

Committee of the Whole
May 16, 2018

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 16, 2018
10:26 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILLS: 180162, 180163, 180164, 180165, 180166,
180167, 180168, 180178
RESOLUTIONS: 180185

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

3 We are going to start now.

4 This is a Public Hearing of the
5 Committee of the Whole regarding Bills No.

6 180162, 180163, 180164, 180165, 180166, 180167,
7 180168, 180178 and Resolution No. 180185.

8 Mr. Stitt, please the read the titles of
9 the Bills and Resolution.

10 THE CLERK: Bill No. 180162: An
11 Ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for the six
12 Fiscal Years 2019-2024, inclusive.

13 Bill No. 180163: An Ordinance to adopt
14 a Fiscal 2019 Capital Budget.

15 Bill No. 180164: An Ordinance adopting
16 the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2019.

17 Bill No. 180165: An Ordinance amending
18 Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code,
19 entitled "School Tax Authorization," to
20 authorize the Board of Education to impose a
21 real estate tax for the School District of
22 Philadelphia, under certain terms and
23 conditions.

24 Bill No. 180166: An Ordinance amending
25 Section 19-1301.1 of The Philadelphia Code,

1 entitled "Homestead Exclusion," to increase the
2 amount of the homestead exclusion, under certain
3 terms and conditions.

4 Bill No. 180167: An Ordinance amending
5 Chapter 19-1400 of The Philadelphia Code,
6 entitled "Realty Transfer Tax," to increase the
7 rate of realty transfer tax, under certain terms
8 and conditions.

9 Bill No. 180168: An Ordinance amending
10 Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia Code,
11 entitled: Wage and Net Profits Tax," by revising
12 certain tax rates, under certain terms and
13 conditions.

14 Bill No. 180178: An Ordinance amending
15 Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia Code,
16 entitled "Wage and Net Profits Tax," by revising
17 certain tax rates, under certain terms and
18 conditions.

19 Resolution No. 180185: Resolution
20 providing for the approval by the Council of the
21 City of Philadelphia of a Revised Five Year
22 Financial Plan for the City of Philadelphia
23 covering Fiscal Years 2019 through 2023, and
24 incorporating proposed changes with respect to
25 Fiscal Year 2018, which is to be submitted by

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

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

10 Today we continue the Public Hearing of
11 the Committee of the Whole to consider the bills
12 read by the clerk that constitute proposed
13 operating and capital spending measures for
14 Fiscal 2019, a capital program and a forward
15 looking capital plan for Fiscal 2019 through
16 Fiscal 2024.

17 Today we will hear testimony from the
18 public, the most important aspect of what we do
19 here. Because at the end of the day, it is your
20 money. Thank you.

21 Our public testimony ground rules will
22 go as follows. When your name is called, I am
23 going to ask you to come up. You are going to
24 be given three minutes to testify. So if you
25 have long testimony, please summarize it. But

1 you can hand it in, and we will make sure that
2 it's read into the record. There is going to be
3 a timer. When you hear the timer, please,
4 conclude your remarks.

5 And welcome. And we look forward to
6 hearing what your testimony is today.

7 Mr. Stitt, please call the first names.

8 THE CLERK: Omar Barlow, Jason
9 Corosanite -- sorry if I get your name wrong.
10 Alison McDowell, Darryl Bundrige.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Ms. McDowell,
12 is that you? Okay. Just wanted to make sure
13 before we call the next name. Take your time.
14 No rush.

15 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.
17 You guys self-select who will go first.

18 MR. BARLOW: Okay. I will go first.

19 Good morning, Members of City Council.
20 My name is Omar Barlow. I'm the principal and
21 CEO of Eastern Academy Charter School. My
22 purpose today is to provide public comment
23 referencing the school funding measures in the
24 City of Philadelphia's Fiscal Year 2019 Budget.

25 Eastern Academy Charter School has a

1 total population of 300 students. Our school is
2 founded on many principles, one being early
3 college education. Students at Eastern have the
4 opportunity to earn college-level credit as
5 early as their tenth grade year. The results
6 speak for themselves with hundreds of acceptance
7 letters into Morehouse, Cabrini, Temple
8 University, Hampton, North Carolina A&T and many
9 other accredited institutions in and outside
10 Pennsylvania.

11 As it stands, the School District of
12 Philadelphia's budget is now in review. As City
13 Council reviews this budget with the current
14 standards and measurements given on a city and
15 state level, members of City Council should note
16 their decision to fund public schools immensely
17 affects the operational needs of charter
18 schools.

19 On a state level, understanding that
20 House Bill 97 has a tremendous impact on charter
21 schools funding which seeks to strip funds from
22 the special needs budget is unreal. Even more
23 illusory is the School District of Philadelphia
24 has asked this Council for more than
25 \$700 million for the budget where a good portion

1 of the budget is used or serves as a pass
2 through for the 88 charter schools.

3 Charter school activities make up a
4 substantial amount of the School District of
5 Philadelphia's budget. Honorable members of
6 City Council, I respectfully request that you
7 take a moment and ask yourselves what are we
8 spending our money on? What are we buying into
9 where there are so many charter schools suing
10 the School District of Philadelphia for its
11 charter school offices pattern of unfair
12 conduct? Why are coalitions forming all over
13 the City for the specific purpose of fighting
14 the School District's charter school's office
15 policies?

16 Respectfully, I believe the people of
17 Philadelphia deserve to know exactly what you
18 are funding. Reevaluating the charter school
19 office's practices and finding out why so much
20 dissension exists between this office and
21 Philadelphia charter schools ought to be of
22 utmost importance to your decision making with
23 this budget, especially where 75,000 children
24 are educated in charter schools are concerned.
25 This Council has a history of challenging the

1 spending practices of the School District
2 especially on charter schools.

3 It is time once again to ask these
4 questions. Use your power to ensure our
5 schools, all of them, are funded fairly and
6 responsibly. You have the power to do this
7 again. Please, for the sake of our charter
8 schools, make those inquiries and tailor your
9 generosity accordingly.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. COROSANITE: Good morning. Good
12 morning.

13 I am Jason Corosanite, cofounder of
14 String Theory Schools. Today I am here in
15 support of increased funding for the School
16 District of Philadelphia.

17 String Theory Schools stands shoulder to
18 shoulder with the superintendent, the Mayor in
19 requesting additional support for our schools.
20 It takes a lot to educate students in our City.
21 And the number of students with higher needs is
22 rapidly expanding. We see that every day with
23 our Renaissance School, which is one of a
24 handful of neighborhood catchment charter
25 schools in the City.

1 As a charter school leader, I know that
2 charters are not a magic solution. The number
3 of charter schools and the way that which they
4 grew was far from ideal. However, I do think
5 there are ways to have some additional measured
6 growth that significantly benefits the City and
7 the district. And I would like to see a much
8 closer working relationship between existing
9 schools and the charter school office.

10 There are three potential ways I see to
11 lessen the burden and cost of charter schools.

12 Number one, create and grow charter
13 schools with local catchment areas. I know
14 there are charter schools that have preferences
15 for certain ZIP codes. But one of the things we
16 have learned from our experience with
17 Renaissance School is that the impact you can
18 have on a community when there is a seat for
19 every child is impactful. With a local
20 catchment, if you have lived in the
21 neighborhood, that is your school. I believe
22 this is the best and most efficient way of not
23 leaving the School District with stranded costs.
24 If there are any new charters approved in the
25 years ahead, I think this is a great option.

1 Number two, I think it's possible to
2 have new charters actually contribute to the
3 cost of oversight and accountability by paying
4 for some shared services. For simplicity sake,
5 an annual fee of \$5,000 per charter school, for
6 example, would allow the district to develop a
7 larger support staff as new charters are created
8 and come online. This is a bold, unprecedented
9 concept. And I don't believe there's anything
10 under charter school law that prohibits this
11 type of arrangement.

12 Lastly, I am sure everyone is familiar
13 with the deferred maintenance cost associated
14 with district buildings. The most recent
15 facility condition assessment puts that figure
16 at around four and a half billion dollars. If
17 that is not alarming enough, the report details
18 how this number is going to grow by over a
19 billion more dollars in coming years.

20 These are just a few examples of
21 maintenances costs of City schools. Samuel
22 Powel School, \$5 million; Henry C. Lea
23 Elementary, \$14 million; Roxborough High School,
24 \$26 million; and Frankford High School,
25 \$56 million.

1 One of the greatest benefits of a
2 charter school is the ability to take on its own
3 debt and to be able to fund its own facilities.
4 If the district strategically worked to create a
5 new local catchment charter in an area facility
6 cost, this could result in significant positive
7 benefit for the district. And I am certainly
8 willing to work with City leaders in exploring
9 it.

10 Thank you for your time.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you so
12 much for your testimony.

13 MS. MCDOWELL: Hello, yes. My name is
14 Alison McDowell. I'm a parent of a Philadelphia
15 public school student.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Morning.

17 MS. MCDOWELL: I have copies around. I
18 would love it if you guys picked up my copies of
19 my testimony. It has an important back page.
20 Ridge-Lane Limited Partners is a merchant-bank
21 founded by former Pennsylvania Governor Tom
22 Ridge and R. Brad Lane. It's specializes in
23 corporate strategy and venture development for
24 private growth stage technology companies. It's
25 website claims that it is at the Apex of public

1 and private sectors with over 50 well connected
2 advisers to broker corporate government deals
3 and information technology, sustainability, real
4 estate and education.

5 According to their website,
6 Superintendent William Hite is one of
7 Ridge-Lane's senior education advisers. If Dr.
8 Hite is setting public education policy while
9 serving as an adviser to a powerful
10 merchant-bank, it is a serious conflict of
11 interest and must be immediately addressed. It
12 certainly makes interventions like the one
13 taking place against the will of the community
14 at Strawberry Mansion High School highly
15 suspect. It is a special concern that
16 Ridge-Lane's business model follows the social
17 impact, what works, triple bottom line venture
18 capital machine.

19 A machine whose profit opportunities are
20 fueled by austerity and public underfunding,
21 allowing it to cloak financial speculation in
22 social justice rhetoric. It's a machine that
23 breaks into public system so they can be remade
24 for private profit. It's a machine that used
25 poverty management as a profitable and

1 sustainable investment. This business model
2 advances -- that Ridge-Lane advances is a threat
3 to community control and public education.

4 If Philadelphia adopts a pay-for-success
5 approach to education finance, digital devices
6 will increasingly automate education. Online
7 learning management systems will supplant face
8 time with teachers and peers. Algorithms will
9 track, discipline and profile black and brown
10 students. And a majority of Philadelphia's
11 children will be callously managed as human
12 capital for the gig economy.

13 Public/private partnerships may appear
14 fiscally prudent, but laying out narrow metrics
15 of success will limit educational offerings to
16 those that service the needs of the contracts.
17 This approach requires instruction be reversed
18 engineered to generate data to assess impact.
19 And in this way, pay-for-success makes data
20 mining children a central focus, not
21 relationships or care, knowledge or humanity.

22 Does Mayor Kenney have public funding to
23 ensure all children have access to healthy safe
24 school? Does City Council? No? Well, perhaps
25 this is why our schools at this point have been

1 brought back under mayoral control. Venture
2 capitalists from investor circle impact PHL and
3 social capital market see dollars signs in our
4 children's trauma and crumbling buildings. And
5 with the passage of ESSA, predatory investors
6 are poised to benefit from Pennsylvania's
7 systematic investment in our schools. Merchant
8 banks like Ridge-Lane can package education
9 technology, social/emotional training,
10 wraparound services and, voila, private profit
11 extracted from the public trust in our children.

12 Please, we are saying we do not -- we
13 want our schools funded with public money and we
14 want you to secure pilots and restructure the
15 property tax abatements. In short, corporations
16 pay their fair share and investigate, please,
17 Dr. Hite's relationship to Ridge-Lane Limited
18 Partners. As a public school parent, I ask you
19 that.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you so
22 much for your testimony. We appreciate you
23 coming in today. Thank you.

24 THE CLERK: Darryl Bundrige, Deandra
25 Logan, Reynelle Brown-Staley.

1 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

3 Thank you for coming in. You all can
4 self-select who goes first.

5 MS. BROWN-STALEY: Good morning.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

7 MS. BROWN-STALEY: On behalf of the
8 parents, students and community members with
9 whom we work, thank you for the opportunity to
10 speak today. My name is Reynelle Brown-Staley.
11 And I serve as policy attorney for the Education
12 Law Center PA, an organization dedicated to
13 ensuring that all of Pennsylvania's children
14 have access to quality public education.

15 For decades, ELC has been leading the
16 fight for fuller and fairer state funding,
17 demanding more money for education from our
18 state legislators in each and every budget,
19 getting lawmakers in Harrisburg to distribute
20 funding based on current student need rather
21 than entrenched political power, and suing the
22 state for violation student's constitutional and
23 civil rights to a quality public education.
24 Based on our years of representing children and
25 working in schools, we know that Philadelphia's

1 public school students have been suffering for
2 decades of underfunding.

3 Many of the challenges we face in
4 Harrisburg will not be addressed until the state
5 fulfills its legal obligation to provide our
6 students the basic resources they need. We have
7 the opportunity with this budget and with all
8 the budgets that follow to show that our
9 students matter, and that Philadelphia's willing
10 to do whatever it takes to invest in our
11 children. I urge all of you here today to
12 demonstrate that commitment by approving the
13 Mayor's proposed education budget.

14 We know that the current system of
15 funding public education in our state does not
16 serve Philadelphia's public school students
17 well. A student ZIP code, skin color and family
18 wealth play a greater role in their education
19 funding than the educational needs of students
20 in their local district. Pennsylvania has the
21 widest gap between poor and wealthy school
22 districts of any state in the country. The
23 poorest districts, which often have the greatest
24 educational need, have 33 percent less to spend
25 than their wealthiest counterparts.

