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2 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
3 CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING
4 BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

4

5 Room 400, City Hall
6 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
7 Tuesday, April 29, 2008, 10:50 a.m.

6

7 BILL 080158 - Amending Section 19-1801 of
8 the Philadelphia Code, entitled
9 "Authorization of Tax," to further authorize
10 the Board of Education of the School
11 District of Philadelphia to impose a tax on
12 real estate within the City of Philadelphia.

10

11 BILL 080159 - Amending Chapter 19-1800 of
12 the Philadelphia Code, entitled "School Tax
13 Authorization," by amending Section 19-1806,
14 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
15 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the
16 Board of Education of the School District of
17 Philadelphia to impose a tax on the use of
18 occupancy of real estate within the School
19 District of Philadelphia.

15

16 Committee Members Present:

17 Anna C. Verna, Chair
18 Jannie L. Blackwell
19 Darrell L. Clarke
20 Bill Green
21 William K. Greenlee
22 Curtis Jones, Jr.
23 James F. Kenney
24 Maria D. Quinones-Sanchez
25 Marian B. Tasco

21

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25

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25	testimony is attached hereto.)	

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
3 morning. This is a continued public
4 hearing of the Committee of the Whole
5 regarding Bill No.'s 080158 and 080159.

6 (Witnesses come forward.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
8 morning.

9 MR. BRADY: Good morning, Madam
10 President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: At
12 this time, the Chair recognizes
13 Councilman Jones.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
15 morning.

16 MR. BRADY: Good morning.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: It seems
18 like just yesterday we got together.

19 MR. BRADY: Deja vu all over
20 again.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'd like to
22 take you back to the alternative school
23 situation, and I want to have some
24 clarity on the process. I understand
25 that the contracts are about to expire.

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2 MR. BRADY: Correct.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: And you are
4 going to issue an RFP?

5 MR. BRADY: Dr. Jones?

6 DR. JONES: Good morning.

7 Cassandra Jones, Interim Chief Academic
8 Officer.

9 The alternative ed providers
10 contracts, we actually issued through
11 our legal counsel a letter terminating
12 their contracts effective June 19th or
13 20th of this month. And what we are
14 doing is negotiating a one-year
15 contract, not a contract extension,
16 but we are actually looking at the
17 indicators, we're looking at some cost
18 efficiencies, and looking at having no
19 break in services for our students,
20 and then having a new contract for one
21 year, from June of 2008 until June of
22 2009.

23 In May, an RFP, a request for
24 proposal, is going to go out that's
25 going to totally restructure

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2 alternative education for our
3 students. It's not only the
4 disciplinary schools, but it's also
5 for the students who are over-aged and
6 under-credentialed and who need a
7 different kind of educational
8 experience.

9 And that request for proposal
10 will go out nationally. We're looking
11 at lots of models for best practice in
12 terms of around the country and how we
13 have structured the RFP as well as
14 looking at the needs -- the lessons
15 learned over the last eight years of
16 doing alternative education.

17 Over the summer, we will have
18 a -- or in the early spring, rather,
19 we will have a bidders conference, and
20 then we will, over the summer, have
21 those proposals come in, which will be
22 reviewed by the committee that's made
23 up of members of our task force now,
24 both members internal to the District
25 as well as external to the District,

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2 with the recommendation going to
3 Dr. Ackerman and the SRC in fall of
4 2008, looking at January of 2009 for
5 some preliminary projects to come up
6 with full implementation of a totally
7 restructured alternative ed program
8 July 1, 2009.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, in
10 light of the information that you
11 supplied Council on the demographics,
12 I'm looking at performance measures for
13 African-American males, Latino males in
14 particular jumps out at me.

15 Is there going -- and is there
16 a correlation between those poor
17 reading and mathematic levels among
18 that demographic and some of the
19 disciplinary problems that we see?
20 And if so, is that going to be
21 considered in the RFP that you put
22 out?

23 DR. JONES: When you look --
24 all of those factors were parts of some
25 of the things we looked at in the RFP.

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2 I think one of the things that
3 we're looking at specifically is the
4 behavior of the students, not just the
5 academic, which is certainly -- the
6 reading levels, our math performers
7 are certainly drivers, but we're
8 looking at some of the life
9 circumstances also and how early are
10 we intervening with these students.

11 So that some of the -- one of
12 the things that we're looking at is if
13 we had intervened earlier with more
14 sustained effort and reaching out
15 beyond the District looking at some of
16 our social and City agencies to
17 partner with us, we can get ahead of
18 that, so you will see those kinds of
19 elements in the RFP.

20 And part of the other thing
21 that, when we come into service is, it
22 will not be a program or an initiative
23 that is going to be such a -- centered
24 in just the District. The RFP is
25 written in such a way that, yes, we

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2 are looking at that performance in
3 academics, but also what are the City
4 services, what are the community
5 organizations that we have proven over
6 the years have addressed these
7 behaviors so that we can change the
8 structure. So it is looking at
9 lessons learned.

10 And we actually have quite a
11 bit of the data. Dr. Sheffield from
12 out -- the Accountability Office
13 actually runs the data that we
14 provided for you, and if you would
15 like, we can go through that for you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: I appreciate
17 that and look forward to that.

18 One other question. We had
19 recent hearings in reference to some
20 problems we've had with youth on SEPTA
21 that has caused some violent
22 occurrences on -- along the Broad
23 Street line. My colleague Councilman
24 Greenlee is co-chair of that
25 committee.

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2 And one of the things that we
3 were trying to get our arms around is,
4 is there a coordinated effort between
5 the School Board, SEPTA, the police to
6 address some of the issues surrounding
7 it? And one of the alternative
8 schools, which I won't mention in
9 stereotype, is involved in that, or at
10 least some of the students were
11 mentioned to have been involved in
12 that.

13 And how are we addressing that
14 issue of juvenile violence? Some of
15 them happen to be members of public
16 schools. How are we working to
17 coordinate the relief, that effort?

18 MR. FAROLINO: Good morning.

19 My name is Fred Farlino. I'm the
20 Interim Chief Operating Officer.

21 Councilman, we recently
22 participated in the hearings; I guess
23 they were last week --

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Mm-hmm.

25 MR. FAROLINO: -- where we had

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2 both our education component as well as
3 school police testify regarding the
4 very question you asked.

5 And we reported at that time
6 that the School District of
7 Philadelphia's police, internal
8 police, as well as the Philadelphia
9 police and the SEPTA police have an
10 excellent working relationship. And
11 we primarily -- and, obviously, this
12 is seasonal; there are hot spots along
13 the SEPTA system and. We do the best
14 we can to coordinate our efforts and
15 --

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, I hear
17 what you are saying, and I take that as
18 true, except for the fact that when we
19 ask people what was the frequency of
20 meetings and how did they coordinate,
21 that was a little murky for me.

22 And then I also wanted to know
23 specifically, are we dealing with
24 let-out times? are we calculating that
25 based on bus schedules? are we

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2 comparing that to other schools? and
3 are we finding that these problems
4 occur at a particular time of day? and
5 how are we specifically addressing
6 that?

7 MR. FAROLINO: Locally, we have
8 the ability, through our principal
9 principals, to stagger dismissal
10 schedules in a particular part of the
11 City, but even though we're doing that,
12 ultimately, within a half an hour to 45
13 minutes, even though there are
14 staggered times, you still have the
15 vast majority of students who are using
16 the SEPTA lines to travel to and from
17 school.

18 But we intentionally stagger
19 our admission and dismissal times for
20 the reason that you are mentioning.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just
22 wanted to get some specifics on
23 frequency of meetings and -- because
24 problems tend to adjust and shift.
25 They're creative. And to make sure

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2 that we are regularly monitoring acts
3 of violence and adapting, just like
4 some of the young people that are
5 actually committing some of these
6 crimes and are meeting regularly as a
7 task force. So I wanted to know about
8 the frequency of --

9 MR. FAROLINO: If we could, we
10 could get back to you and provide you
11 with the information that you're asking
12 for.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

14 MR. FAROLINO: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Madam President.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
18 You're welcome.

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilman Green.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
22 Madam Chair.

23 You mentioned the costing-out
24 study in your testimony and that
25 Philadelphia-- according to it,

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2 Philadelphia needs a billion dollars
3 more a year than we currently get from
4 the State or from some source, from
5 some revenue sources.

6 We're getting 86 million more,
7 I think, under this year's budget.
8 And the total amount that -- the whole
9 costing-out study, I think, called for
10 4.3 to 4.5 billion for the State
11 schools, 1 billion of that to
12 Philadelphia. And 2.6 billion has
13 been put in the budget as long as --
14 it's not a definite increase; it's
15 only an increase if the State budget
16 is balanced and they're not having
17 trouble elsewhere.

18 MR. BRADY: Correct.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So it's a
20 goal.

21 MR. BRADY: Correct.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: My question
23 is: How much is Philadelphia going to
24 get over the next six years?

25 MR. BRADY: The Governor's

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2 proposed budget -- and, Councilmember,
3 thanks for the question.

4 Actually, the costing-out
5 study says 2.3 billion, and so that --
6 of which Philadelphia is one billion
7 short. So the Governor, in his
8 six-year budget, proposes to address
9 that --

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: The
11 costing-out studies -- I didn't
12 understand what you just said. For the
13 whole --

14 MR. BRADY: The total is 2.3
15 billion; I don't know where you got the
16 4 billion figure.

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: From the
18 costing-out study, but that doesn't
19 matter. A billion to Philadelphia,
20 that's what is important.

21 MR. BRADY: Yeah. It's
22 projected out in the next six years if
23 the Governor's budget is approved each
24 year for an incremental increase to
25 make up for the \$1 billion gap.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: We get the
3 whole billion over six years?

4 MR. BRADY: Well, it's for the
5 Commonwealth, so as you look at it,
6 we're at 84 million more this year and
7 it's for the next -- I'm --

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I don't
9 believe that's correct. I don't
10 believe we get a billion.

11 MR. BRADY: No, we're not
12 getting a billion.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But over six
14 years we're getting it?

15 MR. BRADY: Over six years.
16 The significant --

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: My question
18 really is: How much of the billion are
19 we going to get?

20 MR. BRADY: Oh. Well, I'll
21 find out for you.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. You
23 don't know the answer?

24 MR. BRADY: Correct.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

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2 That's fine.

3 If you had a billion dollars
4 coming in next year, what would you do
5 with it?

6 MR. BRADY: Look at the key
7 drivers for academic success. You'd
8 look at lower class size; you'd hire
9 the teachers to lower class size; you'd
10 look at intervention specifically for
11 the achievement gap; look at a
12 substantial investment in safety,
13 facility security, to improve the
14 learning environment.

15 And it sounds like almost a
16 Christmas wish list for a billion
17 dollars, so it would be targeted
18 interventions for proven academic
19 reform.

20 And it would address many of
21 the things you brought up yesterday
22 about what does a district look for in
23 transforming a city and helping to
24 transform a city and bringing the
25 quality of elementary in Center City,

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2 lowering class size, et cetera, et
3 cetera.

4 So it would put us on a whole
5 new level if we had that billion
6 dollars.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: If you had a
8 billion dollars and -- do you think
9 more parents would choose the
10 Philadelphia public school system? In
11 other words, will there be enough
12 schools in the school system that we
13 won't lose our middle class with young
14 kids to the suburbs?

15 MR. BRADY: Again,
16 theoretically, if we had a billion
17 dollars a year, that would address both
18 the adequacy and the equity of
19 distribution within Philadelphia.

20 Our school still system would
21 be transformed; it would be in the
22 process of being transformed, having
23 the resources to do it. And over
24 time, it would address the issue that
25 you talked about, which would be the

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2 quality of every school reaching where
3 it should be.

4 It's not going to happen
5 overnight. And if those who said,
6 Well, you -- it would be over a period
7 of time. I think many people would
8 say, "Show me," and it would be
9 results of achievement tests, et
10 cetera.

11 So, yeah, it would be a
12 steady -- in my opinion, it would be a
13 steady improvement and a very rapid
14 improvement if given the resources,
15 yes.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Do you have
17 sort of a business plan, a strategic
18 plan for how you're going to spend the
19 additional dollars that are coming in,
20 86 million this year --

21 MR. BRADY: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- and
23 equivalent numbers over the next six
24 years?

25 MR. BRADY: Well, we have a

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2 five-year plan that --

3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And it

4 includes that increased --

5 MR. BRADY: It projects the --

6 we have a five-year plan which

7 addresses the known revenue and

8 projected revenue, and we err on the

9 Governor's budget being accepted. So

10 yes.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So let's

12 just call that 600 million of the

13 billion that you would get over the

14 next six years. If you had 600 million

15 today, would you also say that the

16 School District could -- would be in

17 the midst of a transformational

18 training?

19 MR. BRADY: It would allow the

20 SRC and the CEO to do certain -- to

21 accelerate the proven reforms that we

22 have in process now, yes.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So in six

24 years, we should be looking at the

25 beginning of the transformational

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2 changes of the Philadelphia School
3 District with that additional
4 \$600 million in State funding?

5 MR. BRADY: I think words are
6 important. I think transformation of
7 the school system --

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Sorry. That
9 was your word. I just --

10 (Timer bell rings.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Go ahead.

12 MR. BRADY: Began about --
13 okay. I think within a period of six
14 years, there would be a significant
15 improvement -- a continued improvement
16 in the School District of Philadelphia
17 if given those resources, yes.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.
19 My time is up. I'll come back.

20 Thanks.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
22 Mr. Brady, can you tell us how many
23 attorneys the School District employs?

24 MR. BRADY: Yes, ma'am, I can.
25 We employ, I believe...

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2 We're budgeted for 33
3 employees in the District Council --
4 and I will check to make sure that
5 they're practicing attorneys.

6 (Mr. Brady confers with
7 colleagues.)

8 MR. BRADY: Yes, 33, Madam
9 President.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I'm
11 sorry?

12 MR. BRADY: 33.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: You
14 know, we're going through the budget
15 book, and in calculating, it would
16 appear that there are more than 33.

17 MR. BRADY: On Page 332, Madam
18 President?

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: On
20 332.

21 MR. BRADY: A total of 33
22 employees.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: All
24 right. What is the average pay that an
25 attorney receives?

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2 MR. BRADY: Between 100 and
3 110,000.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
5 they are full-time employees? What do
6 they do full-time?

7 MR. BRADY: There is a -- as in
8 any large enterprise, we have a number
9 of claims, we have a number of --
10 contract review, we have -- perhaps the
11 general counsel is here to join us?
12 Labor relations. But we can get a
13 detailed list to you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
15 wish you would, because I think that if
16 they're making \$110,000, the question
17 is: Are they full-time? because I
18 think we had testimony from the
19 District attorney and also the Public
20 Defenders Office indicating that their
21 pay range is far less than \$110,000.
22 They have preparation of cases, they go
23 into court every day.

24 So I would like to know what
25 the attorneys do, please.

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2 MR. BRADY: I certainly will.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
4 you.

5 The Chair recognizes
6 Councilman Greenlee.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
8 you, Madam President.

9 Good morning.

10 MR. BRADY: Good morning.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I just
12 have a -- I guess it's a general
13 question, and I know it probably could
14 be a long answer, so I guess I'm just
15 looking for a highlight.

16 First of all, thank you for
17 all of the information you gave on
18 demographics. It looks like you broke
19 it down every which way here, and we
20 appreciate that and doing it so
21 quickly.

22 But I know generally, just
23 looking through it quickly, it looks
24 like -- and I guess this is not,
25 unfortunately, surprising that even

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2 though the gap has shortened between
3 Latino and black students as compared
4 to Asian and white, there's still a
5 significant gap.

6 And I know you touched on this
7 both yesterday in one of your answers
8 to Councilman Jones, but can you just
9 kind of highlight first what you think
10 that's been done already to shorten
11 that gap and what can be continually
12 do you see to be done to keep
13 shrinking it?

14 And I know that could be a
15 long answer, but I guess, you know,
16 I'm just --

17 DR. JONES: I will try to make
18 it short.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
20 you.

21 DR. JONES: Cassandra Jones,
22 Chief Academic Officer, and I'll try to
23 just put in it lay terms.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes.

25 DR. JONES: When we brought in

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2 the core curriculum, one of the issues
3 was, because we wanted to make sure
4 that every child was going to be able
5 to have the same standard of what they
6 needed to learn, how they got there
7 could look a lot of different ways.

8 Then we looked at the learning
9 styles of different children. Some
10 people do hands-on; some, you know,
11 small group, manipulative; some can
12 respond to stand and deliver.
13 Different learning styles that our
14 children need.

15 Then we looked at the
16 professional development and just kind
17 of a cultural awareness that there are
18 differences in the way that children
19 come and learn and the experiences
20 that they're coming to the classroom.

21 So in the short answer, we
22 looked at those kinds of major things,
23 looking at the children who are coming
24 from English as a second language,
25 looking at our students with special

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2 education students. So you have
3 different categories of students and
4 the way that they -- what they need to
5 learn.

6 And what we made a very
7 conscious decision is that the bar
8 could not change. It's the
9 accommodations, it's the other
10 resources that you would need based on
11 the needs of the student, changing the
12 way that we do professional
13 development that is more targeted, as
14 well as the professional development
15 for our leaders.

16 And so those are the kinds of
17 things that we've done to close the
18 gap.

19 Then it's the monitoring,
20 because you can do all of that and
21 it's what we're saying, but if we're
22 not seeing if it's really happening
23 and then addressing it where we don't
24 see it happening, that's what we've
25 done.

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2 So through our school stat,
3 which is every six and ten weeks
4 monitoring of exactly what's being
5 taught in the classroom and what we
6 need to do to change it, looking at
7 that, and then looking at that data by
8 group.

9 So after we look at it by the
10 whole district and then by grade,
11 we're saying this population in this
12 school -- African-American males, the
13 females, Latinos, the white
14 students -- you know, where are we
15 finding the gaps, and then going
16 through that and saying, what is it
17 about this particular age group, what
18 is it about this particular subgroup
19 that we need to address, and then
20 really taking it apart, going back to
21 the curriculum and saying you got to
22 reteach this, you got to reassess it
23 another way, and going back.

24 So those are the things we're
25 doing. It's showing improvement, but

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2 we still need to figure out, as we are
3 working very hard, to accelerate that
4 learning, because it's not about
5 remediation; it's how do we accelerate
6 it.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mm-hmm,
8 okay. I appreciate that.

9 And just -- you brought up
10 English-as-a-second-language students.
11 Have those number of students
12 increased over time, or are they --
13 what kind of things are you doing
14 particularly with students that are
15 English-as -- ESL, I think, is the
16 term, right?

17 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I know
19 something about it 'cause my wife
20 teaches it, so I know a little bit
21 about that.

22 DR. JONES: We understand the
23 question.

24 Again, that is another one of
25 our subgroups. We have a task force

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2 that really helps to give us some
3 feedback. Margaret Chin from my
4 office actually gives us a lot of
5 guidance.

6 We've had some studies that
7 really start to speak to some of the
8 specific things, so very concretely, a
9 welcome center. That doesn't sound
10 like a lot until you find out that
11 that's something that was really
12 missing in terms of just how you get
13 our students into the system.

14 Looking at how we provide the
15 services for our ELL students in terms
16 of -- an experience that I actually
17 had that really brought it front and
18 center to me was being in a meeting
19 and having a translator translate for
20 me at a meeting, and I can remember
21 leaving that meeting and said, Tell me
22 this is not how our children are
23 learning calculus. And so it helped
24 us to change how we're providing the
25 professional development and the

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2 resources.

3 It is smaller classes, it is
4 looking at a continuum of services so
5 that students are going to exit out of
6 our ELL services but has provided them
7 with the intensive services that they
8 need at the beginning so that they can
9 exit out.

10 Lots more to do, but I will
11 say thanks to the group of -- the work
12 of the task force that's led by
13 Margaret Chin in that office. They
14 have really started to come into --
15 they are now part of the curriculum.
16 Before, it was a side. When you look
17 into our core curriculum now, it's
18 what is there for every students; it's
19 no longer just a side.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Great,
21 okay. Thank you.

22 Thank you, Madam President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

24 You're welcome.

25 The Chair recognizes

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2 Councilman Jones.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
4 again.

5 Quickly, Title I programs are
6 determined by income levels, and is
7 that determined by census on the
8 federal level?

9 MR. BRADY: It's determined by
10 a free and reduced lunch requirement,
11 and it's --

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: It's like an
13 income (indiscernible.)

14 MR. BRADY: Yeah, as you know.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: 185 percent?

16 MR. BRADY: Yes.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. And
18 how often do we evaluate that
19 eligibility?

20 (Witness comes forward.)

