:14 118:6 119:18 123:14 139:18 144:15 149:15 168:12 173:2 174:15 183:5 184:23 185:7 187:1 197:21 218:20 219:2,4 260:10 puts 27:4 54:16 putting 19:24 110:6 115:24 142:15 162:11 212:10 260:2 puzzle 117:3 pyramid 13:12,14 p.m 46:1,6 203:13 234:17,19 262:17,18 Q quagmire 131:8 qualifications 103:8 qualify 131:2,10 258:1 quality 6:23 26:4 26:17 47:4 50:17 51:24 73:3 98:1 130:24 131:9 132:2 134:10 140:8,12 222:15 228:8 229:5,24 232:20 244:19 256:23 261:13 quarters 32:4 163:15 quasi-governm... 45:1 question 8:17	15:7 28:9 32:1 39:23 41:1 43:14 61:20 62:17,18 63:7 65:8 72:1,16 76:2 80:22 85:15 87:22 88:1,3,7,13,19 90:18 91:6,8,9 91:11,16,17 93:12,16 100:9 101:3,18 103:5 103:20 105:18 105:19 107:15 107:16 108:7,14 108:15,17,20 109:4 150:9 165:9 171:20 186:4 187:18 195:15 198:13 246:8 250:9 questionable 245:20 questioning 108:1 questions 5:23 30:8 31:15 40:3 41:21 45:22 58:16 61:21 63:1 64:8 65:5 69:2 86:14,15 86:16 90:13 98:10 101:4 107:4 109:9,10 109:11 114:17 124:3 125:10 127:24 132:19 138:7 152:7,16 152:21 154:5 155:13,17 161:15 173:4 189:22 242:18 247:9 262:9 quick 31:15 65:5 69:2 150:8 179:17 quickly 70:15 100:5 113:11	129:13 144:10 quiet 34:2 191:12 QUINONES-S... 1:16 quit 95:19 quite 67:22 101:18 quote 56:10 122:3 122:5 230:5 R R 263:1 race 130:14 176:18 213:2 230:1 racism 210:8 Radnor 50:9 80:1 raise 24:3 49:16 50:6 74:23 90:18 103:21 121:19 142:24 209:16 222:7 233:9 254:20 raised 14:13,14 69:8 91:14 101:4 103:20 161:15,23 162:1 166:24 179:17 235:5 raises 122:19 136:3 143:1 154:4 raising 232:24 Ramos 101:14,15 101:20 ran 225:10,10 Rand 153:1 Randal 33:6 ranks 54:9 rap 53:17 rate 4:4,12,19 5:2 130:7 191:23,23 207:24 213:18 260:6 rates 49:17 57:16 131:12 157:3 ratify 123:3	ratio 4:6 Ray 69:10,10 reach 6:23 123:13 188:3 207:2 reached 153:1 188:9 reaches 204:20 read 2:11 62:3,4 66:21 91:16 107:16 108:14 108:15 197:8 214:18 227:13 227:18 237:19 255:11 reading 53:11 61:1 62:16 ready 9:22 74:20 132:7 183:3 real 3:15,23 4:3,5 4:10,14,18,20 4:24 54:5 63:6 114:7 138:23 139:15,24 140:1 166:3,3 196:8 199:22 200:7 217:3,7 237:15 238:3 249:24 realistic 38:24 141:21 143:12 reality 80:18 163:3,4,16 reality-based 163:2,18 164:7 164:24 realize 151:3 215:16 219:14 258:20 really 11:11 17:3 17:15 21:14 39:4 44:9 60:10 61:15 66:3 67:2 70:17 73:11 78:13,18 83:19 87:22 88:6,19 96:23 97:1,15 98:4,20 117:8 140:1 154:13
--	---	--	---	--

165:15 171:3,17 171:22,23 173:5 181:14,16 183:8 197:8 199:23 200:12 218:12 221:18,18 226:17 254:3 257:16 258:7 Realty 3:11 reappropriating 66:23 reason 9:13 13:19 17:19 21:20 24:16 25:19 85:18 88:23 166:12 172:1 194:21 196:2 reasonable 21:2 22:22 36:5 reasons 6:15 11:11 84:23 92:11 rebates 209:3 Rebecca 5:14 132:20 133:3 rec 7:21 8:8 13:15 14:11 16:18 17:16 24:10,11 28:24 29:12 recall 59:7 receive 112:15 182:11 193:17 241:19 261:2,16 received 9:11 175:11,11 187:2 189:18 217:13 receiving 260:8 recess 150:4 234:13 recessed 234:17 262:16 recession 240:16 reckless 123:1,19 recognize 5:20 recognized 96:19 recommend 117:6	recommendation 81:7,10,13 recommendatio... 78:11 81:11,17 98:23 reconfigure 132:12 reconsider 175:19 record 5:13,23 8:19 14:17 15:2 22:3 30:15,23 91:3 92:6,7 107:16,22 108:20 109:4 132:22 144:15 146:16 156:2 173:22 174:17 184:24 185:8 190:18 197:2 202:6 216:20 218:20 221:8 227:21 239:19 recovering 236:13 recovery 121:6 126:22 161:13 162:8 236:10 237:24 recreation 13:12 112:17 143:7 redevelopment 33:23,23 redo 26:8 reduce 51:7 152:20 191:22 220:2 246:4 252:14 reduced 55:24 66:11 208:1 219:19 reducing 82:10 reduction 147:20 Reed 24:15 25:8 reelect 224:17 referred 196:8 reflect 201:12 reform 47:6 57:17	58:4,17 89:9,19 92:23 93:1 121:12 151:16 151:19,21 155:13 171:13 171:17 173:5 191:7 216:14 217:13,19 220:14 231:10 250:14 reformed 250:17 reforms 57:22 58:1 refrain 59:21 238:13 Refunds 3:21 refuse 201:7,10 220:1 refusing 218:21 regard 46:8 90:6 107:14 regarding 2:7 95:5 133:1 197:10 regardless 74:2 77:17 78:16 171:4,13 230:1 242:5 regards 44:3 84:24 223:3 224:1 231:19 Regional 67:19 regions 111:9 regular 197:19 regulatory 35:21 39:11 rejected 243:23 relate 213:13 related 35:4 39:4 41:15 relates 34:22 41:7 67:11 relating 34:13 relationship 34:21 41:7 42:18 43:14,15 43:23 44:24	relationships 35:1 192:15 197:13 197:14 198:4,11 relative 5:24 relatively 89:15 release 136:4 released 55:16 relevant 192:24 reliant 112:9 relief 38:9,9 147:22 reluctant 239:1 rely 154:8 241:15 remain 123:10 192:16 245:9,13 247:1 remainder 200:23 remaining 216:11 232:6 Remarkably 56:7 remarks 252:1 remember 178:16 203:8,14 252:5 253:16 255:23 remembering 148:2 remind 109:23 115:7 150:3 163:3 203:6 remove 69:19 166:1 Renaissance 127:9,14 Rendell 80:18 238:18 Rendell's 66:6 renters 217:7 rents 217:8 reorder 208:19 reorganization 47:24 67:19 96:15 98:8 134:22 138:2 reorganize 6:5 reorganizes 165:18 reorganizing	165:7 Rep 251:1 repair 187:11 repaired 7:23 repairs 8:12 repealing 3:20 repeated 158:20 repent 106:14 replace 187:15 209:22 replaced 75:5 217:16,20 replacement 9:6 replacing 9:4 report 55:7,22 62:3 71:5,6 136:5 reported 130:7 reporter 263:21 reports 34:5,7 245:1 represent 63:24 86:22 118:23 156:14 169:22 243:9 representation 161:21 representative 18:21 157:22 253:14,19 representatives 100:11,11 192:1 244:11 represents 42:15 reproduction 263:18 Republican 238:20 request 7:16,22 8:2,24 15:8 90:21 107:13 131:16 133:2,20 134:12 requested 10:14 188:13 require 57:14 143:10 245:8
--	---	---	--	--

required 17:14	responded 90:10	retired 95:7 212:7	23:22 24:1,13	240:5 247:14
requirements 9:6	91:7	213:14	24:23 25:2,14	251:4 252:6
9:17 12:22,22	response 109:13	return 197:19	27:11,19 28:2	257:14
