

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 27, 2015
10:20 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN ED NEILSON
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

BILLS 150162, 150163, 150164, 150165, 150166,
150167, and 150438
RESOLUTION 150179

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
3 morning. This is the public hearing of
4 the Committee of the Whole regarding Bill
5 Nos. 150162, 150163, 150164, 150165,
6 150166, 150167, 150438, and Resolution
7 No. 150179.

8 Mr. Stitt, please read the
9 titles of the bills and resolution.

10 MR. STITT: Bill No. 150162, an
11 ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for
12 the six Fiscal Years 2016 through 2021
13 inclusive.

14 Bill No. 150163, an ordinance
15 to adopt a Fiscal 2016 Capital Budget.

16 Bill No. 150164, an ordinance
17 adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal
18 Year 2016.

19 Bill No. 150165, amending
20 Section 19-1801 of The Philadelphia Code,
21 entitled "Authorization of Tax," to
22 further authorize the Board of Education
23 of the School District of Philadelphia to
24 impose a tax on real estate within the
25 City of Philadelphia, to provide for an

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 increase in the tax, and making technical
3 changes, all under certain terms and
4 conditions.

5 Bill No. 150166, amending
6 Section 19-1806 of The Philadelphia Code,
7 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
8 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the
9 Board of Education of the School District
10 of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the
11 use or occupancy of real estate within
12 the School District of Philadelphia,
13 under certain terms and conditions.

14 Bill No. 150167, amending
15 Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia Code,
16 entitled "Wage and Net Profits Tax," by
17 revising certain tax rates, under certain
18 terms and conditions.

19 Bill No. 150438, amending
20 Section 19-1806 of The Philadelphia Code,
21 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
22 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the
23 Board of Education of the School District
24 of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the
25 use or occupancy of real estate within

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 the School District of Philadelphia and
3 to set the rate for such tax, and making
4 technical changes; all under certain
5 terms and conditions.

6 Resolution No. 150179,
7 providing for the approval by the Council
8 of the City of Philadelphia of a Revised
9 Five Year Financial Plan for the City of
10 Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years 2016
11 through 2020, and incorporating proposed
12 changes with respect to Fiscal Year 2015,
13 which is to be submitted by the Mayor to
14 the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
15 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority")
16 pursuant to the Intergovernmental
17 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an
18 ordinance of this Council approved by the
19 Mayor on January 3rd, 1992 (Bill No.
20 1563-A), by and between the City and the
21 Authority.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you.

24 Today we continue the public
25 hearing of the Committee of the Whole to

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 consider various bills just read by the
3 Clerk that constitute proposed operating
4 and capital spending measures for Fiscal
5 Year 2016, a Capital Program, and a
6 forward-looking Capital Plan for Fiscal
7 Year 2016 through Fiscal Year 2021.

8 To ensure that there's an
9 opportunity for all here today to be
10 heard, certain ground rules have been
11 established as follows:

12 Number one, your testimony
13 should be about the budget and proposed
14 spending priorities. Copies are
15 available on the table at the front of
16 the room where you signed in.

17 Two, all speakers must sign up
18 in order to testify. If you have not
19 already signed up, please do so now by
20 signing your name on that same list to
21 the table to my left. Your name will be
22 called in the order in which you signed
23 up. You'll have three minutes to speak
24 in order to be fair because we have such
25 an extensive list. I intend to hold

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2 faithfully to the three-minute limit.
3 And, finally, we have a timer that will
4 be set to three minutes. When the timer
5 buzzes, please complete your sentence and
6 allow the next speaker to approach the
7 microphone.

8 I'll now ask Mr. Stitt to read
9 the names of our first speaker.

10 MR. STITT: Jerry Jordan.
11 (Witness approached witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Always
14 a pleasure. President, PFT.

15 MR. JORDAN: Thank you and good
16 morning, Councilwoman Blackwell and
17 members of City Council.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
19 morning.

20 MR. JORDAN: I am Jerry Jordan,
21 President of the Philadelphia Federation
22 of Teachers. On behalf of Philadelphia's
23 educators, I want to thank you for the
24 opportunity to speak on the issue of
25 resources for Philadelphia's

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 schoolchildren.

3 Much of what I say today will
4 sound familiar, because testifying on the
5 need for more education funding has
6 become an unfortunate tradition over the
7 past several years.

8 Nevertheless, as educators, it
9 is our duty to advocate for the resources
10 that our children need to receive the
11 high-quality public education that the
12 Commonwealth is constitutionally
13 obligated to provide.

14 I want to be clear. It is
15 incumbent on the Pennsylvania State
16 Legislature to reinvest in public
17 education and provide funding that is not
18 only adequate but sustainable.

19 On behalf of the members of the
20 PFT, I want to express my appreciation
21 for all City Council has done to find
22 additional resources for schools, and I
23 am in support of your efforts to find
24 additional revenue.

25 But for educators, parents,

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2 teachers, and certainly students, the
3 annual handwringing over whether or not
4 our schoolchildren will have the basic
5 resources is unacceptable.

6 An excellent school like George
7 Washington Carver shouldn't have to
8 wonder if it can offer an advanced
9 placement computer science class because
10 there isn't enough money for textbooks.

11 It is outrageous that some of
12 our larger schools are still operating
13 with one counselor and one school
14 secretary.

15 Programs that are standard at
16 other districts, such as SAT preparation
17 classes and extracurricular activities,
18 are considered luxuries here in
19 Philadelphia.

20 School supplies like paper,
21 pens, and other materials are still
22 scarce at most schools and are typically
23 provided by teachers and school staff,
24 who spend thousands of dollars out of
25 their own pockets to adequately stock

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 their classrooms.

3 Yes, additional resources are
4 critically needed by our schools. But I
5 would also ask this body insist that any
6 additional resources are used to restore
7 programs and services to our children,
8 like nurses, music, art, and library
9 science, not invested in efforts to
10 prioritize the jobs of public school
11 employees.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. JORDAN: We need to place
14 an emphasis on providing more counselors,
15 secretaries, safety personnel, and
16 support to classroom teachers and end the
17 climate of disrespect and demoralization
18 of educators that has been created by the
19 current District's administration and the
20 School Reform Commission.

21 Our fiscal crises is dire, but
22 for the past three years, the SRC has
23 been using the budget deficit as an
24 excuse to disrespect and demoralize
25 Philadelphia's educators and shirk their

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2 responsibilities to provide programs and
3 services for our children.

4 In April, the School District
5 put out an RFP for outside companies to
6 bid on services provided by per diem
7 substitutes. Now the District is trying
8 to privatize the jobs of Philadelphia's
9 certified school nurses.

10 Certified school nurses provide
11 critical and essential functions for our
12 students. In many instances, a school
13 nurse is the only healthcare professional
14 available to our schoolchildren.

15 As pediatricians specialize in
16 the healthcare of children, certified
17 school nurses are specialists in dealing
18 with children and adolescents in a school
19 setting. They are trained to understand
20 education and the intellectual
21 development of children and adolescents.

22 School nurses are certified by
23 the Pennsylvania Department of Health and
24 Education and are specifically trained
25 and certified to work in school

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2 environments.

3 Unlike contracted healthcare
4 professionals, certified school nurses
5 must have a Bachelor's degree at a
6 minimum and a nursing degree. Most have
7 a Master's degree and beyond.

8 The job of a certified school
9 nurse is not a function that can be
10 simply contracted out to private
11 healthcare providers. But rather than
12 restoring more than 100 nurses to our
13 schools, the District is seeking Band-Aid
14 solutions that put the healthcare of our
15 children at risk.

16 Let's be clear. This has been
17 the District's plan all along. One of
18 the reasons we have been unsuccessful in
19 reaching a new PFT contract is because
20 the District insists on removing all
21 contract language dealing with school
22 nurses. The PFT will not enter into a
23 contract that gives the District the
24 right to take more services away from our
25 children.

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2 Educator morale is at an
3 all-time low. Philadelphia's teachers
4 and school staff have witnessed the
5 erosion of programs and services for
6 children. They have continued to work
7 without a raise for almost four years as
8 they pay for school supplies, and they
9 have suffered as the District has laid
10 off personnel or attempted to outsource
11 their jobs.

12 The dissatisfaction with the
13 status quo is not limited to PFT members.
14 Education was the top issue on voters'
15 minds in last week's Primary Election.
16 Philadelphia's citizens overwhelmingly
17 voted for a mayoral candidate who
18 believes in working with Philadelphia's
19 educators and resoundingly called for
20 local control of public schools.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. JORDAN: We certainly want
23 to see an increase in education funding
24 and a fair funding formula that ensures
25 every school gets the resources it needs.

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2 But along with the funding, we need to
3 see real change in the way those who
4 teach, nurture, protect, support, feed,
5 and care for Philadelphia's children are
6 treated.

7 We can no longer allow
8 financial difficulties to be an excuse
9 for the mistreatment of educators.

10 Thank you again for allowing me
11 to speak to you today and for all you
12 have done and continue to do for our
13 children and our schools.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much, Mr. Jordan, for your
17 leadership over the years.

18 We've been working hard to get
19 Drexel and Penn to agree to a program to
20 try to supplement and complement our
21 school nursing agenda in schools, but as
22 you know, they can only supplement a
23 nurse. They can't replace them. And so
24 with all that we're trying to do, we
25 still feel stuck, because you've got to

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2 have a nurse in the first place. And all
3 that you've said about nurses is so very
4 important, and we raised the issue
5 yesterday, how do you make sure children
6 who need their meds during the day and my
7 issue on Ritalin and behavior-altering
8 drugs and now there's a lot of talk about
9 autism and other diseases and other
10 conditions.

11 So it's very, very important
12 that we deal with this, and we certainly
13 agree with you. Certain issues -- we
14 accept the fact that we've been short on
15 money, but certain positions should not
16 be up for grabs, should not be -- a
17 principal shouldn't have to choose
18 between a math teacher and a nurse.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. JORDAN: Between an English
21 teacher and a counselor. Certain
22 positions -- and we should be able to
23 have libraries in schools in place and
24 staffed with books.

25 So we've got a long way to go,

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2 but we appreciate your commitment over
3 the years and look forward to expanding
4 this conversation so that -- and also let
5 me thank the PFT for their position on
6 the local school board. We've got to do
7 something to do our part to create a
8 change.

9 So I want to thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. JORDAN: Thank you very
12 much, Councilwoman, for those words, and
13 we agree that there's a need for more
14 nurses, and certainly the Federation is
15 open to conversations about partnering
16 with our university partners to
17 supplement services for our children.

18 I find it remarkable when we
19 think about the system as it was prior to
20 the State taking over the School
21 District, we had nurses, we had art
22 teachers, we had music teachers, we had
23 librarians. However, since the State has
24 taken over, there has been a tremendous
25 reduction in those services to our

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2 children. Something is wrong. Something
3 is very, very wrong when the choices that
4 have been made have been to reduce the
5 services, particularly for many of the
6 neediest children. This is a city that
7 has a very high percentage of families
8 living in poverty. I think the 1st
9 Congressional District is the poorest
10 congressional district in the nation, and
11 yet the reduction of services for
12 children and families in that
13 congressional district as well as
14 throughout the City is woefully lacking.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yeah.
16 It's really unbelievable. And all this
17 change happened to ensure we'd have
18 funding, and it's kind of worse. But
19 we're hopeful with our new Governor that
20 life will be better. So we'll know soon
21 enough. And hopefully things will be
22 better and we don't have to deal with
23 these cutbacks across the board and, in
24 fact, may have something and some funds
25 restored.

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2 Questions from members?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Any

5 questions from my colleagues?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay,

8 Mr. Jordan. We're in good shape. Thank

9 you very much.

10 MR. JORDAN: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

12 you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. STITT: George Ricchezza.

15 (Applause.)

16 (Witness approached witness

17 table.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It's a

19 pleasure to see you and look forward to

20 seeing you during our budget hearings.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you.

23 Good morning, Councilwoman

24 Blackwell, members of Council, parents,

25 clergy, residents, and taxpayers of our

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2 great city. My name is George Ricchezza.
3 I'm the President and District Leader of
4 Local 32BJ, District 1201. I represent
5 bus attendants, bus drivers, building
6 engineers, maintenance mechanics, and
7 cleaners in our schools.

8 As I listened to the District
9 give testimony, all I seemed to hear was
10 budget deficit and we need more money,
11 but no plan on how those resources are
12 going to be used. We believe this
13 Council cares about educating children
14 and will find a way to help fund the
15 deficit like you have in the past.

16 If given the needed resources,
17 will our children get the education
18 necessary to graduate or will there be
19 more layoffs of teachers, librarians,
20 school police, counselors, nurses, and
21 food service workers or will there be
22 more mismanagement of funds, causing more
23 hardship of working families already
24 struggling to get by?

25 The COO mentioned building

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2 engineers yesterday. What she did not
3 say is they are licensed by the City of
4 Philadelphia and qualified to run the
5 heating and cooling boilers in our
6 schools. The responsibility, immense.
7 The reward, minimal for providing a
8 clean, safe, healthy environment for the
9 most important aspect of what we do,
10 allow our children to learn.

11 When there are emergencies in
12 any of the buildings, the engineers
13 identify the problem and there are trades
14 mechanics to provide the services needed,
15 day or night, air conditioning, heating,
16 roof leaks, plumbing, asbestos, mold,
17 lead paint.

18 Our bus attendants and bus
19 drivers start as early as 5:00 a.m. to
20 start the buses for the important process
21 of transporting our children to and from
22 school safely each day. This includes
23 thousands of our special needs students.

24 Our bus mechanics have the
25 responsibility of fixing our buses, cars,

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2 and trucks. They work with state
3 troopers to ensure parents that their
4 children are on safe, inspected buses.

5 Privatization is a commonly
6 used term. Three years ago we had
7 600-plus bus drivers and over 30
8 mechanics. Today we have less than 350
9 drivers and 23 mechanics. The District
10 has elected to privatize hundreds of bus
11 routes and send work to vendors to fix
12 buses in lieu of hiring qualified
13 employees.

14 32BJ members in 2012 showed the
15 District and residents of Philadelphia
16 that we care about our children by
17 agreeing to concessions totalling over
18 \$100 million. What we did not know was
19 that the District would downsize BJ
20 employees and not hire for three years,
21 reducing the workforce by 700 employees.
22 With no salary increase for six years and
23 a salary contribution back to the
24 District every pay, it has become
25 difficult to support our families.

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2 Senior management has not given back one
3 dime, but continue to hire.

4 The residents of Philadelphia
5 on a ballot question on May 19th
6 overwhelmingly said yes to dissolve the
7 SRC and give it back to local control. A
8 fair funding formula is needed, and
9 Governor Wolf has committed to fund
10 public education not only in Philadelphia
11 but throughout the Commonwealth.

12 32BJ members applaud your
13 commitment to our children by finding the
14 necessary resources to help fund our
15 schools.

16 With the leadership of Council
17 President Clarke and all of you in City
18 Council, working with the Governor and
19 our elected leaders in Harrisburg, we
20 believe you will find the funding to
21 allow our children to get the education
22 they deserve and make the Philadelphia
23 schools a model that when we, the
24 employees, you, City Council, the
25 Governor and our electeds work together,

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2 we can make Philadelphia a model for
3 educating children in difficult times.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you, Mr. Ricchezza. And, yes, we
8 introduced that legislation and Council
9 overwhelmingly voted for it here, and
10 we're glad it was overwhelmingly
11 supported on Election Day.