21 MR. HARRIS: Councilman, my
22 name's Wayne Harris. I'm the School
23 District's budget director.

24 The School District actually
25 has a school-wide feeding program at a

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 very large number of schools. As a
3 result of having a school-wide feeding
4 program, we do not have the
5 information that many districts have
6 about our parents' income because
7 parents don't like to fill out those
8 forms in any case, and if their
9 children are going to get free or
10 reduced-price lunch anyway, we
11 therefore do not have the information.

12 So what we do instead is a
13 study done by a professor named Yancy,
14 who is at one of the Philadelphia
15 universities, that extrapolates
16 publicly-available information on --
17 starting with poverty information and
18 estimates the poverty rate at each and
19 every school, and that is actually the
20 number that we use to distribute the
21 Title I funds.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: And what
23 other programs are Title I-eligible
24 students eligible to receive other than
25 a free lunch?

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2 MR. HARRIS: Oh, oh. Actually,
3 there's no connection between the
4 free-lunch program and Title I except
5 that we happen to use the same estimate
6 of poverty for both programs.
7 Otherwise --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
9 So let's extract this free lunch --

10 MR. HARRIS: Yes, right.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- 'cause
12 there's no such thing as a free lunch.

13 What programs do Title I
14 students get?

15 MR. HARRIS: Well, Title I
16 funds the -- the majority of Title I
17 funds are distributed directly to
18 schools. They're distributed based on
19 the number of students in poverty as
20 well as the concentration of poverty in
21 the school. The higher the
22 concentration, the more per student in
23 poverty that the school gets.

24 And at the school level, the
25 principal makes the decision on what

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 they spend the money on. The
3 requirement is that the money be spent
4 for instructional programs only.

5 We also use some Title I funds
6 for allowable expenses that -- the
7 Title I funds, in addition, go to the
8 non-public schools, using the same
9 calculations as for our schools.

10 And then at the center, we use
11 it for allowable assessment costs, for
12 a lot of professional-development
13 efforts, for parent involvement
14 efforts.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
16 So how -- again, back to my original
17 question: How often do you evaluate
18 who is eligible for Title I?

19 MR. HARRIS: Well, in the
20 School District of Philadelphia, every
21 single child at every single school is
22 eligible for Title I.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Right.

24 MR. HARRIS: Every one of our
25 schools is a school-wide program at

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 this time.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: So you
4 concede that a Rittenhouse Square,
5 whatever their school is, the public
6 school right there, is also eligible
7 for Title I?

8 MR. HARRIS: Yes, because every
9 one of our schools has an official
10 poverty estimate that exceeds 35
11 percent.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: And only
13 because I only have five minutes, I
14 won't go beyond that, and I'm sure some
15 of my other colleagues will jump on
16 that. The reason I raise this is,
17 isn't a part of the Title I eligibility
18 a tutorial program when kids fall below
19 a certain grade level?

20 MR. HARRIS: Yes. There's
21 something called "supplemental
22 education support" that is available to
23 children who do not reach advanced or
24 proficient level, and they are eligible
25 to be part of a program where there's a

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 set group of providers that are
3 approved, and the children can sign up
4 for those programs, and the cost is
5 paid for by the District's Title I
6 program.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: And if the
8 principal opts not to use that, that
9 money then goes to whatever -- or what
10 eligible category of spending?

11 MR. HARRIS: Well, the
12 principal isn't involved in the
13 decision as to whether or not to do it
14 --

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: So what
16 happens with the money?

17 MR. HARRIS: -- it's whether or
18 not the child signs up.

19 If the -- in all of Title I,
20 if something is not spent, it
21 effectively rolls forward into the
22 next year because Title I is a
23 27-month program and --

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Let me get
25 to my point and why I'm raising this

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 series of questions. It's my
3 understanding that that program is
4 underutilized, that a lot of parents
5 don't know about it. When they find
6 out about it, it's a 17-day spread that
7 they get that tutorial; is that
8 correct?

9 MR. HARRIS: I do not --

10 DR. JONES: Actually, I can
11 speak to what you're talking about,
12 Councilman.

13 In terms of the SES, those
14 dollars are separate. A school
15 can't -- a principal cannot say, "You
16 are not going to do the SES." And
17 what happens is, the providers have to
18 be on an approved list from the State,
19 and then we have several bidder
20 conferences, where people come in,
21 parents come in. We do them at the
22 school, we do them centrally, we do
23 them in the region, and then we send
24 these letters home. We actually call.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.

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2 The point being: Are they
3 underutilized?

4 DR. JONES: I would say that --

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm --

6 DR. JONES: Well, I would say
7 that we would like to see more people
8 take advantage of them, yes.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
10 So we have to do a better job of
11 marketing these resources, particularly
12 to the under -- you gave some stats
13 about who's not performing, and we have
14 some funds over here that we aren't
15 using. We ought to get peanut butter
16 to meet jelly and do something with
17 that to provide some assistance to that
18 population.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Point of
20 information.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
22 Excuse me, Councilman. Councilman
23 Green has a point of information.

24 Councilman Green?

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,

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2 Madam President, Madam Chair.

3 Thank you, Councilman Jones.

4 Councilman Jones asked a
5 question, which I think we could get a
6 specific answer to, so I just want to
7 ask you to provide it to the Chair for
8 the record.

9 And so the question was: Is
10 it underutilized? My question is:
11 How many students -- what is the
12 number of students that are not
13 proficient or better? And what is the
14 number of students who have taken
15 advantage of the SES program? And do
16 you know that off --

17 DR. JONES: Actually, in the
18 information we provided for you -- and
19 I will out -- we provided you the
20 number of students who have the -- who
21 took advantage of SES services now.

22 And, Dr. Sheffield, if you
23 will answer his first question, I will
24 do the second.

25 This year in terms of the

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2 students, the number of students who
3 enrolled in our -- and it's called
4 "Supplemental Education Services,"
5 it's 1,127 students who actually took
6 advantage of that this year.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And how many
8 students are not proficient or better?

9 DR. JONES: Dr. Sheffield?

10 (Witness comes forward.)

11 DR. SHEFFIELD: In terms of
12 reading, below basic and basic, 59.4.
13 And --

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: In raw
15 numbers of students.

16 DR. SHEFFIELD: I don't know
17 the numbers; I have the percentages in
18 front of me.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Do you know
20 how many students --

21 DR. SHEFFIELD: But I could
22 give you the numbers; it's not a
23 problem.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

25 DR. SHEFFIELD: There's a

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 significant number.

3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Well, 59 --
4 how many students are in the School
5 District?

6 DR. SHEFFIELD: I'd say about
7 70,000. If you'd ask me just roughly,
8 around 70,000 kids who are below
9 basic -- basic and below.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. So 2
11 percent -- less than 2 percent of the
12 people eligible for SES are using it.

13 DR. JONES: If you look at the
14 formula -- and we will actually get the
15 official formula -- the students who
16 are not proficient are eligible for a
17 few things, so SES does not -- just,
18 first of all, the pot of money does not
19 cover every child who's not proficient,
20 and so there are several things the
21 District is required to do.

22 SES has to serve the neediest
23 students, so there is a cutoff point,
24 and I will get you the exact --

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Has to serve

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59

2 the what, the neediest students?

3 DR. JONES: The students that
4 are the neediest.

5 So to answer your question,
6 you have -- let's say, just for the
7 sake of an example, if I had a
8 thousand students who were not
9 proficient, and the Title I dollars on
10 a scale would allow us to serve the
11 neediest half of those students, there
12 are other programs that we have to
13 use.

14 So, for instance, the Power
15 Hour, that's another after-school
16 extended service that are used for
17 students who are not proficient.

18 So the Title I SES dollars are
19 not enough to cover every student
20 that's not proficient; it's on a
21 scale, and I will get the exact scale
22 for you.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. But
24 the answer to the question is, it's
25 extraordinarily underutilized,

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2 Councilman Jones.

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 MR. HARRIS: Could I enter just
5 one piece of information? This is for
6 both of the Councilmen who are asking
7 these questions.

8 The School District is
9 required to set aside 20 percent of
10 its Title I funds. There's 141,
11 approximately, million in the current
12 year, and 20 percent of that is
13 \$28 million.

14 Some of that money does not
15 get spent, which includes the SES
16 money. Some of the money that's
17 actually sent to the schools actually
18 does not get spent.

19 And, as a result, the School
20 District, because this is a well-
21 established program that's been around
22 for a long time, we are very
23 aggressive in the way that we budget
24 this. We budget \$160 million on a
25 \$40 million grant because we know

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2 ahead of time that a certain amount of
3 money will not be spent.

4 So while it is perfectly
5 appropriate to discuss whether or not
6 the SES program is being effective and
7 whether or not the SES program is
8 being underutilized, the concept that
9 there is money in Title I that is not
10 being used, that is lying around and
11 being wasted and a resource that's not
12 happening is not correct. Every
13 single dollar of Title I is being used
14 as aggressively as possible for our
15 students.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: If the
17 rooster crows and the sun comes up, did
18 the rooster cause the sun to come up?
19 No. That's a riddle.

20 But my point is, the
21 statistics say that I have a group, a
22 population that can't read and do
23 math. We have funds that are
24 available to up that level of
25 proficiency. Whatever the reasons why

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2 and who shot John, I don't care; what
3 I do care about is that we target
4 those resources towards that
5 population and get it in the hands of
6 people that need it.

7 Why? Because if they know by
8 4th grade that if a urban kid cannot
9 read, how many jail cells to build by
10 the time they're 18? There is a
11 solution in understanding that
12 particular statistic: Teach 'em how
13 to read, teach them how to do math, and
14 we may solve that problem.

15 So my point is, we won't --
16 too often, we leave resources
17 underutilized, and we have to find
18 creative ways to make sure that
19 parents know about it and that
20 students use it.

21 And that's my point.

22 DR. JONES: And well taken.
23 And we would say that looking at the
24 resources that we're using, we shared
25 the ways we're doing it. It is not

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 enough until every child, you know, is
3 going to be proficient, until we've
4 used all of these dollars as
5 efficiently as possible, and it means
6 that we still have to come up with
7 better ways of partnering to get the
8 word out.

9 And then after you get the
10 word out, you know, it's at a point
11 now where I think the District has
12 done a wonderful job in getting the
13 word out, but that's still just a part
14 of the equation. You got to make sure
15 you make the connection and people can
16 for whatever the barriers are.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Just --
18 'cause I know Councilman Green took
19 some of my time.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No,
21 we did not take it from you.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Poor attempt
23 at humor.

24 What I want to say with that
25 is that if Hooked on Phonics can help

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 some of these young people, and for 17
3 days under Title I, we can get that to
4 some parents that don't -- that are
5 frustrated, can't help their kids with
6 their homework but this could actually
7 give them a edge to achieve, we need
8 to use it, and we need to find ways,
9 through the home and school
10 associations, to put it out there.

11 Thank you, Madam President.

12 DR. JONES: Absolutely agreed.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
14 Chair recognizes Councilman Green.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
16 Madam Chair.

17 Can you tell me what
18 percentage of students that are
19 school-aged in Philadelphia attend
20 Philadelphia public schools?

21 DR. JONES: We will get back to
22 you.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. I
24 will save those questions then.

25 So back to the billion dollars

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 and the \$600 million. With the
3 resources currently available to the
4 School District, can you fulfill your
5 core mission?

6 MR. BRADY: Given the
7 performance in the last five years,
8 we're continuing to improve in that --
9 core to accomplish that core mission,
10 yes.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But with the
12 resources on the table --

13 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- are you
15 performing your core mission? Are you
16 effective at what you do?

17 MR. BRADY: Effectiveness is by
18 many different scales. We have shown
19 performance improvement in the last
20 five years.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Sure.

22 MR. BRADY: Is it enough?
23 Absolutely not.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Sure. But,
25 I mean, you know, going from 40 to 50

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2 is still a -- not a passing grade.

3 So my question -- this is an
4 important question. I mean, do you
5 have the resources to fulfill your
6 core mission? I know it's all you
7 have and you can't do anything about
8 it, and you're doing the best you can
9 with what you have. I don't dispute
10 the intent of the people to fulfill
11 the mission with the resources.

12 But this question really is:
13 Do you have the resources to fulfill
14 your mission?

15 MR. BRADY: Clearly, even the
16 costing-out study indicates that we
17 don't --

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

19 MR. BRADY: -- have enough
20 resources.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right. So
22 the answer -- you don't have enough
23 resources to fulfill your mission;
24 you'd agree with that statement?

25 MR. BRADY: I'm saying that the

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 costing-out study indicates we're a
3 billion dollars short every year.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay, thank
5 you.

6 So -- I apologize if this was
7 discussed yesterday when I wasn't
8 here, but are you aware of any
9 research that -- what is the optimal
10 size for class size for students?

11 MR. BRADY: We just did a study
12 on this, and Dr. Sheffield will address
13 that, Councilmember.

14 DR. SHEFFIELD: Actually, the
15 research is all over the place on it,
16 but there is some definitive research
17 that says in K-3, 20 or below.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: 20 or below.

19 DR. SHEFFIELD: The maximum
20 benefit comes in the early -- in the
21 early years.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. So I
23 asked a question -- well, I'll get to
24 that at the end.

25 Did the study look at what

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 factors, other than class size, lead
3 to student success?

4 DR. SHEFFIELD: There's
5 research that speaks to quality of
6 instruction, rigor in the classroom,
7 quality of the teachers. There's a
8 pretty good body of research that tells
9 us the attributes required for student
10 growth in addition to research that
11 tells us around class size.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And ten
13 being, you know, a class size of twenty
14 or below, rigor and quality of, you
15 know --

16 DR. SHEFFIELD: Of instruction.

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- et
18 cetera, where does the Philadelphia
19 School District -- zero being, you
20 know, the worse possible case, where
21 does the Philadelphia School District
22 fall on that scale?

23 DR. SHEFFIELD: I can't answer
24 that question. We haven't done
25 research to quantify that, but we have

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 done research that suggests to us on a
3 lot of measures that -- we've done four
4 or five best practices that are really
5 making a difference.

6 One is having highly qualified
7 staff; two is implementation of the
8 core curriculum; three is having an
9 assessment system, which is benchmarks
10 that are aligned to the curriculum
11 that allow us to be informed of our
12 students progress; and the fourth one
13 is quality professional development,
14 which directly relates to the quality
15 of the instructor in the classroom.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right.

17 DR. SHEFFIELD: So we do have a
18 research study that tells us that we
19 have done that, we're moving in the
20 right direction.

21 The issue for us is continuous
22 growth on those measures.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: We're
24 showing incremental improvement, and I
25 acknowledge that, and I guess what I'm

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 asking, though, is back to sort of the
3 analogy I was making yesterday about
4 the patient and the metrics that I am
5 using to determine whether or not the
6 patient is alive or barely breathing --

7 DR. SHEFFIELD: Mm-hmm.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- and that
9 is class size, rigor, quality, the
10 things that you just discussed, engaged
11 principals, et cetera.

12 Where are we towards achieving
13 that? I mean, I'd like you to -- if
14 you can, I'd like you to say how far
15 away we are from the ideal, from ten.

16 DR. SHEFFIELD: You'd have to
17 say your question in a different way.
18 I'm trying to understand where you're
19 going.

20 There's -- we don't have a
21 measurement. If you're asking me, If
22 there's 10,000 classrooms, are 8,000
23 of them there? That's too hard to
24 tweak out what you're asking, if I'm
25 hearing you right.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Well, you
3 are hearing me right because those
4 maybe are metrics just as important as
5 PSSA. And, as Councilman Jones likes
6 to say, if it isn't measured, it isn't
7 managed.

8 So if we don't know how many
9 of our principals are engaged in a way
10 the research says they need to be and
11 how many of our students are in class
12 size below 20 and how many schools
13 have active parent involvement and how
14 many, et cetera, et cetera, if we
15 don't know those things --

16 DR. SHEFFIELD: I could provide
17 those.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- we can't
19 move towards those things that we know
20 are successful. Those are the things
21 that we know are successful for kids.
22 Everything else we do is incremental.

23 So we need to be looking at a
24 plan that gets us towards those goals,
25 not the goal of increasing test

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 scores, because that will come when we
3 have those things in our schools.
4 That's what I'm talking -- that's
5 where I'm going.

6 DR. SHEFFIELD: We actually
7 have a score card to answer -- that's a
8 different question you just posed.

9 We do have a score card that
10 can tell you how many parent
11 organizations in growth over the last
12 five years. I can answer all of those
13 questions.

14 The notion for us is
15 continuous improvement and growth in
16 terms of students, and I can provide
17 you our value-added documents, which
18 suggest and tell us that we are moving
19 our students in terms of growing them
20 substantially more than any other
21 district in the state.

22 So we are growing -- the
23 notion is about moving students
24 incrementally up. You don't -- you
25 very rarely, when you look at data

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2 across the country do you see these
3 huge leaps. The notion is moving to
4 them from below basic to basic, to
5 proficient, to advanced; that we're
6 successful in doing, and I can provide
7 you all of that information.

8 And if we continue on the same
9 track of additional supports, as our
10 CEO indicated, I believe we will be
11 successful, but it's how we move them.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But within
13 test scores is not what I'm talking
14 about. What I'm talking about is these
15 other metrics -- class size, engaged
16 principals. Do we know the number of
17 engaged principals the way the research
18 says the principal has to be engaged
19 there are out of the 291 that are in
20 the School District?

21 And if we don't know the
22 answer to those questions, my -- I
23 guess what I'm saying is, we're
24 measuring -- it's important to measure
25 student achievement, but we need to

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 measure a lot of other factors that
3 make schools successful that we're not
4 currently measuring.

5 DR. JONES: And we do. I want
6 to give a very specific example.

7 Our regional superintendents
8 work directly with our principals and
9 so, in terms of engaged, they have a
10 performance --

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: How many out
12 of the 291 meet the criteria that would
13 suggest from the research that we have
14 engaged principals? What's the number?
15 Of our 291 principals, how many are
16 engaged the way the research says they
17 need to be?

18 DR. JONES: All of our
19 principals are engaged in the way that
20 the research shows, because part of
21 what the research shows is that where
22 there is any need for assistance, we
23 are to provide it.

24 So this is not a silver
25 bullet. You don't have a principal

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 description and say, You're in the
3 school, sink or swim. And so we have
4 a process for any principal who is in
5 front of our students who's running a
6 school, and where there is a need for
7 additional support -- and now I'm not
8 talking even just professional
9 development in terms of engaging them
10 in instruction and operation. But
11 just as we're working with any
12 principal, we find out that there's a
13 need to have a mentor or a coach that
14 that principal gets that.

15 So when you're talking about
16 engaged, you have to define "engaged."
17 I'll give you specifics. You asked
18 yesterday --

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I --

20 DR. JONES: (indiscernible) was
21 sort of leading the engagement. You
22 said, What percent? what does that look
23 like in the classroom? We said we
24 could go back and find that.

25 We have 11,390 classrooms. In

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 2005, Phi Delta Kappa, a national
3 organization, came in and said going
4 into these classrooms, looking at the
5 engagement of the teachers, which is a
6 result of what happens with our
7 principals who are leading that,
8 what's the percentage of classrooms
9 that you see that are really showing
10 the kind of engagement? And it was 7
11 percent.

12 We went back and we said we
13 would calculate that for you for the
14 walk-ins. The percentage today is 35
15 percent. That's growth, as
16 Dr. Sheffield was saying.

17 Are we there a hundred
18 percent? No, but that does not say
19 that the majority of those other
20 classrooms don't have principals who
21 are engaged in the way that we are
22 expecting. There is a range, it's a
23 continuum --

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I
25 appreciate --

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2 DR. JONES: But they are
3 engaged.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I appreciate
5 what you're saying, but 7 percent and
6 35 percent are both failing grades.
7 It's tremendous progress, but it's not
8 helping the students -- the 65 percent
9 of students who are in classrooms with
10 teachers who are not engaged.

11 DR. JONES: But I think that
12 you're looking at a single indicator.
13 As you were saying, you can't look at
14 just test scores.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right.

16 DR. JONES: And that's not what
17 we're saying, because when we look at a
18 principal's score card, we measure
19 engagement by the parent and community
20 involvement, student engagement. We
21 look at the test scores, we look at how
22 they work on professional development.

23 So on the continuum of
24 services, I think that you will see
25 that with all of our principals to a

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2 varying degree, and some need more
3 support than others.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Oh, okay.
5 My time is ended, and I don't know if
6 other people have questions or --

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Yes.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.
9 And, Councilman, your time has been up
10 also.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I wanted to
12 make you aware of that, Madam
13 President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We'll
15 do a second go-around.