182:14 211:4	125:23 126:1,11	202:15 245:4,13	30:11	rightfully 107:4
requires 152:13	141:2 175:5	revamping	Ricchezza 83:19	rights 204:2
155:5 192:6,7	235:2 251:3	152:18	118:11,14,18,21	rigorous 52:18
rescind 123:18	responsibility	revenue 104:16	124:6,9,14,17	129:23,23
research 48:12,14	36:23 47:10,16	112:15 147:23	125:12 126:8,13	ring 136:21
48:17 52:21	89:17,18 133:24	211:2 238:6	128:1	riot 177:22
58:1,9 89:15	233:13 240:9,17	241:23 242:3,5	rich 208:21	rise 173:1,11
151:16 152:24	responsible 32:16	revenues 128:23	236:18 254:12	193:9
210:6 213:7	37:2 41:2 78:8	reversed 208:12	richer 66:1	risen 121:14
214:20 222:17	89:23 111:23	review 9:5 20:9	112:11	risk 53:1 69:14
research-based	119:21 139:8	reviewed 135:20	rid 147:1 209:21	257:4
49:17 50:5 53:2	198:20 215:15	248:10	219:13	road 20:6
reservation 125:3	responsive 78:8	Revised 2:22	ridiculous 252:18	roaming 70:20
reshuffles 165:18	responsiveness	rewarding 136:6	right 9:15 21:4	Robin 250:24
resident 172:20	126:4	rewrite 219:18	22:9 23:15	251:1
residents 172:14	rest 9:8 34:8	Reynolds-Brown	24:15 25:1	robotics 163:24
241:10	112:19 155:2	1:16 69:3 78:23	29:24 40:22	robust 54:8
resign 97:9	234:14	78:24 79:3	43:2 44:14	Roc 242:20
resolution 1:20	restorative 51:11	80:14 82:1,4,8	45:18 53:15,16	Roccia 239:13
2:9,20 122:9	192:21	82:13 83:7,9,12	58:6 65:3 68:5	Roccia-Meier
123:13	restored 58:21	83:21 84:13	82:14 83:16,22	242:21,21,23
Resolutions 2:12	59:6,15	85:2,8,14,16,21	90:1 91:12 93:8	243:3,4 247:10
resolve 18:7	restraints 145:16	90:17,20,23	94:4,6,12 95:2	Rock 50:10
resolved 18:4,6,9	restrengthen 6:6	91:23 92:1,4,16	96:5 99:22	Rockar 235:3,15
resolving 78:3	restrictions 20:24	92:22 93:7	109:3 115:17,21	235:16,19
resourced 208:9	21:1	100:19,22 101:1	116:3 117:17	Rodney 107:13
resources 51:6,7	restroom 236:7	101:2,11,15	118:12 124:8	Rodriguez 227:1
53:5,8,16,20	restructuring	107:17,21	127:21 139:1,20	227:16
55:11 57:15	71:23 135:3	165:14	144:13 145:4	Roebuck's 253:14
65:24 134:4	243:15,16 247:2	re-articulate	151:5 156:12	253:19
148:11 158:12	249:9	65:13	162:11 167:11	role 56:23 101:6
210:18 215:8	result 49:7 54:12	re-org 102:23	167:12 168:2	161:15 210:8,10
235:22 246:14	56:10 66:9	RFP 94:1,8,16,24	169:9,14 172:17	roles 43:21
respect 3:1 12:16	119:5 153:7	95:8 96:2	173:13 174:21	207:18
19:7 51:18,22	208:10 236:12	124:21 186:11	176:7 178:21	roll 93:18,20
76:4,15 178:2	237:6 241:23	187:7	179:3,23 180:5	rolled 48:3
254:4	results 49:24	Rhynhart 5:11,14	183:5 185:4	Ron 207:7,15
respected 52:1	130:14 131:3	5:14 6:10 7:24	205:15 214:1	room 1:6 72:22
respectful 197:16	135:19,23 230:8	8:16 11:9 12:3,9	216:5 220:15,16	77:6 103:23
respectfully	resume 46:8	14:12,16,18,20	220:22 221:1	106:19 167:19
192:19	234:21	15:6 17:7,17	222:7,10 223:16	167:22 198:13
respond 76:1	resumed 234:19	18:1,7,18 19:18	223:23 224:7,11	204:17 256:3
91:13 124:12	retention 32:12	20:22 21:7,13	224:12 227:20	rooms 105:7
142:22 214:16	52:15	22:6,9,18 23:8	231:14 234:12	roots 235:21

Rose 156:10	San 212:16	51:4,8,10,16	155:9,13,23	213:11,14,15,20
Ross 227:2 229:10	Sanchez 262:12	52:2,3 53:6,15	156:9,15,17,18	215:5,15 216:14
229:11	Sara 33:3	53:22 55:5,18	157:2,8,9,12,13	217:2,12,13,19
roughly 238:7	sat 126:16	56:11,20 58:4	157:16 158:7	217:20,24,24
route 18:16	saturate 232:13	58:16,19,19	159:1,23 160:18	220:14 221:13
Rowe 190:10	save 49:14 121:6	59:9,11 60:4,6	161:5,13 162:16	222:2,10,16
202:8,10,10	122:16,18 137:2	60:11,15,18,21	163:14 164:15	224:7,8 226:5
Roxborough	137:20 172:22	60:23 62:6	164:19,21 165:3	226:17 228:3,10
133:3 180:21	203:24	63:12 66:8 67:8	165:8,18,24	228:12,12,14,15
RPF 136:10	saved 121:15	67:20 68:4,7	167:7 168:17,21	229:21,21 231:2
255:19	202:17	69:13,16,24	168:24 169:23	231:8 234:22
RPR 263:13	saving 122:21	70:23,24 71:7	170:3 172:4,8	236:3,22 237:15
rubber 28:19 73:8	232:5	71:15,16,18	174:12 175:16	238:9 239:8,9
rule 98:20 122:13	savings 122:12	73:4 75:11	176:14,16,17,23	239:10,22 240:7
rules 12:4,4 144:1	saw 46:13,14 71:5	77:14 78:6,17	177:2,2,5,7,10	240:19 241:11
run 36:22 118:6	112:2 162:13	79:11 81:1,7,11	177:20,24 178:1	241:16 242:1,11
139:17 154:9,12	176:17	82:16 84:22	179:20 180:11	243:5,7,8 244:5
160:19 210:16	saying 15:23	88:15 89:9,19	180:13,17,18,19	248:5,6 249:9
225:12 245:14	27:23 43:19,21	90:5 92:23 93:1	180:22 181:3,7	250:14 251:1
running 120:10	62:16 75:16	93:2,3 94:23	181:9 182:11,13	252:13 253:9,10
225:8 260:1	76:15 89:5	95:15 107:8,22	182:14,23 184:2	253:11 255:4,6
runs 93:2 253:24	101:17 102:2	109:1 111:14	185:6,13,24	256:15,16
rural 57:5 238:20	116:20 126:14	112:2,8 113:9	186:6,10,18,23	257:14,19
rushed 210:23	141:14,22	113:22 114:14	188:4,12,19	259:17,21 260:4
Ruth 227:1,16	142:23 143:14	115:9,18 116:14	189:11 190:10	260:23 261:12
	205:20 212:22	117:7 118:23	190:15 191:18	261:16,21,22
	233:7 252:6	119:4,17,22	191:20 192:1,5	262:1
S	255:12	120:3,6,10,19	194:7,9,10,22	schooling 132:15
Sabra 247:14,14	says 26:1 58:9	121:2,6,12	195:1,10,24	schools 47:2,8,12
247:21	74:22 111:11	122:5,8,16,21	196:1,1,2,3,4,15	47:14 48:9,9,18
sacrifice 123:2	163:12 169:16	122:24 123:2,17	196:16,17,19	48:20,23 49:2,4
sad 79:6 181:13	222:14 223:5	123:22 125:1	197:15,19 198:2	50:3,9 51:5,9,13
safe 51:3,5 57:8	237:21 253:2	126:2,12 127:2	198:15 200:1,2	51:20 52:4,9,12
69:12 70:4	scared 183:14	128:11,13,14,15	200:10,12,13	52:15,17 53:3
71:10,17 82:9	198:14	129:7,11,21	201:9,12,21	53:17,19,20,21
85:4,6,13 120:1	scary 105:4	130:14,19,21	202:13,14,15	54:5,10 55:1,14
157:7 177:2,24	schedule 9:14	131:2,3,19	203:2,4,7 204:1	55:14,21 59:17
218:19 229:23	scheduled 42:2	133:1,6,8,9,14	204:5,8,10,13	59:21,23 60:1,2
244:18 248:12	121:20	134:5,7,21	204:18,22 205:3	60:23 66:2