1 Pennsylvania schools are among the most
2 racially segregated in the nation. And in terms
3 of funding, they are among the most separate and
4 unequal with the state spending proportionately
5 more dollars on wealthier and whiter school
6 districts. We need look no more than ten miles
7 from here to see the tale of two cities that our
8 funding system creates.

9 School District of Philadelphia
10 struggles to budget \$15,000 per student per
11 year. Lower Merion spends twice as much.
12 Philadelphia's per student spending places it at
13 the bottom 20 percent of districts, 417th in the
14 state. Lower Merion ranks in the top 1 percent
15 at number four.

16 Based on community characteristics,
17 though, the rankings are reversed. Philadelphia
18 ranks in the top 10 percent of Pennsylvania
19 districts based on the burden its residents bear
20 to fund local schools. Lower Merion falls in
21 the bottom thirds based on tax effort.
22 Philadelphia has roughly seven times as many
23 economically disadvantaged students, five times
24 as many English-language learners, six times as
25 many Black students and five times as many Latin

1 ex students as Lower Merion. Yet,
2 Philadelphia's greater educational need and more
3 significant tax effort translate to half as much
4 funding per students than our suburban neighbor.
5 The issue is less that Lower Merion has too
6 much, but that Philadelphia doesn't have enough.

7 We know that current funding levels and
8 proposed budget don't come close to adequately
9 funding schools, our schools. Philadelphia
10 needs more than a billion dollars more or \$3,000
11 more per student. And so, we urge you to give
12 our students the money that they need.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you for
15 your testimony.

16 MR. BUNDRIDGE: Good morning.

17 My name is Darryl Bundrige. And I
18 proudly serve as the Executive Director of City
19 Year Philadelphia, a federally subsidized
20 national service program that has been serving
21 students, families and communities for the past
22 20 years in Philadelphia. This school year,
23 City year is partnering with 18 schools across
24 the City and the district. And in those schools
25 200 of our AmeriCorps members serve more than

1 12,000 students. I would like to thank City
2 Council for your support over these past 20
3 years. And please ask, that you continue to do
4 so at the current level.

5 City Year supports improvement by deeply
6 embedding in under-resourced communities,
7 providing our partner schools with a holistic
8 portfolio of research-based and data-informed
9 academic and social/emotional interventions,
10 after-school programs and activities that foster
11 a positive schoolwide climate. Throughout the
12 entire school day and year, City Year Corps
13 members support academic achievement in student
14 engagement both in and out the classroom to
15 develop and improving their graduation rates,
16 while also developing key employability and life
17 skills such as critical thinking, team work,
18 problem solving and decision making. This is
19 done through the a rigorous data collection and
20 review process where we partner with school
21 staff to regularly monitor student performance
22 and tailor the types of intervention and
23 supports provided.

24 What we are doing is having a positive
25 impact. Over the past two years, 61 percent of

1 students tutored by City Year learned English;
2 55 percent of those tutored in math have
3 improved their course grade from a D or an F to
4 a C or better. Additionally, 71 percent
5 receiving social/emotional skill development
6 supports have definitely improved their
7 social/emotional learning skills, including
8 self-awareness, self-management and relationship
9 development, which has been key skills for
10 success in the workforce.

11 Not only are our students improving, but
12 our AmeriCorps members are committed to giving
13 back to this community beyond their year of
14 service. Each year up to 75 percent of our
15 members remain in Philadelphia and serve as
16 educators, lawyers, social workers, healthcare
17 practitioners and non-profit professionals. A
18 longitudinal study done over City Year shows
19 that civic engagement through our alumni has
20 greater social impact. And our alumni are more
21 likely to develop lasting relationships with
22 people from different backgrounds as compared
23 with similar service-minded peers.

24 We also leverage our local federal and
25 private sector investments to fund this program.

1 Every local dollar invested here in Philadelphia
2 is matched by \$3 from private philanthropic and
3 federal resources. And a recent study from
4 Deloitte shows that our holistic services are
5 81 percent more cost effective than contracting
6 with individual organizations to provide the
7 same services.

8 City Council's current investment of
9 \$500,000 provides -- or matches federal and
10 private funding that goes beyond is going to
11 improve our community. A reduction in the
12 investment could be devastating to some of our
13 students and families we currently serve. We
14 ask that you continue to provide the support.

15 Thank you for your time.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you for
17 your testimony.

18 MS. LOGAN: Good morning, everyone.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

20 MS. LOGAN: My name is Deanda Logan.

21 And I'm a very proud principal of Cramp
22 Elementary School. I'm extremely and deeply
23 honored, humbled and grateful to sit before such
24 esteemed Councilpersons. And I am here on
25 behalf of Cramp students, parents, staff and

1 neighbors all of who have been positively
2 impacted in a myriad of ways by City Year, an
3 extraordinary program that makes children want
4 to come to school every day, makes them feel
5 special and good about themselves, makes them
6 feel smarter, makes them feel important and
7 makes them want to achieve and be successful.

8 Although it's our first year partnering
9 with City Year, already they are deeply, broadly
10 and indelibly entrenched in all that is Cramp
11 School. That is rare, particularly for a
12 program in its inaugural year, but such a
13 program as City Year. Our data, both
14 quantitative and qualitative demonstrates that
15 the City Year team of young, passionate,
16 committed tireless leaders have changed and
17 enriched the lives of our students in many ways.
18 And all for the better.

19 Our daily attendance rates have
20 increased, our positive school climate is
21 palpable even as you enter our school building,
22 our academic indicators of progress are on an
23 upward trajectory, and our suspension rate, the
24 lowest ever, showing that over 99.6 percent of
25 our students have never been suspended speaks

1 for itself.

2 Having a City Year team at Cramp has
3 been a win-win for everyone but comes with a
4 price. With budget constraints, it's been
5 extremely difficult to identify the \$88,000 cost
6 of funding a team for the coming school year.
7 However, when you consider that cost, and what
8 the asset of the team brings, the price is
9 actually dirt cheap. From a school budget
10 perspective, finding that 88,000, however,
11 requires making many, many gut wrenches
12 tradeoffs. That said, we are committed to
13 bringing the team back. The value they bring to
14 the students, the school and the community is
15 priceless, cannot be underestimated. A point
16 that both parents and staff have made quite
17 clear in their praise of this partnership,
18 students have as well.

19 One of our students, a little third
20 grader unsolicited wrote a letter about the
21 impact that City Year has had on her. This is a
22 wonderfully resilient child who has endured
23 trauma with a capital T many, many times,
24 unfortunately, in her short life. It's because
25 of students like her and many, many others that

1 we have in our school that our thriving despite
2 the overwhelming obstacles. They are achieving
3 academically. We need City Year to continue.

4 So on behalf of the entire Cramp School
5 community, we thank you Council people for
6 listening and we thank you for your support.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you all
8 so much for your testimony. Appreciate it.

9 THE CLERK: Heidi Allen, Karel Kilimnik,
10 Lisa Haver.

11 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

13 MS. ALLEN: Hi. My name is Heidi Allen,
14 and this is my son Michael. We live in
15 Roxborough section of the City. And my husband
16 has been a teacher with the School District
17 since 1989.

18 As we all know, the district has many
19 needs. But I am here to address one issue in
20 particular, specific ADA accessibility on behalf
21 of my son Michael who is presently four and will
22 be kindergarten eligible in one year and how
23 this relates to inclusion.

24 Michael was a premie, which is hard to
25 believe. And he received early intervention

1 since three months of age. And as his learning
2 differences and disabilities emerge, you know,
3 people told us to look for a preschool. And
4 what I quickly found was within ten miles of our
5 house, I contacted and visited over 30
6 preschools. And none were fully accessible. We
7 did find a reverse mainstream, but he only
8 attended briefly due to lack of inclusion and a
9 variety of other reasons that didn't work out.

10 Then we are looking again.
11 Accessibility is an issue. And we even
12 considered fee-based preschools, all kind of
13 preschools, APSes, you know, things an hour away
14 from our house were suggested to us. We were
15 very concerned about inclusion. And thankfully,
16 now Michael is at Seedlings and pushes into the
17 Philly pre-K for inclusion.

18 But that brings me to the next
19 challenge, what happens when Michael hits the
20 district? Our neighborhood school is Shawmont.
21 In preparation for this talk, I looked at the
22 facility reports for the closest six schools.
23 None of them are fully accessible or ADA
24 compliant. So you know, it presents a problem
25 for us.

1 When I -- when Michael started at
2 Seedlings, I was very concerned about the lack
3 of accessibility. And I sent one email to the
4 director about a gate for the playground and my
5 husband had mentioned a ramp. They did both in
6 short order. And I am here because I am a
7 believer in the mantra, you don't get what you
8 don't ask for.

9 So on behalf of Michael, I am asking.
10 Make education and educational equity a priority
11 for all kids. Stop marginalizing kids with
12 disabilities and taking them out of our
13 communities. I am asking now because I know
14 change can take time. They ADA is 27 years old,
15 and it is time. OCDEL has new guidelines about
16 inclusion and parent engagement. I am here, I
17 am engaged, and Michael wants to be included.
18 Michael can't be included if he can't get in the
19 door.

20 Funding provides the support that is
21 needed to make the physical accommodations
22 needed for these kids to be included, but
23 funding also provides the support that these
24 kids need in the classrooms, such as co-teaching
25 and behavioral supports.

1 Thank you very much.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. KILIMNIK: Good morning, everybody.

4 My name is Karel Kilimnik. I'm a retired
5 teacher and a cofounder of the Alliance for
6 Philadelphia Public Schools.

7 Today I wanted to talk about a school
8 specifically that also addresses the entire
9 funding issue. Today another school is under
10 attack. Dr. Hite is closing Strawberry Mansion
11 High School despite saying he's keeping it open.
12 No ninth graders will be admitted in September,
13 thereby, eliminating the comprehensive high
14 school. However, there will be ninth graders
15 enrolled in 2019 for project based high school.

16 Why is he destroying one school to
17 insert another in its place?

18 With the City taking over more funding
19 responsibilities, let us examine his funding
20 priorities. This closure is a pattern repeating
21 itself and rapidly gentrifying Strawberry
22 Mansion. Feeder schools have been closed or
23 turned into charters, programs have been
24 stripped from Mansion. Drake donated a music
25 studio that is not being used. For years, the

1 point of pride was a culinary program that has
2 been without a teacher for this entire school
3 year. There are nine teacher vacancies
4 according to an assistant superintendent.
5 Tomorrow SRC Resolution B15 sends \$13 million
6 into the pockets of a vendor to enroll 400
7 students in an accelerated learning program.
8 Why isn't that money being used to restore
9 programs to Mansion? And yet another resolution
10 tomorrow night, Mansion is included in a
11 culinary arts program grant for the following
12 school year. And yet, there has been no
13 culinary arts teacher.

14 The district's present spending focuses
15 on feeding vendors instead of building up our
16 district schools. The state funding formula
17 definitely needs to change to fix the
18 inequities. But you also have to examine how
19 the district chooses to spend its limited funds.
20 Tomorrow night, almost \$35 million is slated to
21 go to vendors and outside contractors. That
22 money should be spent on supporting our schools,
23 ensuring a stable teaching force, fixing the
24 toxic buildings rife with vermin, reinstating
25 programs that have been slashed. City funding

1 should include eliminating tax abatements,
2 demanding that non-profits such as University of
3 Pennsylvania, Drexel and Temple pay pilots and
4 ensuring that the Philadelphia Parking Authority
5 pays its share.

6 There may not be a deficit right now
7 this year, but our schools are still suffering
8 from doomsday budgeting. There are urgent needs
9 that need funding now. Now that district is
10 returning to local control, I urge City Council
11 to take up funding immediately and not wait for
12 that impending deficit. School needs are
13 immediate and urgent and need to be resolved.

14 Thank you.

15 MS. HAVER: Good morning.

16 My name is Lisa Haver. I am a retired
17 school teacher. Thank you to the Councilmembers
18 who are here today to listen to the members of
19 the public.

20 It's critically important that we fund
21 our schools. It's equally important that the
22 funding be equitable and fair. It may seem that
23 we don't at the moment have a financial deficit.
24 But what we do have, and I know this is going to
25 be echoed by my colleagues -- what we do have

1 and have had for years is a resources deficit.
2 If we say the conditions of these schools, the
3 physical conditions, the educational conditions
4 of these schools is adequate, we are not doing a
5 good job here listening to the people of this
6 City.

7 As we look forward to the return to
8 local control, we have the opportunity to make
9 sure that we use that governance to do the
10 things that the SRC would not. We have to work
11 together to make sure Harrisburg funds our
12 public schools adequately and equitably.
13 Pennsylvania's contribution to local school
14 funding is among the lowest in the country.
15 Government officials and City Hall and on the
16 new School Board should work together. And with
17 education activist and advocates in the City to
18 keep the pressure on Harrisburg to increase its
19 financial commitment to public education.

20 We need to build alliances with other
21 school districts and municipalities. And we
22 need to work together to change what our Auditor
23 General has called the worst charter school in
24 the nation. We need to not put the burden on
25 poor and working people in the largest poor City

1 in the country. No Councilperson who supports
2 graduated income tax should support a regressive
3 tax system, which places the burden on working
4 people and on homeowners.

5 We need to roll back that ten-year tax
6 abatement, which benefits the rich. We have to
7 postpone the proposed business tax cuts, Trump's
8 tax cuts should be enough to cover them for a
9 while. We need to make the non-profits pay
10 their pilots. And we need to make PPA finally
11 pay its fair share. The alliance has had its
12 ears and eyes on the SRC for five years. Our
13 schools are underfund, but the new board must
14 reverse the SRC screwed up spending priorities
15 and put money where it needs to be put: Smaller
16 class size, school libraries with certified
17 librarians, non-teaching assistants and
18 classrooms aides.