16 The Chair recognizes
17 Councilwoman Tasco.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

19 These questions may have been
20 answered yesterday; I tried to listen
21 in my office.

22 But I want to go back here
23 'cause I see the chart here relative
24 to the math -- PSSA math, reading test
25 results. And what is disturbing is

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2 the -- in my district a high school
3 that has 74 percent of the students
4 reading below basic, how do they get
5 there? I mean, how do these students
6 get to high school without reading?

7 My question is, you had
8 mentioned earlier that the real thrust
9 to education should be at the
10 elementally school level, grades 1 and
11 2. Are the resources targeted to
12 those early grades to provide the
13 teacher to be able to teach children
14 to read, write and to arithmetic?
15 That should be the basic goal of the
16 early grades. And what is being done?

17 Because if we don't handle it
18 there, each year they fall behind and
19 behind. So they get to high school
20 and they're 74 percent below the
21 basics in math and reading and the --
22 and 60 percent below on reading and
23 math in the other part of the high
24 school.

25 DR. JONES: And we certainly

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2 grapple with that every day, and you
3 are absolutely correct.

4 We absolutely have -- the core
5 curriculum, as we spoke about, was
6 actually started in the lower grades
7 where we had the targeted resources.
8 Then we brought in many of our
9 interventions that looked specifically
10 at how do we improve the reading and
11 the math. And so though the test
12 scores are showing that there's
13 improvement there, it's still not
14 enough.

15 Unfortunately, when you hear
16 that it takes a generation for this to
17 go through and so you're seeing the
18 results of students who did not have
19 the advantage of that, that doesn't
20 excuse us for that.

21 So what we've done in the high
22 school and our middle school, we have
23 some very specific targeted reading
24 and math interventions that we're
25 looking at with our students and high

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2 school also.

3 The reality is that there's
4 still more that needs to be done. How
5 does it happen? It comes from when we
6 first have our children in preschool
7 environment, many of them that come in
8 that have not had the structured,
9 formal preschool experience, and then
10 we are playing -- working very hard to
11 catch up with those students, it is
12 having adequate resources, whether
13 it's the programs where there's
14 professional development, to move the
15 students forward.

16 The extended resources that we
17 need, it is the books, it's the
18 manipulatives, it's better ways of
19 teaching it, it's connecting the
20 social services that we need to try to
21 change a culture and a climate, it's
22 professional development about what
23 believe our children can do and how
24 you turn the tide. It's the
25 combination of all of that, that we

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2 move in the right direction.

3 But clearly, as we were
4 saying, though, the scores are going
5 in the right direction, it's not just
6 test scores but attendance, looking at
7 the suspension data, looking at all of
8 the free and reduced lunch. We look
9 at everything.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Do you
11 have -- I know in the old days you used
12 to have reading teachers to help
13 children who are struggling with the
14 ability to read.

15 DR. JONES: We do. And we've
16 actually added reading coaches as a
17 strategy. We know that reading across
18 all of our subject areas is a major
19 trust for the District.

20 Again, not enough. When look
21 at the elementary schools, certainly
22 more, but as start to go up, when
23 you're seeing the numbers that you're
24 looking at in high school, the high
25 schools, we have reading coaches, but

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2 not enough in terms of what you're
3 talking about. So you're absolutely
4 correct.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Are the
6 reading coaches mandatory? I mean, do
7 the students have to go or is it
8 voluntary?

9 DR. JONES: It's not always a
10 pullout so that it's not a separate
11 class. They are now working with
12 teachers. It is a actual different
13 model, what you're talking about, where
14 they're actually working with teachers
15 to help them improve how they use
16 reading in their science class, reading
17 in math, reading in the history, and
18 then some students, smaller students --
19 it's a smaller number of students have
20 actually pulled out of reading classes.

21 But the majority do not at the
22 high school level, they do not have to
23 pullout reading courses, so you're
24 working with teachers to improve it,
25 and it is a resource issue.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Do you
3 have pullout classes in the 1st and 2nd
4 grades for reading and math?

5 DR. JONES: We do have some,
6 not across the board in all classes,
7 but we absolutely have some of the
8 targeted in the lower grades. But,
9 again, part of the strategy is how do
10 we build the skills of all of the
11 teachers to be teachers of reading.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, do
13 you have professional-development
14 opportunities for those teachers to
15 learn how to teach?

16 DR. JONES: Absolutely,
17 absolutely. And that's ongoing
18 professional development that we use,
19 but I wanted to -- we need -- if we
20 could say, as Mr. Brady said, what
21 would we use with some of those
22 additional resources? Absolutely to
23 have more of the reading emphasis.

24 So it is coaching, it is to be
25 able to have more of the targeted

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2 resources at a younger age, 'cause
3 you're correct, if you get it at the
4 younger age, then they're reading by
5 3, they're able to be engaged.

6 And we would use a lot of
7 those resources to increase what we do
8 in reading and math in the lower
9 grades so that the foundation is even
10 stronger.

11 DR. SHEFFIELD: I think I --
12 just one comment to support Dr. Jones.

13 In terms of systemic fixes,
14 we're working -- the heavy lifting is
15 connecting the acquisition of
16 standards to a grade. Were you
17 proficient or are you not proficient?
18 And I think we're doing that work.
19 How do we establish rubrics for marks,
20 grades?

21 Because when you look at our
22 data -- and we run our data by our
23 PSSA, proficient basic, you have
24 students who get C's and B's who are
25 below basic. So the question that you

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2 ask and that we've been grappling with
3 is, why is that?

4 So how do we step back and
5 provide a framework for grading so
6 that you do pass based on acquisition
7 of knowledge and acquisition of
8 standards. If we do that, you don't
9 get to the 10th grade or the 9th grade
10 without being able to read at a
11 proficient level.

12 And that's what the hard work
13 and the heavy lifting we're doing now
14 so we can put some framework and then
15 do professional development and move
16 it forward.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Does some
18 of this go back to the notion that you
19 had to -- the children had to be passed
20 and not held back? I know that at one
21 point in time, it was -- there was some
22 outcry about the number of children who
23 were being held back, and then there
24 was an outcry about the kids being
25 passed and they couldn't read and

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2 couldn't write.

3 Where does that debate stand?

4 I mean, where you all in that

5 philosophy?

6 DR. JONES: If you look at the
7 promotion policy and what you were
8 referring to, that absolutely -- I
9 think you cannot ignore that as a
10 contributing factor and another reason
11 why we work so hard in terms of the
12 intervention and support for students.

13 And even when a child was
14 promoted socially, it was with the
15 intention that that child had a
16 structured, extended-day program, and
17 it didn't always happen.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Mm-hmm.

19 DR. JONES: But that was the
20 intention, even with social promotion,
21 that if you promoted Cassandra
22 socially, that I had -- you knew, as my
23 incoming teacher, that I had a
24 difficulty in reading, that you needed
25 to work with me on a particular reading

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2 intervention. That did not happen
3 across the board.

4 So that was, again, another
5 factor that you cannot ignore.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: It didn't
7 happen in most instances.

8 DR. JONES: Did not. And you
9 could not ignore that.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you
11 very much. My time is up.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: The
13 Chair again recognizes Councilman
14 Jones.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Madam President.

17 On a better note, 'cause your
18 stamina has been incredible and we
19 appreciate you being able to answer
20 and respond to questions. It's not
21 always what we want to hear, but it is
22 what it is. And it can, based on that
23 information, get better.

24 DR. JONES: Okay.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: And that's

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2 the way I'm looking at.

3 DR. JONES: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: In my
5 district, we have the School of the
6 Future, which was recently certified as
7 a LEED school, which is environmentally
8 friendly, and I wanted to know if
9 schools like Barry School, which is
10 being constructed also in my district,
11 are they going to be LEED certified?

12 And the third part of my
13 question is: Are we developing a
14 green-job curriculum to prepare public
15 school students for jobs in the
16 industry of environmentalism,
17 conservation, alternate energy and the
18 like?

19 DR. JONES: I'm going to take
20 the last one and then turn it over to
21 Mr. Ferolino.

22 I actually love that idea, and
23 I'm going to speak with Dr. Analoff
24 (sp?) in our career focus, our CTE
25 programs, because I will say that

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2 that's one of the things where you
3 say, "Duh, why didn't you think of
4 that?" because that's makes so much
5 sense. So thank you for that, and we
6 are absolutely going to speak with
7 Dr. Analoff, because there is no
8 reason why we would not do that.

9 MR. BRADY: I think -- thank
10 you, Councilman. Yes, we're very proud
11 that the School of the Future met the
12 LEED standard, and all future design
13 and construction will incorporate LEED
14 standard.

15 It makes good sense to have
16 the right environmental systems and
17 products. And over the years, you
18 could make a good business case that
19 will more than pay for itself.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: There was a
21 recent commercial where this young
22 environmentalist is talking to a
23 seasoned, grizzly CEO type, and she's
24 trying to explain why greening is
25 important, and she simply lifted up the

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2 bottom line of the financial sheet:

3 that it saves money.

4 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: And if that

6 is, in fact, true and we can

7 demonstrate that, it seems like it's a

8 no-brainer to incorporate that.

9 But in addition, as we start

10 to look at careers -- not in the

11 future but in the present -- whether

12 we're talking about waterless urinals

13 or gray-water technology or thermal

14 heating, all of these things are

15 careers.

16 MR. BRADY: Yes.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: You're no

18 longer just a plumber; you're a green

19 plumber. And I think we just need to

20 incorporate that into our shop.

21 But not just green jobs; we're

22 talking about life sciences, we're

23 talking about hospital jobs, and we're

24 talking about service jobs. As we

25 look at the possibility of gambling

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2 actually hitting Philadelphia, we need
3 to prepare public school students for
4 entry-level and even management-level
5 opportunities with these industries.

6 And it seems as though
7 cooperation with the various chambers
8 of commerce, cooperation with PWDC,
9 and cooperation with Community College
10 might be an appropriate way to --

11 MR. BRADY: Good point.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- kind of
13 reverse-engineer these careers and
14 really give a graduate of public school
15 a opportunity, if they're not going to
16 college, at least they're at a
17 wage-earning, family-supporting job.

18 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm. Thank you,
19 very good comment.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
21 Madam President.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
23 You're welcome.

24 The Chair recognizes
25 Councilman Green.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Just a
5 point of information.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I yield to
7 the Majority Leader.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I just
9 wanted to ask a question in terms of
10 Councilman Jones's comments about
11 preparing young people for jobs of the
12 future.

13 I guess the core -- the
14 question is: What are we educating
15 our children to do? I mean, what is
16 the core of the school system in
17 educating our children? What is the
18 end goal?

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
20 Councilwoman --

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Is it to
22 get 'em through --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
24 Councilwoman, the stenographer cannot
25 hear you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I'm sorry.

3 What is the end goal? Is it
4 to have them just to be able to read
5 and write and go off into the world?
6 Is it to help them understand what the
7 world is all about and developing a
8 curriculum so they understand that at
9 the end of the day, they have to work;
10 at the end of the day, they are going
11 to be parents; at the end of the day,
12 they're going to be home owners; and
13 at the end of the day they're going to
14 be adults? And what is it they need
15 to be a productive adult?

16 Are we developing those
17 children to function in the world?

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And that was
19 my question. What is the goal for kids
20 who graduate? What is the goal for
21 kids who graduate?

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: At the end
23 of the day, what is it that you're
24 trying to do?

25 DR. JONES: You've actually

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2 described it: It is to be productive
3 citizens in a global society, not just
4 to go to college, 'cause even after you
5 go to college, you still want them to
6 work and be gainfully employed.

7 I mean, you really described
8 it, you know, in a nutshell. That's
9 what the whole education process is.

10 We want them to be functional,
11 we want them to be good citizens, we
12 want them to understand that this is a
13 global society, we want them to
14 understand that the world does not
15 stop at, you know, North Philly or
16 South Philly or -- you know, that it
17 is, you know, you go to Africa, you go
18 to Italy, you go to other places and
19 you're able to prepare for jobs.

20 Our curriculum -- you know,
21 how do you become thinking, you know,
22 functioning adults, because the jobs
23 that we're preparing them for now
24 don't even exist.

25 And so -- and that you're not

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2 going to be in a job forever, that you
3 are going to be changing your jobs six
4 or seven times. Those days are gone
5 when you came in and you had that job
6 for 30 years. You know, you're going
7 to change jobs four or five times.

8 And so, how do you maneuver
9 the systems, how you're a critical
10 thinker, how you're able to, you know,
11 adapt your skills so they are
12 transferable.

13 Those are the things that we
14 are preparing our students for, so
15 your description was absolutely
16 correct.

17 MR. BRADY: I think, sir, if I
18 may, and Dr. Jones just gave a great
19 overview. Being a more simple
20 soldier-type, I know there's a mission
21 statement and a declaration of
22 education that the SRC has approved,
23 and it -- I think it takes all of the
24 great things that you two just
25 discussed, and I think it puts in more

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2 succinct language, so if you could
3 allow me to get that copied to you,
4 that will give you a better
5 appreciation of, in a more succinct
6 form, what the School District's
7 mission is.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: On a scale
9 of 1 to 10 -- 10 being fulfillment of
10 your mission, that is your written
11 mission, and zero being zero
12 attainment -- where is the School
13 District with respect to the written
14 mission statement?

15 MR. BRADY: I'd like to think
16 about that for a few minutes.

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Sure. I'll
18 come back to it.

19 The reason I was going to ask,
20 What is the goal for kids who
21 graduate? and I expected the answer to
22 be productive citizens, in my view,
23 that -- if you boil down your mission
24 statement, that's it, productive
25 citizens.

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2 And what testing are you doing
3 to determine whether or not a person
4 is achieving towards being a
5 productive citizen? How -- in other
6 words, productive citizens share
7 society's civic values, which may
8 include things like conflict
9 resolution or other things.

10 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: What testing
12 is the School District doing towards
13 determining whether or not you're
14 achieving your goal of producing
15 productive citizens? And at what
16 level?

17 DR. JONES: I think across the
18 board, when we're talking about the
19 testing, it -- we get that feedback,
20 one, from our business partners, so let
21 me start there.

22 When we talk about, Are they
23 able to work as members of a
24 cooperative team? are they meeting
25 some of their skills? some of that

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2 comes from our direct feedback from
3 our business partners, because we have
4 several organizations that work
5 directly with us.

6 And so I want to move away
7 from, if I can, just the test scores;
8 that's a pencil and paper test.
9 That's very concrete. When our
10 employers come back and say, You're
11 producing children, or your graduates
12 are coming to us, and they're not able
13 to function in teams, they're not able
14 to get along with diverse cultures,
15 and so you will see that we do teach
16 conflict resolution, you'll see that
17 we do have service learning and
18 community service learning so that
19 those skills we can measure. And
20 sometimes it's in portfolios.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Great. How
22 many 6th grade students are proficient
23 in conflict resolution?

24 DR. JONES: When you say
25 "proficient," I would have to go back

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2 and tell you how many pass the course.
3 If that's going to be your bar for
4 proficient, then I would --

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Well,
6 passing courses does not have a
7 correlation with proficiency in tests,
8 right?

9 DR. JONES: But you asked me
10 how are many proficient in conflict
11 resolution, and so that is a course,
12 and so the measure of that, of that --
13 of your particular question, I would
14 have to go back to get that answer.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But that's
16 not going to answer the question,
17 because just as, you know, PSSA scores
18 don't reflect -- don't have a
19 correlation to whether or not somebody
20 passed the course in math or reading,
21 you can pass courses, people pass
22 courses, to Councilwoman Tasco's point,
23 and are not proficient, and that's why
24 they end up at 74 percent who don't
25 read who go to high school or who don't

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2 read at proficiency that go to high
3 school.

4 So my -- the point of this is,
5 there should be tests, we should be
6 measuring other things to produce
7 productive citizens other than just
8 what we measure in our tests.

9 So we should develop tests
10 that help us understand whether kids
11 really -- regardless of whether or not
12 they pass the course, whether it's
13 reading, math, or conflict-resolution,
14 they really understand conflict
15 resolution with respect to societal
16 and civic values that we want to
17 impart to our children.

18 There is no measurement that
19 says children, yes, they get that
20 mugging somebody is wrong or fighting
21 is not the way to solve things or
22 being respectful to your boss is
23 important or -- et cetera.

24 These are things that are as
25 important to measure when your goal is

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2 to produce productive citizens as
3 whether or not they're proficient in
4 math or English, and I'd like to know
5 if we can do that.

6 DR. JOHNSON: We would agree
7 with you, and that's why I was giving
8 you the other examples, but I wanted to
9 respond to your question when you said
10 specifically for conflict resolution.

11 There are a lot of different
12 ways to measure that. You can
13 certainly look at the climate of a
14 school, you can start looking at some
15 of the students' survey work that
16 comes out of our Office of Assessment.
17 Those are other ways to measure it.

18 But the only way that I could
19 get to the concrete answer of a
20 particular course -- and it would be
21 lots of other ways we can get to, but
22 that's the only way I could get to the
23 concrete answer of a particular course
24 if your question was just narrow for
25 conflict resolution.

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2 DR. SHEFFIELD: You make a very
3 important point. Qualitative measures
4 are much tougher to get at and drive
5 and often have to be put in some
6 cultural context because your values
7 may not be someone else's values and
8 how do we define that and measure it
9 are very complex.

10 I would also say to you in
11 terms of the quantitative measures and
12 acquisition of standards, we educate
13 children so that they're literate
14 adult, they're critical thinkers, they
15 can think higher order, and that they
16 can -- and that does translate to
17 being a productive citizen.

18 The role of education is to
19 broaden the horizons of children, to
20 teach them things and have them
21 experience things that they would
22 never experience.

23 How you measure those kinds of
24 things are tougher than how we measure
25 if you know 2 plus 2 or if you can

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2 complete an open-ended sentence.

3 But you're right. The
4 question is, how do we get to that?
5 And it's very expensive -- I'll just
6 put that on the table -- to develop
7 those kinds of instruments, but you're
8 right.

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

10 I mean I guess I'd suggest
11 that we know the answer to the
12 question because 45 percent of kids
13 don't graduate from high school at
14 all; therefore, they're not productive
15 citizens.

16 So of the kids who go to
17 public school, 45 percent don't
18 graduate, so that's a -- if the goal
19 is, you know, that's not -- 55 percent
20 is not a passing grade on productive
21 citizens.

22 MR. BRADY: Correct.

23 DR. SHEFFIELD: That's correct.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
25 Madam Chair.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: The
3 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I'm just
5 going to say I guess what we're asking,
6 and society is asking, is for the
7 school system to take on a little more
8 than just educating the children.

9 What you haven't said -- and
10 you alluded to it briefly but very
11 diplomatically -- is that you have
12 some cultural issues and that you have
13 some home issues, where the parents
14 are not engaged, and you have a lot of
15 that.

16 And so, having all of that in
17 the back of our minds as educators in
18 some instances, do we throw up our
19 hands and say we just can't get to
20 some of these kids, and that's how I'm
21 looking at the Boone and the Miller
22 and the Allegheny schools where the
23 kids are like a hundred percent below
24 basic, and then these are the kids who
25 end up probably in the prison system.

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2 So we know that there are a
3 lot of those social problems and
4 issues that we have to recognize. And
5 you can't be -- the school system
6 can't be the cure-all, you can't be
7 the end-all, but the attitude about
8 that by some of the educators may --
9 and I'm not blaming the educators,
10 but, you know, it's just human nature
11 to say, you know, I don't know if I
12 can deal with this, are we going to
13 make any difference with this because
14 of the environment these children come
15 from, and where's the support we need?

16 So the issue that -- and I
17 guess I'm not asking a question but
18 I'm making a statement that Councilman
19 Green said about the whole issue of
20 conflict resolution and the response
21 about the values.

22 DR. JONES: Right.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: There's
24 nothing wrong with teaching right and
25 wrong. That's not a value system;

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2 that's just a cultural issue or a value
3 system, and you don't believe wrong is
4 wrong and I don't believe wrong is
5 wrong. Wrong is wrong. And so we need
6 to teach that wrong is wrong and right
7 is right, and there are some basic
8 values that we do have to teach to
9 these children as they go through --
10 'cause you have them a major part of
11 their lives, from 8 to 3 or 4, and you
12 are responsible for them.

13 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: And it's a
15 thankless job, and I thank all of you
16 and those teachers and principals who
17 are involved with this, because I don't
18 know if I would have the stamina to do
19 it, you know? But it takes a lot. But
20 I don't want you all to forget that --
21 or think that we're thinking that you
22 can't teach values.

23 Now, what -- I mean what kind
24 of values? I mean, certainly, there
25 are other -- there are some

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2 restrictions and that kind of stuff,
3 but the basic let's-get-along kind of
4 values, the values of right and wrong,
5 you shouldn't hit somebody in the head
6 with your book bag or, you know, you
7 don't do those kinds of things unless
8 you teach respect, that those are the
9 values that you can teach without any
10 fear of being in the court, and I
11 think that ought to be pushed because
12 a lot of these kids aren't getting
13 that.