safeguard 172:24	schematic 17:10	136:4,6 138:15	205:7,16,19,23	68:11,13,22
safer 51:9	scheme 136:1	138:24 139:17	205:24 206:4,13	71:8 74:10,14
safety 52:20 84:23	scholarship 222:3	140:20 142:8,12	206:15,20 207:1	74:17 75:12
134:9 156:20	school 3:13,15 4:1	145:1,5,14	207:6 209:8,11	81:5,6,24 82:9
158:14	4:8,9,16,21,23	148:6,17 150:13	209:12,17	84:16,17,18,21
sake 132:14 164:4	46:1,9 47:1,3,5	151:12,13,15,16	210:10,11,12,15	85:5,12 86:21
salary 121:23	47:6,11 49:12	151:18,21	210:20 211:21	88:20,22 89:3,6
sale 260:2	49:13,20 50:14	152:18 154:17	212:8 213:9,9	89:10,11,14,20
sales 238:4 259:1				

92:8,10,13,17 92:17,18 94:14 111:11,15,17,21 112:7,10 113:3 113:8,16,18 114:4,9 116:1 120:14,18 122:6 123:24 127:9,14 128:15,16,21 130:10,12,24 131:11,23,24 132:7,10 133:16 133:18,21,21 134:3 135:9 136:7,15,15,18 136:21 137:2,10 137:12,15 140:11,17 142:15 144:22 146:24 147:1,2 149:1,2,3 152:3 152:11 153:11 153:16,20 154:3 154:9,18 155:1 159:5 160:13,16 161:11 163:4,8 163:15 164:1,6 164:8,11,14 165:6 166:4,10 167:15 169:5 174:7 175:14,21 191:3 192:11 195:17 196:9 197:18 199:7 200:3,3,11 202:18,18,21 204:15 206:23 207:16,19 208:1 208:2,9,18 209:7,20,24 210:1,7,14,15 212:11 214:9,9 214:10 218:3,4 218:4,8,9,21 219:1 222:11 223:15 225:3,8 230:14,16,18,19	231:13,17 232:1 232:6,7 235:4 235:17,20,23 237:4,16 239:3 239:24 240:10 240:18,20 241:3 241:4,7,18,21 242:9,13 244:9 244:13,15,17,18 245:6,10,14 246:11,14 248:1 248:12,16,17,21 248:23,24 249:3 249:4 252:5,8 253:3 254:1 256:14 260:1,11 260:13,14,18 262:3 schoolteacher 247:23 school-wide 192:20 scope 22:23 scores 57:2,4,11 57:15 SCR 72:3 scream 172:4 screaming 23:17 seat 102:6 seated 2:5 seats 130:24 132:2 secession 236:21 second 24:15 25:8 30:13 178:3 191:20 193:14 206:10 207:24 235:10 236:6 secondary 248:6 Secondly 136:19 209:19 219:2 secret 22:1 secretary/treas... 259:16 section 3:10,20 187:8 sector 11:17	secure 51:4 158:17 security 58:19 168:10 177:10 see 14:8,9 20:23 24:10 25:8,9,10 25:11 26:14 27:15 28:6 40:23 61:5 74:14 80:17 86:11,12 99:23 112:4 117:8 126:5 142:4 153:7 169:3 173:23 181:12 196:10 198:6 205:14 206:14 225:9 241:5 248:10,18 249:4 249:17,21 251:4 256:7 257:8 261:11 seeds 209:22,23 209:23,24 210:1 seeing 45:24 205:12 234:12 seek 164:17 seeks 235:21 seen 69:15 113:10 134:5,9 167:1 240:11 261:3,5 sees 236:11 select 125:17 selected 95:12 selecting 125:18 self 51:21 192:8 selling 257:14 semester 194:13 seminars 193:6 Senate 55:3,8,22 66:21 Senator 79:22 send 16:2 17:13 58:4 120:5 179:21 196:16 224:7 241:6,18 242:11 246:21	sending 89:23 120:9,12 241:15 senior 31:6 35:9 36:23 174:5 186:16 222:19 seniors 60:12 sense 10:3 25:16 26:19 39:13,15 39:16 63:22 96:8 100:17 141:21 178:1 242:3 sent 11:2 207:17 214:15 sentence 110:19 sentiments 106:7 separate 95:10,19 171:20 216:18 separated 54:14 155:1 September 64:22 67:17 72:6 74:15,18,19 79:19 80:21 94:14 185:20 189:10 231:21 248:22 sequester 211:11 serious 129:19 152:13,16 153:22 154:4 213:23 seriously 249:23 serve 192:9 242:13 243:21 246:13 served 185:18 256:21 serves 39:2 182:8 service 32:2 34:18 116:9 120:7 245:17 256:2 257:4,5 261:2 services 31:24 32:2,19 33:4 37:23 50:20 53:18,22 56:13	56:14 68:10,13 68:19 82:10 109:1 113:3 118:3 162:1,22 186:12 209:6 211:21 214:17 245:19 249:19 257:21 258:1 serving 136:15 202:13 241:12 241:13,14 session 30:21 234:6,10 set 74:2 77:17 105:9 117:7 185:19 186:21 186:21 230:17 setting 157:24 settle 221:14 settled 161:18 severely 133:22 shake 47:23 shaky 254:22 shape 132:15 shaping 210:9 share 106:6 151:17 203:19 211:18 217:14 229:3,18,18 233:12 242:1 243:11 255:3,11 Shaw 256:5 Shelly 110:24 111:8 Shepherd 215:1 shift 153:15 Shikomba 207:9 215:20,21 216:8 216:9,21,22,24 221:4 short 121:3 138:24 152:13 161:22 162:7,14 187:21 204:11 214:23 237:7 241:10 shortcut 49:24
---	---	---	---	--

shortcuts 50:1	198:12,12 199:2	smaller 45:14	sound 135:10	specifically 32:9
Shot 28:21	simplistic 210:4	196:7 198:10	sounds 21:2	33:19,22 42:17
shoulder 133:24	simply 38:17	199:9 208:4	198:12	44:3 113:4
show 37:18 38:8	81:14 173:12	smart 160:14	sources 65:3	124:12
38:10,18 51:17	218:10 232:18	smiled 238:19	south 170:12	specifications
84:10 185:5	single 38:12 42:10	Smith 95:13	173:18,19 174:4	26:15
218:23 252:24	45:7,11 48:23	sneakers 213:4	174:6,8,18	speech 228:15
showed 102:5	sinks 120:8	social 50:18 56:22	175:12,14	spell 68:17
182:20 203:17	sir 125:12	163:7 230:1	176:12 177:13	spend 55:19
showing 37:20	sister 183:2	society 230:4	179:16,22	115:23 134:15
48:15,17 224:20	sit 72:3 73:2	sole 186:24	180:11 182:7	205:7 213:20
shown 248:24	79:10 103:23	solely 89:17,18	243:8	258:22 262:2
shows 45:13	105:20 205:4	solid 120:21	Southeast 253:8	spending 14:9
shred 48:12	230:10 231:3	Solomon 155:23	so-called 209:22	55:13 65:22
shuffling 161:1	233:4 254:9	156:3,7,8	220:18	109:24 116:16
shut 204:8 238:17	Site 178:24	159:12	space 28:4 186:15	135:24 160:3
shutting 19:15	sits 228:20	solution 152:13	spaces 49:7	187:20 208:1,23
siblings 261:9	sitting 19:20	172:23 219:5	sparrows 25:18	245:23
sick 188:18	44:14 105:7	225:14	speak 36:14 42:16	spent 65:19
220:17 236:6	110:7	solutions 46:16	93:1 110:15	138:18 163:1
239:4	situation 73:6	218:13 221:20	125:14 128:12	211:15 239:10
side 19:20 31:20	74:1,4,5,14	Solve 35:20	133:1 147:21	spirit 123:3
32:23 36:10,13	75:19 76:11	somebody 8:3	151:10 156:22	spite 112:7
64:22 82:20	141:20 143:18	16:3 27:6 28:7	169:12 185:11	split 9:16 10:8
110:8 214:2	220:11 231:7	36:24 37:20	191:13 207:9	spoke 188:22,23
sided 127:5	situations 134:6	88:1 118:2	224:23 226:4,8	212:21 226:5
sides 81:18	146:20 183:19	135:15 136:14	227:24 228:5	232:8