19 This district cannot afford more charter
20 schools. It is the biggest single school
21 district budget expense. School district
22 schools consistently outperform charters. Last
23 month, for reasons not given, the SRC approved
24 Franklin Town Charter. In two days, by all
25 indications, they are going to approve APM and

1 Hebrew charter. Why? We don't know because the
2 SRC is held unaccountable to the people and they
3 always have been. But their own charter
4 school's office made clear that this City
5 cannot -- I take that back. They don't say we
6 can't -- we say we can't afford them. But the
7 charter school office says these schools have
8 not shown why the community needs those schools.

9 I have no idea why the children of
10 Philadelphia would need a charter school that
11 teaches children Hebrew. That, I don't get.
12 But we need to change the law and we need to
13 change our spending priorities in the City.

14 Thank you.

15 (Councilman Henon sitting in as Chair.)

16 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 THE CLERK: Lynda Rubin, Darryl Overton,
19 Katherine Carter.

20 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

21 COUNCILMAN HENON: Good morning.

22 You may state your name for the record
23 and proceed with your testimony.

24 MS. RUBIN: Good morning. My name is
25 Lynda Rubin. And I am a member of the Alliance

1 for Philadelphia Public Schools. I am a retired
2 School District teacher and counselor at the K
3 to 8 level. And I have been a lifelong advocate
4 and activist for the education and welfare of
5 children.

6 Last week after Superintendent Hite sat
7 before this body, the notebook reported him
8 being asked the following by several members, I
9 might add. How do we know whether you are
10 spending money wisely and why do you need a tax
11 increase now if you don't expect to run a
12 deficit for another two years?

13 Your first question makes terrific sense
14 because, frankly, many of us educators and
15 taxpayers have been taking issue publicly with
16 how the School District has been spending its
17 money. Millions of dollars spent on outside law
18 firms to appeal and appeal such losing issues as
19 the abrogation of the teachers' contract, for
20 example. Systematically removing necessary
21 teaching staff and support services to bear
22 bones levels for years, including building
23 maintenance and cleaning staff especially from
24 neighborhood schools in the neediest of areas.
25 Approving and renewing charter schools at the

1 charter schools office itself has demonstrated
2 to be tens of millions of dollars in debt or
3 other fiscal irregularities as well as many that
4 don't meet the same academic standards for which
5 the district routinely closes neighborhood
6 schools. Dismantling the School District's
7 administrative and internal support operations,
8 thus destroying the existence of an actual
9 cohesive educational system and outsourcing them
10 to various for-profit or bogus non-profit
11 companies with high administrative salaries.

12 Now if you're really concerned about the
13 first question, I suggest you send staff members
14 to all remaining SRC meetings and future school
15 board meetings, review their spending proposals,
16 monitor their decisions they make and ensure
17 that the process is open and transparent to the
18 public as well as to yourselves.

19 However, your second question about not
20 asking for money until the piggy bank is empty
21 is insulting to anyone who has run a business as
22 you all do here or even a household. It's
23 insulting to the children this Council governs
24 who are already living with the deficits I noted
25 above, but especially clean and safe buildings

1 that don't have lead paint chips, rat and mouse
2 feces, mold and unabated asbestos that can cause
3 serious cognitive and medical deficits for
4 growing children. To quote State Senator
5 Vincent Hughes, these are health and safety
6 hazards that no child or adult should face in a
7 school.

8 This is a smart and deliberative body
9 comprised of a smart, accomplished and skillful
10 legislators. I have even volunteered throughout
11 the years to help several of you get elected.
12 So, let's stop playing games and posturing for
13 your constituents about spending their money or
14 raising taxes and always choosing working people
15 and long term residents to shoulder the burden
16 for essential City services. You chose to take
17 on this job.

18 Yes, the state legislature is not
19 meeting its constitutional responsibility of
20 adequately funding public schools. So until it
21 does, it falls on this City Council and the
22 Mayor to ensure that another generation of our
23 children's health, welfare and education are no
24 longer neglected or unequally distributed.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. OVERTON: Good morning, City
2 Council. My name is Darryl C. Overton, the
3 proud principal at A. Philip Randolph Technical
4 High School. It's an honor to speak to you
5 today in regard to the support of the funding,
6 career and technical education in the School
7 District of Philadelphia.

8 When I arrived at Randolph seven years
9 ago, I was charged to increase enrollment and
10 make sure the school improved at CTE Programs.
11 Its now the best CTE school in the City. After
12 my assessment of the equipment, materials and
13 supplies in the school, I knew that there had to
14 be a drastic change in order to bring our
15 program into the 21st Century.

16 The first step was requiring each CTE
17 instructor to write a three-year proposal
18 requesting all necessary equipment, materials
19 and supplies to update their program. After the
20 conversations with the teachers, they all
21 wondering where I was going to receive these
22 funds from. I told them, don't worry about it.
23 That was my job. I told them they should just
24 pretend that they were teaching their own
25 children and family members.

1 I immediately contacted CTE office and
2 informed that it was imperative that I receive
3 these materials, supplies and equipment. We
4 also solicited materials and supplies to
5 corporate sponsors and partners. And I spent
6 hours and days cultivating, requesting and
7 begging.

8 At this time, I would like to take a few
9 minutes to speak specifically about the
10 investments that have been made by the School
11 District of Philadelphia and the student
12 outcomes associated with that funding. We all
13 know our most important investment in our
14 child -- in our lives is our children. All the
15 City's students are our children. So, we must
16 continue to invest, support and nurture them
17 through the journey in the Philadelphia School
18 District and beyond.

19 And we have nine different programs at
20 Randolph. I am only going to mention five.

21 Auto collision and technology. The
22 District spent 80,000 on a spray booth; 13,000
23 on a mixing room; water-based paint, mixing
24 system which was 12,000; two mid welders, 7,000;
25 spot welders, which was \$1,400; and spray guns

1 to add up to \$3,000. That's in auto collision.
2 Through that, we have several students, Kadim
3 Carter working at Pacific Ford. Graduates from
4 Penn College of Technologies. Tyriq Finley.
5 Both of those students are making over \$50,000 a
6 year. Drew Bagley from Faulkner Toyota, Tyrell
7 Powell is working at Collision Max.

8 Construction. The consumables for
9 construction are anywhere from 4 to 5,000
10 thousand dollars every year. The tools is up to
11 \$500,000 in inventory. We are still purchasing
12 and receiving the equipment for the 21st
13 Century. And we also have solar panels that was
14 purchased through a grant. And the tools that
15 were used were compact modern solders we had to
16 purchase 800; \$500 for portable saws; aluminum
17 brake, \$3500; 1200 for panel saw and scroll saws
18 and other safety equipment like ladders and
19 other utensils.

20 Also, from that jobs created Jihad Black
21 who is now working for Penn Medical and is a
22 journeymen for installing at the Philadelphia
23 Airport. Andre Brown, \$2,500 from Councilman
24 Domb. I'd like to thank you personally. Now
25 our students are being trained on the forklift

1 by four different teachers that were helped
2 through your honorable donation.

3 Also, in auto mechanics, we have several
4 students graduated. They all working in the
5 Fleet Management. We have seven students right
6 now working for Philadelphia Fleet Management.
7 Three are currently graduates -- seven are
8 graduates. Three are currently now working,
9 also.

10 Culinary Arts. Cryo vac machines,
11 emergent circulating, induction burners, all
12 this equipment added up to 10 to 15,000 dollars.
13 And now currently, the District has spent about
14 \$2 million to upgrade the auto mechanics, the
15 welding and the auto collision area for their
16 certifications. Also, they have also upgraded
17 all our SmartBoards, which is over 130,000 they
18 have spent. I will ask Mr. Williams to come up.

19 Here is an international article we are
20 in that I want to pass around to City Council.
21 And I think she kind of omitted a word. Says:
22 "High School Where College Is Not The Goal" --
23 it's not the only goal. Our students go to
24 Philadelphia University, which is now Jefferson
25 University for free.

1 Thank you.

2 COUNCILMAN HENON: Excuse me. We are
3 going to finish in order. You want to state
4 your name for the record, and then you can
5 proceed with your testimony.

6 You signed up for testimony, correct?

7 MS. CARTER: Yes, I am.

8 COUNCILMAN HENON: You may continue.

9 MS. CARTER: My name is Katherine
10 Carter. I'm the principal at Alain Locke
11 Elementary School.

12 Good morning, City Council President and
13 members of the City Council. One of the major
14 contributions to Locke student achievement
15 success is classroom modernization investment.
16 This investment has allowed our school to
17 implement instructional best practices that
18 engage students in learning. As a result of the
19 classroom modernization investment, the
20 classrooms are bright and inviting for the
21 students to enter every day. The lighting helps
22 to give the students a, "yes I can" attitude. A
23 growth mindset along with creating a sense of
24 pride in their environment that is reinforced by
25 the new positive behavior incentive system

1 program.

2 This year Locke became one of the twelve
3 community schools, which are public schools that
4 serve the wider community through added social
5 services, health-related services, cultural
6 opportunities, after-school programming and job
7 training. Although we are just in our first
8 year of being a community school, the added
9 support from the Mayor's Office of Education and
10 our community partners has aided our schools
11 progress and strengthened our parent and
12 community engagement.

13 The Early Literacy Program at Locke
14 Elementary School has an investment from the
15 class for modernization of materials, furniture,
16 lighting, painting. It's a lot of materials and
17 professional development.

18 Finally, our purpose in coming here
19 today is to express what a positive effect the
20 classroom modernization grant has had on Locke
21 in terms of student achievement and school
22 culture. As you know, pre-K to grade 3 is where
23 students are learning to read. And after grade
24 3, they can read to learn. Early Literacy is a
25 building block for future success. Since this

1 program has had a tremendous impact on the
2 school, my hope and our hope is that other
3 schools will also be able to enjoy and have the
4 type of the Early Literacy, PBIS, a community
5 school that Locke is enjoying. Words cannot
6 explain how much Locke appreciates the support
7 from all of our stakeholders. And our students
8 feel the affects of the added resources and
9 staffing. These resources have had a positive
10 impact on student achievement and how our
11 teachers approach their education.

12 Thank you for listening.

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 You may speak your name because we don't
16 have you on the testimony here. State your name
17 for the record.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. My name is Joe
19 Williams. I am a teacher here at the
20 Philadelphia School District. I'm here for my
21 testimony because the City of Philadelphia has
22 funded and invested in our children.

23 The CTE Program where I work has very a
24 good, cultivating and educating program that you
25 guys fund. It is because of your funding that

1 we have the youngest female welder right now
2 working for SEPTA. It is because of your
3 funding that we have the youngest individual
4 working at Aker Shipyard. It's because of
5 funding we have people trained. And thanks to
6 Ms. Blackwell, have implemented a program where
7 our young men at 20 years old are now making
8 over \$30.00 an hour.

9 It's because of your funding, we have
10 the only automated plasma cutter that has been
11 funded by the City worth over 30 to 40,000
12 dollars. It's because of your funding and your
13 accountability that have instructed us in
14 showing us the direction that these kids need to
15 go. Without this funding and even less funding,
16 it will greatly damage what we have been trying
17 to do and solidify.

18 I would hope that you guys would take
19 this into consideration, continue funding.
20 Continue to see that the progress that CTE
21 programs have done, the investment that you guys
22 have put in front of us is being shown and is
23 being appreciated.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

1 State your name for the record. I
2 assume Dara?

3 MS. MESSING: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN HENON: State your name for
5 the record.

6 MS. MESSING: My name is Dara Messing.
7 I'm a first grade teacher at Alain Locke
8 Elementary School. As my principal stated, we
9 were part of the first cohort to receive the
10 Modernization Grant for the Early Literacy. And
11 what it's done is completely transform our
12 classroom. Our classrooms are now bright and
13 inviting for the students to enter every day.
14 The lighting helps to give the students a "yes,
15 I can" attitude. A growth mindset along with
16 creating a sense of pride in their environment.

17 We now have instructionally sound small
18 group instruction based on the centers -- on
19 center-based learning professional development,
20 which makes teachers experts in small group
21 instruction. And therefore, providing students
22 more individual need -- more individual
23 attention based on their needs. Not only the
24 professional development, but also having the
25 materials and the physical space to do the

1 center-based learning has been really
2 beneficial.

3 Students time on task at the centers has
4 increased, especially with the help of the
5 reading specialist and early literacy CLI
6 support. Most of the DRA levels of the
7 students, their reading levels increased each
8 marking period. And their writing has really
9 improved, especially at the primary levels. I
10 do really hope that other teaches and students
11 get to benefit from what we did.

12 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Clerk, would you please read the names
15 of next people who want to testify.

16 THE CLERK: Deborah Grill, Nancy Nguyne,
17 Donna Cooper.

18 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

19 MR. VAUN: Nancy is not here, so we will
20 be filling in for her.

21 (Councilman Greenlee sitting in as Chair.)

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Whoever would like
23 to go first, identify yourself and proceed.

24 MS. VAUN: Hello, everyone. My name
25 Vaun. And I live in South Philly almost four

1 years.

2 MR. VAUN: First, I would like to thank
3 you guys for letting us speak here today. My
4 name is Nicholas Vaun. I'm a sophomore at
5 Furness High School. And I lived in South
6 Philadelphia for almost 15 years now.

7 We are youth leaders at VietLead and
8 Cambodian Association. I joined because they
9 saw the youth leader in me. And I see what they
10 see today. Today we will be speaking in
11 Vietnamese and English because this is the
12 reality that each of our students face every day
13 at our school.

14 MS. VAUN: (Speaks Vietnamese.)

15 MR. VAUN: We are here to talk to you
16 today about the lead in our school and funding
17 to fix the environmental hazard in Philadelphia
18 schools.

19 MS. VAUN: (Speaks in Vietnamese.)

20 MR. VAUN: We are currently working on
21 building a community garden in back of Furness
22 High School. Gardening has made a huge impact
23 in my life because my grandma and grandpa has
24 told me stories -- has told me stories about how
25 in Cambodia, having land to grow made them

1 happy. I had chance to make a healthy and
2 supportive space for my grandparents and
3 community my building a garden at my own high
4 school.