14 DR. JONES: And that is part of
15 what we do.

16 And I do think that we would
17 say as tough as it is, we don't throw
18 up our hands because we really do
19 believe that there's ways to work with
20 our parents and with our communities
21 and our partners, and it's going to
22 take us all collectively doing that to
23 figure out, you know, how do we change
24 this behavior and the culture and
25 belief systems. But it can be done,

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2 and we see that.

3 I'll give a perfect example,
4 as I said with the Councilman and
5 working with them on some challenging
6 situations that we've had in schools,
7 and it couldn't be solved with just
8 the District alone, but the
9 Councilman, you know, that came out,
10 you know, the Councilwoman came out
11 and put together some City resources
12 together.

13 And that's why I'm saying we
14 measure it in different ways beyond
15 just the class, but it is, when you're
16 getting the feedback, you know, from
17 your partners, from your parents.

18 And I think that collectively
19 what we've seen with the partnership
20 with the City is, you know, that we're
21 not throwing up our hands; we're
22 trying to figure out different ways to
23 measure it.

24 And even the students that-the
25 45 percent that drop out, they're

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 still our responsibility and so that's
3 why we're looking at different ways to
4 engage them, even out of the court
5 system. We still have to engage them
6 in different ways.

7 Because they've dropped out,
8 that doesn't put them off our radar;
9 we're still trying to figure out ways
10 to reach them also.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I'm done.
12 Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
14 You're welcome.

15 Councilman Green?

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
17 Madam Chair.

18 I'm sure you're familiar
19 with -- and I heard about this at a
20 conference that I was at over the
21 weekend. There is a program where
22 lawyers are coming in to public
23 schools to discuss civic values and
24 our society and right and wrong.

25 And I thought you might take

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 the opportunity to talk about that
3 program for a second and also to let
4 people know about it so that they
5 might sign up for it.

6 DR. JONES: Michael Pratt
7 actually brought that program to the
8 District about two months ago. It is
9 actually being developed. It's going
10 to kick off in September.

11 And you're right. Lawyers and
12 judges are going to be coming in. And
13 it's conflict resolution and, you
14 know, how do you really understand the
15 difference between right and wrong,
16 and how do you navigate the life
17 situations so that you can stay on the
18 right track.

19 And that curriculum is
20 actually being developed now, as we
21 speak, working in collaboration with
22 our Office of Curriculum and
23 Instruction and with the bar. And we
24 are very excited about that.

25 And one of the things that, as

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 I was listening to you, I'm going to
3 ask that particular subcommittee to
4 think about other ways that we're
5 measuring what happens as a result of
6 this program because I know we've
7 looked at many of the traditional
8 kinds of assessment, but some of the
9 things that you were saying today I
10 was making note of it to say, as
11 they're in development, there's some
12 different ways to assess some of the
13 things that are going to come out of
14 that program, and then how do we
15 replicate that.

16 So we're very excited about
17 that opportunity and it's going to
18 kick off in September of 2008.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Great. And
20 I'm signed up.

21 DR. JONES: Oh, wonderful.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: At a recent
23 Philly Stat meeting that a member of my
24 staff attended, the School District
25 shared the results of a study

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 identifying the big four predictors of
3 dropout, and it was a measurement taken
4 at 6th grade versus dropout, and that
5 was -- and I know it was briefly
6 discussed yesterday: low attendance,
7 poor behavior, failing 6th grade math,
8 failing 6th grade English. I imagine
9 you could probably draw a correlation
10 back to 2nd grade, you know, if you
11 wanted to, although that's not --

12 And, I guess, the study found
13 that students who fell into these
14 categories had a 10 percent chance of
15 graduating on time and a 20 percent of
16 graduating one year late, and the rest
17 pretty much don't graduate.

18 So I'd like to know, does the
19 District have a computer program or
20 some kind of program that looks at a
21 database available for all its
22 students, that looks at these factors
23 so that schools, as children are going
24 to another school or -- so that their
25 teacher knows that they're in this

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 risk category and their principal
3 knows that they're in this risk
4 category?

5 Is there a list developed? Is
6 there a computer -- could you hit a
7 button now and tell me how many kids
8 in 6th grade fall into this category?
9 And if you can't, why not? Or should
10 we develop it?

11 DR. JONES: Melanie Harris is
12 going to come to address that for you.

13 (Witness comes forward.)

14 MS. HARRIS: Good morning,
15 Councilman. Melanie Harris, Chief
16 Information Officer.

17 The School District is in its
18 fifth year of instituting an
19 instructional management system, which
20 allows all of our teachers to log in.
21 And their first screen is what we call
22 their "KPI," their key performance
23 indicators, which allows them to see,
24 student-by-student: attendance,
25 drop-out rates, test scores, report

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2 card scores. We're in the middle of
3 bringing in actual suspension data
4 into that system.

5 So it allows our teachers to
6 drill down, at the most minute level,
7 information on their students that are
8 in that class at any particular time,
9 and it's updated daily to really allow
10 them to see where they need to make
11 improvements at a per-child level.

12 For example, at the benchmark
13 we talked about yesterday, the six-
14 week intervals in which the students
15 are taught, that six weeks allows them
16 to look back and say, Where do I need
17 to remediate, where do I need to do
18 advanced instruction for those kids,
19 to be able to move them on to the next
20 level. So that is available to our
21 teachers.

22 In addition to that, we have a
23 data warehouse system that, again,
24 brings all of that information up to
25 our administrative level, that allows

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 our administrators to report on any
3 level of, again, key performance
4 indicators that can drive change and
5 instruction.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So you could
7 go back today, tell me how many 6th
8 grade students meet the criteria that
9 would suggest that they're not going to
10 graduate from high school that are in
11 the school system in 6th grade?

12 MS. HARRIS: Yes. Based on
13 what I heard those four indicators to
14 be, yes, we could.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But you
16 would have to go in and do it manually
17 and then -- you know, and then report
18 back to me.

19 So I guess what I'm looking
20 for is, you have you all of the data.
21 You know people's attendance records,
22 and you know these factors that were
23 identified are important. And what
24 I'd like to suggest is that the School
25 District build models that will

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 automatically do the pre -- do
3 predictions for school counselors,
4 for, you know, extra tutoring, for
5 everything that's available for these
6 kids that we can now know, hey, I
7 mean, the teacher's going to work on
8 math because it's low, but we can also
9 say, These are the children that
10 aren't going graduate from high
11 school. We have to do one-on-one with
12 them, intervention, tutoring, things
13 like that, to make a difference, to
14 keep them in school.

15 And it sounds like there's
16 no -- that we're not using our data
17 that way.

18 MS. HARRIS: Councilman, while
19 I'm not an academician, so I don't want
20 to speak for my colleagues, but you are
21 correct. We have, as Dr. Arnette said
22 at the first Philly Stat meeting I
23 attended, there's no lack of data in
24 Philadelphia; probably more data than
25 she has seen in any city. And I do

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 believe that our colleagues are working
3 together to do true data-driven
4 decision-making to drive instructional
5 change, to look for how we need to
6 differentiate instruction to really
7 reach the broadest audience of
8 students.

9 So while I don't want to
10 underestimate, as the technical lead,
11 what it takes to build those models, I
12 do believe we are moving forward on
13 that. And we could be happy to expand
14 on that conversation at any time.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
17 Sorry, Councilman, your time is up.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yes, Madam
19 President.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: The
21 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Sanchez.

22 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
23 you, Madam Chair.

24 Yesterday, in the budget
25 testimony in the afternoon, you

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 mentioned that despite the fact that
3 the State allegations for alternative
4 ed was being reduced by 8 million, we
5 are going to stay at 5 million. Is
6 that because we're planning to expand
7 programming for alternative education?

8 MR. HARRIS: The amount of
9 funding for contract at alternative
10 education '04 disciplinary schools and
11 for the over-age schools is the same in
12 the current budget, which is the Fiscal
13 Year '08 budget and next year's budget,
14 the Fiscal Year '09 budget.

15 Dr. Jones is leading an effort
16 to renegotiate the standards and the
17 payment rates and many other things
18 within that same -- within that same
19 budget amount. And I think we're --
20 if everything went right, we would be
21 hopeful that we might be able to
22 provide more and better service for
23 the same amount of money.

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So where
25 does the additional -- where is the

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59

2 additional money taken from?

3 MR. HARRIS: It's not

4 additional money. It would be the same

5 amount of --

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: But the

7 State reduced our allocation by

8 8 million.

9 MR. HARRIS: Oh, I'm --

10 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So where

11 are we reallocated?

12 MR. HARRIS: The State's -- the

13 State -- the 22 -- you're referring to

14 the \$22 million that was provided by

15 the State for the Alternative Education

16 Demonstration Grant in Fiscal '07, and

17 then it dropped to 14 million in Fiscal

18 '08.

19 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm.

20 MR. HARRIS: We are counting on

21 14 million in Fiscal Year '09 as well.

22 So the drop actually happened from last

23 year into this year, not from this year

24 into next year.

25 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.

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2 MR. HARRIS: It's -- that
3 funding source goes into the General
4 Fund of the School District. And when
5 any funding amount goes down, then we
6 are forced to make decisions about what
7 steps to take to close that gap.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm.

9 MR. HARRIS: In this case, the
10 decision was made that that -- that we
11 closed about two-and-a-half million of
12 that gap through cuts in alternative
13 education, but we were not able to cut
14 anything like 8 million without
15 devastating the programs.

16 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: A lot of
17 our premise on this budget counts on
18 the Governor's budget passing. What's
19 our Plan B if we don't get the
20 allegation that the Governor is pushing
21 for?

22 MR. BRADY: Right now, the Plan
23 A is to close the gap that's already
24 announced, which is the 38.9 million.
25 If that does not pass, then we go to --

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2 we're already working on a deficit-
3 reduction plan for Plan B, and we'll
4 have to make the necessary reduction.

5 I mentioned it yesterday
6 afternoon. I said once we rely on
7 more revenue as part of that threefold
8 approach to budget-deficit reduction,
9 and if obviously a main source of that
10 income is taken away, then we'll be
11 forced to recommend to the SRC and to
12 the City community very, very deep
13 cuts into areas that we've made
14 progress in the last a couple of
15 years.

16 And so to answer your question
17 as openly as you can, it would be
18 devastating, but we have a Plan B,
19 yes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I guess
21 one of my concerns is, there's -- a
22 decision in your new plan calls for
23 extending the qualifying miles for 7th
24 to 12th grade from 1.5 to 2, which
25 would impact 7,000 students at a cost

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 of \$720 per student.

3 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So I'm
5 asking, you know, we -- when we're
6 experiencing cuts in other budgets, we
7 are passing that onto the student. I
8 mean, is this decision final? I mean,
9 it's 7,000 kids that we're asking now
10 to pick up \$720.

11 MR. BRADY: That proposal in
12 the budget is actually a policy
13 decision that the SRC will address in
14 the next few months. It will be a
15 proposal to either move the geographic
16 limit from one half -- from two miles
17 to a mile-and-a-half, or there will be
18 a proposal to base that SEPTA free pass
19 based on an attendance model.

20 And so that they will have
21 that -- both policies. There will be
22 public engagement on it, and then they
23 will reach a decision in, I believe
24 the SRC Chair said, in August.

25 And so --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So that
3 decision hasn't been finalized?

4 MR. BRADY: I'm sorry? No,
5 it's not finalized at this point. That
6 will be a public discussion in June and
7 August.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Can -- I
9 don't know if someone from the SRC --
10 there's been some controversy around
11 this \$1,000-a-day panel. Can you
12 summarize for us what the goals of that
13 panel is and how that information will
14 be used to help the new CEO?

15 MR. BRADY: I'm -- I know the
16 intent of the new CEO is to gather
17 information, have -- and help formulate
18 her plans for the Philadelphia School
19 District. I feel very uncomfortable in
20 trying to explain how the \$1,000
21 honorarium -- is that what you're
22 referring to?

23 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm.

24 MR. BRADY: I do not know, and
25 I think we can come back to you with

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 some details.

3 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I'd
4 appreciate that. At least with some
5 over-arching goals and some --

6 MR. BRADY: Yes. And I know,
7 Councilwoman, that Dr. Ackerman would
8 love the opportunity to explain the
9 overall goal and the intent and
10 deliverables that will come out of that
11 very important approach.

12 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.
15 Councilman Green, immediately after
16 you're finished your questioning, we
17 will break until 1:30, when public
18 testimony is scheduled. So at this
19 time, I recognize you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
21 Madam Chair.

22 I just wanted to stay on civic
23 values for a second, and I think what
24 we heard from your CIO -- and you two
25 were nodding yours heads in agreement,

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 so I'd like to make sure I understand.

3 The quantitative data that
4 teachers have available to them about
5 their students, the KPIs, are driving
6 better test scores, driving increased
7 results. Having that quantitative
8 data, having it available is telling
9 teachers where to concentrate with a
10 particular student, and that's
11 increasing test scores. Is that a
12 fair assess -- summary of --

13 MR. BRADY: I was with you
14 until that last comment.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

16 MR. BRADY: It's more important
17 than just driving test scores.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. I
19 didn't mean to characterize it that
20 way.

21 MR. BRADY: Okay.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: It's
23 resulting in improved test scores.

24 MR. BRADY: It's improving in
25 increased academic performance,

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2 correct.

3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

4 Increased academic performance, which
5 we're measuring in test scores, okay.

6 MR. BRADY: Other indices.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. So
8 what I'm suggesting is, if we had
9 quantitative data available to teachers
10 about whether or not their kids in
11 their classroom understand conflict
12 resolution or share some of our civic
13 values, which I think Councilwoman
14 Tasco very well described as although
15 there may be cultural differences,
16 there really aren't with respect to
17 right and wrong.

18 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: You should
20 respect your elders, you should respect
21 your teachers, you should -- you know,
22 I mean, there are certain universal
23 things that we can agree.

24 MR. BRADY: Sure.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So towards

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 the goal of producing productive
3 citizens, I'd like to suggest that we
4 should try to gather, through testing,
5 some quantitative data on how people
6 really understand that.

7 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And I'd like
9 to know if, other than just this
10 program where lawyers are going to come
11 in --

12 MR. BRADY: Right.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- if
14 these -- to what extent these -- the
15 productive citizen goal is part of the
16 core curriculum now.

17 MR. BRADY: Okay. Allow us to
18 get back to you with a better detailed
19 answer.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

21 DR. JONES: And I would also
22 like to be able to contact you because
23 there's -- I know you've made reference
24 a couple of times to a conference.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Mm-hmm.

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2 DR. JONES: And clearly,
3 there's some things that I think that
4 you have in mind that could help us.
5 So I would like to be able to follow up
6 with you and just to really pick your
7 brain because I think you have some
8 ideas that could probably help us
9 unpack some of the things we're trying
10 to do.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I'd be happy
12 to. Appreciate it.

13 DR. JONES: Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I think I'll
15 follow up the rest of my questions when
16 we have a chance to sit down. And let
17 us all head to lunch. I thank you for
18 your testimony.

19 MR. BRADY: Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: You know, I
21 just want to note that, unfortunately,
22 it seems like we agree that the School
23 District does not have the resources to
24 fulfill its core mission at the moment
25 and --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0:

3 (Inaudible, off-mic.)

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I'm sorry?

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0:

6 (Inaudible, off-mic.)

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: No. And

8 it's a sad thing for parents who have

9 no choice, because they can't make

10 another choice, that have to send their

11 children to public school, to know that

12 there's not enough money there, unless

13 you're child is in a magnet school, to

14 provide them with a quality education

15 that's going to turn them into a

16 productive citizen, and that the day

17 that they go into school, there's a 45

18 percent chance that their child is not

19 going to graduate and become a

20 productive citizen.

21 I mean, this is a moral

22 obligation of this city, of this

23 state, and of this country.

24 MR. BRADY: Mm-hmm.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And there's

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 nothing more important that we can do.
3 And I just would like to know how we
4 can help you.

5 MR. BRADY: Thank you.
6 Appreciate your comments.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
9 you.

10 This committee will stand in
11 recess until 1:30.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO:
13 (Inaudible, off-mic.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
15 sorry.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I'd just
17 like to say that we recognize that
18 there is not enough money to address
19 many, many challenges that exist with
20 the school system.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
22 in the City.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: But I have
24 to say that there are many young people
25 who are coming out of the public school

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 system who are going to college, who
3 are productive young people.

4 It's -- while the numbers are
5 high, we can't overlook the fact that
6 many, many of our leaders in this city
7 came out public school, many of them
8 are coming out of public school and
9 going to colleges and universities,
10 and the School District should
11 highlight that, as was talked about
12 yesterday, the positives that are
13 happening in the public school system.

14 It doesn't mean that we don't
15 fight and request and argue for more
16 resources to meet those challenges
17 that are more difficult to deal with,
18 that we have the funds for.

19 But I want to speak on behalf
20 of those young people who are in
21 school, who are doing a good job, who
22 are learning, and will go on to be
23 productive citizens.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
25 you.

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2 MR. BRADY: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

4 Again, the committee will stand in

5 recess until 1:30. Thank you.

6 DR. JONES: Thank you.

7 MR. BRADY: Thank you, ma'am.

8 (Proceedings stand in recess

9 at 12:20 p.m.)

10 (Proceedings resume at

11 2:17 p.m.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: The

13 Committee of the Whole is now back in

14 session.

15 I believe our first witness is

16 Jerry Jordan.

17 (Witness comes forward.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good

19 afternoon, welcome.

20 MR. JORDAN: Good afternoon.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Your

23 testimony is rather lengthy. If you

24 would like to abbreviate it, we'll give

25 a copy of it to the stenographer and it

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59

2 will be transcribed in full.

3 MR. JORDAN: Okay.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: But
5 it's your call, whatever you want to
6 do.

7 MR. JORDAN: What I will do is,
8 I will skip through -- I will skip
9 portions of it --

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Very
11 well.

12 MR. JORDAN: -- for the sake of
13 brevity. And since it will be in the
14 record in its entirety, that would be
15 fine.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
17 you.

18 Please identify yourself for
19 the record and proceed with your
20 testimony.

21 MR. JORDAN: My name is Jerry
22 Jordan. I'm the President of the
23 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

24 Good afternoon, Councilwoman
25 Verna and Councilmembers. I'm pleased

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 to be speaking to you today on behalf
3 of the PFT's 16,000 members.

4 Our dedicated teachers,
5 nurses, counselors, librarians,
6 classroom assistants, and support
7 staff believe in public education.
8 They believe good schools with
9 qualified teachers and staff, adequate
10 and equitable funding and well-rounded
11 educational opportunities are the path
12 to putting children on the path to
13 healthy, productive lives. But they
14 also believe that education is about
15 more than test scores, adequate yearly
16 progress, and dropout rates.

17 To PFT members, education is
18 about children, some with complex
19 social, educational, and physical
20 needs. PFT members believe that as a
21 community, we must address all of
22 these needs to develop young men and
23 women who can envision futures that
24 are both meaningful and attainable.
25 We know you share this belief.

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2 PFT members work hard to serve
3 students' needs and improve academic
4 achievement, yet they often feel
5 they're hindered by policies that
6 emphasize rote learning, testing, and
7 meaningless paperwork at the expense
8 of programs that do not make kids want
9 to come to school.

10 During a recent visit to a
11 conference of high school, a PFT
12 member asked: How can with say we
13 care about cutting the dropout rate
14 when the District cuts the very
15 programs that keep kids interested,
16 motivated, and engaged in school? Her
17 comments are echoed throughout the
18 School District, where many art and
19 music programs have been eliminated,
20 many school libraries are closed, and
21 choirs, bands, clubs, school
22 newspapers, and other activities have
23 been curtailed.

24 If we listen to the voices of
25 the teachers and support staff on the

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 front lines of education, they would
3 advise us to offer students a broad
4 educational program that teaches
5 students to think creatively explore
6 their talents, and get involved in
7 school activities that prepare them
8 for jobs and college.