sign 16:2 110:4,8	six 2:14 26:4	154:10 194:18	231:3 233:22	spoken 150:5
signed 14:24	126:23 239:10	someplace 139:3	235:18 243:23	152:2 171:9
110:5,13 134:18	sixth 53:12 61:5	143:5	257:3	sports 49:9 130:2
135:16 234:7,8	size 129:4 198:10	somewhat 79:9	speaker 110:20	155:7
significant 56:23	198:17 199:9	son 228:11,11,19	speakers 110:4	spray 24:15,16,17
87:19	208:4 213:7	229:12,16	speaking 103:7	25:6,9,10,10,19
significantly	sizes 38:16 51:2	247:24	170:8 174:4	26:1
57:20	55:24 82:10	sorely 171:12	176:11 201:5	spread 32:4
signs 52:22 256:7	246:13	sorry 15:18 25:4	214:7 226:8	spreads 246:5
silent 123:10	skilled 120:2	87:11 114:9	228:8 259:18	spring 203:9
similar 44:24	skills 50:19,22	125:12 135:15	speaks 17:5	spring's 162:2
57:16 179:19	193:7	142:21 144:2	speale 125:14	sprouting 25:18
239:3	slashing 209:8	180:17 191:14	special 56:13	square 186:15
similarly 40:5	slew 57:22	216:21	130:23 163:11	191:19
77:14	slideshow 155:9	sort 32:2,22 45:9	201:2 243:6	squarely 173:5
Simmons 166:17	slip 120:4	70:14 91:10	244:22 245:7	squeeze 148:11
166:18,19,21,21	slogan 103:18	98:7	specialists 118:5	SQUILLA 1:17
166:24 169:20	small 22:13 32:3	sought 111:16,18	specific 15:7,9	SRC 47:8 48:8
170:7	51:2 172:9	111:20 157:23	34:3 35:4 93:15	50:2 65:9 72:14
simple 71:4 172:1	213:7 229:6	souls 247:1	94:7	72:19 77:9,18

78:17 90:5,15 95:12 101:12 102:2 124:12 126:6,20 139:18 149:11 169:23 188:22,23 207:22 209:15 211:6,11 218:5 218:19 225:6 253:15 SRC's 100:8 231:10 237:12 stability 165:16 165:20 stabilize 134:1 137:24 staff 7:4,17 33:20 33:20 34:19,19 35:3,3,5,5,9 36:24 37:2 38:14 42:9,10 42:11 51:9 52:1 52:7,14 58:19 69:20 70:9,19 82:11 102:21 113:20 123:15 158:8,13 174:14 175:23 177:22 178:2 184:2,2,5 184:8 206:7 210:10 229:17 236:4,9 262:14 staffed 36:2 stage 98:12,12 stages 63:9 staggering 175:12 stake 104:7 stakeholders 48:5 73:13 96:13 99:6,18 121:17 159:2 223:10 stamp 73:9 stand 98:11 159:3 187:4 193:21 standard 158:18 standardized 158:14	standards 158:15 164:11 209:11 209:12 standing 237:10 Stanton 164:18 start 7:1 19:24 20:17,17 22:24 50:11 102:1 126:13 146:22 146:22 147:14 149:14 166:2,2 176:12 202:19 205:20 206:12 220:20 223:20 225:1,4 254:17 started 7:11 13:13 16:16 18:15 19:11 79:15 171:14 176:15 177:14 179:11 180:19,24 183:8 191:2 starting 19:16 50:16 192:5 226:19 starts 49:23 148:2 state 5:12 8:18 30:23 54:19 55:3,4 59:5 66:7 66:13,15,19 75:6 82:1,4 111:17,19 112:2 113:7,12 119:17 133:23 134:2 137:6 139:19 145:1 147:17,18 147:23 148:2 152:4,12 157:2 158:15 159:24 209:2 222:14 225:9,10 233:14 238:12 240:12 249:8 250:11,12 stated 6:16 62:7 80:19 83:13 84:15 93:21 129:10 236:23	237:13 241:2 statement 78:14 188:22,24 221:17 236:11 States 79:22 248:6 statewide 118:23 state's 48:20 75:3 status 42:17 44:5 45:7 175:1 230:1 stay 102:14 103:14 149:24 225:3 stayed 167:7 206:1 staying 168:16 stays 181:18 stem 39:6 stenographer 227:13 stenographic 263:7 step 62:22 114:10 122:20 142:19 142:23 145:20 145:20 165:24 167:10 168:22 169:8 stepped 144:16 145:19 stepping 144:22 steps 13:24 14:2,2 17:8 19:24 20:18,23 201:1 Stevens 175:5 sticking 26:14 28:20 stipulated 84:4 107:24 stipulations 134:17 stocked 129:18 stomach 236:7 stone 81:9 stones 253:5 stood 198:24	stop 21:6 31:24 54:7 58:10 70:17 120:18 147:13 159:3 172:13 208:24 220:19 224:5 232:19 stopped 13:6,6 221:16 stopping 82:14 stops 13:18 215:3 stories 204:14,16 storm 113:5 story 69:9 142:11 Stover 190:13 200:17,18 straight 177:18 225:11 straightforward 38:14 strategies 48:15 49:18,22 50:5,8 55:1 58:3 81:23 strategy 41:22 street 36:14 144:21 167:2,5 streets 120:11 131:14 strengths 111:20 stress 151:21 strict 161:22 stricter 237:5 strike 115:9 string 236:20 strip 37:16 38:3,6 strips 51:6 strong 56:17 57:1 84:18 100:18,18 100:21 117:2,19 117:21 161:21 stronger 112:13 strongly 201:20 structure 31:17 34:22 37:5 101:8 struggle 206:21 208:11 252:2	260:9 struggles 204:16 struggling 61:6 259:7 stubborn 183:6 stuck 19:21 106:16 student 47:24 50:6 55:19 56:3 57:21 58:2 84:11 113:10 116:21 117:19 137:19 173:18 173:20 174:5 177:15,17 180:9 180:23 181:10 181:17 182:5 192:13 193:10 194:4 195:4 196:18 197:5,14 199:14 200:24 205:18 210:6 226:6 248:1 249:10 students 47:5 48:1,23 49:1 50:7 51:15 52:11,22 53:10 53:14 56:7 57:3 57:13 60:14 78:9 84:19 112:23 117:21 118:3 119:23 120:5 121:4 122:4 123:14 129:22 131:5 137:8,13 156:15 157:11 160:1 163:13 164:8 165:7 170:12 175:8 177:19 178:2,6 180:2,7 180:14,18 181:12,18 182:4 182:9,11 192:11 192:16,18,22 193:4,7,8,14,15
---	---	--	---	--

193:24 195:5,7 195:9,13 196:13 197:11,17 198:2 198:6,16 199:24 200:3 201:3,22 202:13 203:10 203:15 204:2,4 204:21,24 205:5 206:7,8,15,23 210:19 212:10 212:10 223:3 226:15 230:21 231:2 243:6 244:7,21,22 245:1,5,7,9,12 246:10,13,23 248:20 252:20 253:15 254:14 254:17,20 258:24 259:9 260:12,21 261:8 261:14,22 student/adult 192:14 studies 153:17 154:2 250:16 study 55:5,7,10 55:16 56:7,21 66:4,10 67:3 111:19 135:20 153:13,18 198:13 244:17 252:22 stuff 24:22 30:4 40:12 105:20 subcontracted 27:16 subject 96:13 subjects 50:7 52:24 submitted 3:2 124:22 227:17 227:18 subsidize 218:21 subsidizing 208:24 substantially	152:22 suburban 57:5 230:2 238:20 suburbs 112:11 198:1 208:5 230:3 succeed 181:11 206:21 success 48:16 50:1 55:10 56:16 112:1 174:10 197:23 253:15,20 successful 49:19 49:21 50:8 53:21 55:6,11 55:18 58:1 130:18 158:7,12 181:20 241:21 successfully 243:20 sudden 13:2 254:19 suffer 49:5 124:8 suffered 154:22 suffering 262:5 sufficient 23:11 58:23 82:10 134:4 suggest 65:16 107:2 218:23 237:19 suggested 160:15 160:17 256:20 256:21 suggesting 66:22 256:18 suggestion 219:17 suggests 