5 MS. VAUN: (Speaks Vietnamese.)

6 MR. VAUN: However, the potential garden
7 area contains a balcony with paint falling off.
8 After testing the paint, we found out that there
9 is high percentage of lead in the area. We
10 think if there is lead outside the school, there
11 is probably lead inside the school, too. Lead
12 is really dangerous to our bodies, especially to
13 young children. If absorbed lead, it can
14 increase development, cause damage in nervous
15 system and also cause short memory loss. If
16 left untreated for a long time, will lead to
17 death.

18 MS. VAUN: (Speaks in Vietnamese.)

19 MR. VAUN: Lead is a big part of -- is
20 part of a bigger problem in our school. When we
21 started to plan a new garden, we handed out
22 surveys during the fall to students asking them
23 to identify what was the greatest challenge at
24 our school. The most popular answer by 26
25 percent was the school building conditions. And

1 supporting students' health, was the second
2 biggest concern by 12 percent. When I looked
3 around at my school, I see cracked walls, rusty
4 pipes and water dripping from the ceiling when
5 it rains. We have collected 126 signatures from
6 Furness High School students who wants the lead
7 out of our schools.

8 MS. VAUN: (Speaks Vietnamese)

9 MR. VAUN: According to a newspaper
10 article from Toxic City, when the Philadelphia
11 School District did its last school inspection
12 if 2015/2016 school year, more than 80 percent
13 of the school had damaged asbestos. In total,
14 2,252 locations had asbestos. Many of which our
15 children went to. At 639 location, the District
16 Environmental inspector was so concerned that
17 they marked the damage spots as high priority
18 because of the potential health risk.

19 MS. VAUN: (Speaks Vietnamese.)

20 MR. VAUN: We hope that everyone can
21 support us to clean the lead out of our
22 soon-to-be garden area and investigate if there
23 is anywhere else in the school. We want to
24 increase funding to go into Philadelphia schools
25 to create a healthy, learning environment for

1 the City to ensure that the School District can
2 adequately do their job and supporting the
3 environmental safety conditions of all
4 Philadelphia schools.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you both.
6 Thank you for your time. Thank you. All right.
7 Wait a second.

8 Councilwoman Gym.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so much.
10 First of all, I wanted to thank you both
11 for coming in. I know that coming into City
12 Council and talking about your experiences as
13 young people isn't always the easiest thing. I
14 just want you to know how much it's appreciated.
15 It's also really important to us that you care
16 so much about your environment because it's very
17 easy for folks to look at lead paint poisoning
18 or asbestos and feel like it just seems
19 impossible. But I think when we hear from you
20 directly about how you are trying to build
21 gardens and go to school to learn and want to
22 feel safe, that that makes it more compelling
23 for us to step up and do things that many people
24 felt have been so difficult for so long.

25 So, I really wanted to thank you for

1 coming in and speaking that today. It was
2 really important to hear. Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you for
4 coming. Thank you.

5 Before you speak, I think we called
6 Ms. Cooper before, why doesn't she come up, too
7 if she -- I thought I saw her. Why don't you
8 come up to the table, too, so we can keep things
9 moving.

10 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please, identify
12 yourself and proceed.

13 MS. GRILL: Good morning.

14 My name is Deborah Grill. I worked for
15 34 years in the Philadelphia School District as
16 a classroom teacher, a school librarian and a
17 literacy coach. For 15 of those years, I was
18 the librarian at Roosevelt Middle School, now an
19 elementary school which was recently featured in
20 a local ABC news.

21 I was heartbroken to see the terrible
22 physical condition of the school, especially the
23 library, once a lively resource for Roosevelt
24 students and teachers, now just a flooded moldy
25 room. Of course, Roosevelt is not only -- is

1 only one of the many district buildings that
2 have not been maintained.

3 In my years with the district, I watched
4 a series of CEOs and superintendents close
5 schools, cut positions and outsource services to
6 inferior vendors in an attempt to save money.
7 And now the District projects no budget deficits
8 for the next couple of years. However, that
9 doesn't mean it doesn't need more funds. Most
10 schools don't have libraries. There are fewer
11 than ten librarians left in the system.

12 While every school has one counselor,
13 many used to have two or more as well as one
14 full-time nurse. There are no full-time NTAs.
15 Classroom aides are all but non-existent. There
16 may be no financial deficit, but there is still
17 a large deficit of resources within the system.
18 I spent my last four years in the District at
19 Germantown High School. At that time, the
20 alumni association was working on a plan to
21 refurbish the libraries dated book collection and
22 antiquated computers.

23 They took a small group of students to
24 Springfield High School in Montgomery County to
25 see what a 21st Century school library looked

1 like. Our students were amazed as they toured
2 the library and were introduced to all the print
3 and electronic resources the library had to
4 offer its students. As we were leaving the
5 library, one of our students turned around to me
6 and said, I will never be able to compete with
7 these students at college.

8 It's time for the City and the state to
9 fund schools adequately so our students can be
10 competitive. There are ways you can do this
11 without taxing those who can least afford it.
12 Council can start by putting an end to the real
13 estate abatements. A recent City controller
14 report found that 59 percent of the tax
15 abatements go to just 6 percent of the
16 Philadelphia neighborhoods. And that the top
17 ZIP codes for development would likely be
18 profitable regardless of the abatements. And
19 developer Bart Blatstein's ten-year abatement on
20 his estimated 8 to 16 million dollar Rittenhouse
21 palace in an egregious example of how abatements
22 benefit those who need them the least.

23 Council must demand that large
24 non-profits pay PILOTs. Hospitals and wealthy
25 universities like Temple, Penn and Drexel own

1 significant amounts of tax exempt property, and
2 are still expanding. I think it's ironic that
3 institutions of higher education refuse to
4 contribute to the support of the public School
5 District of the City in which they are located,
6 from which they draw students.

7 Council must move to audit the
8 Philadelphia Parking Authority. They claim that
9 their hands are tied by the law that defines the
10 formula that distributes money from one street
11 parking. But they are simply shorting the
12 School District and its students. As the
13 portion to the City is guaranteed and grows with
14 PPA revenues, the district portion is confined
15 to whatever funds are left over. But on-street
16 parking is not their only stream of revenue.
17 Council needs to pressure them to find a way to
18 supply the district with predictable and
19 reliable revenues.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All right, ma'am.
21 We want to stick to that three minutes. If you
22 have more, you can certainly turn it in. We
23 will make it part of the record.

24 MS. GRILL: Okay. Fine.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. We

1 want to stick to the same rules here.

2 Donna, go ahead, please.

3 MS. COOPER: Thank you very much. I
4 apologize. I wasn't here when you called my
5 name.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's okay.

7 MS. COOPER: I'm Donna Cooper. I'm the
8 Executive Director of Public Citizens for
9 Children and Youth. And I know that each member
10 of Council cares deeply about the schools. In
11 large part, that's why you paved the way for the
12 creation of the local School Board. Yet from
13 the outside looking in, it appears that you are
14 slow walking the funds for the district now that
15 you have gotten it back in local control.

16 Last week at the District's Budget
17 Hearing, some members of Council challenged the
18 District's need for a tax increase because they
19 said it won't be in the red until 2020. And if
20 you think that gives you a pass, I want you to
21 think again. The District's projected Fund
22 Balance covers seven and a half days of
23 operation. That is a very thin margin for
24 nearly \$3 billion enterprise. This District is
25 teetering on the edge of crisis, and it needs

1 support now.

2 I heard Councilmembers suggest they
3 won't vote for a tax increase until the state
4 steps up to its share of funding. And I share
5 your view. But it's crystal clear that
6 Harrisburg isn't going to pony up what's needed.
7 For God sake, the Speaker of the House -- the
8 Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of
9 Representatives boasts that the state
10 constitution doesn't guarantee the right to
11 education for every child. If that doesn't
12 convince you there is no manna coming from
13 Harrisburg, what will?

14 You must act for our kids. They won't.
15 As much as you've done, and you have done a lot,
16 the District is still short a billion dollars.
17 And of that, about 250 million really ought to
18 be coming from local taxpayers. By adopting the
19 Mayor's plan, we will gradually get there over
20 five years. It's slower than I'd like, but it's
21 the right direction.

22 The new tax assessments make this hard
23 for some in the City. But you know the truth
24 about AVI, it was a good policy. Those same
25 homeowners might change their tune if Council

1 acted to decrease the number of tax delinquents
2 that shirk their responsibility with impunity.
3 Likewise, walk back the tax abasements that
4 shield the top 1 percent from taxes, while the
5 99 percent of us pay the full bill. My point
6 is, don't forgo your obligation to fund our
7 schools because of the ire over the new
8 assessments. Instead, pass bills that address
9 these problems and expand the Homestead
10 Exemption to show homeowners you are serious
11 about making everyone pay their fair share.

12 Weeks of reporting on the horrific
13 conditions in the schools have parents paralyzed
14 with fear. Following the suggestions I have
15 made, show parents you're acting on their
16 behalf. Only by funding the schools can you
17 make the case that you are doing something.

18 The District is doing their part with
19 the meager resources they have. More children
20 are entering 4th grade able to read. Only two
21 other districts in the country can make that
22 claim. And our graduation rate has increased
23 every year for the last seven. These facts are
24 proof positive that the additional funds you put
25 on the table are producing results.

1 We urge you to support the tax package.
2 And in doing so, make sure our schools are
3 safer, our buildings are safer, you are
4 supporting our teachers and you're helping our
5 kids achieve.

6 Thank you very much.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Hold
8 on one second.

9 Councilman Domb.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman. Good morning.

12 MS. COOPER: Good morning.

13 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I just want to make
14 sure I heard correctly. You support the
15 collection of delinquent taxes from non
16 owner-occupants?

17 MS. COOPER: I support the collection of
18 taxes from non owner-occupants that legitimately
19 owe property taxes. Absolutely. Do we need
20 maybe payment plans to make that possible?
21 Sure. But everybody has got a stake in the
22 schools.

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me just give you
24 the statistics so you can really support it.
25 There is 67,000 delinquent properties right now;

1 16,000 are owner-occupant; 51,000 are non
2 owner-occupants. There is 424 million as of a
3 week ago of delinquent real estate taxes,
4 110 million are in payment plans. There is
5 about a hundred million are owner occupants,
6 take them off the table. There is \$215 million
7 of delinquent real estate taxes. Of those
8 51,000 properties that are delinquent of non
9 owner-occupant, and that's against \$5.4 billion
10 of value, a 4 percent lien to value, which means
11 it's collectible.

12 So, I am glad you are for it. Thank
13 you.

14 MS. COOPER: That and the reduction of
15 the abatements, Councilman, would help us
16 considerably.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me just tell you
18 about the abatements. The abatements for this
19 City, I will sit with you privately to show you
20 this, were the number one tool used to expand
21 the tax paying base of the future of this City.
22 I'm happy to go over the numbers with you. I
23 know them pretty well.

24 What I'm talking about, though, there is
25 delinquent people out there who choose not to

1 pay. We have sequestration for those people who
2 are investors for lower income properties to
3 protect those homeowners. They will be directed
4 to pay their rents to us in taxes, so they don't
5 have to leave their homes. We have all the
6 tools in place. We just need to move on this
7 and get this legislation passed.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you very
10 much. Thank you for coming.

11 Mr. McDermott, please our next group.

12 THE CLERK: Koby Murphy, Crystal Khanti
13 and Jerry Jordan if he is here. And if not,
14 Hillary Linard Apolis. We will be calling Jerry
15 Jordan in the afternoon.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

17 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We have two up
19 here. Hold one second, is there anybody else.

20 THE CLERK: The afternoon.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. What
22 Mr. McDermott is going to do is see if there is
23 anyone from the one o'clock list that is here,
24 we can have them. Just one second.

25 THE CLERK: Yesenia Rodriguez, Mollie

1 Michel, Anna Perng, Marissa Post, Michele
2 McKeone, Barbara Dowdall and William Deltoro.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Don't see any.
4 You will be the last two before we take a break
5 for one o'clock. So, sir, please or whoever,
6 please, state your name for the record and
7 proceed.

8 MR. MURPHY: Right. Good morning. My
9 name is Koby Murphy. I'm an organizer with the
10 Philadelphia Student Union. For over two
11 decade, our organization has existed for the
12 purpose of developing agency and leadership of
13 youth to improve their quality of education.
14 Most importantly, we prioritize listening and
15 our intentional about using the feedback and
16 recommendations of our youth to shape our work.
17 And also, as an alumni of the organization and a
18 former public high school student, I have spent
19 more than half of my life advocating for an
20 equitable education for all students. Yet
21 sadly, many of the issues I was impacted by as a
22 student have continued to be the problem.

23 We recognize that the School District
24 with a predominantly black and brown youth,
25 there is a systemic void and resources necessary

1 for programs that prioritize developing critical
2 analysis and provide deep levels of support and
3 navigating school. In Dr. Hite's testimony
4 before City Council on May 9, he spoke about the
5 duties civic leaders have in order to provide
6 students with a quality education. And doing
7 so, it is our belief that this must involve
8 creating school environments where students feel
9 invested in rather than criminalized.

10 The unchecked presence of school police
11 officers and overreliance on the school -- on
12 Philadelphia Police Department is having an
13 negative impact on many students which needs to
14 be addressed with a multi-year budgeting plan
15 that shifts away funds from school police and
16 mobile security. This will increase the
17 district's ability to invest in areas that
18 actually support the development and achievement
19 of students. Most students and parents are not
20 asking for more school police. They want safety
21 and are being presented with a sole solution to
22 their request. When engaged directly about
23 establishing safety, investing in programs and
24 staff which allow schools to be proactive about
25 creating conditions which would limit violent

1 altercations, the reliance on school policing
2 decreases, as well.

