

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, April 30, 2024
10:12 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMEMBER NINA AHMAD
COUNCILMEMBER CINDY BASS
COUNCILMEMBER KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMEMBER MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMEMBER JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMEMBER KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMEMBER JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMEMBER CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMEMBER RUE LANDAU
COUNCILMEMBER QUETCY LOZADA
COUNCILMEMBER NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMEMBER ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMEMBER MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMEMBER ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILMEMBER JEFFERY YOUNG, JR.

BILLS 240179, 240180, 240181, and 240182
RESOLUTIONS 240193 and 181014

- - -

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Good morning, everyone.

4 (Good morning.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

6 Y'all keep forgetting I'm Baptist.

7 Good morning, everyone.

8 (Good morning.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

10 That's much better.

11 This is the public hearing and
12 public meeting of the Committee of the
13 Whole regarding Bills No. 240179, 240180,
14 240181, 240182, and Resolutions No.
15 240193 and 181014.

16 Ms. Loughead, will you please
17 call the roll to take attendance.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 Squilla.

20 (No response.)

21 THE CLERK: Councilmember
22 Gauthier.

23 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

24 Present.

25 THE CLERK: Councilmember

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2 Jones.
3 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Present.
4 THE CLERK: Councilmember
5 Young.
6 (No response.)
7 THE CLERK: Councilmember
8 Driscoll.
9 (No response.)
10 THE CLERK: Councilmember
11 Lozada.
12 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: Present.
13 THE CLERK: Councilmember Bass.
14 (No response.)
15 THE CLERK: Councilmember
16 Phillips.
17 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
18 Present.
19 THE CLERK: Councilmember
20 O'Neill.
21 (No response.)
22 THE CLERK: Councilmember
23 Gilmore Richardson.
24 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
25 Present.

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2 THE CLERK: Councilmember
3 Thomas.
4 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Present.
5 THE CLERK: Councilmember
6 Harrity.
7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
8 Present.
9 THE CLERK: Councilmember
10 Ahmad.
11 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Present.
12 THE CLERK: Councilmember
13 Landau.
14 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Present.
15 THE CLERK: Councilmember
16 Brooks.
17 (No response.)
18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 O'Rourke.
20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
21 Present.
22 THE CLERK: Council President
23 Johnson.
24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
25 Present.

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2 Thank you. A quorum of the
3 Committee is present and this hearing is
4 now called to order.

5 Ms. Loughead, will you please
6 read the title of the bills and
7 resolutions.

8 THE CLERK: Bill No. 240179, an
9 ordinance to adopt the Operating Budget
10 for Fiscal Year 2025.

11 Bill No. 240180, an ordinance
12 amending Chapter 19-1800 of The
13 Philadelphia Code, entitled "School Tax
14 Authorization," to provide for an
15 increase in the tax that the Board of
16 Education of the School District of
17 Philadelphia is authorized to impose on
18 real estate; and amending Chapter
19 19-1300, entitled "Real Estate Taxes," to
20 establish an equivalent reduction in the
21 tax rate for the City real estate tax;
22 and making technical changes; all under
23 certain terms and conditions.

24 Bill No. 240181, an ordinance
25 to adopt a Fiscal Year 2025 Capital

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2 Budget.

3 Bill No. 240182, an ordinance
4 to adopt a Capital Program for the six
5 Fiscal Years 2025 through 2030 inclusive.

6 Resolution No. 240193,
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 2025
11 through 2029, and incorporating revisions
12 with respect to Fiscal Year 2024, which
13 is to be submitted by the Mayor to the
14 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
15 Cooperation Authority pursuant to an
16 Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement
17 by and between the City and the
18 Authority.

19 Resolution No. 181014, calling
20 for the Council Committee of the Whole to
21 convene public meetings and public
22 hearings pursuant to the Educational
23 Supplement of the Philadelphia Home Rule
24 Charter to review the administration,
25 management, operations, and finances of

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2 the School District and adopt plans to
3 coordinate the activities of the Board of
4 Education, the Mayor, and the City
5 Council for the improvement and benefit
6 of public education in Philadelphia.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

8 Today we will continue the public hearing
9 of the Committee of the Whole to consider
10 the bills read by the Clerk that
11 constitute proposed operating and capital
12 spending measures for Fiscal Year 2025, a
13 Capital Program, and a forward-looking
14 Capital Plan for Fiscal Year 2025 through
15 Fiscal Year 2030.

16 Additionally, this meeting
17 meets the requirement of the Educational
18 Supplement of the Philadelphia Home Rule
19 Charter to review the administration,
20 management, operation, and finances of
21 the School District of Philadelphia on a
22 biannual basis.

23 This morning we will hear
24 testimony from the School District of
25 Philadelphia, and in the afternoon we

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2 will hear testimony from the Community
3 College of Philadelphia.

4 Ms. Loughhead, will you please
5 call the first witness to testify.

6 THE CLERK: The first person to
7 testify is the Honorable Cherelle L.
8 Parker, Mayor of Philadelphia.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
10 Good morning, Mayor Parker.

11 MAYOR PARKER: Good morning,
12 Mr. President, members of Council. Thank
13 you for having me this morning.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Welcome back.

16 MAYOR PARKER: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: At
18 this time, you don't have to state your
19 name and your title, but go ahead and
20 begin your testimony.

21 MAYOR PARKER: Thank you very
22 much.

23 Council President Johnson,
24 Majority Leader Gilmore Richardson,
25 Majority Whip Thomas, Education

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2 Chairperson Thomas, City Council, members
3 of the Board of Education, our
4 Superintendent, Dr. Tony Watlington,
5 thank you all for having me. I want to
6 thank all of the members who are present
7 today for your commitment to our
8 Philadelphia public school students.

9 For the past several years,
10 when Mayor Jim Kenney came to this body
11 for the biannual meeting, he focused on
12 the difficult and disruptive impact of
13 COVID-19 on our students, how the City,
14 the School District, and City Council
15 worked together to overcome their
16 differences and work together to respond
17 to that COVID-19 crisis.

18 Here we are, Mr. President,
19 four years later, when schools across the
20 country are still dealing with the
21 effects of COVID, as students struggle
22 academically, and truancy in a way that
23 many of us couldn't have imagined has
24 become more than a major issue. But as
25 you hear, and you will hear from the

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2 School Board and Dr. Watlington today,
3 Philadelphia's story is actually a good
4 one.

5 More students are coming to
6 school regularly. Fewer students are
7 dropping out, and student academic
8 performance, it's rising. And all of
9 this is happening, even though
10 Philadelphia is still, and I want to
11 state this for the record, underfunded by
12 \$1.4 billion.

13 Philadelphia's success is not a
14 mystery. It is the work of a very strong
15 and effective Superintendent, dedicated
16 teachers and staff, and an experienced
17 Board willing to make tough decisions.

18 It is my vision, Mr. President
19 and members of Council, that all 197,000
20 students in Philadelphia, that all of
21 them will receive a world-class education
22 regardless of their neighborhood zip code
23 or socioeconomic status, whether they are
24 in traditional district, charter or
25 alternative schools.

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2 As an aside, Mr. President,
3 I've said to you from time to time that I
4 haven't seen a Mayor who's publicly been
5 willing to say there was no one who is
6 going to get me to engage in the "us
7 versus them" fight between what some
8 people will consider traditional public
9 school advocacy versus the charter school
10 advocacy. I won't allow it, because all
11 of those students attending those
12 schools, they are our children.

13 Ultimately for me, we need
14 quality seats, better academic
15 performance from all schools if our
16 children are going to be successful and
17 to compete in this 21st century global
18 economy. My One Philly budget, it begins
19 that process, Mr. President.

20 We know that until the General
21 Assembly finally begins to meet its
22 obligation to fully fund our District in
23 which all members of this body have in
24 one way or another strongly advocated
25 for, the City will have to increase our

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2 support for the Philadelphia public
3 schools, and I ask for your support for
4 the millage rate shift that will add an
5 additional \$129 million in City funding
6 to public education over the next five
7 years.

8 And, Mr. President, you know no
9 one had to mount a campaign to tell me
10 that's what we should be proposing. When
11 I talked about this on the trail, I
12 talked about moving that millage from 55
13 to 58 percent. Then you get here on the
14 second floor of City Council -- second
15 floor of the Mayor's Office and you
16 realize how much and what it is that you
17 have to do, and that while we can't get
18 to 58 immediately and deal with the
19 plethora of other challenges, I want you
20 to know I'm not shying away from the
21 goal. I'm keeping myself laser focused
22 on the goal, but in this budget, we
23 propose increasing that millage one
24 percent.

25 I just wanted you,

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2 Mr. President and members of the Council,
3 to know that I'm cognizant of us trying
4 to get there in a very methodical,
5 intentional but fiscally responsible
6 manner.

7 This budget, Mr. President,
8 that \$129 million in City funding that we
9 proposed in that One Philly budget, it
10 continues our commitment to PHL pre-K. I
11 want to thank members of Council,
12 including Education Committee Chairperson
13 Isaiah Thomas, our state legislators,
14 including State Senator Vincent Hughes,
15 and Jerry Jordan and the PFT for their
16 focus on the poor condition of many of
17 our school buildings.

18 This collective work has
19 resulted in the creation of not one but
20 two state grant programs, new state grant
21 programs, that for the first time in ten
22 years will provide state dollars to new
23 renovation and environmental hazard
24 remediation.

25 This is an example of how the

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2 intergovernmental approach can raise up
3 an issue and spur concrete results. I
4 see Chairman Harris and Speaker McClinton
5 right now doing -- and we sat next to
6 each other when the Governor gave his
7 budget address, and we saw them rise to
8 the occasion when the Governor talked
9 about his additional investment in public
10 education. And, Mr. President and
11 members of Council, I could not have been
12 more proud to know that Hughes and
13 McClinton and Harris are on the front
14 line advocating for us in Harrisburg.

15 I want you to know that all of
16 this, this collective work, it has
17 resulted in the creation of those two
18 programs, but this is also an urgent
19 problem, and you will be hearing more
20 from me soon on how we can work together
21 to address it.

22 I know that there's some people
23 who thought, Mr. President, that although
24 I've been here for only a little over
25 100 days that I should have on day one

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2 had the solution to address and solve
3 permanently some of these challenges that
4 have seemed insurmountable and
5 intractable and they wanted a concrete
6 plan on day one to say how are you going
7 to fix what was, when I was in this body,
8 a \$5 billion cost. The last day that I
9 saw said that that dollar amount now has
10 actually even moved to \$7 billion plus to
11 rebuild and remediate our school. I know
12 some people thought I should have had
13 \$7 billion in hand to figure out how to
14 do it, but unfortunately that's not the
15 reality when you get to the second floor.
16 You realize that we need everybody in
17 order to make it happen. And,
18 Mr. President, the first sign of it was
19 to introduce a budget that included more
20 revenue.

21 In addition to that, I want to
22 note this: We need a school facilities
23 plan, and I'm committing to you,
24 Mr. President. I'm committing to you,
25 Mr. Chairman. I'm committing to all of

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2 the members of Council that we will have
3 a concrete facilities plan as Mayor of
4 this city working in partnership with our
5 Superintendent, this legislative body,
6 our School Board, the Pennsylvania
7 General Assembly, our federal delegation.
8 And, Mr. President, I'm going to try to
9 do something that we haven't, I don't
10 think, done as well as we should in the
11 City of Philadelphia. We have not worked
12 in a collaborative way to tap the
13 philanthropic organizations that are in
14 our city to say, we need you to all come
15 together and figure out how do we row in
16 the same direction and work to attack a
17 problem that is a win-win for all of us.

18 That's, Mr. President, very
19 humbling, what I'm going to attempt to do
20 as Mayor of this city.

21 We can't do that without a
22 Superintendent who's willing to think
23 outside the box. He can't say that we
24 have to sharpen the pencils the same way
25 we've been sharpening them over the years

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2 and us expecting that we're going to get
3 a different outcome.

4 I'm proud of Superintendent
5 Watlington, Mr. President and members of
6 Council. He has my wholehearted support,
7 and I want to do everything that I can to
8 give him the leeway, not micromanage the
9 District, not think that I am the expert
10 educational manager, because with all due
11 respect, that is not what I do. But I do
12 want to make sure that we give every
13 support and resource that is necessary
14 for Superintendent Watlington to be
15 successful and to present innovative
16 ideas and figure out solutions to
17 seemingly intractable, longstanding
18 problems in the School District of
19 Philadelphia.

20 Next, the Board, Mr. President.
21 Having a strong Board of Education, it is
22 absolutely vital as we move to implement
23 this vision. The Board must have the
24 skills to lead, the wisdom to make good
25 choices and to follow the law, and a

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2 100 percent commitment to the children
3 and families the District serves.

4 Our incoming School Board has
5 five new members, a majority who will
6 bring new ideas and new skills, but to be
7 successful, the Board must balance change
8 with continuity and new skills with
9 experience.

10 The nine members,
11 Mr. President, that I selected to serve
12 on the School Board and that you with
13 eight of them have confirmed, I want you
14 to know that in my mind, Mr. President,
15 they form the best team from the 27 names
16 that was sent to me by the Education
17 Nominating Panel, Mr. President. I
18 didn't usurp a process. I didn't try to
19 do something other than what the law
20 requests that the Mayor does. I put a
21 diverse panel together, more diverse than
22 any panel that's ever been put together
23 in this city, to show that traditional
24 public and charter advocates will be a
25 part of choosing who would be considered

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2 as a nominee. And, Mr. President, when
3 that nominating panel, led by Otis
4 Bullock, did its job and sent me those 27
5 names, Mr. President, I did the best that
6 I could to ensure that I was sending the
7 nine that reflected my vision.

8 There are some people, Mr.
9 President, who, especially after what
10 occurred yesterday, that are going to do
11 everything in their power to get that or
12 fuel, fuel that "us versus them"
13 narrative, the same way that they would
14 attempt to do between traditional publics
15 and charter schools.

16 Are we always going to agree
17 absolutely on everything? No, we're not,
18 Mr. President. But I want the record to
19 reflect that I've been a part of this
20 building in some way, shape or form since
21 1990 when I was 17 years old. I respect
22 this institution. I respect the body.
23 There is no one person or individual
24 that's bigger than this institution.

25 I followed the rules. I

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2 respect you, Mr. President, and I've said
3 to you publicly and I want to say it to
4 you now in front of this body that you
5 lead. I understand that the Parker
6 Administration's agenda, it can be
7 torpedoed, Mr. President, by your
8 leadership. I know what happens, and
9 I've lived it and I've seen what happens
10 when a Council President and the Mayor
11 decide that they're going to be oil and
12 water. And guess what? I see it in
13 neighborhoods where we move across the
14 City. Where the politics and the
15 politicians have worked extremely hard
16 and together, you see advancement, you
17 see stabilization and houses. Quite
18 frankly, you see great investments in the
19 neighborhood public schools, in the
20 commercial corridors.

21 In areas, Mr. President, where
22 the politics haven't worked so well
23 because of that oil and water, you can
24 see the results of that.

25 Members of Council who are here

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2 today, I respect each and every one of
3 you. We may not always agree, but there
4 is no one, Mr. President, who can tell
5 you that they don't respect this
6 legislative body or that one that's a
7 couple miles away.

8 I've been one of 17 and I've
9 been one of 203, and I know what it's
10 like to be a part of a team. But I'm in
11 a different place now, Mr. President.
12 I'm seeing things through a different
13 lens that I've never saw before. It's
14 new to me, Mr. President. I'm never the
15 smartest person in the room. I don't
16 know everything, Mr. President. We've
17 got to work together. But I want you and
18 the people of this city to know that I'm
19 doing the best I can with what little I
20 have to make good on my promise to make
21 Philadelphia the safest, cleanest,
22 greenest big city in the nation, with
23 access to economic opportunity for all,
24 and take a government to the people that
25 they can see, touch, and feel their tax

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2 dollars at work.

3 Mr. President, I thank you so
4 much for the time that you've given me
5 today, sir, to share my perspectives.

6 To members of Council, my hope
7 is to each of you, we have so much work
8 to do, so much work to do. The press is
9 going to fuel it. People are going to
10 post it. They're going to do everything
11 they can to talk about when you trump,
12 when you trump, when you win, when you
13 win. Let's make sure that the people
14 win.

15 We can agree to disagree and
16 we'll have some fights, but don't let
17 that be the north star that determines
18 how we move the City of Philadelphia. I
19 can't do it without you, and you can't do
20 it without me. We're interdependent on
21 each other in order to move Philadelphia
22 forward.

23 And, Mr. President, if I seem a
24 little bit more passionate today than I
25 normally am, I only got a couple hours

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2 last night. Y'all know what that means.
3 A half an hour here, wake up, half an
4 hour there, wake up. You want me to tell
5 you why? Because the phone, the calls,
6 the posts, everybody trying to find a way
7 to benefit from driving a wedge between
8 this President, this leadership, this
9 Council, and this Administration either,
10 A, because they make money on us being
11 divided, and I can give you a list of
12 them who get extremely wealthy when we
13 don't agree, and/or they just want to see
14 a fight, Mr. President.

15 I don't want a fight. I want
16 to get things done. I want partners. I
17 need you. Okay? And I just want to be
18 clear about it.

19 Now, Mr. President, don't laugh
20 at me. Am I supposed to sit for
21 questions or do I leave? Because I
22 forgot.

23 I have your permission,
24 Mr. President?

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

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2 Yes, you have my permission.

3 MAYOR PARKER: Members of
4 Council, thank you so much for your time
5 today.

6 - - -

7 (Applause.)

8 - - -

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
10 Will the Clerk please call the next
11 person for public testimony.

12 THE CLERK: The next person to
13 testify is Reginald Streater, School
14 Board President.

15 (Witness approached witness
16 table.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Chairman Streater, good morning.

19 PRESIDENT STREATER: Good
20 morning. Good morning, Council
21 President, and thank you, Mayor Parker
22 Administration, Council President,
23 Majority Leader Gilmore Richardson,
24 Minority Leader Kendra Brooks, Chair of
25 the Education Committee, Isaiah Thomas,

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2 and all members of the City Council for
3 hosting the Board of Education,
4 Mr. President, the School District of
5 Philadelphia, Dr. Watlington and his
6 cabinet, and myself today.

7 We are here to discuss our
8 progress in the FY25 budget. I am joined
9 by my esteemed colleagues, and this will
10 be, some of them, their last act as Board
11 members, this being the last day of their
12 terms, current Board members Danzy,
13 Egea-Hinton, Salley, Thompson, and
14 Wilkerson. These volunteers are staunch
15 advocates for public education,
16 consistently championing a
17 student-centered approach. Their
18 dedication reminds us of our core mission
19 to educate the whole child.

20 I am deeply grateful for their
21 sacrifices and I -- all made in the
22 pursuit of better futures for our
23 children.

24 Mr. President, City Council,
25 before I proceed, I'd like to acknowledge

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2 our key partners in public education
3 within the School District of
4 Philadelphia and this Board. Our unions,
5 CASA, the PFT, Unite 64 -- 634, excuse
6 me, and 32BJ SEIU have been instrumental
7 and remain key.

8 Additional thanks go out to
9 Education Law Center, Children First,
10 Public Law Center, and many others who
11 advocate tirelessly for public education
12 in our city.

13 I would like to use my brief
14 time today to discuss three key topics,
15 including, one, reflecting on the first
16 six years of local control; two, the
17 Board's goals and guardrails; and, three,
18 the path forward.

19 In reflecting, this Board is
20 proud of the momentum we built over the
21 last six years towards becoming the
22 fastest improving large urban school
23 district in the nation. The Council of
24 the Great City Schools, by way of Dr. Ray
25 Hart, has remarked positively on our

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2 achievement, stating that the Board's
3 approach to governance, I quote,
4 "exemplifies the commitment and
5 innovation necessary to transform
6 educational landscapes, and this focused
7 approach not only enhances accountability
8 and transparency, but also sharpens the
9 District's efforts to elevate student
10 achievement and well-being, serving as a
11 model of governance that ensures
12 educational equity and excellence for all
13 students."

14 Indeed, we as a city have
15 received national recognition for the
16 work that the Board -- this Board has
17 done. We all know that educating the
18 whole child improves social and economic
19 conditions, reducing unemployment,
20 decreasing public assistance dependency,
21 and increasing tax revenues.

22 Since regaining local control
23 in 2018, our focus on student learning
24 has empowered our Superintendent and
25 District to prioritize and measure

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2 achievement effectively. Our engagement
3 with the community and insights from our
4 successful school boards -- of other
5 successful school boards informed our
6 vision for public education in
7 Philadelphia. We've embraced a
8 governance model centered on student
9 needs, setting clear expectations,
10 monitoring progress, and tailoring
11 budgets and policies to support our
12 students.

13 I would like to raise five
14 buckets of work this Board has
15 prioritized since local control was
16 returned to the School District.

17 First, this Board established a
18 committee structure in addition to its
19 monthly action meetings. To date, the
20 Board has held more than 70 committee
21 meetings and currently have standing
22 committees focused on Board policy and
23 our goals and guardrails.

24 Second, we have substantially
25 increased our coordination with the City,

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2 including during the pandemic and our
3 shared coordinated response to gun
4 violence.

5 Three, the District's credit
6 position and bond rating has continued to
7 improve, including receiving
8 investment-grade ratings for the first
9 time since 1977, which Moody's credited
10 to, one, annual development of five-year
11 financial plans and, two, strong District
12 leadership and governance, including the
13 return to local control.

14 Fourth, the Board has adopted
15 or revised more than 130 policies and
16 resolutions, which give clear direction
17 to the Superintendent and their
18 administration. These include
19 streamlined charter school sector
20 policies, a policy on business diversity
21 and the procurement of materials and
22 contracted services, a resolution on
23 welcoming schools to ensure students'
24 learning environments are not disrupted
25 by immigration enforcement actions, all

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2 Board governing bylaws to codify local
3 control and Board policy.

4 Fifth and finally, the Board
5 has implemented new robust Board
6 representative and Parent and Community
7 Advisory Council initiatives, which
8 further ensure the Board is engaged with
9 the various constituencies we serve every
10 day.

11 While many are familiar with
12 our adopted goals and guardrails, I want
13 to take the opportunity to briefly raise
14 them up again on the record.

15 As you can see on the screen,
16 we have three academic goals for the
17 District centered around reading, math,
18 and college and career. We also have
19 four conditions that must exist in every
20 school for us to be able to achieve these
21 academic goals. We call these the
22 guardrails, and they include, one,
23 welcoming and supportive schools; two,
24 enriching and well-rounded school
25 experiences; three, partnering with the

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2 parents and family members; and, four,
3 addressing racist practices.

4 Today and in other venues, you
5 often hear this Board talk about our
6 student-centered approach. These goals
7 and guardrails are fundamentally at the
8 core of this approach. We focus on these
9 seven things. Our decisions are
10 nationally in the best interest of
11 students.

12 Mr. President, these goals and
13 guardrails were adopted by the Board in
14 December 2020, and then guided the
15 nationwide search for Superintendent
16 Watlington as well as his transition and
17 entry plan.

18 Today, Dr. Watlington is
19 executing on these goals and guardrails
20 through the District's Accelerate Philly
21 strategic plan, which the proposed FY25
22 budget actually supports. It focuses on
23 protecting schools' budgets, engaging
24 partners, negotiating labor agreements,
25 implementing the strategic plans, and

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 advocate for fiscal responsibility.

3 Accelerate Philly also focuses

4 on such things as a year-round school

5 pilot, investing in safe paths, and

6 completing a facilities master plan. And

7 on that last point, we take the issues of

8 facilities seriously, and we have worked

9 to respond to Council's concern. We know

10 this is a high-priority issue that will

11 further be addressed with

12 Dr. Watlington's remarks later this

13 morning.

14 We, the collective Board, have

15 achieved significant milestones of

16 student-centered governance, and we look

17 forward to the new Board doubling down on

18 the student-centered focus. We believe

19 that the work of this current Board

20 represents a collective effort and sets a

21 strong foundation.

22 Mr. President, however, these

23 accomplishments are not ours alone.

24 We've strengthened our partnerships to

25 enhance education and promote

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 intergovernmental cooperation. In
3 collaboration, Comcast provided tablets
4 for all students, and the Neubauer
5 Foundation supported our Ninth Grade
6 Academy initiatives. Collaborating with
7 Dr. Waller, Reverend Dr. Waller and Enon
8 Tabernacle, we facilitated the relocation
9 of Building 21 students to Martin Luther
10 King Jr. due to some issues at the
11 school.

12 Additionally, we partnered with
13 Councilmember Gauthier and the previous
14 mayoral administration to agree on an MOU
15 that is poised to transform Sayre pool
16 into a public space with services for the
17 community and the District. Indeed, the
18 District and Board are primed for the
19 intergovernmental approach our Mayor has
20 called for.

21 In closing, I would like to
22 take a moment to discuss and preview a
23 path forward. First and foremost, we
24 need to continue to support
25 Dr. Watlington's leadership and his

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 implementation of the Accelerate Philly
3 strategic plan. This includes teacher
4 retention strategies this Board has
5 brought to Council's attention in the
6 past, included but not limited to,
7 subsidized teaching housing and parking
8 for teachers around schools where there
9 isn't access to parking.

10 Our path forward also calls for
11 continued advocacy for equitable and
12 adequate funding. To achieve this, the
13 Board commits to intentional and
14 sustained engagement with local and state
15 legislators, as evidenced by monthly
16 meetings with City Council, monthly
17 meetings with the Governor's Office, and
18 at least biannual visits to Harrisburg,
19 but also includes new approaches such as
20 exploring new federal funding through
21 Medicare coverage of student supports.

22 And, finally, we will continue
23 to build on our partnerships with the
24 charter school sector and see to increase
25 our touch points with these schools,

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 their leaders and their boards, and the
3 families that they support.

4 Over the last few years, the
5 Charter Schools Office and its leadership
6 has developed robust feedback periods to
7 enhance two-way communication. We will
8 continue to work closely with our City
9 charters to help them be successful while
10 respecting their independence.

11 And, finally, as I conclude,
12 the Board thanks this legislative body
13 for its steadfast support. We look
14 forward to today's discussion on
15 collaboratively improving educational
16 outcomes for our students. We are
17 confident that our efforts have
18 positioned the incoming Board to further
19 advance our goals. The District now
20 enjoys greater stability, has responsibly
21 managed public funds, is nationally
22 recognized for various achievements, and
23 is making progress in academic
24 performance. This sets the stage for the
25 next Board to build upon our momentum and

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 fulfill Mayor Parker's vision on
3 providing a world-class education for
4 students of all ages and backgrounds
5 regardless of their school.

6 Thank you, and we remain your
7 partners.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
9 Thank you.

10 The Chair calls up
11 Dr. Watlington, Superintendent of the
12 School District of Philadelphia.

13 (Witness approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: How
16 you doing, Dr. Watlington?

17 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'm
18 doing well. Good morning, Mr. President.
19 How are you?

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I'm
21 doing good. Always good to see you.

22 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
23 Likewise.

24 President Johnson, Majority
25 Leader Richardson, and Whip Thomas and

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Chair of the Education Committee Thomas,
3 good morning.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Good morning.

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 It's a pleasure to be with you this
8 morning.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I
10 just want to start off by just thanking
11 you for your refreshing and renewed
12 approach in terms of how we educate our
13 young people here in the City of
14 Philadelphia and just giving a chance to
15 work with you within that capacity and
16 beyond that capacity in terms of being
17 out in the community.

18 And so with that being said,
19 you can start your testimony.

20 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

21 Thank you, sir. It's a pleasure to serve
22 in the great City of Philadelphia.

23 Again, good morning,
24 Mr. President, Majority Leader Gilmore
25 Richardson, Whip Thomas, and all members

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 of Council. Good to see you this
3 morning.

4 This morning I'd like to give
5 you an update on our academic recovery,
6 the state of the District, an overview of
7 the Fiscal Year '25 budget overview, a
8 facilities update, and I'll share a
9 couple of other updates relative to
10 school selection, as well as our
11 positions in staffing as we prepare for
12 the upcoming school year, and then we'll
13 conclude with next steps.

14 I want to begin by talking
15 about our core business, academic
16 recovery, how are we doing, how are the
17 children with regard to academic
18 achievement, which is our core business.
19 Additionally, we should always ask how
20 our students are doing academically,
21 because we want our funders to know what
22 kind of return on investment you're
23 getting for the resources that you are
24 investing in the School District of
25 Philadelphia.

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2 I'll begin by sharing this
3 headline that appeared on February 9th in
4 the Philadelphia Inquirer, which reads
5 "Philly schools tops in big city U.S.
6 districts in academic recovery:
7 takeaways from the school board meeting.
8 Measured against other large, poor urban
9 districts, Philadelphia approached its
10 pre-pandemic math achievement faster than
11 any other city's schools."

12 I do want to frame for you,
13 Mr. Chairman -- Mr. President, a study
14 Harvard and Stanford researchers did, the
15 first -- completed the first study since
16 schools were closed across the United
17 States in March of 2023, March the 13th
18 to be exact, in North Carolina. I
19 remember it just like it was yesterday.
20 And they wanted to ask this question:
21 Since schools were closed for such an
22 unprecedented amount of time in American
23 history, how are our children doing in
24 terms of reading and math?

25 They completed a study that

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 included 30 states and 60 percent of the
3 entire public school population in the
4 United States. That's inclusive of
5 traditional public schools, charter
6 schools, which are public schools as
7 well, 60 percent of the population.

8 They look specifically at 3rd
9 through 8th grade math and 3rd through
10 8th grade reading. Now, when we look at
11 what's called the NAEP TUDA districts,
12 there are 26 large urban school districts
13 in the United States that take the NAEP
14 TUDA district -- the NAEP TUDA test, the
15 NAEP test, which is administered to 4th
16 graders and 8th graders every two years,
17 and the researchers wanted to compare
18 when we look at 2019 NAEP testing
19 compared to 2023 individual state tests,
20 including our PSSA test here in
21 Pennsylvania, which districts are
22 rebounding the faster.

23 Among the NAEP TUDA districts,
24 there are 26 of them across the country,
25 in order to be in the study you had to

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 meet two criteria. Number one, the
3 districts must have tested at least
4 95 percent of their students, and, number
5 two, the districts could not have changed
6 their test between 2019 and 2023.

7 The study revealed that among
8 the NAEP TUDA districts and the large
9 urban districts overall, the School
10 District of Philadelphia had the best,
11 fastest-improving rebound performance in
12 3rd through 8th grade math. No. 2 in the
13 study was the Los Angeles Unified School
14 District and No. 3 was in Guilford
15 County, North Carolina, followed by San
16 Diego and Chicago.

17 Even when you don't include the
18 NAEP TUDA districts and you look at the
19 50 largest school districts in the
20 country regardless of the level of
21 poverty, the School District of
22 Philadelphia still finishes the top
23 three, along with Chicago and LA and Wake
24 County, North Carolina, but No. 1 in
25 terms of post-pandemic recovery in 3rd

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 through 8th grade math.

3 When we look at reading scores
4 in grades 3 through 8, the District
5 nationally among the large NAEP TUDA
6 districts that had the best rebound
7 performance was the Chicago Public
8 Schools, and the School District of
9 Philadelphia was No. 2 in the country
10 with regard to rebound performance in 3rd
11 through 8th grade reading.

12 Unlike the math where no
13 district got to the point of exceeding
14 their 2019 performance, you'll see that
15 in 3rd through 8th grade reading, both
16 Chicago Public Schools and the School
17 District of Philadelphia made
18 improvements not just in rebound, tops
19 and rebounds, but also made some
20 significant growth.

21 Let me be really clear. We do
22 not suggest that somehow we ought to ring
23 the bell and say that we have delivered
24 on our expectations. We're saying that
25 we improved faster than our peer

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 districts. We're saying that we have a
3 lot of work to do, and we are going to be
4 innovative, we're going to dig in, and
5 we're going to do the work, because we
6 know our children in Philadelphia are
7 smart and they can demonstrate their
8 intelligence just like everybody else.

9 For the people who say, well,
10 you know, Superintendent Watlington, what
11 do you say to the people who say, well,
12 the scores are still too low? I say I
13 absolutely agree. But the other side of
14 that nickel is, we have to say let's
15 commend our students, our teachers, our
16 principals, our school staff for making
17 progress, because success begets more
18 success.

19 I want to now provide,
20 Mr. President, an overview of the Fiscal
21 Year 2025 budget overview, and I want to
22 begin with our budget priorities that
23 we've established and shared with the
24 Board of Education for their approval.

25 The Fiscal Year '25 budget has

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 five priorities. Number one, we've been
3 very careful to protect school budgets.
4 Since the pandemic hit in March of 2023,
5 the U.S. Congress appropriated ARPA
6 dollars, American Rescue Plan Act
7 dollars, that were sent out to all of the
8 14,000-plus public school districts
9 across the country. In the School
10 District of Philadelphia, we received a
11 total of \$1.2 billion since March of
12 2020. All of those dollars,
13 Mr. President, will sunset in September
14 of this year.

15 That fact notwithstanding,
16 we've budgeted in a way that we will not
17 make cuts to key school positions this
18 year. In fact, we're holding the line.
19 In a few areas we'll actually increase
20 our staffing to meet the needs of our
21 students.

22 I want to thank our Chief
23 Financial Officer and the Board for good
24 budgeting processes that allows us not to
25 cut back on services or positions in the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 upcoming year, subject to how we're
3 funded with the Mayor's budget and the
4 Governor's budget.

5 Priority No. 2 has been to
6 engage partners throughout the City. You
7 may have noticed this year that the
8 runway was longer in terms of how we
9 began to build a budget and the
10 Superintendent and Board talked to our
11 community. The Board of Education asked
12 me upon becoming Superintendent to ensure
13 that we had a longer budget development
14 process so that we could be more
15 transparent, both with our funders, City
16 Council, certainly with the Mayor's
17 Office, with our parents, our students,
18 principals, our school staffs, and our
19 community.

20 So we've held over 50
21 engagement sessions getting feedback on
22 the budget. We've given our state coders
23 an opportunity to complete a survey to
24 tell us what they think about our
25 budgeting priorities. In fact,

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2 68 percent of the people who completed
3 those surveys indicated that they
4 strongly felt that we ought to end the
5 process of leveling, and that's feedback
6 that we've heard both from Council as
7 well as from our stakeholders who
8 participated in the budget development
9 process, and I'm glad that we were able
10 to hear the voices of all of you.

11 Priority 3 is to negotiate
12 mutually benefit labor agreements. Two
13 key labor agreements that will be up for
14 renewal this year, the Philadelphia
15 Federation of Teacher and the
16 Commonwealth Association of School
17 Administrators. So we look forward to
18 working with President Jerry Jordan up
19 until the date that he retires and Art
20 Steinberg, President Steinberg, after
21 that, as well as Dr. Robin Cooper and
22 with the CASA union negotiation.

23 Priority 4, Mr. President,
24 involves really driving faster
25 improvement under the strategic plan

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 entitled Accelerate Philly. Accelerate
3 Philly is designed to identify specific
4 strategies, research-based,
5 evidence-based strategies, that we know
6 if we push really hard and we deliver
7 well, that we will continue to move
8 closer to accomplishing the Board's goals
9 and guardrails.

10 And area 5, priority 5, is to
11 enact some fiscally responsibility
12 measures and while we advocate for
13 additional funding to prevent a
14 structural deficit.

15 I'm going to talk a little bit
16 later about some of the specific fiscal
17 responsibility measures we've taken to
18 tighten our belt, to invest in modified
19 zero-based budgeting, and to commit to
20 stop funding things that we believe we
21 don't have data that says that work, to
22 de-fund things that don't work or that
23 don't drive improved outcomes.

24 So those are a quick overview
25 of the five priorities for this budget.

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2 On this slide, Mr. President,
3 Councilmembers, I want to share an
4 overview of Accelerate Philly, our five
5 key priority areas in the strategic plan,
6 and I'd like to tell you a couple of high
7 priority strategies that we will be
8 investing resources in in Fiscal Year
9 2024-2025.

10 Our first priority area is
11 improve safety and well-being. It's no
12 secret this is our number one priority in
13 the School District, more important than
14 any other priority in terms of our
15 foundation to drive on. And when we
16 think about improving safety, we're
17 talking about three areas - physical
18 safety, social and emotional safety, as
19 well as environmental safety. So in this
20 budget, we will focus intently on
21 facility improvements and facility
22 upgrades as well as school safety,
23 including physical, social and emotional,
24 and environmental.

25 And priority area 2, we want to

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2 partner with -- we want to drive faster
3 improvement in partnering with our
4 families and communities. We believe our
5 families and caregivers are our
6 children's first teachers, and we know
7 that we need to work with our parents and
8 caregivers as equal -- not just partners
9 but as equal partners in this work.

10 Two major priorities in the
11 upcoming year that we will drive faster
12 improvement on because of our
13 investments, number one is Let's Talk
14 two-way communications tool. Under the
15 leadership of Chief of Communications and
16 Customer Service, Alex Coppadge, we've
17 piloted this tool in the Superintendent's
18 Office this school year. It allows us to
19 know, one, is every phone call and e-mail
20 returned in a timely manner.

21 Number two, it gives our
22 constituents an opportunity to give us a
23 feedback score on our professionalism,
24 our responsiveness on a scale from zero
25 to ten, with ten being the highest. And

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2 we're going to roll that out and we're
3 going to move that to more offices and
4 into schools. We had a chance to speak
5 with our Principals Advisory Committee
6 about this yesterday.