209:20 210:15 suicide 213:18 suitable 101:18 sum 153:2 summary 249:12 summer 10:15 19:4 20:4 22:15 23:7 60:11,15	60:18,20 193:13 193:16 215:9,12 215:13 252:12 252:13 summertime 8:13 super 208:21 superintendent 116:23,24 125:19 126:15 126:21,24 164:24 165:1 186:24 257:10 superintendents 56:23 103:17 116:21 Superintendent's 93:5 supervision 51:7 71:3,3 263:20 supply 133:11 support 41:18 48:13 50:22 52:13 56:20 61:2,10,12,17 69:20 70:9,19 111:17,21 112:6 112:10,17 113:2 113:8,16 114:3 114:4,9 153:4 158:8,16 164:6 170:24 174:6,9 174:14,20 176:19 183:2 191:2,24 193:21 193:23 197:5 199:7 200:22 201:2,18,20,24 203:21,23 206:5 206:6,18 207:18 228:17 232:2 241:2 246:15 249:15 250:14 256:3 258:16,16 supported 198:17 248:6 256:1,13 supporting 88:23 supportive	175:10 206:9 supports 165:21 246:14,23 249:19 supposed 150:4 151:3 156:24 supposedly 248:20 Supreme 115:19 sure 14:20 16:7 17:17 18:18 23:8 30:11 32:18 36:15,24 42:20 43:11 46:15 64:11 67:3 91:8 92:21 116:12 126:3 133:14 141:3 148:13 186:19 187:5 203:8,14 223:1 225:3 235:15 248:9 surface 25:16 surprise 255:18 surprised 257:16 surprisingly 56:17 surrounding 55:20 65:14,20 113:1 survey 56:10 survive 113:15 260:9 Susan 151:1,1,10 suspect 57:22 sustain 214:20 sustainable 54:2 54:24 Sutton 247:11,13 swaps 209:17 sweat 142:16,17 225:16 swing 124:23 swirling 40:13 switch 162:14 system 10:8 27:13 54:6,8 68:24	77:11,12 81:1,2 87:17 114:8 123:17,22 125:16 126:10 132:7 137:13 139:16 140:3 162:16 163:12 165:5 192:16 197:20,22 208:13 217:12 217:24,24 221:14 223:14 223:17 244:5 245:20 systemic 132:4 systems 132:6 T T 263:1,1 ta 19:20 Tabernacle 166:7 table 5:8,9 30:17 30:19 73:2 102:13 110:2 114:24 115:6 123:12 127:17 141:9 144:12 157:21 179:6 261:6 tackle 161:23 tainted 161:8,9 take 6:19,20 7:4,8 10:9 13:7 33:24 34:1 36:23 41:13 49:24 59:14 67:20 88:21 89:1 99:2 99:16 112:3 114:10 131:17 139:19 140:15 141:22 143:6 175:16 178:4 181:10 187:4 199:17 204:8 205:1 208:5 222:1 225:20 227:8 240:17
---	---	--	---	---

252:21 259:10 taken 8:4 30:15 46:4 71:7 153:9 233:14 249:23 263:7 Takeover 249:8 takes 6:14 11:6 12:7 13:8,9 14:10 99:1,2 talented 192:7 talk 12:12 13:4,5 13:19 21:8,10 21:18 25:15 29:22 31:16 40:16 61:8 73:2 89:14 92:24 104:4,19 106:3 116:19 127:4 144:11 146:14 149:12,15,20,22 149:23 160:24 163:3,20 164:7 164:23 165:12 183:14 203:18 205:5 240:2 254:10 257:20 talked 75:21 105:10 125:13 144:22 145:15 153:23 160:12 160:13 165:14 167:9 talking 13:10 19:12 28:13 29:24 35:10 64:4 74:10 77:21,21 87:16 87:19 100:17 105:2,5 115:19 125:1 140:8,9 147:13 160:23 163:2 165:22 218:12 220:1 223:11,12 234:21 254:18 254:19 259:8 talks 106:14	155:10 253:1 tantamount 123:16 Tasco 1:17 5:20 5:21 7:13 8:1 9:24 10:9,13,19 10:22 11:2,19 12:7,14 15:16 15:19,23 16:9 16:13 17:22 18:5 19:9 23:12 23:16,20,23 24:2,5,9,14,24 25:3,7,17 27:14 27:21 28:3 29:7 40:23 106:13 Tasco's 14:22 17:18 task 17:8 121:14 taught 177:19 207:16 224:21 224:24 239:9 tax 3:12,14,20 4:4 4:4,8,10,12,19 4:19,21,24 5:2 112:13,15 114:12 144:17 188:13 208:20 209:3 216:12 217:2,7,11 218:15,15 219:3 219:5,9,10,13 219:15,19,24 220:6,17,19,21 220:23 221:23 238:3,7 241:24 259:1 taxed 139:22 220:17 221:24 taxes 3:24 4:4,15 4:19 54:12 104:18 112:16 112:24 119:13 138:23 139:24 141:11 142:24 143:2 171:11 172:3 173:1	207:18 209:2 217:8,14 219:17 219:22,23,23 220:21 222:8 225:15 232:24 233:9 240:22,24 242:4 260:5 taxing 128:22 139:5 taxpayer 211:13 taxpayers 118:20 145:21 259:19 teach 51:21 204:20 teacher 52:14 56:4 95:13 129:18 165:19 190:10 192:17 197:15 201:9 202:11 204:19 224:15 236:9 teachers 46:11 52:1,7,14 58:24 58:24 63:11 100:10,11 113:19 123:14 136:16 142:14 146:10 158:7 163:7,7,7,8,9,9 163:10,10,10,11 167:22 174:14 176:20 177:18 181:2,10 182:23 189:12 196:7 199:23 203:10 210:18 214:4 224:12,14 229:7 229:16 232:16 Teacher/Building 250:24 teaching 52:2 113:23 181:10 212:9 224:14,15 team 34:9,12 45:9 109:21 114:8 179:11 teamwork 51:22	tear 261:23 Tech 175:4 technicalities 225:19 technology 130:4 teen 182:17 teeth 96:24 115:20 telephone 169:5 tell 8:4 16:17 32:15 35:13 70:13 86:17 104:18 117:10 127:7 145:2 148:8 165:23 167:8 168:15 189:1,4 221:17 222:16 226:10 236:16 238:21 260:20 telling 16:1 62:20 149:18 tells 11:20 Temple 151:15 153:13 178:7 temporarily 236:15 temporary 220:5 220:19 ten 48:20 213:17 219:16,20 220:3 255:13 258:12 tenant 244:8 tend 45:14 153:19 tenure 36:2 term 131:13 132:2 152:13 161:22 162:7,8 162:15 236:12 241:10 terminate 97:9 terms 3:16 4:13 5:2 41:8,22 77:9 88:4,21 94:13 134:23 231:10 231:15 252:2 terrible 26:5	178:5 test 57:15 testified 60:21 203:11,15 testify 46:12 110:5,9,23 159:10,11 179:2 190:17 197:14 202:11 216:11 227:9 234:6,15 234:24 235:7 247:20 251:8 259:14 testifying 5:22 193:24 234:4 testimonies 197:12 testimony 5:19 46:2 58:14 59:7 65:6,18 75:2 81:22 82:15 83:18,23 84:15 85:19 90:9 109:22,23 111:3 114:23 115:6 128:6 132:22 145:9 151:4 159:14 170:16 173:24 178:18 185:7 189:5 190:19 197:1 202:7 227:12,17 227:17,22 231:4 231:9 235:14 239:20 243:2 Thaddeus 175:5 thank 5:4,18,21 23:22 29:5,5 30:6,7,9,20 31:8 45:18,19,20 46:3,12,13,17 46:18,19,20,24 58:11,13 62:24 62:24 63:3,5 64:12,13,15,17 67:9 69:4,4 73:18,21 78:20
--	---	--	---	--