12 Are there any questions?

13 Councilman Jones.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

15 In our constant trying to move
16 the needle in the right direction for
17 you, public education, and your members,
18 it came across my ears that this is your
19 last year.

20 MR. RICCHEZZA: Yes, sir.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can we,
22 Madam Chair, make it a part of any deal
23 that we do that he cannot be allowed to
24 go?

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I

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2 agree. I'm in total agreement.

3 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you for
4 that vote of confidence.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just want
6 you to know that in the worst of times
7 when we were trying to make a dollar out
8 of 50 cents, when we were trying to make
9 a way for public education funding, that
10 you, your membership made sacrifices -- I
11 remember that -- to move the needle in
12 the right direction so we could keep
13 schools open and keep buses rolling and
14 keep operations going, and I'll never
15 forget that. So thank you for your
16 service.

17 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you very
18 much.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you very much. We wholeheartedly agree.

22 Would you wait a moment,
23 please, because we have other comments.

24 Councilman Neilson.

25 MR. RICCHEZZA: I'm sorry. I

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 apologize.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Can't
4 get away too quickly there.

5 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: Nice try,
6 George, getting away from things.

7 Thanks, George, for testifying
8 here today. We appreciate it. A couple
9 questions.

10 MR. RICCHEZZA: Sure.

11 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: George,
12 yesterday the School District testified,
13 as you know, and they identified their
14 debt services being \$4 billion. That's
15 billion with a B. They told us that that
16 debt service that we carry was for the
17 improvement of the schools. Now, your
18 experience and the people that you
19 represent are closest to the conditions
20 of our schools. Can you tell us for the
21 record what the conditions of the schools
22 are. Because I walk through schools.
23 I've visited many schools, as you know,
24 and what we see is a pretty picture
25 painted sometimes and it's not what's

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2 there. We get pushed down main corridors
3 that look nice. However, we know the
4 nooks and crannies and the infrastructure
5 inside is crumbling down. We've had some
6 of your boilers at Northeast High, I
7 believe it was, about a year and a half
8 ago where the stack fell down, crumbled.
9 Thank goodness school wasn't in. Then
10 they fixed it, and they didn't even fix
11 it correctly. They had to come back and
12 fix it again. They're paying for things
13 two, three times.

14 George, can you give
15 Councilmembers and the public an idea on
16 how the schools' shape is, the buildings.
17 You lost, I think you said, 700
18 employees?

19 MR. RICCHEZZA: Yes.

20 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: That can't
21 be good.

22 MR. RICCHEZZA: No, it's not.

23 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: So they're
24 the ones -- we're sending kids in an
25 unsafe environment, and I think we need

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2 to get that identified here on the record
3 and tell us what your needs are, because
4 you have needs as well. And I know
5 Mr. Jordan identified his needs and we
6 know them, but these needs go far beyond
7 that and I think we need to identify that
8 for the record.

9 MR. RICCHEZZA: Well, let me
10 start off by saying that I've been with
11 the District over 40 years. When I first
12 started in the Maintenance Department as
13 a welder, we had over 750 employees in
14 the Maintenance Department. Today we're
15 under 300 in 16 different crafts, which
16 means that the burden of fixing the
17 schools, keeping up with them becomes
18 increasingly difficult every day. The
19 School District has taken an initiative
20 that they would rather privatize and send
21 work out than have our mechanics, who are
22 more than qualified to do the work in
23 every aspect, and I'm talking about
24 steamfitters, carpenters, electricians.
25 We have the ability to do the work.

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2 Unfortunately, everything that we always
3 hear is they got to put out an RFP to
4 contract out the work, which is not
5 necessary. Much cheaper for us to do the
6 work.

7 In regards to the conditions of
8 the schools, the schools have
9 deteriorated in the last 15 to 20 years,
10 simply because the resources are not
11 being put into the schools like they used
12 to years ago. And what I mean by that
13 is, the staff has been cut from when I
14 started at 4,700 employees down to a
15 little over 2,000 employees today.
16 Cannot do the same amount of work in the
17 buildings with the same amount of
18 buildings that we still occupy, over 200
19 buildings today, with that amount of
20 employees.

21 We talked to the School
22 District. We try to encourage them to
23 sit down, have meetings with us so we can
24 find resolutions to how we can fix the
25 schools. And I don't want to get into

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2 every aspect of what the problems are in
3 the school, but they're significant and
4 they range from outside of the buildings,
5 actually deteriorating the outside,
6 cement falling down from the buildings,
7 to mold, asbestos inside the buildings,
8 carpentry problems. It's just a whole
9 host of work that needs to be done.

10 We've been telling the School
11 District they need to hire, and when you
12 have an in-house workforce, much of that
13 work can be done in-house at a much
14 cheaper rate than try to contract it out,
15 because we find when they contract it
16 out, the work isn't the same, as you
17 mentioned, shoddy work being done by some
18 contractors. Not all. I'm not going to
19 sit here and say every contractor the
20 School District employs does bad work.
21 But the problem is, our workforce is
22 deteriorating. We're getting older at
23 this point, and we're trying to find
24 programs, which we've had in the past for
25 the trades, trainee program that I

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2 started in, to bring young mechanics into
3 the fold, teach them the trades.
4 Students in the City are not all going to
5 go to college. So finding a program for
6 them once they graduate to come to the
7 School District, get educated in the
8 trades here, which we've done in the
9 past. It has stopped over the last five
10 or six years again. It's a mechanism to
11 keep the schools growing, to keep the
12 schools maintained, and doing it at a
13 cheaper cost than contracting it out.

14 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: And,
15 again, as Councilman Jones said, we know
16 you're calling it your final days. You
17 will be missed, George. We worked
18 together for a long time.

19 MR. RICCHEZZA: Yes, indeed.

20 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: Prior to
21 me joining Council and everything. It's
22 always been a great relationship, and I
23 wish you well in the future, and thank
24 you for all you do.

25 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you very

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 much. I appreciate that.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

5 Councilwoman Sanchez.

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
7 you, Madam Chair.

8 I wanted to echo those
9 sentiments about George. And I don't
10 know how much detail of this you know,
11 George, but if you could elaborate a
12 little bit. So one of the areas that we
13 identified a couple years ago was the
14 transportation. The School District
15 brought in a consultant who quit. Can
16 you tell us from your perspective what
17 the status of that whole transportation
18 reorganization is.

19 MR. RICCHEZZA: Well, the
20 entire experienced management has left
21 the School District in the last three to
22 five years. So right now what we have in
23 the Transportation Division is someone
24 who came from outside who has no
25 experience in transportation, money man.

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2 He knows the money, but the aspect of the
3 job, he doesn't.

4 So the reason that there's so
5 much privatization going on right now --
6 and we've lost about 200 routes that
7 we've had in the past over the last
8 couple of years. We used to have almost
9 500 bus routes that we serviced. We're
10 down to somewhere around 300 and change
11 right now.

12 But, again, it goes back to
13 senior management and hiring a group of
14 people who really don't delve into the
15 problems that we experience every day on
16 our buses, how the buses get out on the
17 street at 5:30 in the morning. Our bus
18 attendants are on the street at 5:30.
19 They get on the bus. They have to
20 service the bus before they leave. They
21 have to pick up the children getting to
22 and from.

23 So the consultant came in. And
24 it's always about what a consultant -- as
25 you know, money. They can do it cheaper.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 We've proven to the School District with
3 numbers that we do it cheaper than a
4 contractor does, and I have the
5 information if you would like to ever see
6 and share it with you. An average route
7 that the School District pays for a
8 part-time route, four hours a day, is
9 approximately \$285 a day. When we hire
10 bus drivers here, they come in making
11 about \$15 an hour. So it costs the
12 School District \$60 a day until they are
13 entitled to benefits, and at that point,
14 that increases to about \$212 a day total
15 as they get increments. But, again, the
16 School District is not willing to really
17 sit down, have a dialogue and a
18 conversation with us. And we've told
19 them the best people to talk to are the
20 people that do the work. Bring the
21 drivers in.

22 I tried to form committees.
23 I've talked to the School District about
24 getting our electeds on our board who are
25 transportation drivers to sit down and

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 have conversations. We have a
3 conversation, but it goes no further than
4 the conversation.

5 So, again, I hope that answers
6 the question.

7 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yeah, it
8 did, and I just wanted to kind of
9 highlight that point, that even when you
10 have a workforce, as been the case for
11 SEIU who have come to the table, who have
12 made concessions, the reform doesn't
13 happen because you're not part of the
14 process. And I think that I agree with
15 you ultimately, you know where you can
16 save the money and ensure public safety
17 and cleanliness, which is what we want
18 particularly for the children.

19 So I want to thank you for
20 that, because I think that whatever
21 happens with the School District budget,
22 clearly the accountability piece has to
23 be in there. We can't allow for bus
24 attendants and some of those adults in
25 the buildings who are incredibly valuable

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 to the climate and the culture of the
3 building not to be part of how we get out
4 of this. So thank you for your service.

5 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you. Can
6 I just make one comment? When I came
7 last year and I spoke here, Councilwoman
8 Blondell Reynolds Brown, I had made a
9 comment that we don't have a seat at the
10 table, and she actually said not only
11 should you have a seat, you should have a
12 voice. Well, that was a year ago. We
13 still do not have a seat and we still do
14 not have a voice at the table. And
15 that's all we want.

16 Our employees are dedicated
17 employees. They want to do the best they
18 can for the School District and the
19 children, but the problem is, when you're
20 so understaffed as we are in buildings
21 and the day-to-day grind every day,
22 people get sick. There's no one to fill
23 that void at all, and that's why we're
24 asking the School District.

25 They're starting to hire very

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 small amounts and we're telling them that
3 they need a program to get enough staff
4 in the building so the principals, the
5 students, the teachers, everyone in that
6 building can feel good that they can go
7 to a clean, safe, healthy environment
8 every day, and that's all we ask for.

9 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
10 you.

11 Thank you, Madam Chair.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you.

14 Councilman Oh.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
16 much, Chairwoman.

17 I was grabbed by the collar to
18 ask you about bus maintenance.

19 MR. RICCHEZZA: Yes. Well,
20 right now our bus fleet is probably one
21 of the oldest in the state. We always
22 prided ourself here that we had the best
23 bus fleet in the State of Pennsylvania,
24 and we did. Seven, eight years ago we
25 were the model. We had a director that

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 was a director of transportation that was
3 nationally known and made sure that our
4 buses were serviced, taken care of, the
5 fleet was through budgetary money to get
6 new buses. And what's happened is, our
7 buses now are 12, 15 years old, which
8 means that they need more service than
9 they've done in the past. We used to
10 have around 35 or 36, what we call, bus
11 mechanics, fleet mechanics. We're down
12 to about 23 today, and actively working
13 we probably have about 18. What the
14 School District is doing is, instead of
15 keeping in-house services and having our
16 mechanics do the work, they've elected to
17 contract out a lot of that work. Again,
18 like I said, we do it cheaper and we've
19 proven we do it cheaper, but just the
20 mindset of the District right now is
21 let's privatize it, let's push it out,
22 and what's happening, honestly, is
23 they're dismantling our union. They're
24 taking us apart piece by piece. They're
25 not hiring in the division. Things are

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 going awry. Again, we tried to have that
3 seat at the table and just cannot get it.
4 But our fleet mechanics do an excellent
5 job maintaining the oldest fleet probably
6 now in the state, including our
7 contractors. And from what I'm being
8 told, they're going to hire, but that's a
9 capital expenditure and they're trying to
10 get that approved right now.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank you
12 for that, and I certainly want to thank
13 all the staff and the teachers and
14 everyone involved who deal with the kids
15 every day, all the difficulties. You
16 know, it's challenging in many ways, but
17 I think it's been historically proven
18 that the most important thing about
19 education are the people and the people
20 in the classroom and the people who
21 support, and I think that would have to
22 be the priority if we're going to turn
23 around the School District. And I think
24 there are certainly a lot of issues
25 around people not being paid

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 appropriately, and I'm not sure how we're
3 going to turn this around if we don't
4 start paying people appropriately and
5 ensuring that that is the mechanism for
6 better education.

7 So I appreciate your work and
8 all your members and everyone else that
9 is involved. Thank you.

10 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
12 Councilman Jones.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
14 Madam Chair.

15 One of the other issues, your
16 members are in the physical buildings, in
17 the schools, and we had before us a
18 consideration on a capital expenditure
19 for a new prison. That budget comes very
20 differently from the school budget, and I
21 am aware of that, but I couldn't help but
22 notice that many of our schools are
23 approaching 100 years old. Some of them
24 have had AARP cards twice over, and I was
25 wondering did the amount of maintenance

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 required to keep them at least habitable,
3 at some point do you see us needing to
4 move for a capital expenditure for new
5 schools as opposed to that new prison?

6 MR. RICCHEZZA: Well, again, I
7 have a history with the School District,
8 and Councilwoman may remember, there was
9 a Perch Rooter (ph) report about 15 years
10 ago that identified over a billion
11 dollars in capital work that needed to be
12 done. The School District borrowed the
13 money. I think they borrowed almost a
14 billion dollars about 10 or 12 years ago
15 to start that improving of the schools.
16 At that point, that money was exhausted,
17 and that's when the schools started to
18 deteriorate.

19 You are right, we have
20 buildings that are over 100 years old.
21 As far as maintaining them on a
22 day-to-day basis, I think what we do we
23 do well and we maintain, but boilers get
24 old. The infrastructure of the building
25 itself needs to be improved, and the only

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 way they're going to do that is with
3 money through the capital budget.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we've
5 asked them to do a new analysis. After
6 they merged the schools in a slightly
7 controversial manner, we asked them, All
8 right, so let's look at the physical plan
9 of what we have available and take a look
10 at where we can improve so that people
11 could be in healthy environments, both
12 your members but also the teachers as
13 well as the students. And so we have
14 asked them to embark upon that again so
15 that we can start to plan for -- because
16 there are areas in Philadelphia that are
17 growing in population and some are
18 shrinking in population, but we need to
19 know where our infrastructure is and
20 where our good bones are and where areas
21 that we could invest and expand and
22 create different opportunities, such as
23 labs at Overbrook High School where I am
24 a proud alumnus. We can go through that
25 with some other schools out here, but we

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 could use some new labs, laboratories.
3 The whole fifth floor is blocked off, and
4 it is a strategic school for the
5 catchment area it serves and we need to
6 either start to make investments to
7 create a new school or to give a facelift
8 to the schools that we have. But that
9 needs to be strategically done now so
10 that in five, ten years we can make those
11 moves.

12 MR. RICCHEZZA: Well, I think a
13 plan should be put in place, and I think
14 even thinking about taking down Overbrook
15 High School would be a crime. That
16 shouldn't even be an option at this
17 point.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's not
19 an option.

20 MR. RICCHEZZA: Beautiful
21 school, but the fact remains is, yes,
22 does it need work? Yes. But I think the
23 plan money-wise is going to be
24 instrumental. But the point is, the
25 School District is fragmented in the way

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 they do their work. It's like a piece
3 here, a piece there, a piece there. We
4 need to take an initiative to get into
5 Overbrook High School and make the
6 necessary repairs that are going to stay
7 there for 15 or 20 years rather than do a
8 piecemeal and just fix a boiler or fix a
9 floor. We need work done in schools, but
10 the only way that we're going to get this
11 achieved is we got to do it piece by
12 piece by piece, one school at a time.