9 We have been encouraged in
10 recent years by increased public
11 support for Philadelphia's schools.
12 Since 2000, a strong coalition of
13 parents, students, and community
14 leaders has joined the PFT in calling
15 on legislators and policy-makers to
16 focus resources in schools and in
17 classrooms where learning occurs. The
18 community is clear and unified about
19 the specific resources schools need:

20 Early childhood education
21 programs that target at-risk three-
22 and four-year-old children and prepare
23 them for kindergarten;

24 Small classes taught by
25 certified teachers who can give

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59

2 students individual attention;

3 Safe schools with high

4 standards for conduct and consistent

5 enforcement of rules;

6 Well-stocked school libraries

7 in every school staffed by certified

8 librarians who can instill a love of

9 reading and guide students in the

10 pursuit of college;

11 Middle-grade programs that

12 identify and support students who are

13 struggling and at risk of dropping out

14 of school;

15 A relevant curriculum;

16 Technical and career training

17 and other creative high school

18 opportunities to help students explore

19 their individual talents and prepare

20 them to join the workforce or attend

21 college;

22 The highest-achieving school

23 districts have these resources, and

24 it's time that all Philadelphia

25 schools have them too. Our schools

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 have made tremendous progress. Over
3 the past few years, academic
4 achievement is rising, and good things
5 are happening throughout the District.

6 Teachers and staff are helping
7 to broaden students' learning
8 opportunities too, and often, their
9 success are overlooked. You may have
10 heard about:

11 Overbrook High School's
12 victory in the State mock-trial
13 competition;

14 Or Bridesburg Elementary
15 School being awarded the National
16 Center for Urban School Transformation
17 Excellence and Urban Education Award;

18 Or Masterman School being
19 ranked in the top 100 schools in the
20 United States;

21 Or Pollack Elementary School
22 being named a blue-ribbon school by
23 the U.S. Department of Education;

24 Or West Philadelphia High
25 School's Automotive and Technology

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 Academy receiving the National
3 Automotive Technician Education
4 Foundation Training certification;
5 Or the Baldi School team
6 capturing the National Academic League
7 City Championship.

8 And let's not forget the 61
9 exemplary teachers who were honored
10 last week by the Lenbach Foundation
11 and those who will be honored tomorrow
12 night at the Celebration of
13 Excellence.

14 These are the signs that many
15 schools are thriving despite austere
16 budgets and an increasing emphasis on
17 testing.

18 Yes, schools are improving,
19 but we are not where we should be.

20 And I am going to skip,
21 Council President, and close out this
22 testimony...

23 I just want to spend a few
24 minutes before closing to talk about
25 the need for better funding for our

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 schools. None of the programs that I
3 stated earlier can be implemented
4 without additional funding.

5 This year, the PFT joined the
6 Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign,
7 a statewide coalition that has lobbied
8 the General Assembly to change the way
9 schools are funded in Pennsylvania.
10 Governor Rendell proposed increasing
11 the State's education subsidy by
12 nearly 6 percent this year based on
13 the legislators' costing-out study,
14 which determined the actual cost of
15 educating every child to State
16 standards.

17 In Philadelphia, the
18 costing-out study determined that it
19 would cost another \$5,000 per student
20 per year, or \$14,925 a year, to help
21 every Philadelphia student become
22 proficient in reading, math, and
23 science.

24 Governor Rendell's education
25 budget represents a significant first

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 step to fixing the State's education
3 funding formula, and it is important
4 in two critical areas.

5 First, he proposed enacting a
6 comprehensive education funding system
7 for Pennsylvania for the first time
8 since 1991, and he proposed funding it
9 fully by the time he leaves office in
10 2011.

11 Philadelphia's fortunate to
12 have a mayor who is deeply concerned
13 about raising graduation rates, a
14 governor who has proposed a
15 significant ramping-up of state
16 education funding, and community
17 members who are joining in the call
18 for increased school resources
19 invested where it counts, at the
20 school level.

21 Then there are those who work
22 on the front lines of education, the
23 dedicated teachers and support staff,
24 both instructional and non-
25 instructional, who deserve

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2 recognition, respect, and to have
3 their voices heard. They come to work
4 every day, sometimes in extremely
5 challenging circumstances. They are
6 fighting a battle for the future of
7 our students and, indeed, for the
8 future of this city.

9 I urge City Council to help
10 the Pennsylvania School Funding
11 Campaign advocate for passage of the
12 Governor's education budget this
13 spring and to use your oversight to
14 ensure that new state funds are used
15 to improve conditions in classrooms
16 and for programs proven to raise
17 achievement. The time to improve our
18 schools is now.

19 Thank you for your work and
20 for your continuing commitment to
21 improving the future for
22 Philadelphia's children.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
25 you very much.

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2 On your first page, you spoke
3 about a PFT member indicating how we
4 can say we care about cutting the
5 dropout rate when the District cuts
6 the very programs that keep kids
7 interested, motivated, and engaged in
8 school.

9 You further go on to say that
10 this PFT member's comments are echoed
11 throughout the School District where
12 many art and music programs have been
13 eliminated.

14 Yesterday, we heard testimony,
15 and the testimony was that, as I
16 understood it anyway, that every
17 school would have art and music, or
18 art or music, and it would be a
19 requirement.

20 Are you familiar with that?

21 MR. JORDAN: I am, Council
22 President Verna. That is an initiative
23 that the School Reform Commission has
24 mandated during this budget cycle. I
25 am talking in my testimony about what

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2 actually exists now.

3 And the SRC is saying that in
4 September, all schools are going to be
5 required to have those programs.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well,
7 the issue is that we're dealing with a
8 budget for next year; we're not dealing
9 for the budget today. I just wanted to
10 make certain that I was not, I guess,
11 not too clear on what this member was
12 saying and what we heard yesterday.
13 But as long as you're telling us that
14 that will be certainly in the budget
15 for next year. You agree with that?

16 MR. JORDAN: I can only tell
17 you that the SRC has recommended that
18 those positions be present.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.

20 MR. JORDAN: I don't have the
21 authority to --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
23 Right. But I understood, and I assume
24 everybody did, that it would be in
25 every school, and it would be art and

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2 music, or music or art, and would be a
3 requirement, and they felt that that
4 was definitely going to be in the
5 budget.

6 MR. JORDAN: That is my
7 understanding. I was here yesterday
8 during the presentation by the School
9 District.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay,
11 fine.

12 MR. JORDAN: However, what I
13 spoke about was what currently existed
14 and has been existing for a number of
15 years in the School District, that
16 schools did not provide art or music
17 instruction to all students.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So
19 we're on the right track and we are
20 making improvements?

21 MR. JORDAN: I hope so.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilwoman Blackwell.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good

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2 afternoon. We say thank you. It's
3 always a pleasure to be here with you.
4 And thank you for your leadership at
5 the helm of the PFT.

6 MR. JORDAN: Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We are
8 really concerned. I think the most
9 disappointing thing of all is, after so
10 many years that we've all been
11 involved, we still don't have uniform
12 teaching at uniform grades -- not just
13 between Charter and public schools, but
14 across the board, where teachers are
15 still trying to run off materials,
16 trying to buy materials, trying to
17 gather materials.

18 And we still don't have, in
19 spite of the testing and the time
20 restraints and us worrying about that
21 -- all that that brings on, we still
22 don't have a uniform education across
23 the City in every grade. And as long
24 as that doesn't happen, we're going to
25 have problems with children learning

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2 for all the reasons, whether it be
3 neighborhood, whether it be their
4 ethnic background, all of those things
5 will play in.

6 And, obviously, I'm sure you
7 agree with me that that's the reality
8 of what we're dealing with even now.

9 MR. JORDAN: Yes, that is the
10 reality.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And so
12 we wanted to thank you for your
13 leadership and always extend our hand
14 in partnership to what you think we
15 should do and what you think will help
16 improve education.

17 Yesterday, I mentioned Ritalin
18 and behavior-altering drugs; I always
19 do and always will, God willing. And
20 we'll see what we can do.

21 Thank you, Mr. Jordan.

22 MR. JORDAN: Thank you,
23 Councilwoman Blackwell.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: The
25 Chair recognizes Councilman Jones.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good

3 afternoon.

4 MR. JORDAN: Good afternoon.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: It was good

6 to read in your testimony that

7 Overbrook High School's mock trials

8 championship was recognized, and I

9 appreciate the work that your

10 membership put into that.

11 It is sometimes distressing

12 when I hear from groups like that. A

13 year ago, when they were in a similar

14 situation, where, because of cutbacks,

15 they didn't have enough paper to copy

16 their testimony and preparation and

17 notes, and so they had to have a

18 fundraiser to raise the money for

19 paper, which was interesting to me.

20 You cut off some of your

21 testimony and made it brief. I kind

22 of get a flashback in school that if I

23 did that and cut it off and said that

24 I want to abbreviate my book report, I

25 would have gotten in trouble, but

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2 that's okay.

3 MR. JORDAN: I can take a hint
4 from the President of Council.

5 (Laughter.)

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh, okay,
7 that was a good move. Oh, okay.

8 But I point that out because
9 you mentioned that you had an
10 opportunity to go to a school in the
11 Lehigh Valley, where their vocational
12 career paths were solid.

13 I don't know if you heard my
14 comments in testimony earlier about
15 green jobs and opportunities like
16 that, and I wanted to kind of let you
17 elaborate on the record a little bit
18 about the Lehigh Valley visit.

19 MR. JORDAN: Thank you,
20 Councilman.

21 The Lehigh Valley School was a
22 school that was developed in
23 partnership with the community
24 leaders, and they were able to sit
25 down and determine the kinds of jobs

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2 that the Lehigh Valley employers would
3 need over the next decade.

4 And as a result of those
5 conversations, they then developed the
6 programs that young people are able to
7 study at the Lehigh Valley Career and
8 Technical School.

9 And it's been a very
10 successful school because young people
11 choose the course of study that
12 they're interested in, and they're
13 hired in their community by the
14 companies that will employ them with
15 the skills that they have.

16 Many of the young people are
17 able to get dual credit, credit for
18 high school and for college, and leave
19 with enough credits to have an
20 associate's degree. I learned that
21 many begin working in their skilled
22 area, and, after a few years, may
23 decide that they want more education
24 and will then go back to college for
25 another two years to earn a bachelor's

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2 degree.

3 It's a program that prepares
4 young people for the jobs that are
5 going to be available in their
6 community. And I'm suggesting in my
7 testimony that it's something that we
8 need to do. We need to look at how
9 our high schools are functioning.

10 I know that yesterday there
11 were some questions about -- and I
12 think from you -- regarding the high
13 schools and the graduation rate. And
14 in order to increase our graduation
15 rate, we need to offer children the
16 opportunities to pursue a course of
17 study that they're interested in.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: I appreciate
19 that, and I didn't want that cut out of
20 testimony. I wanted that kind of
21 highlighted on the record.

22 Another interesting part that
23 you talked about was at-risk young
24 people. Councilman Goode and other
25 Councilpeople here cited startling

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2 statistics as to attainment levels
3 at-risk young people have or the lack
4 thereof.

5 And you mention in your
6 testimony, which you didn't put on the
7 record, verbally some of the
8 coalitions that needed to occur from
9 your vantage point and from your
10 membership's vantage point, on being
11 able to: A) keep more kids in school
12 and increase graduation rates; and B)
13 reduce some of the impediments such as
14 teen pregnancy and other issues.

15 So could you elaborate on that
16 a bit for me on the record.

17 MR. JORDAN: Yes. Children who
18 are in foster care, children who --
19 teens who are pregnant and children
20 having a lot of other issues, we know
21 that those are children who are very
22 likely to drop out of school.

23 So if we know it, why don't we
24 develop a program in order to make
25 sure that those children are

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2 constantly supported, constantly
3 supported, because they face a lot of
4 challenges.

5 And rather than -- we can't
6 continue to act as if they're not
7 there. We have to focus the social
8 services in that area in order for
9 those young people to know that they
10 have the support at the school level
11 so that they will be able to be
12 successful.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: And my final
14 question, which I'm out of time and
15 I'll maybe get another opportunity:
16 The condition by which your workforce,
17 your membership, have to deal with
18 in-class violence, I don't see that
19 here, and it was a big series of
20 articles about that about six months to
21 a year ago.

22 In fact, one of the persons,
23 the teacher, went to Millersville with
24 me who had his neck broke, and I
25 wanted to find out if that condition

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2 generally has gotten better. Is there
3 more security or less in the public
4 schools for teachers and
5 administrators?

6 MR. JORDAN: First of all, let
7 me say that schools are some of the
8 safest places for kids.

9 But having said that, the
10 example that you cite of the serious
11 incident that happened to Mr. Byrd
12 does occur, and there is a section in
13 my testimony calling for better safety
14 measures and better interventions.

15 I, first of all, believe very
16 strongly that if we -- we can begin
17 the safety and intervention by making
18 sure that every child is able to read
19 by 3rd grade, because if a child is
20 able to read, that youngster is less
21 apt to become disruptive as he or she
22 reaches the middle years, they are
23 able to work independently, they are
24 able to work in groups, they're able
25 to go to that library if it's open

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2 with a librarian, and to work and to
3 discover so much information.

4 But too many young people are
5 not successful readers. And as a
6 result of it, I think a lot of
7 disruptive behavior is the way that
8 some adolescents try to cover up their
9 lack of ability to read and to work
10 with others.

11 But we need to make sure that
12 we have an adequate number of adults
13 in buildings. In the case of Mr. Byrd
14 and that incident, there were no
15 non-teaching assistants assigned to
16 that building. The hallway was empty
17 during the passing classes, and so the
18 young men who were playing in the
19 hallway when Mr. Byrd came out of his
20 classroom, had there been a non-
21 teaching assistant patrolling the area
22 to say to those youngsters, "Why are
23 you in the hall? you should be in
24 class? Where's your note?" I think
25 that that would have been preventable.

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2 But we really have to do more
3 to get out the disruptive children.
4 And that is not a large number, but
5 there are a few who are disruptive,
6 who aren't able to follow the rules.

7 And I say in my testimony that
8 we don't believe that schools should
9 be treated like prisons. And children
10 are children; they're not prisoners.
11 We've got to try to make sure that we
12 do all of the things to intervene
13 before a disruptive child is forced
14 out of the school.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Less
16 assaults, more assaults on teachers and
17 administrators?

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
19 Councilman, Councilman.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
21 Madam President.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
23 Councilman Greenlee.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
25 you, Madam President.

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2 I actually was going to ask a
3 very similar question to Councilman
4 Jones's last question, but maybe just
5 I can add one more on a very general
6 note.

7 Do you see -- you talk about
8 some of the things in improving school
9 safety that you think should be done.
10 Have you seen, in your opinion, the
11 District moving towards some of those?
12 Are you -- do you see improvement in
13 working on those issues or not?

14 MR. JORDAN: No, I don't. As
15 the testimony that was given to you
16 yesterday, that there is a task force
17 that will be coming out with
18 recommendations.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Right.

20 MR. JORDAN: So I can't say
21 that I have seen that, and I don't know
22 what the recommendations will be.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So it
24 might depend on what the -- okay,
25 that's fair. All right. Thank you.

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2 Thank you, Madam President.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

4 You're welcome.

5 The Chair recognizes

6 Councilman Green.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,

8 Madam Chair.

9 Good afternoon, Jerry.

10 MR. JORDAN: Good afternoon.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: During the
12 School District's testimony, I asked a
13 couple of questions relating to
14 conflict resolution, civic values,
15 shared values, right and wrong, as
16 Councilwoman Tasco put it.

17 And the questions really
18 related to whether or not there is any
19 way to quantitatively measure the way
20 we do on PSSAs for math and reading,
21 et cetera, how to quantitatively
22 measure whether or not the School
23 District is -- or, you know, the
24 children of our being imparted those
25 values or truly understand the

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2 precepts of conflict resolution, et
3 cetera.

4 And I just -- I don't know if
5 you heard that or any of that
6 testimony.

7 MR. JORDAN: No, I did not.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Oh, okay.

9 So the premise for me was that we --
10 for each student, we have records on
11 how they're doing in math and reading
12 and attendance and other measures,
13 which can tell us whether or not, by
14 6th grade, whether or not the child's
15 likely to graduate from high school,
16 likely to do other things.

17 And we described the core
18 mission. I think the School District
19 and I agreed that the core mission, if
20 you boil it down, of the School
21 District or the school system is to
22 produce productive citizens.

23 And so my question is -- and
24 you don't have to answer it today, but
25 if you have thoughts, that would be

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2 great.

3 Can you think of ways we can
4 measure and have data on how
5 successful the School District is in
6 imparting the kind of values that
7 would, in fact, reduce school
8 violence, like tests that determine
9 whether or not children truly
10 understand conflict resolution, not
11 just their grade in that course, or
12 whether or not they have -- you know,
13 share values that society in general
14 holds, like you should respect your
15 elders and respect your teachers and
16 not talk back and things like that.

17 Any thoughts about that?

18 MR. JORDAN: Well, I would
19 first say that I think that the
20 District does have the ability to
21 quantify some of that in that we
22 mention in our testimony -- and I heard
23 the District say a bit about it
24 yesterday -- that one of the warning
25 signs of a potential dropout is

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2 youngsters who are having behavioral
3 problems, children who are poor
4 readers, children who are poor when it
5 comes to math.

6 So when youngsters violate a
7 school rule, there is something as
8 simple as a pink slip that is written
9 by the adult who sees what it is that
10 the child has done improperly, and the
11 child -- the incident is discussed
12 with the child by an adult and many
13 times with a parent as well. So --
14 and those records are being
15 maintained.

16 Insofar as drilling down
17 deeper into your question, I think
18 that that's an example -- what you're
19 asking is an example of the kinds of
20 conversations that counselors in
21 schools have with children and with
22 their parents in order to help
23 children deal with issues to also
24 reach out to the families and so
25 social service agencies to help.

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2 And at this time, it is very
3 difficult for counselors to be able to
4 do that kind of work that you're
5 asking for because of the limited
6 number of counselors in our elementary
7 schools, and some have a large number
8 of students.

9 There is only one counselor in
10 that building, and many of those
11 counselors teach a portion of the day,
12 leaving less time for them to deal
13 with a situation such as the one that
14 you described.

15 And in our high schools, the
16 counselors also have a large caseload,
17 a lot of paperwork. They have --

18 (Timer bell rings.)

19 MR. JORDAN: You know, if
20 anyone had to fill out a college
21 application with a child recently,
22 there's a lot of time that goes into
23 doing that, and there are just but so
24 many hours a day for counselor to be
25 able to do all of the things that he or

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2 she is asked to do in order to, you
3 know, fulfill the -- their job duties
4 and responsibilities.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So you think
6 increasing the number of counselors
7 would move us towards that --

8 MR. JORDAN: That is one
9 recommendation.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: My time's
11 up. Thank you.

12 (Councilwoman Blackwell
13 assumes position of Committee Chair.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're
15 welcome.

16 Are there any other questions
17 for Mr. Jordan?

18 (No further questions.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you, as always.

21 MR. JORDAN: Thank you,
22 Councilwoman Blackwell.

23 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
24 witness is Paul Weeks.

25 (Witness comes forward.)

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2 MR. WEEKS: Good afternoon,
3 Madam President Anna Verna in absence
4 and Councilwoman Blackwell,
5 Councilwoman Marian Tasco, Councilman
6 Jones, Councilman Green, Councilman
7 Greenlee, and all the other
8 Councilpersons present.

9 I also want to give a
10 (indiscernible) to Mrs. Heidi Ramirez,
11 SRC Board Member, and also Dr. Laurie
12 Shore, Office of Education for
13 Philadelphia.

14 I promise not to bore you all.
15 I will be very brief.

16 The last question that was
17 asked, you know, we had to be really
18 proactive with this budget, and we
19 don't want the Council to be a rubber
20 stamp to what the SRC Board is doing.
21 We want to inform you with these
22 testimonies, because the two things
23 that people need more than food or
24 water is information and inspiration,
25 and we want to inspire you all,

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2 because out of the \$2.3 billion
3 budget, 40 percent of it we account
4 for in the City, \$889 million, and not
5 even 1 percent of that goes to class
6 size

7 And my whole testimony wraps
8 around class size first. And,
9 Mrs. Blackwell, you know -- you've
10 been a teacher -- that class size is
11 crucial. I think class size would be
12 a proactive solution to any classroom
13 problems. The larger the classroom
14 you have, the more problems you have

15 And I would just like to
16 highlight a few things in my
17 testimony, A, B and C. I used the
18 pyramids of Egypt as a prime example
19 of, if you're going to build, you have
20 to build class size first. You put
21 the heaviest weight on the hardest
22 foundation. And still, we are
23 mystified and marvel by the longevity
24 of our Egyptian pyramids.

25 And if you build class size

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2 first, you will get A, B and C. You
3 will highlight the best and the
4 brightest of our future leaders. You
5 will highlight the middle-of-the-road
6 children who, however, have great
7 potential. You will get C out of
8 that. You will get those who are
9 slowly cerebrally developing children,
10 you will get to highlight those and
11 look at the phonics, reading, math.
12 And tutors will be implemented.

13 In closing, for class size
14 first, you open up the windows of the
15 hearts and the eyes of some of our
16 young people who are dealing with some
17 serious social issues: death, divorce,
18 a broken home, or even abuse.