78:21,22 80:15 85:18,18,21,23 86:3,6,7 90:2,3 90:11,16,22 91:1 92:4 93:8,9 93:14 95:2 96:6 96:6,7 99:23 100:1,2 102:10 102:11 106:21 106:23 107:1 108:3,4,13 109:8,14,16,17 109:19,19,20,21 111:2,4 114:15 114:16,19 118:8 118:9,18 124:1 124:5,9 125:6,8 126:8 127:21,22 127:23,24 128:1 128:7 132:17,18 132:19,20,23,24 138:3,9 141:1 143:23 144:6,9 145:23,24 146:2 146:5 150:1,2 150:21,22 151:8 151:9 155:19,20 155:21 156:1,6 156:12 159:6,7 166:13,15,17,23 169:19,20 170:6 170:7,14,17,19 173:14,15,21 175:24 176:7 178:12,15,16,17 180:1,4 181:21 181:23 184:12 184:14,17,18,18 184:19,21,22 185:8,11 189:22 189:24 190:5,6 190:6,8,19 193:22 194:1,17 195:17,18 196:22,24 197:1 197:6 199:10,11 200:11,15,16,21	202:3,5 205:16 207:3,4,8,11,11 207:14 211:18 211:19,22,24 212:2,6 215:17 215:18,19,19,22 215:23 216:6,8 216:23 221:2,3 221:3 226:2,22 226:23,24 227:7 227:9,10,20,23 228:1 230:22 233:21 234:2,3 234:3,15 235:10 235:10,17 239:6 239:7,8 242:16 242:17,18,24 243:3,10 247:7 247:8,9,10,18 247:19 250:21 250:22,23 251:12 259:4,6 259:7,10,14 262:7,9,12,13 262:13,17 thanking 202:20 205:11 thanks 175:22 179:5 181:24 184:5 191:24 211:20,20 thing 10:12 12:21 26:11 36:6 46:15,16 71:15 104:3 105:2 118:6 124:14 142:2 143:9 148:4,4 149:18 151:20 153:24 160:5 167:11,12 169:9,14 173:13 218:23 220:2 224:2,3,6 228:7 229:15 230:7 236:14 258:20 things 6:21,22 7:5 7:8 38:14 39:1,2	40:14 41:14,24 75:17 77:20 79:12 105:4 116:12 142:1 143:7 144:18 145:8 146:22 149:13 154:16 155:4 160:3,24 165:12,15 166:4 168:13 183:12 183:13 208:4 211:14 213:6 226:18 252:6,19 253:22 254:18 254:18 think 6:17 11:9 11:11 17:17,19 18:2,7,18 19:2 20:23 21:1 22:21 23:13 35:6 63:8,18 65:7,21 66:18 71:15 74:13,20 74:23 75:17 77:10 80:2 81:2 85:6 87:18 91:7 96:20 98:6,18 98:19 100:16 102:2 103:11 105:10,13,14 106:8 115:11,15 116:15,21 125:15 126:10 136:7 138:11,13 140:4,4 141:6 141:23 144:14 145:15,17,18,22 146:7 147:15 151:24 152:4,5 155:18 171:16 171:19,22 177:11 181:3 182:24 190:1 193:9 195:9,12 195:14 196:12 214:6,24 215:11 222:18 225:1,14	225:20 226:14 226:16,17 232:2 232:11 236:10 252:17 253:20 254:10 255:23 257:18 thinking 74:8 third 53:11 60:24 155:6 160:20 192:3 193:22 201:6 236:5 Thirdly 219:13 Thirty 30:9 Thomas 33:21 93:2 212:9 216:1,5 221:5,5 221:6,9,10 226:24 thoroughness 162:4 thought 27:12 78:10,12 89:1 101:24 135:3 144:20,23 175:3 182:23 195:15 196:10 254:1 thoughts 78:5 thousand 142:7,8 150:13 thousands 48:14 120:20 166:6 thread 197:12 threat 114:1 three 12:2 25:17 27:8 39:4 50:16 71:1 110:14 116:11 135:16 163:14 185:20 188:22,23 204:11 213:12 228:23 three-year-old 97:19 threshold 187:12 187:13,17 188:1 thresholds 187:9 throwing 253:5	thrown 144:21 ties 246:21 tile 26:7,7 till 13:22 15:4 212:16 Tilman 178:23 179:9,11,14,15 Tim 178:23 time 6:14 7:9,19 8:9 9:20 15:1,5 15:5 16:6,14 18:17 24:5,7 29:9 34:1,1 40:24 41:19 46:1 56:2 58:9 59:8 62:6,12 73:10 87:6 110:18,22 115:9 115:18 118:2 120:23 135:24 143:21 145:2,6 145:20 150:6 159:6 163:1,5 166:14 173:8 178:13 180:1 183:7,17 185:22 188:8,18 193:23 197:6 198:21 199:10,18 204:22 205:3,7 205:12 208:2 212:18 215:2,24 225:1 226:5,7,8 234:15 248:3 251:19 252:10 255:15,17 259:17 timeline 23:3 timer 110:18 times 40:11 61:3 71:1 84:21 111:16 127:4 149:7,7 176:24 177:7 188:23 203:12 246:1 timing 164:17 Timothy 179:15
---	---	---	---	--

Tina 227:2 228:2 247:11,12	217:15	transportation 137:7 245:15	147:19,21	258:24
tired 219:21	totally 81:20 83:6 83:8	trauma 197:18	171:14 199:17	twofold 133:20 134:12
220:8,17	touched 100:6	254:9,12	200:5	two-thirds 48:17 244:14
title 82:16 223:4	tough 119:19 146:19 149:7	traumatized 254:7	trying 6:5 9:14 13:9 21:15	two-tiered 137:13
249:8	Tower 28:21	travel 49:1	39:18 40:19	two-way 223:6,8
titles 2:12	town 39:5 57:6 172:14 186:9	travels 58:22	45:5 65:2 74:4	two-year-old 97:18
today 5:5 28:4 83:19 91:14	Townsend 247:14 247:16,19,21	treat 236:8	74:10,11 90:17	Tyesha 227:2 229:11
100:9 112:6	track 17:11,12 183:5	treated 183:9	91:9 97:1,17,20	type 25:5 74:11 74:12 168:23
113:21 128:12	traditional 153:15,20	tremendous 66:14 70:8	140:19 147:15	244:12 246:7
133:20 151:17	train 172:10	tremendously 192:14	167:2 224:2	254:21 256:4
156:13 169:2	training 52:7 116:8 122:20	trepidation 144:18	Tuesday 55:16	types 246:10
170:24 174:6	transactional 44:10,10	tricks 147:9	189:2 236:1	typically 35:9 36:21 37:8,19
181:22 184:13	transactions 37:7 37:10	tried 135:14,18 161:2 256:13	Tuesdays 42:3	38:10 52:4
185:8 194:21	transactor 38:21	trips 133:9	tune 141:11	Tyra 227:1 231:1
196:12 202:11	transcript 263:8 263:18	triumphs 204:16	turn 41:9 55:1 118:2 178:11	
202:19 207:20	transfer 47:16	trouble 60:24 136:3	183:12 191:21	U
221:16 228:4	transfers 164:14 246:11	troubled 79:14 182:16	206:16,24 244:9	ultimately 36:22 125:15 139:15
235:18 252:13 252:14	transform 47:8 246:11	troubling 7:15 79:8,9 96:22	turnaround 124:24 136:6 244:13,24	unable 203:20
today's 187:22	transformation 151:20,23	truant 53:13 179:20	turnarounds 165:22	unabled 180:22
toddler 111:12	152:17 155:11	true 6:8 27:9 72:8 72:8 73:11	turned 136:8	unacceptable 81:20 83:1
toilets 120:7	198:9 248:10	75:15,16,17	turning 48:10	104:20 121:10
told 16:23 18:15 21:10,24 27:2	transformed 174:23	77:8	turnover 52:5 165:16	222:20
62:12 76:7	transforming 47:2	truly 65:11 204:7 242:6 243:15	turns 38:19	unanswerable 217:18
82:23 124:21,24	transparency 18:24 54:22	trust 75:24 78:4 169:11	tutoring 56:1	unanticipated 147:22
127:13 144:19	78:16 92:9	trusting 44:16 197:16	twelve 48:20	uncertainty 104:8 104:10 188:8
145:1,3 162:23	transparent 22:1	truth 62:20 199:2	Twenty-five 87:3	204:3
164:13 167:10		truthful 62:21	two 5:5 11:6	uncle 236:18
183:20 184:7		try 7:9 36:15,19 61:9 96:24	12:20 19:5 27:8	unconscionable 123:19 124:6
208:8 228:23		99:11 115:16	42:4 52:2 66:5	190:3
229:1 244:10		133:12 139:7,13	67:6 69:2 71:1	undercredited 180:15
245:2 257:15,17		139:14 141:19	81:11 82:1,5,21	underfunded 75:3 133:22
tolerated 158:22		141:24 142:24	97:4 131:17,23	134:14 222:11
Tom 91:7 161:12			133:4 149:21	underfunding
tomorrow 255:4			151:11 152:1	
tonight 240:1			153:9 157:24	