3 I recently on March 14, members of the
4 Philadelphia Student Union and Juntos lead the
5 march calling for a new vision for safety, which
6 prioritized divesting from school police and
7 investing in mental health and increasing
8 guidance counselor, social workers and nurses.
9 After participating in school walkouts in
10 solidarity with the Parkland students, our
11 members lead a march of 1500 school district
12 students all calling for an alternative vision.
13 On April 20, our members worked together to host
14 a youth summit discussing alternatives to school
15 policing where the need to move away from the
16 overreliance on school police was clear. A
17 coordinated plan to decrease school police
18 funding and reallocate those funds towards
19 hiring of guidance counselors and other staff
20 and health programs would be a bold direction
21 towards achieving many of the priorities
22 outlined in the districts action plan.

23 Increasing graduation in college
24 preparedness is more likely when there is not a
25 portion of the student body that aren't being

1 penalized or arrested. Now is the time to start
2 matching commitments with both action and
3 shifting policy and shifting budget towards
4 alternatives.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you very
7 much.

8 Ma'am, please identify yourself and
9 proceed. Talk right in the microphone.

10 MS. KHANTI: My name is Crystal Khanti.
11 I'm a Philadelphia native. I graduated from
12 John Bartram High. I'm a single mother and I'm
13 also a property investor. In the year 2002, I
14 established a mental healthcare home for
15 elderly. Being as though I was new to the
16 business, also was referred the more challenging
17 clients, the ones nobody wanted to house.

18 I housed thousands in the last 18 years.
19 In 2007, I started a Why Can't I Care For
20 Children. Over the last ten years, I received
21 more calls from younger people needing housing
22 and food. Hunting Park is filled with 30 kids a
23 day that skipped school. They cut school. They
24 are not connected. Times have changed and they
25 need more. Most of our children are coming from

1 one parent to no parents for whatever reasons.

2 They are bored. They are hungry, believe me.

3 Which equals into violence. They are
4 not eating in school or at home. So, when do we
5 step in? Through school this year, I believe
6 that this year coming up, we should all do -- we
7 should all try to understand what children need
8 and like. The old stories and the old history
9 stories is not cutting it. Our kids are not in
10 tune with school anymore. It's time we bring
11 back trade programs, teaching them how to use a
12 drill and build instead of stealing and killing.

13 Each school should have a school store
14 that would generate money for our City for our
15 children. That would provide school pride, and
16 it also would involve the parents and bring the
17 parents into the schools. It's not against the
18 law to have school stores. They do it in the
19 suburban areas and it generates a lot of money.
20 It's over 400 students per school. And if
21 everybody was involved, it would be \$400 a day.
22 Times that times five, there you go.

23 It would be some funding for us. And it
24 would involve the parents and bring the parents
25 into the schools, which they need to be.

1 My second part would be about bullying
2 and the safety of children. I believe over the
3 last six months, I've been doing a program where
4 I feed children every Tuesday at the
5 recreational centers for free. From that, I
6 realize that over 50 children -- 50 children
7 come to me every Tuesday to eat. To eat, just
8 to eat. And they appreciate it. They love it.
9 From me being there, I realized that the
10 recreational centers aren't being used properly.
11 They are not being used to their full
12 advantages.

13 I think that a lot of the children that
14 are bullying and mental health, I think we
15 should divide our children. I think we should
16 make our schools safer for our children. In
17 that way, I think we should put the children
18 that has behavioral problems or mental health
19 issues, have them go to the recreational centers
20 throughout the daytime. And there we can
21 provide different things to rehabilitate. But I
22 definitely think we should separate. It would
23 be more safe. And I also believe we should have
24 school stores.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, ma'am.

1 Thank you both for coming.

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That will complete
4 our list for the morning. We will stand in
5 recess until one o'clock this afternoon where we
6 come back for more public system.

7 Thank you very much.

8 (Public Testimony recessed at 11:42 a.m.)

9 - - -

10 (Public Testimony recommenced at 1:06 p.m.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We are going to
12 start the testimony now. We are going to
13 reconvene here with the Committee of the Whole
14 with the Public Testimony.

15 To remind folks that weren't here
16 previously, we are asking everybody to limit
17 their testimony to three minutes. If you have
18 written testimony and it goes beyond that, you
19 can certainly submit for the record the whole
20 written testimony to be made part of the record.
21 We ask everybody to limit it so we can be fair
22 to everyone just three minutes.

23 And in just a minute, Mr. McDermott will
24 call the first three names on our list here.

25 THE CLERK: Yesenia Rodriguez, Mollie

1 Michel, Anna Perng.

2 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good afternoon,
4 everyone. Please, whoever would like to start,
5 just identify yourself for the record and
6 proceed, please.

7 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hi. My name is Yesenia
8 Rodriguez. I'm a high school student at Central
9 High School. And I am here on behalf of Youth
10 United For Change.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Go ahead.

12 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I can start?

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yeah, sure.

14 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Homework is integral
15 part of the student's education program. If A
16 written assignment is not given, the student
17 should be reading the text or doing collateral
18 work. This item is BEYOND CRUCIAL. Every
19 subject should be studied every day.

20 Students don't believe this statement.
21 They equate homework with written work as with
22 past experience. This is not the case at
23 Central. If you don't keep up to date with
24 reading and reviewing, the work becomes
25 progressively harder. The hole you dig becomes

1 only as deep as you make it. Now, if you were a
2 new student and you read this in your student
3 handbook, would you feel welcomed in this new
4 environment or intimidated? Do you feel
5 empowered and respected as a human being, or
6 disconnected from staff as you were grouped into
7 a category of students that are seemingly too
8 young to "believe" in this statement.

9 This excerpt on homework policy can be
10 found in my high school student handbook. But
11 this condescending tone isn't just found on
12 paper. This tone is carried through the halls,
13 into our classrooms and embedded into our
14 school's cultures. Interactions between
15 teachers and students and even between staff and
16 parents confined as underlying tension.
17 Students are pushed into this inferiority
18 complex as schools continue to dehumanize them
19 into basically student robots, constantly
20 demanding more and more work so scores can go up
21 for standardized tests.

22 As Philadelphia students work more and
23 study harder while still combating the
24 oppression and trauma many receive due to
25 poverty and race relations, a competitive

1 culture of perfectionism is being added on top
2 of their already heavy workloads. Students are
3 staying up until one in the morning to do
4 projects. They are skipping meals to do
5 homework. They are unable to turn to support
6 systems when they have familial problems because
7 there are very little opportunities to build
8 relationships with trusted adults in school.
9 Many kids as well as adults don't feel
10 comfortable going to a stranger when they are
11 having an emotional crisis, but that is exactly
12 what schools are telling students to do.

13 There are opportunities for students to
14 develop a relationship with counselors. Friends
15 of mine have even said that the only time they
16 have gone to the counselors in the past three
17 years of their high school career was just to
18 get an SAT fee waiver showing our testing
19 culture has a higher priority than something
20 that we haven't been talking about in schools,
21 our mental health culture.

22 Mental health doesn't just concern
23 people with depression or anxiety. Those are
24 mental illnesses. Mental health affects
25 everyone. It affects students and teachers,

1 janitors and principals, parents even
2 counselors. I have it and so do you. That is
3 why a mental health culture has to be
4 implemented into schools. It's daily impact on
5 all of us is too big to ignore any longer.

6 And frankly, City Council, I am tired.
7 I am tire of my friends calling me in the middle
8 of the night saying, help, I'm having an anxiety
9 attack. I am tired of seeing my friends
10 breakdown in front of me but the counselor is
11 not being available to them. I am tired of
12 excusing myself from class to cry in the
13 school's bathroom. I'm tired of hearing the
14 words "I can't take it, why should I be going to
15 school if it just makes me feel worthless."
16 School is supposed to be opening doors and
17 giving insight on life, so why does it instead
18 make some students think that they should take
19 their life?

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Thank you.

21 I want to limit everybody -- be fair to
22 everybody for the three minutes. If you have
23 that written testimony, if you submit it, we
24 will make sure the whole thing is part of the
25 record, okay? Okay.

1 Thank you. And thank you all for coming
2 here, okay?

3 Who would ever like to go next.

4 MS. PERNG: My testimony is only two
5 minutes long. I timed myself, so she could
6 have --

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: No, no, no.
8 That's not the way it works. We want to let
9 everybody do the three minutes.

10 (AUDIENCE MEMBER: "There is no one here.")

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please, who would
12 like to go next. Please speak into the
13 microphone.

14 MS. MICHEL: Good afternoon. My name is
15 Mollie Michel. I'm a resident of Philadelphia's
16 First District in South Philly.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good afternoon.

18 MS. MICHEL: Good afternoon.

19 As you know, this district has been hit
20 particularly hard by property tax increases
21 through reassessments in the past several years.
22 Since January of 2014, when my husband and I
23 bought our row house on South 6th and Reed, our
24 taxes have gone up somewhere in the neighborhood
25 of 50 percent. I know we are not alone, so I

1 can only imagine the phone calls that Councilman
2 Squilla fields on a regular basis. Not only
3 about reassessments, but about the proposed
4 additional property tax increase to fund our
5 schools.

6 But here is the thing. For me, I am all
7 for funding our schools appropriately by any
8 means possible. And if I have to pay more
9 property taxes to do that or pay more for my
10 coveted Diet Coke at the corner deli across the
11 street, I'll do it. I won't drive or move to
12 Delaware. I'll stay put in the City which I am
13 raising my kids. So, I am thrilled for the
14 increase in property taxes to go to our public
15 schools and not just because my kids attend one
16 of the more than 200 schools in the district,
17 but because all Philadelphia's kids deserve high
18 quality education with teachers who are paid
19 appropriately and provided with necessary tools
20 to educate our children. But they also
21 deserve -- and I would say that they deserve
22 this first and foremost, to attend schools in
23 buildings that are not falling apart at the
24 seams and creating environmental health hazards
25 that harm them on a daily basis.

1 We've all seen the articles in recent
2 weeks, lead poisoning, asbestos, lack of
3 functioning bathrooms, rodent and bug
4 infestations, even carbon monoxide poisoning
5 from unsafe work practices at the schools that
6 are receiving appropriate maintenance. It's
7 almost too horrifying to consider. But we must
8 consider these conditions and prioritize safe
9 learning environments in all our schools.

10 Recently, Kristen Graham wrote an
11 article for the Inquirer about a
12 20 million-dollar upgrade to classrooms in 11
13 City schools to support early literacy. I read
14 this article and I got angry. Of course early
15 literacy is important. We all know this. But
16 how effectively is this money actually spent
17 when there are so many barriers to learning
18 because the vast majority, and it is the vast
19 majority of our school buildings, contain toxic
20 and dangerous health hazards that have gone
21 unaddressed. It's maddening.

22 Is the service classroom makeover in
23 eleven schools fixing the other health hazards
24 that may exist all over these buildings? Are
25 the bathrooms clean and functioning? What about

1 rodents? I can't believe I just said what about
2 rodents when talking about my kids' schools, but
3 I did.

4 In my opinion, every single penny the
5 district receives in additional support from any
6 entity must first be used to create safe
7 continues for our kids. When we don't provide
8 basic clean and safe school buildings to our
9 students and teachers, we show them how much
10 they are valued. If we are complacent about
11 these conditions, we are complicit in the
12 consequences.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you very
15 much. Again, if you hadn't finished, if you
16 want to submit the whole thing, it will be made
17 part of the record.

18 Please, ma'am. Identify yourself and
19 proceed.

20 MS. PERNG: My name is Anna Perng. I
21 will just read this last paragraph from
22 Ms. Rodriguez.

23 Staff should also be trained to support,
24 protect and create an environment in which
25 students mental health thrive. This can be done

1 through trauma informed training through staff
2 disciplinary and everyday and mental health
3 first training. Staff should proactively foster
4 relationships with students as support system
5 because mental health as a culture isn't one big
6 project. It's maintained on a day-to-day basis
7 of caring for students while teaching them to be
8 emotionally intelligent, as well. This will
9 move us further into the ultimate vision of
10 students from Youth United for Change by
11 implementing a mental health culture in schools.
12 It would create holistically healthy schools as
13 wished by districts green future initiative of
14 healthy schools and healthy living.

15 Ultimately, this will push us into the
16 direction of our schools, creating young leaders
17 so they can reshape society into a more just way
18 where everyone can realize their life's full
19 potential.

20 So, this is my statement. I'm a parent
21 of a preschooler and a first grader who attends
22 public school. The Inquirer's report of our
23 toxic schools shouldn't surprise anyone. They
24 have reported on these issues since 2016. Other
25 advocates and I have said that rain was coming

1 through the roof into classrooms. I have
2 sounded the alarms about the district's practice
3 of warehousing disabled students into crumbling
4 schools because schools aren't ADA accessible
5 and special ed is criminally underfunded. Back
6 then the district said it needed \$5 billion to
7 fix all the schools. Since then a number of
8 solutions have come up.

9 I support a shale tax. I hope PPA pays
10 the district what it owes. I support the Fair
11 Funding Lawsuit. I want all of these things to
12 succeed. But it's also time for reality check
13 we can't rely on bake sales and GoFundMes to
14 fund our schools. Without a tax increase that
15 is equitably distributed across ZIP codes, the
16 gap between the haves and the have nots grows
17 greater.

18 Fellow district parent Carey Aquila
19 observes typically when budgets are developed,
20 they are done so with an understanding of what
21 the approval tolerance is and not necessarily
22 based on the reality of the funds that are truly
23 needed. So the district is damned if it
24 requests what it really needs and damned if it
25 doesn't. And by acting like our schools need a

1 projected deficit before they can get increased
2 funding, I worry that as a City, we are robbing
3 Peter to pay Paul. We are robbing our teachers
4 who pay out of their own pockets for supplies.
5 We are robbing our children who get exposed to
6 lead dust and get sick for the rest of their
7 lives. We are robbing special ed students like
8 Michael who uses a wheelchair and won't be able
9 to enroll in any of his neighborhood schools
10 without repairs.

11 City Council, I know you stand with
12 families and our teachers. But we can't wait
13 for another two years as our own Flint, Michigan
14 unfolds. Our kids have one shot at our
15 education and health. And I and other families
16 pay our taxes and are willing to pay more if it
17 ensures every child across the City has the
18 schools they need to succeed.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you for
21 coming down and speaking.