7 And, number two, in the
8 upcoming year, we are going to move
9 forward with our plans to relaunch Parent
10 University, which we've heard from a
11 number of parents and caregivers across
12 the City during the listening and
13 learning tour that they felt was very,
14 very helpful, because we not only focus
15 on helping our children but we also focus
16 on connecting with their parents and
17 providing supports and resources to
18 parents and caregivers.

19 And priority area 3, accelerate
20 academic achievement, which is our core
21 business. Last year we purchased a
22 standardized best-in-class math
23 curriculum called Illustrative Math. Our
24 kids in Philadelphia are now using the
25 same math curriculum that many of the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 children in Singapore use. As you well
3 know, Singapore is one of those countries
4 that has some of the highest math
5 performance in the country.

6 Outside of having a highly
7 qualified, well supported, stable teacher
8 and a highly qualified, well supported,
9 stable principal over time, the best
10 thing that we can invest in to improve
11 student achievement is what our kids
12 learn in the classroom.

13 If I didn't hear or learn
14 anything else from my mentor,
15 Dr. Constance E. Clayton, it was that the
16 curriculum is key. It must be
17 standardized among all schools in
18 Philadelphia, and we've got to make sure
19 our kids have access to high quality,
20 rigorous, grade-level instruction, and we
21 can't leave teachers to having to surf
22 the internet and Pinterest and other
23 places to find the materials to read in
24 an age where we don't use traditional
25 textbooks anymore.

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2 Secondly, we're focusing on
3 career and technical education job
4 training and partnerships. That includes
5 some traditional CTE areas as well as
6 some new areas that we know that will be
7 important based on where the economy is
8 going over the next 20 to 30 years in the
9 Philadelphia region.

10 Third, we are going to move on
11 the Mayor's priority regulated to
12 extended-year/year-round schools. In the
13 upcoming year, we are really going to
14 beef up the out-of-school time from the
15 end of the school day until 6:00 or 7:00
16 p.m. to make sure that what we are
17 providing for our children complements
18 what they're learning in the classroom.
19 We're going to do this in a very
20 intentional manner. And over time we
21 will move forward with a set number of
22 schools where we will have a pilot, some
23 pilots, for an extended day and extended
24 year. The purpose of that is to ensure
25 that our kids don't experience that

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2 summer slide, and also we want to give --
3 some children just need more time.

4 It's no secret that the
5 traditional calendar school year in the
6 United States is 180 days. There's
7 some -- there are children in Japan that
8 go to school 240 days. I'm aware that in
9 some parts of France kids go to school
10 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and
11 they're not in school on Wednesday.

12 We know that some kids -- a lot
13 of our kids, we've got to eliminate the
14 summer slide and we've got to provide
15 more time to master the grade-level
16 standards, but we want to do this in a
17 way according to this notion: Nothing
18 for us without us, Mr. President.

19 So we want to be partners with
20 our parents to explain this, to take our
21 time to talk about it, to be deliberate
22 about building buy-in so that families
23 and communities and schools don't feel
24 like this is something that's done to
25 them but with them. And we will

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2 prioritize high-impact tutoring where we
3 bring trained adults into the classroom
4 with our teachers during the school day.

5 In priority area 4, we will
6 focus on recruiting and retaining diverse
7 and highly effective educators. We've
8 named a strategy in our strategic plan,
9 and it's the right thing to do, that we
10 will recruit and retain more Black and
11 Latino male educators, because we know
12 that representation matters. We know
13 that talent is equally distributed in the
14 population, and we believe that our
15 school staffs ought to reflect our
16 student bodies. And so we're committed
17 to that, as well as recruitment and
18 retention of more teachers and principals
19 across the board.

20 Across the United States,
21 Mr. President, the research is telling us
22 that there's a 50 percent decline in
23 individuals who are choosing to become a
24 teacher or to go to a public or a private
25 university to get a teaching license.

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2 The statistics are even more startling in
3 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Over
4 the past eight to ten years, there's been
5 a 71 percent decline in the number of
6 individuals who are graduating from our
7 public and private universities in the
8 Commonwealth.

9 And so we're so excited when we
10 see initiatives like Senator Vincent
11 Hughes championing this notion that we
12 ought to pay our student teachers. We're
13 so pleased that the Commonwealth of
14 Pennsylvania is beginning to relax the
15 rules and say that if you teach in
16 another state, we'll honor that
17 reciprocity.

18 I can tell you for the past two
19 decades in the state in the South where I
20 worked, if you were a teacher of record
21 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we
22 cleared out all the red tape. You come
23 straight to North Carolina, we will hire
24 you within 48 hours. As long as you've
25 got a clean criminal record, come on

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2 down.

3 That wasn't the case in
4 Pennsylvania for many years, so we're
5 having to play some catchup, and we
6 compliment our legislators and the
7 Governor for the work to begin to offer
8 more reciprocity to teachers in other
9 states.

10 In priority area 5 -- and the
11 reason why teachers are so important,
12 more than tutoring, more than technology
13 investments, more than class size
14 reduction, more than anything else we can
15 spend money on in the School District of
16 Philadelphia, the number one thing that
17 matters the most if we want kids to grow
18 academically is a highly qualified, well
19 supported, and stable teacher over time
20 in a school. So when you get a really
21 high poverty school where there's this in
22 and out turnover of teachers, it's really
23 difficult to get some significant
24 traction. So we have to find ways, as
25 the Mayor said, to be innovative to get

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 those highly qualified, stable, well
3 supported teachers to stay in a school,
4 and we'll be talking with the Board about
5 some incentive models in that regard.

6 In priority area 5, deliver
7 efficient, high quality, and
8 cost-effective operations. We want to be
9 good stewards of federal, state, and
10 local tax dollars. This Board of
11 Education has been, I would say,
12 excellent stewards of those tax dollars.
13 And so one of the things we're driving on
14 is not only has the Board of Education
15 set up a very robust evaluation for the
16 Superintendent that is largely driven on
17 are our children getting better
18 academically relative to the goals and
19 guardrails, and rightfully so, we are in
20 the District, we're developing a Central
21 Office performance evaluation system that
22 will apply to the entire School District
23 staff, and we're also developing a
24 project management culture so that we can
25 execute really well on a number of

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2 priorities.

3 I do want to take a moment
4 since safety and well-being of our
5 students and staff is our number one
6 priority, Mr. President, I did want to
7 just note four key areas that we're
8 investing resources in specifically to
9 school safety.

10 We're installing new weapons
11 detection technology. We're continuing
12 the safe paths programs. As you recall,
13 former Chief of Safety, Kevin Bethel, now
14 Commissioner Bethel, led that work that
15 resulted in an increase from seven safe
16 path programs to well over 20. Our Chief
17 of School Safety, current Chief of School
18 Safety, Craig Johnson, is here with us
19 today, and he's continuing that work, and
20 he continues to work very closely with
21 Commissioner Bethel. I don't think a day
22 goes by that they are not in
23 communication with each other.

24 We are also installing new
25 security cameras, 150 across the School

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2 District, and we're expanding youth
3 violence reduction initiatives and
4 investing in how we help our children
5 develop better relationships such that if
6 they see something, they're more likely
7 to say something.

8 It's not just about the
9 hardware, police officers, and equipment,
10 although those are really, really
11 important. We've got to build those
12 relationships as well so that our
13 children feel comfortable talking to
14 somebody.

15 At this time, I'd like to
16 provide an overview of the 2025 lump sum
17 budget. Councilmembers, you've seen this
18 slide as we've done individual meetings.
19 You'll notice that it's the five-year
20 overview from 2025 to 2029. The dark
21 blue bar represents revenues and -- our
22 revenues. The lighter blue bar
23 represents expenditures. You can notice
24 that as we go over the next five years,
25 expenditures begin to outpace revenues

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2 effective in Fiscal Year '25.

3 The green line shows our annual
4 surplus, our deficit. You can see that
5 line going below the baseline after next
6 year as we approach next year, and you
7 can see that the orange line shows our
8 fund balance, which is solvent for this
9 year and next year, and then after the
10 following year, you'll see we have
11 depleted our fund balance.

12 What this says to us is that
13 it's really, really important that in
14 Fiscal Year '25 that legislators in
15 Harrisburg fund the Governor's proposal.
16 It will result in \$247 million for the
17 School District of Philadelphia. And if
18 and when the City Council, Mr. President,
19 funds the Mayor's proposed budget, it
20 will result in a record \$129 million in
21 new dollars for the School District of
22 Philadelphia. And so the trend suggests
23 that it's really important that the
24 funding be addressed.

25 I do want to note,

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2 Mr. President, that we are not here with
3 hands out just saying give us more money,
4 pour money into things that don't
5 return -- where there's no return on
6 investment. We are laser focused on
7 having a return on investment for every
8 dollar that you invest in the School
9 District.

10 This is a good point to note,
11 that we made improvements in 13 out of 17
12 tested areas last year. Teacher
13 attendance is up. Student attendance
14 rates are up. The four-year cohort
15 dropout -- the four-year cohort
16 graduation rate is up, and our dropout
17 rate is down.

18 This year we have more than
19 reduced -- on average, we have some 4,000
20 children that drop out of school
21 typically in a year in Philadelphia.
22 That number has been cut by 1,200
23 students this year. I want to implore
24 upon the Council, we are getting a return
25 on investment for the dollars that you're

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2 investing in the School District, and we
3 will get better.

4 These are the fiscal
5 responsibilities measures, Mr. President
6 and members of Council, that we're
7 taking, and I'll invite you to watch to
8 follow me in a clockwise pattern starting
9 with Item No. 1.

10 One of the things that we are
11 doing to be the best stewards possible of
12 tax dollars is, we're seeking private and
13 foundation funding. I heard Mayor Parker
14 talk about that being a priority in the
15 School District. So we're glad to be in
16 the early stage of some of this work.

17 We're working very closely
18 under the leadership of President Kathryn
19 Epps Roberson, President of the Fund for
20 the School District of Philadelphia, to
21 seek private and foundation funding to
22 help drive some of the key areas of
23 Accelerate Philly.

24 The Fund for the School
25 District of Philadelphia has pledged to

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2 raise some \$40 million. To date, the
3 Fund has raised -- since Accelerate
4 Philly launched last school year, the
5 Fund has already raised some \$5 to
6 \$6 million already, and we thank them for
7 that.

8 Number two, we have begun
9 data-driven program evaluations. Our
10 Chief of Evaluation, Research and
11 Accountability, Dr. Tonya Welford, is
12 with us today, and through that office,
13 we're taking a hard look at everything in
14 the District to determine what are the
15 things that we have data that say work
16 and what are the things that we have --
17 where the data just doesn't show an
18 appreciable improvement. We're taking a
19 hard look at everything.

20 For example, with the
21 curriculum, we believe that having
22 various curricula across schools, as
23 Dr. Clayton advised me and counseled me
24 on, would not drive the kind of
25 improvement that we need in the School

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2 District. So at no cost to the City
3 Council or the state, we used federal
4 dollars. We sunsetted what we're
5 spending on other curricula and we
6 invested in a state-of-the-art,
7 best-in-class math curriculum last year
8 using federal ARPA dollars. In the
9 next -- in the upcoming year, we will
10 invest federal dollars. We've purchased
11 English language arts curriculum, and
12 before the dollars sunset in September of
13 2024, we are going to use those existing
14 federal dollars to purchase best-in-class
15 science curriculum. That won't launch
16 until the following year.

17 Item No. 3, we've analyzed
18 Central Office budgets and we've begun a
19 modified zero-based budgeting process.
20 As we have come to the Central Office
21 budgets, there are two things that I want
22 to note. Number one, we do not have a
23 bloated Central Office in the School
24 District of Philadelphia. The School
25 District of Philadelphia is one of the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 most lean central offices among any
3 public school district of its size across
4 the country.

5 How do we know that? The
6 Council for Great City Schools completed
7 an audit of our Central Office functions
8 in our Central Office in 2022, and what
9 they found is we have a much smaller
10 ratio of staff -- a much bigger ratio of
11 Central Office employees relative to the
12 number of students in the School
13 District. So it's very lean.

14 Even though we have a lean
15 Central Office budget, we still cut some
16 vacant positions so that we could find or
17 identify \$8-plus million in the budget so
18 that we could send those dollars to the
19 schools to eliminate the leveling process
20 beginning this fall. But I do want to
21 note, we still have a very lean Central
22 Office.

23 We've also began a
24 zero-based -- modified zero-based
25 budgeting process.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The
3 audit that was done, it was done by what
4 organization, just for the record?

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

6 Yes, sir, Mr. President. The Council for
7 Great City Schools. They're located in
8 Washington, DC, and they represent 77 or
9 so of the large urban school districts.
10 They do advocacy with Congress and they
11 provide support for those districts.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Would that audit be considered a forensic
14 audit?

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: It
16 was a high level audit. I'm not sure if
17 they would consider it forensic, but it
18 was a high level audit to get under the
19 staffing of the District and to compare
20 it to benchmark districts across the
21 City.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
23 Thank you very much.

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: The
25 other thing we're doing is modified

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2 zero-based budgeting. We're not doing
3 100 percent zero-based budgeting because,
4 quite frankly, given the size and scope,
5 it's like turning a supertanker around in
6 the middle of the Delaware River. It
7 takes some time to get through
8 everything, and so -- but we've started
9 in a couple of our Central Office
10 departments, and we're looking at all the
11 programs and contracts that we bring to
12 the Board of Education. And the Board
13 actually has a process by which before
14 they consider action items, they require
15 me and my staff to explain what's been
16 the return on investment, why should we
17 invest more resources in this, and quite
18 frankly, there are some things that we're
19 discontinuing and doing something
20 different with.

21 Area 4, we're identifying some
22 other cost savings. Let me just share
23 two of those that will be very real world
24 and easy to understand.

25 We've worked very strategically

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2 under our Chief Operations Officer --
3 Operating Officer's leadership, Colonel
4 Oz Hill, to acquire more energy savings.
5 And as we get those energy savings, our
6 approach has been to send those dollars
7 to the school, not to keep them at the
8 Central Office.

9 One other very practical thing
10 we've done over the past two years is, we
11 discontinued our contract with the
12 Pennsylvania Convention Center to host
13 our principal meetings. Instead we took
14 some of those resources and we put them
15 into Strawberry Mansion High School to
16 make a couple of upgrades so we can use
17 our own facilities for all of our
18 principal meetings, and we'll continue to
19 do that. And we're hopeful that as we
20 bring 250 principals and climate managers
21 and others to Strawberry Mansion and to
22 other schools in our communities, when we
23 have to have lunch, we bring more people
24 in, they eat there, we invest there, we
25 spend more resources there, and it will

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2 also help invest in more of our school
3 communities.

4 And then the last area item,
5 area 5 fiscal responsibility measure, 5,
6 is we've made some changes to our
7 accounting processes and how we
8 strategically align funds. Won't spend a
9 lot of time going into the detail about
10 that now, but should you have questions,
11 our CFO, Mike Herbstman, is here with us
12 today as well.

13 On this slide, Mr. President, I
14 wanted to just note again that we're
15 losing all of the \$1.2 billion in ARPA
16 funding that we got from Congress, will
17 go away in September of this year.
18 However, because of good budgeting, we've
19 been able to not make cuts and layoffs
20 and that there's some 350 positions that
21 will remain in the School District, and
22 they include 129 assistant principals,
23 110 teachers, 35 climate managers, 26
24 counselors, 46 school climate staff, and
25 15 other school-based staff.

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2 It's been an honor and pleasure
3 to work with two of our union presidents,
4 particularly President Jerry Jordan and
5 President Dr. Robin Cooper, and I think
6 that speaks to the intergovernmental and
7 kind of collaboration that the Mayor was
8 talking about, and we look forward to
9 doing more of that.

10 I spoke earlier about
11 discontinuing leveling. We certainly
12 appreciate the leadership of the Board,
13 of Majority Leader Gilmore Richardson,
14 and members of Council who gave us an
15 opportunity to present before this body
16 and Chair of the Education Committee,
17 Thomas. As we promised, we took the time
18 to really dig into and study the process
19 of leveling.

20 Leveling is the process of
21 moving teachers within the first 21 days
22 of school, which historically has been a
23 part -- a guideline of our contract with
24 the PFT, but it was disruptive. The
25 survey indicated that 68 percent of

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2 stakeholders thought we should do
3 something different, and we are. We will
4 discontinue the process of leveling this
5 upcoming school year.

6 So if we have a school in the
7 first 20 days that somehow is just short
8 of their projection or their enrollment
9 projections, we will -- if we have
10 schools that need more teachers because
11 they have an unexpected increase in
12 enrollment, we will not pull those
13 teachers from other schools where they've
14 not increased or they've had a slight
15 decrease, because we know it's
16 disruptive.

17 How are we going to do this?
18 Number one, we've allocated -- we
19 repurposed \$8.8 million from Central
20 Office budget cuts and energy savings
21 that we are going to move to the schools.

22 Number two, we are forming a
23 summer scheduling work group under the
24 leadership of our Deputy Superintendent
25 for Academics, Dr. Jermaine Dawson.

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2 Dr. Dawson will bring a very robust group
3 of people together during the summer.
4 They'll represent the Academics Division,
5 our Special Education team, Multilingual
6 Services, the Talent Office, Research
7 Office, and our Budget Finance Office,
8 and what they'll do is, they will
9 carefully monitor our enrollment, because
10 things shift from the time we leave
11 school at the end of the school year and
12 in the fall or late summer when our
13 students return.

14 They are going to also, under
15 Dr. Dawson's leadership, work very
16 closely with the City of Philadelphia and
17 with others to engage with our parents
18 and caregivers and our students. We want
19 to get out in the community, get out
20 throughout the City to touch and see our
21 children, our young people, and if they
22 are moving because they're home insecure
23 or they're couch surfing, we'll know it
24 in realtime, because we're going to keep
25 those contacts with them.

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2 So it will not come to any
3 surprise to us in the fall when we come
4 back to school if there's some kids who
5 have moved to different school
6 communities, because we do have a number
7 of children who are transient in the
8 School District. So as Clayton Constance
9 would say, Dr. Constance Clayton would
10 say, we have to build a school system,
11 not a system of schools. So this is part
12 of our school system initiative.

13 And the other thing we're going
14 to do under the leadership of our Deputy
15 Superintendent for Talent, Strategy and
16 Culture, Jeremy Grant-Skinner, is we're
17 working to try to build a pool of
18 teachers, not just any teachers but we
19 are doing our best to get highly
20 qualified teachers in a pool,
21 notwithstanding the 71 percent decline in
22 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. So
23 we're reaching out to try to get these
24 teachers from Pennsylvania, and because
25 of our geography, we're going down to

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2 Delaware, going across the river to New
3 Jersey to recruit a pool of highly
4 qualified teachers so that if there are
5 some schools that have an increase in
6 enrollment, we hope to have a
7 shovel-ready pool of teachers at the
8 beginning of the year that we can deliver
9 to those schools.

10 Now, if the teacher shortage is
11 still so acute that we can't have all the
12 teachers we need, we will certainly
13 provide those principals with a hiring
14 permit so that they can either hire their
15 own teacher in a timely manner and, if
16 needed, if push comes to shove, we will
17 provide those principals with some
18 flexibility to use those dollars for
19 high-impact tutoring and other items that
20 might be of benefit based on how they
21 think will best support their schools.

22 Mr. President, pleased to bring
23 an update on facilities. On the next
24 slide we're going to begin with a capital
25 improvement plan update.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The
3 plan?

4 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
5 We're going to get right into the plan,
6 yes, sir. The plan will come right after
7 this, yes, sir. This is the precursor to
8 the plan, yes, sir.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: All
10 right. Thank you, sir.

11 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
12 Yes, Mr. President.

13 So, in fact, Mr. President, in
14 an upcoming slide, I want to share with
15 you an eight-phase plan to get us to a
16 place where our facilities are brought up
17 to standards.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: You
19 have an eight-phase plan we're about to
20 see now that's coming before the plan the
21 Administration is going to provide as
22 well, correct?

23 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
24 They will be tag-teamed in tandem
25 together. We're going to work, and we're

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2 looking forward to that work with the

3 Mayor.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Absolutely.

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 Absolutely.

8 The first thing I want to note
9 for the Council, Mr. President, is that
10 this School District invested
11 \$1.72 billion in the ten years preceding
12 2023. I say that because I think
13 sometimes, nobody's fault, but I think
14 sometimes it gets lost some of the
15 significant improvements that are being
16 made in the District. They are not
17 enough, but there's been significant
18 improvements made between 2013 and 2023.

19 If you'll go to the next slide,
20 I want to detail those for you.

21 For example, five new school
22 buildings were built - TM Peirce, Solis
23 Cohen, Northeast Community Propel
24 Academy, Powel SLA Middle, and West
25 Philadelphia High School.

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2 Ten major school additions were
3 completed. Forty-six classroom
4 modernization projects were completed,
5 significant lead paint assessments in 194
6 facilities and 169 lead-safe schools.
7 Work processes were completed. Seventeen
8 hundred state-of-the-art hydration
9 stations were installed so that kids can
10 have access to filtered, healthy drinking
11 water. Humidity sensors and monitors
12 were placed in 31 schools to prevent
13 mold, and there's been a host of other
14 deferred maintenance, system upgrades,
15 and structural and energy efficiency and
16 site improvement work.

17 Over the next five years --
18 now, remember, for the previous ten
19 years, there's \$1.72 billion in facility
20 improvements. Over the next five years,
21 that number will move from 1.72 billion
22 to 3.3 billion, and that will include the
23 construction of three new schools -
24 Cassidy, which opens later this year,
25 Holme, and AMY James Martin.

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2 Major renovations are underway
3 to the tune of \$544 million, HVAC
4 improvements to the tune of 435 million,
5 \$314 million in exterior renovations,
6 energy improvements to the tune of
7 \$214 million, \$305 million in electrical
8 upgrade improvements, which is really
9 important because some of our schools, we
10 can't just go throw an air conditioner in
11 the window because the electrical
12 circuits are such that we have to replace
13 them.

14 You see \$141 million in site
15 improvements, 51 million in security
16 equipment, minor renovations to the tune
17 of 48 million, and other plans to the
18 tune of 275 million.

19 On the next slide,
20 Mr. President, we're going to get right
21 into your point about the facilities
22 planning and the work we'll do in tandem
23 under the leadership of Mayor Parker, and
24 she spoke to that vision this morning.

25 Let me begin with the

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2 historical context, and I want to get
3 right into the issue of school closures
4 and lessons learned in the District.
5 Some of these similar lessons the folks
6 in Chicago learned.

7 Between 2012 and 2013, our
8 District closed 30 schools to address a
9 \$1.35 billion budget deficit. These are
10 the lessons we learned, and this is not
11 Tony Watlington's view. This is a review
12 of the Research for Action research.
13 This is a review -- this is based on a
14 review of a University of Pennsylvania
15 study conducted by Matthew Steinberg and
16 James MacDonald in 2019.

17 Now, what they found as they
18 studied the school closures is typically
19 when districts close schools, you can
20 think about it from the perspective how
21 do you most efficiently operate the
22 district if you have more schools than
23 you have the student population to
24 support, which is a very legitimate way
25 of looking at it. However, if you only

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2 treat that issue, it's very likely that
3 you can cause more harm to the children
4 in terms of their achievement.

5 If you, on the other side of
6 that nickel, think about how do we think
7 about school buildings and how we most
8 effectively use our resources in a way
9 that it's not just about saving dollars
10 but some or all of that savings or at
11 least some of it go into providing more
12 direct services to the least of these, to
13 the children who are most
14 underperforming, what the researchers
15 found is that the School District of
16 Philadelphia indeed saved \$24 million
17 annually. Most of that savings was
18 realized from eliminating school-based
19 personnel.

20 The average test scores
21 actually decreased for the students who
22 were displaced with school closures, and
23 test scores actually decreased for
24 students in the schools where schools
25 received the displaced students. I think

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2 that's really important for us to take --
3 to be thoughtful about so that we can
4 move forward with our plan in a way that
5 we use our resources to both be better
6 stewards to make the dollar go further,
7 but at the end of the day, we want to
8 also increase student achievement and
9 student attendance.

10 The researchers also found that
11 students' absences actually increased
12 significantly for the displaced students.

13 Two years ago, 57 percent of
14 our students were attending school
15 90 percent of the month, 57 percent.
16 Last year, the percentage of our students
17 who were in school, I mean, at least
18 90 percent of the year increased from
19 57 percent to 60 percent. Significant
20 improvement. Still not enough.

21 Now, the difference between
22 student attendance in the School District
23 of Philadelphia, which is 60 percent of
24 our kids are now attending at 90 percent,
25 which is the gold standard if we want to

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2 improve achievement, if you compare that
3 to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, our
4 kids who are now at 60 percent regular
5 student attendance, meaning they're
6 attending the school 90 percent of the
7 month. The percentage -- for the average
8 for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is
9 82 percent.

10 So the first thing we've got to
11 do as we focus on highly qualified, well
12 supported teachers and principals, we've
13 got to change that attendance gap between
14 60 percent and 82 percent. We got to
15 close that gap, because otherwise we'll
16 be comparing apples to oranges instead of
17 apples to apples.

18 So we've got to make the
19 investments and we've got to have laser
20 focused in front of us that at the end of
21 the day, we can do this work, this
22 facilities work, but we've got to do it
23 in a way that our charge is to improve
24 student outcomes, especially the least of
25 these, because we can't just divest more

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2 resources for the poorest, underserved
3 children. And I think they've learned a
4 hard lesson even in the Chicago Public
5 Schools, because they've studied what
6 happened in Chicago too. Chicago closed
7 more schools than any city in the nation
8 back in, I think it was, 2013 or so with
9 49 school closures.

10 So the applications of the
11 lessons learned are this:

12 Number one, as we go down this
13 road, we want to prioritize student
14 learning as our north star, in alignment
15 with the Board's goals and guardrails.

16 Number two, we believe we need
17 to have comprehensive data, and I'll talk
18 more about that on the next slide, so we
19 treat the problems and not just the
20 symptoms.

21 Third, we know we need to have
22 a transparent community engagement
23 process so that the community is up to
24 speed and regularly updated on our
25 thinking and our work, and we're going to

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2 do that work under the Mayor's
3 leadership. And we know that we must
4 focus on repurposing some buildings to
5 better support our communities.

6 So we do not think that
7 everything that's in place now ought to
8 look the exact same. Absolutely not. In
9 fact, we believe that we can drive faster
10 improvement when we take a look at how to
11 best utilize our facilities, and we're
12 also doing some work to begin to look at
13 a common minimum school size that will
14 help us to drive faster improvement.

15 Mr. President, this next slide
16 is just a quick high-level overview of
17 the eight phases of our facilities plan.
18 It's an eight-phase process.

19 Phase I began in June of 2022,
20 and it took us a year to complete, nearly
21 a year. Phase I was to develop
22 Accelerate Philly, our strategic plan.
23 We wanted to develop a strategic plan
24 first, not because we don't have a sense
25 of urgency. I promise you, we are moving

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2 with a sense of urgency, because we know
3 we cannot kick this can down the road.
4 This administration is committed to work
5 under the Board of Education and the
6 Mayor's leadership to having a plan that
7 makes hard decisions about how we upgrade
8 our school facilities, and we will get it
9 done and this administration won't kick
10 it down the road.

11 But we needed a strategic plan
12 so we first knew what is our strategy for
13 improving student achievement, because
14 new buildings by themselves do not
15 improve student achievement. I want to
16 be really clear. New buildings by
17 themselves do not improve student
18 achievement. You've got plenty of new
19 schools with poor achievement every day
20 across the United States.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: We
22 witnessed that with the School of the
23 Future, Microsoft, in West Philly, but
24 just as equally, closing schools because
25 of asbestos and lead also doesn't do good

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2 for the morale of students when they have
3 to go to another school because their
4 school has been shut down or half of the
5 school is shut down.

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 Yes, sir. Absolutely true, sir.

8 Phase II, Mr. President, we
9 developed a request for proposals in June
10 of 2023. We issued a request for
11 proposals to secure a data strategy
12 vendor. Why did we need a data strategy
13 vendor? Council, you may be familiar
14 with the Parsons report from 2017, and
15 there's been some conversations since the
16 issuance of the Parsons report. The
17 Parsons report just looked -- it was
18 appropriate for its time. It looked at
19 our buildings and gave all of our
20 buildings a facility conditions index
21 score. It looked at a number of things
22 in our buildings.

23 What the Parsons report did not
24 do is, it did not look in a detailed way
25 at our building systems. It did not dig

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2 into the issue of environmental hazards,
3 asbestos, lead paint and the like. It
4 did not address ADA accessibility,
5 American Disability Act disabilities. It
6 did not speak to -- and I've read the
7 report in its entirety. It did not speak
8 to historic preservation rules, laws,
9 guidance, et cetera. It did not speak to
10 our demographics. It did not speak to
11 our enrollment trends, where are we
12 losing kids in the City, what parts of
13 the City are growing, what parts of the
14 City is the population remaining the same
15 but kids are choosing other options to go
16 other places. And it did not do a deep
17 dive into safety and security issues.

18 So we issued an RFP. We knew
19 we needed more information, that the
20 Parsons study was not enough to make
21 really robust decisions if our north star
22 is to improve student daily attendance,
23 regular attendance, and improve academic
24 achievement.

25 So that RFP was out on the

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2 street, as they say, between June of '23
3 to September '23.

4 Also while that RFP was out, we
5 pulled together a group to develop what
6 we call academic baseline standards,
7 Phase III. Phase III was to tell us what
8 does every school need to have.

9 Phase IV involved developing a
10 facility swing space. The swing space is
11 complete now. What is not complete is in
12 progress, but we're able to move kids
13 faster when we have an asbestos
14 environmental issue. And when we finish
15 building out the swing space plan, Mr.
16 President, we'll have 23,000 student
17 seats set aside so that as we go down the
18 road of potentially consolidating,
19 rebuilding or repurposing schools, we'll
20 have shovel-ready spaces to move
21 children.

22 Phase V, we developed a pilot
23 data warehouse with 30 schools.

24 Currently we're in Phase VI
25 where we are developing a data warehouse

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2 with all the information I talked about
3 earlier in one data warehouse. We have
4 an external vendor that's doing that.
5 It's in progress.

6 And Phase VIII involves
7 launching a facilities plan project team.
8 The planning is already underway in terms
9 of bringing some internal and external
10 stakeholders together. We're working
11 closely under the Mayor's leadership, and
12 we'll look forward to continuing to
13 update Council on where that's going.

14 Now, as we work -- I'll just
15 say this very quickly, Mr. President: As
16 we worked with Chicago, Detroit, Boston,
17 Indianapolis and other cities, typically
18 what they've shared is that from the time
19 you bring all the internal/external
20 public-private partners together with the
21 data, it takes anywhere from 18 to
22 24 months to do a full -- a really good,
23 robust plan and to execute on it.

24 We hear the Council very loud
25 and clearly. We hear the Mayor loud and

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2 clearly that we need to move with a
3 fierce sense or urgency, and we intend to
4 do that. I'm saying it will take 18 to
5 24 months. I just want to level set.

6 I have two other quick updates,
7 Mr. President, and I'll be done, other
8 District updates. School selection. As
9 you know, we've been working hard to
10 improve the school selection, the lottery
11 process. Last year, the lottery process
12 and the fact that we talked directly with
13 principals resulted in some significant
14 improvements. We have 145 more people,
15 more students, who applied to our
16 criteria-based schools. We have an
17 increase of 5,322 eligible applications.
18 We have an increase of 356 applicants and
19 an increase of well over 1,200 accepted
20 offers in our criteria-based schools last
21 year.

22 I want to highlight what that
23 looks like for individual schools. Hill
24 Freedman, Lankenau, Motivation High
25 School, the Philadelphia High School for

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2 Girls, Saul High School, and SLA Beeber
3 all saw the 9th grade class grow. In
4 fact, the Philadelphia High School for
5 Girls has the greatest improvement in
6 this group among the student enrollment.

7 Now, what that will show,
8 though -- this is based on the process
9 for the upcoming school year. Now, what
10 we know is that for some schools that
11 have had a decline in enrollment; for
12 example, the Philadelphia High School for
13 Girls, if we continue on this trajectory
14 over time, that school will grow bigger.
15 The point of entry is in the 9th grade.
16 So that's why I want to note that.

17 And then finally on the next
18 slide, Mr. President, I want to get to
19 positions and staffing update. The final
20 update, Mr. President, if we go to that
21 final slide, I want you to see the
22 staffing update and the positions filled
23 as of April of 2024. You can see this,
24 96.7 percent of teachers, 98.1 percent of
25 counselors. We are knee deep in the

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2 hiring season. So we're going to stay
3 focused on all of these positions.
4 94.7 percent with our nurses,
5 95.9 percent with our food service
6 workers, school climate staff 94.2.
7 Special education systems, we're only at
8 82.3 percent. We are adding some
9 additional new positions there this year.
10 And when you look at all school-based
11 positions, we're at 91.9 percent staffing
12 as compared to 91.2 percent staffing.

13 You can see in all areas that
14 we're hiring faster, at a faster clip
15 this year than we did last year, and
16 we're committed to doing better as we go
17 forward. And we're not just hiring
18 people. We're trying to hire very highly
19 qualified people.

20 Mr. President, I thank you for
21 this opportunity, and this concludes my
22 testimony. Thank you, sir.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Thank you very much. I had to remember,
25 this is that biannual meeting, not just a

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2 typical budget hearing, and so we thank
3 you for your thorough presentation.

4 Just a couple of questions
5 before I turn it over to my colleagues,
6 but first I want to note for the record
7 the presence of Councilmember Mark
8 Squilla, Councilmember Mike Driscoll,
9 Councilmember Kendra Brooks,
10 Councilmember Cindy Bass, and I did see
11 Councilmember J. Young.

12 Have you since you arrived as
13 the Superintendent, have you engaged in a
14 forensic audit? Just from an overview,
15 let me take a look at this institution
16 I'm inheriting and get a forensic audit,
17 just to look at everything in terms of
18 how we're operating from a fiscal
19 standpoint, seeing where all the dollars
20 and cents are going. I know you talked
21 about savings in some areas versus being
22 fiscally responsible in other areas.

23 Have you taken that approach or
24 will you consider or welcome a forensic
25 audit?

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2 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

3 Thank you, Mr. President. The rules
4 require us to have a board -- to have an
5 audit of the School District's finances
6 every year and of every school in the
7 District. We always have the option to
8 go and do a deeper dive forensic audit.

9 I have not commissioned an additional
10 forensic audit of the District to date.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 Okay. Would you welcome one?

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: A
14 forensic audit is always a good idea.
15 Absolutely.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

17 Thank you.

18 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

19 We've begun by getting the Council for
20 Great City Schools to come in and do
21 three audits for us. They did a
22 curriculum audit just before Dr. Hite
23 left, as a matter of fact. Since I've
24 been here, we've asked them to do an
25 audit of our staffing, Central Office

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2 staffing, and they've also conducted a
3 pretty detailed, at the forensics level,
4 audit of our Transportation Department.
5 We are waiting the findings from that
6 audit as we speak.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: All
8 right. Thank you very much.

9 Also, you talked about, which I
10 was actually happy to see, you went into
11 buying new curriculum, right, around
12 math, science, and I'm glad you're going
13 in the direction of addressing the issue
14 of academic achievement, right?

15 When we think about the
16 school-to-career pipeline, when I think
17 about -- I have a nine-year-old,
18 seven-year-old. At the end of the day,
19 it's about academic achievement. Like
20 that's my expectations for them every
21 single day. And so I am happy that -- in
22 the past, that wasn't always the actual
23 focus, at the end of the day, how are
24 young people doing from an academic
25 achievement standpoint.

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2 How are we doing -- how are you
3 measuring progress with the recent math
4 and science curriculum that you purchased
5 for 70 million?

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 Thank you, Mr. President. The
8 \$70 million mark is to pay for -- is the
9 cost for math, English language arts, and
10 science curriculum. To date, we've only
11 launched the math curriculum, because we
12 don't want to overwhelm the system,
13 teachers or students.

14 So with Illustrative Math, we
15 are evaluating it in several ways.

16 Number one, I meet regularly with my
17 Principals Advisory Council, Teachers
18 Advisory Council, and Student Advisory
19 Council and we get direct face-to-face
20 feedback.

21 Number two, we issue surveys,
22 particularly the teachers who have the
23 job of delivering the curriculum. To
24 date, 83 percent of the teachers feel
25 like they are equipped to deliver the

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2 curriculum that is making progress, that
3 we're making progress under the
4 curriculum. The negative they've told me
5 is they just didn't have enough time to
6 prepare. And so this year with the
7 English language arts, we're doing
8 training now and throughout the summer.

9 And the third way we get
10 feedback on how well it's going is that
11 we do a Star Assessment throughout the
12 year. It's led by our Evaluation,
13 Research and Accountability Department,
14 and to date, the Star Assessment, which
15 are diagnostic assessments done
16 throughout the year, right now it seems
17 to suggest that we are moving in the
18 right direction in terms of student
19 achievement.

20 The Star Assessment predicted
21 for us last year that we would have some
22 improvement in academics, and we expect
23 this year to be no different, but we
24 won't know for sure until we actually
25 take the PSSA tests and the Keystone test

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2 to know did it result in state testing
3 improvement.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Talk about when you say we didn't want to
6 overwhelm the system, so we started with
7 one curriculum versus all three. What
8 aspects of the system would be
9 overwhelmed? What are we doing to
10 overcome the system being overwhelmed so
11 we're working with a sense of urgency?