19 I give you Exhibit A of this,
20 because we want to build a tax base
21 here in Philadelphia. We want to be
22 the next great city, as they
23 projected.

24 Penn Alexander at 42nd and
25 Spruce, that is the model for how we

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2 should try to build our class size
3 first. I toured Penn Alexander, and I
4 spoke to the principal, and
5 immediately, I went outside and I
6 looked at the properties.

7 I seen two houses for sale
8 right down the street, at 42nd and
9 Spruce. One said the owner was
10 selling it, and I called the number.
11 He wants \$595,000 for a rowhome. Why?
12 Because it is attributed to Penn
13 Alexander. People are running to that
14 district because of the job that they
15 are doing at that facility.

16 I went down the street and I
17 called the next house, a rowhouse, a
18 three-story rowhouse, sold by a
19 Realtor. \$620,000 for a rowhome
20 because it is in correlation to Penn
21 Alexander

22 And I believe if we have the
23 willpower, if we really have the
24 willpower to counteract dropout rates,
25 to counteract this abusive situation,

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2 which is a societal ill that's
3 spilling into our schools, that we
4 ought to really, really highlight
5 class size first, because we know that
6 when we build class size first and the
7 rumor gets out, people will flock to
8 that jurisdiction, they will flock to
9 that district, they will flock back to
10 Philadelphia. And we all know that it
11 is a win/win factor for all of us.

12 I thank you for your time and
13 I appreciate it.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you very much for your fine testimony.

16 Are there any questions for
17 Mr. Weeks?

18 (No questions.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
20 you very much.

21 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
22 witness is Sheila Simmons.

23 (Witness comes forward.)

24 MS. SIMMONS: Good afternoon.
25 I'm Sheila Simmons, Education Director

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 of Public Citizens for Children and
3 Youth. Thank you for this opportunity
4 to comment on the proposed education
5 budget.

6 I begin by noting PCCY
7 supports the priorities laid out by
8 the School Reform Commission: smaller
9 class size, music and art for every
10 school, more nurses, counselors and
11 librarians. We also support the
12 District's efforts to reshape our high
13 schools so that they are smaller, more
14 adequately staffed, and able to
15 respond appropriately to the needs of
16 the City's youth.

17 In the fall of 2007, we were a
18 school community shocked with the
19 sudden burden of a deficit which grew
20 to \$181 million on the futures of our
21 children. A loud call for both more
22 accountability, and yet again, more
23 funds went out to all in a position to
24 hear it, including this body, the
25 Philadelphia City Council.

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2 We are thankful that you heard
3 it and responded with the public
4 education reinvestment bill, moving
5 nearly \$20 million a year over the
6 next five years to schools in an
7 accompanying resolution dated October
8 25, 2007, seeking greater
9 accountability, and for that we are
10 grateful. You are to be congratulated
11 for your prompt response.

12 It was an important step we
13 need you to take more.

14 Our financial picture has
15 improved since then, although we still
16 pay today for the financial missteps
17 of yesterday, and we hope you will
18 call for the District to be more
19 proactive in more accurately
20 determining student enrollment,
21 teacher retirement impact, and the
22 cost of contracting out on finances
23 and on the District's own capacity to
24 perform public work.

25 Philadelphia has the largest

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 class sizes in the state. It is time
3 we come up with a plan to not only
4 name it as a priority but to put in
5 place a plan for it to happen and
6 promote ways to fund it from local,
7 state, and federal sources

8 We are pleased that some
9 schools will get smaller class sizes
10 in the proposal before you, but we
11 need it for all of our schools

12 We urge you to identify the
13 cost of having all elementary schools
14 have small class size in the early
15 grades and that you help support this
16 initiative. We would ask that instead
17 of eliminating 151 teaching positions
18 to serve 3,303 fewer students, why we
19 don't take the opportunity to bring
20 smaller class sizes to 3,303 students

21 In the area of school safety,
22 the District stated 8 percent
23 reduction in its 40 most challenging
24 schools comes as a relief, but
25 clearly, we need the joint efforts of

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 the City and School District to
3 support the initiatives to improve
4 school climate. This may indeed be a
5 good opportunity for the new Shares
6 Services Task Force. From more
7 behavioral-health programs, to extra
8 supports from DHS for children in
9 care, there is much that can be done
10 to improve the environment in our
11 schools.

12 We support the District's
13 single-school cultural initiative and
14 have worked with the School District
15 to target positive behavior supports
16 as an integral part of this model.

17 Improving the environment in
18 our schools means increasing the
19 adults who can work with kids and
20 developing a coherent, consistent
21 approach within all of our schools.
22 It is a joint responsibility of
23 citizens, community groups, the City,
24 and the School District.

25 We commend the District for

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 its announced move to reshape
3 alternative education, including
4 reissuing contracts for disciplinary
5 schools. We need more clarity and
6 transparency as well as common sense
7 when dealing with different behaviors.

8 We should make sure that we
9 only send youth to disciplinary
10 schools when it is absolutely
11 necessary and that the contractors for
12 these schools meet agreed-upon
13 expectations. This is the type of
14 action that's needed in a district
15 where every dime and every student
16 counts. If the District is moving
17 forward with the multiple-provider
18 model, we need to take financial
19 impact as well as performance into
20 consideration.

21 For five years, the private
22 providers have insisted that their
23 schools deserve a higher per-pupil fee
24 because they were taking on the
25 lowest-performing students in the

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 District. This has become a tired
3 argument. After five years, at some
4 point, their students should no longer
5 be the lowest performing.

6 Do what works based on data,
7 reports, and surveys, many of which
8 have already been taken and the
9 information is known.

10 Of the 70 public schools in
11 corrective action or considered
12 failing schools, 16 are managed by
13 outside providers. As disturbing as
14 this is, there are some schools that
15 have shown progress, and PCCY supports
16 continuing them when schools and
17 communities believe they are well
18 served by their managers and the data
19 finds strong improvement

20 But such schools are in the
21 distinct minority. We have long
22 encouraged a school-by-school approach
23 to enacting reforms and deciding
24 management structure. After
25 establishing a task force and

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 discussing RFPs, we are hopeful that
3 the District has decided to indeed
4 take this approach.

5 In terms of resource
6 allocation, we support the next tier
7 of priorities named by the School
8 Reform Commission for nurses and
9 counselors. We support these and urge
10 that you insist that educational
11 programs that have a direct impact on
12 classrooms are protected from budget
13 cuts.

14 Our high schools are also in
15 dire need of attention. While test
16 scores have improved five years in a
17 row in the lower grades, as mentioned
18 yesterday, this is not the case for
19 11th grade test-takers.

20 High schools under EMO
21 management -- I believe there are
22 three -- have been shown to fare as
23 bad or worse than District high
24 schools. Students themselves have
25 long called for small schools in their

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 neighborhoods, for more manageable
3 atmosphere, more personalized
4 environment. These schools have been
5 shown to be particularly important for
6 disconnected students in large urban
7 environments.

8 Yet in some neighborhoods,
9 creating small schools has meant
10 putting a wall down the middle of a
11 big school instead of a from-the-
12 ground small school, as is often the
13 case in Center City neighborhoods

14 Choosing a small school is not
15 really a choice for families in our
16 neighborhoods. We do not oppose small
17 schools that have select criteria, but
18 the need now is to create and support
19 small schools in our regular
20 neighborhoods without advanced
21 criteria, except the belief that these
22 children should have a chance for a
23 good education and a safe environment
24 too.

25 As Research for Action wrote

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 in a recent report, today, within the
3 School District of Philadelphia, there
4 is only one choice: the neighborhood
5 high school for the 51 percent of
6 rising 9th-graders who try to exercise
7 choice but are not accepted into any
8 of their preferred choices.

9 Finally, we look forward to
10 City Council's full support of the
11 Governor's education budget.
12 Following the legislature's
13 costing-out study, we know the entire
14 state is far behind on what is needed
15 to pay for a quality public education.

16 The study found that 474 of
17 the State's 501 districts are
18 underfunded; Philadelphia to the tune
19 of \$5,000 per student. We ask you to
20 help lead the movement for a major
21 revision of the funding formula so
22 that children across the state can
23 benefit from the beginning of a
24 six-year commitment to adequately fund
25 public schools across the state We

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 also urge that you explore every
3 possible opportunity to increase the
4 City's support for it is schools.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much.

8 Are there any questions for
9 Miss Simmons?

10 Councilman Jones?

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just want
12 to say your professional history of
13 being a newspaper reporter shows in
14 your testimony, and it was succinct and
15 helpful. And what I mean by that is, a
16 lot of times, as a freshman, you know,
17 you get a lot of testimony, but it says
18 and highlights what the problem is as
19 opposed to what you point towards
20 solutions. And in this testimony, as I
21 read through it, I got a lot of the
22 answers as to the questions posed by
23 you, and I appreciate it.

24 One question I do have is --
25 and I keep hearing this about this

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 creating a single-school culture. And
3 I'm going to be honest with you, I'm a
4 little lost about what that really
5 means to you and others. So help me
6 to understand that.

7 MS. SIMMONS: From my
8 understanding, it is the School
9 District's effort to get all schools to
10 think pretty much and act as if we're
11 all -- as if all the schools' divisions
12 departments, and staffs are all on the
13 same page.

14 What it tries to do is to come
15 up with similar interventions for
16 academics behavior and climate; and if
17 you address one, you know, you're
18 often addressing all three. And PCCY
19 has really been working with the
20 School District and others in the
21 community to apply a positive behavior
22 support model to the behavioral
23 component of single-school culture.

24 And it is scientifically shown
25 to not only -- not only to decrease

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 incidents in schools but to also
3 increase academic scores. And the
4 reason for that is, the less time that
5 it takes dealing with disruptions in
6 classrooms, the more time that you
7 have on task, so there's more time for
8 students to learn.

9 An example of positive
10 behavior support often involves just
11 the way you speak to children. A lot
12 of our kids don't hear anything
13 positive all day for every day, for
14 years in their life.

15 And so, sometimes if you tell
16 a problem student, instead of saying,
17 "Don't hit the kid next to you," and
18 instead, you say, "Keep your hands to
19 yourself," there's kind of like a
20 subtle difference in it that kind of
21 has a different psychological effect
22 on them.

23 And Mr. Jordan from the PFT
24 talked about the pink slips that kids
25 get. Philadelphia uses -- this is

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 considered like a control tactic.
3 Every time you do something wrong,
4 we're going to pink-slip you, we're
5 going to suspend you, we're going to
6 expel you. But a lot of times, if you
7 deal with these interventions early
8 on, you won't have to get to that
9 point.

10 Positive behavior support also
11 encourages walking around with a
12 notepad and giving notes to the kids
13 for doing something right. So when
14 they do something right, you recognize
15 it. You set up a lot of opportunities
16 for kids to identify positive behavior
17 and to learn appropriate behavior.
18 And they have to learn it and they
19 have to practice it every day.

20 Not all of our kids come to
21 school ready to learn, not all of them
22 come to school with the behaviors that
23 we'd like to, but if the school
24 addresses it and establishes
25 agreed-upon expectations, everyone

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 knows what they are. You're awarded
3 when you follow them, you're dealt
4 with when they're not, and you follow
5 it, then it tends to have a better
6 impact on the entire school --
7 academics, behavior, and climate.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
9 I want to try to be as
10 succinct in my questioning as you are
11 in your answers, and that was great.
12 Thank you.

13 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you,
14 Councilman.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
16 Councilman Greenlee? I'm sorry.
17 Councilman Green.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
19 Madam Chair.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you. We do know the difference.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: It's not the
23 first time that's happened to us.

24 (Laughter.)

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59

2 for your testimony.

3 Are you saying the school --
4 like in -- when I was in elementary
5 school, I didn't get a blue slip for
6 good behavior but, you know, there was
7 a board, our names were on it, I got a
8 star or a -- is that not happening?

9 MS. SIMMONS: I'm not sure. I
10 would think that different schools have
11 different systems to reward behavior.

12 The difference is that it's
13 not embedded as a system-wide
14 approach.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

16 MS. SHAPIRO: And I think
17 that's the difference, and that's one
18 of the things that we're encouraging.
19 We need the entire school system to say
20 that we need to come up with a reward
21 system to recognize the behaviors that
22 we like.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I understand
24 what you're saying. Let me ask a quick
25 question about the --

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2 MS. SIMMONS: I'm not sure. It
3 probably varies by school.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: A quick
5 question about the pink slips, and that
6 is: If you get a certain number of
7 pink slips, does that result in
8 disciplinary action?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: No? Okay.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

12 (Inaudible, off-mic.)

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. Well,
14 we don't have to agree on that.

15 MS. SIMMONS: I think a pink
16 slip means you're suspended.

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

18 MS. SHAPIRO: I could be wrong,
19 but...

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So a pink
21 slip is like you have counseling and
22 stuff, but I wonder if -- what you
23 suggested seemed like a very good idea,
24 which is, maybe there should be a blue
25 slip that cancels out a pink slip so

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 that, you know, your record is kind of
3 expunged of your bad behavior when you
4 do something that merits -- you know,
5 when you do something that's praise-
6 worthy.

7 MS. SIMMONS: Right. Well, I
8 think that what --

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So that the
10 focus isn't just on pink slips, but
11 there's also, you know, good-conduct
12 slips.

13 MS. SIMMONS: Right,
14 absolutely. There needs to be a
15 balance. You also have recognize
16 positive behavior, but you also have to
17 correct the negative behavior and then
18 encourage the kids to show them the
19 right way and then encourage them to
20 follow that.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I think what
22 you're saying makes sense. There
23 should be a systematic --

24 MS. SIMMONS: Absolutely.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- approach

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 to recognizing good behavior as well as
3 bad behavior so the records demonstrate
4 good conduct as well.

5 MS. SIMMONS: Absolutely.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Not just
7 about bad conduct.

8 MS. SIMMONS: And that's
9 actually a part of a national movement.
10 There's actually a national movement in
11 education towards more positive-
12 behavior supports, and it's also called
13 "positive-behavior intervention
14 supports."

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I just --

16 MS. SHAPIRO: The School
17 District is starting to move a little
18 towards that.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I just
20 wanted to recognize that point. I
21 think it's a good point.

22 Thank you very much.

23 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you.

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2 Are there any further
3 questions for Miss Simmons?

4 (No further questions.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you.

7 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you.

8 MR. MCPHERSON: Our next
9 witness is Helen Gym.

10 (Witnesses come forward.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
12 identify yourself for the record and
13 begin.

14 MR. WRIGHT: My name is Gerald
15 Wright. I'm a parent of two daughters
16 at John Story Jenks Elementary School
17 and also a member of Parents United for
18 Public Education.

19 And just before I really get
20 started with my testimony, I want to
21 say what Parents United for Public
22 Education is. We're an all-volunteer
23 citywide collective of public school
24 parents concerned about School
25 District budgets and how they reflect

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 achievement and accountability. We've
3 been successful with both bringing new
4 funds to schools and ensuring that
5 funding is dedicated toward the
6 initiatives that we as parents believe
7 in: reduce class size, art and music,
8 libraries, counselors, nurses, a
9 healthy food program for every child
10 at every school. Just kind of
11 introductory.

12 And, again, good afternoon.
13 My name is Gerald Wright. I'm a
14 parent of two daughters who attend the
15 John Story Jenks Elementary School and
16 a member of Parents United for Public
17 Education.

18 We believe that public
19 education can, and should be,
20 high-quality education. At the end of
21 the day, the majority of children in
22 Philadelphia will be educated through
23 the publicly-supported schools.

24 There are nearly 170,000
25 children enrolled with the School

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 District of Philadelphia. These
3 children can't wait five years for
4 reforms. They need our help today and
5 no later than the beginning of the
6 school year beginning in September
7 2008. We must challenge ourselves to
8 not fall victim to pretty processes
9 and eloquent diagrams. Our children
10 need improvement right away.

11 There are many things and
12 issues that the School District of
13 Philadelphia could do to improve
14 education for our children. However,
15 with limited time, I will only raise
16 three topics for your consideration.
17 Two of the three relate to hiring and
18 retaining quality teachers.

19 Earlier, you heard testimony
20 about small class sizes being the rock
21 upon which we -- or the hard surface
22 upon which we need to build, and we
23 believe that smaller class sizes is a
24 cornerstone of anything that we do to
25 improve education in Philadelphia, but

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 we can't do that if we do not recruit
3 quality teachers, retain those
4 teachers, and provide professional
5 development for them.

6 If teachers are the most
7 valuable asset that the School
8 District has in improving the quality
9 of learning for our children, why does
10 it appear that no pay increase is
11 budgeted for teachers in the 2008-2009
12 budget?

13 Ironically, we just hired a
14 new CEO for the School District of
15 Philadelphia, and for that slot, we
16 gave a 15 percent pay increase, from
17 \$275,000 to \$325,000 per year. There
18 is not a salary freeze at the
19 administrative level. We want to make
20 -- we are hopeful that there is not a
21 salary freeze for the line people who
22 must be at the front of building a
23 better learning environment for our
24 kids.

25 We should make sure that

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 teachers are valued and supported.
3 Essentially, as we make greater
4 demands for quality learning outcomes,
5 and as we spend more money than ever
6 before on education in Philadelphia,
7 it kind of appears that teachers, as a
8 percentage of those costs, is expected
9 to be less. I hope that
10 Councilmembers make certain that this
11 does not happen.

12 Without good teachers, there
13 can be no good learning outcomes for
14 our children.

15 This leads to my second topic.
16 Second, there appears to be
17 \$54 million in the budget for teacher
18 development. This does not include
19 costs associated with the Friday
20 afternoon teacher development sessions
21 that are so disruptive to parents.

22 \$54 million is a lot of money.
23 What is it spent on? Does this
24 \$54 million represent contracts? Is
25 this teacher development strategically

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 utilized to help recruit and retain
3 quality teachers or to lure teachers
4 with specialties such as advanced math
5 and science.

6 Finally, the School District
7 of Philadelphia has to see parent
8 engagement in a better light. While
9 there's been a great deal of
10 improvement in that area and a great
11 deal more done now to engage parents,
12 parents should be integral to the
13 budgeting process and should have some
14 input into any teacher contract
15 negotiated and perhaps should have
16 some input in looking at current
17 procurement vendor selection
18 processes.

19 What may be important to big
20 systems -- or what may not be
21 important to big systems like the
22 School District of Philadelphia, with
23 a \$2.3 billion budget, may be
24 extremely important to parents and to
25 the education of their children.

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2 Thank you for your time and
3 attention.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you.

6 REVEREND SIMMONS: My name is
7 Reverend Leroy Simmons. I am the
8 coordinator of the Germantown Clergy
9 Initiative, and I'm here and thankful
10 to be a part of this wonderful group,
11 the Parents United, although my
12 youngest child is 28 years old and
13 graduated from public schools, and I
14 did too and so did my son.

15 I'm here representing really
16 the more than 1400 children, parents,
17 and teachers and churches and
18 community members around Germantown
19 High School and to bring to your
20 attention something that -- you know,
21 I didn't plan to come down, so I
22 didn't write a lot of stuff down, but
23 from my heart.

24 One of the things that I found
25 in conversation just today, thinking

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 about it, it was in 1994 that
3 Mr. Hornbeck came up with the Children
4 Achieving Plan, and that Children
5 Achieving Plan, you know, those
6 children are now the 18- and
7 19-year-olds dropouts that we're
8 talking about. That Children
9 Achieving Plan, those children came
10 into kindergarten with high
11 expectations and through several
12 administrations and through several
13 budgets like this.

14 I want to thank you for
15 scrutinizing the budget now, and I
16 would appeal to you to be good
17 stewards of the money that is coming
18 in from the City and be good stewards
19 of the efforts towards education our
20 children.

21 We will never been never be a
22 first-class city with a second-rate
23 school district. So we need to move
24 forward and help these children
25 achieve, 'cause what they have

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 achieved so far -- just in Germantown
3 High School, 400 children come into
4 the school in 9th grade, and less than
5 a hundred graduate. Those children
6 that come into the school are reading
7 below basic. Seventy to 75 percent
8 are reading below basic throughout
9 Germantown High School's tenure, and
10 nearly 70 percent are doing math below
11 basic -- not at proficiency, not at
12 basic, but below basic. These
13 children are the dropouts we see in
14 the streets.

15 Councilman Curtis Jones asked
16 about the students involved in the
17 horrible incident with Mr. Byrd.
18 Mr. Byrd was a teacher that was loved
19 by the children there at Germantown
20 High School. He was a great teacher.
21 He was someone who ran plays on his
22 own time to help engage our children.
23 He was somebody who I saw walking
24 around with -- like a duck with little
25 ducklets, leading children around,

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2 taking pictures all over the
3 neighborhood. He enhanced them.