22 Mr. McDermott, you want to call the next
23 three please.

24 THE CLERK: Hillary Linarda Polis,
25 Marissa Post, Michele McKeone.

1 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good afternoon,
3 everyone. Whomever would like to start, please,
4 identify yourself and proceed.

5 MS. MCKEONE: My name is Michele
6 McKeone. In 2010, Deshaun came to my South
7 Philadelphia classroom with age-inappropriate
8 behavior. He used baby talk and he told us
9 about fairy tale princesses in the ninth grade.
10 But after a trip to the Franklin Institute where
11 there happened to be a naked statue of
12 Cleopatra, we were able to shape his interest
13 from fairy tale princesses into kings and queens
14 of ancient Egypt and taught him how to use
15 Google apps to develop his language ability.

16 Today Deshaun, a person with neuro
17 diverse needs, is working in the Human Resources
18 Office for the City of Philadelphia. He was
19 employee of the month. And on his days off, he
20 takes the bus to the Franklin Institute for
21 lunch, probably trying to find that statue
22 again.

23 I wish I could tell you DeShawn's
24 journey from high school to work is the norm in
25 Philly, but it's not. Eighty percent of

1 students like Deshaun across the City are
2 systemically pigeonholed into unemployment and
3 segregated from their communities when they
4 don't get the work ready services they need.
5 After seven years of my teaching in
6 Philadelphia, I use my background in tech and
7 behavior to start a Work Ready training program
8 called Digitability. We are preparing students
9 for a tech driven workplace in five states.
10 This year it's being implemented in Pittsburgh
11 and Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks and Chester
12 Counties.

13 To City Councilmembers who are concerned
14 about raising taxes, there are people trying to
15 make a difference, and we are not always asking
16 for money. With support of the State of
17 Pennsylvania, Digitability has the opportunity
18 to provide free work ready and digital literacy
19 training to thousands of students in the City at
20 no cost to the district. We already had 500
21 parents from every City Councilmember's district
22 request to enroll their child across 17 schools
23 who requested the program.

24 However, we are having difficulty
25 getting the Philadelphia School District

1 Administration on board. How can we overcome
2 this barrier? The benefit is that you won't
3 need more taxpayer money to develop a skilled
4 workforce that can contribute to diverse
5 workplaces and increase our tax revenue.

6 Well, we are also participating in the
7 Mayor's workforce development initiative. As a
8 former teacher, I recognize that the skills you
9 need to be an independent person start in the
10 classroom. If this City Council wants to be an
11 ally to diversity and inclusion, we need to
12 influence the school district to be a partner
13 with our community.

14 Digitability is here to work with the
15 City to still provide free digital literacy,
16 work ready and social/emotional development
17 training to thousands of students. And we hope
18 that we can encourage Dr. Hite to join us.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank
21 you very much. Who'd like to go next?

22 MS. POST: I will go.

23 Good afternoon. My name is Marissa
24 Post. I'm a parent of three children receiving
25 special education services in their public

1 school general education classrooms. I came
2 today to speak to the resolution authorizing the
3 Committee on Children and Youth to hold public
4 hearings regarding residential placements
5 contracted to pay -- provide for care, treatment
6 and development of Philadelphia youth.

7 I read in this resolution that three --
8 750 youth were committed for behavioral and
9 emotional challenges last year. And felt that
10 is alone -- felt the parents needed to be heard
11 on this issue. My hope is that we can share
12 ideas about how to avoid this being the result
13 in coming years.

14 Emotional, neurological and specific
15 learning challenges are all conditions that fall
16 into protected disability categories under IDEA.
17 All of these conditions have related behavioral
18 challenges that could interfere and often
19 interfere with the ability of a child to access
20 the general ed curriculum. These behaviors of
21 disability are often mistaken as choice and
22 discipline issues. However, if a child with
23 these disability are properly identified and
24 supported, they could access their education,
25 grow and mature. If they don't, they will

1 simply be passed along to suffer growing
2 frustration and resentment for not being
3 understood and helped. They could potentially
4 demonstrate behaviors that impact the education
5 of their surrounding school children, as well.

6 Children are properly supported when
7 they are identified, given goals and a plan in
8 collaboration with their parents, taught by
9 trained staff and related service providers and
10 provided with data driven progress reporting.
11 Their early education can be very successful if
12 this happens. My son is a prime example of
13 that.

14 This is an anchor goal of this
15 administration to start early, identify early,
16 take care of young children and make sure that
17 they are not one of the 750 children sent to an
18 institution, a very expensive institution.
19 Luckily for all stakeholders, there are the
20 premises of the basic IDEA law that makes this
21 program already ready and available for you.
22 Following IDEA is the best return on investment
23 for our City and is also the best ethical
24 choice.

25 So when I read the resolution stating

1 this Philadelphia and its districts has a claim
2 that residential facilities on ground schools
3 provide schoolwork that is below grade level to
4 students -- (timer rings) -- is that me?

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yeah. We are
6 trying to limit -- let me ask you, ma'am. I
7 know you are talking about the resolution. I
8 know that hearing is tomorrow.

9 MS. POST: Oh, okay.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yeah. I didn't
11 want to interrupt you while you started talking.
12 But I think what you -- I know it's budget
13 related, too, what you are talking about, but I
14 didn't know if this was in substitute -- are you
15 coming tomorrow or --

16 MS. POST: No.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You didn't know
18 about tomorrow?

19 MS. POST: You can share it.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Pardon me?

21 MS. POST: It can be shared. And I
22 can come tomorrow, as well.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. All right.

24 MS. POST: It's all the same about
25 budget and --

1 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Again, I'm
2 not trying to -- we want to try to keep
3 everybody at the same time limit here.

4 MS. POST: Yeah.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you wanted to
6 summarize something.

7 MS. POST: I am getting to the point,
8 yeah.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. All right.
10 Again, that written testimony can be made part
11 of the record, you know.

12 MS. POST: Okay. The claim that
13 residential facilities on ground provides
14 schoolwork below grade level taught multi-grades
15 in the classroom by uncertified teachers, they
16 fail to provide adequate special education
17 services is a reason that the school district
18 should have control over these. However, that
19 is the exact model the School District uses
20 right now for our very young elementary school
21 students.

22 They are in multi-grade classrooms.
23 They are sometimes taught by uncertified
24 teachers. And they expect far below grade level
25 for their students. So my request as far as

1 budgeting goes is that you collaborate with
2 parents and your decision making powers, and
3 that the funding is put in place to start the
4 interventions at a very, very early age,
5 kindergarten to be precise. And that we don't
6 as a City claim that residential facilities are
7 inadequate when they are practicing the same
8 systems that they do in the School District.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

10 MS. POST: This will take funding.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Thank you.
12 Thank you very much. Again, the hearing, I
13 think is 2:30 tomorrow I believe. So, it's up
14 to you if you wanted to come back.

15 MS. POST: Okay.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Hillary, please,
17 identify yourself and proceed.

18 MS. POLIS: Hi. Good afternoon. My
19 name is Hillary Linarda Polis. I'm on staff at
20 the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. I am
21 delivering testimony this afternoon on behalf of
22 PFT President Jerry Jordan. We are encouraged
23 by signs that schools are improving, that the
24 financial condition in the School District is
25 slowly improving. And we thank City Council and

1 the Kenney Administration for their commitment
2 to our school children.

3 As you know, the schools still face
4 significant problems and challenges. And
5 overcoming these issues will require financial
6 resources and better management of teaching and
7 learning conditions. One persistent issue is
8 the ongoing vacancy crisis in the School
9 District. It is mid May, as you know. And
10 there are currently 148 teaching vacancies in
11 the School District. More than 20 of which have
12 existed since the first day of school. I don't
13 have to tell you about the ramification of those
14 vacancies.

15 We go into some more depth on those in
16 our written testimony. And by now you are
17 certainly aware of the -- another huge dilemma
18 facing our schools. And that is the poor
19 physical condition of the buildings in which our
20 children learn and our educators teach. The
21 Philadelphia Inquirer's Toxic School series has
22 done an excellent job of documenting this
23 crisis. And it's a crisis that the PFT Health
24 and Welfare Fund has been trying years to get
25 the district to more aggressively and

1 proactively address. Many of these issues can
2 indeed be attributed to the age of our City's
3 buildings and infrastructure, but they are
4 compounded by failure to share information and
5 cooperate with PFT and other stakeholders to
6 develop proactive and cost effective strategies
7 that would mitigate many of these problems.

8 So, this year's mold emergency at JB
9 Kelly Elementary in Northwest Philadelphia is a
10 perfect example. When the district was able to
11 remediate the massive mold growth, the school
12 was then promised that the air conditioning
13 system would be operable, and it's not. It has
14 still not been repaired. And we already had an
15 incident at the school last week, I think, where
16 a paraprofessional fainted in the building
17 during a recent rise in temperature. So,
18 incidence like these are really important to
19 highlight and to make sure that we are
20 addressing them on a holistic -- in a holistic
21 way.

22 As Superintendent Hite himself said in
23 his recent op ed said fixing the problems in
24 school buildings will take a team effort and it
25 requires input from all stakeholders. And that

1 is essential. So, that's why the PFT has joined
2 with the Philly Healthy Schools Initiative to
3 ask City Council to immediately establish a
4 Philly Infrastructure Environmental Hazard
5 Oversight Task Force or a special committee.
6 This group should be comprised of parents,
7 educators, public advocacy groups and others who
8 will be responsible for identifying and listing
9 the most urgent needs of the school. And the
10 group will develop best practices, approaches
11 and provide recommendations for short, medium
12 and long term responses and remediation.

13 Additionally, an effort must be made to
14 ensure that every school building has an
15 appropriate number of staff dedicated to keeping
16 our buildings cleaned and maintained. We are
17 aware that making these improvements has a price
18 tag. And Philadelphia cannot be expected to
19 replicate the teaching and learning conditions
20 enjoyed by our public -- excuse me, by our
21 suburban neighborhoods unless we are able to
22 increase our investment in public education.

23 So, Senator Vincent Hughes has, you
24 know, spoken out on the school conditions
25 frequently, and recently wrote an op ed, you

1 know, regarding this. And also has introduced
2 legislation and in Bill 777, which would create
3 up to \$5 billion in bonds funded by a tax on the
4 Marcellus Shale. Yes. We are still talking
5 about taxing the Marcellus Shale, but we will
6 still keep fighting for it. But we also realize
7 that waiting for Harrisburg legislators to
8 adequately fund our schools is a fight that we
9 could and will be fighting for years.

10 So, that's why we are supporting the
11 Mayor's plan to raise revenue for the School
12 District. Better schools are a pathway to a
13 stronger more viable City for every resident.
14 And we understand that getting there could
15 require some sacrifice from Philadelphia's
16 taxpayers. However, too many businesses and
17 large corporations have managed to escape their
18 fiscal responsibility to our City's future. It
19 is unfair to ask Philadelphia's citizens alone
20 to share the burden of funding our schools. So,
21 business community must also contribute its fair
22 share.

23 Once again, on behalf of PFT President
24 Jerry Jordan, the Executive Board and PFT staff
25 and members, we thank you for allowing us this

1 time to share our concerns and our hopes for our
2 school children.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Thank you
4 very much.

5 Ma'am, I misspoke earlier. The hearing
6 Children Youth Committee tomorrow is scheduled
7 to start at one o'clock, if you are interested.

8 MS. POST: I am going to submit my
9 testimony because it was about budget, but I
10 didn't --

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. No problem.
12 Thanks. Thank you all. Mr. McDermott, will you
13 call if there is anyone else.

14 THE CLERK: Barbara Dowdall.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

16 THE CLERK: That is the last name I
17 have.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Is anyone else
19 here who wanted to speak?

20 Okay. Ms. Dowdall will be the last one.

21 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good afternoon.
23 Just pull that microphone close to you. And
24 identify yourself for the record and proceed,
25 please.

1 MS. DOWDALL: Okay. My name is Barbara
2 McDowell Dowdall, retired English department
3 head A. Philip Randolph Career Tech High School,
4 member Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools
5 and a registered voter, 13th Ward, Fourth
6 Division.

7 Good afternoon members of City Council
8 and winners 93,000 to 22,000 of yesterday's
9 ballot question number two on your new role in
10 Philadelphia public school, school board
11 governance. Congratulations from one of the
12 voters who contributed to that majority. Adding
13 the right to review appointments to the school
14 board to your current prime position as school
15 district funders as the state legislature
16 maintains its heartless derogation of that
17 responsibility in that regard provides Council
18 with the opportunity and responsibility to ask
19 and demand answers to the hard questions and
20 school governance and expenditures.

21 Your constituents, especially
22 youngsters, their parents and guardians will be
23 looking to you to represent their interests.
24 Proper resourcing and staffing, safe, healthy
25 and inviting learning environments with vigor

1 and consistency, a few suggestions.

2 For Superintendent Dr. William Hite, the
3 key crossover figure from SRC to local control
4 whose contract has several years to run and to
5 the new board of education, will there be ally
6 movement away from the billionaire Eli Brode
7 philosophy of churn school failure labeling
8 closures and turnarounds? Will a comprehensive
9 plan for dealing with horrifying threats to
10 student and staff health, lead paint chips and
11 dusts, mold, asbestos, aged heating and cooling
12 systems be a top priority? Will restoration of
13 the fully resourced professionally staffed
14 library in every school, not just Mastermann,
15 Central, SLA and Penn Alexander.