12 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

13 Yes. Because teaching is the number one
14 factor, if -- I had a teacher who sent me
15 an e-mail, and every now and again I will
16 sit down and meet with a teacher, and she
17 says -- and I won't call her name, but
18 she was a 20-year veteran, and she said
19 to me, Dr. Watlington, work with us. If
20 you ask us to do 100 things all at the
21 same time and I've got to attend to
22 discipline in my classroom and I've got
23 to take care of my own family and on top
24 of that I've got to grade all these
25 papers and on top of that I've got to be

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2 a counselor, we can't do everything at
3 one time. Let us focus and do some
4 things really well.

5 And so in partnership with our
6 teachers in particular, they asked us to
7 give them a chance to learn these
8 curriculum resources, and they didn't
9 think they could do reading, math, and
10 science all together at one time, because
11 it's such a sea change.

12 I think that -- that doesn't
13 mean we're not still focusing on doing
14 the best job we can with the current
15 English language arts curriculum. I'm
16 not saying that they're bad curricula.
17 They're just not rated the best. It's
18 kind of like when you buy a car with
19 Consumer Reports, you can buy a good car,
20 but you want the car with the best gas
21 mileage and the best wear and tear ratio
22 on your tires, I think.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

24 Thank you. The Benz or the Range Rover,
25 but that's a different conversation.

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2 Let's talk about young people
3 and safety. Is Karyn Lynch here with you
4 today?

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'm
6 sorry?

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Is
8 Karyn Lynch here with you today?

9 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'm
10 not sure. I have not seen her this
11 morning.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I
13 know she usually deal with a lot of the
14 trauma-informed issues I'm about to ask
15 you right now.

16 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
17 Deputy Superintendent for Academics is
18 here, if needed.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Gun
20 violence, number one here in the City of
21 Philadelphia, young people being shot and
22 murdered every single day. We know that
23 they're dealing with the issue of trauma,
24 because after they see the shootings, if
25 they have family members murdered,

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2 they're still going to school. If they
3 have friends being murdered, they're
4 still going to school.

5 So what is the District doing
6 in terms of offering trauma-based support
7 for these young people so they can
8 actually focus and address the trauma
9 that they're dealing with that's out of a
10 school setting?

11 And then the second part of my
12 question is, I'm a strong advocate of
13 what we call the boots-on-the-ground
14 organizations, the organizations that are
15 working with some of the safe passage
16 programs that the District provides
17 services for.

18 Are we considering -- and I
19 know we had the roundtable that I came
20 and participated in -- bringing more of
21 these neighborhood-based
22 boots-on-the-ground organizations inside
23 the school and support systems around the
24 issue of gun violence for our teachers?
25 Because at the end of the day, a lot of

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2 these teachers, some probably never even
3 could identify with the level of gun
4 violence that they're seeing in the City
5 right now, which frankly I can
6 understand. However, bringing in people
7 that have that lived experience and kind
8 of understand how our young people are
9 dealing with a variety of different
10 issues in our neighborhoods. What type
11 of support services are we providing for
12 them?

13 I'm an advocate of bringing
14 PAAN back into the school, Philadelphia
15 Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network, because
16 they are the organization that actually
17 does the intervention. They were in the
18 schools at one particular point in time.
19 And so I'm trying to see where the
20 District is versus the Administration to,
21 again, get more intervention
22 organizations. And PAAN is just one, but
23 you got Cure Violence. You have
24 Ceasefire. How can they be a part of the
25 District's plan to address trauma and the

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2 gun violence that young people are
3 experiencing inside the school
4 environment?

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

6 Thank you, President. We're working with
7 both some national and local
8 professionals in that regard. Dr. Greg
9 Ginwright is a professor, I think, at
10 UCLA, he was doing some consultant work
11 with the School District.

12 One of the things we're trying
13 to focus on more, though, is how we tap
14 our local resources. I heard Mayor
15 Parker say once that we ought to -- if we
16 drew a three- to five-mile radius around
17 every school, we ought to know exactly
18 what the resources right there in the
19 backyard and do a better job in
20 connecting those resources. And so we
21 absolutely as we relaunch Parent
22 University next school year, that's a big
23 piece of it.

24 We think that we need to do a
25 better job of launching partnership with

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2 various faith-based organizations in the
3 community, with grassroots organizations
4 just like the ones you've talked about.
5 And so we're very open to learning more
6 about who some of these great providers
7 are, including people with lived
8 experiences in our city.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

10 Now, you touched on the faith-based
11 community, and I'm glad you mentioned
12 that. I would like to facilitate a
13 meeting with you with -- there's a
14 coalition of brothers from the Muslim
15 community, right? You know, about
16 85 percent of the students in the
17 Philadelphia School District are Muslim,
18 right?

19 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

20 Yes, sir.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: And
22 them having a seat at the table in terms
23 of how we're going about making sure that
24 their issues and concerns are addressed
25 as relates to them being Muslim going to

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2 school. Like, for instance, Jumarza (ph)
3 Friday, right, but the young people are
4 in school, right?

5 I remember reaching out to
6 Edwin Santana to kind of relay to you
7 maybe there could be a possibility,
8 right, that if there is a partnership --
9 and I know it's supposed to be separation
10 from church and state, so to speak.
11 However, when we look at the level of gun
12 violence that's being impacted in the
13 City of Philadelphia and working with the
14 Muslim community and they recognize a
15 significant amount of young people
16 identify as Muslim that's involved in
17 some of these neighborhood beefs, but one
18 of the Imams at the table said, well, if
19 you got about 85 percent of the students
20 that identify as Muslim in the School
21 District, if we're not at the table,
22 right, trying to be helpful in addressing
23 some of the gun violence neighborhood
24 beefs, then we don't have a voice.

25 And so I'm glad you said that

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2 faith-based piece, and I'll do a
3 follow-up with you, because it did come
4 up at a meeting around how to address it
5 from a faith-based standpoint. But also
6 critically important is trying to see as
7 many, again, those groups that have lived
8 experience to be in the school setting.
9 Obviously they pass the background check
10 and all the things that need to be done.
11 And that has been an issue where
12 individuals -- we're not talking about
13 job predators, though, but they may have
14 a bleep on their record, retail theft or
15 something along those lines, but they
16 have a track record they changed their
17 lives. Could they have that opportunity
18 to still be able to come in and
19 participate and try to help the school
20 climate?

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
22 Yes, sir. In fact, one of the strategies
23 as we relaunch Parent University is a
24 related strategy to actually pay what we
25 call parent ambassadors. In another

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2 district we used Title I dollars for that
3 purpose, because it solicits parent and
4 community involvement. And we've got to
5 find ways to be more innovative and we
6 don't just say, well, because you either
7 have a criminal record or you've had some
8 problem with the law, that somehow we
9 don't find the way to connect parties
10 together for the benefit of our
11 community.

12 We know there are some people
13 in the community who have much better,
14 much tighter, much stronger relationships
15 than any superintendent, principal,
16 teacher or police officer. And so we
17 want to figure out through this Parent
18 University how do we connect with those
19 people who have that kind of relational
20 capital on the ground.

21 I do want to note, President
22 Johnson, that one of the things our CFO
23 is always focusing on is our request that
24 we also, within the rules, within the
25 letter and spirit of the law and Board

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2 policy, that we find ways to work with
3 local vendors and have dollars recycled
4 in this great city.

5 I believe the numbers show we
6 may have a 3.7 percent increase in local
7 vendor participation, and we certainly
8 want that to be diverse groups across the
9 City, including MBE -- M/WBE when we
10 think about people who can provide those
11 support services to schools.

12 We also have an array of
13 programs. I remember you asked about
14 that last year, what are some of the
15 social-emotional supports. They include
16 things like Kooth. It's an online
17 resource. Positive behavior intervention
18 supports, responsive schools.

19 Principals have been asking for
20 more -- less Central Office dictating
21 what resources that they can draw upon
22 and more give them an array of options so
23 they can customize based on what they
24 feel like their schools need.

25 I'm really pleased, because we

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2 just had an action item approved by the
3 Board of Education that gives principals
4 a little bit more autonomy in that
5 regard, to customize what's best for
6 their schools.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

8 Thank you.

9 Before I relax the time to my
10 colleagues, I also want to give a
11 shout-out to Karyn Lynch, because so many
12 years ago, we went to Graterford Prison
13 to meet with the lifers. It's called the
14 FACT program, Fathers and Children
15 Together. And just based upon the
16 partnership with her and her leadership,
17 the program still exists where the
18 individuals who are doing life have an
19 opportunity to interact through social
20 monitor what their children are attending
21 the Philadelphia public school. The
22 program still exists to this day based
23 upon the leadership and the work that
24 she's done, and that's the innovative
25 way, again, thinking outside the box as a

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2 way to address gun violence, because the
3 other part of it is, we know broken
4 families result in young people getting
5 involved in all types of mischief. So
6 this type of program allows that father
7 to be in the life of their son and
8 daughters, right? And keeping that
9 family together goes toward keeping our
10 neighborhoods wholesome, safe. And so I
11 do want to acknowledge her for that
12 particular program.

13 I sent you a letter some time
14 ago, March 25th, 2024, regarding the
15 Philadelphia School District 3-5-7-9
16 policy regarding teacher absences. The
17 letter talks about teacher absences for
18 personal or family illnesses, but at the
19 same time, feeling that they are
20 penalized for taking time off. And so I
21 just want to get an idea of what's the
22 status of reevaluating that policy. I
23 think there's a need based upon
24 constituent calls to my office, but just
25 want to get an idea from you all where

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2 we're at and the status of it.

3 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

4 Absolutely. Mr. President, we are

5 working -- we've been working and meeting

6 with the PFT in particular. I've been

7 meeting with my Teachers Advisory Council

8 and Principals Advisory Council to get

9 some context around the 3-5-7-9

10 procedure. It's been here for some time.

11 We've been trying to make sure we

12 understood why it was created in the

13 first place. Equally important, how is

14 it being applied in the District.

15 I could report to you that it

16 is not resulting in terminations or

17 concerning disciplinary actions. I think

18 as I've talked -- continue to talk with

19 teachers and the PFT, there are folks who

20 do not like it and will point out, well,

21 the Superintendent doesn't have a 3-5-7-9

22 procedure. The Deputy Superintendents

23 and the principal doesn't have a 3-5-7-9

24 procedure. Why do we have a 3-5-7-9

25 procedure.

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2 We will conclude our review
3 within the next week to ten days,
4 Mr. President, and we will have our
5 findings and recommendations to the Board
6 of Education shortly thereafter. After
7 we provide that information to the Board,
8 we'll be in a position to have a more
9 detailed follow-up, but that's what I can
10 tell you at this time. It's being
11 pursued with a sense of urgency.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: All
13 right. Thank you very much.

14 I do want to acknowledge you
15 addressing the issue of leveling that was
16 raised to another level based upon the
17 leadership of our Majority Leader,
18 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
19 Richardson. So thank you for addressing
20 that particular issue.

21 The Chair recognizes the Chair
22 of Education, Councilmember Isaiah
23 Thomas.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Good
25 morning, Council President. Good

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2 morning, colleagues.

3 I want to start by first saying
4 thank you to our Mayor for joining us at
5 our meeting and for making what I feel
6 like was some very passionate and
7 important remarks as it relates to the
8 schools in the City of Philadelphia.

9 I also would like to thank
10 Board President Streater as well as
11 Superintendent Watlington and the entire
12 leadership team here at the School
13 District of Philadelphia. We spend a lot
14 of time together. We appreciate the work
15 that you do. We appreciate the
16 transparency.

17 I definitely want to give a
18 special thank you to our CFO, who keeps
19 us very informed as it relates to the
20 fiscal stability of the City, Mr. Oz
21 Hill, who probably catches a tough break
22 more than anybody right now as it relates
23 to facilities, but the innovative ideas
24 and approaches that he's presented to us
25 to try to address this issue from his

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2 lens, as well as of course Mr. Craig
3 Johnson, who keeps us very informed as it
4 relates to incidents that take place in
5 the District.

6 I also want to take a moment to
7 offer condolences to the CEO of ASPIRA
8 Charter School. We found out this
9 morning that the CEO passed away. So at
10 some point as a legislative body, we want
11 to offer proper respect to an educator
12 who unfortunately lost his life last
13 night as it relates to the work that's
14 being done here in the City of
15 Philadelphia.

16 I want to start with some
17 remarks and then I'll go to a few
18 questions, and then I'll pass it on to
19 other Councilmembers.

20 So, first, as a teacher and as
21 a coach and as somebody who truly cares
22 about education, I love the work that we
23 do. I love the fact that we care about
24 our children, and the reality is at some
25 point when I walk away from politics and

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2 City Council, I'll probably end up
3 returning to somebody's classroom,
4 because this is the work that I love and
5 this is what I care about.

6 When I think about the state of
7 education in the City of Philadelphia and
8 I think about all of the problems that we
9 have, schools, along with crime and some
10 other issues is one of the reasons why
11 people often leave our city.

12 I say it often that, you know,
13 gun violence is the problem that we talk
14 about the most, but public education is
15 the most complicated problem that we have
16 that we have to find a way to fix in
17 order to improve our city.

18 As it relates to the work that
19 we do in City Council, there are a lot of
20 people who want accountability when
21 they're not getting what they want as it
22 relates to public education. It's very
23 difficult to hold someone accountable for
24 the failure of our children and the
25 failure of our schools, so they often

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2 turn to this legislative body to ask for
3 accountability when things aren't
4 happening.

5 I want to be very honest. I
6 was one of the Councilmembers and
7 probably the most advocate Councilmember
8 to only pass eight out of the Mayor's
9 nine School Board members, because I felt
10 very passionately about some systemic
11 things that have been failing our schools
12 and our children and our families long
13 before you got here, Dr. Watlington, and
14 you talked about some of them things
15 today, long before you got here, Board
16 President Streater, but there were some
17 other folks who were in leadership as we
18 deal with these issues.

19 Dr. Watlington, you talked
20 today about the improvement of numbers in
21 the special admission schools, but I'm
22 not sure if you know that right before
23 you got here, the previous leadership
24 changed the entire policy as it relates
25 to how people got admitted into special

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2 admission schools. This legislative body
3 fought against that system and against
4 that process, and our advocacy fell on
5 deaf ears.

6 So now you inherited the
7 problem that you now have as it relates
8 to trying to fill seats in special
9 admission schools, and as a legislative
10 body, our goal was to hold somebody
11 accountable for that bad decision.

12 We also know that there was a
13 decision made to change public comment as
14 it relates to how people can comment at
15 School Board meetings. That was
16 something that was presented to us, and
17 again we were looking to hold someone
18 accountable for that decision that we
19 didn't necessarily agree with.

20 Council President talked about
21 leveling and issues related to leveling.
22 Happy to be in a position where that was
23 actually addressed, but again another
24 issue that we had to deal with where
25 we're trying to hold someone accountable.

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2 We also looked at issues
3 related to water and water fountains in
4 schools. City Council had to pass a bill
5 to make sure young people had clean
6 water, safe water in our schools.

7 One of the most disappointing
8 things we had to deal with was sports
9 during COVID. I don't know if anybody
10 remembers, but when COVID first hit,
11 everybody was going to be able to
12 participate in sports except for children
13 who went to public schools. The public
14 schools were the only group of people who
15 were going to be put in a position where
16 they weren't going to be able to
17 participate in athletic activities, and
18 it was the effort of this Council body
19 that forced the hand to have our children
20 participate in public sports -- I mean,
21 in extracurricular activities and sports
22 as it relates to public schools.

23 Of course we know about some of
24 the issues that we've seen with Ben
25 Franklin High School and SLA and how

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2 decisions cost the City and taxpayers
3 tens of millions of dollars. And of
4 course after all that, we have to deal
5 with issues related to our facilities.
6 And so now I'm going to jump into some
7 stuff around there.

8 One of my team members on Team
9 Thomas is going to pass around some
10 pictures as it relates to issues that we
11 were dealing with with our facilities,
12 and again listening to you,
13 Dr. Watlington, this is another problem
14 that you've essentially inherited.

15 For those who don't know, the
16 facilities crisis was so bad that former
17 Councilmember Derek Green on
18 September 17th introduced Bill No.
19 2108 -- I mean, 210685-AA. This bill was
20 introduced into law to basically mandate
21 that buildings in the City of
22 Philadelphia be up to a certain par.

23 Dr. Watlington, when you became
24 the Superintendent, one of the things
25 that we commended you for was your level

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2 of transparency as it relates to issues
3 dealing with asbestos and facilities.
4 And so at some point, Dr. Watlington, I
5 will be curious to hear based on your
6 experience working in districts all
7 across the country how bad is our
8 facilities crisis compared to other
9 places. We'll get to that in a little
10 bit.

11 After the bill was introduced,
12 there was a lot of advocacy as it relates
13 to decisions to be able to force the
14 teachers to go back in schools. We can
15 all remember the embarrassing pictures of
16 the white fans that were given to schools
17 as a way to deter some of the issues
18 related to COVID, and it's unfortunate
19 that our teachers essentially had to go
20 through this unfortunate situation.

21 When we were in the midst of
22 this advocacy, the PFT put out a report
23 related to the facilities crisis that we
24 were dealing with, and according to the
25 PFT report, there was years of neglect

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2 that even led to the death of a worker as
3 well as various sicknesses of teachers
4 and members of the PFT because of
5 asbestos in the schools.

6 The District at the time -- and
7 this is in 2021. The District had
8 refused, again refused, to disclose
9 information as it related to how bad our
10 facilities was. This was according to
11 the PFT. The District also stopped
12 communication with the PFT regarding any
13 lead poisoning reports that had been
14 required to be conducted -- I mean, to be
15 removed from the schools.

16 I could go on and on and on as
17 it relates to issues that we've seen,
18 from leveling to special admissions, but
19 I think the most severe catastrophe that
20 we've seen is the issues related to our
21 facilities and to our schools.

22 Dr. Watlington and team, while
23 I commend you for the great work that you
24 are doing and your advocacy and
25 innovation as it relates to correcting

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 the current facilities crisis we have, we
3 have to be clear and honest. You did not
4 create this problem. You inherited this
5 problem.

6 We love what the Mayor had to
7 say. We love that she's advocating for a
8 plan around facilities, but we have to be
9 clear and honest. The Mayor did not
10 create this problem. The Mayor inherited
11 this problem.

12 So here we are right now in the
13 midst of dealing with one of the worst
14 facilities crisis that we've seen in our
15 lifetime, and a big part of the reason
16 that we have this problem is because the
17 information had been covered up for years
18 by the previous leadership regime.

19 So with that being said,
20 Dr. Watlington, I want you to put your
21 experiences to the mic and talk to us
22 about other places that you've worked as
23 it relates to being here in the City of
24 Philadelphia. Have you ever seen a
25 facilities crisis as bad as what we're

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 facing right now? And how difficult was
3 it for you when you first found out how
4 bad these buildings were and you made the
5 amazing decision to make that information
6 transparent to all of us so we all could
7 understand how bad our facilities are and
8 we can work together to begin to figure
9 out what do we do from here?

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
11 Chair Thomas, I will -- since you've
12 invited me to speak from my personal
13 perspective and life experience and
14 across 30 years in public education, the
15 way I'll answer that question is, I'm
16 aware of other places that have some
17 tough facility issues. I will say that
18 for the districts that I worked in in a
19 state in the South, number one, 20 years
20 ago we stopped closing schools because of
21 hot weather days. These were not
22 Rockefeller-rich school districts. They
23 are districts that qualified for low
24 wealth funding, and somehow there was
25 enough public-private intergovernmental

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 cooperation 20 years ago we found the
3 resources to air condition every single
4 school among the 125 schools in a 73,000
5 student district 20 years ago.

6 Now, fast forward, I think it's
7 a unique challenge that 47 percent of our
8 schools in the School District of
9 Philadelphia have adequate air
10 conditioners such that we can keep kids
11 in school on hot weather days. That's,
12 one, just a fact.

13 By way of comparison, I will
14 tell you that in the districts I've
15 worked in prior to coming here, I've
16 never had to close a school or never
17 experienced a school closure related to
18 an asbestos problem. Now, I am familiar
19 with schools closing because of a mold
20 problem in the place where I came from.

21 And then I think to your
22 question about what's the magnitude of
23 the problem or crisis as you've deemed
24 it, I will simply just quote the facts of
25 the, as best as I understand them, from

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 the Parsons report that said among all
3 the schools in the District's footprint,
4 among the 300 buildings, there were 21
5 schools that the Parsons report
6 recommended should be either closed or
7 repurposed.

8 Those would be three facts I
9 could say. I do think that a lot of why
10 we're situated where we are is the
11 vestiges of historic underfunding. No
12 different than our house and our car, if
13 we don't get the resources to keep them
14 up, they won't be in good condition.

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
16 you, Superintendent Watlington. I do
17 want to open the floor for other
18 Councilmembers to be able to ask
19 questions of you. Again, I spent a lot
20 of time with you, Board President, and
21 the leadership here, so a lot of the
22 information that was presented today
23 we've discussed in depth as it relates to
24 where we are.

25 But I do want to be clear

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 before I call on Councilmember Jones to
3 go to the next questions, I love our
4 children. I care about our schools, and
5 at the end of the day, if the job isn't
6 getting done the right way, somebody
7 needs to be held accountable. If that
8 person is me and that's who the citizens
9 of Philadelphia see that needs to be held
10 accountable, then so be it.

11 As it relates to this
12 legislative body, we're going to be fully
13 prepared to work with our Council
14 President as well as the Mayor to move
15 forward however they see fit, but I want
16 to be very, very clear to you and to
17 anyone that's listening. When we look at
18 how we vote, who we vote for, and what we
19 say is good enough, right, I just named
20 about ten things that have happened over
21 the last five years during our time in
22 City Council that explains clearly why I
23 specifically was not in favor of voting
24 for all nine members of the School Board.
25 Very clearly, what our issues are, what

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 we've been dealing with in trying to
3 rectify and also wanting to commend you
4 for actually addressing some of the
5 concerns that have been communicated to
6 you, as well as trying to brainstorm the
7 problems you inherited. The problems you
8 inherited, Dr. Watlington, in our mind,
9 someone needs to be held accountable.
10 However our Council President and Mayor
11 decides to move forward, I am fully
12 prepared to support that effort.

13 With that being said, the Chair
14 recognizes Councilmember Jones. And for
15 the courtesy of my colleagues, after
16 Councilmember Jones, we'll go to
17 Councilmember Brooks and then
18 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

19 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
20 you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your
21 passion and laser focus on education of
22 our young people.

23 But I want to also thank
24 Superintendent Watlington for his laser
25 focus on the improvement of the education

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 of our students, and in particular, I
3 was -- you toured my alma mater,
4 Overbrook, along with Majority Leader
5 Gilmore Richardson and Isaiah Thomas, and
6 I want to report to this body that we've
7 constantly gone back to the well and
8 thank your team, the development team,
9 for looking at possibilities for
10 renovating the 4th and 5th floor of
11 Overbrook. And I don't just pick on
12 Overbrook. I show how you are trying to
13 put together that facilities plan that
14 our Chairman wants. So that's number
15 one.

16 I want to thank you during the
17 pandemic and your team before you got
18 here, that one of the few highlights
19 during that pandemic was the fact that
20 our schools fed our kids, that our
21 schools provided distance learning.
22 There was no playbook in the library to
23 pull from. You had to build the plane
24 and fly it at the same time.

25 I don't want you to think and

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 your team to think that those positive
3 attributes don't be recognized by this
4 body, because we were scared just like
5 you were scared. We were unsure just
6 like you were unsure, and that learning
7 loss when distance learning happened,
8 we're thankful that you guys are back on
9 the case.

10 When we lost a life at
11 Roxborough or our other schools, it was
12 my colleague always, my colleagues here
13 and your staff that met us right at the
14 schools. So you didn't run away from the
15 problems that we face. You locked arms
16 with us to face it.

17 So I just want to balance some
18 of those issues, and now I'll move on to
19 my questions. Because he's right about
20 being passionate about what's wrong, but
21 I want to be as passionate about glimmers
22 of hope that I see.

23 First and foremost, I'm going
24 to go back to my alma mater and say
25 that -- it shocked me. Thirty percent of

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 those students are homeless. Thirty
3 percent of the students that attend
4 Overbrook High School are homeless. So I
5 need to know in this budget how you
6 provide guide rails and guardrails for
7 them, and how does the Community Schools
8 model -- which I like in my district
9 where they are, it's at Gompers, but it's
10 needed at Barry. It's needed at
11 Overbrook. How do we get those extra
12 resources to take care of things like
13 homelessness?

14 There is a large percentage of
15 students at Overbrook that are on ankle
16 monitors as a result of their involvement
17 with the criminal -- tell me in this
18 budget how we produce better outcomes for
19 them. And I'll let you answer this
20 question. How do we reduce the
21 school-to-prison pipeline and increase
22 the school-to-paycheck pipeline? I'll
23 stop and allow you to respond.

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: All
25 right. Thank you, Councilmember Jones.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 Relative to reducing the school-to-prison
3 pipeline and increasing the
4 school-to-paycheck pipeline, as you say,
5 I think several things that we are doing,
6 and we need to do more of it. Number
7 one, we have to shine a big, bright
8 spotlight on our dropout problem in the
9 City.

10 To your point about the number
11 of students who are homeless, homeless
12 kids and kids who are in the category of
13 kids who are hard to love, it's very easy
14 to let those kids -- let our kids just
15 kind of slip away and disappear. Even
16 when we see them, it's easy to kind of
17 ignore it if we see them on the street.

18 So we're shining a big, bright
19 spotlight on student regular attendance,
20 accounting for every kid, and we want to
21 know where every single 7th through 12th
22 grade kid is in this city.

23 Two, toward that end, we've
24 kind of reorganized the Central Office
25 and brought aboard an assistant

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 superintendent for dropout prevention
3 whose sole job is to find every single
4 kid's record, get face to face with the
5 small group of people to find out what
6 are our children's story, because we just
7 can't let kids disappear.

8 On average, we have 4,000 kids
9 who drop out every year. A good number
10 of those kids are homeless. And
11 unfortunately their parents and
12 caregivers don't come to the Board
13 meeting and say, look, I need some help.
14 They don't show up in Chamber and say, I
15 need some help. So we have to take the
16 responsibility and the accountability
17 structures to focus there.

18 I'd also like to say I think
19 that as we -- to President Johnson's
20 point, as we work more closely with
21 grassroots community organizations,
22 faith-based partners, whether that's
23 traditional christian, Muslim, et cetera,
24 as we draw a line around every school and
25 get closer face to face with those

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 grassroots organizations and faith-based
3 partners and the people who know the
4 communities better than we do, I think we
5 can drive faster improvement and better
6 communication.

7 And, finally, I absolutely
8 agree with you on the Community Schools
9 model. When I think about -- the best
10 example for me is that dental clinic that
11 Temple University operates, a
12 full-fledged dental clinic. We could go
13 there ourselves, Councilmember, if we
14 needed to and get state-of-the-art care.
15 And I love the way they're doing that. I
16 think -- is that at Kelly School? Yes,
17 at Kelly. And we need more of that. And
18 the facilities when we think about it, it
19 gives us an opportunity to really think
20 thoughtfully about how we use our
21 facilities to drive more of that kind of
22 Community Schools processes in terms of
23 how we repurpose some of our buildings
24 for the benefit of the children.

25 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So I'm

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 encouraged by your facilities management
3 team who has been working closely with us
4 about saving Overbrook, but within
5 Overbrook, that's a model for every
6 school around the District. Edwin
7 Santana, from the Fourth District by the
8 way, has been a good liaison on
9 troubleshooting. When we have these
10 problems, he is one of the people I go to
11 to make sure, well, who in that
12 organization handles this particular
13 aspect.

14 Finally, that
15 school-to-paycheck pipeline, you toured
16 Randolph School with me as well, you and
17 Board Director Streater, and we saw that
18 the dropout rates were lower, the
19 attendance rate was higher, student
20 achievement was higher, because they had
21 a purpose and a paycheck at the end of
22 the pipeline. Within that tour, we saw
23 the automotive people, students. They
24 represent now one-third of Fleet
25 Management's workforce.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 So to the degree that Majority
3 Leader Gilmore Richardson is looking to
4 fill all of those vacancies within the
5 City, we need a concerted effort that if
6 we can't find employees, we should work
7 with you to grow them.

8 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
9 Absolutely.

10 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
11 you, Mr. Chair.

12 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
13 Totally agree.

14 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
15 you, Councilmember. Appreciate your
16 advocacy, and great line of questioning.

17 Just to switch it a little bit,
18 the Chair now recognizes Councilmember
19 Gilmore Richardson and then we'll do
20 Councilmember Phillips and then
21 Councilmember Brooks.

22 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
23 Great. Thank you. Thank you so much,
24 Mr. Chair, and thank you very much for
25 your advocacy and for your leadership.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Thank you, Dr. Watlington, and
3 to your entire team, to Dr. Dawson
4 especially. I can't see past the chairs,
5 but --

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 He's here. He's here.

8 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

9 Okay. And to Dr. Gordon, who has joined
10 us every Friday at the Philadelphia High
11 School for Girls, also Michelle and
12 Melanie and the entire team, of course
13 Laureal and Sarah here, but your whole
14 team. I've worked with so many of you,
15 and I just want to start by expressing my
16 thanks and my gratitude for your
17 willingness to work with us. Board
18 President Streater is here, so he knows
19 about this advocacy. I see Lisa Salley,
20 our Girls' High girl here as well.

21 So I just wanted to start off
22 by saying thank you, because you didn't
23 have to do what you did, but you did,
24 particularly around leveling. That was
25 an issue that was so important. You know

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 I introduced legislation and we held
3 hearings on that issue, and we heard from
4 so many parents and families about how
5 leveling does impact them, but
6 particularly from the staff at the
7 schools.

8 And so I want to say thank you
9 for listening to our advocacy and for
10 finding revenue to address the issue. I
11 am very appreciative. I think it's a
12 game changer for Philadelphia, and I
13 think we made the right decision. So
14 I'll definitely start there.

15 You know my issues, because I
16 communicate with you all on a weekly
17 basis, but there's some things that I
18 have to put on the record for this
19 hearing.

20 So I will start where we left
21 off at our last meeting, thanking you all
22 for the town hall at the Philadelphia
23 High School for Girls. I was unable to
24 participate in person because we were
25 still in Council Chambers.

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2 You talked about in some of the
3 enrollment highlights some of the
4 increases based on the change in the
5 special admission policy but also the
6 enrollment highlights. And for me I was
7 struck that the 9th grade enrollment for
8 this school year for Girls' High was at
9 88. My class was almost 400. But the
10 9th grade acceptances for the upcoming
11 year is 186.

12 Do the acceptances mean they
13 will actually attend? Because a number
14 of students get accepted to a number of
15 schools. Have they actually chosen
16 Girls' High, the 186, as the location or
17 the school that they will attend?

18 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: The
19 way we know if students accept an
20 acceptance is on that first day of school
21 and an enrollment, and when we have an
22 open house, if they show up and you see
23 the whites of their eyes.

24 All students and families have
25 the opportunity to continue to shop, but

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2 it's our job to really market,
3 communicate, support school leadership.

4 Chief Alex Coppadge has a very
5 robust plan for helping schools to stay
6 in contact with our young people, because
7 it's just like when you're hiring
8 somebody, you say, okay, you've got the
9 job and you don't start until three weeks
10 later. You need to call that person
11 every day just to check in, see how
12 you're doing, do you need anything, tell
13 you what, let me take you to lunch next
14 week just to give you a little bit more
15 information about the job. We're taking
16 that approach under Chief Coppadge's
17 leadership.

18 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: That
19 will be great. So if you can keep us up
20 to date at the beginning of the school
21 year on the enrollment. And I want to be
22 clear, because this is such a specialized
23 issue because of a number of specific
24 factors that have deeply impacted Girls'
25 High, but I care about all of our

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2 schools, every single one of them, and I
3 want to be clear that I'm the parent of
4 young people who attend a
5 neighborhood-based school that I fought
6 for my children to attend, because it's
7 not our closest school technically, but
8 it's our closest local public school, and
9 that's the school that I attended. So my
10 children attend that school.

11 So I care about all of our
12 schools. All three of my children go to
13 public school. Okay? And I want to be
14 clear about that, because the advocacy
15 that is centered around the Philadelphia
16 High School for Girls does not stop the
17 overall advocacy for all of our schools,
18 and I just want to say that for the
19 record.

20 I wanted to just briefly thank
21 you too for the principal search at
22 Girls' High and the updates for the
23 students and the alumni. You did confirm
24 that there's no enrollment cap for Girls'
25 High, because we had heard initially that

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Girls' High was only able to accept 200
3 students. So if they were capped at
4 accepting 200 students, of course this
5 number would not be more than 200. We
6 want to get that number up higher,
7 because their enrollment is so low,
8 particularly in the 9th grade class.

9 I will proceed at this moment
10 from the Girls' High conversation only
11 with the continued agreement that you all
12 will work with us at Girls' High every
13 step of the way, not only with the
14 principal search but around the
15 enrollment, around the facilities issues,
16 and the concerns of the students. And I
17 will tell you that Dr. Gordon has been a
18 godsend for the young people, because
19 they trust him. He has come every single
20 Friday to address the numerous issues
21 that were really bubbling over in the
22 winter, and I've continued to attend once
23 per month every single month, but we just
24 need that continued commitment.

25 Now, on the school finder

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2 app -- you know, this has been something
3 I've been talking about for a while. How
4 are we better communicating with families
5 to let them know about their options for
6 attending their closest local public
7 school? And I know there's been some
8 issue and challenge not only around the
9 catchment area piece but also around
10 Google and the actual mapping when you
11 insert your address, but that is of
12 concern for me.

13 You talked about marketing and
14 ensuring that we are marketing our
15 schools correctly. I get postcards from
16 a ton of schools. I even get postcards
17 from a school that's not even in
18 Philadelphia, that's in another county
19 for my children to attend.

20 So how are we doing a better
21 job around the school finder app and then
22 marketing our closest local public
23 schools to our families?

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
25 Majority Leader Gilmore Richardson,

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2 Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I'd
3 like to ask our Chief of Communications,
4 Alex Coppadge, if she'll come to the dais
5 and just say a word about that, because
6 she's leading a very robust
7 communications campaign. We stole her
8 from Mastery Charter Schools where she
9 was leading communications, and we'll ask
10 her to speak to that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: That
12 will be great. And then, Dr. Watlington,
13 in addition to that, if you could just
14 give us an update on the catchment
15 boundary plan and how we're looking to
16 address that.

17 (Witness approached witness
18 table.)

19 CHIEF COPPADGE: Good
20 afternoon, Council, and thank you for the
21 question, Councilmember Gilmore
22 Richardson.

23 Communications is critically
24 important to Superintendent Watlington,
25 starting initially just trying to make

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 three key improvements, like increasing
3 our transparency, increasing our
4 consistency with how regularly we deliver
5 communications, and then our clarity. So
6 that has been a focus throughout my
7 tenure here and trying to ensure that we
8 are just engaging our families more
9 regularly, and we really saw that come
10 through in the school selection process.
11 And so one of the things that we focused
12 on were the recommendations from
13 Accenture and really boosting how we
14 market our schools, our criteria-based
15 schools, and make sure that families are
16 aware of the opportunities that are
17 available.

18 So just to give you a quick
19 idea of some of the things that we did,
20 we hosted a marketing training for all of
21 those criteria-based high school
22 principals, developed marketing toolkits
23 for all of the criteria-based high
24 schools. So really teaching them how do
25 they engage school communities and

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2 recruit.

3 Like one of the things you
4 talked about was how Girls' High student
5 population was nearly 400. How do we
6 keep that and how do we make sure that
7 those type of schools are still desirable
8 locations and how do we make sure our
9 families, our students know that that is
10 a resource and available.

11 So we wanted to teach our
12 principals how do you recruit students.
13 Gone are the days when people just come.

14 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: And
15 I heard the bell, so I want to respect
16 and honor the clock, but if you could
17 just detail for us if there's a budget
18 for schools to do like a postal mailing
19 to families in their catchment area, is
20 there a budget for advertising maybe on
21 local billboards or in local newspapers
22 for schools to really talk about the
23 advantages for families to select those
24 schools.

25 CHIEF COPPADGE: So we have a

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2 budget this year of \$100,000 that we
3 allocated towards -- this year it was
4 criteria-based schools as well as our
5 graduation campaign. In the upcoming
6 school year, we plan to transition that
7 to our enrollment campaign.

8 In my past experience, I led
9 communications for Mastery Schools, and
10 that was our focus just because we didn't
11 have the same access to a citywide group
12 of students. We had to be very tactical
13 with how we recruited. We had to do
14 strategic marketing campaigns, the flyers
15 that come to your house all the time. So
16 we did that, and we're trying to bring
17 that to the District.

18 Previously communications had a
19 limited budget, so we are trying to find
20 free ways like that I mentioned, teaching
21 our principals how to recruit, in
22 addition to the increased funding that we
23 could hopefully push out into our
24 families.

25 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

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2 Okay. Great.