13 I heard the comment about
14 charter schools going into our public
15 schools that have closed. That's a great
16 idea. I think charter schools should not
17 have facilities outside the School
18 District, that they should be able to
19 take a school that we have right now,
20 let's get in, do the work that needs to
21 be done. But the point is, every time we
22 create a charter school, we're not in it,
23 as you know. It's not a unionized
24 workforce, which is problems with that.
25 All we're saying is give us the

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 opportunity to go in those schools, keep
3 the unionized workforce, whether it's
4 teachers, maintenance workers, whatever
5 it may be, but utilize the buildings that
6 we now have that are unoccupied. Instead
7 of trying to knock them down or build
8 condos or something, let's do it for the
9 children of Philadelphia.

10 There's many, many programs in
11 this City that we could undertake in
12 these schools after our programs, and I
13 think that's a mechanism to keep these
14 schools growing in each area, like you
15 just mentioned right now.

16 I see the plan in place,
17 Philadelphia Community Sustainability. I
18 think they're great ideas, but I think
19 those communities where we're closing
20 schools is a detriment to the areas. And
21 I'm from the Point Breeze area. They
22 closed three schools in the Point Breeze
23 area alone, and that's a shame that we're
24 closing good, viable schools in those
25 areas when they could be used for other

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 programs.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
4 Madam Chair.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much. We certainly agree.
7 Councilman Neilson.

8 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: George,
9 one last thing. I keep hearing our
10 schools, our infrastructure, and I want
11 to put that on the record, that the State
12 took over these schools. They weren't in
13 this bad a shape when they took them, and
14 they've really run the system into the
15 ground, and that's unfortunate and that's
16 something that we are still trying to
17 deal with, and Election Day did put a
18 mandate on that.

19 But, George, during your
20 testimony, you identified that your union
21 saved the School District \$100 million.
22 Not 5 million, \$100 million, and that was
23 on the back of your workforce, I'm sure.
24 That was up in your contribution to the
25 pension and stuff like that. Can you

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 identify some of the ways that you came
3 up with that 100 million? Because the
4 public thinks that the entire District
5 and the employees are draining it, and we
6 think it's management, and we're going to
7 keep banging heads like that. Because
8 your workforce are my neighbors, and you
9 know that, and they're the ones that are
10 coaching the boys clubs and keeping
11 those. I mean, I got to say, the guy up
12 the street from me, he mows the lawn, and
13 that's not his job. He comes in on
14 Saturday and does it on his own time,
15 because if not, we'd have CLIP coming
16 out. That's how long it gets. That's
17 how much your workforce has been
18 eliminated.

19 But can you identify some of
20 the cost-savings initiatives that you put
21 on the table -- they didn't put on the
22 table; you put on the table -- to save us
23 and put that 100 million right back into
24 the education, right back into the
25 teachers. You did that.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. RICCHEZZA: Yes.

3 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: And I
4 think that's going to be your legacy,
5 George, when you leave, and I think you
6 need to put that on the record for us all
7 to share.

8 MR. RICCHEZZA: I appreciate
9 that. Well, let me start out by saying
10 that we have a four-year contract, and
11 there were 2,700 layoffs on the table in
12 2012, as I think everyone here knows. So
13 we didn't want anybody laid off, so we
14 had to make considerable concessions.
15 The first concession that we made is, we
16 make a contribution out of our paychecks
17 every two weeks to the School District.
18 Our \$15,000 employees who are our bus
19 attendants pay \$10 a pay or \$20 a month.
20 Our employees who make a little bit over
21 \$30,000 pay \$100 a month back to the
22 School District, and our employees who
23 make over 45 pay \$180 back a month. So
24 that contribution continues to come out
25 of our paychecks every pay, and that will

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 happen until August 31st of 2013 (sic).

3 Our Health and Welfare Fund, we
4 gave back to the School District four,
5 what we call, holidays, over \$2.2
6 million. We had a training fund that
7 provided training to our employees, CPR
8 training, computer training, GED
9 training. That was taken back. That was
10 a half a million dollars. So when you do
11 it over four years, you're talking about
12 \$2 million. So all these are quadrupled,
13 every number that I'm giving you.

14 Our mechanics and our employees
15 used to get, what we call, boot money, to
16 have safety shoes on so they can make
17 sure that they go to schools and do their
18 work with safety shoes. That was taken
19 out of the budget also. That saved the
20 School District hundreds of thousands of
21 dollars every year.

22 When you -- again, between the
23 contributions back, the boot money, the
24 Health and Welfare money, the pension
25 payments, everything totals about \$25

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 million a year and over the four years it
3 was \$100 million.

4 COUNCILMAN NEILSON: Thank you,
5 Madam Chair. I have nothing further.

6 Thank you, George, again.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you.

9 Thank you very much for your
10 years of service. Thank you.

11 MR. RICCHEZZA: Thank you very
12 much. And thank you, Council, for giving
13 me the time to speak here today. Thank
14 you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you.

17 (Applause.)

18 THE CLERK: Rebecca Poyourow,
19 Christine Carlson, and Sarah Moton.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much. Please introduce yourself
24 to our record and begin your testimony.

25 MS. POYOUROW: Thank you.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Thank you, members of Council, for
3 allowing me the opportunity to speak
4 today. My name is Rebecca Poyourow and I
5 am a public school parent in Roxborough.
6 My husband and I have sent our children
7 to Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School for
8 the last six years, a high-performing
9 neighborhood District school with roughly
10 80 percent of its students eligible for
11 free and reduced lunch. I have testified
12 before City Council every single year
13 since the shameful public education cuts
14 of 2011.

15 Over the past four years, I
16 have used maybe 12 of my own personal
17 days to make trips to Harrisburg to lobby
18 for education funding, and my message to
19 you and to state legislators remains the
20 same - fund our children's schools, this
21 time in cursive, but it's still the same
22 message.

23 This is the mandate of the 2014
24 and 2015 elections. This year the voters
25 of Philadelphia have spoken directly to

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 you, even those who are leaving the
3 Chamber room, and they said fund our
4 children's schools. It cannot be an
5 either/or with State and City funding.
6 It must be both.

7 While we cannot take the
8 pressure off of Harrisburg, we cannot
9 punt to Harrisburg either. As one
10 Council member has said, "ultimately,
11 these are our kids."

12 Fund our children's schools.
13 We need sustainable, recurring funding
14 instead of one-time fixes. While the
15 City has done some, it has to do more.
16 We need a funding plan that asks
17 different groups in our city to pay their
18 fair share, not depending solely on
19 regressive taxes or on huge property tax
20 increases, but --

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. POYOUROW: -- but requiring
23 large corporations and non-profits to pay
24 their fair share as well.

25 Every year --

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. POYOUROW: Every year since

4 2011, our children's schools have been

5 stripped of personnel, programs, and

6 materials, nurses, counselors, music,

7 art, gym, language, reasonable class

8 sizes, tutoring, AP classes,

9 transportation and more. Our children

10 deserve schools staffed with full-time

11 professionals committed to their

12 education and well-being, not cut-rate,

13 outsourced, privatized nurses or

14 counselors. Our children --

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. POYOUROW: Our children

17 deserve real science classes with labs,

18 not MOOCs. Fund our children's schools.

19 Finally, a note on timing. We

20 don't have time to play chicken with

21 Harrisburg. That strategy has been tried

22 and failed for the last four years. We

23 need Council to fund our schools and

24 commit to the City's contribution

25 quickly, because as parents, we shouldn't

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 have to spend our time lobbying you for
3 funding when we could be in Harrisburg.
4 If you don't act, our kids will suffer.
5 There is no magic bullet, and no one else
6 is coming to the rescue.

7 Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much.

11 MS. CARLSON: Good morning --

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
13 morning.

14 MS. CARLSON: -- Councilwoman
15 Blackwell, the rest of the Councilpeople
16 that are here. My name is Christine
17 Carlson. I'm a public school parent.
18 I'm also the Democratic Committee Person
19 in District 1 of Ward 30.

20 Yesterday we heard a lot --
21 well, yesterday and today we've been
22 hearing a lot about what's wrong with the
23 School District of Philadelphia, and I'm
24 going to take a vary from that and talk a
25 little bit about what's going right, and

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 it all starts with a miserable, rainy
3 Saturday in March when the Philadelphia
4 Crosstown Coalition's Education
5 Committee, of which I am a member, held a
6 forum to share ideas and energy about how
7 to build a citywide movement in support
8 of neighborhood public schools. In spite
9 of the weather, over 100 committed
10 activists from more than 45 neighborhood
11 schools and civic associations spent five
12 hours of collective learning and sharing.
13 Now we are working to harness this
14 momentum to turn this embryonic network
15 into something greater than the sum of
16 its parts.

17 Our group has decided to focus
18 on three things. One is fostering
19 "friends of" neighborhood schools. This
20 is aiming to form and build individual
21 groups, share information, and find
22 leaders to start friends groups in
23 unrepresented schools.

24 The second is building citywide
25 political voice for neighborhood schools,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 which is one of the reasons I'm here.

3 And the third is building the
4 brand. Believe it or not, we think we
5 can build a new narrative that focuses on
6 the opportunities for neighborhood public
7 education rather than just the
8 challenges.

9 And I'm talking about this
10 incredibly positive phenomenon because
11 it's occurring independently throughout
12 the City. Philadelphia's increasing
13 desirability as a place to live and raise
14 children is causing hundreds of people,
15 many of them who are young and many who
16 don't have children, as well as
17 neighborhood organizations, they are
18 realizing the importance of the
19 neighborhood public school as an anchor
20 of their community. They are involved in
21 making their neighborhood schools a
22 viable place for all children in their
23 communities. They were the ones who made
24 education such an important issue in the
25 past primary. It's time to recognize

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 these individuals as vitally important,
3 as a vitally important part of your
4 constituencies and to do what is
5 necessary for the City to adequately
6 support its education system.

7 This is an issue which goes
8 beyond parents of public schoolchildren
9 or even beyond this realization that in
10 order for communities to thrive, they
11 must support their neighborhood school.
12 It is a citywide economic issue that is
13 inhibiting the future growth and progress
14 of the City, and I'm not exaggerating.
15 Moody's Analytics lists the School
16 District's financial situation as the
17 number one downside to Philadelphia's
18 economic growth.

19 I can understand why Council
20 may not want to fund Dr. Hite's request
21 solely through a property tax increase,
22 but there are other ways to commit to
23 meeting our obligation to our young
24 people, and some of them may include
25 vigorously enforcing the school income

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 tax, which is currently unbeknownst to or
3 considered voluntary by many
4 Philadelphians.

5 In addition to enforcing the
6 school income tax, you should expand it
7 to make it apply to non-wage,
8 non-business income.

9 And you should seriously
10 consider changing the ratio of property
11 taxes to correctly assess a higher land
12 value and a lower improvement value.
13 This will not increase the taxes on
14 properties that are already improved, but
15 will generate additional revenue from
16 owners of vacant lots and discourage
17 landowners from holding onto vacant lots
18 that litter our communities.

19 Much of the talk yesterday and
20 today is framed by supporting the School
21 District as charity, and why should we do
22 it? And I ask you why not? The City is
23 growing and many schools are successful
24 in spite of the obstacles we've placed
25 before them. More and more

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 Philadelphians are realizing the
3 importance of their neighborhood schools
4 and putting their time and energy into
5 making them the best that they can be.
6 Now it is Council's turn to change gears
7 and look at school funding as an
8 investment for every citizen in every
9 Council district.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Are there any questions?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you.

18 THE CLERK: Maria Guerrero,
19 Lauro Guerrero, and Molly Michael.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
23 morning. Welcome. Please introduce
24 yourself to our record and begin.

25 MS. GUERRERO: Good morning.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 My name is Maria Guerrero and I am from
3 Mexico and I am (unintelligible).

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
5 pull your mike a little closer.

6 MS. TRAPARRO: Good morning.
7 My name is Sophia Traparro (ph). I will
8 be translating for Mr. and Mrs. Guerrero,
9 and this is Lauro Guerrero and he's a
10 proud father of three children that
11 attend the public schools in Philly.

12 MR. GUERRERO (through
13 translator): For him it's simple. It's
14 simple. He knows that there are
15 difficult decisions to make, but that
16 with the little he earns, he's always
17 willing to give that to his children and
18 to the benefit of their education.

19 For me it's incredible to see
20 that my kids who are at Southwark School
21 are able to get the benefit of a
22 bilingual education and to learn
23 languages and the cultures that are
24 served in the school.

25 I feel very proud that

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 everything that I earn, everything that I
3 make from my work goes towards the
4 education of my children and to the
5 classes, that they're able to benefit
6 from its school, and I'm very proud of
7 that. And I think that it's a simple
8 question to always be willing to give up
9 what I make for them.

10 And for our society as well,
11 it's the same. Education is the key to
12 success, and not just for my children but
13 in general for the City as well.

14 MS. GUERRERO (through
15 translator): I come representing all the
16 children. As soon as I drop off my
17 children at school, I leave feeling
18 complete trust that they will be okay in
19 the school, because I know that schools
20 and all those that work in schools work
21 very hard every day to give our kids the
22 best that they deserve. But I also
23 notice that schools have a lot of needs.
24 In this case, when children get sick,
25 there's not always a nurse there. I ask

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 myself if there's ever an emergency, what
3 would happen.

4 I think the majority of us here
5 are all parents and we want our children
6 to feel safe wherever they are. So I
7 think it is our responsibility, all our
8 responsibility, to meet the needs of our
9 children, because our children are our
10 future and we are an example to our
11 children, and if we give them the example
12 that we're ready to support them, they
13 will grow up and also understand that
14 it's their responsibility to support
15 whoever is their future.

16 I think everyone who is here
17 has also benefited from the support of
18 somebody or someone or some organization
19 so that the people that are here can have
20 their careers. Now it is our moral
21 responsibility to support our children
22 the way some of us have been supported as
23 well.

24 Thank you for listening.
25 (Applause.)

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you very much.

4 Any questions?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much.

8 THE CLERK: Sarah Moton.

9 MS. MICHAEL: Molly Michael.

10 THE CLERK: Molly Michael.

11 MS. MICHAEL: Thank you. Good
12 morning. My name is --

13 THE CLERK: One moment. Sorry.

14 Toni Damon and Andrew Lukov.

15 (Witness approached witness
16 table.)

17 MS. MICHAEL: Good morning. My
18 name is Molly Michael and my daughter is
19 a kindergartner at Southwark Elementary
20 in Councilman Squilla's district. And as
21 many of you heard yesterday, Southwark
22 launched a new two-way Spanish immersion
23 program last fall. My daughter and Maria
24 and Lauro's daughter is also part of that
25 program in the inaugural kindergarten

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 class, and it was this program and the
3 school's leadership that convinced us to
4 invest in our neighborhood school.

5 The dual language program
6 wasn't something that came out of nowhere
7 fully conceived and funded. It was
8 requested by a school community lucky
9 enough to have a principal who took the
10 idea and ran with it, consulting experts
11 at Penn, working with community members
12 and parents, and receiving support from
13 the District.