16 Random donation of books like those I
17 delivered from Sister's Girl's High grad Jean
18 Dorsi Robinson, Class of 1943 to A. Philip
19 Randolph last week along with scads of good
20 hearted volunteers to hand them out do not a
21 legitimate school library make. Will they be
22 recognized and plans for an essential, not
23 optional? Will we raise equity as a prime
24 directive providing additional necessary funding
25 to schools that lack philanthropic largess of

1 graduates or Philadelphia schools partnership
2 Mark Gleason funneled and other millionaire tax
3 benefit contributions? Might we return to our
4 traditional geographic neighborhood school
5 districts, move away from the Boston Consulting
6 Group conception of organization charts. Every
7 school aspires to be provided opportunity and
8 autonomy to represent innovation, and would
9 never seek, especially in light of the
10 devastating cuts to staff and supplies in our
11 years under state control to be tossed in a
12 turnaround maelstrom that willy-nilly eliminates
13 at least half of long term staff and brings in
14 questionable outside unproven reformist plans.

15 And I will submit this.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You can submit the
17 rest. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate
18 very much.

19 All right. We appreciate everyone
20 coming down. With no one else to speak, the
21 hearing will stand in recess until 3:30 when we
22 will have callbacks of some departments.

23 Thank you very much.

24 (Hearing stands in recess.)

25 - - -

(Committee of the Whole recommenced.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Now we will proceed with callbacks. And requested for callbacks was Office of Treasure, Office of Finance Director and the City Controller's Office. And here to testify is the Director of Finance and the City Treasurer.

So, you have previously given testimony. So, we will delve right into the questions.

And the Chair recognizes Councilman Domb.

COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you, Council President.

Good afternoon, and thank you for coming back.

MR. DUBOW: Good afternoon.

COUNCILMAN DOMB: I have an opening statement. This has to do with reconciliations I would like to make, and then I would like to get to the questions. But I want to begin by sharing a statement from a taxpayer who is a certified professional accountant with the following credentials: a Master's of Science in Taxation, a chartered global management accountant, a former adjunct professor of

1 accounting for 20 years, and a former partner of
2 a big four accounting firm.

3 Monthly bank reconciliations, he stated,
4 are a basic normal and critical component of a
5 set of internal controls that public companies
6 and other large organizations employ and are
7 required to have. Internal controls are
8 intended to identify and thwart errors and
9 irregularities and to safeguard assets.

10 Irregularities include theft and fraud. First
11 year, first semester accounting students learn
12 about back reconciliations and internal
13 controls. They are that basic fundamental.

14 Errors and irregularities within the
15 cash disbursement system cannot be found without
16 a monthly bank reconciliation, which is employed
17 to safeguard that asset as part of a normal set
18 of internal controls. It uncovers the
19 difference between the bank's balance and the
20 organizations cash balance in its general
21 ledger. Reconciling differences including
22 outstanding checks not cashed, deposits in
23 transit, bank charges and credits not booked and
24 other miscellaneous differences. If there are
25 errors or irregularities, they may be found

1 through this process.

2 Without it, the organization risks
3 writing checks from an overdrawn account
4 resulting in bouncing checks. In fact, if a
5 public company did not reconcile its accounts,
6 it would not receive an unqualified good opinion
7 from its auditors. And the CFO would receive a
8 stern management letter that internal controls
9 are lacking. It's unheard of for a \$4.6 billion
10 organization like the City of Philadelphia with
11 a capital program of 4 billion totaling over 8.6
12 not to have internal controls or to have
13 internal controls and but not to execute upon
14 them.

15 This is not a matter of complex
16 accounting issues like those found in accounting
17 for derivatives. Reconciling cash is as basic
18 as an auto mechanic changing and securing a
19 tire. Not reconciling cash is tantamount to
20 that mechanic not tightening the lug nut when
21 changing a tire.

22 Mr. President, this is just one example
23 of the countless phone calls, emails, letters
24 and other communications my office has received
25 regarding this issue that has come to light in

1 recent weeks. I learned about the lack of
2 reconciliation of the City's financial records
3 during our ongoing budget debate for Fiscal Year
4 2019. And I feel responsible to all of the
5 citizens of this City to help provide answers on
6 this fiscal management of their tax dollars.
7 Also, feel equally responsible to provide a
8 specific time frame when these accounts will be
9 reconciled and feel responsible to help find and
10 track money that appears to be missing.

11 And lastly, I feel a strong
12 responsibility to help work together and find a
13 solution for us going forward to prevent this
14 from ever happening again. So, today I am
15 interested in discussing the issue of the 27.5
16 million that is still missing from our accounts
17 as well as all the unreconciled accounts and
18 what actually occurred.

19 I have been a City Councilman at-large
20 in Philadelphia since January 2016. And I feel
21 it is imperative to address this very important
22 issue. The treasurer Rasheia Johnson said in
23 previous testimony that she could not speak to
24 historical issues in our last hearing.

25 Therefore, I have asked Rob Dubow and

1 Ms. Johnson to be present today in order to
2 address the history of our reconciliation
3 problem. I also asked Mr. Schwartz and City
4 Controller Reinhardt to attend, but they were
5 unavailable.

6 The goal of today is to gather all the
7 facts on this issue in order to understand what
8 happened, how we are going to resolve it, and
9 how we are going to put in place the systems to
10 prevent this from ever happening again. The
11 facts as they were presented to me over the last
12 few weeks from two testimonies by Mr. Rob Dubow
13 and Rasheia Johnson are that we have not
14 reconciled our accounts from the timeline I will
15 outline right now.

16 The City of Philadelphia payroll -- and
17 by the way, there were three different dates
18 from when this was not reconciled. In one
19 testimony, it was December of 2010. In another
20 testimony, it was June of 2010. And in the
21 Controller's report, it was September of 2010.
22 These accounts were not reconciled from 2010
23 until June 30 of 2017, and remained
24 unreconciled. This is the City of
25 Philadelphia's payroll account. This account

1 currently has a payroll amount that is about 1.7
2 billion per year. And if we assume over the
3 time period an average payroll of 1.4 billion
4 since it was lower in the earlier years, we
5 still have not reconciled \$10 billion of payroll
6 checks that have gone through this account.
7 10 billion is not reconciled.

8 The Consolidated Cash Account, also
9 called Con Cash, we have not reconciled from
10 June of 2014 to June of 2017. This is the
11 account, as I understand it, where we collect
12 all our tax receipts. So the Real Estate Taxes
13 that everyone pays us, which are about 1.3
14 billion including the school portion; the Wage
15 Tax, which is 1.9 billion; the Transfer Taxes of
16 287 million; BERT taxes, net income and gross
17 receipts, 413 million; Parking Tax, 98 million;
18 the Beverage Tax close to 80 million; Sales Tax,
19 188 million, they are basically totals \$4.5
20 billion. But I am going to assume a lower
21 figure of 3.8 billion since it's over time.

22 Not reconciling the Con Cash Account,
23 the consolidated cash account for three years,
24 assuming a lower number of 3.8 billion means we
25 have not reconciled deposits of 11.4 billion

1 from the period of 2014 to 2017.

2 Revenue, as I understand it, makes a
3 deposit of taxes almost every day. We have
4 receipts, but not reconciled the bank deposits
5 to those receipts. They should be reconciled
6 daily, let alone not in three years. We have no
7 idea if all dollars actually entered the bank
8 without having this reconciliation. Third
9 account is General Disbursement Account, not
10 reconciled since June of 2012 where most of the
11 City's checks are written from. Roughly, 3.8
12 billion per year on average. So from June of
13 2017 -- went from June of 2012 to June of 2017,
14 five years not reconciled, so about \$19 billion.
15 These are checks we write out to the City for
16 General Disbursement Account.

17 The Pension Account for all those people
18 who have worked for the City of Philadelphia and
19 earned a pension, this account has not been
20 reconciled since June of '14 through June of '17
21 or about three years. This account roughly
22 represents on average 600 million per year, it's
23 higher today. I am using a lower number to be
24 conservative. This is about 1.8 billion. It
25 hasn't been reconciled from the payroll account

1 for three years.

2 There's a PPDA settlement account that
3 hasn't been reconciled. I don't have a figure
4 for this account, but I believe it's a smaller
5 figure. We were told in testimony it was less
6 than 10 million. But this has not been
7 reconciled since December of 2015.

8 So overall, my concern is that we have
9 close to 40 billion of deposits in checks that
10 were not reconciled timely. We currently sit
11 here today trying to locate 27.5 million down
12 from 33 million, which was down from 40 million.
13 And we are trying to find that money. But at
14 this point, that money has not been found.

15 The reconciliations, I want to make it
16 clear, I'm not saying this money is missing.
17 But the accounts haven't been reconciled.

18 So my first question for you, Rob, is
19 just to give some history on this. When did you
20 start as the Finance Director for the City of
21 Philadelphia?

22 MR. DUBOW: In January 2008.

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: In your opinion, why
24 is the reconciliation of accounts considered
25 important?

1 MR. DUBOW: I think you described why
2 it's important. It's important for us to know
3 what's happening with our money.

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Is that the main
5 benefit of the reconciliation?

6 MR. DUBOW: Yeah.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: What do you think it
8 prevents?

9 MR. DUBOW: Well, I think it prevents
10 the kind of confusion we are going through now
11 about why there would be a difference between
12 what's in our accounting system and what's in
13 our bank accounts.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. And as Finance
15 Director, do you recall the first time that you
16 learned that the accounts were not reconciled in
17 a timely manner?

18 MR. DUBOW: I can't give you an exact
19 time. I know it's happened over the years.

20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Would you say
21 it was in 2011? 2010? 2009?

22 MR. DUBOW: I just don't remember. I
23 can't.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Do you have a
25 recollection of how many times you were

1 informed?

2 MR. DUBOW: I don't. And I also know
3 there were times when we would fall behind, and
4 times when we catch up. So, I can't give you
5 that answer either.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: But for the payroll
7 account from June of 2010 till June of 2017,
8 there was no catch up there. That was seven
9 straight years of not being reconciled. And so,
10 there were reports by the Controller's Office
11 issued that indicated from '07 to '09, that
12 period of time, there was a problem with
13 reconciliation. And that report was issued in
14 2012 and a press release was done in 2011 about
15 it. There was another report after that and
16 there was another report in 2016 where everyone
17 in this government was copied on.

18 So when you -- you don't remember when
19 you were told the accounts weren't reconciled.
20 But would you say it was a year ago? Two years
21 ago? Five years ago?

22 MR. DUBOW: Well, it's more complicated
23 than that because there were times when they had
24 been behind, times when we caught up. So I
25 think over the course of those ten years, it's

1 probably multiple times.

2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I mean, I have in my
3 hand the Controller's report from '07 to '09
4 where it was reported that there were several
5 instances where the accounts weren't reconciled.
6 Including in here -- I won't -- just give you an
7 idea.

8 It says: "We reported that the
9 Treasurer's Office did not reconcile the book
10 balances of 61 out of 66 accounts to related
11 bank statement balances for over eleven months."

12 And that report was '09 -- '07 to '09
13 and it was reported in '11 and '12. There are
14 more reports like that. Not going to get into
15 every detail.

16 So, I am trying to understand when you
17 found out about it, and what you did about it
18 once you found out?

19 MR. DUBOW: Right. We have tried to do
20 various things over time. We have brought in
21 outside help, brought in a deputy for cash
22 management, have had changes in the treasurer.
23 There are a number of things over the years we
24 tried to do to catch up.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: The Controller in her

1 testimony, the current Controller said the
2 failure to reconcile is a material weakness and
3 it was extremely concerning. Those were her
4 words.

5 Does that concern you?

6 MR. DUBOW: It does. And that's why we
7 have put in place a plan to eliminate all the
8 backlog and reconciliations and to keep up with
9 reconciliations going forward.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: If these accounts
11 hadn't been reconciled for several years and
12 it's considered material weakness and extremely
13 concerning, what would have been the reason why
14 for several years the payroll account wasn't
15 addressed?

16 MR. DUBOW: As I said, we had a number
17 of things that happen. We had people leave. We
18 had turnover. I can tell you what we are doing
19 now to try to eliminate it, which I think is
20 kind of what you said. You want to focus on
21 going forward and so do we.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Just so you know, in
23 all the info -- I took this whole weekend, maybe
24 30 hours and studied all this stuff, read
25 through every report. Comments in 2012 are

1 almost identical in 2016. Where it says we had
2 a shortage of people, we are working on getting
3 it caught up and we'll try to address it.
4 That's been the company line.

5 MR. DUBOW: And now we have added people
6 with more staffing, and we have outside help.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: To the best of your
8 knowledge since 2008, has every City Treasurer
9 been made aware of the responsibility to
10 reconcile our accounts?

11 MR. DUBOW: I think they all knew of
12 that responsibility, yes.

13 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Every one of them who
14 came in. And were they aware of the reports
15 highlighting our failure to reconcile, because
16 those are public record?

17 MR. DUBOW: I assume they were, yeah.

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And so, when a new
19 person transitions into the job as treasurer, is
20 there a briefing that occurs?

21 MR. DUBOW: There -- I don't know
22 there's particularly a briefing. But there is a
23 transition process.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Like an orientation.

25 MR. DUBOW: Yeah.

1 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Was that discussed at
2 the orientations of the treasurer's for the last
3 ten years?

4 MR. DUBOW: Well, I am sure it was
5 discussed with them over time. It's not like a
6 first day sit down and do a briefing.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I mean, I think that
8 as a rule of thumb going forward, not just in
9 the Treasury Department but in many departments,
10 we should put forth a better training program
11 where whoever is taking the position has at
12 least the last ten years of all the records of
13 the City that is produced, and they have to read
14 that information and understand it to know
15 what's going on. If somebody took the time to
16 read these reports that I have for ten years,
17 you would have been fixing this immediately.

18 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. One of the things
19 that we are doing with the outside group is
20 working to improve their internal controls to
21 make sure that the appropriate --

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I am saying a rule of
23 them going forward when we transition new
24 people, we should have a detailed list of
25 orientation and what's required. And go back in

1 time and show them everything that occurred.

2 Did you discuss with the current
3 treasurer the fact that reconciliations were
4 outstanding?

5 MR. DUBOW: I think we had a number of
6 conversations about reconciliations over time.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And what was the
8 conclusion of -- do you have an idea what our
9 current treasure -- when was the first time you
10 discussed with current treasurer that
11 reconciliations were a problem?