3 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

4 Majority Richardson, if I may just add,
5 one of the things that -- if that's okay,
6 Mr. Chairman.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

8 Mr. Chairman, I can come back on the
9 second round.

10 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

11 Dr. Watlington, is it okay? Can we --

12 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

13 Yes, sir.

14 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: --

15 address this on the second round?

16 Because there's a lot of members that
17 want to get queued up.

18 The Chair recognizes

19 Councilmember Brooks, then Councilmember
20 Phillips.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Thank
22 you, Mr. Chair.

23 Thank you, Dr. Watlington and
24 the School District. So I appreciate the
25 Mayor championing the intergovernmental

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2 cooperation, and it's clear to me that
3 fixing systemic issues in our School
4 District, it takes us in Philadelphia,
5 the legislators in Harrisburg, and our
6 federal partners.

7 I've been to Harrisburg to
8 support many initiatives that would
9 improve our School District for students,
10 parents, and teachers, and I've heard
11 back from parents and people within the
12 School District that drawing down on
13 federal grants is a challenging thing for
14 the District.

15 Can you explain what the
16 process is for drawing down federal
17 grants for the School District? Because
18 I know there's significant federal
19 funding opportunities that the School
20 District would be eligible for to enhance
21 energy efficiency in the school
22 buildings, and is the District pursuing
23 any of these opportunities and how can
24 Council be of support?

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

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2 Thank you, Councilmember. Really quick,
3 if I could just note, on the website, our
4 website, Majority Leader Gilmore
5 Richardson, Chief Coppadge led an
6 overhaul of the entire website, went and
7 fixed links that were broken or had
8 inaccurate information, and when parents
9 contact my office, they now get a chance
10 to give us a feedback score on whether or
11 not they think we answered the question.
12 We're going to launch that more publicly
13 in the upcoming year, including the
14 catchment area part of the website.

15 Councilmember, I do want to
16 note that in the School District, our
17 grants department sits under the
18 leadership of the Chief of Staff, and
19 it's there because the Chief of Staff
20 manages -- is the Superintendent's
21 liaison to the Board of Education. She
22 and her staff, Chief Galbally, Sarah
23 Galbally, is the liaison, she and her
24 staff, to City Council, to our state
25 legislators, and also to our federal

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2 officials, not limited to our elected
3 congressional members in the House and
4 Senate. They also are contacts to make
5 sure that when there are grant
6 opportunities that come from the
7 Department of Education or some other
8 department, the Department of Health and
9 Human Services or HUD, that we get right
10 in front of the line to apply. So we do
11 have that system in place.

12 We'll be glad to take any
13 feedback of any places where we could
14 have -- where we're hearing that there's
15 red tape or we're not moving as fast as
16 we need to. Chief Sarah Galbally is
17 here, and if you have other questions,
18 I'm happy to have her speak directly to
19 that.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Yeah,
21 because I would like to know like how can
22 we be of support in moving some of the
23 federal grant applications or if there's
24 like any standstill or we weren't
25 eligible or what were the barriers to

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 prevent you guys from applying for any of
3 the federal grant opportunities that may
4 have come our way.

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

6 There's usually a lot of things coming
7 down from the federal government. A lot
8 of times our congressional
9 representatives will let us know. We
10 have a direct Listserv that comes down.
11 And so it's a matter of us being very
12 thoughtful and mindful.

13 Now, we always try to look at
14 what are the grant dollars, federal grant
15 dollars or even philanthropic dollars,
16 that align to Accelerate Philly, and so
17 that work sits all in the Chief of
18 Staff's division.

19 PRESIDENT STREATER: If I could
20 add something very briefly. Just another
21 example of the way City Council can be
22 helpful is Medicaid reimbursements. So
23 some states have plans where they have --
24 they have done the requisite work to
25 create a state plan amendment to allow

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 school districts to be reimbursed for
3 services provided only to students with
4 disabilities under IDEA. In some
5 schools, some states have done it in a
6 way where they're able to get
7 reimbursements of some school-based
8 services or for some students beyond
9 those with IEPs who are enrolled in
10 Medicaid.

11 We've already reached out to
12 the state. I believe they're looking
13 into it as well, because it could be
14 something else that we can all kind of
15 rally around.

16 Just as an example, Board
17 member Wilkerson, through her work with
18 the Council for Great City School, has
19 spoken with Chicago, and it appears
20 they've been able to put on an additional
21 \$100 million from this program.

22 So, again, this is something
23 that I think that -- even though we can't
24 control it right here, but we can
25 advocate up to the state and see how we

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 can be helpful to help the state move
3 this along.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Okay.

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: And
6 if I may just add to President Streater's
7 comment, I do want to note that one of
8 the things that kind of sort of attracted
9 me to the School District of
10 Philadelphia, I do want to note for the
11 record that member Joyce Wilkerson
12 actually serves on the Executive
13 Committee for the Council for Great City
14 Schools. And so we are able to really
15 tap that organization for early
16 information, and we're often able to get
17 ahead of other districts because we have
18 someone who serves on that national body
19 that routinely shares information with
20 us.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Okay.

22 My next question is about teacher
23 vacancies. One of the biggest issues the
24 School District and teachers are facing
25 is teacher vacancies. The facts are

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 clear that Pennsylvania is in crisis of
3 recruiting new teachers, and with that in
4 mind, the Philadelphia Federation of
5 Teachers agreed to a one-year contract
6 this year.

7 Are you confident that the
8 District has the finances necessary to
9 meet the demands with the contract that
10 would bring new teachers into
11 Philadelphia, and how does the budget
12 address the lack of staff? And I want to
13 be very specific. I'm asking you to
14 address the lack of speech and language
15 pathologists, occupational therapists,
16 teachers, and custodial staff. And can
17 we anticipate a raise in salary and
18 bonuses to attract and retain these staff
19 in the next coming years?

20 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
21 Yes, I am confident that we have the
22 budgetary resources and that the Board,
23 as it has been done before, will make
24 good decisions upon the Superintendent's
25 recommendations relative to the PFT and

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 CASA contract in the upcoming year. This
3 Board has been very good stewards of the
4 public tax dollars. I would not have
5 come here to work as Superintendent if I
6 thought I was going to walk into a place
7 that was going to implode.

8 Relative to the positions.

9 Now, we're going to -- we are going to
10 continue to struggle, quite frankly -- I
11 want to manage the expectations -- with
12 recruiting the following: math teachers,
13 some science teachers, special education
14 teachers, foreign language teachers, and
15 speech-language pathologists. I know
16 that's an area that's near and dear to
17 you, Majority Leader Gilmore Richardson.
18 And even this year, we've had some
19 interruption in services because we just
20 could not get speech-language
21 pathologists hired.

22 Part of the issue is pay when
23 people can go to more lucrative. Part of
24 the issue is people -- we hire people and
25 if you don't treat them well, people

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 leave their immediate supervisors, no
3 matter how much you pay them. You've got
4 to have good work culture. And the third
5 thing, I think we have to talk up the
6 City and talk about how this is a great
7 place to live. And so how we present
8 ourselves in the public really matters
9 too for recruitment purposes, in my
10 opinion.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: How -- I
12 know I heard the bell, but how
13 competitive are our salaries for speech
14 and language pathology and occupational
15 therapists? Because to your point, they
16 can go anywhere. Are we within range for
17 fair salary rates for those positions?

18 And to President Streater's
19 point, are those the reasons why we
20 should kind of buckle down? Because
21 those are all Medicaid reimbursable
22 positions that we can be drawing down
23 more dollars to make sure that we're
24 paying people equitably and want to take
25 those jobs, when they can go to make \$100

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2 an hour in a hospital.

3 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

4 Absolutely. To your point, our Deputy
5 Superintendent for Talent, Strategy and
6 Culture is currently leading a salary
7 study with a vendor, and I'd like to --
8 as we get the results back from the
9 salary study, they'll make
10 recommendations to us about what's
11 market-appropriate salaries in this very,
12 very, very, very competitive market that
13 we're in. Once we get that salary study
14 back, we'll then go back and make
15 recommendations to President Streater and
16 the Board and give the Board an
17 opportunity to weigh in and give us
18 direction about how we should go, and at
19 that point, I think it would be
20 appropriate for us to come back and
21 update you about how we're moving in that
22 regard.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Thank
24 you so much.

25 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Before I

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 recognize the next Councilmember, just a
3 point of information. What is the
4 national organization that you referenced
5 earlier?

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: The
7 Council for Great City Schools.

8 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So for
9 us on our side, we have things like Local
10 Progress, the League of Cities. I'm
11 assuming that that's similar, right?

12 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
13 It's similar, and the reason why it's so
14 significant is some 40-plus years ago,
15 the person who used to have oversight for
16 that organization was Dr. Constance
17 Clayton. She remade that organization.
18 In fact, she fired the entire staff when
19 she was Superintendent here. She told me
20 the story and the former Executive
21 Director told me the story. He was out
22 of the country at the time for a funeral,
23 but he will be here for the naming of the
24 440 building.

25 She hired one person back. His

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 name is Mike Casserly. He served as
3 Executive Director for nearly 40 years.
4 He recently retired and now serves as
5 Executive Director Emeritus, and a
6 gentleman named Ray Hart, who came out of
7 the Atlanta public schools, a researcher,
8 leads that organization, but they
9 routinely advise the White House and
10 Congress on issues related to public
11 schools. In fact, I remember them
12 sitting down with President Obama doing a
13 roundtable on education. It's called the
14 Council for Great City Schools,
15 represents 77 member districts.

16 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
17 you. So I think I've heard of it before.
18 Now, similar to some of the cohorts that
19 we're a part of, do you pay to be a part
20 of the coalition?

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: We
22 pay to be a constituent member for the
23 Council for Great City Schools. It's
24 about \$40,000, which is a very minuscule
25 amount for all the support and resources

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 we receive.

3 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Makes
4 sense. I mean, we do similar things
5 here. So I just want to for the record
6 note that any other Board member can sit
7 on the Council. It doesn't have to be a
8 specific person. It could be anybody who
9 represents the School District of
10 Philadelphia, because we're paying for a
11 seat to be on the Board, correct?

12 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

13 That's correct.

14 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Okay.
15 Thank you, sir.

16 The Chair recognizes
17 Councilmember Phillips.

18 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
19 Listen, I just want to thank Chairman
20 Thomas. It's been a pleasure serving on
21 the Education Committee as the Vice Chair
22 of Education and seeing the work of
23 Councilwoman Kendra Brooks on Education
24 as well, amongst so many of our Education
25 Committee members. So I just want to say

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 thank you all.

3 The City of Philadelphia

4 certainly has an issue when it comes to
5 educating our young people, and safety is
6 a priority, as you said, in the current
7 budget. The Safe Path program aims to
8 increase community safety by providing a
9 positive, trusted adult presence for
10 students as they travel to and from
11 school, connected with adults with
12 existing violence intervention efforts.
13 Now, the program is modeled after the
14 Safe Passage program which started in
15 Chicago and resulted in 14 percent
16 decrease in violence after Chicago
17 schools implemented the program. Chicago
18 School District established a Safe
19 Passage program in 2009 with 35 schools.
20 The program currently serves at 188
21 schools for the 2023-2024 school year.

22 Dr. Watlington, this is
23 actually really important for me, because
24 I was bullied as a kid and I know what it
25 feels like to go home and not feel safe.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Bullies exist throughout the City of
3 Philadelphia, and what we're trying to do
4 our best is to make sure bullying doesn't
5 exist.

6 I'm curious to learn from you
7 how does the School District of
8 Philadelphia intend to incorporate the
9 expansion of the Safe Pass program into
10 its budget to extend its reach beyond the
11 additional 12 schools?

12 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

13 Thank you, Councilmember Phillips. As
14 you may or may not know, we are -- we
15 were fortunate to get some resources in
16 partnership with the University of
17 Pennsylvania to expand some of the Safe
18 Pass programs.

19 What I think people sometimes
20 forget is when you think about the 500
21 public school districts in the
22 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the
23 majority of those districts don't have to
24 take resources out of their operating
25 budget to go fund safe path programs, to

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 go fund safety zones with police
3 officers. The majority of those 500
4 school districts don't have to take
5 dollars out of their operating budget to
6 develop swing space plans and to pay to
7 move kids to other school locations, then
8 to move them back.

9 What happens is, every time we
10 take dollars out of the budget and we're
11 almost robbing Peter to pay Paul, we get
12 further and further away from what we're
13 driving, improvement in the classroom.

14 So to date, we've worked really
15 strategically and hard under Commissioner
16 Bethel's leadership and Chief Johnson's
17 leadership to go after grants and other
18 resources to expand the Safe Pass
19 programs. I think the number -- Chief
20 Johnson went from 7 to 22 -- 25.

21 Chief Johnson, could you come
22 to the -- since safety is so important,
23 perhaps you can just say a word about
24 that and specific to Councilmember
25 Phillips's question about how do we --

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 what's our plan for procuring more

3 resources to expand.

4 (Witness approached witness

5 table.)

6 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning,

7 Chairman. Good morning, Vice Chair.

8 Good morning, everyone. Good afternoon.

9 Sorry. Yes.

10 And so, yes, the Safe Pass

11 program, we absolutely think it is

12 essential. Currently right now it costs

13 approximately \$72,000 per location to run

14 the Safe Path program. That's inclusive

15 of four monitors and a lead.

16 The 25 schools that we cover

17 right now comes at a cost of

18 approximately \$1.8 million per year. To

19 date, we have secured grant funding.

20 This initiative has been completely paid

21 for through grant funding, and we have

22 grant funding to take us through the next

23 school year.

24 We're going to continue to

25 aggressively look for additional grant

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 funding so that we can expand the
3 program.

4 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: Thank
5 you. I would love to see how we can take
6 what Chicago did and put us in the
7 hundreds, because I know we just have
8 only 20-some-odd schools. This is really
9 important as one of your priorities.

10 The Superintendent presented
11 academic data for NAEP, which measures
12 growth, but, Superintendent, you said it
13 was for grades 3 to 8, but NAEP tests
14 grades 4 and 8 and not 3 through 8th
15 grade. Why was NAEP presented and not
16 academic achievement with PSSAs? Can you
17 please share the academic gains or losses
18 across grade bands?

19 Also, because my time is
20 limited and I want to make sure that
21 every question comes up that I want to
22 do, can you describe how your facilities
23 planning process is taking into account
24 the need for space for about 6,000
25 children currently not enrolled in pre-K

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 to attend pre-K programs?

3 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

4 Yes. To your first question about the
5 relationship, NAEP tests are given in the
6 4th and 8th grade, whereas our PSSAs are
7 given across grades 3 through 8.

8 The researchers did a study to
9 see what's the connection for 3 through 8
10 in the aggregate. That's the research we
11 provided.

12 But if we want to talk
13 specifically about PSSA, Pennsylvania
14 data, the District made progress in 13
15 out of 17 tested areas. Almost across
16 the board, with the exception of algebra,
17 the number of children scoring at the
18 below basic, the lowest level, improved
19 across the board, with a significant
20 improvement for Black and Latino
21 students. So that's kind of where we
22 stand on academic achievement.

23 Now, the high school numbers
24 are not as good. Quite frankly, we went
25 the wrong direction in algebra 1. And so

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 I want to give the full, full story
3 there.

4 Second part of your question
5 about 6,000 seats for pre-K students and
6 what is its relationship to the -- what's
7 its relationship to the facilities plan
8 that's in progress.

9 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: Yes.

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I
11 think I told you that last summer we
12 pulled together a group to do baseline
13 standards of what are the basic
14 expectations that every school should
15 meet and how do we allow the resources.
16 One of those baseline standards aligns to
17 having quality pre-K readily available
18 near where families live. We can do it
19 through multiple sources, but that's one
20 impact of the academic baseline standards
21 on the facilities planning work.

22 We don't have the solution yet,
23 but it is absolutely in our sights.

24 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: Thank
25 you. I will submit other questions for

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 the record, but I'll come back for the
3 second round.

4 Thank you, Chairman Thomas.

5 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
6 you, colleague.

7 The Chair recognizes
8 Councilmember Gauthier, followed by
9 Councilmember Bass.

10 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: Thank
11 you, Mr. Chair.

12 Good afternoon, Dr. Watlington.

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
14 Good afternoon.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I
16 wanted to follow up on Councilmember
17 Jones' line of questioning around youth
18 and homelessness. According to data
19 provided by HopePHL, a staggering 8,363
20 young people aged birth to 21 years old
21 are identified as experiencing
22 homelessness in Philadelphia. Sadly,
23 youth from birth to age 3 experience the
24 highest prevalence of homelessness,
25 leading to elevated risk of health

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2 problems, developmental delays, and
3 social-emotional difficulties.

4 Unsurprisingly, experiencing
5 this level of trauma at such a crucial
6 development state can lead to these same
7 young people dropping out of school when
8 they are older. All of these students
9 are not in DHS custody. They may have a
10 history of interaction with DHS but are
11 not currently in DHS care. We know that
12 350 to 400 DHS youth are AWOL, and most
13 of them are unhoused.

14 So my questions are the
15 following: Programs like Thrive offered
16 through HopePHL have partnered with the
17 School District to provide services to
18 this vulnerable population. How are this
19 and other partnerships being leveraged to
20 not only support those experiencing
21 homelessness but also to decrease its
22 occurrence? How much money has the
23 District allocated toward supporting this
24 effort in the coming school year and how
25 does that compare to prior years? And

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 knowing what happens during early
3 developmental stages affects later
4 learning abilities, is there anything
5 being done or that we should be doing to
6 support these young people before they
7 even enter the school system?

8 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

9 Thank you, Councilmember Gauthier.
10 Appreciate your referencing the
11 8,360-plus young folks and people who are
12 referred to as homeless. Several things.
13 I want to begin by saying I'd like to
14 follow up and get -- I don't want to give
15 you a number -- trust my memory. I would
16 like to follow up with a response to the
17 hearing and get you the actual dollar
18 impact in the budget related to this area
19 next year.

20 I can tell you that every penny
21 we're spending, we know it's worth it,
22 because the cost to Philadelphia and the
23 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for every
24 dropout, according to a Neubauer Family
25 Foundation study, is \$405,000, and so

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 want to redirect those resources.

3 We are -- in the Office of
4 Strategic Partnerships, which reports to
5 Chief of Staff Sarah Galbally, we are
6 currently identifying every partnership
7 that exists between the School District
8 of Philadelphia and the community, so we
9 can know what is the partnership, who is
10 the contact person, what resources are we
11 providing, what outcomes are we driving
12 toward, and how are we doing.

13 We don't have the full data to
14 give us that feedback just yet, but we're
15 happy to share that as we build out that
16 comprehensive database.

17 I can tell you that when I look
18 at a partnership like Strawberry Mansion
19 High School working with Ryan Boyer and
20 members of the Building Trades and other
21 groups, including Council, that provide
22 some financial literacy training, our
23 young people, 40 of them who did not
24 necessarily have a good job future and
25 weren't sure about their interest,

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 they're getting a credential in -- an
3 OSHA credential. They're learning
4 construction management, and they're
5 learning about how to manage that money.
6 So I think that's a gold standard example
7 of a partnership.

8 We should have lots of those
9 going across the District. But as we
10 build out that database of all the
11 partnerships, we'll be able to give you
12 some more defined quantitative data to
13 answer your question.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: It
15 would be great to have a sense of how
16 you're dealing with the issue of homeless
17 youth in a full sense in this year's
18 budget and how funding for that has --
19 the funding proposed for FY25, how that
20 compares to prior years.

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
22 Absolutely.

23 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I
24 wanted to ask a few questions about the
25 Sayre pool. Thank you so much, Board

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 President Streater, for referencing this
3 as a model for how the City and the
4 District can be working together to
5 reopen pools for our community. I agree
6 with you that it's a model.

7 Last year we were grateful to
8 get a vote from the School Board to put
9 \$11 million towards the renovation of
10 this site. We were also very excited to
11 have Council transfer -- I'm sorry. That
12 means I get another few seconds.

13 I wanted to talk about the
14 Sayre pool a little bit. I too, like
15 President Streater, think that this was a
16 great model for how the City can be
17 working with the School District to
18 reopen shuttered pools. We were grateful
19 for the School Board vote last year that
20 allocated \$11 million towards the
21 renovation of the site. Council was
22 excited to transfer \$3 million to add in
23 to the cost of having the site repaired.
24 And so that's a great outcome for the
25 community, but I wanted to get some

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 specifics on this project actually moving
3 forward.

4 So a few questions. First, can
5 you tell me if the contractor to design
6 and update the Sayre pool has been
7 selected? Can you talk to me about the
8 construction timeline and an anticipated
9 timeline for the groundbreaking? And
10 since the pool and the rec center share
11 one building, can you help me to
12 understand whether any of the repairs
13 will impact the rec center and maybe
14 cause closure or the inability to access
15 certain parts of the center?

16 And then, lastly, the community
17 was -- the community fought for years for
18 this, for years, and they really, really,
19 really want to be at the table as the
20 project moves forward and as we talk
21 about things like programming and access.
22 So can you please talk about how we can
23 include these advocates who really got
24 this win in the project moving forward?

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 want to defer to President Streater
3 first, because the Board took action on
4 that. So pleased that the Board saw fit
5 to take action on that, and I'll be glad
6 to follow with any specifics.

7 PRESIDENT STREATER: First, I
8 just want to say thank you for your
9 advocacy as well. You were an
10 instrumental partner in cooling some of
11 the heads that needed to be cooled, being
12 the advocate but also the mediator at
13 some points. So I was excited to help
14 push this over the line from the Board
15 perspective. So thank you again.

16 Again, like I said in my
17 comments, I think this could be an
18 example of the hard work that has to be
19 done behind the scenes to create MOUs of
20 understanding so that we can have the
21 type of partnerships, intergovernmental
22 approach that we would likely need with
23 our facilities when that comes to
24 fruition.

25 But I just want to kind of put

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 that level of detail to it. I'm going to
3 ask, I guess, Dr. Watlington if you want
4 to...

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

6 Absolutely.

7 In terms of the operation side,
8 the nuts and bolts of what's going on in
9 the administration and steps, I'll ask
10 Colonel Oz Hill, our Chief Operating
11 Officer. He can speak specifically to
12 that.

13 Colonel Hill, are you here?
14 (Witness approached witness
15 table.)

16 COLONEL HILL: Thank you very
17 much for the question, Councilmember, and
18 before I answer it directly, I'd like to
19 express the gratitude of more than 3,500
20 employees in Operations Division for the
21 support that this body has provided that
22 has enabled us to make investments and
23 improvements in our facilities. Thank
24 you very much for that.

25 With Sayre pool, on April 16th

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 we received five bid proposals for the
3 work to begin. Interviews are being
4 scheduled by our Selection Committee to
5 make a final decision. We anticipate
6 that Sayre pool will -- an action item on
7 Sarah pool will go before the Board of
8 Education at the June action item
9 meeting.

10 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: And
11 that's for the -- is that to approve the
12 contractor?

13 COLONEL HILL: Yes, ma'am.

14 Additionally, as we are talking
15 about pools, we are also updating the
16 estimates on Pickett pool, and that
17 should be finalized not later than the
18 end of this week.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: Wait,
20 wait, wait, wait. Before we move on, can
21 we talk about construction timeline for
22 Sayre and how we can engage the
23 community.

24 COLONEL HILL: We have met with
25 several community organizations

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2 soliciting input. Aqua Philly I believe
3 is the organization. We've met with
4 them. They've provided input around the
5 Sayre pool and exactly what's required.

6 Based on the selection of the
7 contractor and the confirmation of the
8 scope of work, a notice to proceed will
9 be issued, and that notice to proceed
10 will provide the definitive timeline for
11 the work to be completed.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: Can
13 you give me your best estimate?

14 COLONEL HILL: My best estimate
15 is that for the beginning of school year
16 '25 that that pool will be in operation.

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: Okay.
18 That's amazing. That's great.

19 And then on the community
20 piece, I just wanted to clarify that I
21 think Aqua Philly is one of the groups
22 advocating around pools citywide, but for
23 Sayre, we have a pretty specific working
24 group of people in the community that has
25 been fighting for this. So I would love

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 to talk to you offline about how we get
3 those folks to the table.

4 COLONEL HILL: Welcome the
5 conversation, ma'am.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: Thank
7 you.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
10 you, colleague. Thank you for your line
11 of questioning and, again,
12 congratulations on Sayre pool.

13 The Chair recognizes
14 Councilmember Bass, followed by
15 Councilmember Ahmad and Councilmember
16 Young.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank you.
18 Good afternoon.

19 (Good afternoon.)

20 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I have
21 just a few questions. The first is --
22 and I'd like for your answers to be
23 brief, because I'd really like to try to
24 get through as many of my questions as
25 possible, because it's been a minute.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Can you tell us what an
3 extended day looks like and how you get
4 staffing for that? I'm assuming you've
5 had conversations with the PFT and with
6 others. Are there incentives for staff?
7 Can you talk about that very briefly?

8 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

9 Extended day looks like programming that
10 kids have access to after the traditional
11 school day ends that is fun, innovative,
12 but they are learning something that
13 relates to what they learned during the
14 school day. Is that what you're
15 referring to, Councilmember?

16 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Yes. So
17 let me -- so just to be clear, because I
18 know that the Mayor is asking for
19 year-round educational attainment, that
20 it's going to continue. So it's no
21 longer, from my understanding, it's no
22 longer a September through June sort of
23 operation.

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

25 We've not -- it's a continuum. In fiscal

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2 year -- in school year '24-'25, we're
3 going to focus on building out the
4 after-school program supports so that
5 they're first class, they help, they're
6 interesting and they're related and they
7 complement what they're learning during
8 the school day.

9 I want to be clear, though,
10 downstream we intend to pilot a model
11 where the day is longer, more formalized
12 longer day, and extend the year with some
13 breaks during the year. The best example
14 of that is the Harlem Children's Zone.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So when is
16 downstream? How far away are we from
17 that?

18 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
19 School year '25-'26 we anticipate having
20 some pilots.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: '25-'26,
22 okay. Because I was under the impression
23 from the presentation that it was going
24 to be happening like now.

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

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2 This upcoming school year we're focusing
3 specifically on the after-school
4 component, and the reason is,
5 extended-day and year-round schools don't
6 work by just telling -- by the District
7 telling parents and children you're going
8 to school longer or your configuration is
9 going to change. We have to build the
10 demand and create a demand, and they'll
11 partnership support for it.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So is the
13 after-school programming optional then?

14 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: At
15 present, after-school programming is
16 optional. The key is if we make it
17 exciting, interested, and we've got to
18 take the time to hear what motivates
19 young people, then when they're partners
20 with it, they'll be better at it.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So if it's
22 not optional -- so it is optional.

23 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: At
24 present.

25 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So the

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2 idea is to make it exciting and then
3 they'll want to participate, but assuming
4 that not every child will want to
5 participate no matter how exciting, how
6 do you plan to incentivize young people
7 to get them to come to these optional
8 activities that -- they just may want to
9 get out and run free. You know, like
10 they've been in a school building since
11 8:00 a.m. It's 3 o'clock, I'm ready to
12 get out of here. How do you keep them
13 for this very important programming?
14 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: We
15 do the same thing that happens whenever a
16 judge tells a Tony Watlington or Reginald
17 Streater -- maybe we should use our
18 names, but if a judge says, look, you're
19 in front of my courtroom, and I'm telling
20 you you need to be in school every day.
21 There are plenty of cases where judges
22 tell kids they have to be in school.
23 That doesn't mean they're connected. It
24 doesn't mean they're interested. It just
25 means they're not on the street.

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2 And so part of what we have to
3 do is do the work to have programs where
4 we're doing coding and STEM work and
5 other extracurricular activities that
6 appeal to their interest, to include
7 athletics, sports, extracurricular
8 activities, arts, chess.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Got it.

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: And
11 a wide range of supports.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay. So
13 2025-2026 we can look for the extended
14 school day?

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
16 Absolutely, yes.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay. So
18 that will be Monday through Friday, 8:00
19 to?

20 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
21 We've not made those -- we've not
22 finalized those decisions. I can tell
23 you that one of the best models in the
24 country of an extended-year/year-round
25 kind of calendar is at the Harlem

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2 Children's Zone. I can tell you that
3 Black and Hispanic and Latino students
4 there have pretty much closed the gap in
5 performance, and they go to school from
6 8:00 to 6:00.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So what
8 are the hours? 8:00 to 6:00?

9 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
10 8:00 to 6:00. And generally up to half
11 of the kids are there on Saturdays.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay. And
13 that is throughout the duration of the
14 entire year or is that just for certain
15 months?

16 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
17 They don't go to school every week of
18 every month throughout the year. There
19 are some intercession breaks built in
20 between, and they do that in a way that
21 gives kids some opportunity to have
22 some -- they could do some extra tutoring
23 time, they could have some time to just
24 have some time off, but the main thing
25 that it does is, it prevents the summer

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2 slide.

3 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay. So
4 let me ask you a question. If you would,
5 talk to me about District growth in
6 population. So most of the City's growth
7 is east of Broad Street. And so most of
8 the overpopulation in schools is
9 obviously east of Broad Street,
10 particularly I think in Northeast, maybe
11 some parts of South Philadelphia. And
12 meanwhile there's a lot of schools,
13 including in my district, that are
14 severely underpopulated. And so because
15 of that, the resources instead of having
16 it a little more evenly keeled so that
17 you can put resources on the east side
18 and on the west side of Broad Street,
19 like how are we going about that?
20 Because right now it feels to me that the
21 resources, the spending is primarily east
22 of Broad, and for those of us west of
23 Broad, it's kind of like, well, that's
24 where the population growth is, but what
25 are we doing to make that a little bit

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2 even keel so, number one, kids aren't in
3 overpopulated schools and not getting
4 what they need, but, number two, the ones
5 on the west side who are in
6 underpopulated schools aren't getting the
7 investment from the District that they
8 should be getting because it's going to
9 where the overpopulation is?

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
11 Councilmember, one of the biggest equity
12 issues of our time is how do we address
13 that phenomenon in a way that by the way
14 we do things, we encourage more
15 out-migration from some neighborhoods and
16 we encourage more migration to other
17 neighborhoods. We have to get kids the
18 supports that they need.

19 Now, what we will work on in
20 this facilities planning process is the
21 fact that we can drive faster and better
22 supports for the kids that you're
23 referring to if we take a look during
24 this process at a minimum school size,
25 because you can drive faster, better

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2 resources to support the kids who need
3 them the most. That's one way.

4 The other way is that we budget
5 in a way that we know some kids and some
6 schools, some communities need more
7 resources. It's the difference between
8 equality and equity. And so we do have
9 an equity formula in terms of how we
10 staff and provide some resources. It's
11 still not enough due to the historic
12 underfunding.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Is there
14 any possibility of moving kids, of
15 chartering buses so that you're not -- so
16 that like if you've got a school and
17 you've got an overpopulation, that you
18 can charter a bus to go from that school
19 to a school that's underpopulated in
20 another part of town rather than
21 incentive? Because the incentive may
22 mean that I as a parent have to figure
23 out how to get my kid there or it may
24 mean that my child may be relying on
25 public transportation, which can be

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2 dangerous, you know, going into different
3 neighborhoods. You know, if you're not
4 from one part of town, you shouldn't be
5 going to that part without some sort of
6 mode of transportation to get there and
7 to get back safely to your own
8 neighborhood. Are those kinds of
9 conversations happening or considered?

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
11 Absolutely. Some of the innovative
12 thinking we'll be doing as a part of this
13 process is taking a hard look at our
14 transportation services and how we
15 provide transportation, how we work with
16 public transportation sector, and what we
17 might consider to do differently in the
18 School District and the City.

19 And I'll also note that there's
20 always -- there's lots of opportunities,
21 not limited to that. We can also look at
22 co-location from time to time where it's
23 appropriate, but I think that when you
24 have a number of really small
25 under-enrolled schools to continue to do

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2 the same thing and expect a different
3 result is just probably not going to be a
4 good way to approach that. So we're open
5 to a lot of different opportunities.

6 President Streater.

7 PRESIDENT STREATER: If I could
8 add briefly, under the Board, the Board
9 has a policy where if a school is
10 under-enrolled by 90 percent, students
11 from outside the catchment can go to the
12 school. So this is my plug for anybody
13 who is listening. There's some great
14 schools in your district. Linglebach,
15 for example. Like there's some great
16 schools that might be under-enrolled
17 where there's a great experience there,
18 but students from other parts of the City
19 have access now under the Board's policy
20 around out-of-school catchment enrollment
21 for neighborhood schools. So just wanted
22 to put that out there.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay. And
24 I know the bell has rung and I want to
25 honor the time, but I do want to make

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2 just one quick statement, not a question,
3 and, that is, that I've asked the
4 District several times now about
5 incidents, when they occur in the Eighth
6 District, to be informed, and I haven't
7 had that courtesy. And I've asked a
8 number of times, and it's becoming a
9 little bit like what is going on here.
10 When Evelyn Sample-Oates was government
11 relations for the Philadelphia School
12 District, it never happened. It never
13 happened. Dr. Watlington, you know
14 because I pulled you aside and gently had
15 this conversation with you before.

16 But I'm very serious about
17 being informed about what's happening in
18 my district, because when someone calls
19 me and says, I heard that there was a
20 shooting at this school, I need to be
21 able to say directly, I spoke with the
22 School District and they said it wasn't
23 true, they said it was true, they said
24 that someone was injured, they said no
25 one was injured. I need to be able to

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2 say I got it straight from the horse's
3 mouth as to what happened in realtime.

4 And so I think that the sort of
5 going around me as a District member --
6 because they're not calling anybody else
7 in here, right? In the Eighth District,
8 they're going to call me, and everybody
9 has got my cell phone number. So they're
10 going to be in touch with me directly and
11 they want to know what happened at XYZ
12 school, and I have to be accountable, and
13 I rely on you so that I can be
14 accountable.

15 So I'm asking -- as it was in
16 the past, like I said, when Evelyn
17 Sample-Oates was sort of like in charge
18 of this sort of operation, that that
19 would return to be the policy of the
20 District.

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
22 Duly noted. We'll do a better job of
23 that, Councilmember.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank you
25 very much. Thank you.

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2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
4 you.

5 The Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Ahmad.

7 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
8 you, Chair.

9 Good afternoon. Thank you for
10 being here. It's been a long morning,
11 afternoon, lots of really good
12 information about progress.

13 You know, you spoke about your
14 five priorities, safety being number one,
15 and I think the academic achievement was
16 number three, and I'm sort of
17 intersecting those two and looking at how
18 student progress, achievement is impacted
19 by number of teachers in the classroom,
20 so the ratio of student to teacher.

21 Research has shown, and I'm
22 sure you know this, the smaller that
23 ratio is, one to 17 -- right now I think
24 it's one to 30 for elementary school and
25 one to 33 for middle and upper grades.

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2 When we think about safety,
3 when we think about knowing your student
4 and knowing what life circumstances
5 they're going through, if they're going
6 to be imminently homeless or there's
7 trouble in their home or whatever the
8 circumstances that impact a child and
9 their learning potential and capacity is
10 about that knowledge, is about having the
11 teacher being the first line of defense
12 to keep them safe in the classroom and
13 make sure they learn.

14 So I wanted to -- you gave us
15 the example of your school district
16 before, how they did a public-private
17 partnership to do air conditioning. Can
18 we look at different ways to really put
19 some resource into this, because this can
20 be drawing from anti-gun violence money,
21 this can be drawing from Medicaid money,
22 this is a determinant of health. There's
23 so many different ways to package this.
24 I wanted to know what your thoughts were
25 on that, and where are we going in terms

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2 of real attention to our learning styles
3 in the classroom when you have just one
4 teacher and not much support? Thank you.

5 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

6 Thank you, Councilmember Ahmad. I'll say
7 two things. One, related to class size,
8 you're absolutely right. There's been a
9 number of national studies, particularly
10 in the kindergarten through 3rd grade
11 range, that say if you bring the class
12 size down to one to 15 or less and you've
13 got highly qualified, well supported
14 curriculum, teachers and you're teaching
15 the science of reading curriculum, you
16 can improve literacy much faster. And
17 our current numbers that we operate under
18 are much higher than that, so we need to
19 be able to address that.

20 Relative to my experience with
21 public-private partnership with regard to
22 air conditioning, one of the things
23 that's different in another state where
24 I've spent the most of my time is that
25 we're able to make the case to the public

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2 that if you want these upgrades, we would
3 put initiatives on the ballot where
4 there's a quarter cent sales tax, et
5 cetera, even in the districts -- in North
6 Carolina, school boards -- none of the
7 school boards have taxing authority, just
8 like here, but we were able to put
9 measures on the ballot and say -- and
10 people voted with their -- used their
11 voting prerogative to fund bond
12 campaigns.

13 Now, granted, the other
14 difference in the state that I came
15 from -- although the State Supreme Court
16 ruled that the way we support the most
17 disadvantaged schools was
18 unconstitutional too. In that state, the
19 state still takes on a much greater
20 percentage of the local school district
21 funding than Pennsylvania does.

22 When you look across the
23 country, Pennsylvania has one of the
24 lowest state-funded percentages relative
25 to how school districts are funded, and

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 we make up so much based off local
3 revenue. That wasn't necessarily the
4 case in another school district where the
5 state just paid more. But anyway, that
6 would be my thoughts about that.

7 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: So
8 there's different sources of revenue to
9 support something like this. We have a
10 \$14 billion surplus at the state level,
11 right? So I think it behooves us now to
12 have a plan to say how are we going to
13 address this ratio, how are we going to
14 do it now.