tools 52:7			176:13 180:2	
top 13:10 14:7 31:22 120:15			185:4 191:9,16	
133:10 139:11			194:5 199:17	
160:15,21			201:1 211:14,17	
Torch 237:21			216:7,17,24	
torn 26:5			220:18 238:3	
total 68:20 121:7				

147:6	unique 56:6	urging 114:3	victim 131:7	147:20
underperforming	unison 149:9	use 3:11,14 28:22	view 82:22 84:1	wages 209:8
147:2 210:1	unit 257:20,21,23	49:9,22 53:2	174:19 211:9	260:8
understand 13:16	Unite 259:16	76:17 129:20	240:9 241:9	wait 13:22 17:22
13:17,23,24	United 79:21	134:17 144:15	243:11	20:5 92:2 109:5
14:22,23 17:11	159:20,21 161:3	175:9 216:15	views 198:3	138:5,7 141:15
17:15 19:19	161:15 247:4	217:23 237:11	violations 136:9	167:4,5 212:16
22:4 25:5 29:23	248:6	245:17	violence 69:9,15	234:11
30:17 34:23	units 257:24	uses 49:20 242:8	200:2 232:8,9	waiting 57:18
67:23 92:7	258:2	usually 35:3	232:10,12	91:23 175:5
101:6,21 102:8	universally	112:20	violent 254:21	218:11
119:16 121:2	154:20	U.S 175:13	virtue 48:8	waiver 50:23
128:19 137:11	University 178:8	198:23	vision 202:2	wake 168:22
138:19 147:11	179:24 209:5		214:15	232:18,18
148:6,21 152:12	212:9 222:5	V	visit 205:2	walk 70:6 167:19
162:7,12 198:24	unleveled 214:8	vacation 188:17	visited 47:19	167:24 168:3
199:1 238:24	unmanageable	valid 222:13	visiting 84:20	169:1
248:22	57:19	value 120:5 171:1	visitors 180:7	walked 18:16
understanding	unmotivated	216:12 217:2	182:4	123:5 177:9
64:3 76:6 91:10	206:4,17	218:14	vital 171:18	226:11,12
108:17 162:2	unnamed 248:21	valued 104:9	vitality 204:6	want 5:23 6:19
164:5 231:11	unpaid 141:10	146:6 249:24	vocabulary 50:21	7:9,14 12:12
undesirable 244:7	unrealistic 20:21	values 51:21	voice 49:6 249:22	13:11 15:24
unemployment	81:21	241:24	voices 147:18	18:7,8 24:2,14
120:24 260:6	unsafe 134:6	varies 84:16,18	203:18 204:2	24:15,19 25:18
unencumbered	unsupervised	variety 51:14	226:21	25:19,22 26:9
213:4	70:21	53:21 93:19	volunteer 142:4,8	35:7 36:5 39:23
uneven 53:9	unsustainable	various 7:7 32:4	143:17 236:1,3	40:16,23 73:5
79:24	243:18	34:13 207:18	236:17 243:5	73:11 76:4 77:3
unfair 80:1	upcoming 175:18	250:15	volunteering	87:8 91:24
unfairly 240:24	Upland 136:23	vast 119:7	133:8 146:5	96:11,18 98:1
unfamiliar 49:2	Upper 253:9	vastly 137:21	volunteers 142:6	99:11,14 102:14
unfortunate	upset 180:20	vault 139:3	150:14	102:16 106:18
240:18	240:23	209:16	vote 104:16	115:22 130:18
unfortunately	upstairs 106:12	vegetable 261:15	119:14 144:22	130:20 131:1
34:17 63:8	115:13	Velazquez 190:12	161:3 247:4	133:14 139:6,7
161:7 241:5	uptake 69:15	195:20,21	voted 76:8 144:17	139:10 141:2
unified 166:10	urban 57:5,14	vendors 186:11	voter 259:19	142:3 143:9,13
union 52:16 63:11	154:2 210:5	vent 117:7,11	votes 171:24	144:11,15 145:2
64:5 119:3	240:7	venting 29:7	261:24	145:8 146:4
121:15 185:6,12	urge 58:4 112:6	Vernon's 213:17	voting 211:5	147:19 148:14
185:18 186:8,9	201:20 205:3	version 148:8	VP 186:16	148:21,21,23
187:3 188:2,3,7	215:14 246:20	versus 68:14	vulnerable	149:3,5 150:18
188:19 256:2	259:20	147:11 148:22	119:20	151:7,17,20
unions 62:8 74:12	urgency 64:22	210:7		155:16 157:6
121:13 139:10	128:19	vibrant 204:12	W	159:10,11 160:5
147:4 209:9	urgent 171:8	Vice 156:9	wage 3:19 122:20	163:3 164:23

167:14 168:13	45:6,8,11	64:14 79:4	White 29:11	207:1 231:4
168:18 171:2	Watson 173:21	85:20 90:24	Whitehorn 207:7	wondering 60:5
175:17 177:1	178:19 227:15	99:24 111:2	207:13,15,15	63:17 101:22
180:1 183:24	waves 185:20	114:22 118:17	211:22	188:9 189:19,20
185:7 194:7	way 6:6 27:5	127:16 128:4	whittling 20:18	wont 189:4
196:19 200:11	29:13,18 30:18	170:15 173:21	wide 154:23	wood 28:15 29:2
201:4,13 202:19	34:15 36:1 38:1	181:2 190:17	widespread 48:16	word 96:9 119:1
213:13 217:5,23	38:7,23,24 39:2	207:11 227:10	wife's 253:6	205:2
219:1 224:6	39:17 53:23	234:9 239:15	wilderness 147:19	words 144:16
228:6 232:19,20	62:22 65:13	243:1 247:15,16	willed 12:17	183:23 217:3
233:7 234:15	67:14 78:6,7,8,8	welfare 112:19	William 1:13	wore 111:12
241:17,17	84:11 87:9,12	121:21	114:20,21 115:3	work 7:18 9:11,15
244:11,18	103:22 104:23	well-considered	212:20 216:17	9:16 11:15
256:24 257:18	112:9,19 119:21	211:16	Williams 173:19	15:15 19:3
258:16	121:4 125:22,24	well-functioning	178:19 227:14	21:16,24 26:13
wanted 58:15	139:8 140:7	134:5	willing 56:24 72:3	26:18 27:24
60:16 87:21	142:19 148:18	went 57:20 84:8	72:23 73:2	29:19 33:13,21
88:17,21 89:1	149:17 158:24	115:10 116:22	79:12 132:8	36:13 39:9
98:7 150:12	161:11 169:4	126:19 127:12	183:4 194:20	41:12,24 50:10
157:10,14 160:6	186:20 187:6,22	139:19 142:3	232:23 233:1,2	51:18,19 52:8
178:8 196:6	199:24 200:6	144:20 174:11	willingness 79:20	52:16 57:10
226:9,9 230:5	204:20 205:1	176:22 177:17	winners 54:14	61:4 82:5 84:2
252:24 253:23	221:21 228:17	212:18 219:10	wiring 120:7	87:17 97:11,21
254:23	232:24 237:23	228:11 248:5	wise 35:18 190:11	116:3,5,14
wanting 228:21	237:23 244:13	weren't 183:3	197:4,4	120:2 122:7,13
wants 121:11	254:15 256:16	West 39:6 68:14	wisely 134:16	123:15,16
139:2 228:22	260:11 261:13	229:11 235:3,16	wish 23:13,18	140:11 141:19
233:4	ways 49:15 52:10	235:20 236:2	145:11,11,11	158:16,21 159:1
war 123:17	80:9 157:24	western 148:1	194:8,9	161:21 163:22
warning 52:22	218:16 231:24	238:20	withdraw 166:1	169:14 171:22
wars 176:18	233:9 258:23	we'll 18:17 87:11	withdrawn 161:7	183:23 187:8
wary 136:9	weaknesses 53:4	99:23 173:19	witness 5:8,9	189:3,20 193:4
wasn't 9:1 21:13	wealthier 54:18	178:22	30:17,19 102:13	193:12,18
29:10 117:15	wearing 111:11	we're 22:11 23:9	144:12 179:6	194:20 206:1,13
177:2 200:9	weather 236:15	30:13 46:10	witnessed 176:16	207:21 213:6
206:3 214:15	weathered 240:15	91:21,22 125:1	176:18 189:4	214:11 256:13