14 As a result, my daughter and
15 her classmates are immersed in a program
16 that serves a diverse community across
17 cultural and socioeconomic spectrums, and
18 she can read, write, and speak in two
19 languages in kindergarten.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. MICHAEL: It's no secret
22 that Southwark has historically struggled
23 in leadership and dwindling resources
24 like so many other schools in our city,
25 and while our leadership is now stable,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 our resources remain dismally small. But
3 because of this immersion program and
4 other developments of the school,
5 Southwark is fast becoming known as a
6 hobbit of effective education and
7 innovation. And yet with over 600
8 students, including more than 40 percent
9 English language learners, Southwark does
10 not have a librarian, a full-time nurse,
11 a music teacher, adequate lunchroom and
12 recess supervision or a school social
13 worker.

14 So I ask you, if Southwark can
15 nurture and create this dual immersion
16 program that serves a diverse community
17 with almost nothing, what would happen if
18 Council granted the District's request
19 for 105 million? What would happen if we
20 could replicate the two-way immersion
21 program in different languages throughout
22 the City based on each community's needs?
23 What would happen if we did the right
24 thing?

25 But don't do it for me. Do it

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 for Kaia, Solimae, Alejandro, Lucy,
3 Kamiya, Kara, Maritza, Sori, David, John,
4 Navin, Mariana, Maria, Nicoletta, and the
5 tens of thousands of children in
6 Philadelphia who need your support right
7 now.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 DR. DAMON: Good morning. My
11 name is Dr. Toni Damon. I am the proud
12 principal of Murrell Dobbins CTE High
13 School located in North Philadelphia. I
14 often get to double as the counselor, the
15 nurse, the secretary, a teacher on
16 occasion, social worker, recruitment
17 officer, and community resources liaison.
18 I want to thank you for this opportunity
19 to speak before you and also thank you
20 for your support that allowed us to open
21 school on time.

22 I stand here or I sit here with
23 a heavy heart, because when I was here
24 last week, I heard conversations about
25 the potential purchase of a new prison

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 when Dobbins stands to get a renovation
3 this year, but yet we haggle about how
4 much we are to get.

5 Frederick Douglass said that
6 it's easier to build strong children than
7 to repair broken men. This calls me to a
8 student that I met two years ago as a new
9 principal at Dobbins. During spring
10 break, this young man was arrested for
11 armed robbery. He was number one in his
12 class, and his father had nowhere to go
13 for help for him. All he knew was to
14 come to the school, the place where his
15 child could get help.

16 I immediately began to rustle
17 up some resources. We went down to court
18 for this young man. We got him out.
19 Looking for other resources, we were able
20 to get his record expunged because he was
21 cleared of all charges.

22 (Applause.)

23 DR. DAMON: Although the
24 practice is to have students return to
25 their neighborhood school, I went down to

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 placement to get this young man back at
3 my school to resume his place as number
4 one in his class, took him to Howard
5 University, and he is now studying on a
6 full ride.

7 (Applause.)

8 DR. DAMON: This is a difficult
9 challenge in the midst of limited
10 resources.

11 He is only one student that I
12 could tell you about. We also have
13 students representing at Penn State,
14 Drexel, Clark Atlanta, Bloomsburg. This
15 year we have students who are already
16 accepted to IUP, Lincoln, Neumann, Del
17 State, University of Maryland, and these
18 are just the students I know of because I
19 worked with them personally.

20 I want you to know that this
21 young man was also proficient and/or
22 advanced in all three tested area
23 subjects. But I also want you to
24 consider that we are more than just our
25 test scores.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 DR. DAMON: If I could shift
4 gears just for a moment to talk about my
5 enrollment, because I know that that is
6 questionable and schools often are
7 considered for closures when their
8 enrollment is low.

9 When I walked into the school,
10 it was full of students, but students who
11 were there for the wrong reason, and many
12 children who wanted to come but were
13 afraid because they felt they had to
14 fight their way through. I immediately
15 began to work with my team to counsel
16 these students and parents and to work
17 with School District officials to get
18 them into a more appropriate placement
19 that would suit their continued
20 disruption in the school. This year we
21 received over 2,000 applications from
22 around Dobbins CTE High School, and I am
23 very excited to say that we have accepted
24 500 of those students. While we
25 recognize that all 500 may not show up,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 when we had Accepted Students Day just
3 this month, we had at least 200 parents
4 come in to tour the school and make a
5 commitment by buying their school
6 uniform. Just yesterday I accepted three
7 more students.

8 We are growing in a new
9 direction. I invite you all to come out
10 and visit Dobbins. We are Dobbins 3.0 in
11 alignment with Dr. Hite's Action Plan
12 3.0, all students college and career
13 ready at graduation.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
17 you very much.

18 Councilman Jones.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
20 Madam Chair.

21 And thank you for that
22 testimony. Dobbins is not in my
23 district, but I've been there half a
24 dozen times. We share, Councilman
25 Greenlee and I, some people that are very

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 interested in Dobbins, Ward Leader Green
3 and others.

4 The best quote I ever heard
5 about that type of perspective was given
6 maybe two years ago about the two
7 bookbags that go to school, the one
8 carrying the books of the day and the
9 other carrying the burdens from home and
10 the neighborhood. We thank you for
11 dealing with the second bag of books too.
12 We do.

13 If you look at what Council
14 President wants to do with the
15 school-based family services, we want to
16 help you as government to address some of
17 those other issues, because that choice
18 between school, college, and prison is a
19 real choice that we make every day when
20 we assign our budget priorities. We can
21 either build new prisons or we can
22 refurbish some of these schools to
23 prevent those young men and women from
24 going into those institutions.

25 So you keep doing what you do.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 We're going to do what we have to do to
3 make it a little lighter on that bookbag
4 for you.

5 DR. DAMON: Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much.

10 Next panel.

11 THE CLERK: Andrew Lukov, Sulay
12 Sosa, and Ciara Ragan.

13 (Witness approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
16 Welcome.

17 MISS RAGAN: Thank you for
18 allowing me to speak about what makes
19 school important to me. My name is Ciara
20 Ragan and I am an 8th grader from Andrew
21 Jackson Elementary School. I'm here to
22 testify about why art is important in our
23 school.

24 Art is important to me because
25 it makes me feel alive and makes me --

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 and fills me up with excitement. I feel
3 that art softens the hardships and
4 challenges in life we are presented with.
5 It's a language less demean of
6 communication that every person of any
7 age can understand, and it fills up the
8 air with happiness and hope.

9 Art is a precious, wonderful
10 world that needs to be saved and
11 preserved for generations in years to
12 come.

13 Art is revolutionary, yet
14 reactionary, and where words have that
15 time spelled, art has prevailed.

16 Art makes me feel as though I
17 can connect with people, not only in
18 words but with imagination and
19 creativity. Art comes in various forms
20 and is a universal meaning.

21 When I share my inner
22 creativity and imagination with others, I
23 feel as though I am giving the best of
24 what is inside of me. Art is a treasure
25 to me because I feel as though it is the

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 single element in life that keeps
3 humanity feeling alive and well.

4 At times, art can speak louder
5 than words and crosses boundaries words
6 cannot. Art gives life to my important
7 ideas, while at the same time pushing
8 them forward to make them come true, and
9 that's what makes art magic.

10 Art makes the world more
11 beautiful and it seeps through the cracks
12 of hopelessness, sadness, and despair and
13 gives the sense of power, release, and
14 hope. It gives you a different outlook
15 on life and let's you focus on the little
16 things that we miss out on.

17 Art makes me feel as though I
18 am fulfilling my purpose in life, and I
19 could possibly fill someone's life as
20 well. Art allows people to truly see me
21 for who I am. Art unifies, opens doors,
22 breaks down barriers, and opens our
23 vision. A world without art would be
24 like love without a heart.

25 I am not only speaking for

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 myself today, but for everyone else who
3 doesn't have the opportunity to express
4 themselves and show how art is powerful
5 and gives meaning to many lives as well
6 as mine.

7 If art was taken away from this
8 world or from my life, I'd be living in a
9 world full of darkness. Today we are
10 bringing you paint brushes to paint a
11 better picture of our schools. Because
12 if life doesn't give you color, what do
13 you have?

14 Thank you for your time and
15 opportunity for allowing me to speak.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you very much for your testimony. Thank
19 you.

20 THE CLERK: Ron Whitehorn,
21 Helen Gym --

22 (Applause.)

23 THE CLERK: -- Helen Gym, Mark
24 Gleason.

25 (Witnesses approached witness

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 table.)

3 MR. WHITEHORN: Thank you for
4 the opportunity to testify today. My
5 name is Ron Whitehorn. I'm the
6 coordinator for PCAPS, Philadelphia
7 Coalition Advocating for Public Schools,
8 which is a coalition of labor and
9 community groups embracing parents,
10 students, educators, and school workers.

11 For three years we've been
12 fighting budget cuts and school closings
13 in pursuit of high-quality, well-funded
14 neighborhood public schools that serve
15 all children. We have a particular
16 vision of what kind of schools we need,
17 as well as a perspective on how to fund
18 them.

19 Beginning with the schools in
20 neighborhoods of greatest need, we want
21 investment in sustainable community
22 schools.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. WHITEHORN: We applaud Jim
25 Kenney for his commitment to create 25

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 community schools if elected Mayor this
3 fall, and we also greatly appreciate the
4 initiative of Council President Clarke in
5 promoting the community school idea,
6 along with some important ideas --

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. WHITEHORN: -- for moving
9 it forward.

10 We also want to draw attention
11 to a fight right now for a community
12 school. Youth United for Change, a
13 leading member of our coalition, is
14 fighting to save and transform Kensington
15 Urban Education High School, one of four
16 small schools that were won in a long
17 struggle to improve education in that
18 community. The School District seeks to
19 merge Urban with Kensington Business, a
20 plan that will not produce better
21 outcomes and cuts against the original
22 small school vision that has emphasized
23 close personal relationships between
24 staff and students. The District, having
25 suspended the relevant provisions of the

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 School Code, is rushing ahead with their
3 plan without allowing for deliberation
4 and real engagement by the community.

5 YUC, recognizing that the
6 school currently needs improvement, is
7 calling for a process that would
8 transform Urban into a community school
9 with wraparound services, engaging
10 curriculum, restorative practice, and a
11 stronger voice for parents, school,
12 staff, and students.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. WHITEHORN: We hear all the
15 time about it's all about the students,
16 it's all about the kids, but when will we
17 start listening to the kids?

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. WHITEHORN: We call on
20 Council to hear the pleas of students who
21 are here today and community members and
22 help prevent another school closing.

23 In terms of school funding,
24 while we believe more funding from the
25 State is critical, that doesn't mean the

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 City can't do more. However, calls for
3 increasing taxes on working people are
4 neither fair or likely to pass muster
5 politically as long as corporations, mega
6 non-profits, and wealthy people fail to
7 pay their fair share.

8 We have fought in the past and
9 will continue to call for, one, use and
10 occupancy tax reform that would increase
11 taxes on the corporate landlords who got
12 a huge tax windfall thanks to the
13 Adjusted Value Initiative;

14 Two, eliminating the tax
15 abatement on the School District portion
16 of the property tax. It's obscene that a
17 corporation like Comcast with billions in
18 profits can stiff our schools. The tax
19 abatement cost schools this year nearly
20 \$50 million. That is not acceptable;

21 Three, implementing a robust
22 pilot program that would raise revenue
23 from the likes of the University of
24 Pennsylvania, one of the biggest property
25 owners in the City and with an endowment

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 larger than the gross national product of
3 many countries.

4 Taking these steps would not
5 only generate recurring revenue, but
6 demonstrate the City's commitment to tax
7 fairness and equity and thus create more
8 political support for investing in
9 schools.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 And before you speak, let me
15 say congratulations to Helen Gym, as you
16 all know.

17 MS. GYM: Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
20 look forward to her joining us here in
21 January.

22 MS. GYM: I look forward to it
23 too. Thank you very much, Councilwoman
24 Blackwell.

25 Good afternoon, everybody. I

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 want to thank you for your time. My name
3 is Helen Gym. Before earlier this year,
4 I'm one of the co-founders of the group
5 called Parents United for Public
6 Education. I'm a mother of three
7 children myself in the public schools,
8 and Parents United was found and built
9 off the idea that there should be a
10 baseline budget for all schools, no
11 matter where they come from, what
12 communities they serve, that we as a city
13 deserve to ensure that every child in
14 every part of the City has essential
15 services in every school, things like a
16 manageable class size, nurses,
17 counselors, guaranteed programs,
18 after-school programs, and that that
19 should be the foundation of the School
20 District's budget. It should be the
21 foundation of how we look at how we hold
22 hearings with the District and that those
23 questions should be answered on a regular
24 basis.

25 It's important to understand

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 that the District does do some things
3 really well. When we look at the current
4 population of the School District, we
5 know that the District serves its
6 immigrant populations very highly and far
7 more than any other category of
8 educational options that are out there.
9 And so it does bother me that a school
10 district that used to in the 1990s have a
11 cutting-edge approach towards bilingual
12 and immersion learning in schools is now
13 down to a handful of Spanish elementary
14 bilingual programs in schools. It's
15 basically five. Maybe if Southwark is
16 new this year, that would be the sixth
17 elementary bilingual Spanish program that
18 exists in schools, but all the other ones
19 have been largely eliminated from our
20 high schools. We used to have Mandarin,
21 Kamai, Russian, Arabic. Those are all
22 gone now, and that is not reflective of
23 what is changing and modifying within our
24 School District.

25 We also know that our District

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 serves special ed students very well
3 and -- well, let's say that we serve them
4 at a very high rate. And so we do need
5 to invest in our special ed population.
6 We need to pay attention to what's going
7 on.

8 We know that 25 percent of our
9 high schoolers are in the DHS or criminal
10 justice system. We've made them go to
11 schools that lack counselors that don't
12 have trauma-informed care as being a
13 guiding vision, when they don't have
14 nurses in schools. We're ensuring that
15 problems that they endure when they're
16 only 13 or 14 years old, things that are
17 circumstances that are far beyond their
18 control or even their ability to
19 articulate, are going to become a life
20 sentence for them, and that is punishing,
21 and it's wrong for the City.

22 I want to talk a little bit
23 about how the process -- I know there's
24 been a lot of frustration about school
25 funding, but I want to understand that we

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 got here through deliberate steps, and I
3 want to talk a little bit about those
4 deliberate steps.

5 The School District over the
6 past couple of years has invested in
7 brand new programs that never existed
8 before. This last week they are
9 exploring a \$10 million contract for an
10 online blended learning program, and
11 we're looking at closing down a school,
12 and that's wrong. We need to understand
13 that City officials went before the
14 School District last month demanding the
15 \$55 million TIF so that the Gallery could
16 have a designer mall updo, and that's a
17 problem too. It's not right to have City
18 officials acting as vehicles for a
19 private interest. PREIT at the very
20 least should be going up in front of our
21 schools and facing off against our
22 parents and the young people and
23 demanding why their \$55 million tax break
24 is suddenly a priority.

25 (Applause.)