15 We are a first world country,
16 and yet we have our children graduating
17 not reading at grade level or doing math
18 at grade level. To me, that's criminal,
19 and I think we need to put everything we
20 have, every resource, every available
21 avenue to make sure we take care of our
22 young people, who are our future, and to
23 make that an urgent matter. I didn't see
24 anything in here speaking to that.

25 I've spoken to people before

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2 about class size. They say, oh, yeah,
3 that's like an idealistic thought. I'm
4 like, why can't we take that idealism and
5 put it into action when it is our
6 children's lives at stake?

7 So I really implore you, the
8 School Board to make this a priority, to
9 work with us to see how we advocate for
10 it, how we get our communities and our
11 families to realize this can be done.
12 It's not like rocket science.

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: One
14 of the lessons we learned from the
15 pandemic, when Congress appropriated
16 those dollars to all these 14,000 school
17 districts, a number of school districts
18 immediately allocated the dollars to
19 address learning loss. They said, we're
20 going to create more teacher positions.
21 Many of those districts were unsuccessful
22 because even if you create more teaching
23 positions to bring class size down across
24 the board, in a lot of districts the
25 teacher supply is not there. And so what

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 you end up doing is, you hire less than
3 highly qualified teachers, and then the
4 public says, wait a minute, we gave you
5 more money, you hired more teachers, why
6 didn't the test scores go up. Because we
7 didn't follow the research. The most
8 important factor is a highly qualified,
9 well supported teacher.

10 Now, to the extent that we
11 rebuild a type line, it would make sense
12 to bring class sizes down. Generally
13 we're not seeing a lot of research that
14 lower class sizes at the secondary level
15 is improving academic achievement. The
16 key is in K-3, and you've got to be
17 teaching the science of reading and
18 you've got to have a highly qualified,
19 well supported, stable teacher, not the
20 rookies and not people who came into the
21 profession from somewhere else and didn't
22 get a good teacher education program.

23 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: And
24 you're having a whole new set of
25 curriculum now. So this is going to be

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 very critical that we don't see a slide,
3 right, as the teacher is ramping up to
4 this. So whatever you need, I think we
5 should be doing, but you have to tell us
6 what it is you're needing and have a real
7 plan, a strategic plan, around how we
8 make this achievement gap disappear,
9 because we can't get our students into
10 jobs that need them to read and write and
11 do math, you know. That's just every
12 job.

13 So I just implore you to think
14 about how -- what is the best way we
15 prepare our children to be ready for this
16 21st century, because we seem to be in
17 the 19th. So thank you very much.

18 Thank you, Chair.

19 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: That's
22 great timing, Councilmember.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilmember Young.

25 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 you, Mr. Chair.

3 Good afternoon. Just to put
4 some things into perspective, right? So
5 the City of Boston has a population of
6 over 600,000 people with a budget of -- a
7 projected Fiscal Year '25 budget of
8 4.64 billion. So that covers the city
9 operational services and their education
10 budget, right? And so the School
11 District serves a population of over just
12 about 200,000 with the same budget.

13 And so I'm just trying to get
14 at -- and the School District has one
15 goal, one service, and that is to provide
16 education. They don't have to worry
17 about cleaning streets. They don't have
18 to worry about providing other services.
19 The number one job of the School District
20 is to educate our children. And I'm a
21 little disappointed to see that the
22 priorities -- the priority area
23 accelerate academic achievement is No. 3
24 instead of No. 1. So I'm disappointed in
25 that.

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2 Dr. Watlington, you mentioned
3 that the Central Office has a modified
4 zero-based budgeting method which has led
5 to savings, right? And that's great.
6 However, I'm a little disappointed and
7 disheartened by your response regarding
8 why this budgeting method is not broader.
9 You mentioned something along the lines
10 that it's like trying to turn a barge in
11 the Delaware River. But from my
12 understanding looking at these numbers,
13 the School District is sinking. That
14 ship is sinking right now, right? And so
15 I think we have to start over, start
16 anew, blow it up, right? And essentially
17 zero-based budgeting starts at a zero
18 point every single year for every single
19 program, right? And I think it's a much
20 more efficient budgeting method than an
21 incremental-based budgeting.

22 However, I think there's an
23 even better method of budgeting when it
24 comes to education and, that is,
25 outcomes-based budgeting, right? Because

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 the School District is in the results
3 business, the achievement business, and
4 so how do you measure the results? How
5 do you measure the dollars versus the
6 results.

7 And I think during this
8 financially restrained times which you're
9 in, you know, we can target austerity
10 measures with less reliance on raising
11 taxes, because \$400 million is not going
12 to come from anywhere. So outcomes
13 should inform your budgeting process, and
14 with that, in instances where the data
15 doesn't show significant improvements,
16 like, for example, the attendance rate.
17 It went up from 57 to 60. That's a three
18 percent improvement. That's great,
19 right? But what investments are you
20 making to lower that gap? How much money
21 is being invested to close that gap? How
22 much money is being invested to say, you
23 know what, we need to go from 60 percent
24 to 80 percent? Like where can we as a
25 body see that the School District is

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 investing this amount to achieve that
3 goal, right?

4 And there are other goals that
5 we have in mind. Essentially with the
6 dropout rate, right? Where can we see
7 that the School District is investing
8 this amount to close this gap? And
9 that's something that is not fairly
10 obvious for us to see and to determine.

11 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I
12 will say that when you think about this
13 Harvard/Stanford study, it wasn't done by
14 someone down the street. These are
15 pretty reputable resources at those
16 institutions that have the resources to
17 really study the academic rebound for
18 30 percent -- 60 percent of the U.S.
19 public school population.

20 I do think it is not
21 insignificant that our students are
22 rebounding faster than Atlanta, Detroit,
23 Los Angeles. I don't mean that to
24 suggest --

25 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: We've

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 heard that, Dr. Watlington. You've told
3 us that. We are rebounding faster than
4 some of our peer cities. That's great.
5 We were much lower than them in
6 achievement anyway. So we're rebounding
7 at a -- we shouldn't be there in the
8 first place to have to rebound faster
9 than that.

10 So essentially -- again, I
11 understand all that. Outside of that
12 rebounding fast, again, where can we see
13 the money that is being invested to
14 achieve these goals that you have?

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
16 I'll say one other thing, and I will
17 certainly invite President Streater to
18 speak from the Board's perspective,
19 because he's been in the District -- been
20 a resident here longer than I have.

21 I will tell you that the top
22 two things that I prioritize as the
23 Superintendent is investing in highly
24 qualified and well supported teachers.
25 Now, because the pipeline is down by

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 71 percent, you won't see me go and say,
3 you know, Councilmember Young, let's just
4 go buy a whole bunch of technology, let's
5 go buy a whole bunch of tutoring kits,
6 let's just go buy a whole bunch of
7 workbooks. For me it's always going to
8 be highly qualified, well supported
9 teachers.

10 So the industry standard is
11 that since school districts are
12 people-intensive organizations, we spend
13 greater than 70 percent of our budgets on
14 people and benefits, we've got to invest
15 in them. So the industry standard is to
16 spend no less than five percent of the
17 budget on meaningful professional
18 development, supporting teachers with, A,
19 knowing my content; B, knowing how to
20 connect the content and make it
21 interesting and get students engaged;
22 and, 3, how do we really connect with
23 families to understand the neighborhoods
24 and culture from which our kids come
25 from. That's number one.

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2 A second piece is --

3 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

4 Mr. Chair, if I may, Mr. Watlington, I
5 understand that point, and I guess it's
6 not getting to the question that I asked
7 specifically, so I'll just ask another
8 question specifically.

9 You mentioned teachers, right?
10 So when it comes to the need for
11 teachers, we have classroom aides. What
12 incentives, what help does the School
13 District provide for any of those aides
14 that now want to become teachers?

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: We
16 have a paraprofessional initiative that
17 we've got some \$2 million additional
18 investment in in partnership with
19 currently with Cheyney University, La
20 Salle, Temple, and College Unbound. They
21 can get -- they already know our kids.
22 They work in the School District. They
23 can get their degrees debt free and come
24 back to work in the School District.
25 That is a signature program that we're

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 doing in partnership with the PFT.

3 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Now, how
4 often -- because I have a lot of friends
5 who are paraprofessionals, right, and
6 that question came from them, who had no
7 idea this program existed. So how are
8 you getting that word to them?

9 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
10 Again, Chief Coppadge is helping us to
11 have an aggressive communication
12 strategy. In fact, I'll be attending a
13 graduation at Cheyney this year. We've
14 got a number of people who raised their
15 hand, well over 200.

16 And, Councilmember, here's
17 what's interesting about that: Whereas
18 our teaching population has an imbalance
19 of white teachers to a majority Black and
20 brown student population, the
21 paraprofessional pipeline --

22 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I know.
23 They're all Black. I know. So, you
24 know, those are things that we already
25 know, right? And it's just what are we

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 doing to change that, is the question.
3 What are we doing specifically to
4 increase that number of Black and brown,
5 Latino, Asian teachers in the classroom?

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 We're expanding our footprint for
8 recruiting, number one. We're investing
9 in the paraprofessional initiative,
10 number two. We are planning for a launch
11 of a middle college high school in
12 partnership with the Community College of
13 Philadelphia where we will identify young
14 people as early as the 7th and 8th grade.
15 Instead of putting a basketball in their
16 hand and say go be a professional
17 athlete, we're going to encourage them to
18 think about becoming a teacher. We're
19 going to take them through a rigorous
20 program through high school and we're
21 going to find the money for folks who
22 live right here in our city and get them
23 through college debt free, just like we
24 do with the paraprofessional initiative.
25 Those are three signature initiatives.

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2 And also we've got some work already
3 occurring at Parkway West, SLA Beeber,
4 and other schools where they're doing
5 some good work to prepare people who are
6 interested, young people who are
7 interested in education.

8 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
9 you. I heard the bell, so thank you.

10 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
11 Councilmember Young, thank you for the
12 line of questioning, and please tee in
13 for the next line.

14 Let me just add a couple
15 attachments to Councilmember Young's
16 question. I think he asked some
17 important questions, especially around
18 academic achievement. I don't need the
19 answer right now, because I'm going to
20 call up Councilmember Harrity and then
21 Councilmember Landau, but when we come
22 back from our break, a couple things that
23 I would like you to have for us in line
24 with Councilmember Young's questioning.

25 So the Philadelphia School

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2 District has been under local control
3 since July of 2018. We're about six
4 years as having control of our own
5 schools here. When we come back from the
6 break, we would like for you to let us
7 know what were the ten lowest performing
8 schools when the SRC was running the
9 School District of Philadelphia and what
10 are the ten lowest performing schools
11 right now. That's one thing.

12 The second thing, if we exclude
13 charter schools and special admission
14 schools, what is the baseline proficiency
15 for all of our kids in both math and
16 English, looking specifically at 11th
17 grade standardized testing mechanisms
18 that are out there.

19 I don't need the answers to
20 that right now.

21 The third thing we're going to
22 ask is, what percentage of Philadelphia
23 children have attended a school that has
24 been closed due to lead or asbestos while
25 they were currently a student in the

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2 school?

3 So similar to the questions
4 that Councilmember Young asked, if we can
5 get a little more information around what
6 Councilmember Young is asking around
7 dollars being spent on moving the needle
8 as well as the questions that I just
9 asked, that will help us coming back on
10 the other side from the break.

11 The Chair recognizes
12 Councilmember Harrity, followed by
13 Councilmember Rue Landau.

14 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
15 you, Councilman.

16 I have a whole list of
17 questions here that I'll get to in the
18 second round, I guess, but I have a few
19 from a couple constituents who are
20 texting me asking me to ask questions.

21 So let's start with this one:
22 How will principals be held accountable
23 to adhere to the Accelerated Philly
24 goals, especially pertaining to
25 effectively partnering with parents,

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2 family, and community members?

3 I'm sorry. Did you not hear

4 that? Okay. How will principals be held

5 accountable to adhere to the Accelerated

6 Philly goals, especially pertaining to

7 effectively partnering with parents,

8 family, and community members? That's

9 one. And how often do FACE liaisons

10 receive professional development to teach

11 them how to advocate families and

12 community members?

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

14 Thank you, Councilmember Harrity. To

15 your first question about how will

16 principals be held accountable to

17 Accelerate Philly and our expectations,

18 absolute expectation that starts with the

19 Superintendent and goes right on over to

20 the schools to partner with families and

21 communities. We absolutely are

22 hardwiring that into how we deliver

23 annual evaluations. We can't just say at

24 the 10,000-foot level that we want to

25 partner with families and communities as

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2 equal partners and have no tool for
3 measuring that.

4 There's a guardrail that the
5 Board created around the extent to which
6 we work in the community, and we're also
7 including that in how we evaluate the
8 Superintendent, members of my team,
9 Assistant Superintendents and others.

10 To your question about how
11 often the FACE office receives
12 professional development, I can't sit
13 here and tell you the exact number of
14 days, but I'll get that number for you.
15 I will tell you that we're taking a hard
16 look at how we can drive better and more
17 robust community engagement relative to
18 the FACE office given the staffing levels
19 that we have there. We absolutely
20 recognize there's room for improvement.
21 It's no secret. I've heard that,
22 notwithstanding the hard-working people
23 we have in the FACE office.

24 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Okay.
25 And you'll get us those? So that's good.

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2 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

3 Absolutely. Yes, sir.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I got
5 another question. It's actually kind of
6 disturbing, if it's true. Teachers'
7 jails or rubber rooms, there is supposed
8 to be three. What are they, how many are
9 there, and where are they?

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

11 Yes. There is this phenomenon referred
12 to as a rubber room. So I don't give you
13 the incorrect information and I certainly
14 won't want to talk about confidential
15 personnel information, I'll invite Deputy
16 Superintendent Grant-Skinner up, who
17 oversees the Human Resources Department,
18 and he can speak specifically to the
19 location and anything else that would be
20 appropriate to share about that.

21 Deputy Superintendent
22 Grant-Skinner.

23 (Witness approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: So what

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2 are these? These are rooms that are used
3 for disciplinary? Is that what it is?

4 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

5 GRANT-SKINNER: Sure. Thank you for the
6 question. There are times when we have
7 allegations of some kind of improper
8 behavior of an employee, which could
9 include a teacher and could include other
10 employees, where that necessitates us to
11 temporarily reassign that individual from
12 their normal work location, such as a
13 school.

14 So an example of that is, there
15 could be an allegation that involves DHS
16 where we get information that says we
17 need to implement a safety plan while
18 that is being invested to remove that
19 person from their normal work location.

20 So while those are not the
21 words we use to name the spaces, we have
22 a couple of spaces at the District office
23 where individuals in those temporary
24 circumstances are reassigned to report to
25 work instead of their typical work

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2 location.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: So
4 these are actually teachers that are
5 being -- who are accused or being
6 invested for something else unrelated or
7 is it related to the school? Could it be
8 related to the school or is it just if
9 they're having, as you say, an issue with
10 DHS with their own family and then we
11 have to -- so how does it work?

12 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT
13 GRANT-SKINNER: This could be appropriate
14 for any employee of the District who is
15 under -- for which we've received some
16 allegation that relates in some way to
17 their ability to be in their normal work
18 location.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Okay.
20 So these would be teachers or staff that
21 are kind of suspended, is that what it
22 is, or like kind of -- can you explain
23 like what's the method behind this? This
24 is -- so we're pulling teachers out of
25 classes or whatever in order to send them

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2 over there to do what?

3 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

4 GRANT-SKINNER: Sure. So you used the
5 word "suspended," and I will say you
6 might think about it in lay terms like
7 that, but it is actually while we are
8 going through an investigation and/or due
9 process. So we've not made any
10 determination of a consequence, which
11 could be suspension, which could be
12 termination, which could be something
13 else.

14 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: So
15 they're waiting for their case or
16 whatever it is to go through the process,
17 and as they're going through the process,
18 they are assigned to these other rooms?

19 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

20 GRANT-SKINNER: Alternate location.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: And
22 while they're there -- I'm sure there's
23 levels of severity for what's going on
24 there. What's going on while they're
25 there? Like what are they doing? Are

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2 they working? Are they getting other
3 training? Like what happens?

4 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

5 GRANT-SKINNER: So they're --

6 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Or are
7 they just sitting there doing nothing, in
8 other words, collecting a paycheck?

9 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

10 GRANT-SKINNER: It's a range, and I would
11 say what is consistent in all of those
12 cases, it is aligned with an expectation
13 that they continue to report to work,
14 because these are cases where, again, we
15 are going through due process and can't
16 stop paying them.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Yeah,
18 innocent until proven guilty. I get
19 that. I get that. So I'm just trying to
20 get a whole handle on the whole
21 situation. So how many at any one time
22 do we have assigned to these rooms?

23 DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

24 GRANT-SKINNER: I don't have any specific
25 number available today, but we could

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2 follow up with that.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Can you
4 get us those numbers?

5 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: I'm
6 sorry. If we can get those -- and I got
7 you, Councilman.

8 If we can get the number of
9 teachers or staff in general that are
10 currently in the rubber room before we
11 finish our hearing today, that would
12 definitely be appreciated.

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
14 Thank you. Happy to follow up, Chair
15 Thomas.

16 I do want to note that the
17 School District of Philadelphia has some
18 19,000 employees, and when we get you the
19 number, sir, you'll find that there's a
20 very minuscule percent that are going to
21 be there. So I do want to manage that
22 expectation.

23 And, number two, I will defend
24 to the death any individual's right to
25 due process. The key is due process

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2 ought to occur in a timely manner. It's
3 no different than in the court system.
4 Nobody should sit -- I'm no lawyer like
5 President Streater, but nobody should sit
6 in a courtroom for 50 years waiting to
7 get to trial to be able to face their
8 accuser. But we'll be happy to get that
9 information. Thank you.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: And if
11 you could, what's the average length of
12 stay that they're assigned to this other
13 thing, like how long? Are they there
14 average six months waiting for the --
15 because I know how the court process
16 works, because it takes sometimes,
17 especially with DHS, it could take a long
18 while for their investigation to finish,
19 and at that point, these teachers are
20 pulled out of teaching our children.

21 So I'm just curious, you know,
22 the length of stay and the number that
23 are actually in that teachers jail or
24 rubber room, whatever they're calling it.

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

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2 Councilmember Harrity and Chair Thomas,
3 since I don't routinely ask for that
4 report and it's not an established data
5 system that I routinely review, since
6 you've asked me that question, I'd like
7 to defer to giving us an opportunity to
8 go back and pull the data and be very
9 transparent with the response to you.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I'm
11 fine with that. I'd rather it be right
12 than a guess.

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
14 Yes, sir. Happy to.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
16 you.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
19 you, Councilman. Appreciate the line of
20 questioning.

21 Just for clarity, Doc, can we
22 get the number of people in the rubber
23 room sooner, because I know that number
24 is not hard for you to come by. The
25 Councilman's other request as far as the

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2 average time, I know that might take you
3 some time to get. So if we can just get
4 the first part of his question answered
5 today, and the second part, if you can
6 get it to our Council President, we would
7 definitely appreciate that.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilmember Landau, followed by
10 Councilmember O'Rourke and after
11 Councilmember O'Rourke, that would be the
12 end of the first round and we will take a
13 brief recess.

14 Councilmember Landau.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Thank
16 you.

17 Thanks for sticking with us
18 here. Appreciate you.

19 I want to ask a couple of
20 series of questions, but just underscore
21 what my colleagues are saying about
22 reimagining how we're doing things at the
23 School District. I appreciate that our
24 scores are going up, but the floor should
25 not be the floor. We should only be

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2 continually moving the ceiling, because
3 we've got some wonderful young kids who
4 can do so well and some educators that
5 just need support.

6 So on that level, I wanted to
7 ask, so many of our schools have one,
8 maybe two counselors. I'm told that
9 sometimes counselors are pulled from
10 their counseling duties to cover a class
11 sometimes twice a day. Can you share
12 with Council the classroom coverage
13 procedures and why are counselors
14 covering, especially when our students
15 are experiencing so much trauma?

16 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
17 Thank you, Councilmember Landau. I'll
18 say two things. Number one, the National
19 Counselors Association recommends a
20 student-to-counselor ratio of one
21 counselor per 250 students. That sounds
22 like a big number. Historically the
23 counselor-to-student ratio in the School
24 District of Philadelphia has been one
25 counselor per 649 students. That's been

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2 our historic ratio.

3 Now, we have made some inroads
4 to get that down in part with the
5 COVID -- the ARPA dollars. We can follow
6 up and get the exact numbers through
7 Chief Herbstman and we'll communicate
8 that back to Council.

9 Yes, we have been in
10 communications with the Philadelphia
11 Federation of Teachers that represents
12 many certificated staff members, not just
13 teachers, and one of the things we've
14 been talking about is trying to keep our
15 counselors specific to their roles given
16 the level of trauma we have in the City.

17 We have received some
18 complaints, very transparently, about
19 counselors being asked to work on
20 attendance issues, to teach in a rotation
21 sometimes so that teachers can have more
22 time to plan together, and we've been
23 addressing those with our PFT partners I
24 think with great progress.

25 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Can you

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2 tell us how many schools have social
3 worker teams helping students, how many
4 social workers those schools have, and
5 how many schools do not have these teams
6 and how much would it cost to put these
7 teams into every school?

8 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'd
9 like to pull those numbers and have staff
10 to pull them, unless Chief Herbstman has
11 those numbers at the ready. I don't
12 think we have those at the ready, but we
13 can -- Chair Thomas, we can pull that
14 data together very quickly and we can
15 also share with you.

16 Now, in a lot of districts, and
17 I'll have to check with ours, there are
18 some positions that schools actually
19 share. Like it's very rare that one
20 school will have a dedicated
21 speech-language pathologist depending on
22 school size, but we'll take a look at
23 that and we'll get you the information.
24 We understand your question.

25 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Right.

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2 The more supports to our teachers, the
3 better.

4 Okay. Next set of questions.

5 According to Penn Law Professor Dorothy
6 Roberts, 50 percent of Black children
7 will be subjected to a child welfare
8 investigation by the time they are 18,
9 and truancy is a major driver of family
10 separation. What schools have the
11 highest truancy rates in the City? I
12 have a few questions. I'll rattle them
13 off. What schools have the highest
14 truancy rates in the City? Can the
15 District send information documenting the
16 primary causes for truancy? Are
17 school-based factors like bullying, unmet
18 special education needs, and high teacher
19 vacancies taken into account? And what
20 specific strategies does the District use
21 to reach young people with persistent
22 truancy and disengagement from school
23 given the high rate with which we see
24 these children becoming involved with gun
25 violence on both sides of the tragedies?

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2 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

3 Thank you. Relative to the question,
4 Councilmember Landau, on what schools
5 have the highest truancy rates, we
6 absolutely can get you that very quickly,
7 because we look at this every Monday
8 afternoon in my cabinet meeting. My
9 direct reports and I meet and we look at
10 attendance across the board and we look
11 at the school over the previous week to
12 month that had the most absences, all the
13 way down to the schools that have some of
14 the most improving absences. So we can
15 get you that report.

16 The primary causes varies. I
17 can tell you that kids who have supports
18 outside of school, family structures that
19 provide support seems to be a big piece
20 of the equation. It ranges from
21 everything to kids who are ranging -- who
22 are helping to care for other family
23 members, all the way to kids not having
24 clean clothes to wear to school and
25 things like having washing machines

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2 inside of schools that work. We're
3 finding lots of different needs, but the
4 nucleus is having a support system, a
5 family nucleus support system that is
6 able to provide the supports necessary to
7 be in school.

8 I will tell you we've looked at
9 truancy -- we're also looking at truancy
10 for children who come to some schools, to
11 some classrooms and not others, and that
12 data is very telling, as well in terms of
13 how we make school places where kids want
14 to be, that they find relevant, that they
15 find -- that they have connections to.

16 And then, third, when we look
17 at our kids who are involved in the arts,
18 athletics, chorus, band, et cetera, we're
19 finding that they have much better
20 attendance, much better graduation rates,
21 and less truancy problems, and the same
22 is true for our children who are engaged
23 in some kind of extracurricular activity.
24 And so we know that's a nucleus that
25 we're looking at as well.

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2 We've got a number of
3 strategies regarding truancy, but the
4 first one is not to necessarily increase
5 the students in courts and taking the
6 punitive measures, because it's kind of
7 like if Reginald Streater is not in
8 school every day, once he comes to
9 school, why in the world am I going to
10 suspend him again? That may be what he
11 wants. That's certainly not going to
12 help him.

13 So we have to get eyeball to
14 eyeball with our young people, and we
15 have to stop saying that schools need to
16 be the schools of yesterday. Our kids
17 are different. They've got different
18 needs, and we have to understand their
19 perspectives and, quite frankly, we have
20 to also focus on the curriculum. I know
21 this doesn't sound like a sexy answer,
22 but when kids have to come and sit in a
23 straight row for eight hours, I know I
24 can't do it. So we're also thinking
25 about how we make schools more engaging

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2 for them as well.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Great.

4 I would also, just before I pass the mic,

5 say I'm a big fan of the Lift Every Voice

6 talking about a Chief Joy Officer,

7 because I don't think they should be

8 sitting in rows for eight hours a day. I

9 think that's part of the problem. It's

10 very hard for them to do that.

11 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: Joy

12 is one of our Board-approved core values.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

14 Excellent. Thank you.

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank

16 you, colleague. Thank you for the

17 questions.

18 A lot of homework hopefully

19 that we can get information for after the

20 break, and I think Councilmember Landau

21 just added to that list. I'm like 90

22 percent sure Councilmember O'Rourke will

23 add to that list as well too.

24 Councilmember O'Rourke is the

25 last person for the first round of

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2 questioning, and we just want to remind
3 you that when we come back for the second
4 round after our break, we want to start
5 with hopefully some data and some answers
6 to some of the questions that
7 Councilmembers asked that we
8 unfortunately could not get the answers
9 to.

10 Councilmember O'Rourke. Thank
11 you, sir. Appreciate your patience.

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Thank
13 you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate you and
14 your leadership.

15 Blessings, good afternoon to
16 you, Superintendent.

17 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
18 Good afternoon, sir.

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: As
20 well as Chairman Streater.

21 Since you already teed it up,
22 Councilmember Landau, I was really
23 compelled last night by folks who spoke
24 at our budget town hall in West Philly.
25 We were blessed to have the hosting

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2 pleasure of Councilmember Gauthier at
3 West Philly High School where Lift Every
4 Voice was there in numbers, and they
5 spoke about the ways in which schools rob
6 our students of joy with practices like
7 punishing students for dancing in line,
8 taking away student recess, silent lunch
9 periods, being quick to suspend or expel
10 students.

11 We know these practices have
12 disproportionate impacts on students of
13 color, Black students, poor students.
14 For example, Black students make up about
15 50 percent of students in the District,
16 about 71 percent of suspensions, and
17 economically disadvantaged students make
18 up about 40 percent of the District but
19 86 percent of suspensions, which I'm sure
20 you are fully aware of. This reflects a
21 punitive status quo, is their point.

22 Lift Every Voice proposes that
23 we establish a Chief of Joy, Chief of Joy
24 within the District, a senior-level role
25 that would spearhead efforts to

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2 prioritize the emotional well-being of
3 all Philadelphia children. This may look
4 like reviewing discipline practices and
5 developing proposals to shift our school
6 cultures to ones that elevate joy as
7 opposed to punishment.

8 So, first, what are your
9 thoughts on Lift Every Voice's proposal
10 for a Chief of Joy, a cabinet-level
11 official focused specifically on student
12 well-being, mental health, and approaches
13 to discipline? And I'm reminded even as
14 I'm saying this to take a note out of
15 Madam Mayor's quotation book. If you
16 want something done, you give that job to
17 somebody, and if we are trying to address
18 the issue of joy or lack thereof, it
19 seems to me like it wouldn't be too much
20 of a far shot to give that job to someone
21 to ensure that it happens as opposed to
22 assuming.

23 Can you speak to that for me,
24 Superintendent?

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

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2 Absolutely. Councilmember O'Rourke,
3 thank you very much for the question.
4 I'm absolutely intrigued by the concept
5 of a Chief of Joy. While we took the
6 step to establish joy as one of our core
7 values, I was struck by the spirited
8 debate about that one core value in our
9 strategic plan, Accelerate Philly. There
10 were people who were patently opposed to
11 it. I distinctly remember they said,
12 look, kids don't come to school to have a
13 lovefest or to have fun and to play. I
14 grew up in a time where my mother and
15 father or grandmother told me I need to
16 do something, we just did it or else, and
17 if I didn't do it, the teacher told my
18 mother, father, somebody, grandfather
19 before I got home.

20 And I'm not opining on that.
21 I'm just saying it's very interesting.

22 We had another group of folks
23 in the District in our external
24 stakeholders who said, absolutely, we
25 should be thinking about how to build

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2 schools around kids that they feel good
3 in. And I remember asking the question,
4 I said, I want you guys to raise your
5 hand, what do you want your own children
6 to experience, and I'm putting my hand up
7 for joy.

8 So I think it certainly has
9 value. I also think that the more --
10 we've got some issues and problems we've
11 got to deal with in the District.
12 There's no question about it,
13 particularly related to Black boys and
14 how they're treated, higher suspension
15 rate, lower achievement. I also think
16 that part of that, in addition to
17 thinking about that joy officer position,
18 is we ought to think about how do we
19 communicate with our teaching force
20 that's declining in a way that we give
21 them permission to feel a little bit more
22 joyful about what we think about them,
23 how we appreciate them, because if we
24 don't invest in our teachers, how do they
25 say, they'll eat the students or they'll

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2 just -- too often they walk out of
3 schools because they feel like they don't
4 feel enough support, both from the
5 District, from parents, and the School
6 District at large.

7 I grew up in a time where
8 teachers were revered, and unfortunately
9 across the country, we've moved too far
10 away from that. I grew up in a time
11 where it didn't matter whether you were a
12 teacher of Black, white, brown, polka
13 dot. If they ask you to do something,
14 you do it the first time.

15 A little bit of that stuff kind
16 of helps teachers have a little bit more
17 joy, and I think they pass that joy onto
18 students.

19 But your point is well taken.
20 When I see children, particularly Black
21 and brown children in pre-K and
22 kindergarten, and they come to school
23 full of wonder, excitement, et cetera,
24 and then I see them sometimes in 7th,
25 8th, 9th grade and I say, what happened

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2 there? And I'm going to be quite frank,
3 and the Superintendent and our staffs
4 have to ask that question and look at
5 ourselves in the mirror in that regard as
6 well.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Thank
8 you for hearing that question and thank
9 you for noting all that you noted as it
10 relates to the process and how people
11 responded to the joy piece. I do feel
12 strongly that as odd or as loosey-goosey
13 or liberal as it may sound, if we're
14 intentional about prioritizing the things
15 that we actually want, we'll see it show
16 up in a real meaningful way. So thank
17 you for entertaining it.

18 As we all know, teacher
19 shortages are a huge issue across the
20 country and in Philadelphia. In 2021 and
21 2022 school year, nearly one in three
22 Philadelphia teachers left their
23 positions. It's also notable to me that
24 between 2018 and 2022, educators in
25 charter schools left teaching at a rate

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2 almost double that of District teachers.
3 So we've got incredibly high attrition
4 rates problem, especially in our charter
5 schools.

6 I want to talk about this more.
7 What were the teacher attrition rates for
8 District and charter schools in the 2022
9 and 2023 school year?

10 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: We
11 can get you that information. I'm not
12 sure if we have that on the ready in
13 front of us, the attrition rate in
14 2022-'23, but we can get that in short
15 order.

16 If we could add to the list,
17 Chair Thomas, if you'll permit that.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
19 Appreciate that.

20 And as you're doing it, does
21 the School District actually conduct exit
22 interviews with all teachers who leave
23 their positions?

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'm
25 sorry. I couldn't hear that.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Does
3 the School District actually conduct
4 interviews with educators that actually
5 leave their positions, exit interviews?

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
7 Yes, sir. We do exit interviews, and
8 routinely I will just handpick a teacher
9 here or -- teachers in particular. I
10 don't get a chance to do it with all
11 employees, but I will handpick a few
12 every now and again just because I'd like
13 to get eyeball to eyeball with our
14 teachers, but Deputy Superintendent
15 Grant-Skinner leads that process in the
16 Human Resources Department.

17 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: And
18 what are the primary drivers of teacher
19 attrition from your reports?

20 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: It
21 looks like there are two reasons. One,
22 low pay. Two, our teachers feel like
23 they have not received the support by
24 their direct administrator, their
25 direct -- whoever directly supervises

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2 them, and some teachers report that they
3 struggle with classroom management.

4 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Okay.

5 I know we've been here a long time and
6 I've heard the bell, but what are some of
7 the key strategies the School District is
8 actually employing to improve teacher
9 retention? I really wanted to ask more
10 specifically between that versus charter,
11 but just for the sake of expediency, what
12 are some of the key strategies the School
13 District is championing here?

14 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

15 One, providing training and development
16 for supervisors to know how to best
17 connect with and pour into and support
18 their direct reports, and it goes way
19 beyond giving somebody a birthday card on
20 their birthday or recognizing them for an
21 accomplishment. I'm talking about
22 classroom-based supports where teachers
23 feel like they can go to their
24 administrator and talk about concerns or
25 problems they are having and they not

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2 immediately be evaluated on it but that
3 we coach them to get better and give them
4 the supports to get better.

5 Another teacher retention
6 strategy is, there are some schools that
7 are hard to staff. We probably have a
8 lot more, and we're not doing as many of
9 them, but where we provide a financial
10 recruitment incentive for teachers who
11 work in some of our hard to staff
12 schools. That number is still not robust
13 enough, and generally it's not
14 competitive even with districts like
15 Camden, New Jersey, which is a much
16 smaller district, but we're moving in
17 that direction and we intend to recommend
18 more incentives -- recruitment and
19 retention incentives to the Board of
20 Education in the upcoming year as we work
21 collaboratively with PFT and CASA unions.

22 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Thank
23 you, Superintendent.

24 Thank you, Chairman.

25 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank

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2 you, colleagues.

3 Thank you to Dr. Watlington,
4 President Streater, the entire leadership
5 team and other Board members who are here
6 today.

7 We are now going to stand in
8 recess until 3:00 p.m. At that time, we
9 will return. We will continue our
10 dialogue, and hopefully start with you,
11 Dr. Watlington and President Streater and
12 your team, providing some answers to the
13 questions that folks asked today.

14 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
15 Chair Thomas, we'll do our best to go
16 retrieve as much of that information. We
17 don't have our computers here, but we'll
18 send folks to the District to see if we
19 can get that quickly.

20 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
21 you, sir.

22 See everybody at 3:00 p.m.

23 - - -

24 (Recess from 1:55 p.m. to 3:09
25 p.m.)

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2 - - -

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 This is Round 2, and the Chair relaxes
5 his time to Chairman of Education,
6 Councilmember Isaiah Thomas.

7 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
8 you, Council President, and thank you,
9 colleagues.

10 Let's start, Dr. Watlington,
11 Board President Streater, with hopefully
12 some of the data and responses to some of
13 the questions that Councilmembers had
14 before we took our recess to be able to
15 provide some level of information and
16 clarity on some questions that were
17 asked.

18 Dr. Watlington, if it's okay
19 with you, Board President,
20 Dr. Watlington, if it's okay with you, I
21 would ask that you hold your responses to
22 Councilmember Young's questions
23 specifically because he's not here. So
24 if you can just answer Councilmember
25 Harrity's questions, Councilmember

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2 O'Rourke, my questions, and if you could
3 hold Councilmember Rue Landau's questions
4 as well as Councilmember Young's, that
5 would be appreciated.

6 PRESIDENT STREATER: I would
7 like to respond to the question around
8 academic achievement, and I can speak to
9 the charter sector.

10 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Can we
11 hold -- I think that was Councilmember
12 Young.

13 PRESIDENT STREATER: I can hold
14 off.

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Can we
16 hold off until he comes back? We
17 definitely want to hear your response,
18 but I just want to give the Councilmember
19 the leeway to be able to offer some type
20 of rebuttal.

21 Any information around the
22 rubber room, number of people in the
23 rubber room? Councilmember O'Rourke had
24 questions as well too that you said you
25 would get back to.

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2 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

3 Yes, sir. Chair Thomas, if you permit me
4 to also give a very clarifying statement
5 about extended-year schools, because I'm
6 not sure that we fully answered that
7 question. May I do that really quick?

8 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: I'm
9 not -- I don't memorize the Councilmember
10 that asked that question. I know it was
11 somebody on the right, and I don't think
12 it was Councilmember Nina Ahmad. So can
13 we hold off on that one as well too?

14 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
15 Absolutely.

16 Relative to the talent
17 question, there are 85 employees
18 currently temporarily assigned to the
19 Central Office as an alternate work
20 location. We'll need to do a little bit
21 more research to let you know how that
22 compares to previous years, but 85
23 employees out of 19,000 District
24 employees are currently assigned to an
25 alternate location.

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2 There was a question,
3 Mr. Chairman, about environmental
4 closures since I joined the District in
5 June of 2022. During my tenure,
6 approximately 4,163 students, 4,163, less
7 than two percent of our population, the
8 District population, have been affected
9 by a school closure preventing in-person
10 learning due to facilities issues. The
11 schools are Building 21, Gratz, Mitchell,
12 Frankford, CW Henry, Universal Vare,
13 Southwark -- and Southwark. Other
14 schools have been -- had space closures,
15 but relocation was possible within the
16 school. That includes Ben Franklin High
17 School, Bartram High School, and
18 Masterman.