228:16 251:19	website 155:10	139:13 140:5	witnesses 5:9	256:17,18
waste 162:17	Wednesday 1:7	173:23 190:9	45:23	worked 12:10
waster 7:19	week 19:2,12,16	232:22 257:11	woes 130:17	29:11 77:9,10
wasting 177:4	42:3,7 177:7	we've 6:1 11:14	woman 123:2	79:21 158:21
187:20	213:16	67:12 80:15	women 120:20	207:19 213:17
watch 177:23	weekend 70:3,7	88:23 133:11,13	174:8 191:21	214:14 215:4
watched 168:5	weeks 12:2	169:24 192:20	230:24	232:17 256:4
watching 177:23	105:16 188:6	253:17 259:8	wonder 85:9,10	worker 261:3
223:18,19,20	196:2	whatnot 139:11	100:7 233:14	workers 27:17
water 25:18 120:8	weight 172:18	whatsoever	wonderful 154:21	109:2 118:23
Waterfront 45:3	welcome 5:18	127:16	175:21 176:1	119:23 121:9

122:4,24 124:22 209:8,10 260:4 260:8 262:3 working 6:1,24 11:15 13:16 18:19,22 19:11 20:20 21:14,23 22:5,8 42:10 75:18 103:1 141:17 149:10 158:8 168:15,18 169:6 185:14 194:13 208:13 214:10 241:20 244:4 works 33:14 58:10 71:18 81:18 87:17 200:7 246:17 world 168:9,12 182:15 193:12 196:9 198:3 200:7 201:24 worn 111:15 worry 261:11 worse 48:19 244:16 worst 141:21 176:19 243:21 252:4 worth 43:7 133:18 177:3 212:12 wouldn't 63:14 104:19 189:1 200:9 220:11 222:6 237:22,23 wound 219:11 wrap 61:15 195:12 wreck 172:10 wrestle 204:7 write 222:17 223:7 writing 169:24 170:4 wrong 88:14	115:17 146:22 172:17 wrote 151:18 169:10 www.strehlowc... 263:24 X X 41:18 X-number 80:4 Y Yanoff 110:24 111:4,6,8,8 114:17 yard 41:2,3,4,10 44:4,13 yeah 34:24 35:23 38:4,4 91:18 92:24 95:1 98:6 105:5 year 2:19,22 3:2 4:16 20:4 23:17 48:23 59:12,13 60:23 62:6 66:11,15 75:4 75:22 76:13 114:4 116:7 119:8 121:16,24 122:9,11,23 133:12 134:18 135:10 136:4,13 136:23 137:16 143:19 144:15 160:16 163:6 164:9,13,22 176:16 192:2,3 193:20 199:21 200:23 201:6 202:16,24 203:17,19 212:19 213:10 214:14 219:20 219:24 228:20 237:8 244:9 252:4,20 yearly 248:17 years 2:15,24 4:1	10:10 11:6 12:7 12:20 13:9 17:24 19:13 26:4 27:8 28:19 42:19,24 47:12 47:18,20 57:23 59:24 66:5 67:6 80:4,6 87:2 88:24 103:10 113:9 116:17 119:3,4 121:11 137:17 146:18 146:19 153:2 165:4,6 176:14 181:19 185:16 191:5,9,16 192:6 194:5 196:14 204:11 207:17,19 208:10 212:4 213:17 219:16 219:20 220:3,18 228:23,23 238:3 238:18 239:11 249:13 252:4 257:8 259:8,8,9 259:9,9 year's 236:4 237:1 yelling 23:17 yesterday 46:14 58:16 59:8 60:10 65:8 69:8 82:15 101:5 103:16 113:23 163:1 236:5 253:24 257:15 yesterday's 107:23 yield 12:13,14 York 135:23 245:23 246:2 young 26:21 60:19 69:9 71:6 72:7 80:24 84:21 85:11 115:8 116:3,4	116:10,13 131:1 174:8 175:15 179:19 191:21 196:10 198:18 199:6 younger 183:2 youngster 61:2,10 youngsters 156:23 youth 116:8 192:9 193:19 y'all 117:7,12 Z Zeelyna 190:11 197:4 ZIP 230:1 Zoning 38:9 \$ \$1 123:6 \$1,385 121:22 \$1.6 121:21 \$10,000 54:15 65:19 \$10.6 122:19 \$100,000 28:17 129:16 \$12,000 80:1 \$120,000 7:22 16:1 \$15 122:12 \$150,000 126:23 \$156 61:22 62:3 62:16 \$2.6 129:17 138:20 160:2 \$20,000 122:23 \$262,000 8:3 \$28,000 119:8 \$3,000 187:9 188:1 \$3.3 121:18 \$331 209:16 \$4,000 122:21 \$4,300 55:19 \$468 139:1 \$470 219:6 221:1	\$472 238:10 \$500 225:22 \$58 62:13 \$60 121:16 \$7,000 80:3 \$75 62:9 \$800 147:22 \$94 74:9,9,23 75:11,13 139:9 171:12,15 188:13 211:9 0 09 9:1 1 1 45:24 121:20 130:10 185:20 211:17 221:24 222:4 225:20,20 262:17 1:04 46:6 10 9:2 20:18 129:13 186:14 219:19 220:2 245:7 10:42 1:7 100 20:22 174:23 177:16 206:2 219:20 101 213:9 11 202:17 228:20 11th 180:9 199:16 11:30 46:4 111,000 238:7 115 163:6 12 8:2,11 42:24 47:20 66:24 94:18 116:23 12th 182:5 222:22 1201 118:11,19,22 121:9 127:15 185:1,13 190:2 120164 2:8,13 120164,120165 1:19 120165 2:8,16 120166 1:19 2:8
---	--	---	---	---

2:18	124:22 188:14	3	6,500 118:23
120167 1:20 2:10	188:15	3 3:7 110:17	6:14 262:18
2:20	2.6 140:17	121:20 129:14	60 140:1 153:11
120173 1:19 2:8	20 150:4 207:17	163:9	600 238:4
3:10	20,000 164:8	3,000 187:12,13	634 259:16
120174 1:19 2:9	200 245:18	3:30 150:4	64 59:17 60:1
3:18	2000 115:4	30 20:20 22:21	165:5 244:8
120175 1:19 2:9	2001 77:13 162:9	23:9 127:11	66 163:7
3:23	255:22 256:11	188:14 254:20	7
120230 1:19 2:9	2002 152:23	31 163:10	7 55:11 129:11
4:14	2007 162:10 249:8	32BJ 118:10,20	70 209:1
121 163:7	249:11	118:22 119:7	74 130:7
13 94:18,20 119:3	2009 7:21 8:4	121:9,17 127:14	8
130-some 20:23	10:15 15:24	184:24 185:13	8 163:10
137 14:2 20:18	17:20 176:15	190:2	8:30 42:3 203:12
138 13:24 17:8	2010 10:13 55:3	321 186:11	80 193:16
14 94:21,24 122:3	122:1,3	323 163:11	81 220:24
262:17	2011 189:10 219:5	33 137:2 254:17	82 55:5,5,11
142 258:11	2011/2012 121:16	34 254:20	85 167:12
145 191:21	2012 1:7 3:2 8:2	38 14:2 212:4	9
15 164:8 218:23	161:12 184:4	39 119:4	9 1:7 129:13
15,000 86:19,20	185:20,21,22	4	164:20
156 139:9	195:6 248:22	4 139:1	90 191:3
1563-A 3:8	2012/2013 122:11	4-some 141:11	91 69:13
16th 29:1	2013 2:15,17,19	4:33 234:17	94 114:14 139:2
17 129:9 163:8	2:24 4:2,17 8:15	40 47:13 48:22	143:4
180:14	186:5 195:6	59:21 136:20	95 220:24
17-year-old	2014 103:19	137:1,15 160:16	99 130:15
199:14	2015 18:6	164:8,21 165:6	
18 188:21	2017 2:24	207:19 244:9	
19 185:16 196:14	2018 2:15	248:21	
19-1300 4:2,17	202 238:5	400 1:6 186:14	
19-1500 3:18	21 180:15	43rd 54:9	
19-1508 3:20	21st 241:20	44 126:15	
19-1800 4:7,20	218 139:12	47th 235:24	
19-1806 3:10	22 163:8	5	
193,000 47:4	23,000 65:22	5:30 234:7,8,10	
1980 29:11	24 59:24 137:16	234:14	
1981 115:7	249 86:23	5:46 234:19	
1989 151:13	25 103:10 188:14	50 147:9 163:9	
1990 29:12	237:18	50,000 80:24 81:4	
1992 3:7	26 47:12	504 116:7	
2	26,000 65:22	6	
2 164:19	27 123:9	6 59:22	
2,700 118:24	270 137:3		
119:1 121:9	29 189:10		