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MS. GYM: And I also want to
3 talk about charter schools. This year
4 alone the School District of Philadelphia
5 opened up six new charter schools in the
6 City at a projected cost of probably at
7 least between \$3 to \$5 million per
8 school, 150 -- we're talking about a
9 significant amount of money over the next
10 five years. We know that 39 charters
11 applied for schools and that each one of
12 them will have an opportunity that got
13 denied to go to the State for a contract.
14 We also know that a charter school that
15 was denied a charter went to the State
16 and got a five-year contract with them,
17 even though the SRC voted to close that
18 down. And in 2012, when we were
19 facing -- when we took on the \$300
20 million debt, we added 5,200 charter
21 school seats at a cost of over \$45
22 million a year. And so these are
23 conscious choices that we're going and
24 walking towards.

25 It's not that charters are good

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 or bad. We're talking about competing
3 interests within the School District
4 itself. We're talking about public
5 school students who don't have a voice or
6 a space to be able to talk about their
7 needs, their need for access to nurses,
8 their need for access to healthcare, to
9 counselors and supports in schools, and
10 then we're talking about City officials
11 who are going up and acting on behalf of
12 business interests in the City to talk
13 about individual charters that are going
14 up against it.

15 So we have to understand that
16 schools -- we understand that everybody
17 in the City supports education. That's
18 not the issue. But we've got a competing
19 situation here where public schools are
20 no longer a top priority and that we have
21 to understand it as not being a good or
22 bad issue, but something that we have to
23 prioritize now.

24 The City has an opportunity and
25 City Council -- the bar has always been

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 in Council's court. It's one of the
3 reasons why I value this body so much.
4 In your hands is the ability to not talk
5 about school funding, but to talk about
6 fair taxation, to talk about the fair
7 share lift that every Philadelphian
8 should contribute to our City and to our
9 schools, the large corporations and
10 non-profits. We can talk about U&O. We
11 can talk about the tax shift. Those are
12 all within our opportunities and we have
13 that power to be able to move on. But we
14 have to understand that at the same time,
15 that there are going to be competing
16 interests here at this table, here in
17 this City, who are going to look at
18 things in a lot different way. We need
19 to talk about our schools today. We need
20 to talk about them tomorrow. We need to
21 be talking about them in the summer and
22 in September.

23 But this is going to be a top
24 priority of the City. It is a top
25 priority in the election, and I want to

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 thank everybody for the time to talk
3 about that.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you.

7 Mr. Gleason, good to see you.

8 MR. GLEASON: Good morning.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
10 morning. My name is Mark Gleason. I'm
11 here today as a City taxpayer, a public
12 school parent, and as Executive Director
13 of the Philadelphia School Partnership.
14 We're a non-profit focused on increasing
15 access to educational opportunity. I'm
16 here to urge City Council to commit to a
17 multi-year phase-in of the proposed 9
18 percent property tax increase.

19 Since 2011, PSP has granted
20 more than \$35 million to 35 schools,
21 stretching across nearly every Council
22 district in the City. Those include
23 roughly ten traditional public schools,
24 roughly ten traditional charter schools,
25 ten District charter conversion schools,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 and five Catholic and private schools.
3 In all of these schools, our team works
4 closely with school leaders to develop
5 and review budgets and other matters of
6 school finance.

7 In four years we have gained a
8 deep knowledge of the differences in how
9 schools spend funds and of the challenges
10 that they face in trying to provide a
11 comprehensive, quality education. Among
12 other challenges, we have seen how
13 formulaic District budgeting rules mimic
14 principals' ability to tailor strategies
15 to the particular needs of individual
16 schools.

17 A clear finding in our work has
18 been that the biggest driver of school
19 quality is how schools spend their
20 budgets. There are many examples in
21 Philadelphia of schools with comparable
22 budgets, similar student populations, and
23 vastly different academic outcomes.
24 Notably, there are also examples of
25 schools with comparable budgets,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 different school populations, and vastly
3 different outcomes.

4 We should not expect that an
5 infusion of new money into the City's
6 lowest performing schools will, by
7 itself, transform those schools. To
8 achieve the amount of improvement, first
9 must come clearly articulated goals.
10 Second, a school must develop
11 comprehensive and integrated strategies
12 that are aligned to those goals. And,
13 third, available revenues must be
14 budgeted in a way that supports those
15 strategies above all else, taking into
16 account the specific needs and challenges
17 at individual schools.

18 It troubles me when the Chair
19 of the SRC says, as she did yesterday,
20 that there is nothing left to cut. She
21 also recently told Philadelphia Magazine
22 that the District doesn't need to change
23 its approach; it just needs more money.
24 Yet when the District recently released
25 its School Progress Reports, it showed

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 that 83 of 218 District-run schools --
3 that's nearly 40 percent -- are in the
4 lowest tier of performance. The District
5 labels that tier "intervening,"
6 demonstrating that dramatic changes in
7 the strategic approach and how monies are
8 spent are needed in those 83 schools. If
9 we're being honest, many of those schools
10 should be closed.

11 (Audience members booing.)

12 MR. GLEASON: Clearly, much of
13 what the District is spending money on is
14 not working. There will have to be cuts
15 so that funds can be redirected to more
16 effective strategies. Every change in
17 practice can't be funded by new dollars.
18 Some, or even most, changes need to be
19 funded by existing dollars redirected
20 from well-intended but ineffective
21 approaches.

22 (Audience members clapping
23 hands.)

24 MR. GLEASON: At the same time,
25 it is necessary to ensure that revenues

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 to the School District are growing over
3 time. Another clear finding --

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
5 Everybody in City Council, everyone in
6 City Council deserves to be heard. You
7 may have your opinion. You may come up
8 and express it, but you cannot deny a
9 person their right to be heard, whether
10 you agree or disagree.

11 Mr. Gleason, please continue.

12 MR. GLEASON: Thank you,
13 Councilwoman.

14 At the same time, it is
15 necessary to ensure that revenues to the
16 School District are growing over time.
17 Another clear finding of our work is that
18 school costs, no matter what type of
19 school, increase every year. While
20 salaries in District schools have not
21 risen in the past two years, the cost of
22 health benefits, pensions, and other
23 benefits programs have. Because staffing
24 accounts for nearly half of all school
25 expenditures and benefits account for

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 more than a quarter of all staffing
3 costs, rising benefits costs have a
4 significant impact on schools.

5 Schools need revenue sources to
6 grow from year to year in order to keep
7 pace with rising costs. Otherwise,
8 effective uses of taxpayer funds become
9 threatened and principals lose a crucial
10 margin of flexibility.

11 City Councilmembers, you
12 deserve plaudits for helping to
13 significantly increase the City's flow of
14 dollars to public schools over the past
15 few years, but with schools still in
16 crisis and the City's economic future
17 threatened by the abundance of
18 academically struggling schools, there is
19 no opportunity to cap the revenue growth.
20 What is needed is a move away from the
21 annual drama of trying to identify new
22 taxes and one-time, stop-gap revenue
23 generators, and a turn
24 toward establishing a pattern of
25 predictable, moderate, and slowly growing

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 revenues.

3 The recent redirection of the 1
4 percent sales tax and the City's
5 cigarette tax have netted the District
6 roughly 180 million in new, recurring
7 revenue. That's a significant boost.
8 Hopefully a growing economy will lead to
9 steady growth in the sales tax revenue.
10 However, experience in other cities
11 indicates that the cigarette tax is
12 likely to be a flat or even declining
13 revenue stream. The bulk of local
14 revenue that flows to public education
15 comes from the City property tax.
16 Keeping that rate flat from year to year
17 puts the School District in a vice.
18 Rising costs are not fully matched by
19 rising revenues from some of the smaller
20 revenue streams, and the squeeze is on.

21 Perhaps the most important
22 learning when it comes to school budgets
23 is the importance of planning time. This
24 also represents the most important reason
25 to establish a pattern of annual moderate

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 but steady property tax increases. This
3 would go a long way toward making
4 City-based school funding predictable for
5 Superintendent Hite and the system's 220
6 principals. When costs rise and City
7 revenues are projected to be flat from
8 one year to the next and with the State
9 not providing clarity about the amount of
10 State funding flowing to Philadelphia
11 schools until late June or even later,
12 schools are unable to have full knowledge
13 of their available budgets for the coming
14 school year, and as a result, they can't
15 plan. They can't accurately determine
16 how many staff will fit in the budget,
17 and so they must delay hiring and
18 transfer decisions. This lack of
19 planning impedes principals' ability to
20 establish goals and develop strategies.
21 It essentially forces hundreds of schools
22 to run in catch-up mode from September
23 onward. It's a big reason the District
24 began trying to recruit 400 new teachers
25 last December in the middle of the school

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 year and when few good teachers are
3 actually in the job market. This is one
4 of the advantages charter and suburban
5 schools have. Because charter funding is
6 set by a formula that is based on prior
7 year spending, they know in May what
8 their budget for the coming year will be.
9 Similarly, annual increases in property
10 taxes, along with a lower reliance on
11 State funds, gives suburban schools
12 predictability that City principals can
13 only dream of.

14 Taking some of the drama out of
15 the City budgeting process by
16 establishing a pattern of annual but
17 affordable property tax increases would
18 go a long way toward lessening this
19 problem.

20 Let me be clear. As a taxpayer
21 and former school board member, I do not
22 see a one year 9 percent property tax
23 hike as reasonable, especially when the
24 inflation rate is near zero. But phasing
25 in a 9 percent hike over three or perhaps

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 even four years, that would be enormously
3 sensible policy.

4 Please don't view this and
5 decide I'm letting the State off the
6 hook. It too needs to ensure stable,
7 predictable, growing sources of funding
8 for schools. Beyond that, the State
9 needs to move to a weighted state funding
10 formula, prioritizes the extra costs
11 required to educate disadvantaged youth.
12 But the State can't do it alone. Both
13 City and State revenues have to grow
14 steadily over time, and because these are
15 our City schools that we're discussing,
16 the City has to be willing to lead the
17 way.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

19 Mr. Gleason, you'll have to conclude.

20 MR. GLEASON: Sure. Sorry for
21 running on.

22 Nobody likes property taxes.
23 Nobody likes that they go up, but they
24 have real benefits for school funding.
25 They yield more stable revenue streams.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 They create predictability for school
3 leaders, and as Paul Levy, Jerry Sweeney
4 and others have thoughtfully argued, they
5 are less likely to scare away employers
6 and jobs than taxes on income, sales, and
7 other activities.

8 And a final word about
9 accountability, because I know that was a
10 big topic yesterday. I just want to urge
11 caution when you think about
12 accountability. Accountability is not
13 about mandating inputs. It's not about
14 how many teachers or how many nurses or
15 how many textbooks. It's about the
16 outcomes we want for our kids - are they
17 graduating from high school, are they
18 going to college, are they going to trade
19 schools, are they prepared to go into the
20 military.

21 Accountability has to be about
22 outputs, not inputs. If you make it
23 about inputs, you actually lessen
24 accountability, because you then create
25 the ability for a principal or a school

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 leader to say, You told me what to do.
3 You have to own the results, not the
4 school. It's the wrong way to do
5 accountability. We need accountability
6 for outcomes for school performance, and
7 that's the most important thing.

8 So I thank you for the time. I
9 have a few remarks I didn't get to, which
10 I'll make sure I leave behind written
11 copies of. Thanks so much.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you. We're happy to --

14 (Audience members booing.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We're
16 happy to make all of you --

17 (Audience members chanting.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We're
19 happy to make all of your comments part
20 of the record. Thank you very much.

21 THE CLERK: Darren Spielman,
22 Jamie Kudera, Ian Gavigan.

23 (Applause.)

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

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2 MS. KUDERA: Good morning,
3 Councilwoman Blackwell, members of
4 Council. I am Jamie Kudera. I'm here
5 today in support of funding for the
6 School District of Philadelphia. I am a
7 graduate of Girls' High and the parent of
8 two students in the District.

9 Like many people in this room,
10 the election of a new Governor and an
11 exciting local primary have given me
12 hope. But my hope is tempered by
13 concern, concern that we have forgotten
14 what to ask for. We have forgotten what
15 a normally funded school looks like. We
16 are happy that one of our three children
17 is lucky enough to attend a school with a
18 library. We are relieved that our school
19 with over 2,000 teenagers has two or
20 three school counselors. We accept that
21 a medical professional is in our
22 asthmatic child's school building only
23 three days a week.

24 We have forgotten what an art
25 class looks like and why it is important

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 or that PSATs used to be offered to all
3 students in high school. My daughter
4 dreads the school lunch, not because of
5 the food, but because she doesn't want to
6 spend one-third of her lunch period
7 waiting in line, because that's how long
8 it takes to get a meal in an understaffed
9 cafeteria.

10 I am here to remind you that
11 what we have gotten used to is not right.
12 It is fundamentally unfair to expect our
13 children to learn and develop into
14 leaders and citizens in schools with such
15 limited resources and opportunities.

16 I respect your desire for
17 accountability and hope that you extend
18 that to charter schools as well and focus
19 on outcomes that matter, such as
20 increased high school graduation rates,
21 reductions in violence, and higher
22 literacy rates.

23 I know that you are frustrated
24 with State control. We parents are
25 frustrated with State control as well and

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 travel to Harrisburg often for this
3 reason. But ultimately this is our city.
4 These are our kids. These are our
5 schools.

6 I urge you to prioritize School
7 District funding, strategize about
8 long-term revenue sources, including ones
9 that force major businesses and
10 non-profits to pay their fair share, and
11 for us all to think big, think about what
12 it will take to make this a strong School
13 District worthy of the City and children
14 we love.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you, Ms. Kuder.

19 MR. GAVIGAN: Good morning.
20 Thank you, Councilwoman Blackwell and
21 members of City Council for the
22 opportunity to speak today. My name is
23 Ian Gavigan. I'm the Research and Policy
24 Fellow at the Education Law Center of
25 Pennsylvania.

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2 The Education Law Center's
3 mission is to ensure access to a quality
4 public education for all children in
5 Pennsylvania, and we know that for years
6 the State has failed to give our schools
7 the resources they need to serve all
8 students. We have been hard at work to
9 change that. As leaders of the Campaign
10 for Fair Education Funding, we are
11 pushing the State to adopt and fund a
12 fair funding formula based on actual
13 student and District needs, and along
14 with our partners at the Public Interest
15 Law Center, we have brought a major suit
16 against Pennsylvania for violating its
17 state constitutional mandate to maintain
18 a thorough and efficient system of public
19 education.

20 And the budget process is
21 heating up, and the budget for education
22 is still an open question in Harrisburg.
23 It still isn't clear what will happen,
24 when it will happen or how much the State
25 will provide our City's struggling

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 schools. What is clear is that the
3 students in our City cannot depend on
4 Harrisburg alone.

5 Meanwhile, the educational
6 crisis facing our District is especially
7 acute when you look at the most at-risk
8 learners. Students with special needs,
9 English language learners, and students
10 living in poverty are concentrated in our
11 City's neighborhood schools where funding
12 cuts have decimated staff and gutted
13 educational opportunities. Only new and
14 predictable funding will help these
15 schools make up lost ground and begin to
16 provide all the services their students
17 need.

18 Providing new dollars to
19 Philadelphia's schools is one of the best
20 investments we can make. Research shows
21 that poor students educated in public
22 schools that experience sustained,
23 predictable investments over time grow up
24 to have lower rates of poverty, higher
25 educational attainment, and lower

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 dependency on public supports throughout
3 their lives.