19 I can't remember if you wanted
20 me to speak to the lowest performing --
21 ten lowest performing schools. We'll
22 hold on that. I think that was per
23 Councilmember Young's question.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Partly
25 Councilmember Young, partly myself. So

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2 we can hold it until Councilmember Young

3 comes back --

4 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

5 Yes, sir.

6 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: -- to

7 have a more robust question.

8 I do want to go to a line of

9 questioning that Councilmember O'Rourke

10 had. I don't know the exact concept he

11 said, but he talked about a position of

12 joy. So unfortunately I was not able to

13 attend the hearing yesterday, but I did

14 hear this concept presented at another

15 one of our town halls. If I heard

16 Councilmember O'Rourke paraphrase it

17 correctly, the goal of the position would

18 be able to basically create positive

19 experiences for young people who attend

20 our schools, is that correct, based on

21 what your knowledge of the position is?

22 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

23 That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Okay.

25 So when Frankford High School first

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2 closed -- clearly I'm a graduate of
3 Frankford High School, so my bias is
4 there.

5 When Frankford High School
6 first closed, there was a lot of
7 uncertainty from the District around how
8 bad the asbestos problem was, which again
9 you did not create, but the problem was
10 so bad that we were not sure if it should
11 be renovated or if it should be a brand
12 new building.

13 Dr. Watlington, with all due
14 respect, I pressured you, Mr. Oz,
15 President Streater, the entire District
16 for months to give us a response as it
17 relates to the future of Frankford High
18 School.

19 The other side of what I pushed
20 you on was positive experiences. One of
21 the things that I asked you all to do was
22 to try to put us in a position to be able
23 to make sure that we're providing trips,
24 incentives, and positive activities for
25 the parents -- I'm sorry; for the staff

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2 and for the students that were at

3 Frankford High School.

4 So being inspired a little bit
5 by Councilmember O'Rourke's line of
6 questioning, I'm wondering on a small
7 scale have we been able to adhere to what
8 this position is calling for as it
9 relates to providing positive, fun
10 experiences for the people at Frankford
11 High School? Because if I remember
12 correctly, we did agree at the beginning
13 of the school year that we would go down
14 that journey with Frankford High School.
15 We're in April, May at this point. So
16 I'm wondering where are we as it relates
17 to positive experiences for Frankford
18 High School and what have we done to make
19 sure that that school is experiencing
20 positive events and activities?

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

22 I'll say two things. First,
23 Councilmember Harrity's point about a --
24 and Councilmember O'Rourke's point about
25 a position dedicated to joy, Chief of Joy

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2 and the like, it has merits. We're
3 taking that as a homework assignment to
4 think about.

5 Relative to Frankford High
6 School, since the 9th grade class is
7 relocated to Roberto Clemente School, not
8 specifically to joy per se, but we've
9 arranged, thanks to the good work of our
10 COO and Principal, Dr. Calderone, we've
11 got what they call the Pioneer Express.
12 I believe that's what they call it, the
13 bussing system that moves children from
14 Frankford to Roberto Clemente.

15 I think the way they labeled
16 that and tried to make it a positive
17 experience, not something dreaded moving
18 from neighborhood to the next and to try
19 to make it -- talk it up as something
20 that's kind of fun and interesting.

21 I think that is a very, very
22 small manifestation of how we're trying
23 to see the glass is half full instead of
24 half -- the glass half full instead of
25 half empty.

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2 I know we provided some
3 additional budgetary resources to
4 Frankford so that they don't lose -- we
5 know they need more staffing because
6 they're on two different campuses.

7 Relative to specific acts of
8 joy, I would need to drill down a little
9 bit deeper with Principal Calderone, but
10 I can tell you, I've been on that campus
11 to have lunch with he and members of his
12 staff, and the mere fact that we're
13 talking to them, engaging them face to
14 face, I know President Streater and
15 members of his Board have been there
16 themselves to walk the campus, and I
17 think that assured the principal that
18 there's a level of support, both at the
19 Board and Superintendent level.

20 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
21 you. I appreciate that response.

22 I'm going to open the floor up
23 to some of the other responses.

24 Councilmember Young has joined us.

25 There are some responses to

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2 your questions from earlier, so we do
3 want to allow for that dialogue.

4 After that, I have a few
5 questions, and based on who is queued up,
6 we will start with Councilmember Lozada,
7 if she makes it up, but if Councilmember
8 Lozada doesn't make it up, we'll start
9 with our Majority Leader, Councilmember
10 Gilmore Richardson, followed by our
11 Minority Leader, Councilmember Brooks.

12 Councilmember Young, just for
13 the record, we're going to pass it to
14 Board President Streater as well as
15 Superintendent Watlington to provide some
16 more detailed answers to the questions
17 that you asked earlier.

18 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
19 you.

20 PRESIDENT STREATER: Thank you
21 for the question. Just to frame the
22 question, the Board of Education doesn't
23 have direct oversight as to the
24 day-to-day operation, curriculum. We
25 don't know the attrition rate, for

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2 example --

3 COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry.

4 There's trouble with the microphone.

5 PRESIDENT STREATER: Is this
6 better?

7 Councilmember, it's a great
8 question, and I just want to kind of
9 frame the question as it relates to our
10 charter schools. There's a performance
11 framework where we measure academic
12 achievement. We can only take action as
13 it relates to non-renewals and/or
14 revoking a charter, but we do track
15 academic achievement, and that does
16 inform whether a school meets or does not
17 meet the standard as it relates to that
18 domain of the charter framework.

19 But as it relates to data, the
20 PSSA ELA data is 34.2 percent of students
21 who are proficient in ELA in our charter
22 sector, and that's a 1.8 increase from
23 the previous year.

24 PSSA math is 16 and a half
25 percent. That's a 4.6 increase from the

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2 previous year.

3 Our PSSA science is at 42.8.

4 That's a 5.2 percent increase from the
5 previous year.

6 Keystone literature is

7 51 percent, 8.9 increase from the

8 previous year. Keystone algebra is

9 19.1 percent. That's a 3.6 increase from
10 the previous year. And the Keystone
11 biology, that's 25.2 percent. That's
12 9 percent increase from the previous
13 year.

14 Just to also state as well, the
15 Board of Education, other than getting
16 the raw data, unlike the District, which
17 has a very rigorous, from my
18 understanding, approach as to validating
19 that data before it comes out, this is
20 just the raw data that we get from the
21 state. So that's what I have for that.

22 Dr. Watlington, you want to
23 speak to the rest of the District?

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

25 Thank you, President Streater.

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2 By the way, Chair Thomas, we
3 are planning, in partnership with
4 Frankford High School, an end-of-year
5 celebration, and the District office,
6 specifically Dr. Dawson's budget, is
7 picking up the cost for that
8 end-of-the-year celebration for the
9 students at Frankford. So hopefully that
10 will be some small manifestation of joy.

11 Councilmember Young, to your
12 question about what were the ten -- about
13 the ten lowest performing schools --

14 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: That was
15 Councilmember Thomas.

16 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
17 Excuse me, Chair Thomas. School Reform
18 Commission in 2018-'19 and what does that
19 look like now based on the most recent
20 round of testing in school year '22-'23.
21 In 2018-2019 there were ten schools in
22 the bottom ELA performance for grades 3
23 through 8. Five of those schools got off
24 of that list. So five of the ten schools
25 are no longer in the ten lowest

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2 performing schools relative to 3 through
3 8, English language arts.

4 Relative to -- in 2018-'19, of
5 the bottom ten schools in grade 3, not 3
6 through 8 but grade 3 English language
7 arts performance, based on last year's
8 testing, nine of those ten schools are no
9 longer in the ten lowest performing
10 schools.

11 In 2018-'19, if we look at 3rd
12 through 8th grade math performance, the
13 ten lowest performing schools, five or
14 half of the ten are no longer in the
15 bottom ten. Then if we look at 3rd grade
16 math by itself, not grades 3 through 8,
17 of the ten schools that were the lowest
18 performing under the School Reform
19 Commission in 2018-'19, of those ten
20 schools, seven or 70 percent based on
21 last year's test scores are no longer in
22 the bottom ten percent.

23 I think you also, Mr. Chairman,
24 asked a question about how we're doing
25 with our test scores overall for the

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2 District-operated schools. In 3rd grade
3 reading, in 2021-'22, 28.1 percent of our
4 students were proficient on the PSSA
5 test. In '22-'23, that number for grades
6 3 through 8 increased from 28.1 percent
7 to 31 percent, which is a 2.9 percentage
8 point increase.

9 Our grade 3 through 8 reading
10 remained flat at 34.4 and 34 percent.
11 Our 3rd grade math increased from
12 20.8 percent to 26.5 percent, which is a
13 5.7 percentage point increase.

14 Our 3rd through 8th grade math
15 proficiency from 2021 to '22 increased
16 from 16.5 to 20.7 percent, which is a 4.2
17 percentage point increase. And 4th and
18 8th grade science increased from
19 37.1 percent to 40.2 percent, which is a
20 3.1 percentage point increase.

21 In all five of those areas, the
22 number of students and the percentage of
23 students who scored at below basic
24 declined for every area. Third grade
25 reading below basic, there was a 3.8

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2 percentage point reduction. In 3rd
3 through 8th grade reading, 1.8 percentage
4 point reduction. In 3rd grade math,
5 there was a 6.9 percentage point
6 reduction in kids who score at the
7 bottom. In 3rd through 8th grade math,
8 there was a 4.9 percentage point
9 reduction in the kids who perform at the
10 bottom. And in grades 4 through 8, there
11 was a 2 percentage point decrease in the
12 students who perform at the bottom. So
13 that tells me that the floor strategy is
14 working.

15 What a lot of districts do to
16 raise the test scores, they go get what
17 we call the bubble kids, the kids who are
18 right there close to proficiency and
19 let's just tutor them, teach them and get
20 the numbers over the hump. We're not
21 trying to do that. We're trying to lift
22 the floor. As our Deputy Superintendent
23 for Academics will always say, serve the
24 middle and also continue to invest in the
25 kids and don't forget about the kids at

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2 the top.

3 In full disclosure,

4 Mr. President, we went the wrong

5 direction in algebra 1. Our proficiency

6 in algebra 1 dropped from 36.3 percent to

7 30.1 percent, which is a 6.2 percentage

8 point decline. That is not okay. We are

9 not happy about that. It's not

10 acceptable.

11 Also, the number of our kids

12 who scored at below basic in algebra 1,

13 which is that baseline math class,

14 declined from 26 percent -- increased the

15 number of kids scoring at the bottom,

16 below basic, actually increased from

17 26 percent to 34 percent, which is an

18 8 percentage point increase, which is

19 absolutely unacceptable, and we will do

20 better, I can assure you.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So,

22 Dr. Watlington, I think just listening to

23 those numbers is very discouraging, and I

24 appreciate your honesty around the

25 numbers and I also appreciate your

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2 appetite and eagerness to want to do
3 better, and I listen to you consistently
4 say that, so I appreciate that part.

5 I think that this is the
6 concern that Councilmember Young was
7 speaking to earlier when he was asking
8 specifically how many dollars are we
9 spending on moving the needle and
10 improving these numbers.

11 Look, at the end of the day, as
12 elected officials, we're voted in and out
13 by the people, but I know that this body
14 truly cares about public education and
15 truly cares about our children. We have
16 had local control for some time now. I
17 was one of those people who fought and
18 advocated for local control. We have to
19 look at us.

20 At the end of the day, I know
21 that we all agree that our schools are
22 severely underfunded. We have a number
23 of issues that none of us essentially
24 created, but they're our problems right
25 now, and at the end of the day, the

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2 numbers that you just communicated can't
3 be the numbers next year. They can't be
4 the numbers the year after that. They
5 can't be the numbers the year after that.

6 Based on listening to the
7 numbers that you just communicated and
8 thinking about the conditions that our
9 schools have been in since I've been in
10 high school, right, I'm over 20 years
11 since I've been in high school. I went
12 to all public schools, from elementary
13 school to high school. At the end of the
14 day, we have to do better, and I think
15 it's up to us to be committed to say that
16 the numbers that you just read to us
17 today will not be the numbers next year,
18 will not be the numbers the year after,
19 and at some point, we have to look at the
20 system and say something is broken if we
21 can't assure that every child in the City
22 of Philadelphia can get a quality
23 education, no matter what zip code they
24 live in.

25 So thank you for answering the

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2 questions, but it is definitely
3 discouraging to hear where we are as it
4 relates to academic progress, and I
5 believe that we all can agree that we
6 have a lot of work to do and it's going
7 to require a collaborative effort to put
8 us in a position to really move the
9 needle.

10 With that being said, I will
11 ask a few questions throughout the course
12 of the hearing, but I do want to respect
13 Councilmembers' time and I thought it was
14 important that you start by answering
15 some questions that didn't get answered
16 in the last round.

17 So I'll start by passing it to
18 our Majority Leader, Councilmember
19 Gilmore Richardson, and after
20 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson, we'll
21 go to our Minority Leader, Councilmember
22 Brooks.

23 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
24 Thank you. Thank you so much to our
25 Majority Whip and Education leader,

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2 Councilmember Thomas.

3 I just had two questions that I
4 wanted to get on the record, and the rest
5 I will submit for feedback at a later
6 date.

7 First, I wanted to start with
8 CTE and our career and technical
9 education programs. You know that I
10 passed legislation to provide for a point
11 preference when our young people who
12 graduate from CTE programs when they
13 apply for City employment. And so I just
14 wanted to talk about the investment or
15 the increased investment in this proposed
16 budget relative to middle school career
17 and technical education programs.

18 We have brought this up
19 previously, and Councilmember Thomas
20 hosted Evin Jarrett and Mayfair CTE, and
21 I visited with them last summer, and we
22 support them throughout the year, but I
23 wanted to know what's your plan around
24 increasing the middle school CTE programs
25 available. You know that's an important

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2 part of the career exposure for young
3 people.

4 And in addition to that,
5 driver's ed has been a big issue for
6 young people. We are seeking to connect
7 to opportunities not only in the trades
8 but in a variety of industries upon
9 graduation, and we found that lack of a
10 driver's license has been a huge
11 impediment for the young people in the
12 School District. And previously there
13 was driver's ed. There were driver's ed
14 courses in the School District of
15 Philadelphia, and we want to figure out
16 how we bring that back on sort of a
17 large-scale model, even if you start with
18 the CTE students, who are more likely to
19 have a need for driver's ed, but we need
20 it all around the District to sort of
21 help prepare our young people.

22 And then, finally, if we could
23 just go back to something that I heard
24 Councilmember Bass talk about earlier in
25 the hearing and I just wanted to ask for

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2 additional clarity there relative to the
3 extended-day year and what that would
4 sort of look like. I ask because you
5 know that some of our schools are
6 Community Schools, and they already have
7 a complement of like an after-school
8 program, as an example. And so like my
9 kids' school, where school ends at 2:54,
10 they can stay up until -- I think this
11 year it's 5:30 for the after care
12 program. And so how would that work for
13 schools that are Community Schools and
14 schools that are not? Like what would
15 that whole sort of year-round process
16 look like?

17 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
18 Thank you, Majority Leader Gilmore
19 Richardson. Number one -- I'll try to do
20 answers pretty quick, Chair Thomas.

21 Question one with regard to
22 career and technical education, I do want
23 to note on the record that last year we
24 made significant improvement in the NOCTI
25 CTE appraisal. Our students -- and test

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2 scores are not the only measure, but they
3 are an important measure. And we
4 increased the NOCTI proficiency rate for
5 our career and technical education
6 students from 43.4 to 49.1 percent, which
7 was a 5.7 percentage point increase,
8 which I think is significant.

9 Number two --

10 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Can
11 I just say really briefly that I think
12 that's a wonderful improvement,
13 particularly because of some of the
14 schools that we visited recently, you
15 have a large component of ESL students in
16 some of the CTE programs. So I think
17 that's a great improvement, and it shows
18 the investment not only in the ESL
19 students but also in the CTE program. I
20 just wanted to mention that.

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: And
22 if we continue this work downstream,
23 Majority Leader Richardson, it will help
24 kids -- and if we continue to make
25 improvements on the PSSAs, it will help

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2 our young people to be able to pass those
3 tests that gives them some preference in
4 City hiring, to your point.

5 Number two, how are we thinking
6 about middle school CTE, including
7 Mayfair and some of the other very fine
8 programs and how that is referenced in
9 the budget. We currently are in the
10 process of finishing up this year an
11 audit of all of our career and technical
12 education programs. The external auditor
13 is the Southern Region Education Board.
14 They've included -- they finished the
15 first five high schools. They've got the
16 next wave of schools in tow. Part of
17 that audit feedback will help us to know
18 how well -- what the feeder pattern might
19 look like, and we'll get some
20 recommendations about how to strengthen
21 it.

22 So more will be coming during
23 this year. Not next year, during this
24 year, during this calendar year. So
25 we'll take that as a homework assignment.

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2 Third, my experience -- I
3 remember in the state I came from, we
4 used to have driver's education teachers.
5 The state I came from discontinued all of
6 those services, but paid and outsourced
7 driver's education. Typically you'll
8 have the athletic director's office and
9 also coordinating driver's education for
10 our young people. It's something that
11 President Streater has asked us to put on
12 our radar relative to the number of kids
13 who, as he shared with me, are having
14 difficulty getting jobs in part because
15 they don't have their driver's license
16 and somebody has to teach them.

17 I understand that in
18 Pennsylvania, in this Commonwealth, you
19 have to have insurance also in order to
20 get a driver's license, if I'm correct.
21 So that is an issue that we're working on
22 internally. We haven't reached a
23 conclusion about where to go there, but
24 it is something that we are looking into.

25 And I think your last question,

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2 if you want me to go ahead and do the
3 extended year or did you want to --

4 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

5 Right. Just elaborate on the extended
6 year program and what that would look
7 like. And I mentioned it because of sort
8 of the services that are currently
9 available at the Community Schools, and I
10 gave the example of my kids' school where
11 you could attend up to 5:30 technically
12 with the after care program that's
13 currently at the school. So if you could
14 just elaborate on what that would look
15 like overall with the District.

16 And then back to the driver's
17 ed, and I heard the bell, but back to
18 driver's ed really quickly, I think
19 outsourcing would be the best option. As
20 far as having the availability of the
21 vehicles and the vehicles needing to have
22 insurance, if we could partner with a
23 program or someone who could run that if
24 you're not able to do it internally. I
25 think we just need the option for the

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2 young people.

3 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

4 Now, in North Carolina you don't need
5 insurance to go through a driver's
6 education course in the summer or after
7 or before school. The state pays --
8 allocates funding for the school
9 districts. The school districts
10 outsource that. There are a few school
11 districts that still teach it, but the
12 larger districts outsource that. And so
13 I can go through a driver's education
14 program. It's where I get to the point
15 that I need to get a driver's license
16 from the state Department of Motor
17 Vehicles, in order to get that license, I
18 may have to have some insurance, but
19 we'll continue to keep you updated on our
20 thinking there.

21 I appreciate the opportunity to
22 clarify our partnership with the Mayor on
23 extended and year-round programming.
24 Currently, Majority Leader Gilmore
25 Richardson, we are meeting regularly with

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 the Mayor's team to stand up 20 school
3 pilots for the '24-'25 school year, 20
4 pilots for the upcoming school year. At
5 this time, our focus in those 20 pilots
6 during the 2024 school year is on
7 extended day, as we're working to have
8 that in place at the start of the school
9 year.

10 For one year, for year one, we
11 are looking to expand before and after
12 school and to layer on some enriching
13 activities. The Mayor has been very
14 clear that we ought to have
15 state-of-the-art chess and STEM and
16 robotics, the things that extend reading,
17 math, science, but that are also fun and
18 engaging that give our kids things that
19 they're really interested in.

20 Once we finalize this piece, we
21 would then continue to work with the
22 Mayor and her team on -- well, beyond
23 year one, we'll start working on the
24 extended year -- extended summer
25 programming so that our students have

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 safe, enriching summer experiences in the
3 20 pilot schools. And beyond year one,
4 once we get into school year '25-'26, we
5 will continue to work with the Mayor and
6 her team, including our union partners.
7 We'll be working closely with parents to
8 extend the District calendar for those 20
9 pilot schools, where they actually start
10 school before the other schools in the
11 District and we eliminate the long break
12 in the summer, but they'll get breaks
13 during the year. So they won't go to
14 school 365 days or 300 days a year.
15 They'll have holidays and they'll have
16 small breaks built in.

17 But we know that it's going to
18 be important for us to make parents our
19 partners. Nothing for us without us.
20 And we look forward to working with the
21 Mayor and keeping Council updated on the
22 progress with this Mayor's priority.
23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
25 you, Majority Leader.

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2 Dr. Watlington, Board President

3 Streater, I'm going to ask you to be a

4 little more concise in your answers this

5 time around. We still have Dr. Generals

6 and CCP who have to come before us, and

7 there are a lot of Councilmembers who

8 still have questions for the District,

9 and we want to try to get through

10 everyone's questions before we move on to

11 Dr. Generals and his team.

12 Listening to Councilmember

13 Gilmore Richardson's line of questions

14 sparked a few of the questions that I

15 had. Number one, as it relates to

16 extended school, out of school -- whether

17 it's after school or summertime, what is

18 going to be the curriculum focus?

19 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

20 It's in development, sir.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Okay.

22 So once you figure that out, will you

23 please be willing to share that with us?

24 I spent a lot of time working in

25 non-traditional school settings.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

3 Absolutely.

4 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: And we
5 can't just teach everything. So I'm
6 wondering what that curriculum focus will
7 be.

8 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

9 Absolutely.

10 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

11 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson talked
12 about driver's ed and CTE programs.
13 She's absolutely right. Driver's ed is a
14 great entryway into developing a
15 professional career that can pay you well
16 over six figures without a college
17 degree. So I definitely commend her for
18 that, but let me add a few things to the
19 list and give you a few seconds to
20 respond.

21 There's an aviation program
22 right now at Frankford High School in
23 partnership with one of our private
24 partners. I took a visit to check out
25 the program, and the structure is pretty

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 good, but we need to expand it so that
3 more young people can take advantage of
4 it. So we want the District to be
5 thinking about how can we get more people
6 enrolled in the pilot aviation program
7 that's in Frankford High School so more
8 young people who are interested in
9 aviation can be exposed to that.

10 We also want the District to
11 think about arts and crafts. A lot of
12 our schools, especially our elementary
13 schools, are not in a position to have
14 quality art teachers to be able to teach
15 arts and craft.

16 I'm no artist myself, but we
17 have a lot of creative young people in
18 the District, and those who have that
19 artistic skill set, we want to be able to
20 tap into that. So if you can give us
21 your plan to be able to add more arts and
22 crafts teachers as well as more music
23 teachers. I will put that in the same
24 category as arts and crafts. We need
25 young people to get exposed to these

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 programs so they can tap into their

3 God-given talent.

4 Councilmember Rue Landau I

5 believe earlier talked about counselors.

6 Our numbers as it relates to percentage

7 of students per counselor is

8 embarrassing. So at some point, maybe

9 throughout the course of today or maybe a

10 written plan, how are we going to improve

11 the number of counselors who are in our

12 schools? And we're not just thinking

13 about young people transitioning out of

14 the current school into higher academia

15 or into high school. We're also thinking

16 about the social-emotional support,

17 because we talked about social workers as

18 well too. So the response we got to some

19 of those questions were not adequate to

20 what we want to be able to offer our

21 children, especially considering all the

22 trauma that they're facing on a

23 consistent basis.

24 We also want to see more dual

25 enrollment programs. We love what the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 District has going on with Parkway, but
3 we don't have enough dual enrollment
4 options for all young people, no matter
5 what high school they attend. It's
6 amazing when a Parkway student can
7 graduate with a diploma as well as an
8 associate degree, but what if I'm not
9 lucky enough to get into the Parkway
10 lottery, but I'm academically sharp
11 enough to be able to leave with that
12 diploma and that associate's degree.
13 So in the midst of the courses
14 that Councilmember Gilmore Richardson
15 talked about, please add those courses to
16 the list, as well as the other courses
17 we've been asking for, coding, financial
18 literacy, and civics and government, all
19 recommended to be taken in senior year in
20 high school so young people can get the
21 option to get registered to vote as well
22 as understand how to write a check and
23 other financial important obligations
24 that we all as adults have to participate
25 in.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 I want to pass it to
3 Councilmember Brooks. If there's
4 anything that I said that corresponds
5 with her questions, please feel free to
6 include responses into what Councilmember
7 Brooks has to say.

8 The Chair recognizes Minority
9 Leader Brooks.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Thank
11 you so much.

12 One of the issues that we've
13 heard a lot about coming out of the
14 pandemic is student attendance, and I was
15 wondering how is the School District
16 addressing this truancy and have we seen
17 any improvement in these numbers? And
18 the specifics are, have we -- and also,
19 I'm sorry, have we sat down with the
20 students to ask them about the issues
21 that are causing the truancy and have
22 they had an opportunity to like provide
23 feedback and be directly involved?

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
25 Thank you, Councilmember. Relative to

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 truancy, yes, we have had groups to sit
3 down and do direct contact with our
4 students about what's getting in the way
5 of student attendance. We are actually
6 doing a presentation for the Board of
7 Education per the Board's request within
8 the next 30 days of our summary findings.
9 We're happy to share that with Council as
10 well.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
12 Dr. Watlington, were the children from
13 traditional neighborhood schools or are
14 they from different schools around the
15 City?

16 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
17 Around the City, to include traditional
18 neighborhood schools, yes. Absolutely.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: And my
20 next question, this came in from a
21 constituent. Every time a student gets
22 suspended, the chances of them dropping
23 out increases. Just as we cannot arrest
24 our way out of this problem, we cannot
25 push our way out of this problem. Lift

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Every Voice Philly members have
3 highlighted troubling patterns of
4 collective punishment in schools, such as
5 entire classes or grades being punished.
6 Our District like other school districts
7 has a long history of harsh discipline
8 policies. We've learned from
9 constituents like Lift Every Voice
10 Philadelphia members that entire grades
11 can be punished for the actions of a few
12 consequences, like losing recess.

13 What is the District's policy
14 on collective punishment and will the
15 District commit to ending the practice of
16 collective punishment in schools?

17 PRESIDENT STREATER: Minority
18 Leader, just as a parent of children in
19 the School District, I hear you and I
20 definitely appreciate that question that
21 was raised. I do think that with that
22 said -- and Dr. Watlington is going to
23 respond to your question directly. The
24 District has made strides over the years
25 to be less punitive. And this is not

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 saying we are done, right? This is not
3 to mitigate anything that you just said
4 just now, but now we have things like
5 amnesty boxes at our schools. So if a
6 student does feel the need to bring a
7 weapon or may have a weapon on them, they
8 can put it in the box, no questions
9 asked.

10 It is -- I guess it's unheard
11 of -- I've talked to colleagues all over
12 the country through the Council of Great
13 City Schools, and I have yet to sit
14 through an expulsion hearing as a Board
15 member, right?

16 So I think there has been a
17 marked difference, and I think some of
18 the work that Craig Johnson is doing, in
19 addition to work that now Police
20 Commissioner Bethel has done, has
21 transformed how we look at monitoring
22 students in school. For example, our
23 resource officers no longer carry weapons
24 and things like that, but Dr. Watlington
25 can definitely speak to the joy piece. I

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 just wanted to put that piece out there,
3 but we understand we got more work to do.

4 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I
5 just want to echo what President Streater
6 said. Now, let me be clear. I bring a
7 completely different perspective than
8 most people who I talk to in
9 Philadelphia. I came out of the South,
10 and I can tell you that the mere fact
11 that 95 percent of the kids in the School
12 District of Philadelphia don't get
13 suspended is really a good statistic. It
14 may not look big to you guys, but I can
15 tell you that you're running circles
16 around some places that really are just
17 not doing as well in terms of harsh
18 disciplinary outcomes.

19 Now, we still over-suspend
20 Black boys, there's no question about it,
21 in this School District, and we've got to
22 address that.

23 Number two, since I've been
24 here, President Streater, I've not seen
25 one expulsion, which I'm very familiar

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 with. You know, in those zero tolerance
3 states and some of those districts where
4 kids strike -- three strikes and you're
5 out, they get expelled, kicked out and
6 have no right to an inherent public
7 school education and have to find a way
8 to get it best they can.

9 Number three, a few years
10 ago -- and I'll do this really quick,
11 Chair Thomas -- I read in the national
12 headlines in my district, we studied this
13 district because you're one of the first
14 school districts in the country out of
15 14,000 public school districts that said
16 we are not going to suspend kids in K-2.

17 Moreover, I hear more
18 principals here tell me that they feel
19 like their hands are tied and we just
20 don't allow them to go and do more
21 aggressive discipline.

22 So I think that's one of the
23 strengths, believe it or not, of the
24 School District, the diversion program
25 and our approach to supporting our

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 students.

3 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: So I

4 just want to kind of be like a little bit

5 more -- I'm talking more of like the end

6 of like silent lunches in school, which

7 is like a collective punishment, or

8 ending the nine kids like bathroom breaks

9 primarily for K to 5. Just because one

10 child did something wrong, you can't go

11 to lunch or nobody can go to the

12 bathroom.

13 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

14 Absolutely.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Like can

16 we end that practice? Because that's

17 just like inhumane.

18 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

19 Yes, ma'am. Absolutely. There is no

20 District policy or procedure that gives

21 anyone cover to take away recess from a

22 child because of some behavioral concern.

23 We will work on that. I'll take that

24 personally as a homework assignment.

25 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: And when

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 it happens or it comes to our desk, where
3 should we point to to get resolved?

4 Because there's no way that a
5 kindergarten should be denied recess or a
6 bathroom break. So I want to make sure
7 that we have on the record that this is
8 not a policy of the School District, but
9 how can a parent report and get
10 justification for such treatment?

11 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: If
12 that can be shared with my office or my
13 Chief of Staff, Sarah Galbally, we'll
14 work with the appropriate assistant
15 superintendent and as will Dr. Dawson to
16 address those issues when they occur, and
17 we'll do some training around this issue.
18 We'll take it as a personal
19 responsibility. No one should be denied
20 recess, period.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: And like
22 how are we engaging families and
23 communities to be a part of this more so?
24 I came out of family and school
25 engagement. That's how I kind of got my

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 feet into this. Is that still happening,
3 and what are we doing to make sure that
4 all parents have the ability to be
5 actively engaged in schools at every
6 level?

7 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'm
8 going to be clear. Schools are at
9 different places in terms of how they are
10 interacting and connecting with parents
11 as equal partners in communicating,
12 two-way communication. We'll continue to
13 work with that to make it better.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Thank
15 you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
17 you, Dr. Watlington.

18 Thank you, Minority Leader.
19 Yes. That was a great line of
20 questioning.

21 And I do want to just highlight
22 what the Minority Leader talked about as
23 it relates to parents and engaging
24 parents. What strategies are you using
25 right now to ensure that parents are

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 partners, not just as it relates to
3 discipline-related things or making them
4 informed about rubber room stuff? What
5 are we really doing to make sure that
6 parents have the proper level of
7 communication when things are taking
8 place, but they're really considered
9 partners as it relates to decisions like
10 the Minority Leader was just talking
11 about, discipline, daily activities
12 that's happening in school? What's the
13 vision?

14 PRESIDENT STREATER: Well, I
15 can speak to the charter side. I think
16 you and I were in the foxhole trying to
17 figure out the Math Civics piece, right?

18 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Sure.

19 PRESIDENT STREATER: One of the
20 concerns that I actually spoke to one of
21 the parents -- I'm not going to say her
22 name on the record. I had a meeting with
23 her a few weeks ago. We have to do a
24 better job of engaging with parents
25 around charter issues. So a lot of

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 parents had no idea, you know, number
3 one, that the school can close like it
4 did; number two, that there have been
5 about 15 to 20 years worth of ACE reports
6 triggering certain concerns as it relates
7 to how the school is operating; and,
8 three, didn't know where to go, right?
9 And by the time they figured out it was
10 time to go to that board and advocate for
11 their babies, for their students, it was
12 too late. The decision had already been
13 made to close the school.

14 So one of the homework
15 assignments that I have, and I'm
16 definitely going to raise with the new
17 Board, is how do we better engage parents
18 transparently through the process, right?
19 We have hearings now that are not in
20 person as it relates to non-renewal
21 decisions, things like that. They should
22 be open to the public, I think, and I
23 think parents should be brought along so
24 they can also do what they need to do to
25 ensure that both boards that are

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 accountable to them, the Board of
3 Education and the Board of each charter
4 school, are accountable to the needs of
5 parents as well and that parents are
6 brought along.

7 So that's a homework
8 assignment. I would say we have done not
9 a good job at doing that, and I know that
10 the CSO right now is building out his
11 office to do that. So, for example, he
12 has an Engagement and Operations part of
13 his office that's going to work on doing
14 this in a better and a more sustainable
15 way.

16 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
17 you, Board President. I appreciate you
18 answering that on behalf of what's going
19 to happen through the Charter Office and
20 on the charter side.

21 In the midst of thinking about
22 that, I do think that we still have a lot
23 more work to do as it relates to students
24 at MCS. I think one of the concerns that
25 was communicated to me, when we as a

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 group discuss the MCS situation, the
3 option for those students to be able to
4 get admission into special admission
5 schools was something that was on the
6 table. Since you brought it up, do we
7 feel like we are putting the students and
8 families at MCS in a position to be able
9 to have options as it relates to the
10 schools that they can transition to?

11 I'll use my family for example.
12 My family has a number of different
13 people who all go through a K through 12
14 school, similar to MCS, whereas though my
15 son is in 6th grade, my niece is in 3rd
16 grade, and my nephew is in 9th grade,
17 right? So if we were put in the same
18 situation as MCS, our family might have
19 to find three different schools, which
20 can have an economic impact on the
21 household as well too.

22 So I'm wondering where are we
23 as it relates to that process and how can
24 we assure that those families have a good
25 soft landing considering the original --

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 actually, the original four plans that we
3 probably came up with unfortunately
4 didn't actualize themselves?

5 PRESIDENT STREATER: Yeah. So
6 just to start, yes. At the outset, when
7 the decision was made -- and we didn't --
8 we found it out like the rest of you all
9 found out, in the newspaper, that the
10 school was going to close. The CSO
11 reached out to the school community on
12 school selection information and really
13 tried to get the parents involved and
14 engaged as to engaging with the process
15 through the District's application
16 process but also through Apply Philly.

17 Apply Philly is a third
18 party -- I guess third-party provider as
19 it relates to for the application for
20 charter schools, of which we don't have
21 the ability to compel or make them do
22 anything. But they've been good
23 partners. I'll say that on the record.

24 With that being said, there was
25 concerns on the Apply Philly charter side

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 that if we were -- if they were to break
3 their process and for parents and
4 students who had already kind of went
5 through the process and engaged, it can
6 actually impact the integrity of the
7 program, where other parents in the
8 future will be, well, if I sign up and
9 something happened, will my child be
10 pushed to the back of the line?

11 With that being said, I know
12 for a fact that CSO, we have been over
13 there across the street -- the school is
14 across the street from the District --
15 reaching out, doing handouts and trying
16 to really engage parents. We've done
17 town halls and things of that nature, but
18 to date, it is true that all the children
19 have not been seated at an additional
20 school.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: And I
22 just would consider that as a failure of
23 leadership on multiple sides. I will put
24 myself in that category and everybody
25 else that's involved based on the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 decision that someone made that none of
3 us has control over. At the end of the
4 day, our families and our students see us
5 all as government, and all they know is
6 that government closed their school and
7 government has not found a soft landing
8 for them and their family. So we have to
9 continue to do our due diligence.

10 Dr. Watlington, I have to move
11 on. I will come back to you to allow at
12 some point for you to talk about the
13 traditional comprehensive school side of
14 parent engagement.

15 The Chair recognizes Dr. Nina
16 Ahmad. Following Dr. Ahmad, we'll go to
17 Councilmember O'Rourke.

18 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
19 you, Chair Thomas.

20 My question is going back to
21 the out of school and after school and
22 the extended learning that was spoken
23 about. A week and some ago, I was at a
24 community garden in North Philadelphia,
25 beautiful, massive space where that has

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 been kept up by seniors who have been
3 doing this for 40 years, and they're
4 looking to pass on these gardening
5 skills, urban gardening skills, and
6 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and
7 there's another trust called the
8 Neighborhood Gardens Trust, we were all
9 talking about there were no young people
10 in that space hardly. There were some.
11 But we thought about the School District,
12 and I asked, is this something that the
13 School District, could the kids use this?
14 Is there a way to make this happen? You
15 know, open air, multiple things,
16 including staying off your technology,
17 all those things, and just knowing where
18 your food comes from and taking care of
19 mother earth. I just wondered if you
20 have anything of that in your curriculum
21 for this extended learning?

22 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
23 Yes. We are thinking and talking about
24 it for two reasons. One, we have a
25 number of schools that are focusing on,

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 as you called it, urban gardening that
3 have raised garden beds, trying to teach
4 kids how to grow healthy foods and the
5 like.