12 MR. DUBOW: I can't give you an exact
13 date. I know we have talked about it over time,
14 which is how we wound up putting together a plan
15 we have now. We had also before that used
16 outside auditing help to try to catch up. So,
17 it's something we have talked about over time
18 and developed a plan.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Our current treasurer
20 testified in a prior hearing that budget meeting
21 that the -- when she came into office in January
22 of '16, she learned about it in May of '16. And
23 she didn't know really the depth of it until May
24 of '16. And then for some reason, it took us 17
25 months for us to come up with an RFP in

1 October/November of '17, seventeen months later,
2 to hire an outside firm.

3 I guess one of my questions was, why did
4 it take us 17 months to resolve that what we
5 knew, when we knew reconciliations were a
6 problem for so many years?

7 MR. DUBOW: If I had different approach
8 at first, we brought outside auditing help.

9 MS. JOHNSON: For one, we had to
10 understand -- one, you had to understand the
11 depth of the problem and dig into it. So, I can
12 speak to why it took to that point. I need to
13 understand and get into myself why where current
14 staff was, what the gaps were and what we needed
15 and started having conversation with other
16 departments we work with like Revenue and
17 Finance Accounting.

18 And then from there, that's when we
19 brought in the outside accountant to come in.
20 And we worked with that person for a while and
21 started to understand the problem and dig into a
22 little deeper. And then that's when we started
23 to ask for additional help. And realized if
24 current staff could keep things going, we needed
25 someone else to do the lookback. So, it wasn't

1 like someone was just sitting on their hands for
2 17 months. We were working on it.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: In July 12 of 2016,
4 the Controller's Office issued a report: Report
5 on Internal Control and Other Matters of City of
6 Philadelphia July '12 Executive Summary.

7 What the Controller's Office found, the
8 City's financial statements were presented
9 fairly in all material respects in accordance
10 with accounting principals generally accepted.
11 The City's CAFR, Comprehensive Annual Financial
12 Report for the fiscal year ended June 30 of
13 2015, which would have been July 1 of '13 to
14 June 30, the weaknesses and deficiencies
15 contributed to errors exceeding 1 billion. Some
16 of these -- many of these require management's
17 attention.

18 There was a report out that said we had
19 one billion of errors. I think they got fixed.

20 MR. DUBOW: Well, yes. If you read
21 that, you will see that by the time the CAFR was
22 out, that was all fixed. That's a separate
23 issue from reconciliation.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Right. My concern
25 with that overall is that if we had a billion

1 dollars of errors, that's a red flag that we
2 need more training or better qualified people in
3 that department handling the money. And it also
4 goes on to say in that report: "Bank account
5 reconciliations were not timely completed."

6 Over 85 percent of accounts had not been
7 reconciled until more than two months after the
8 fiscal year end. In one instance, the last
9 reconciliation on file for the City's payroll
10 disbursement account was September of 2010.

11 Late preparation of reconciliations can prevent
12 timely detection of errors or worse,
13 irregularities. This was the report from a
14 controller July 12 of 2016. It was pretty
15 detailed.

16 When did we find out that the payroll
17 account of 2010 wasn't reconciled? That one
18 account; do we know?

19 MR. DUBOW: I don't remember.

20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: But it did say in this
21 report it wasn't reconciled.

22 Do you recall when our current Treasurer
23 sat down with you to talk about the problem of
24 reconciliation? Did she bring that to you or
25 did you bring that to her?

1 MR. DUBOW: I don't remember. She may
2 have brought it to me. I know we have been
3 talking about it for a while.

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, whose idea was it
5 to open new bank accounts at the end of June of
6 2017?

7 MR. DUBOW: We, I think, probably
8 jointly decided to go through an RFP process.

9 MS. JOHNSON: Right. Every four years
10 we go through an RFP process for payroll.
11 Again, through a competitive process with having
12 a new bank responsible bidder and winner, that's
13 when we opened new accounts. It had nothing to
14 do with --

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And if we went through
16 that process every four years, why did the
17 payroll account go unreconciled for seven years?

18 MR. DUBOW: We actually went through
19 that process, but I don't think we changed banks
20 in the last process. We didn't open new
21 accounts.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: A prior treasurer I
23 spoke to claims that requested help to reconcile
24 the accounts.

25 Why did we not provide the treasurer

1 with the resources to manage the finances of the
2 City especially since the payroll account was so
3 far behind?

4 MR. DUBOW: We did provide additional
5 resources. One of the things we provided was a
6 deputy for cash management, so we did provide
7 resources.

8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And did that solve the
9 problem?

10 MR. DUBOW: It did not.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Who was monitoring
12 that person that we provided additional -- we
13 hired additional people. They didn't do their
14 job. It went on for a long time. Who was
15 monitoring that?

16 MR. DUBOW: I guess various people over
17 time. Someone in -- in our shops.

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: In the report from
19 2011, the Controller also talked about material
20 weaknesses from 2007 to 2009 and also referenced
21 again reconciliation.

22 Did we do anything at that point?

23 MR. DUBOW: I think we did over time
24 take actions. But obviously, we fell behind
25 again.

1 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Just to reiterate, in
2 July of 2012, the Controller issued another
3 executive summary talking about the \$1 billion
4 of errors which were corrected.

5 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, we don't have an
7 answer because -- on this person that you hired
8 as to why none of these reconciliations were
9 done.

10 MR. DUBOW: I mean, there were other
11 issues with other senior people leaving and
12 turnover that contributed to our not being able
13 to keep up.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I mean, at the end of
15 the day when you add up all these accounts, it's
16 40 billion plus not reconciled. I'm not saying
17 the money is missing. I'm just saying it's not
18 reconciled. Now where we are right now, we
19 originally had 40 million missing.

20 MR. DUBOW: No. We had difference
21 between -- say we had difference between what's
22 in our accounting system and our bank account of
23 40 million missing. Now it's down to 27.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: The 6 million from
25 33.3 to 27.5, where did that come from? What

1 did we find out was the issue there? How did we
2 find that money?

3 MS. JOHNSON: With doing the current
4 reconciliations, we realized some journal
5 entries were not made to transfer money from one
6 account to another within the City.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: That was \$6 million
8 worth?

9 MS. JOHNSON: Various items. Was not
10 one item for 6 million, yes.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Is there somebody who
12 supervises that and checks that work?

13 MS. JOHNSON: The reconciliation work?
14 Yes.

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I mean, I guess the
16 problem was that that particular account went
17 from 14 to 17 unreconciled. And that's the
18 account where every tax receipt is paid into?

19 MS. JOHNSON: That's correct.

20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Basically, what I
21 envision is Revenue Department records the
22 receipts, gets deposited, and no one is
23 balancing the receipt to the bank balance.

24 MS. JOHNSON: It's not quite that cut
25 and dry. There are several departments that

1 actually collect money and deposit money. And
2 sometimes, all of it is not validated. So,
3 there is a fine process. And I welcome you to
4 come see how it looks on a daily basis to do the
5 match up.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Whether I see it or
7 not, what we do know is that for three years,
8 the consolidated cash account which is like 3.8
9 billion goes through that, wasn't reconciled.
10 And I think the last testimony you mentioned
11 that at the end of June we should have these
12 accounts reconciled.

13 Is that still on track?

14 MR. DUBOW: It's different --

15 MS. JOHNSON: It's different dates for
16 different accounts. But the payroll account's
17 slated for June, yup. They will be -- the
18 ones -- Wells Fargo will be closed out, yes.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Can you do me a favor?
20 Can you give me the name of each account that's
21 not reconciled and the date that each one will
22 be reconciled?

23 MS. JOHNSON: Yes.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: What's the first one?

25 MS. JOHNSON: So, you want it to go

1 through it again like we did last week?

2 Payroll account, which was last
3 reconciled in 2010 --

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I know those dates. I
5 am saying when this will new firm have those
6 records reconciled?

7 MS. JOHNSON: That's being done
8 internally with the additional staff that we
9 have in-house. The accounting firm is not
10 working on the payroll account.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, the payroll
12 account is not being done by an outside auditor?

13 MS. JOHNSON: No.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: It's being done
15 in-house?

16 MS. JOHNSON: Yes, that's correct.

17 MR. DUBOW: It's only Con Cash.

18 MS. JOHNSON: The Consolidated Cash
19 Account is the only where the lookback is being
20 worked on by the outside accountant firm.

21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, all the other
22 accounts are being done in-house?

23 MS. JOHNSON: Yes. With additional
24 resources that we have in staff. Yes, that's
25 correct.

1 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Can you give me the
2 list -- it's the Payroll Account, the Pension
3 Payroll Account, the General Disbursement
4 Account, the Consolidated Cash Account and that
5 PPDA Account?

6 MS. JOHNSON: That's correct.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: What you are saying to
8 me now is that the only account being done by
9 the outside auditor is the Consolidated Cash
10 Account?

11 MS. JOHNSON: That's correct.

12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And you are saying
13 that we internally are doing the other
14 reconciliations?

15 MS. JOHNSON: That's correct.

16 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And all of the sudden
17 we are able to do them where we couldn't do some
18 of these for seven years?

19 MS. JOHNSON: Well, I can't say all of
20 the sudden. With the request of additional
21 bodies and staff and there has been some
22 turnover in backfilling positions, we are
23 staffed where we are equipped to handle it to do
24 the catch up and keep current.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. The firm that

1 we have hired for this Consolidated Cash
2 Account, have we checked the backgrounds of that
3 firm carefully?

4 MS. JOHNSON: We went through RFP
5 process, checked their references and their
6 standings and yes.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Because I just looked
8 on the internet, which you can do today, and I
9 noticed that one of the principals had their
10 accounting license suspended from '02 to '11.
11 Which I -- what I am told it was pretty tough to
12 get your accounting license suspended. I am
13 just mentioning this because I think our
14 finances should be by a large independent
15 accounting firm, very large with very
16 experienced. We have a lot of money at stake,
17 and we should pick the best and pay for it.
18 There is a lot of money at stake.

19 So, these are the four goals that I
20 wanted to try to accomplish today. And I think
21 we are getting there. One, I want to make sure
22 we understand what happened. Two, I want to
23 confirm that all these accounts will be
24 reconciled. I haven't heard the time frame,
25 though, of the accounts. I know you are doing

1 them internally. The last time I was told it
2 was June 30.

3 MS. JOHNSON: June 30 for the payroll is
4 what I told you the last time. And we are still
5 on that time frame.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How about the Pension
7 Account?

8 MS. JOHNSON: The Pension Account,
9 September.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And the General
11 Disbursement Account?

12 MS. JOHNSON: General Disbursement, our
13 target is December.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: December?

15 MS. JOHNSON: That's correct.

16 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Why do we have to wait
17 seven months?

18 MS. JOHNSON: Because again, we are
19 using internal staff, the timing and the size of
20 the account and the work that needs to be done.

21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: We are paying one
22 accounting firm \$500,000 to reconcile that
23 account?

24 MS. JOHNSON: We are not paying them
25 that. That's the maximum amount of the

1 contract. Hopefully, they can get it done and
2 we don't exhaust that contract.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Why wouldn't we have
4 included these other reconciliations in that
5 contract?

6 MS. JOHNSON: Because the thought
7 process behind that is all the other accounts
8 that you mentioned except for Con Cash are ZBA
9 accounts. What we put in, goes out in checks.
10 Con Cash is not. So that's -- that's where
11 there was a book difference. So, that is where
12 we wanted to focus their attentions.

13 COUNCILMAN DOMB: The Consolidated Cash
14 Account, what's the date they are telling us we
15 are reconciling that by?

16 MS. JOHNSON: We are going through the
17 work plan. And they just started last Monday.
18 And the goal is to have something by the end of
19 this week as far as a work plan.

20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, there is no time
21 frame that we can tell the taxpayers when that
22 will be.

23 MS. JOHNSON: Not today. But by the end
24 of the week as they finish going through our
25 internal review of our processes, yes.

1 MR. DUBOW: We will provide.

2 MS. JOHNSON: We will provide it to you.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How about the PPDA
4 Account? Any idea when that will be done?

5 MS. JOHNSON: October.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me go back over
7 this. We wanted to make sure what happened,
8 one. Two, we wanted to make sure all accounts
9 are reconciled. I am hearing the dates when
10 they will be reconciled. Want to find the 27.5
11 million that is not accounted for.

12 MR. DUBOW: Right. Eliminate that
13 discrepancy.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: We want to put systems
15 in place to ensure a lack of fiscal management
16 will never happen again.

17 In the future, I strongly believe our
18 financial audits must be completed by a large
19 independent and non-political third party that
20 will not only audit our financial accounts and
21 records but also provide a corrective action
22 plan that would include the following: Review
23 the City management's response to issues raised
24 in past audit reports. Because I have three or
25 four reports where they raised issues where we

1 didn't really address them. Two, define
2 penalties for uncorrected audit findings or for
3 remaining non-compliant with the audit report.
4 Three, lay out a step-by-step plan of actions to
5 correct deficiencies identified in the audit
6 report. And four, review the performance in the
7 completion of previous corrective action plans.

8 This is an outline of a potential
9 solution that I plan to introduce. And hope
10 that the Administration of my colleagues on
11 Council will join me on working on this together
12 for our City and for the benefit of our
13 taxpayers.

14 Thank you, Council President. Thank you
15 for coming back. I hope to work with you on
16 this. I think the good news is we may have a
17 lemon where we can make lemonade out of by
18 doing. So, I think having an independent audit
19 will put a lot of people at ease.

20 Thank you. Thank you very much.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good,
22 Councilman? Any other witnesses?

23 There being none, I want to thank you
24 very much.

25 Two-minute break.

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1 (Brief break taken.)

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

3 This Committee will stand in recess
4 until Wednesday, May 23, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. At
5 which time, we will reconvene in City Hall in
6 Room 400.

7 Thank you all very much.

8 (Committee of the Whole Hearing
9 adjourned at 4:13 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,
Court Reporter, Notary Public

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