4 The Education Law Center's own
5 research focusing on Pennsylvania has
6 shown that investments in public schools
7 have led to increased student outcomes on
8 state exams, and investments in specific
9 services lead to big payoffs. For
10 example, when students with special
11 needs, English language learners, and
12 students in poverty have access to
13 libraries and librarians, they see
14 markedly higher results in reading and
15 writing, and that's research done right
16 here at home. Countless studies and
17 common sense show money matters.

18 We urge you to support
19 Philadelphia's children. They cannot
20 wait any longer.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you very much.

25 THE CLERK: Gail Clouden,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Horace Clouden, Leah Clouden.

3 (No response.)

4 THE CLERK: Orlando Acosta,

5 Toni McIlwaine, Susan Gobreski.

6 (Witnesses approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you. Feel free to introduce yourself to
10 the record and begin.

11 MS. LEAH CLOUDEN: Good -- I
12 think it's still morning. Oh, good
13 afternoon. I'm Leah Clouden. My
14 parents, Horace and Gail, they just
15 stepped out for a moment, so they're not
16 here to speak right now.

17 Greetings, City Councilmembers.
18 I am here today testifying before you
19 because I care. All our communities
20 matter, and our ancestors did it for us.
21 With my family in unity of hope for a
22 better educational system for the
23 children in Philadelphia public system, I
24 speak.

25 I started to write and deliver

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 a testimony dissecting the
3 Superintendent's 3.0 Action Plan, but I
4 decided not to because it was done
5 already.

6 Times of diminishing resources
7 require an even greater commitment to
8 equity. This is the first line of the
9 Action Plan 3.0. What is equity? A
10 stock or any other security representing
11 an ownership interest; a company's
12 balance sheet; the amount of the funds
13 contributed by the owners, the
14 stockholders, plus the retained earnings
15 or losses; the value or an asset after
16 all the liabilities or debt have been
17 paid; the quality of being fair and
18 impartial.

19 It seems to me that the only
20 thing the current Administration wants to
21 do is balance the books. How can they
22 stand on the grounds of equity when you
23 give principals full autonomy? How can
24 you stand on the grounds of equity when
25 they close 31 schools and/or facilities

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 based on the findings that they couldn't
3 afford to keep them?

4 For about three years totalling
5 over \$12 million and with another million
6 dollars in renovations for two facilities
7 they don't own, Science Leadership
8 Academy and Constitution High -- they're
9 paying this amount per year, \$2 million
10 for both schools. These schools do not
11 have a lunchroom, auditorium and/or yard.
12 That money could have went to supplying
13 nurses and/or libraries. Where do their
14 priorities lie? You have schools that
15 can't even get the basics, a math teacher
16 for high school students and a biology
17 teacher and a lab.

18 Another school has those AP
19 classes, but the instructor has no longer
20 been showing up, so those children can't
21 even finish because the substitute is not
22 certified.

23 If you decide to give the
24 School District money, please consider
25 making deductions - 13 million for the

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 three years of the leasing of two
3 buildings for the school that could have
4 easily fit into other schools and any
5 other findings that you may have.

6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you, Ms. Clouden.

10 MS. McILWAINE: Praise the
11 Lord. Good afternoon. My name is Toni
12 R. McIlwaine and I come standing before
13 you or sitting in reference to the
14 education. And I asked God this morning,
15 what do I come and I speak to City
16 Council about, because as a minister of
17 the gospel, I am careful what I say to
18 God's people. And so I'm coming here
19 just to share brief testimony.

20 Maybe 40-some years ago, I
21 graduated from William Penn High School
22 on Broad and Jefferson Street, and I came
23 out of William Penn High School not
24 knowing how to read or write. And
25 because of this, I ran into poverty,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 prostitution, drugs. I ran into abuse
3 for 30-some years, homelessness for 40
4 years.

5 And so I'm saying to the
6 Council now, I became an advocate for
7 education. I have three beautiful kids,
8 and I didn't train my kids. We stayed in
9 shelters, and we journeyed through
10 Philadelphia. But I'm saying even the
11 school couldn't supply the needs, or as a
12 mother coming from abuse, I was scared to
13 share information with the teachers. My
14 kids came with used clothes on and they
15 didn't have food to eat and they were
16 teased and they was picked on every day
17 of their life, but I still stood strong,
18 even getting choked and beat. I always
19 taught my kids that education was very
20 important. And I graduated not reading
21 and writing. So by me having children, I
22 instilled into them that education is
23 key.

24 And so as a woman of God and of
25 the gospel, if you look at Exodus, it

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 talks about when the pharaoh gave out the
3 word to kill off the first born, to kill
4 off our children. Education is very
5 important.

6 So I stand here before you and
7 I thank God. At 56 years old, I just
8 graduated from Harcum College and I came
9 out with a degree in leadership.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. McILWAINE: And that's only
12 because God got a hold of me.

13 My kids didn't have a library.
14 We didn't have school buses. I gathered
15 my kids in the corner when we didn't have
16 food, and I instilled the word of God in
17 them and I instilled education.

18 When I was beat down, I went to
19 home and school meetings and parents
20 meetings, and parents did not show up.
21 Parents do not show up at the meetings.
22 So I became an advocate for the School
23 District of Philadelphia. And so now the
24 Lord has separated me from that abuse,
25 and so now I stand in the gap for kids in

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 school. And I'm saying it's very
3 important. I'm not just coming here to
4 talk about money. Education is key. But
5 I got a higher education, because if it
6 was not for God, the enemy would have
7 took me out.

8 So I thank God that I can stand
9 here as a testimony. Education is
10 important. And I'm not going to leave
11 until I tell you that.

12 All three of my children -- my
13 daughter has a Bachelor's degree as a
14 teacher. She's graduating from Chestnut
15 Hill College. My son, Santino, just
16 graduated from Delaware of the Arts, and
17 he's going for animation. So don't tell
18 me, hallelujah, that a budget, don't tell
19 me that a pencil or paper -- when you're
20 determined, hallelujah, to do what is
21 right, it will pay off at the end.

22 And so I look around and I look
23 at the children and I look at the adults.
24 We want to have to be accountable to our
25 children, hallelujah. We will.

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2 But I thank God for giving me
3 the opportunity to stand before this
4 great woman, Jannie Blackwell. I
5 followed her for years and years and
6 years. She's a great woman of God. So I
7 thank God, for education is key. It's
8 very important.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you very much. Thank you very much, and
12 thank you for your kind remarks. Thank
13 you.

14 MS. GOBRESKI: Hi. My name is
15 Susan Gobreski. I'm the Director of
16 Education Voters. So I come here as both
17 an education policy person, I'm also a
18 mother of three children in Philadelphia
19 public schools, so I'm here as a mother.
20 I also pay my taxes, so I'm here as a
21 taxpayer. And I want to actually -- I
22 have three points I want to make today.

23 One, we got sent a bill. We
24 have to pay it, right? The School
25 District is telling us what we need, and

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 I am with you, I will stand with City
3 Council asking tough questions of the
4 District about what they're planning to
5 do with our money. But we do know from
6 research that money matters. We do know
7 that our children do not have -- many
8 children don't have art, some don't have
9 recess. They don't have the science
10 equipment that we need. So I am here to
11 say to City Council, please let's pay
12 that bill that we've been sent.

13 Now, I actually -- I was
14 watching yesterday on the Internet, and
15 one of the things that I was sitting
16 there thinking is, here are the questions
17 that I wish I would see you guys asking.
18 So one suggestion for the future is that
19 consider having public hearings before
20 you bring the District in so that some of
21 the questions that we have as a community
22 can be asked of them.

23 So along the lines of what
24 we're talking about in terms of outputs
25 and inputs and outcomes, I would like to

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 know what kinds of programs, what would
3 the District need to do exactly to
4 increase the graduation rate, what kinds
5 of things are they pursuing, how much are
6 the costs of those things. I'd like to
7 know how much art and music every 1st and
8 2nd and 3rd grader is getting. I'd like
9 to know -- I'd like to get an update on
10 the state of the science equipment and
11 what it would cost to provide every high
12 school in the City with a science lab
13 that's fully equipped, because I think
14 those are the kinds of things that we
15 want to know about where our money is
16 going.

17 And then I wanted to use my
18 final minute to take a shot at this whole
19 accountability thing. It's really true
20 that we can't point at an educator and
21 say -- and let the educator say to us,
22 Well, I gave them a book. That's true,
23 but when we talk about accountability, I
24 think the previous testifier really had
25 it wrong, because when we talk about

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 accountability, what we're really talking
3 about is accountability for us. When we
4 point at schools and ask them to do more,
5 the question that we need to really ask
6 of ourselves is, Did we give them
7 everything that we needed to give them
8 and that they needed to produce those
9 results.

10 So this question of
11 accountability isn't just saying to
12 schools, Here, we'll give you however
13 little money we want and if you don't get
14 results, you're doing a bad job. The
15 question is really, What is it they need
16 to provide every student with their full
17 set of needs, whether or not that's ELL
18 services, tutoring, counseling, nursing,
19 and what do we do to make sure that
20 they're getting a full set of resources
21 to provide the services. And then we can
22 hold them accountable. We're not really
23 there yet.

24 So I'm going to urge you to do
25 your part. Yes, we continue to work on

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 the State funding. Other folks have
3 testified to that well. There are
4 numerous sources on the table, including
5 U&O. I'd be willing to talk about the
6 soda tax again. Minor, modest real
7 estate increases and I think the land tax
8 are all good ideas, but we have to pay
9 this bill.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Let me note my staff just
15 reminded me about Mother Bertha Simmons.
16 You can't see her picture well, but were
17 she here, she would testify about prayer
18 in schools. As many of you know, she
19 passed away last year at the age of 87,
20 and so she can't make that suggestion or
21 recommendation. And so we will add that
22 here, because Bertha Simmons would do
23 that. Thank you to my staff.

24 And now, Brother Acosta.

25 MR. ACOSTA: Thank you,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Chairman Jannie Blackwell, and thank
3 President Clarke for doing the public
4 testimony in community schools and
5 everything like that. I didn't have
6 time --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
8 sorry. Introduce yourself to the record,
9 please.

10 MR. ACOSTA: Orlando Acosta.
11 That's O-R-L-A-N-D-O, A-C-O-S-T-A.

12 I didn't have time to get
13 everything prepared that I needed to, but
14 I did want to say, every year we come in
15 here and -- well, the District is coming
16 here to ask City Council for appropriated
17 funds for schools and different things of
18 that sort, which we do need schools to,
19 you know -- we do need funds to run the
20 schools, of course, but the problem is
21 that we need to have that accountability
22 of how the funds are being used, and
23 until we have communities sitting at the
24 table with State officials and the School
25 District, it's always going to be into

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 this problem where we always have these
3 shortfalls, because only the people that
4 are living in these districts, whether it
5 be West Philly, North Philly, South
6 Philly and so forth, to be able to tell
7 you exactly what's needed in every
8 school. And until that is done and until
9 people are sitting at the table, the ones
10 that live in the community -- because you
11 can look at a spreadsheet all day. You
12 can look at numbers all day, but that
13 doesn't tell you if a special needs child
14 needs services, if a parent tells you my
15 child needs this. Each individual child
16 has their own individual needs, and until
17 they be able to tell you what's needed
18 for that school or that particular class
19 or that particular child or individual,
20 then you're going to always have this
21 shortfall of, well, we got to take money
22 from music, we have to do this, we have
23 to do that.

24 So the problem is that until
25 you have each individual person sitting

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 down from each individual area of the
3 City, along with the City and State
4 officials, to be able to tell you what's
5 actually needed in the schools, then
6 that's going to be the primary issue of
7 having that shortfall.

8 Thank you very much.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you, Mr. Acosta.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 THE CLERK: Horace and Gail
15 Clouden, please.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
19 afternoon. Thank you for your patience.
20 We're sorry you stepped out for a moment.
21 Leah did quite well. Please identify
22 yourself for the record.

23 MR. CLOUDEN: My name is Horace
24 Clouden. I'm a building engineer for the
25 School District and speaking as a

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 community concerned person. I'd just
3 like to start off by saying we attended
4 six of these budget hearing meetings that
5 the School District had put out
6 throughout the City the last month, and
7 what was interesting was that hearing the
8 testimony from the principal at Dobbins
9 School, which we were there three weeks
10 ago, that when I alluded to Dr. Hite's
11 plan of how many CTE seats, he had a plan
12 come in at 2012 where his goal was to
13 reach 12,000 seats by the year 2017, and
14 at the time, he had no information on
15 where he was at in that 12,000 seats.
16 But what was more interesting was that
17 the principal didn't allude to the fact
18 that -- what she said a half an hour ago,
19 that 2,000 people had applied for her
20 school and they accepted 500. I find
21 that just overwhelming, because the
22 School District has on its website 111
23 CTE programs in 37 occupations at 28 high
24 schools, but when you go in their
25 website, it doesn't tell you where the

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 trade is actually located in the School
3 District. So that's one thing to that
4 issue about where did the 2,000 children
5 come from.

6 And the other thing is this:
7 Yesterday at City Council they had the
8 head of the CTE department, and we
9 brought up -- well, it was brought up
10 about the CTE program that's being put in
11 Ben Franklin and -- I'm wording it
12 differently. You have a CTE school,
13 which is Dobbins, which is half full.
14 Why wasn't that CTE program placed there?
15 And the response was, Well, we didn't
16 want to overcrowd the school because
17 we're on a three-year \$40 million
18 project. So we wanted to keep the
19 enrollment low. So I think that's just
20 one example of how 440 isn't talking to
21 its principals.

22 And to add insult on injury on
23 that particular item or example, they
24 have what Dobbins -- what they call a
25 Dobbins lifecycle replacement, and they

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 list down here \$60 million for repairs,
3 and it would take three years to do these
4 repairs. It actually takes two years to
5 build a school. So I don't know why
6 would it take that particular school
7 three years for this project. And then
8 why not just add another \$20 million and
9 build a brand new school, you know. But
10 here's another management decision or
11 lack of experience.

12 Now, what I'd like to start off
13 with is just saying this: I'm no for the
14 vote, because the way it's stated is that
15 the homestead exemption people would pay
16 for this tax increase. Here you have
17 people who are submitting a form to get a
18 tax break and you're going to turn around
19 and charge them for what they want a
20 break for. I don't know if the public is
21 aware of that or not, but that's what
22 this is about, this \$105 million.

23 Now, the other thing is this:
24 Everybody talks about the \$200 to \$300
25 million. But let's talk about the \$7

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 billion that the School District already
3 had go through its fingers. What did we
4 get for \$7 billion? Well, hey, let's
5 see. We got school closures, between 20
6 and 30 schools. What we got was quality
7 seats. This is a new term that the
8 administration brought in, quality seats.
9 So how many quality seats did we get for
10 \$7 billion? Well, let's give them some
11 numbers. Let's give them some seats.
12 Let's say he got 1,000 seats, he produced
13 1,000 quality seats since they've been
14 here. Because as three reinvented high
15 schools only produced 300 seats, the
16 little programs -- I'm sorry about the
17 children learning Spanish or learning a
18 second language. That's nice. They're
19 kindergartners. We have 7th graders that
20 don't even have this opportunity, people
21 that are really trying to make that
22 decision in life which path they want to
23 go. I don't know how you say which one
24 is more important, but that's an example
25 right there.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 So we have 1,000 quality seats
3 this administration has produced. Oh,
4 excuse me. There's 130,000 students. So
5 what percentage of that is quality seats?