4 It was some students that had
5 gone to Boone and gotten out of Boone,
6 one the CEP schools that didn't really
7 develop those children, that had
8 gotten into the hallways. And like
9 Mr. Jordan said, there were no NTAs
10 because somebody came up with a
11 brilliant idea that NTAs cost too
12 much, let's just do SMAs, and they did
13 SMAs. The SMAs weren't there in the
14 hallways.

15 And these were students who
16 wasn't engaged emotionally at all in
17 this incident, ended up ending a
18 career of a wonderful teacher who was
19 making a difference.

20 In this budget, I don't see --
21 I know you've talked about and heard
22 some wonderful testimony about the CA2
23 schools. CA2 schools are the lowest-
24 performing schools in the School
25 District. They actually came up with

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 a plan and listed them in tiers. And
3 there's the first entire that might,
4 you know, with a little help, get into
5 yearly progress, you know, average
6 yearly progress.

7 And then there's Tier II
8 schools that, with some help, could
9 maybe get to Tier I and maybe with
10 another year of help could get to
11 average yearly progress.

12 And then there's the Tier III
13 schools. The Tier III schools --
14 everybody's talking about, you know,
15 we want to reduce -- we want to reduce
16 the dropout rate. There is zero money
17 in the budget for Germantown High
18 School, which is a CA2 Tier III
19 school.

20 What are we going to do to
21 move these children to a level where
22 they can at least achieve? Yeah,
23 there's some things that work. There
24 should be some votech stuff.

25 You know, when they get

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 exposed, like the children in West
3 Philly get exposed to auto mechanics,
4 they don't just fix cars; they develop
5 a whole new industry. They will
6 produce jobs. These are brilliant
7 children who don't get an opportunity.

8 And I -- you know, I know it's
9 not your total purview, but there is
10 nothing, I believe, more important
11 than looking out for our children.

12 When will we begin to put them
13 on the front burner as opposed to an
14 after-thought? When will we begin to
15 move our schools to the place where
16 they belong, our children to the place
17 where they belong? We have only got
18 money in the budget for security.

19 And I would ask that you
20 would -- there's some people in the
21 budget that I don't understand: the
22 BRT. The BRT is 85 people in the
23 budget. I don't know where that comes
24 from and who's spending the money on
25 that.

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2 There's million of dollars
3 involved with Mr. Butkovitz's office,
4 you know, and he does a good job. I
5 mean, I know the BRT collects the
6 taxes; I pay 'em myself, a lot of 'em.

7 But I think that the City --
8 you, in your brilliance and your --
9 I'm not kidding. Figure out a way to
10 take that burden off of the School
11 District, and that would increase, you
12 know, in these low-performing schools.
13 In Germantown High School, they
14 drafted a budget of \$92,600 for each
15 teacher. If we could get some of the
16 that money back from the BRT people,
17 if we can get some of that money back
18 from the controller's office people,
19 it would take some of the burden off
20 the school, and we could hire some
21 teachers to do some things.

22 I -- you know, I'm taking up a
23 lot of your time, Helen.

24 But I -- in ending, I
25 appreciate your scrutiny, but I would

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 ask that you would be good stewards of
3 this nearly \$900 million that you're
4 going to sign over to the School
5 District and look into some of these
6 contracts that seem to seep through
7 without good oversight, these
8 contracts that, you know, seem to get
9 into pockets of people who aren't
10 getting into our children's hearts and
11 minds.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
14 you.

15 Good afternoon.

16 MS. GYM: Good afternoon.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

18 Please identify yourself for the
19 record.

20 MS. GYM: My name is Helen Gym,
21 and I'm the mother of three children
22 who are in or entering public schools.

23 We're again a part of this
24 group, Parents United for Public
25 Education. All of us have experience

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2 working. And we live with this
3 budget. I'm not a policy wonk or, you
4 know, I'm not a, you know, a budget
5 expert in any way. I'm here to talk
6 about what essentially is an
7 accounting document feels like to live
8 with to come home to -- for my
9 children to grow up in, and I think
10 that's kind of a different thing.

11 We also -- you know, I guess
12 part of it is that, you know, for us,
13 at least as a parent and a mother,
14 this is a really grim budget.

15 If there's a five-year plan
16 where school closings are essential to
17 cost-savings, that's a grim budget.

18 And if there's a budget where
19 there are across-the-board pay
20 freezes, balanced deficits, then it's
21 grim budget.

22 And when, out of \$2.3 billion
23 for next year's budget, the brightest
24 new initiatives are \$18.5 million for
25 reduced class size and arts and music

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2 programs, that that's an amount that's
3 less than one half of one percent of
4 the entire school budget, then that's
5 a problem.

6 And although we as parents
7 acknowledge the progress we have made,
8 it's important to say here it's not
9 enough, especially for the investment
10 that the City Council has put in last
11 year.

12 And for the record, parents
13 fought for all of those things: the
14 reduced class size, the arts and music
15 programs; we pushed the District to
16 redo the budget to include those. So,
17 you know, we're coming at it kind of
18 from the back -- you know, already on
19 the back foot in some ways.

20 In some ways what I feel like
21 we've made progress in since last
22 year's time is that we've identified
23 the areas where we need to invest in.

24 We know we need to do more in
25 early grades, where children can be

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2 most influenced. We know that we need
3 intervention in the middle school. We
4 know that the 8th-to-9th-grade
5 transition is essential. And we know
6 that high school reform is absolutely
7 necessary.

8 But what we haven't done is
9 invest. And if you look through the
10 budget, these are the missing items in
11 the budget.

12 Councilwoman Tasco, I know,
13 was concerned about the 74 percent of
14 students who fail to be proficient in
15 high school, but we despair about the
16 fact that 52 percent of our kids don't
17 meet grade-level reading by 3rd grade.
18 And then we go back to the budget and
19 we look. Class sizes have increased
20 over five years.

21 We've lost librarians at
22 three-quarters of our -- three-
23 quarters of schools don't have
24 librarians. Most of them are
25 elementaries because most of the high

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2 schools can afford in their budgets to
3 put them in. And why we cut literacy
4 programs -- literacy interim programs,
5 rather, at the elementary school
6 because we lack the money.

7 This budget may have addressed
8 class size, but it hasn't relieved the
9 overcrowding ironically, which is a
10 function more of geography than of
11 achievement.

12 And we need to ask why, when
13 teacher quality is one of the top
14 issues of our school district, why
15 we're talking about a five-year pay
16 freeze when we're already at a huge
17 disadvantage with our surrounding
18 suburbs.

19 Meanwhile, we consistently ask
20 why we prioritize some things over
21 others. Why do we agree that we pay
22 external contractors like this
23 disciplinary contractor, CEP 3500 --
24 we allot 3500 students as disciplinary
25 expulsions before we even know who

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2 they are, especially when these
3 contractors, specifically CEP, have a
4 non-performance-based contract, charge
5 thousands of dollars more per student,
6 don't have a track record in returning
7 kids to schools, and that the State
8 cut their budget by 36 percent.

9 When the District saw its
10 transportation budget to the State
11 cut, it recommended that it push the
12 burden onto children and families to
13 bear the burden of the transportation
14 cuts.

15 But when alternative education
16 gets its contract cut, why don't we
17 cut that contract? Why is that on our
18 end to foot that bill?

19 We know many of our problems
20 in the budget stem from this chronic
21 underfunding of public schools,
22 there's no doubt. But this budget,
23 more than others, should have us
24 asking the question, What problems are
25 of our own making?

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2 The majority -- overwhelming
3 majority of the reform money over the
4 past five years and for the next five
5 years we go towards charters and debt
6 service. Meanwhile, school operations
7 have grown 2 percent in the last five
8 years.

9 We have a contracting
10 environment that's run amok. And from
11 the recent news stories, we know that
12 the District, perfectly honestly, is a
13 terrible contract manager.

14 As difficult a handle the
15 District has on its own operations, it
16 gets worse when it doesn't run things.
17 The multiple-provider model has been
18 held up as this model or a solution,
19 but if we look at the multiple
20 academic studies and reviews that have
21 been done on alternative education
22 providers, charters, and EMOs, the
23 money we spent and the average-to-poor
24 results that we've gotten back, we
25 need to start asking ourselves whether

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2 this multiple-provider model is not a
3 solution but really a part of the
4 problem. It hamstrings us in legal
5 and political entanglements and costs
6 us hundreds of millions of dollars
7 over years, and we can't let it go.

8 So how do we get to a better
9 budget? As parents, we offer the
10 following suggestion:

11 Number one, we believe that
12 the District has to cost-out its
13 priority initiatives. This seems
14 rather obvious. How much does it cost
15 to reduce class size over five years
16 for every child in the District for
17 whatever grades that we have set out?

18 We have requested that
19 costing-out study for months. And we
20 want to know how much it costs to put
21 a full music and art program, not
22 part-time, full-time, in every school;
23 what it costs to put a full-time nurse
24 in every school; what it costs to have
25 potable drinking water available so

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2 our kids don't have to buy water. But
3 we continue to wait for these studies.

4 And without these cost
5 studies, the District does not have a
6 plan, it does not have a sense of what
7 it's buying and what it needs to shoot
8 for. And what we see is that despite
9 -- and I want to say it's a very
10 heartfelt rhetoric from the School
11 District and Reform Commission. The
12 District's budget has stayed largely
13 the same year-to-year, with only
14 fiddling in some of the areas to
15 reduce damage but not to seriously
16 restructure financial priorities.

17 The second thing we ask is
18 that the District pass the limit
19 contracts. This isn't about just
20 EMOs. The Philadelphia public schools
21 has more contracts probably for more
22 services than just about any district
23 in the nation. We've got CBOs running
24 security, we've got contracts for
25 cleaning, curriculum, professional

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2 development, testing, everything under
3 the sun. Even the State-run school
4 board has a contract value of -- they
5 have a contract pool of \$1.68 million
6 that they can do with their contracts.

7 And, as we said, the District
8 is a poor contract manager. And
9 meanwhile, while we continue to do
10 these contracts, we wonder whether the
11 District's internal capacity is
12 gutted. And when there's a problem
13 with contracts going wrong, we can't
14 reassume those services.

15 The third thing: We need to
16 ask your support in helping the
17 District control charters. I'm a
18 charter supporter; one of my sons goes
19 to charter schools. But I don't
20 believe that a charter system can
21 operate without limits. Without
22 controls, parameters, guidelines, or,
23 most importantly, consequences,
24 there's no limit to the possibility of
25 creating a secondary school system;

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2 it's going to happen, especially with
3 the amount of dissatisfaction.

4 Until this year, the School
5 District had closed only one charter
6 school, and so we need Council to
7 support some sense of control on these
8 entities, the reality of the school
9 landscape, but they are also extremely
10 cost -- they cost a lot and they're
11 erratic performers, according to a
12 number of studies.

13 Number 4. The City needs a
14 plan to review local revenue to
15 schools. Over the next five years,
16 the District looks at 31 percent
17 growth in projected expenses. The
18 City's projected revenue growth of
19 schools, even with the generosity of
20 the last year's public reinvestment
21 fund, is only 5.9 percent, and that's
22 just simply not enough.

23 What this means is, we need to
24 have a discussion about boosting local
25 revenue; whether that's through

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2 enforcement of existing taxes, whether
3 we link any property-tax reassessments
4 to impact on school funding and the
5 City's consideration of assuming
6 services that the District now
7 provides.

8 Number 5. We ask that you go
9 back to the Parking Authority. If
10 anyone were to tell me that this
11 entity that collects \$200 million in
12 revenues, boots, tows, runs red-light
13 cameras, and only has enough profits
14 to turn over \$1.2 million to the
15 public schools, it would have to be
16 have to be a laugh.

17 The PPA's agreement to fully
18 fund the City and give a minimal
19 payment to the schools was just a
20 political compromise at the time. The
21 longer the City and State tolerate the
22 waste at the Parking Authority, the
23 more financial burden both entities
24 assume for the schools.

25 And the last thing that we ask

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2 you is that we ask you to empower
3 parents. We're not necessarily naive
4 enough to think that Council is
5 supposedly going to put school
6 management on the top of its priority
7 list; it's not necessarily your job.
8 But we do ask you to support the
9 parents who do put it at the top of
10 their list.

11 Our group has been at the
12 forefront in analyzing budgets and
13 putting forth the parent voice on the
14 shaping of financial priorities. We
15 join many other parents who are also
16 on this mission.

17 We ask you to help empower
18 parents by asking the District to give
19 us a role in the budget process, help
20 us ask the questions that we can get
21 the answers to, and meet us halfway at
22 some of these school budget meetings
23 where we're struggling to get some
24 answers.

25 I want to conclude by saying

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2 thank you especially to the
3 Councilpeople who are here. We're
4 very grateful for this part of public
5 testimony; we don't get this
6 opportunity very often.

7 We know the cost of
8 underfunding the schools. Most
9 importantly, we want Council to
10 understand that a major cost driver --
11 or a major savings driver for the
12 School District in the next five years
13 will be school closings and
14 consolidations.

15 And I know that Councilpeople
16 here in this room will not want to
17 face their constituents in a few years
18 who are angry because their school is
19 closing. At one point, Paul Vallas
20 had projected 22 school closings over
21 the five years, which would more than
22 likely hit most Councilpeople at some
23 point in their district.

24 So we've got to find a way to
25 figure out what to do now. It's an

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2 urgent situation. It shouldn't come
3 to school closings to force the
4 Council's intervention in this issue.
5 We ask you to work with our parents,
6 demand accountability, keep tabs on
7 public engagement, and help us be
8 ready for the hard decisions coming
9 down the road.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

12 You're welcome.

13 Councilman Jones, you're light
14 is on. Did you want to be recognized?

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, Madam
16 President.

17 I want to thank you first for
18 getting out of your sick bed and
19 providing that testimony. I know you
20 were ill. We tried to contact you
21 yesterday, and my staff informed me
22 that you were very sick.

23 Thank you also for providing
24 me information about the educational
25 process during my transition into City

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2 Council, and it was very enlightening
3 and helpful.

4 I want to say that you don't
5 have to feel as though you're being
6 naive for this Council to prioritize
7 education of our young people. We
8 contribute to that funding of these
9 schools. We contribute to the future
10 of Philadelphia by educating a
11 workforce. And it is a priority.

12 Clearly for me, clearly for
13 me, as a product of the public school
14 system -- all of my children, all of
15 my children attended public school and
16 they got a valuable education that was
17 augmented by dad's and mom's interest
18 in their well-being, but that's the
19 vehicle by which they were educated.
20 I could safely say all my
21 grandchildren will go to public
22 schools.

23 The question becomes: What
24 are we prepared to do in this Council
25 and this administration to make sure

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2 there is a system worth putting our
3 kids into?

4 I have found in my district
5 that the single decision that -- one
6 of the biggest decisions that a person
7 makes beyond the physical dwelling of
8 their house is, what school and type
9 of education and quality of education
10 will my child receive by going to this
11 particular institution?

12 I think that your testimony,
13 and all of your testimonies, should be
14 given -- I asked for a copy of yours
15 in particular; hopefully, you'll be
16 able to provide that to the President
17 of Council so we all can benefit from
18 it and ask those tough questions as we
19 continue this process.

20 Councilman Green and I share
21 now a motto: that if it ain't
22 measured, it ain't managed. And if
23 it's contracts or if it's deliverables
24 by institutions, we have to do a
25 better job of holding the feet to the

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2 fire of the SRC and the respective
3 institutions to make sure that our
4 kids are getting a quality education.

5 So it is a priority. And no,
6 we don't want to face the ire of the
7 public for not being good stewards,
8 but I hope and encourage you to help
9 us to do that by giving us
10 information.

11 There's one other analogy:
12 The mouse in the house spends more
13 time concerned about the owner of the
14 house whereabouts than the owner of
15 the house cares about the mouse.

16 In some instances, because we
17 have so many departments, I understand
18 what you're saying, that we don't pay
19 as much attention as you do to what's
20 going on in our public schools, but
21 keep us informed, keep us in the
22 information loop. You've done that
23 for me, I would hope do you that for
24 all of the members of Council, and
25 particularly the disciplinary schools

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2 who, in my opinion, the alternative
3 schools, some of whom are ripping us
4 off, just plain ripping us off, and
5 we're going to look into that in a
6 great deal of detail along with my
7 colleague Councilwoman Quinones-
8 Sanchez, and we hope to come to some
9 kind of understanding of that in the
10 new contracts that are going to be let
11 out.

12 So thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
15 Chair recognizes Councilman Green.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you
17 very much. Thank you all for your
18 testimony today.

19 Miss Gym, you said something
20 that I just have a question about, and
21 that is that the budget is addressing
22 class size? I did not get that
23 impression from the School District
24 and wonder where you get that idea.

25 MS. GYM: We're saying that the

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2 School District's budget does not
3 address class size enough, reducing
4 class size. Our concern is that they
5 --

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

7 MS. GYM: So we're in
8 agreement?

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yeah. I
10 just misunderstood you, or you went
11 through it very quickly, so okay.

12 Do you happen to know what the
13 average class size is in the School
14 District? I went to the website, and
15 it looks like it would be a 17-to-1
16 ratio based on number of students and
17 number of teachers, and I know it's
18 more like 30 in the actual classroom,
19 but do you -- is there a number that
20 you're aware of that's public
21 information?

22 MS. GYM: I don't -- I think
23 that's what we're struggling with.
24 We've been struggling for a long time
25 because -- trying to get at not just

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 what the average class size is because
3 I think there's this idea that you can
4 take aggregate numbers like total
5 students, total teachers, and do a
6 division, and it's extraordinarily low.

7 But if you were to look across
8 the classrooms, we know that the class
9 size maximum -- contractual maximum,
10 according to the PFD contract is 30
11 students in grades K to 3, 33 students
12 in grades 4 to 12.

13 Dr. Jones has said on several
14 occasions that she's aware of roughly
15 100 class sizes across the District --
16 it's been thrown out before, I don't
17 know how well it's been studied -- 100
18 class sizes that exceed the
19 contractual maximum.

20 And what we've been trying to
21 ask is, Can you give us a head count
22 of the number of students at a school,
23 you know, the class size, and I
24 think -- you know, I don't know if
25 there are, like, legal complications

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2 because, you know, they then violate
3 PFT rules, that they actually put a
4 number, I don't know.

5 But, you know, what we do know
6 is that there are plenty of schools,
7 particularly in the northeast and east
8 regions, where you've got 38, 39 more
9 students packed into classrooms. And
10 it's a huge problem and it's not
11 really addressed at all -- or enough,
12 rather.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: No. And
14 I -- I don't -- once again, I agree
15 with you. I don't think that they
16 know, or at least I can't get a clear
17 answer about it.

18 And it's scary that things
19 that are most important that you can't
20 get the answer from the School
21 District, like class size.

22 Thank you for your testimony.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you all very much. We appreciate your
25 coming in to testify. Thank you.

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2 Our next witness?

3 MR. McPHERSON: James Sklaroff.

4 (No response.)

5 MR. McPHERSON: James Sklaroff?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

7 (Inaudible, off-mic.)

8 (Witness comes forward.)

9 MS. SHAPIRO: Thank you very
10 much.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

12 You're welcome. Kindly identify
13 yourself for the record.

14 MS. SHAPIRO: Good afternoon,
15 Council, and thank you for letting me
16 speak today.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

18 You're welcome.

19 MS. SHAPIRO: My name is Mimi
20 Shapiro. I wanted to make sure I
21 didn't forget the others.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: All
23 right, Mimi.

24 MS. SHAPIRO: I had the
25 pleasure of meeting Curtis Jones at

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2 Community College a few weeks ago and
3 the pleasure of meeting Jannie
4 Blackwell and Augusta Clarke when I was
5 working at the Obama campaign at
6 Haverford College, and both of them I
7 spoke to very briefly 'cause I know
8 their time is very important and said
9 to get back to them, so here I am.

10 And as Curtis pointed out for
11 himself, I am a freshman here so if
12 this is not highly organized as I'd
13 like it to be, I'll apologize for it
14 in advance, and hopefully, you can
15 follow me.

16 I had brought in a speech that
17 I wanted to read, but after hearing a
18 lot of the comments that just went
19 up -- came up, I changed my speech and
20 had some answers for some of them and
21 points that I wanted to bring up
22 instead.

23 I'm a retired Philadelphia
24 school teacher. I was in the system
25 30 years, a little over 30 years. And

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2 from my speech, I wrote -- I had a
3 very dangerous job. I had to walk
4 through a metal detector, I had to
5 wear an I.D. badge, and I had to
6 succumb to mobbing and bullying. And
7 yes, folks, I was a teacher in
8 Philadelphia.