6 We also know that through some
7 of our CTE culinary programs, that some
8 of our students are really embracing that
9 area. That's another point of entry. In
10 fact, I was at CCCAP last night where
11 students from South Philadelphia High
12 School, I think, and several other kids
13 were being recognized because of some
14 work. They won some scholarship awards
15 because of some work they're doing in
16 that area. It's on our radar.

17 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD:
18 Wonderful. I'd love to know once you do
19 have something programmed what that looks
20 like.

21 My second question was about
22 the proficiency rates that you discussed
23 and the drop in the algebra. What
24 specific things are you doing and what
25 resources are you using to address the

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2 slide? And also even improvements are
3 still abysmally low.

4 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

5 Absolutely. I agree.

6 Did you want to say something,
7 President Streater?

8 PRESIDENT STREATER: I think
9 just to kind of give you context on the
10 charter side, because, again, that's
11 60,000 students who we're all responsible
12 for too. One of the things that the
13 Board has attempted to do is evolve into
14 a Board where there is a focus on student
15 achievement, no matter where the students
16 are. So in doing so, from 1997 to 2012,
17 we had limited oversight. There just
18 wasn't a lot of resources in our Charter
19 School Office.

20 Two, in 2012, we started
21 authorizing quality initiatives. 2016,
22 annual charter evaluations through ACE.
23 2021, reorganization. And now we're seen
24 as a national leader as it relates to
25 authorizing. But in doing so, we created

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2 the framework, which was, from my
3 understanding, inclusive of voices from
4 the charter sector itself where we look
5 at things like student achievement, where
6 we compare charter schools to District
7 schools but also similar schools groups
8 to determine where their proficiency
9 rates are rising, and that, amongst other
10 markers, can determine whether a school
11 meets the standard or doesn't meet the
12 standard. If a school doesn't meet the
13 standard, there may be a decision that
14 has to be made, whether we need to work
15 with the school and create conditions for
16 the school to survive, not renew a
17 school. Like we did (unintelligible)
18 Academy, when we saw student achievement
19 rising, we brought them back off the
20 non-renewal track.

21 So there is something that we
22 are doing on the District side -- on the
23 charter side. It's just that the law
24 doesn't allow us to go into year 2 or
25 year 3 of a five-year term to say, you

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2 need to change something now or else,

3 right? We have to wait five years.

4 So that's what's happening on

5 the District side, the charter side.

6 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

7 Councilmember Ahmad, I do want to note

8 that improvement rates of three to five

9 percentage points within a given school

10 year are uncommon in a lot of districts.

11 One of the myths is that public

12 traditional schools are not getting

13 better. The Council for Great City

14 Schools is actually going to publish a

15 book later this year and they're going to

16 lay out the data to show that many of

17 those districts are actually improving.

18 Now, here in the School

19 District of Philadelphia, we know that

20 we're disadvantaged because we're in a

21 state where the number of certificated

22 teachers has gone by 71 percent. So the

23 number one thing that I'm focused on

24 putting resources in is to teacher

25 development and training, because not all

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2 of us are at the level where we need to
3 be with regard to, A, knowing my content.

4 I have the Human Resources
5 Department taking a look at all of our
6 math teachers to determine how much math
7 do they actually have on their college
8 transcripts and how do we need to get
9 innovative and get some of our math
10 teachers over at Temple and other places
11 to get what they don't need in terms of
12 content, how do we help our teachers to
13 better engage students and to also
14 understand how to connect with the
15 learner and their families. Professional
16 development is a really, really big
17 priority for us.

18 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
19 you.

20 Thank you, Chair.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
22 you, Councilmember.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilmember O'Rourke, followed by
25 Councilmember Landau, and then we will

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2 close out with Councilmember Young.

3 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Thank
4 you, Mr. Chair.

5 And welcome back. We were
6 talking a bit about teacher retention
7 when I left off with you. In addition to
8 retaining our incredible teachers, I also
9 want to talk about how Philadelphia
10 schools are preparing the next generation
11 for careers in education or government
12 really, both extremely important fields
13 with high vacancy rates.

14 Are there any existing programs
15 in our District high schools that prepare
16 students for future careers in teaching
17 or for public service?

18 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
19 Yes. There are programs that train our
20 young people to become teachers, SLA
21 Beeber, Parkway. I'm working with
22 President Guy Generals at the Community
23 College as we speak, not just to launch
24 the Municipal College, which is a number
25 one priority and an exciting priority,

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2 we're also planning a teacher prep middle
3 college high school in partnership with
4 the Community College of Philadelphia
5 where we are going to grow our own
6 teachers. We are going to diversify the
7 teacher pipeline, and we are going to
8 find resources for every single one of
9 our young people to go to college debt
10 free and return here to teach.

11 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: It
12 sounds like not only is it something that
13 you're currently doing but you're working
14 on going deeper into it.

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
16 Yes.

17 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: From
18 what you have seen, and I probably could
19 assume because of your focus and your
20 commitment your investment in doing more
21 of it, what have you seen so far as it
22 relates to the results of these kinds of
23 trainings or prep programs, if you can
24 just say that for the record?

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'm

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2 sorry. What have we seen so far?

3 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: What
4 have you seen as a result of these
5 programs, if you can just state it for
6 the record.

7 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

8 Sure. We've not put together a detailed
9 report, but it's something that I'll have
10 the Human Resources, the Talent team to
11 do. I've actually seen anecdotally --
12 I've been to SLA Beeber. I visited there
13 with Senator Vincent Hughes and others
14 and President Streater and others to
15 celebrate some new teachers and kids who
16 are getting their pre-teaching work done
17 there.

18 We've seen more people say,
19 look, we're excited about getting paid as
20 student teachers, so we're more likely to
21 stick with this thing and that
22 legislation that went through.

23 And then, third, we've also
24 seen some students who left Parkway to go
25 work at KenCrest, and we intend to get

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2 them back in the School District.

3 But as far as a full-fledged
4 data report, we've not produced that yet,
5 but we will.

6 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Can I
7 keep going, Mr. Chair?

8 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: One
9 more.

10 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: One
11 more?

12 Like many of my colleagues,
13 including Chairman Thomas, actually as
14 well as -- not my colleague but Madam
15 Mayor this morning have shared some
16 serious concerns about the school
17 facilities. From my understanding, the
18 last time the School District did a full
19 facilities conditions assessment was
20 2015.

21 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
22 2017.

23 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: 2017,
24 okay. It looks like another partial
25 assessment was done in 2020 as well, but

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2 it doesn't appear to provide updated data
3 for a large number of facilities.

4 When does the School District
5 plan -- and if you've already answered
6 this, I apologize, but when does the
7 School District plan to update these
8 assessments for all of the facilities?

9 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: We
10 will have all of the comprehensive data
11 in a database for all of our
12 District-operated schools, all 300
13 buildings, by December of this year.
14 We're currently moving in earnest with a
15 sense of urgency to staff up a project
16 team, which we will launch officially
17 once we have all the data in so that we
18 have accurate data for all our
19 facilities.

20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Thank
21 you, Mr. Superintendent.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
24 you, Minority Whip.

25 The Chair recognizes

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2 Councilmember Rue Landau.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Thank
4 you.

5 Thank you so much. We'll try
6 to do a lightning round. I had a second
7 cup of coffee.

8 What do you see as the role of
9 the Charter Schools Office in both
10 oversight and accountability as well as
11 support for the schools?

12 PRESIDENT STREATER: Well,
13 number one, I believe that the law
14 dictates --

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Board of
16 Ed. Sorry.

17 PRESIDENT STREATER: Yes. I
18 believe the law dictates our role. Our
19 role is to hold charters accountable for
20 results. That's how the charter school
21 law was created. Ensure equitable access
22 for all students, which is one of the
23 reasons why there's a conversation around
24 Franklin Towne; that charter school law
25 says that children from citywide should

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2 have access to any charter school, no
3 matter where they are. And then keeping
4 the public aware of how charter schools
5 utilize public dollars.

6 But with that being said, we do
7 think that once a school is authorized,
8 that the Charter Schools Office role is
9 to do what it can to support and provide
10 support for the charter school, while
11 also respecting independence. And I
12 think one of the things that I think some
13 people get -- I think we conflate is
14 independence versus support. Sometimes
15 there's a pushback for the support,
16 because we want to do it our way, and
17 that's what the charter school law
18 provides, but whenever the CSO convenes
19 these small lend communities where
20 charter schools can come in and learn
21 best practices, I think that that work
22 has been helpful.

23 Two, the Charter School Office
24 believes that it should make the process
25 not as onerous as it relates to like the

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2 paperwork piece, right? That's why the
3 CSO has created the early window for
4 charter schools who need a little bit
5 more time or early access to maybe
6 address some things that might not be
7 accurate in their report. But other than
8 that, we believe that the Charter Schools
9 Office is to ensure that there is -- the
10 standard of care for education is
11 maintained in the charter school sector,
12 and I believe that the Board's role is to
13 decide whether or not the school should
14 be authorized or de-authorized.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Have you
16 done an assessment of the charter leaders
17 to make sure that we don't have another
18 situation like Mathematics, Civics and
19 Sciences? I got another question.

20 PRESIDENT STREATER: The sad
21 part about Mathematics, Science and
22 Civics is that I personally sent an
23 e-mail to the Board Chair of that school
24 in the summer and I, for whatever reason,
25 did not get a response. The next thing I

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2 heard was in the newspaper two months
3 later that the school was going to close.

4 So right now I don't know if
5 there's another school out there waiting
6 in the wings to potentially sell the
7 building from under the operator, but I
8 do know that the CSO is doing everything
9 it can to try to be a better partner with
10 our schools.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: This is
12 for Dr. Watlington. We're all very
13 concerned as we're hearing the numbers
14 today that we're eking up here, eking up
15 there. We know that we're graduating
16 students who are still struggling with
17 basic math, basic reading.

18 What kind of assessment do you
19 guys do in your office weekly or
20 otherwise looking at the lowest
21 performing schools, the ones with the
22 greatest challenges? What kind of focus
23 are you doing on that to give them an
24 extra hand?

25 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

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2 Absolutely. We look at the data with
3 regard to attendance, academic
4 achievement. We look at Star Assessments
5 that we do throughout the year. That's a
6 diagnostic assessment. And we start --
7 we tier the schools, the schools that are
8 at the very bottom, the schools that are
9 at the middle, and the schools that are
10 the most -- that have the best performing
11 ratios, and we try to figure out what
12 customized supports need to go in those
13 particular schools.

14 I do think it's important, if I
15 might say, Councilmember Landau, that if
16 we -- in the context of we got to make
17 more improvement. Where we are is not
18 good enough, but I think the extent to
19 which Council can help say to our
20 teachers that we recognize the
21 improvement in 14 out of 17 areas, that
22 we recognize that the bottom is
23 improving, that we recognize that the
24 graduation rate is going up and that
25 1,200 less kids are dropping out of

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2 school and to say, hey, thank you, keep
3 working, we're behind you, I think that
4 will kind of help motivate us to get even
5 more improvements.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I'm a
7 huge fan and a cheerleader of the
8 educators. I think they're doing a great
9 job. That's why my first questions were
10 really about counselors, social workers.
11 We must have more supports for the
12 teachers. They cannot do this on their
13 own. We want to give them everything
14 that they deserve in order to make their
15 classrooms the easiest they possibly can
16 be so they can educate our little
17 scholars.

18 Thank you.

19 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
20 you, Councilmember. We know you got a
21 former teacher on your staff, so you got
22 that inside information as it relates to
23 what goes on in our schools.

24 Last, but not least, the Chair
25 recognizes Councilmember Young.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
3 you, Mr. Chair. Having a former teacher
4 on your staff is a plus. One of my
5 staffers is a former teacher at Ben
6 Franklin, former CTE teacher at Ben
7 Franklin. So the things that he's told
8 me, really I learned -- in February he
9 left to come work for me. So the things
10 that I've been told about how the School
11 District operates is just -- I just
12 really didn't want to believe it.

13 But I'm going to take a micro
14 level approach to talk about some Fifth
15 District-specific schools in the
16 budgeting, because I'm trying to figure
17 out how the School District allocates
18 resources towards certain schools.

19 And just to give you some
20 numbers, this is from the numbers that
21 were provided to us. I want to take a
22 look at six schools in our district.
23 Adaire, the average spend per pupil, per
24 student at Adaire is \$11,441, right,
25 based on your numbers you provided us,

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2 and they have a 38 percent economic
3 disadvantage.

4 Bache-Martin, the average spend
5 is \$23,559. They have a 57 percent
6 economic disadvantage.

7 The third school, Dobbins, has
8 a \$15,889 per student spend with 90
9 percent being from economic disadvantage.
10 And the numbers for Dobbins has been
11 going down for the last three years,
12 which is crazy to me being that it's our
13 city's best known CTE school, right?

14 Then we have Ben Franklin.
15 It's a \$17,500 per student with an
16 82 percent economic disadvantage.

17 Gideon, my neighborhood school,
18 \$25,881 with 91 percent economically
19 disadvantage, and Strawberry Mansion High
20 School with \$23,980 and 90 percent
21 economic disadvantage.

22 And I'm just looking at these
23 numbers, and they're all out of whack.
24 Like no one like set of schools has like
25 a standard, okay, we have this level of

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2 economic disadvantage, so we want to pour
3 these resources there, right? Because
4 when I look at a school like Dobbins with
5 a 90 percent economic disadvantage rate
6 and they're only spending 15,000 per
7 student, where I look at Bache-Martin
8 with 57 and they're spending 23,000 per
9 student and I look at -- then I look at
10 Ben Franklin, which is the feeder high
11 school of Bache-Martin, which is only
12 getting 17,000.

13 So if I'm a parent who sends
14 their child to Bache-Martin for K through
15 8, I'm not sending them to Franklin,
16 because Franklin has less resources than
17 the school that they just are coming
18 from.

19 So we have to -- I'm just
20 trying to figure out how do you all
21 allocate resources per school per pupil?
22 Because from looking at the numbers here,
23 it seems to be no rhyme or reason.

24 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
25 Thank you, Councilmember Young. The

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2 lion's share of funding to schools, the
3 lion's share, is going to be represented
4 in personnel and benefits costs, because
5 70 percent of school districts funding --
6 70 percent of our funding goes to -- is
7 very heavily personnel. We're a
8 personnel-driven organization.

9 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I'm
10 looking at that, though. So on this
11 sheet that you provided to us, it lists
12 the positions, principals, teachers,
13 classroom aides, nurse, secretaries, et
14 cetera. It lists all of that per school
15 and the number of teachers per school.
16 So I'm looking at -- it looks like -- I'm
17 looking at the average. Like Adaire, for
18 example, has 26 and a half teachers
19 projected. Ethel Allen has 26.4 teachers
20 projected. So those numbers are there,
21 but it still seems to be no rhyme or
22 reason why this one school with similar
23 amount of students, similar amount of
24 teachers has a budget that is
25 astronomically different than another.

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2 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: So

3 I can take a stab at that. Here's how

4 I'm going to suggest we think about it:

5 The difference between equality and

6 equity is that schools that have kids who

7 have unique different challenges need

8 more, and they should get more. We

9 agree.

10 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I totally

11 agree, but when you say that, right, I

12 look at a school like Bache-Martin again

13 that only has 57 percent economic

14 disadvantaged students, then I look at a

15 school that's getting 23,000 per student.

16 Then I look at Dobbins with 90 percent

17 economic disadvantage that's only getting

18 15,000 per student.

19 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: So

20 let me say two things to you,

21 Councilmember Young, and I'd be happy to

22 sit down offline to go into a deeper

23 dive.

24 It's not just about the number

25 of children who qualify for free and

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2 reduced lunch. It includes things
3 like -- equity funding is designed to
4 include things like the percentage of the
5 kids who qualify for free and reduced
6 lunch, things like the number of special
7 education students, the percentage of
8 English language learner students. You
9 can also factor in there sometimes the
10 academic achievement indicator.

11 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: You're
12 telling me what goes into equity funding,
13 but I'm telling you that the numbers here
14 show that it does not -- it's not adding
15 up, right? Because, again, Dobbins is at
16 90 percent. They're receiving less money
17 than some of these other schools that,
18 you know, that have lower numbers than
19 they would, right?

20 So, again, I understand what
21 goes into it. You don't have to explain
22 that to me. I get that. That's great.
23 But I'm trying to figure out the
24 methodology, the formula. Is there like
25 a formula that says, you know, that you

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2 go and say, all right, per pupil, per
3 economic disadvantage, per special ed,
4 we're allocating this amount of dollars
5 for that particular student, school, et
6 cetera, because based on these numbers, I
7 cannot, I guess, follow what that
8 methodology is.

9 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

10 Yes. In 60 seconds or less, Chair
11 Thomas, if you'll permit me, I'll just
12 say two things. Number one, yes, there
13 is a formula. And, Councilmember Young,
14 your ears must have been burning
15 yesterday, because I met with my
16 Principal Advisory Council and one of the
17 things they recommended to me is that we
18 take a look at all of the formulas, many
19 of which were developed more than a
20 decade ago, to see how relevant they are
21 to our situation today.

22 Now, let me give you one other
23 clean example of why you may not be able
24 to see everything that we see in those
25 numbers. Overbrook High School is a

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2 school that used to qualify for CSI
3 federal funding because of its
4 achievement level. Now, sometimes of the
5 lowest achieving schools we get federal
6 dollars. Once those schools improve in
7 categories, those funding go away.

8 Overbrook is a school that improved. The
9 graduation rate went up. They made some
10 improvement.

11 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: And I get
12 that. And Overbrook is a fine West
13 Philadelphia institution, right? I'm
14 talking about schools in North Philly.

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON: I'd
16 be happy to look at that and walk through
17 it with you offline, if that will work,
18 sir.

19 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
20 you.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
22 you.

23 Let me just recognize the
24 Council President real quick.

25 The Chair recognizes Council

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2 President Johnson.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 Yeah. And the line of questioning was
5 dead on. It was on my mind earlier
6 today, but I didn't get a chance to ask
7 this question -- this request rather.

8 Under other administrations, we
9 would receive kind of a rubric that would
10 show all the schools in the City of
11 Philadelphia and the type of funding they
12 received per pupil, right, and the other
13 different categories. I do remember
14 receiving that in the past.

15 So the Chair requests if that
16 type of data could be put together so
17 that we can compare what South
18 Philadelphia High School gets compared to
19 Northeast High School, what Bartram
20 receives versus West Philadelphia High
21 School, and then we can just take an
22 overall analysis in terms of equity. And
23 I know that that report exists because I
24 remember when I received it before in the
25 past, it was a variety of different

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2 categories, but the spending was the key
3 per pupil, and it gave me a chance to
4 kind of look at overall. And this is --
5 matter of fact, I think this might have
6 been under Dr. Arlene Ackerman. So it's
7 been some time ago, right, but I do
8 remember receiving that type of report
9 and it also gives us a snapshot to make
10 sure that funding is being distributed
11 equitably, right?

12 I went to Martin Luther King
13 High School and did a budget town hall.
14 The auditorium was magnificent. I kicked
15 off the budget town hall in South
16 Philadelphia High School, which is in
17 Squilla's district, but most of the kids
18 from my district attends there, and it's
19 a vast difference, but I think MLK High
20 School was a new school, which is good,
21 right?

22 At John Bartram High School,
23 they were waiting to get security cameras
24 that we as Council pledged to have at
25 that particular school, but then there

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2 are other schools where they are
3 technology efficient.

4 So I do officially request,
5 however you want to go about performing
6 the data analysis, but it would be
7 really, really important, really, really
8 important. And I would also like to
9 compare from -- you just got here. So
10 we're talking about addressing systematic
11 inequalities, right, that have been
12 always going on here in the City of
13 Philadelphia prior to your
14 administration, right? But if we're
15 talking about moving forward and doing
16 some things differently, it's a new day,
17 right, this would be the opportune time,
18 one, same thing as I mentioned to you
19 earlier. I know you said you would
20 welcome it. Let's look at a forensic
21 audit just so the public -- because we
22 get asked questions too, right? Okay.
23 Each year we're doing a tax increase,
24 which we're not doing this year, or some
25 level of funding, right? And then we

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2 want to make sure that return on
3 investment, so we can be able to go back
4 in a transparent way to our constituents
5 and say, you know, our District is doing
6 their good fiduciary responsibility,
7 taking care of what they're supposed to
8 take care of, which I know that's the
9 case, but just having that data is good.

10 But the key component is just
11 making sure that if a kid attends Bartram
12 or Tilden, they're getting the same as
13 Meredith, McCall, all those schools on
14 the east side of Broad that become
15 lottery schools because the neighborhood
16 get gentrified and they can start getting
17 the resources. And I'm speaking from
18 experience. I live in South
19 Philadelphia, got Chester Arthur.
20 Everybody from the neighborhood went
21 there.

22 I went to Childs Elementary
23 School all my life as a kid. When the
24 neighborhood changed, the resources just
25 start plowing in, right? I'm just

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2 talking about experience, because the
3 demographic changed, the demand is a
4 little different. The District would
5 change response. But, however, it was
6 prior to you, prior to you.

7 And so I do want to officially
8 request, rather you call it a rubric,
9 rather analysis of how funding is
10 distributed per schools in terms of
11 resources just so we can take a snapshot
12 of what it looks like across the City.
13 That's all.

14 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:
15 Council President, I clearly understand
16 what you're asking for.

17 And, Councilmember Young, I
18 understand and appreciate the spirit of
19 your question. Let us go do a little
20 further dig, homework, and we'll be glad
21 to follow up, and we'll make it clear,
22 rank the vision, make it plain. I hear
23 you loud and clear, sir.

24 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
25 you.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
3 you, Councilmember Young, for your line
4 of questioning. I think it inspired a
5 lot.

6 And what we will also do as
7 Chair of the Education Committee, we will
8 look at the different schools by district
9 and when we do our monthly meeting, begin
10 to explore it by district to be able to
11 have conversation around equity,
12 finances, and other public safety-related
13 issues that we feel like we need to do as
14 far as coordinating and working together,
15 because I think Councilmember Young kind
16 of sparked something that other District
17 Councilmembers were probably thinking.

18 I do want to take a moment to
19 say thank you. Thank you, Superintendent
20 Watlington. Thank you, Board President
21 Streater. Thank you to the entire
22 leadership team that's here at the School
23 District of Philadelphia, as well as
24 current and former School Board members
25 who decided to sit through this entire

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2 conversation.

3 I do always want to note for
4 the record that being a School Board
5 member is a volunteer position. So
6 somebody probably had to take off work
7 today, as you often have to do, to make
8 sure that you're putting us in the best
9 interest to support our families and our
10 children. So thank you all for being
11 here. We truly appreciate you, and we
12 all know that we have more work to do.

13 With that being said, we will
14 call up Dr. Generals and the team at CCP.

15 SUPERINTENDENT WATLINGTON:

16 Thank you for the opportunity, sir.

17 PRESIDENT STREATER: Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I
19 also want to take a moment to acknowledge
20 Lisa Salley and Cecelia Thompson. Thank
21 you for your service, School Board
22 members.

23 (Witness approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Let's rock and roll. Dr. Generals, how
3 are you today?

4 DR. GENERALS: Good. Good.

5 Thank you for having me.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Just state your name and your title and
8 let's begin your testimony.

9 DR. GENERALS: Yes. Dr. Guy
10 Generals, President, Community College of
11 Philadelphia.

12 I want to thank you, President
13 Johnson and members of the Council.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: One
15 second, Dr. Generals.

16 Could we keep it down, please.
17 Thank you very much.

18 Dr. Generals, please proceed
19 with your testimony.

20 DR. GENERALS: Again, I'd like
21 to thank you, President Johnson and
22 members of the Council. It's been a long
23 day, so I will try to be as concise as
24 possible with our testimony.

25 I do want to begin with what's

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 most important. This Saturday we will
3 graduate about 1,667 students. A hundred
4 and six of those students are middle
5 college students. We've put a lot of
6 focus on working with the School District
7 to try to get students through college
8 earlier. Most come through the Parkway
9 Central. Some come through MaST
10 Community Charter School. Two hundred
11 and three of those students will be Catto
12 scholars. As you know, Catto is a
13 relatively new program, and we're
14 graduating 203 students. Thirty will
15 come through our CME program.

16 Seventy percent of these
17 students will graduate and then transfer
18 to either Temple or one of the area
19 universities, including West Chester.
20 Most go to Temple. Many go to West
21 Chester, and we have quite a few that go
22 to Drexel and then throughout the area.
23 Of course, you know there's quite a few
24 universities and colleges and our
25 students transfer.

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2 Many of them will take jobs
3 right out of graduation.

4 (Technical issue with
5 microphone.)

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: One
7 second, Doctor.

8 Please proceed.

9 DR. GENERALS: All right.

10 Thank you. I think it's important to
11 give an update as to where we are
12 relative to coming out of the pandemic,
13 because as you know, the pandemic was
14 pretty devastating to enrollment and just
15 the overall status.

16 The good news is that over the
17 last academic year, we have posted five
18 percent increases in the fall. The
19 spring semester we're up four percent,
20 and as we move towards the summer
21 semester, we're at ten percent. This
22 defies common logic, which typically says
23 that when the economy is good, Community
24 College students tend to not come. So
25 they're coming despite the fact that the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 economy is good and the unemployment rate
3 is -- I'm not touching anything. My body
4 is giving off electricity.

5 (Technical issue with
6 microphone.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

8 Here you go.

9 We know how to improvise around
10 here. Taxpayers' dollars. Go ahead,
11 sir.

12 DR. GENERALS: Are we good?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 Yes.

15 DR. GENERALS: Okay. So 1,565
16 students are enrolled in dual enrollment
17 programs. That will be part of our
18 financial ask as I get to that part of my
19 presentation. Fifty-seven percent of our
20 students are being retained, which is a
21 fairly high number. We're trying to do
22 better.

23 We have become an emerging
24 Hispanic-serving institution at about
25 18 percent. That's been a goal to move

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 that number up. We have some competing
3 institutions around the City. So I think
4 we're being successful based on the
5 support services that we provide.

6 In terms of student support,
7 this year we will hire 20 faculty, two
8 advisors. Many of them are replacement,
9 but some of them are new. We continue to
10 support CME both with the grant dollars
11 as well as institutional dollars. We
12 committed a million dollars to CME to
13 expand to the I Am More program.

14 We have a women outreach and
15 advocacy program at the College that's
16 quite successful. We have the MarcDavid
17 LGBTQ Center.

18 We continue to build and to
19 strengthen our PHA partnership. Right
20 now we have about seven or eight students
21 that are in there. It's been as high as
22 16, I believe. Many of the students have
23 graduated. Some of them have moved on.
24 So that the team is moving towards trying
25 to fill those beds right now, and I hope

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 to have a conversation with my friend
3 Kelvin Jeremiah to be able to expand
4 that, because we think it's a really good
5 program for students that are either
6 homeless or housing insecure.

7 We continue to provide food
8 collaboration and provide perishable as
9 well as non-perishables. We have a
10 garden on the campus, Grady's Garden.
11 Very proud of that. And I think what's
12 most important is that for the eighth
13 year in a row we have not increased
14 tuition. So we are very much committed
15 to trying to help students be successful
16 and to try to help them deal with some of
17 the issues beyond being successful in the
18 classroom.

19 We know that students -- you
20 think of Maslow's law. They have to have
21 an opportunity to be safe and to be
22 secure in terms of what their financial,
23 economic, and health needs are. We do a
24 lot in that space to try to help students
25 be successful.

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2 As you know, our workforce
3 portfolio is expanding as we speak. We
4 continue to provide -- we partner with
5 CHOP. We are providing their nurse and
6 nurse aides gen ed courses so that they
7 can move forward with their education.
8 This is part of our Corporate College.
9 We do Corporate College as well as
10 contract training. We provide training
11 for SEPTA management and supervision
12 workshops.

13 We are working with the City in
14 trying to deal with the issues of
15 violence through a grant-funded program
16 referred to as Credible Messenger
17 Academy. You may have heard of that.

18 We will roll out our Google
19 certificate program next week, which will
20 include IT support, data analytics, cyber
21 security. And we developed a degree for
22 the District's paraprofessionals, with a
23 focus on special education. This is our
24 education pipeline that we think will be
25 quite successful. We just started that.

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2 As you know, at the CATC, the
3 Career and Advanced Tech Center, we have
4 a fairly large transportation center
5 where we have partnerships with Fiat,
6 Ford, Nissan, Subaru, and of course our
7 regional program Toyota, the Toyota T-TEN
8 program.

9 We are now into our second
10 semester with the heavy trucks, so we're
11 providing training and opportunities for
12 students that are interested in being
13 truck mechanics. We think that that's a
14 possibility for a lucrative career for
15 students.

16 Our Ready-to-Weld Industrial
17 Welding Pre-apprenticeship program has 49
18 students from Ben Franklin, Mastrom,
19 Randolph -- Mastbaum, Randolph. Quite
20 successful. We had one graduate this
21 year, a young lady who is a senior. She
22 hasn't even graduated high school, and
23 she will be working for Rhoads
24 Industries. So that has the potential to
25 be quite successful in terms of pipelines

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 into CTE and programs such as that.

3 We are working with the U.S.

4 Mint with our computer numerical controls

5 program. If you've been out there, you

6 know that the equipment I'm talking

7 about, state of the art, brand new. So

8 we're really excited about the

9 opportunities that they provide.

10 We are working with the Navy

11 pipeline projects. It's a two-year

12 partnership with -- two-year partners,

13 the Navy pipeline two-year partners

14 program through the Office of Naval

15 Research where they are providing summer

16 internships, paid summer internships into

17 their research institute.

18 We received the apprenticeship

19 Building America Grant working with

20 Philadelphia Works. As you know, Pat

21 Clancy is on our Board, so we have a

22 pretty good relationship with them, and

23 we're trying to continue to expand that.

24 This year again,

25 state-of-the-art equipment, we were able

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 to educate 83 students in our dental tech
3 program and 65 students in our certified
4 nurse assistant program. Part of what
5 we're offering out in the Career and
6 Advanced Tech Center is not just advanced
7 manufacturing suite but also healthcare.
8 So we're quite happy about that.

9 In terms of STEM, we're now, I
10 believe, on our second term of a ten-week
11 aseptic technician program. We are doing
12 all we can to continue to build in our
13 gene and cell therapy suite of programs.
14 We had 23 students, nine of whom were
15 able to find employment through WuXi and
16 Integrated Molecular.

17 Our Clinical Trials Research
18 Conference was quite successful where we
19 brought professionals, doctors, from
20 around the field, from around the area to
21 work with our students in the field of
22 clinical research. We think that that's
23 an area in the gene and cell therapy
24 space that will provide opportunities for
25 our students.

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2 We did partner with Lincoln
3 University. We're now offering their
4 graduating students an RN in nursing. As
5 you may or may not know, Lincoln
6 discontinued their nursing program, so
7 now those students are able to come to
8 us.

9 We have a Jr. STEM Academy also
10 at the CATC where the students, middle
11 school and high school students, are
12 learning drones, 3D printing, and
13 robotics. We have a waiting list.
14 There's 158 students right now in that
15 program, so we're quite happy about that.

16 I want to say that our
17 Institute for Community Engagement and
18 Civic Leadership is quite important in
19 the City. I wanted to give you some
20 information about that.

21 We're involved in an Adopt a
22 School program. We have CCP Votes and
23 Civic Engagement where we've been able to
24 register close to 200 -- over 240
25 students to be able to vote, and we have

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 a semester of service where we had over
3 250 students provide 3,000 hours of
4 service to the community. So we try to
5 really put meaning into the community.

6 I'd like to point out the fact
7 that we are asking for \$10 million, of
8 which part of that, 6 million to 7
9 million, will go towards either the
10 capital and/or programmatic development
11 of the Municipal Tech, Municipal College.
12 We haven't quite landed on a name yet,
13 but as you know, the goal is to align
14 Community College education with the
15 workforce, the very specific workforce
16 needs of the City.

17 It is our hope that we are able
18 to provide pathways from the high school
19 all the way through to Community College
20 where we can have pre-apprenticeship
21 programs as well as apprenticeship
22 programs, worked very closely with the
23 City to try to hone in on the specific
24 skills that students will need, including
25 civil service skills, forensics.

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2 We right now are able to
3 coalesce the programs that we currently
4 offer. So we're doing the soft building
5 now. We have programs in criminal
6 justice, public policy, law and society,
7 forensics, cyber security. So we're
8 building these divisions, if you will,
9 that will provide a pathway for students
10 who are interested in going into any one
11 of these programs.

12 We've had a conversation with
13 the Mayor's staff about how this is going
14 to build out, what it's going to look
15 like. It will include workforce
16 development, specifically the CATC and
17 some of the things we're doing there,
18 but, again, the magic will be the
19 relationship between the College and the
20 City and ensuring that --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

22 What's the timeframe?

23 DR. GENERALS: I'm sorry?

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The
25 timeframe.

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2 DR. GENERALS: So the --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: For
4 the program to be up and running.

5 DR. GENERALS: So within the
6 first six months. September is always,
7 you know, a push. We hope to be able to
8 coalesce the programs and lay out degree
9 programs, certificate programs so there's
10 an academic pathway. As you know, this
11 is built around the Northwest Campus up
12 on Godfrey. We have some renovation that
13 has to be done there. That's probably
14 going to be minimally a year before we're
15 able to get that going.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 This is Northwest Philadelphia?

18 DR. GENERALS: Northwest
19 Philadelphia.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Not
21 North Philly at 17th and Spring Garden?

22 DR. GENERALS: Did I say North
23 Philly? Northwest Philadelphia, Godfrey.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: You
25 said Northwest. I wanted to make sure I

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 heard it correctly.

3 DR. GENERALS: Northwest.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Northwest Philadelphia.

6 DR. GENERALS: Northwest

7 Philadelphia.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Not

9 17th and Spring Garden, the main campus,
10 correct?

11 DR. GENERALS: The academic
12 programs can begin there as well as our
13 other extension programs, because we
14 offer these courses at both campuses.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 Where would the Municipal College be?

17 DR. GENERALS: It will
18 eventually be at the Northwest Campus.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 Okay. I wanted to be clear on that. I
21 don't think we heard that thus far, that
22 it will be in the Northwest Philadelphia.
23 We thought it would be at your
24 centralized main campus, but thank you
25 for the clarity, though.

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2 DR. GENERALS: Yeah. That's
3 the goal. So it will be a unique
4 phenomena in that it will be directly
5 connected to City needs. Again,
6 Municipal College, Municipal Tech Center,
7 we haven't landed on a name yet, but the
8 idea will be that students will go there
9 with the full understanding that they
10 will be on a pathway into City government
11 jobs.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

13 Awesome.

14 DR. GENERALS: So by September,
15 we'll have the beginnings of these
16 pathways in place already. Some of the
17 staff, they're here. They're already
18 beginning to coalesce these programs into
19 packaged academic tracks.

20 Right now we have courses kind
21 of -- I don't want to say scattered, but
22 they're in many different divisions. The
23 idea will be to pull these courses into a
24 way so that they actually represent a
25 degree and/or certificate while we begin

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2 the work on the northwest building.

3 And then, finally, probably

4 what we think is the most exciting is

5 that, as you probably know, we've

6 rebranded the College. We have new

7 symbols, new language, new articulations

8 about who we are, Rise from Within. We

9 think that expresses our students' desire

10 and self-motivation to be successful. We

11 see it all the time, overcoming

12 incredible odds to come to college and to

13 be successful and to move on. So we

14 think -- we really wanted to capture that

15 idea.

16 We had a huge block party. You

17 may have been invited. Maybe some of you

18 came. It was really exciting. And so

19 we're excited about the next chapter of

20 Community College of Philadelphia, and

21 part of what I've tried to explain today

22 is that all of that represents the next

23 chapter.

24 So with that, I'll certainly

25 entertain any questions.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Thank you very much, Dr. Generals. And I
4 know we did 10 million during the midyear
5 transfer to help get you started thus
6 far, so it's good to see that the
7 timeline is starting early in terms of
8 how you map out this initiative. Just
9 didn't know it would be up in the
10 northwest part of Philadelphia, which is
11 cool, but when I think about Community, I
12 think about your core main campus. And I
13 think such a significant investment I
14 thought would be at the actual main
15 campus and go from there.

16 DR. GENERALS: You know, if
17 you're in the program, it doesn't mean
18 you wouldn't be taking courses at the
19 main campus.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: No.
21 I got you.

22 DR. GENERALS: And/or online,
23 but the Northwest is that will be a
24 center.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 That will be the center?

3 DR. GENERALS: Yes.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Okay.

6 DR. GENERALS: We're
7 envisioning technologies in simulation,
8 especially if we get into public safety
9 issues, which is a need. We're
10 envisioning sort of like a junior
11 academy, police academy, to help students
12 prepare to take that Nelson Denny, which
13 has been a problem.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 Cool.

16 DR. GENERALS: And the models
17 that are out there, it's all about
18 technologies and simulation and an area
19 in which students can be excited about
20 going to. So that's what we hope to be
21 able to build.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

23 Good. Awesome. Awesome.

24 I just have a couple small
25 questions, because I know my members are

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2 queued up on the mic.

3 One, I want to give a shout-out
4 to Jasmine Sessoms, Chief Engagement
5 Officer.

6 Can we give her a round of
7 applause, y'all.

8 - - -

9 (Applause.)