6 Now, here we go with another
7 example. We've been as a family harping
8 on this since day one. You have two high
9 schools, Science Leadership Academy and
10 Constitution High. They lease both of
11 those schools at \$2 million a piece.
12 Now, what did the CFO say yesterday? I
13 don't know if he was being flip or he
14 just wanted to say it because he -- I
15 don't know if you know, he put in his
16 resignation, so he has really three more
17 weeks to go. But he said, We're looking
18 at a ten-year lease with these guys.
19 Now, just imagine, it's been three years.
20 You're talking they already invested \$12
21 million in schools that don't even have
22 an auditorium, don't even have a gym.
23 Plus you close high schools that these
24 children could have easily been
25 transferred to.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Now, here again, why should

3 these children go to these schools?

4 Well, why not? You closed Bok. You

5 closed Germantown. You closed University

6 City, and you told them children, You got

7 to find another school to go to. So why

8 couldn't we do the same with SLA and

9 Constitution High School? Okay. Well,

10 let's don't say at SLA. Let's say this

11 is the SLA. You created an off-campus

12 site at Beeber. Now, Beeber has an SLA

13 off site, which they probably have maybe

14 60 to 90 children. SLA has 500 children,

15 the main site. That whole site can fit

16 in the SLA off site. Here again, saving

17 \$2 million. But, no. I don't know.

18 Maybe I'm just -- my logic isn't right.

19 But to add insult to injury

20 again, in their proposal -- these are

21 their books. These aren't our books.

22 These are their books. They got an FY

23 projection of a half a million dollars

24 renovation for both of those locations.

25 A half a million dollars each. What are

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 they renovating? Are they renovating
3 leased properties? What did these people
4 do to get this type of contract with the
5 School District? Who do they know? It's
6 bad enough the School District sold these
7 properties to these people. Now they're
8 really getting us.

9 Now, here we go. What else did
10 we get for our \$7 billion? Okay. This
11 is what we got for our \$7 billion. Each
12 year there's a lease -- if you do the
13 math. Dr. Hite yesterday said it costs
14 \$8,000 to educate a child. Now, that
15 doesn't matter if it's a charter child or
16 if it's a public high school child. It's
17 \$8,000. But what does the District
18 receive for that child? It receives
19 13,500. So that's a difference of
20 \$5,000. If you look at it, where's the
21 \$5,000 at per child per 200,000 children?
22 Let's not separate this now. Let's put
23 them all together in the same box. But
24 what would the District say? Well, you
25 have special needs children. They're a

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 little bit more, so we can't tell because
3 we got special needs children. Okay.
4 Let's add the special needs children.
5 Let's say 5,000 off the top for them. So
6 you still have the amount, and the amount
7 is \$1 billion in maybe non-mandatory
8 contracts.

9 Now, guess what? The District
10 said for \$7 billion, last year we saved
11 you \$6 million. You saved us \$6 million
12 from a \$2.6 billion contract? What's
13 wrong with you? Budget, thank you, from
14 a \$2.6 billion budget. Somebody needs to
15 be fired. I'm glad the guy resigned, so
16 we don't have to fire him. I'm glad he
17 resigned.

18 Now, \$1 billion -- and we're
19 looking at non-mandatory contracts. What
20 does that mean? That means guess what?
21 You don't need that bell that's ringing,
22 because we can go over the PA system to
23 say the class is being dismissed.

24 So it's different types of
25 infrastructure. It's different types of

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 contracts that we can say -- even say to
3 SEPTA that we give \$100 million off the
4 top to and wait for them to give us a
5 rebate check of what we didn't spend.
6 That's SEPTA, \$100 million contract.
7 Come on, people.

8 It's in here. When they say
9 transparency, transparency.
10 Transparency. The little resolutions
11 that everybody doesn't want to go to or
12 doesn't look on the Internet when they
13 have the little SRC meetings, you better
14 look at the SRC meetings. They're giving
15 away at least \$10 million a month on
16 contracts.

17 So what are we crying about?
18 We're crying about \$105 million. We're
19 crying about \$105 million. Come on,
20 they're giving away a billion dollars in
21 contracts. And I'm no statistician, but
22 let's say 75 percent of them are
23 non-mandatory contracts. So when you
24 have a non-mandatory contract, you can
25 say to somebody, I'm sorry, but we can't

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 use your services this year, and that's
3 all you got to say. But guess what?
4 They use their services. Now it's a game
5 that they're playing. Here's the lowest
6 bidder. He comes in at \$2 million. He
7 gives a \$2 million bid. He's the lowest
8 bidder. Now there's amendments five
9 months down the road saying this, Oh,
10 well, I need an extra hundred thousand
11 dollars. Well, I thought your lowest bid
12 was \$2 million. I thought you were
13 supposed to take everything for \$2
14 million.

15 Oh, you know, it's a work
16 change order. We all do that. So it's a
17 hundred thousand dollars.

18 But to add insult to injury on
19 that, they had one particular resolution
20 that they charged the District \$100,000
21 because somebody in Procurement didn't
22 file the paper on time, \$100,000 paper.
23 Come on, y'all. Come on, \$100,000 paper
24 that they, you know -- and add insult to
25 injury again, you only have 11 people in

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 Procurement that's overseeing this \$2.6
3 billion budget, but yet you have an SRC
4 committee that's now going to have a \$2
5 million budget and going to have a \$3
6 million budget next year. What do they
7 need that kind of money for to already
8 pass what they know they're going to
9 pass? You saw the relationship yesterday
10 between the Superintendent and the head
11 of the SRC.

12 Do me a favor, can you pass
13 this for me.

14 They're going to pass this
15 stuff. It's 99 percent approval it's
16 yes. This is what we're dealing with.

17 For our \$7 billion, we have a
18 system of inexperienced managers. Just
19 like one of the Councilmen said, it's
20 lack of management, but, no, it's
21 inexperienced management. It's the type
22 of management where, Well, hey, I just
23 lost my job in this department, can you
24 help me out.

25 Well, yeah, I'll put you over

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 here in this department, with no
3 experience.

4 That's what running the School
5 District right now.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you. We need you to summarize,
8 Mr. Clouden.

9 MR. CLOUDEN: Basically what
10 I'm saying is this: It's halftime and
11 you have to change the quarterback.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you. Thank you, Mr. Clouden.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.
16 Mama Gail.

17 MS. GAIL CLOUDEN: Thank you.
18 Thursday --

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
20 identify yourself.

21 MS. GAIL CLOUDEN: I'm sorry.
22 My name that I was born with is Gail
23 Steward and my married name 40 years this
24 month -- or next month is Gail
25 Steward-Clouden. And I have to recognize

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 my ancestors by using the name Steward.

3 I rang a bell at the SRC

4 meeting last week, and this is the bell

5 that I used, and to me it symbolizes time

6 for a change in administration. As the

7 descendent of folks that were enslaved, I

8 see a cycle, and being in Philadelphia to

9 me is very, very significant to me,

10 because I'm one of those people that

11 people talk about that had a near death

12 experience. I call it a new life

13 experience, where I actually stopped

14 breathing and went to God, and he sent me

15 back, told me very specifically, back to

16 Philadelphia, because we were at that

17 time in South Carolina. So I'm on a

18 mission. And so when you all hear me,

19 young people, it's for you that he sent

20 me back for. He sent me back to save

21 many of you, and he sent me back to this

22 platform, which is education, because

23 that's how many of us are lost.

24 I sat in an SRC meeting one

25 day, and Mr. Green said to me when my

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 time was up by their timer that he was
3 sent there to keep order. And I'll never
4 forget that day because that was a day
5 that I had in my possession a document
6 that I found that morning where three of
7 my ancestors were owned by a white
8 family. And a lot of times I talk about
9 the past, and people will look and think,
10 why is she talking about slavery? Why is
11 she talking about that? Because one
12 thing I know is, people look at history,
13 and it revolves, it recycles. And so I
14 say it because I don't want to see us
15 enslaved again, and that's why I stand.
16 And that's what I said before, that I'm
17 standing for our children. I am standing
18 strong and proud for you all and those
19 that will come behind you, because guess
20 what? We're living with, as I keep
21 saying, decisions that were made
22 generations ago. That's what you're
23 going through right now. People made
24 decisions, and that's why I tell the SRC,
25 what you think, feel, say, and do today

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 affects us generations from now.

3 People made decisions about
4 you, and I'm going to say it again. I
5 got a job at the phone company at 16
6 years old. I spoke to folks that were
7 there that were Caucasian that began
8 working at 12 and 13. I got a job
9 through a school-to-work program. Again,
10 folks that were there got their jobs at
11 12 and 13 years old. There are two
12 different Philadelphias. There are
13 probably four different Philadelphias if
14 you sat down and talked about it for
15 real.

16 I want to bring the elephant in
17 the room, because I rode around on a
18 tourist bus on Sunday and I looked around
19 as we were traveling through Philadelphia
20 and I looked at who was visiting and who
21 was serving. I'm tired of seeing my
22 people begging. I'm tired of seeing my
23 people selling water. I'm tired of them
24 asking, Can I have a dollar, can you
25 spare something to eat. It shouldn't be,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 and it should start with these young
3 people right now and those that are
4 coming behind us.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. GAIL CLOUDEN: Imma tell
7 you, I've traveled, we traveled. My
8 husband got his job at 18 at the phone
9 company and retired at 40. You know our
10 story. He got -- and I'm saying this now
11 for you young people. My husband worked
12 for the School District for seven years
13 and got sick. He got carbon monoxide
14 poisoning that almost took his life. For
15 a year my daughter and I helped to bring
16 him back. He couldn't walk more than ten
17 minutes. Guess what? Three years ago --
18 and the case has not come up yet -- how
19 much has to be paid to people, how long
20 does it take. All we asked for was one
21 year, his pay for one year. This man had
22 never been absent, never been late. Go
23 through any building, been in over a
24 hundred schools, would go in any building
25 before anybody else came in to make sure

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 it was safe. Imma tell you, I'm not
3 saying it because it's him. I'm saying
4 how many other cases are sitting, how
5 many lawyers, how many law firms are
6 being paid. They sent him up to almost
7 New York in a chauffeured car. Was that
8 necessary when a doctor could have been
9 found in Philadelphia to see him? Dumb
10 stuff. I've never said "stupid" so much
11 in my life until this last year. I've
12 never said "crap" in my life until this
13 last year. I sit and I listen to stupid
14 stuff repeatedly every month by people
15 who are supposed to be educated.

16 I'm watching, and it looks good
17 when the people come in and they get the
18 pictures taken, but my heart goes out to
19 all the others that are not in that
20 position, all these children that are not
21 getting what they deserve, and it's wrong
22 and it's wrong and it's wrong, and I will
23 keep saying it. It is about color. It
24 is about race. It is about class, and we
25 need to say it and say it loud.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Schools are great.

3 School-based programs are great, Jannie,
4 and anybody else that's listening, but
5 Imma tell you something loud and clear.
6 I don't want our black children to keep
7 seeing white folks coming in like they're
8 our savior. In these clinics --

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. GAIL CLOUDEN: In these
11 clinics, I saw the people that want to
12 come out and I saw those folks that sat
13 in the audience here months ago who are
14 resources. Where are the black
15 resources? Where are people that look
16 like them to stand in front of? I'm
17 tired of us begging. And guess what?
18 When we don't get jobs, what do people
19 do? They commit crime and they beg. I'm
20 seeing more prostitutes in my community
21 than I've seen ever. People's mothers,
22 people's sisters, people who that's all
23 they got to do -- got to sell is their
24 bodies, because they didn't learn
25 anything in schools. When I said

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 generational, they stopped teaching many
3 of our children many years ago.

4 I've been around 30 years.

5 I'll never forget speaking to a regional
6 superintendent and I said to this man --
7 God bless you, Walter Scrivens. I said
8 to this man, Is there a time period set
9 aside where you will go back when they
10 were creating the middle school system,
11 is there a period where you'll go back
12 and change it if it doesn't work? And he
13 told me my question was so ludicrous, he
14 wasn't even going to answer me. That's
15 the kind of arrogance, that's the kind of
16 ego. And I see ignorance all the time
17 when we deal with the School District
18 when we ask questions, when we call them
19 on stuff. Everybody has got this smart
20 answer or smug answer or attitude instead
21 of just telling us. Most of the times
22 they don't want to tell us because they
23 don't know the answers.

24 I don't have a whole lot more
25 to say, but I'm on a mission, and I said

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 it. I'm on a mission to save as many of
3 these children. It's not just about
4 black, because everybody that comes
5 through those doors, I don't care where
6 they are, and through these doors are
7 benefiting because of something our
8 people did. We're the ones that stood
9 for equality. And how dare they think
10 that everybody else is supposed to come
11 through and get it and not the people
12 that stood for it? That's ludicrous.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. GAIL CLOUDEN: Time is up.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you. Thank you both, and Leah as well.
17 Thank you both.

18 THE CLERK: Keenan Martin,
19 Essence Whiting --

20 (Applause.)

21 THE CLERK: -- Essence Whiting,
22 Carl Moore.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 you very much. Thank you for your
3 patience. Please give us your name and
4 begin your testimony.

5 MR. MARTIN: Good afternoon,
6 everyone. My name is Keenan Martin. I
7 am a youth leader at Youth United for
8 Change and a freshman at Kensington
9 Catholic High School. I stand in
10 solidarity with our peers of the
11 Kensington Multiplex and fighting for
12 preservation and fighting for
13 preservation of our neighborhood schools.

14 I have a question for everyone.
15 Do you want the Kensington Multiplex to
16 fail? The future of the Kensington
17 Multiplex depends on us and everyone in
18 this room. We are looking forward to
19 finishing our high school years with the
20 original small schools plan and not the
21 plan being forced at us by the School
22 District.

23 First, we demand that the City
24 Council helps keep the original small
25 schools plan of having no more than 400

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 students in each of the Multiplex high
3 schools. Putting more than 400 students
4 in the Multiplex creates a difficult
5 learning environment. We want all the
6 teachers to know our full names and
7 social ID number. This creates a better
8 community, better family. Smaller
9 schools create families and builds
10 stronger relationships inside and outside
11 of schools.

12 Secondly, we demand to have a
13 formal process for all changes that are
14 happening within Kensington Multiplex.
15 These are our schools we attend and not
16 the SRC or the City Council. Our voices
17 must be heard to ensure that the
18 Kensington Multiplex has a formal process
19 for all administrative and student
20 discipline policies that are effective
21 and do not push students out of school.
22 We demand that we have a Multiplex
23 coordinator that will oversee the
24 administrative duties of the Multiplex
25 and to ensure that all five schools are

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 working together towards a strong
3 collective role. With the Kensington
4 Multiplex coordinators, students' voices
5 will be heard.

6 The District needs to stop
7 destroying the Kensington Multiplex, and
8 City Council must intervene and support
9 creating a local controlled school board
10 that advances our society and doesn't
11 push us back.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you.

16 MR. MOORE: My name is Carl
17 Moore. I guess I'm last. I'm in support
18 of you. I was here a year ago and I
19 spoke on the school board in reference
20 about the different things it was doing.
21 I told you back then that he said he was
22 closing those schools and it was
23 necessary for him to close the schools to
24 keep the budget in line. I told you he
25 was a liar. Dr. Hite is a liar. The

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 whole board over there is a bunch of
3 liars. They're there for the purpose of
4 shutting down our public school system.