10 - - -

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 Because we ain't going too hard on you.
13 We got to deal with Jasmine later on, you
14 know, but Jasmine does a good job as
15 being, what I call, outstanding
16 ambassador, all things Community College.
17 Been invited, yes, to the party and the
18 rebranding and the center that you named,
19 the center she started for women, which I
20 thought was fantastic and phenomenal. So
21 you definitely got an asset that's a part
22 of your team. So I just wanted to
23 acknowledge her, give her her flowers for
24 her hard work and her dedication, even
25 saying can y'all speed this up a little

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2 bit.

3 By anyway, let me keep it
4 professional, stop playing around all the
5 time.

6 You have a food insecurity
7 collaborative, right? How does your food
8 collaborative focus on addressing food
9 insecurity for students that attend CCP?

10 DR. GENERALS: So we do wrestle
11 with the issues of food insecurity. We
12 have a food snack program there whereby
13 we either purchase and/or take donations.
14 So we have a food pantry, which is always
15 pretty much stocked with perishables and
16 non-perishables.

17 We have engaged students in a
18 garden that includes a groundhog.
19 Believe it or not, Philadelphia has
20 groundhogs. You can't just -- you have
21 to treat it very nicely. So the biggest
22 challenge there is keeping the groundhog
23 from eating up the vegetables, which, you
24 know, a couple of times a year, it yields
25 vegetables for students, and we can

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2 them -- they can them and give them out
3 to students. And sometimes there have
4 been times when we've given them out to
5 the homeless. So we do that. We had
6 Philabundance come. We had Philabundance
7 come during the corporate citizens --
8 what was it called? Our Corporate
9 Volunteer Council. And we packaged and
10 gave out tons of food. So it's an
11 ongoing process.

12 And then we have CCPcares. So
13 any student that is struggling, like
14 right now, tonight have nothing to eat,
15 they can call into CCPcares and get
16 financial support and/or at least -- if
17 not the type of -- you know, if it's a
18 family, we're able to direct them to
19 where they need to go. And we have our
20 Single Stop, which also provides avenues
21 towards food and opportunities for
22 students to eat and/or sleep.

23 Many of our students, as you
24 know, were foster or are foster and they
25 hit 18 and they're emancipated. So they

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2 find themselves, at best, couch surfing
3 and too often out in the streets and too
4 often in cars.

5 Numerous stories where students
6 were working with Uber Eats and sleeping
7 in the same car. So they're resourceful,
8 and we try to support them as best we
9 can. And we do a lot of fundraising for
10 students. I don't know if I'm allowed to
11 give a shameless plug, but our gala is
12 coming up, and part of what we do with
13 those money --

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 What's coming up?

16 DR. GENERALS: The gala, the
17 College's annual gala.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The
19 gala? Okay.

20 DR. GENERALS: So we provide
21 scholarships as well as opportunities to
22 meet some of their personal needs.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Awesome. I always respected the work
25 that you've done, so, Dr. Generals, keep

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 up the good work.

3 I'm going to acknowledge

4 Councilmember Rue Landau.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Thank

6 you so much.

7 Thank you for being here, and

8 thanks for sticking around for us.

9 The Mayor's proposed budget has
10 given you flat funding for this year and
11 it's unclear what funding from the state
12 is going to look like. The College
13 hasn't raised tuition in seven years, but
14 since 2020, we've seen inflation rising.
15 Will flat funding from the City force you
16 to raise tuition?

17 DR. GENERALS: I think "force"
18 is a strong term. You know, we try to be
19 as resourceful as we can. We try to wait
20 to see where the state is coming in.
21 Last year it wasn't much, but we were
22 able to do it. But there could come a
23 time where we would have to raise -- we
24 are forced to raise tuition as a result
25 of a lack of funding.

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2 So part of the \$10 million is
3 to go towards some of these costs that
4 you're talking about. It's not a full
5 increase, but it's certainly a set-aside
6 for cost increase and inflation and
7 things that you're talking about.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I know I
9 for one, along with so many colleagues,
10 want to support CCP as much as possible.
11 We think it's a gem in the City, but we
12 know that the staff is not paid as high
13 as it should be. So the MIT Living Wage
14 Calculator published new data showing
15 that a living wage for one person living
16 in Philadelphia is \$46,000 a year. How
17 much does the lowest paid staff person in
18 CCP make?

19 DR. GENERALS: The lowest
20 hourly paid is -- we moved it up to 15, I
21 believe. 16.40, because it gets
22 increased.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: So
24 according to this calculator, someone
25 would have to make 23.59 in order to make

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2 the \$46,000 a year for a living wage.
3 And we really support this staff in
4 getting as much as they possibly can. I
5 know it's a struggle. I know you're not
6 rich with resources, but I know I, along
7 with many of my colleagues, would like to
8 see the staff paid more for the amazing
9 work that they're doing.

10 I also know that the College
11 has been outsourcing some of its work,
12 from IT to HVAC, engineers, tutoring
13 services, cleaning services. What would
14 it take for the College to bring back
15 these good union jobs?

16 DR. GENERALS: So those changes
17 largely were as a result of trying to
18 deal with the reduction in tuition
19 enrollment post-pandemic. We did
20 everything we could to not lay people
21 off. We did not lay anyone off. We
22 continued to provide increases in
23 salaries. And so where we saw areas in
24 which we could get savings as well as,
25 quite frankly, greater productivity,

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2 especially in the HVAC area, it was
3 extremely difficult to find the type of
4 technicians that we needed, and as you
5 remember, during those times there were
6 very specialized filters and other types
7 of things that we had to put in place.
8 We just didn't have the luxury to keep
9 searches open for a prolonged period of
10 time.

11 The cleaning I would say is
12 pretty much the same. We felt that there
13 was a real need. And, again, nobody was
14 laid off. These were through attrition
15 we replaced individuals. I don't know
16 what the exact number would be, but I
17 think it would have to be a combination
18 of time and productivity and we could
19 probably come up with a way to staff
20 those positions, but we felt that it was
21 the best and the most practical thing for
22 us to do at that time.

23 And, you know, just to get back
24 to the \$16, those are primarily part-time
25 folks. I don't believe we have any

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2 full-time people that are below that
3 range, and it doesn't include the health
4 benefits, of which nobody under 40,000 at
5 CCP is paying into their health benefits.
6 So that original \$15, we were ahead of
7 most of the area institutions in terms of
8 an hourly rate, and that came about
9 through the last negotiation. We're
10 anxious to negotiate with the unions
11 right now, and I think if they would
12 negotiate with us, we could come to a
13 happy medium, and that's our goal.

14 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Do all
15 full-time staff get benefits?

16 DR. GENERALS: Do what?

17 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Do all
18 full-time staff get benefits?

19 DR. GENERALS: Yes.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Okay.
21 That's helpful. Thank you.

22 I'll come back for another
23 round or -- I got more.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
25 I'mma allow you to throw another one in

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 there, because this will be one round.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Okay.

4 I've been a huge fan, huge fan of SEPTA,

5 talk about it all the time, and I want

6 people to have -- as many people as

7 possible to have reduced fares, if not

8 free passes. So what have you done

9 towards this end or can you do in order

10 to give low cost or free transportation

11 to your students to get to school?

12 DR. GENERALS: So over the

13 years, we've had different types of

14 programs. They were limited, but we did

15 have SEPTA passes for students, and I

16 know this has come up very recently. It

17 has not come up to me. That's what

18 happens when you don't negotiate. I

19 think that's something that we probably

20 could find a way to pursue, especially

21 for students, but we have not had much

22 conversation as it relates to that. I

23 know it's an issue now, and we will

24 certainly look into that.

25 We did have programs in the

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2 past. I believe SEPTA has rolled out
3 different types of programs over the
4 years that I've been here, and we had
5 available SEPTA passes for students, but
6 that sunsetted and nothing has happened
7 since, but certainly I'm open to the idea
8 of providing means, especially for
9 students.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Students
11 and employees would be great. If you
12 talk to us more, we'd love to be a part
13 of that conversation. Thank you.

14 DR. GENERALS: Sure.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 Thank you, Rue.

17 The Chair recognizes
18 Councilmember Jim Harrity.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
20 you, Council President.

21 Me and Rue are on the same
22 wavelength with these questions here. So
23 just as a follow-up to Councilwoman
24 Landau's questions, the most recent Pew
25 report on the State of the City shows

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 that too many Philadelphians continue to
3 be left behind because of the skills gap.
4 This especially impacts Black and brown
5 people. What does CCP need to better
6 help the City address these problems or
7 is there any way that CCP can help
8 address these problems?

9 DR. GENERALS: So certainly,
10 again, the Career and Advanced Tech
11 Center is a little bit over a year. That
12 was built with the idea in mind that the
13 City needed the types of skills that we
14 are providing. Community College of
15 Philadelphia did not have a welding
16 training program before that. The high
17 schools did. We partnered with Ben
18 Franklin years ago, and then of course,
19 you know, Ben Franklin had asbestos
20 problems, so when they had to close down,
21 we had to close down. So we now have our
22 own welding center. We think that's a
23 valuable source for jobs.

24 We think that the health
25 science programs we have, both dental

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2 tech and certified nurse assistants, are
3 entry-level positions for people that
4 don't have capacity otherwise. And our
5 auto tech program probably has at this
6 point over 150 students, hugely popular.
7 Those students -- our biggest challenge
8 is to keep them there until they
9 graduate, because auto tech centers grab
10 them before they graduate because their
11 skills are so good.

12 So we have made the commitment
13 to expand our portfolio, if you will, of
14 career and tech, CTE programs. We've
15 worked with the School District to align
16 those CTE programs. The school-to-work
17 pipeline is an exam of that. We work
18 with Philadelphia Works to identify
19 grants, grant opportunities both from the
20 state as well as the federal. We work
21 with the Navy pipeline.

22 We're part of a consortium here
23 in Southeast Philadelphia, us, Montgomery
24 County College, Bucks, Camden, and
25 Delaware Community College, for the very

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 large training needs that one college
3 couldn't necessarily provide, so we share
4 our technical training opportunities, and
5 that's designed to provide means for
6 helping with the economy here in
7 Philadelphia.

8 And then, finally, I think this
9 Municipal College is the next step up.
10 We have said the training is good, but we
11 need the connections to the jobs.

12 I spend a huge amount of my
13 time talking to companies and industries
14 to try to find not just job placements
15 but internships. It's a full package.
16 If you're teaching somebody how to work
17 in a particular industry, it's really
18 helpful to have that industry help you
19 identify what those skill needs are,
20 because it may be welding, but I have
21 found out that there's different types of
22 welding.

23 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: There's
24 a lot of different types of welding. I
25 came from the industry.

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2 It's good stuff. I'm glad to
3 hear that. Listen, you know, I love CCP.
4 My wife is at CCP right now. She went
5 back to get her degree at 56. And while
6 when she first started she was, you know,
7 kind of frazzled a little bit, but you
8 guys helped her along the way through the
9 counselors and stuff like that to
10 actually get it, and now she's about six
11 classes from graduating. So big deal.

12 Just one more question, Council
13 President.

14 Because of their family and
15 work obligations, roughly 75 percent of
16 the CCP students attend part time. What
17 supports are in place to help part-time
18 students succeed since they don't really
19 qualify for the Catto Scholarship or
20 anything like that? Is there any
21 supports that you guys are giving to help
22 those students that are actually only
23 going part time?

24 DR. GENERALS: So nothing like
25 Catto. We just don't have the resources,

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2 and we've been talking with the City
3 about expanding it to partner, but we do
4 have -- prior to Catto, we have what we
5 referred to as the 50th College Promise
6 program, which was private dollars. We
7 raised that through our fundraising
8 efforts, and we're able to provide a
9 number of students, part-time students.
10 There's certain caveats. They have to
11 hit certain benchmarks in terms of their
12 grades. They have to be a Philadelphia
13 graduate. That's pretty successful.

14 And then we have a number of,
15 for lack of a better term, specialized
16 scholarships for people who are
17 interested in exactly what you're saying,
18 the working mom who is coming back to
19 school to try to be a nurse or medical
20 lab technician, what resources are there
21 for them.

22 So we have an advancement
23 office whose job it is to organize these
24 dollars. I think they do quite well.
25 We're actually going to an event tonight

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 with the Wanamaker Foundation. They are
3 an organization that provides for
4 students in CTE programs.

5 So it's an ongoing issue, and
6 I'll say this, I'll close out with this,
7 I've been very much involved at the
8 national level with Pell, Pell grants.
9 As you know, both in terms of the amount
10 of money that goes to part-time students
11 as well as the money that goes to
12 non-academic degree-pursuing students is
13 non-existent. There is no equivalent for
14 non-credit courses in welding and medical
15 lab, dental technician. There's no Pell
16 equivalent.

17 Pell has been the backbone for
18 higher ed for almost 60 years. It's on
19 the higher ed reauthorization. It's been
20 part of that. I've been here for ten
21 years. It's been a part of that for ten
22 years. It has not moved, and I think you
23 know what's going on now at the federal
24 government.

25 So there's a huge hope that at

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 some point, the Pell grant, which is the
3 primary source for funding, will come to
4 a reality and be able to provide support
5 for part-time students as well as
6 students who are in the technical CTE
7 fields.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
9 you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 Thank you.

12 The Chair recognizes Madam
13 Leader, Katherine Gilmore Richardson.

14 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
15 Thank you. Thank you so much, Council
16 President.

17 Thank you so much,
18 Dr. Generals, and to the team at
19 Community College of Philadelphia. And
20 in addition to that, I just wanted to
21 also give kudos to --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: You
23 see how smooth that was. Was that
24 smooth?

25 Go ahead, Madam Leader.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: I'd
3 also like to give kudos to Jasmine
4 Sessoms, Chief Engagement Officer of
5 Community College of Philadelphia, who
6 really is a trusted source and someone we
7 can always count on to work with us in
8 Council, and I just wanted to uplift her
9 work and the work of the new institute.
10 I'm truly excited about all the training
11 that will take place to ensure that we
12 are really raising up the next crop of
13 civically engaged Philadelphians. So
14 thank you very, very much.

15 I just have a couple of
16 questions this year. One, your childcare
17 center. I know prior to the pandemic,
18 there was a childcare center. I think
19 it's on North 16th Street?

20 DR. GENERALS: 16th, the
21 trailers, yeah.

22 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
23 Right. And so has the childcare center
24 reopened?

25 DR. GENERALS: No. First of

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 all, there were physical problems. It's
3 very -- they were very old, but more
4 importantly, our students and faculty
5 were not using it.

6 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

7 Really?

8 DR. GENERALS: It was mainly
9 being used by the Fairmount area local
10 community people. We looked at the
11 numbers and there was less than double
12 digits in some semesters where maybe
13 eight, nine, ten, combination of students
14 and faculty, mainly faculty. There were
15 faculty that used it.

16 So, you know, the model, and it
17 not just us, is more of a -- our students
18 need childcare where they are, where they
19 live. That's where their parents are.
20 That's where their transportation is.
21 The idea that they're going to come to
22 school and drop off their child on the
23 school campus and then stay there full
24 time, it's just not our reality.

25 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: So

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2 do you think really it was the pandemic
3 that was the sort of end of the childcare
4 center?

5 DR. GENERALS: I'm sorry?

6 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: I
7 apologize. Do you think it's the
8 pandemic that was the end of the
9 childcare center or was it not performing
10 well prior to the pandemic?

11 DR. GENERALS: It was not
12 performing prior to, all along. And we
13 kept it running, we kept it running, we
14 kept it running. It was primarily used
15 by the community, which, I mean, nothing
16 is bad with that, but we were
17 supplementing it for the community. Our
18 students were not using it.

19 So we were able to get a
20 federal grant. I forget the name of it.
21 CCAMPIS. It ended, but CCAMPIS gave
22 students vouchers to be able to take
23 their childcare in the community. So
24 that's what we're trying to do now.

25 I think at some point in the

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2 future we can revisit and integrate it
3 with an early childcare educational
4 program where students can intern. This
5 was outsourced, what we had. We had a
6 company that was running it.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
8 Okay.

9 DR. GENERALS: So the model
10 that I would prefer is that we bring it
11 inhouse and we have our professionals. I
12 think it would be very consistent with
13 the education pipeline concept. And so
14 that's what we're aiming for now.

15 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:
16 Sure. That was a quick round, but I
17 would love to revisit that concept with
18 you. It's something that we want to work
19 on here, particularly for not only our
20 municipal workers but also for those who
21 are doing business with the City in our
22 quadplex area. So I did bring this up
23 during the testimony with the First
24 Judicial District relative to a state act
25 that provides for a fee that can help

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2 towards the payment of that particular
3 facility, but I do think as we're having
4 more folks come back to work and more
5 folks coming downtown, that that's
6 something we should look into. So I
7 would love to explore that more with you
8 all.

9 I did hear the bell and will
10 honor the clock, but I just wanted to
11 mention, if you don't mind, Council
12 President. Thank you very much.

13 Councilmember Landau and also
14 Council President Johnson talked about
15 the \$10 million that we sort of
16 front-loaded in the midyear appropriation
17 for this past spring. And so
18 Councilmember Landau talked about the
19 potential for the tuition increase
20 relative to the funding availability, and
21 I know of the 10, you said 6 or 7 million
22 will be for the Municipal University, and
23 so that will leave about \$3 or \$4 million
24 for offsetting additional costs.

25 With the \$10 million and with

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 the base budget of roughly \$50 million,
3 how are you all dealing with that reality
4 is my question, because we asked that
5 question during Appropriations, that if
6 we front-load this, are we giving you 10
7 now and then 10 later? You understand
8 what I'm saying?

9 DR. GENERALS: Yeah. Sure. So
10 I don't have a precise answer for you
11 right now, because it's something that
12 we're continuing to work with. I think
13 through the pandemic, we were
14 front-loaded a lot of money to recover
15 tuition, and some of that, you know, is
16 fund balance. It's in the fund balance
17 now. So some of these challenges, these
18 immediate challenges, will have to come
19 out of that fund balance.

20 Our enrollment is going up, so
21 those are dollars that -- if the
22 enrollment continues, I mean, it's been
23 over a year, it continues to grow up. If
24 we get anywhere near where we were before
25 the pandemic, I think that will resolve

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 that problem. And, again, the state,
3 we're not sure where the state is coming
4 in. Our initial ask from the state was
5 an eight percent increase. The state
6 hasn't held us harmless since the Corbett
7 Administration, quite frankly. We're
8 hoping that the current Governor is more
9 friendly. As you know, he's talking
10 about a system. If the system comes
11 through, he's actually promising
12 15 percent. So it's our hope that
13 somewhere between eight and 15 percent
14 will go a long way towards meeting those
15 needs. And at the same time, we're
16 negotiating a contract, so --

17 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

18 Thank you for the clarification.

19 DR. GENERALS: -- there's no
20 immediate answer at this point.

21 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: I
22 understand. I understand. I think we
23 just want to be cognizant of it,
24 particularly in Appropriations as well
25 when we see the midyear, whether it's

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 spring and/or fall.

3 But thank you for the
4 clarification. I'll come back on the
5 second round, if we have one, but I
6 wanted to give a shout-out to our
7 Community College intern Daisy, who
8 worked with our office, and also to
9 Malika Rahman. We hosted students from
10 her office as well. I wanted to thank
11 Daisy for her service and for all the
12 work she did in our office. She was just
13 a stellar intern, and we really, really
14 enjoyed having her.

15 Thank you.

16 DR. GENERALS: Great.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

18 Thank you, Madam Leader.

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilmember Nina Ahmad.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
22 you, Council President.

23 Good afternoon. I had a
24 question about the Catto scholars. What
25 sort of post-graduation tracks do they

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 follow and what kind of workforce
3 development programs did they receive as
4 students? Like what was the connections
5 made for them?

6 DR. GENERALS: Most of the
7 programs that they have taken, there are
8 some who are in the more technical areas,
9 like computer technologies, who will go
10 into the work field, but they're not
11 taking the non-credit CTE programs.
12 They're taking academic degree programs.

13 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: My next
14 question is about, on a similar vein, the
15 new technology center, and how
16 intentional are the pipelines to our
17 local businesses as well as our City
18 government to really have a pipeline of
19 skilled workers ready for jobs that are
20 in the near horizon?

21 DR. GENERALS: I would say a
22 huge amount of our focus is designed
23 towards precisely that. We mentioned
24 Rhoads. We mentioned -- well, Rhoads is
25 not really City, but the whole point in

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 the Municipal College would be to better
3 align with the City.

4 So right now we do have
5 relationships with the City's
6 Transportation Department. I believe
7 some of them are on our Advisory Board,
8 and some students get jobs in that
9 department. We do provide training for
10 City government. I think I mentioned a
11 couple of them. And we just received a
12 grant for the Credible Messenger Academy,
13 which is a program designed to help
14 students through our criminal justice
15 program to help students create credible
16 messages.

17 We have worked with City
18 government's Human Resources Department
19 to provide different types of training.
20 Over the course of the last couple of
21 years, we've provided training for
22 seniors, so --

23 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: And in
24 terms of -- oh, sorry.

25 DR. GENERALS: So I guess the

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 point is, we've always provided training
3 in different areas of the City, and I
4 think the Municipal School, the Municipal
5 Institute is designed to make that more
6 intentional and more precise in terms of
7 students going into those fields.

8 You know, we work with -- we
9 have a pretty successful health and human
10 behavioral program and we work with
11 different entities within the City that
12 provide those services. Our students
13 provide clinicals, and then they also
14 find jobs when they're able to when they
15 graduate.

16 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: We have a
17 great need in that area.

18 My final question is, you
19 mentioned gene therapy in your testimony,
20 which is one of the most promising
21 industries in our economy. One of the
22 major issues that have been mentioned by
23 the leaders in this space is difficulty
24 finding skilled workers and recruiting
25 people in Philadelphia.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Do you have any data on how
3 many graduates stay in Philadelphia
4 versus moving to other hubs like Boston
5 or San Francisco, and how well are these
6 graduates doing in these well-paying
7 careers with promise of upward mobility?

8 DR. GENERALS: In specifically
9 the gene and cell therapy area?

10 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Yeah.

11 DR. GENERALS: I don't know
12 that we have precise data for that. I
13 know at large our graduates stay here,
14 and we have data for that, and we can
15 derive the students that -- we have a
16 very successful Wistar program even
17 before this became -- I shouldn't say a
18 thing, but even before gene and cell
19 therapy really became a push here in
20 Philadelphia, Community College of
21 Philadelphia has been involved with The
22 Wistar Institute for many years. So
23 there are many graduates from that
24 program, who may or may not have gotten
25 into gene and cell therapy. Many of them

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 went out to medical school. Many of them
3 went out to different fields in the STEM
4 fields.

5 So we're expanding that now.

6 We've received dollars through our
7 aseptic program. We have a very
8 successful biology and chemistry program.
9 We bought all brand new labs. So
10 students who may find their way into one
11 of these specialized programs, they will
12 obviously find jobs, but we have many
13 students who don't necessarily go through
14 there but get the same training. We have
15 the biotechnician program where those
16 students in many ways is kind of the same
17 fields where they have to be adept at the
18 technology and the equipment and how lab
19 experiments are set up. So that's been
20 in place for quite a few years, and many
21 of those students have graduated and
22 stayed in the field, but I don't have an
23 exact number.

24 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Yeah.

25 The reason I ask is when we are inviting

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 more companies to come who need these
3 kind of skill workers and companies that
4 are going from the bench, lab bench, to
5 commercialization, we want to keep them
6 here and we want to have a workforce. So
7 that is the marriage I'm looking for to
8 see how intentional we can be about that
9 specific pipeline, because that is going
10 to be a high-paying job, and there's
11 growth there, meaning you can train
12 yourself beyond where you started.

13 So I would love to work further
14 with you and your department to think
15 through what that looks like, because one
16 of the things that make people hesitant,
17 companies, to come here is the workforce
18 issue. So thanks so much for doing a lot
19 in that arena. We appreciate that.

20 DR. GENERALS: Absolutely.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
22 you, Council President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 You're welcome.

25 The Chair recognizes Nick

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 O'Rourke.

3 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Thank
4 you, Mr. President.

5 Good afternoon, good evening.

6 DR. GENERALS: Good afternoon.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: CCP is
8 a community college in reality as well as
9 the name, as diverse as the City and
10 neighborhoods that it serves. As an
11 institution, it expands the very
12 definition of higher education by being
13 an accessible vehicle for social mobility
14 for Philadelphians. It is a real steward
15 of opportunity with a curriculum that
16 directly prepares students for careers in
17 our city.

18 So we applaud CCP for
19 recognizing that there is no typical
20 school student and for working creatively
21 to lower barriers for students who could
22 not otherwise afford to leave their
23 homes, families or work to study at CCP,
24 but there certainly is more work to be
25 done.

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2 I wanted to ask a question
3 about childcare facilities, specifically
4 I think Majority Leader kind of touched
5 on what we wanted. So this is from some
6 of our constituents.

7 Our neighbors at Montgomery
8 County Community College --

9 DR. GENERALS: Neighbors where?
10 I'm sorry.

11 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
12 Montgomery County Community College and
13 Bucks County Community College have
14 significantly lower class sizes than CCP.
15 We agree that students in Philadelphia
16 need more support, not less, than our
17 suburban counterparts, and that is -- and
18 that this is an inequity that
19 shortchanges our students.

20 In K through 12, these kinds of
21 inequities across the Commonwealth were
22 recently ruled unconstitutional. The
23 question is, do you think that CCP
24 students deserve to at least have the
25 same class sizes as the suburban schools

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 that are similar like this, and what
3 would it take for us to actually do that,
4 if so?

5 DR. GENERALS: So I meet with
6 those presidents almost on a monthly
7 basis and I'm not sure where the data
8 came from, but I would disagree that
9 their class sizes are significantly
10 smaller than ours. I would say that we
11 are obligated based on the Federation's
12 contract to have class sizes of 22, and
13 our average is 20 for the most part.
14 Those areas where the need is greatest,
15 primarily developmental, basic skills,
16 ESL, those numbers are in the teens.

17 There are high-end courses,
18 your psych courses, your sociology where
19 I think we have a cap of 35, 36, and
20 we're below that as well.

21 So I would need to see the data
22 in order to respond appropriately, but I
23 would say it could be, but I don't know
24 that that's necessarily the case.

25 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Very

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 well. Let me move to faculty and staff
3 wages. I want to celebrate CCP steadily
4 increasing enrollment. This is a
5 heartening sign, because the students
6 were disproportionately impacted by the
7 pandemic, as we've discussed.

8 However, while enrollment is
9 nearing pre-pandemic levels, there's been
10 a 23 percent reduction in faculty and
11 staff, as we understand it. Teaching,
12 learning, and access, the unequivocal
13 missions of CCP, are fundamentally
14 dependent on CCP's ability to attract and
15 retain quality staff and faculty. So
16 this is the twofer so I can get up off
17 the Council President's time.

18 A living wage for one person
19 living in Philadelphia is 46K per year
20 somehow. How much do the lowest paid
21 staff at CCP actually make?

22 DR. GENERALS: The hourly
23 employee is 16 and change.

24 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: And
25 how much new operating money would CCP

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 need to raise the minimum to 23.5 an
3 hour, which comes out to 46K per year?

4 DR. GENERALS: I would have to
5 calculate and figure that out. Don't
6 forget that part of their salaries
7 include health benefits. So increasing
8 staff increases health benefits,
9 increases retirement benefits. You know,
10 I would have to figure out what the
11 formula for that is.

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Heard,
13 but I should say that over --

14 DR. GENERALS: I said the
15 16-plus that I just mentioned, they are
16 the lowest paid, lowest skilled employees
17 of the College.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: And
19 it's super important I think that folks
20 have a livable wage in the domain within
21 which they live. Just for some context,
22 over 50 full-time, as we understand it,
23 CCP staff members currently don't make a
24 living wage for a family of one, which is
25 obviously very challenging in our mind.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 So we think that should certainly come
3 up.

4 Let me move on to my next
5 piece. Full-time and part-time faculty
6 at CCP are unlike their counterparts at
7 other higher ed institutions because they
8 are uniquely dedicated instructors rather
9 than researchers.

10 DR. GENERALS: Because they're
11 what?

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
13 Uniquely dedicated instructors rather
14 than just researchers. We need faculty
15 members to feel that they are full
16 members of the CCP community, not
17 contingent or expendable, so who are
18 paid -- folks who are paid enough to
19 participate fully in college affairs,
20 committee activities, curricular
21 development, and academic counseling. So
22 what are you exploring to make faculty
23 jobs more secure and better resourced?
24 And that will be it for me.

25 DR. GENERALS: So we have a

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 full complement of faculty support
3 programs, including tuition
4 reimbursement, including travel money.
5 We throughout the course of the year have
6 different types of faculty development
7 programs in various areas, curriculum,
8 pedagogy, assessment, planning.

9 We agree that our faculty are
10 teaching faculty. They're not
11 researchers. In the last go-around, that
12 was part of the argument that we had
13 relative to that, that we felt their time
14 should be spent on being better teachers
15 and -- basically better teachers.

16 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Okay.
17 Well, again, thank you --

18 DR. GENERALS: Many of -- you
19 know, many of our faculty, they had the
20 choice of choosing the amount of credits
21 they wanted to teach. The traditional
22 amount of credits is 30 credits a year.
23 And those of you that were around, you
24 knew that was part of the debate. We
25 settled on they could choose. If they

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2 were there, you can decide what you
3 wanted to teach, and many of them chose
4 27, 24. Most of them, especially the
5 newer ones, chose the 30, with of course
6 the increased money.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

8 Dr. Generals --

9 DR. GENERALS: We do not argue
10 with the idea that our faculty, our
11 teaching faculty, we hold them, in terms
12 of promotion, tenure, and those types of
13 things, accountable for their teaching
14 strategies and methodologies and success
15 in the class, not for research.

16 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Dr.
17 Generals, my time has expired. I thank
18 Council President for his time and thank
19 you for being here today.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

21 Thank you.

22 The Chair recognizes
23 Councilmember Isaiah Thomas.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank
25 you, Council President.

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2 I'm not going to be long. I
3 want to echo the sentiments of a lot of
4 my colleagues and say thank you to you,
5 Dr. Generals. Of course thank you to the
6 amazing Ms. Jasmine Sessoms, the
7 leadership team over at CCP, especially
8 your athletic director and your coaches.
9 We've worked very closely with you on a
10 number of different initiatives. And I
11 appreciate you recruiting Philadelphia
12 kids as it relates to coming to your
13 school, your program and then being a
14 part of your athletic stuff.

15 Look, Dr. Generals, I'm going
16 to get right to the point. You clearly
17 have a contract issue taking place right
18 now. This is the legislative branch of
19 government that wants to help you solve
20 it. I listened to Councilmember
21 O'Rourke's questions, and I'm kind of
22 disappointed that you didn't come here
23 today with a number, saying, City
24 Council, if you give me this amount of
25 money, it will put me in the position to

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 solve our contract dispute. So am I
3 wrong in that assessment?

4 We clearly know you have a
5 contract dispute. You can clearly tell
6 by the Councilmembers' line of
7 questioning that we want the contract
8 dispute settled and we want to be able to
9 pay the people who work at CCP a quality
10 wage.

11 We can't go back to the Mayor
12 and say, CCP needs this much money to get
13 rid of the contract dispute, if you don't
14 give us that dollar amount. So my
15 question is, how much money do you need,
16 right? The only person I ask this to
17 besides you is my wife. How much money
18 do you need to solve this problem? Give
19 me the dollar amount, how much you need
20 to fix this. If you don't know right
21 now, come back to us.

22 DR. GENERALS: If what?

23 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: I said
24 if you don't know the dollar amount right
25 now, come back to us, because at the end

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 of the day, it's not like you're a
3 corporation that's benefiting a great
4 deal off of the tax dollars that we're
5 giving you. You are running a
6 institution that primarily services
7 disadvantaged people that we all
8 represent that we want to see do better.
9 So we want you to be successful. We want
10 your staff to be successful, and the
11 worst thing that we can have right now is
12 a contract issue while we are in the
13 midst of our Mayor's first and our
14 Council President's first budget
15 negotiation.

16 So as the Chair of the
17 Education Committee, if you don't have a
18 dollar amount right now, that's fine. We
19 want to fix this. We want to fix it.

20 Last question, dual enrollment,
21 that's my baby. I love the Catto
22 Scholarship program. I listened to one
23 of your professors talk a little bit
24 about the program and the services the
25 program offers. Now, the services that

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 the program offers are amazing, but it
3 did raise some level of concern about
4 students who come from Philadelphia who
5 are not eligible for the Catto
6 Scholarship.

7 So I'm wondering two questions
8 and I'm done. How are we supporting
9 students who are not eligible to be in
10 the Catto Scholarship? Because it's not
11 just about the free tuition. I learned
12 this from your people. Y'all give them
13 all type of amazing wraparound services.
14 So, again, what do we need to do to
15 replicate those services so other
16 Philadelphia students can take advantage
17 even if they're not in the Catto
18 Scholarship program? And every time I
19 see you, I'm going to ask about dual
20 enrollment, because I think that's one of
21 the best gifts that we give our students,
22 is an opportunity to graduate from high
23 school and have an associate's degree,
24 and nobody, to my knowledge, does it
25 better than CCP.

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 So talk to me about those two
3 things, sir.

4 DR. GENERALS: Forgive me, but
5 I failed to mention in our ask in
6 addition to the 10 million is 500,000 for
7 dual enrollment. So that's part of the
8 ask, to support dual enrollment.

9 We agree. We think with all of
10 the issues connected to cost of higher ed
11 and time and, you know, keeping students
12 busy through their junior and senior year
13 in high school, that is probably the best
14 that can happen.

15 In terms of the contract, I'm
16 at a little bit of a disadvantage,
17 because we were negotiating and I thought
18 we were negotiating pretty much in good
19 faith. And so some of these things that
20 you all are mentioning just came up
21 Friday, to be honest. First time I heard
22 about the issue with SEPTA was Friday.

23 So I'm willing to negotiate.
24 We put forth a good-faith offer, what we
25 thought was good faith. The way

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 negotiations happen, come back with
3 something else and we can go from there.
4 And I think if we can find a spot where I
5 think we can agree, I'd be more than
6 willing to come to you and say, you know,
7 this is going to cost \$4 million, this is
8 going to cost \$12 million over the life
9 of a contract.

10 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So
11 basically you're just a little too early
12 in the negotiation process to determine
13 the numbers?

14 DR. GENERALS: Their contract
15 is not up until August. It is not up
16 until August. So this was -- you know,
17 my experience with negotiations, it's a
18 process and you go through this process.

19 So we've been -- I thought we
20 were working in good faith. You know,
21 they came, you know -- and I don't want
22 to talk about them, but they came to the
23 negotiations Friday with students. We're
24 not negotiating with students. We have
25 pizza with the President. They got

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 issues -- if students have issues, they
3 come directly -- they come speak to me
4 directly.

5 So, you know, I don't want to
6 start any bad faith. We've been trying
7 to work with them, and some of these
8 things, they're coming as a little bit of
9 a surprise, because we were negotiating
10 with them. I thought we were negotiating
11 in good faith. Maybe we need to go back
12 and sharpen our edge a little bit and see
13 if we can find a way to come to a number
14 and we can get you that number.

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So,
16 Council President, I just want to be
17 clear, because I want to close out.

18 I do not want to accuse you or
19 anybody else in leadership at CCP as
20 negotiating in bad faith, because that's
21 not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is
22 that you have an issue, and we want to
23 help support you with that issue, not
24 just because of the great work that you
25 do and your leadership team, but also

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 because we recognize that the people who
3 work there as well as the people you
4 serve are the constituents that we
5 represent and we feel obligated to make
6 sure they have the best possible product.
7 And I want to be clear, I do believe in
8 you and your team to produce the best
9 possible product.

10 So I don't want you to take
11 this as us criticizing you in the sense
12 of what is going on, because I personally
13 don't know enough about what's going on.
14 I just know that there's a dispute. The
15 timing is bad, and we need to get it
16 resolved as soon as possible.

17 Thank you, Dr. Generals. Thank
18 you again to your team.

19 Council President, thank you,
20 sir.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Thank you for your time.

23 Dr. Generals, we appreciate you
24 taking time out of your schedule and
25 being here today. We support your

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 efforts. You got an extra plus today
3 from the Whip of the majority party. We
4 want to be actively supporting you to
5 make sure you'll be able to address this
6 contract negotiations.

7 And so with that being said,
8 thank you, and continue to keep up the
9 good work on behalf of the students that
10 attend CCP here in the City of
11 Philadelphia. Thank you very much.

12 DR. GENERALS: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Any
14 other questions or comments from members
15 of the Committee?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Hearing none, the Chair recognizes
19 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson for a
20 motion that the public hearing and
21 meeting on the bills and resolutions
22 before the Committee today stand in
23 recess until Wednesday, May the 1st, 2024
24 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 400, City Hall.

25 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 Thank you. Thank you, Council President.

3 I move that City Council's Committee of

4 the Whole stand in recess until

5 Wednesday, May 1st at 10:00 a.m.

6 (Duly seconded.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: It

8 has been moved and properly seconded that

9 the public hearing and meeting on the

10 bills and resolutions before the

11 Committee today stand in recess until

12 Wednesday, May the 1st, 2024 at 10:00

13 a.m.

14 All those in favor will signify

15 by saying aye.

16 (Aye.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

18 Those opposed?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The

21 ayes have it, and we are in recess until

22 tomorrow, 10:00 a.m.

23 Thank you.

24 - - -

25 (Committee of the Whole

1 4/30/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 adjourned at 5:20 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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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