5 I told you back then that Dr.
6 Hite was about the business of shutting
7 the union down. Now he's about the
8 business of outsourcing all different
9 things within the school system. He has
10 killed two of our black kids --

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. MOORE: -- by not having
13 those (unintelligible) there.

14 City Council -- and I know the
15 rest of you City Councilmembers know me
16 and you're in rooms. Hey, if you don't
17 do something about it, come November,
18 after November, you will hear from me,
19 because I've saved my money up for
20 lawyers to sue every last one of you.

21 This man has told you a lie.
22 He told you back then if you shut the
23 schools down -- I told you back then it
24 was \$300 million that he owed. After you
25 pass out the tax reform of 1 percent,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 still need more. Still need more. Still
3 need more. Still need more. After the
4 cigarette tax was placed on him, in that
5 interview with the newspaper, he said we
6 still need \$82 million.

7 Everybody is giving money. You
8 have to realize, when he came here, he
9 gave everybody in that school board a
10 raise and everybody got a raise. Then he
11 said, Now we going to go back. Then he
12 told us that he was going to take a cut
13 in pay, and last year he wants that cut
14 back, that \$30,000. He want it back.
15 This man is full of liar. How long are
16 you people in City Council going to
17 continue to let this man lie to you?

18 The City of Philadelphia people
19 have spoken. Get rid of the fool, but
20 the fool got other people going along
21 with it. He got those other millionaire
22 people. They tried to bundle their money
23 into controlling this government here.
24 They did their best. They gave their
25 dollars, and they did a good job of doing

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 it, but you as representatives of the
3 people of the City of Philadelphia must
4 stop.

5 I got 17 grand-kids in school.
6 I got five great grand-kids, and they
7 doing good because I stay on their butt.
8 But the fact is when you come from a
9 family like I come from, multicultural --
10 half of me is Puerto Rican, the other
11 half of me is Afro-American -- and I know
12 where everything came from in my life.

13 You young kids, you got to hang
14 in there and fight. Don't give up on
15 these SOB's, because they was out to hurt
16 you. Don't do no violence. Just stand
17 in there. Stand and stand and stand and
18 stand.

19 Now going back to my original
20 title, I'm here as Carl Moore, but when
21 you get the education point of it, my
22 name is Dr. Mahmut Hasciola Carl Moore.
23 I got a Ph.D.

24 These people up here in City
25 Council right there, Jannie Blackwell,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Maria -- I remember when Maria was 17
3 years old. I remember when Jannie was
4 teaching school. She taught my niece,
5 and my niece is a doctor now, M.D.

6 All what I'm saying to you is
7 the fact is -- and I spent 25 years down
8 here. This has to stop.

9 Mayor Nutter is talking about 9
10 percent. He ain't getting no 9 percent.
11 I'm not going for it. And if you think
12 you going to run for that congressional
13 seat, you can forget that too, brother.
14 There ain't nothing going on. And I'm
15 standing on the spot. I'm putting it out
16 here, Maria. Council President Jannie
17 Blackwell, you know I always put a person
18 on the table. I don't hide nothing.

19 This man lied to us. I
20 listened to him tell y'all. He brought
21 that same accountant on up here. The
22 accountant ready to go because they done
23 sold so much money, it's a damn shame.
24 And listening to this last gentleman
25 here, hey, they're doing it. I told you

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 last time, have an audit. Oh, he's
3 willing to go because they got another
4 replacement for him to go another place.

5 The last superintendent before
6 she died, I guess she was saying her
7 grace to God, she told me everything.
8 She told me how they was giving money,
9 how they was going to school training
10 these people to come in and take over.
11 They want to shut down the school system,
12 the public school system, and make it a
13 charter.

14 There was one charter school, a
15 black charter school. He shut it down in
16 the middle of the season. He couldn't
17 let them go until June? Those parents
18 had to go out there and try to find a
19 way.

20 Oh, this is the rules and
21 regulation.

22 In rules and regulation, you
23 people need rules and regulations.

24 Find the thieves over there,
25 because they're stealing. They're doing

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 it honestly. The guy who is leaving in
3 two weeks, he can tell you. He did it
4 down there in Prince George's County,
5 Maryland. I gave this City Council
6 information on this man. I told you from
7 the beginning he was a thief. He was a
8 crook. He's nothing but a flunkie for
9 somebody else and he is not working for
10 us, and it just proves it.

11 Now he trying to outsource.
12 Isn't that something? I thought you
13 outsource overseas. Now he going to
14 outsource the nursing. He going to
15 outsource subbing teachers. Outsourcing
16 subbing teachers? That means his boys
17 got a plan for a contract. They get the
18 contract. The teacher come on there,
19 they put them in there. They doing this.

20 This man went into an agreement
21 with the school board. They have a
22 contract. He wanted to shut them down,
23 put them out. No one stand up and saying
24 anything. But guess what? If you think
25 I'm getting my 9 percent, you're not

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 going to get it. I'm a disabled vet, 72
3 years old, and I will go on the pension
4 plan on you. It's over. We can't take
5 it no more, Maria. Our people can't take
6 it no more. That Puerto Rican side of me
7 can't take it no more.

8 Council President Blackwell,
9 that black side of me can't take it no
10 more. I can't take it. I've been in
11 every civil rights movement there is.
12 I'm on a new movement now. You're not
13 going to mess with my grand-kids. And
14 y'all in City Council right there in your
15 Chambers in there, Curt, Darrell --
16 Darrell, you come from the neighborhood.
17 All of us. I'm saying I'm calling them
18 out by name. Stand up, Darrell. You're
19 the President. Stand up, ask for
20 accountability. What is he going to do?
21 He ain't going to give -- don't let the
22 man lie to you. Listen to Mother Jannie.
23 She'll lead you on the way.

24 Ladies and gentlemen of this
25 audience and you young kids, hang in

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 there. Don't y'all give up shit.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you, Mr. Moore.

6 MR. MOORE: Your mother and
7 father going to whip your ass.

8 Councilwoman Blackwell, thank
9 you for allowing me to speak.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you, Mr. Moore.

12 MR. MOORE: You've always been
13 a pleasure.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you.

16 MR. MOORE: And God is so
17 pumped. Thank God you're still here.
18 Don't retire yet. You got too much more
19 work to do.

20 You hear that, Maria? You
21 can't retire. You got work for you to do
22 too.

23 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: There's
24 a lot of work to be done.

25 MR. MOORE: Stick with us,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Maria.

3 You hear me, Curt? You didn't
4 (unintelligible) in school. I got you on
5 that.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you.

8 We have another speaker here.
9 Give us your name for the record and
10 begin your testimony.

11 MISS WHITING: My name is
12 Essence Whiting. Thank you for having me
13 here today.

14 Well, good afternoon, City
15 Council. My name is Essence Whiting and
16 I'm a student at Kensington Urban
17 Education High School and a student
18 leader with Youth United for Change.
19 We're here again today trying our best to
20 fight for our schools, our passion. The
21 School District is trying to close my
22 school and consolidate it with Kensington
23 Business back to a large, overcrowded,
24 dysfunctioning high school that failed
25 years ago.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 We want you to know what is
3 happening, because the School District
4 should not be allowed to get away with
5 this.

6 Our schools are part of
7 Kensington Multiplex, a group of five
8 small schools that students and community
9 members fought for more than ten years.
10 This team of schools was designed to be a
11 multiplex working together to serve the
12 students from Kensington catchment area.

13 The Kensington Multiplex
14 schools came out of a community vision
15 for a high-quality neighborhood education
16 through small schools. They were a
17 cohort of schools and should be treated
18 as a team, as the Multiplex coordinator,
19 a principal corner team and the community
20 stakeholders and group and cross school
21 training supports.

22 The School District needs to
23 return to its vision. Rather than
24 closing or merging or characterizing any
25 of our schools, they should become pilot

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 community schools, starting with
3 Kensington Urban Education. The District
4 and City have been exiting opportunity to
5 invest in the Kensington Multiplex of a
6 model of community-based neighborhood
7 schools working together closely. If
8 combining the schools supposedly saves
9 money, why are we only worth that much
10 money to you, School District? We really
11 shouldn't be worth any amount of money.
12 We are all priceless. You can't pay for
13 a young life. We should be worth the
14 resources and money to become the best we
15 could actually be as a small school.

16 If combining the school
17 supposedly improves our education, why is
18 it the opposite of what's happening at
19 Bartram High School? When the small
20 schools were closed, it led to chaotic
21 circumstances and didn't improve anything
22 at all. We want a much better education,
23 but we know in our hearts that closing
24 our schools is definitely not the way to
25 do it. Instead, we should become a

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 community school, with community
3 partnerships and strong parent community
4 council.

5 The School District has also
6 pushed students, parents, and communities
7 out of this process. They informed us of
8 the plan very late and are going around
9 the state law to speed up the school
10 closing to June 18th.

11 We are asking City Council to
12 involve and not let the School District
13 get away with this. This is about
14 protecting our neighborhood schools,
15 protecting our rights as parents and
16 students and committee members to have a
17 say in our schools.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you very much.

21 THE CLERK: Andrew Lukov, Sarah
22 Moton, Sulay Sosa, Darren Spielman.

23 (No response.)

24 THE CLERK: Elizabeth Escobar,
25 Chanelle Houston.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 (Witnesses approached witness
3 table.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Point of
5 order, Madam President.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
7 Councilwoman Sanchez.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yes. I
9 just wanted to briefly, before our young
10 people left here today, recognize one of
11 the challenges that exists when we have
12 new leadership that comes into the
13 District. Having been a resident of
14 North Philadelphia for 20-plus years
15 watching these school transformations, I
16 think it's really important and I'll ask
17 my Council colleagues to join me in
18 asking the District to really respect
19 what has been a ten-year plan of creating
20 the Kensington Multiplexes and to really
21 hear the voices of the young people.
22 We've watched school after school get
23 underfunded, and this is one of these
24 decisions that it took us a long time to
25 get to a place where these young people

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 felt they were part of a school
3 environment, and I think it's an
4 opportunity for us to show that sometimes
5 we have to push the pause button, because
6 if not, we're destined to repeat history.
7 And the Kensington complexes, along with
8 Mastbaum and other schools, are vital to
9 that community.

10 So I'm going to be asking
11 Council to help me in advocating for a
12 process that respects the number of years
13 that went into the creation of this and,
14 at the same time, reaches the goal of how
15 do we better serve young people. I don't
16 think it's an either/or. I think it's an
17 "and," and I look forward to working with
18 not only Youth United for Change but
19 other student advocates.

20 This is one of the last few
21 organizations we have that really
22 advocate strongly on behalf of young
23 children and gives young people a voice,
24 and we need to respect that.

25 So I just wanted to put that on

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 the record, and I look forward to working
3 with the School District and the young
4 people to get there.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you, Councilwoman, and we thank you for
8 always speaking for them whenever there's
9 an education hearing and whenever it
10 comes up, and when youth come, you always
11 defend them and speak for them. Thank
12 you very much.

13 We have two more young ladies.
14 Please give us your name for the record
15 and begin your testimony.

16 MISS ESCOBAR: My name is
17 Elizabeth Escobar and I am a student of
18 Andrew Jackson Elementary School. I am
19 here today to ask you to approve a budget
20 that gives 105 million to the
21 Philadelphia School District so that our
22 students can have the quality education
23 and so that all of our students can have
24 access to the arts.

25 I believe that the arts are

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 essential in our public schools for many
3 reasons. It gives us a way to express
4 ourselves when words can't. It gives us
5 a voice when there are many. When we are
6 in despair, when we are hurt, the arts
7 are there. Music and drawing and
8 painting can help us reveal who we are.

9 I thank you for listening, and
10 I hope you will help our school get the
11 money they need so that our students can
12 succeed in school and in their careers
13 and in life.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you. Thank you.

17 MS. HOUSTON: Hello. My name
18 is Chanelle Houston. I have worked as a
19 teacher. I used to be a student,
20 graduated 2014. Arts provider, I would
21 like to think of myself as that, and
22 taxpayer I definitely am, taking money
23 out of my checks.

24 Well, from listening to
25 everybody, you know we need 105 million.

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 There is no asking. It's a definite need
3 for this \$105 million. And I don't think
4 there can be any better way of saying
5 that.

6 Coming from my arts family and
7 coming from a high school that was
8 dedicated to arts, it's amazing how it
9 brings a community together.

10 I think the most distressing
11 thing when it comes to coming back from
12 college and looking at the school system
13 as it is, it's horrible that teachers
14 have to take out huge chunks of their own
15 money and they pay for supplies that can
16 easily run over thousands of dollars, and
17 it's even harder for families, because a
18 lot of the students end up having to ask
19 their parents for money in order to buy
20 these supplies. And being an art teacher
21 part time, it's engaging for me to work
22 with both students and their parents in
23 helping kids find their voice, helping
24 them out of whatever problems they may
25 have. I myself was very depressed as a

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 young child, and if it wasn't for someone
3 reaching out and helping me start an art
4 program in my middle school when our art
5 teacher was laid off, I would have taken
6 a different path in life. I can honestly
7 say that.

8 So I will always be coming back
9 here to be speaking again on behalf of
10 actually my little brother, who is still
11 in the Philadelphia public school system,
12 because he is showing great interest in
13 art now and it's getting harder to share
14 my art supplies with him, but I know that
15 I would give whatever money that I did
16 earn in order to help provide him, and if
17 I could, I would give all my money in
18 order to help provide, but my measly
19 checks cannot even begin to make a dent
20 in this \$105 million needed.

21 So I hope that somehow money
22 will rain from the sky. But these kids
23 really need it, and coming from where
24 they are in the past -- my last three
25 years of high school, it was horrible,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 like supplies were dwindling so fast. We
3 were using reserve money, and then when
4 there was none, it was -- we couldn't
5 even put on a musical until we somehow
6 managed to get that money. So these kids
7 kind of need it. And thank you for
8 listening to me.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you very much.

12 Do we have anyone else who
13 would like to testify?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is
16 there anyone else who would like to
17 testify today?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
20 want to certainly thank everyone who has
21 testified today. It's been very
22 important and it's made a big difference
23 for the subject, and as all of you know,
24 anyone who would like to have something
25 recorded on the record who didn't speak,

1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 we're happy to take your testimony and
3 record it as though you made the
4 statements here.

5 I want to thank all my
6 colleagues who have been here. Thank
7 you, Councilwoman Sanchez, for staying
8 until the end of our hearing. And we
9 want to thank all of those who spoke for
10 their varying testimonies. We only had
11 one or two that were questioned by nearly
12 everyone here, and we are grateful for
13 that as well.

14 THE CLERK: Madam Chairwoman,
15 there are no other names on the speakers
16 comment list.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you.

19 So then we will not need our
20 hearing that will begin at 1 o'clock.
21 Therefore, this Committee will stand in
22 recess until Tuesday, June 2nd, 2015 at
23 10:00 a.m., at which time we will
24 reconvene in these Chambers, Room 400,
25 City Hall.

Committee of the Whole
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1 5/27/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Again, we thank you all very

3 much.

4 (Committee of the Whole

5 adjourned at 1:00 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
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