9 And the problems were not from
10 the children. Children are children;
11 children are good, bad and ugly and
12 beautiful wherever you go, and they
13 didn't ask to be born that way; it
14 just happened for various reasons.

15 And after my first 15 or 16
16 years of teaching, with 150 accolades
17 for excellent classroom projects where
18 my students won show tickets from
19 downtown, monetary awards, Toys-R-Us,
20 they got computers that they had won
21 for essays that they had written --
22 writings was one of my areas of
23 expertise. They had won clothing.
24 There was very little that my students
25 lacked for when we did a writing

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2 project and had a goal in mind.

3 And all of a sudden, because
4 of a particular gentleman who's in
5 this building -- and I don't know if
6 we're allowed to mention names so I
7 won't, but his office is in this
8 building, went after me. I had been
9 accused of something that never took
10 place.

11 The School Board President at
12 that time was the late Rotan Lee, who
13 later became a very close friend of
14 mine, did the investigation, and it
15 proved not to be true. However, this
16 gentleman and another person -- who
17 her office may be in here, I think
18 it's across the street, though -- went
19 after me like bees on honey for no
20 reason, having never spoken to me.

21 Never -- there was no
22 investigation, there was nothing done.
23 And the next 15 or 16 years of my
24 teaching career were nothing more than
25 bullying and harassment.

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2 I couldn't go from this
3 excellent teacher -- and I'm not
4 bragging, I'm just -- it's a fact
5 what. I mean, what my students won I
6 can prove. I have documentation for
7 all of it from superintendents, from
8 mayors, from everybody -- into this
9 nightmarish person that these two
10 individuals dreamed up.

11 And another teacher of mine
12 got so angry one night -- another peer
13 of mine, I should say -- that he went
14 to the Internet a few years ago and
15 put in "teacher abuse," in as many
16 different words as he could find, and
17 he came up with a website called
18 endteacherabuse.org, which is where my
19 shirt is from.

20 There's close to a thousand
21 teachers in the nation that belong to
22 this. There are many more that would
23 like to belong, but Karen Horowitz,
24 who is the owner of this site in
25 Chicago, finds that many teachers are

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2 afraid for fear of retaliation.

3 Once I left the system, I let
4 my name go public, because then I had
5 nothing to fear, but I knew, as long
6 as I was in the system, I had
7 everything to fear and then some.

8 And as Jerry Jordan, who was
9 here today, agreed with me on March
10 11th in the Philadelphia Inquirer in
11 an article done by Martha Woodall, any
12 teacher that complains is retaliated
13 and eventually terminated.

14 I was forced to sit in a
15 closet, another teacher I know of was
16 forced to sit in a basement, and
17 people have been forced to sit
18 elsewhere.

19 Commissioner Ramsey -- Police
20 Commissioner Ramsey said a few weeks
21 ago on the 11 o'clock news that if you
22 want people to be professional, they
23 need to be treated professionally.
24 Myself sitting in a closet I don't
25 consider professional.

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2 And it was done for weeks on
3 end. I find that a waste of money and
4 a waste of my talents, while my
5 children, who don't have a regular
6 substitute, 'cause you cannot get them
7 in Philadelphia, are losing in the
8 lung run. Those are the ones that
9 were hurting and losing the most. And
10 many teachers in Philadelphia have
11 been asked to do this, this sitting
12 and doing nothing.

13 When you talk to people
14 outside of education, they think we're
15 wearing like loose straight jackets.
16 They have no idea of the bullying and
17 the mobbing going on inside the
18 building. The School District -- and
19 I don't mean towards the children.
20 The School District staff and the
21 union need to be held accountable for
22 their actions, or lack thereof.

23 This is where the laws have to
24 be changed in America. The laws are
25 being changed, and have been changed,

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2 in states like Kansas, Montana,
3 California, and Tennessee. And the
4 one person, from what I understand --
5 excuse me. There is one document here
6 that's being done, and it has very
7 poor wording on it, to help extinguish
8 this bullying and mobbing, and it has
9 been sitting on Dwight Evans' desk for
10 months.

11 And at this point now, I think
12 it's a good idea that it's been
13 sitting there because staff, parents,
14 and others that work in the School
15 District buildings need to be
16 protected, just like the children do.
17 And, of course, the children are our
18 utmost importance, but it's the harm
19 that's coming to the others that's
20 making their life so miserable.

21 Many districts like
22 Philadelphia are untouchable and above
23 the law. They have what is called
24 "immunity." I spoke to a district
25 court judge, Johnny Houston, from Red

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2 Bank, Tennessee, about his article.
3 Teachers are not protected. He has
4 confirmed this and researched this in
5 his state and is continuing to
6 research it. He would like people to
7 contact him with any stories they
8 have.

9 And it's funny that when I
10 called him -- and this man is in
11 Tennessee, at work in the courthouse,
12 didn't know me, got on the phone,
13 spoke to me for 50 minutes of his
14 time.

15 I cannot get anyone in the
16 City of Philadelphia to talk to me. I
17 cannot get anyone in the Department of
18 Education in Harrisburg to talk to me.
19 And yet, this man a million miles away
20 wanted to hear what I had to say
21 because he thought it was valid.

22 I'd like to know where else
23 can people work and not be paid, as
24 has happened to me and others in the
25 public school district here in

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2 Philadelphia. I walked in, I signed
3 my T&A; I was not paid.

4 Where can you go out on
5 approved sick leave and be terminated
6 while you are out on approved sick
7 leave with documentation that is
8 required?

9 Where else do they put people
10 in rubber rooms to sit for days on end
11 and weeks on end except the School
12 District and perhaps in mental
13 hospitals?

14 Where can administrators make
15 fun of your clothes, embarrass you
16 publicly, lie about what you did,
17 throw out your belongings, coerce the
18 children to do things that are really
19 professionally unacceptable if they're
20 trying to get rid of a teacher?

21 And yet, this has happened to
22 me and others here, in Philadelphia.

23 To the best of my knowledge as
24 a layperson, all of the
25 above-mentioned bullying is against

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 Pennsylvania State labor laws. Yet
3 the union, the EEOC, and the PHRC just
4 look the other way.

5 Bullying itself is not against
6 the law. However, abuse, harassment,
7 not being paid for work performed, and
8 a hostile work environment is against
9 the law. And bullying needs to be
10 inserted in there because it's going
11 on here rampantly.

12 I know of two employees in
13 Philadelphia who were terminated
14 because they reported and photographed
15 teachers abusing children in a public
16 school.

17 A teacher in my last school,
18 at Elkin Elementary, covered a
19 student's mouth with four to five
20 inches of the -- I guess it's
21 two-and-a-half, three-inch-wide gray
22 electrical tape so the child would
23 stop talking in his class. This is
24 fact; I witnessed it. It was
25 witnessed by 60 children and 2 or 3

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 adults. The principal did nothing.
3 She liked that teacher. That teacher
4 didn't create problems; his children
5 pretty much did whatever they wanted
6 in the classroom. He never wrote pink
7 slips because if you write pink slips,
8 you're harassed and terminated, you're
9 known as a troublemaker. He never did
10 any of those things, so she let him
11 slide.

12 And, again, it really
13 happened.

14 In another school, a teacher
15 went home for three hours because her
16 house was not too far from school.
17 The children were left uncovered. I
18 had this on video because I happened
19 to be taping that day for my pen pal
20 project, and I was showing another
21 school, a suburban school, what life
22 was like in a city school. How do you
23 tape a room with no teacher?

24 When the teacher came back two
25 or three hours later, nothing was done

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 to her. Why? She didn't create any
3 problems in the building for the
4 principal so she was allowed to stay,
5 and nothing was done about it.

6 In another school, a teacher
7 received an emergency phone call about
8 her special-needs child. It was the
9 first phone call the teacher ever
10 received in the four years at that
11 school. The teacher went to answer
12 the phone, never leaving the class
13 uncovered. It was a prep teacher.
14 The primary classroom teacher was
15 there, the principal was there. There
16 was work for the children to do, and
17 then the teacher went and took the
18 emergency call.

19 The principal wrote her up as
20 an unsatisfactory teacher for
21 answering an emergency phone call.

22 Lucy Rodriguez, the District
23 superintendent at that time, said, "Of
24 course she had to answer the phone
25 call; family comes first." And I

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2 agreed with her, and I stated I never
3 left the building, I never left the
4 building. This teacher obviously was
5 me.

6 My were classes covered, the
7 work was there. Nothing was done
8 against the District's policies, to
9 which she replied, "We don't pay you
10 to come to work and answer emergency
11 phone calls. We don't care about your
12 family. You're here to teach our
13 children."

14 I wonder if that was her child
15 how she would have felt, not knowing
16 what was going on or why this phone
17 call was received.

18 I think the School District
19 needs to invest in security for the
20 teachers and the children and the
21 others in the building.

22 I also have attached a photo
23 here that was hung all last year at
24 the entrance to Edison High School
25 right opposite the principal's office.

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2 I find it highly offensive and
3 provocative, and I would appreciate it
4 if you would look at it.

5 I did mail a letter to the
6 Councilpeople inviting them to a
7 meeting that we had in Germantown on
8 March the 30th. The only one that had
9 sent representation was Frank Rizzo.
10 And I am in touch with Donald Tripp,
11 who was his representation.

12 And I just would be curious on
13 Councilpeople's opinion of this
14 hanging in a Philadelphia public
15 school in the main entranceway. What
16 is being taught here? This is a
17 troubled high school, and it hung
18 there for at least a year. I have not
19 been in the building this year so I
20 don't know if it's there today. And,
21 obviously, everyone in the District
22 knew about 'cause they've all been in
23 that building.

24 Mr. Wright made some very
25 valid points in his speech, that we do

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 need alternatives for the children
3 right in the buildings. I don't know
4 why vocational technical education was
5 ever done away with. We can't all be
6 doctors and lawyers. I myself am not
7 a doctor or a lawyer, and I went to
8 Philadelphia public schools. These
9 things need to be brought back so that
10 these children have something to
11 achieve to.

12 The children being below basic
13 is blamed on the teachers. The
14 teachers are questioned, the teachers
15 are harassed, the teachers are written
16 up. Why are your children below
17 basic? The fact that these children
18 come in unprepared, some show up once
19 a week, some show up once a month;
20 they blame that on the teacher. The
21 teachers seem to be the scapegoat for
22 everything in this system.

23 And it's not true. You have
24 some excellent, excellent teachers out
25 there that I have worked with and some

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 excellent principals out there that I
3 have worked with, and I'm sure there's
4 many that I have not worked with.

5 But it's this underlying
6 current, as Rotan called it, the old
7 school boys' network, that's ruining
8 our school district and that ruined my
9 life.

10 There are no activities after
11 school for the average or the above-
12 average child. There needs to be
13 activities in these school buildings
14 for the average and above-average
15 child, not just the children that are
16 failing. The average child and the
17 good child need something to achieve
18 to as well, to being allowed to be in
19 a sports activity, a sewing class, a
20 computer class. None of this exists
21 for our children, so they have nothing
22 to do but go out on the street, and
23 that's where the problems start.

24 It was mentioned from one of
25 the speaker that we should use

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2 conflict resolution. Conflict
3 resolution has proved to be negative.
4 This has been researched by Dr. Marie
5 Lewis in Wayne, Pennsylvania, and she
6 would be happy to talk to anyone about
7 it.

8 What conflict resolution does,
9 it makes the victim a victim twice
10 because the victim has to point out
11 who their perpetrator was, thus giving
12 the perpetrator the attention that he
13 or she is seeking. And then the
14 victim becomes the whistleblower or
15 the squealer that all the children go
16 after because they pointed out the
17 perpetrator, and then they become
18 ostracized. That is how the victim
19 becomes a victim twice.

20 There's another program called
21 "Step Two Program" used in many
22 suburban schools, which has a much
23 more positive affect. And there are
24 positive comments and effects going on
25 in the school, but there needs to be

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2 more of it.

3 There's a lot of research
4 showing that children react positively
5 to positive reinforcement, and so do
6 teachers. There is no positive
7 reinforcement going on for the
8 teachers in the Philadelphia public
9 schools from the administration, and
10 it would be nice once in a while if
11 somebody just said, "Hey, you did a
12 good job" or "I appreciated you coming
13 in early" or "Thank you for staying
14 late." That doesn't happen.

15 Thank you.

16 I think summer school -- if
17 there was less summer school and the
18 money from summer school was taken to
19 make smaller classes, we would achieve
20 a lot more, because in summer school,
21 all the children have to do is show
22 up, sign their name, eat lunch, not
23 cause too many problems, and they pass
24 summer school. There is not a whole
25 lot of learning that takes place in

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 summer school.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Miss
4 Shapiro, can you please come to some
5 conclusion?

6 MS. SHAPIRO: Okay. I think
7 what needs to be stressed is more
8 funding for safety and for the children
9 in smaller classrooms, better
10 protection all the way around for
11 everyone and more supplies and more
12 positive reinforcement for all of the
13 children and for the teachers as well.

14 Give me two more seconds to
15 wrap it up.

16 And I want to just thank
17 everybody for giving me the time to
18 listen. I would be happy to talk to
19 anyone about what happened to me
20 because I was assaulted in a
21 Philadelphia school.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you, Miss Shapiro.

24 When you first started your
25 testimony --

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2 MS. SHAPIRO: Yes.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: --

4 you said how were being harassed --

5 MS. SHAPIRO: Yes.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: -- by

7 someone in this building.

8 MS. SHAPIRO: Yes.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Were

10 you referring to the school building or

11 were you referring to City Hall?

12 MS. SHAPIRO: This building,

13 City Hall.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: City

15 Hall.

16 MS. SHAPIRO: Correct.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I

18 have --

19 MS. SHAPIRO: I have newspapers

20 articles to document it. This is not

21 --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I beg

23 your pardon?

24 MS. SHAPIRO: I'm sorry?

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I beg

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2 your pardon?

3 MS. SHAPIRO: I do have
4 newspaper articles from the time that
5 it happened to prove what I am saying,
6 that this particular individual went
7 after me numerous times with no fact,
8 never spoke to me to this day, has
9 never spoken to me, has refused to
10 speak to me when asked to speak to me,
11 and there was never any investigation;
12 that is fact.

13 As Rotan Lee, unfortunately,
14 is not here but could attest to --

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
16 you said you were literally put in a
17 closet?

18 MS. SHAPIRO: That is correct.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Let
20 me ask you something: Did you ever go
21 to an attorney?

22 MS. SHAPIRO: Did I ever what?

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Did
24 you ever seek the advice of an
25 attorney?

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2 MS. SHAPIRO: I went to --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Did
4 you ever go to an attorney?

5 MS. SHAPIRO: I went to many
6 attorneys in Philadelphia. There are
7 very few -- in fact, I couldn't find
8 any, except Rotan, who was an attorney
9 and he was representing me. I had a
10 meeting with him at 9 o'clock in the
11 morning that he died; I got a phone
12 call 7 not to show up because Rotan had
13 died on Sunday night.

14 I had spoken to him before he
15 went to see his doctor, Judy, who told
16 him to go home.

17 That will take the case.
18 Rotan said he was willing to do it
19 because Rotan had done his own
20 investigation.

21 Most of the attorneys will --
22 well, I should say "most," 'cause all
23 of the attorneys that I spoke to would
24 not touch the case for two reasons:
25 One is, they all have a hand in the

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2 Philadelphia School District. If that
3 individual attorney did not, someone
4 in the firm on the third floor that
5 they haven't spoken to in six months
6 had a cousin twice removed that had
7 dealings with the School District.

8 And the second reason is, if
9 you have a union, you are not
10 allowed -- even if you are not a
11 member of that union, you are not
12 allowed to have a lawyer represent
13 you. You must use the union. And I
14 was not allowed to talk to Willick,
15 Williams & Davidson without the
16 approval of the union, and they would
17 not give me their approval because it
18 cost money. So how could Willick,
19 Williams & Davidson fairly, rightly,
20 honestly represent me without talking
21 to me?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you.

24 Are there any questions of
25 Miss Shapiro?

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2 (No questions.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Miss
4 Shapiro, thank you very much for coming
5 in.

6 MS. SHAPIRO: Okay. And I just
7 want to say one more thing, please, if
8 I may.

9 I just want to recommend a
10 couple of books that need to be looked
11 at: "Guilty Until Proven Innocent,"
12 written by Neil Schwartz, a teacher at
13 George Washington High School here in
14 Philadelphia. It came out in 2007,
15 it's a quick read, and I would highly
16 recommend it.

17 "Breaking the Silence" by Joe
18 and Josephine Blaze.

19 And "Peer Abuse No More,"
20 which shows you the psychological
21 perspective, by Elizabeth Bennett.

22 I would highly recommend these
23 books to see what's going on.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
25 you very much.

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2 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
3 witness is Kay O-Q.

4 (Witness comes forward.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
6 afternoon.

7 MS. O-Q: Good afternoon.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
9 Please identify yourself for the record
10 and proceed with your testimony.

11 MS. O-Q: Yes. My name is Kay
12 O-Q, and I'm here to represent CMAC, a
13 nonprofit agency working with refugees
14 and immigrants in the area.

15 Good afternoon to members of
16 City Council, community partners, and
17 members who are here. I'm here today
18 to speak on behalf of the thousands of
19 Asian, Latino, and African immigrants
20 and refugees in Philadelphia.

21 In the School District of
22 Philadelphia, there are thousands of
23 students, parents, and families from
24 these communities. Unfortunately,
25 these communities suffer from

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2 continual lack of support and from
3 continual lack of interest in helping
4 them with language-access services and
5 culturally appropriate services.

6 I just also want to say that I
7 am a proud product of the Philadelphia
8 school system. I'm a born native
9 Philadelphian and proof that with good
10 teachers, administrators and staff and
11 community-member support, you can
12 receive a quality education in
13 Philadelphia.

14 I'm a graduate of Temple
15 University, and I want to continue
16 working and supporting immigrants and
17 refugees in the area. We are among
18 Philadelphia's laymen. We keep the
19 economy running. We also support and
20 uphold many of Philadelphia's
21 integrity and traditions of freedoms.

22 A large part of the community
23 every day that we work with testify
24 and -- I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'm a
25 little bit nervous. But members of

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 the community that we work with daily
3 want to be self-sufficient, and they
4 cannot do this without having access
5 to quality education. Parents that we
6 talk to often say that language-access
7 services are not given to them.

8 We suffer from many of the
9 similar issues that students suffer
10 from: overcrowding, specialized
11 services, education curriculum. But
12 on top of that, we have another
13 barrier: We have language issues.

14 In the many times that we have
15 testified in front of the School
16 District of Philadelphia, there has
17 been no answer to the reasons why the
18 School District is not inclusive of
19 language-access services in its
20 budgets. There's also no answers in
21 its accountability on how it spends
22 language-access money given to it by
23 the State and by the government.

24 I want to say that these
25 communities are asking that the City

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2 of Philadelphia look into the School
3 District budget and to be inclusive of
4 the needs of immigrants and refugee
5 communities. We have made a
6 commitment to the City and we hope
7 that the City, in return, makes a
8 commitment to helping our communities
9 thrive and grow.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
12 you very much. We appreciate your
13 taking the time to come in to testify?

14 Are there any questions or
15 comments for this witness?

16 (No questions or comments.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
18 you.

19 MS. O-Q: Thank you.

20 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
21 witness is Cecilia Thompson.

22 (Witness comes forward.)

23 MS. THOMPSON: Good afternoon.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Good
25 afternoon. Please identify yourself

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2 for the record. Thank you.

3 MS. THOMPSON: My name is
4 Cecilia Thompson, and I have a
5 nine-year-old son with autism who
6 attends public school at Thomas G.
7 Morton Elementary School in the
8 southwest section of Philadelphia.

9 I'm also a member of the
10 Philadelphia Right to Education Local
11 Task Force, an organization federally
12 mandated by the State of Pennsylvania
13 to provide systemic advocacy for
14 individuals receiving specially-
15 designed instruction in Philadelphia
16 public and charter schools.

17 I'm also an employee of the
18 Arc of Philadelphia, a nonprofit
19 organization that provides advocacy,
20 supports and services for individuals
21 with developmental, intellectual, and
22 cognitive delays.

23 I am testifying today on
24 aspects of the proposed school budget
25 for your consideration.

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2 As to the dropout rate, the
3 District's dropout rate for students
4 is 45 percent. However, according to
5 Penn data, the dropout rate for
6 children with special needs in
7 Philadelphia is 19 percent.

8 And I must add that that's an
9 error. The City and the State knows
10 that that number is wrong, and they
11 really don't know how many children
12 with disabilities are dropping out of
13 high school and just sitting at home.

14 The result of that is,
15 depending on the severity of the
16 disability, the parents end up
17 quitting their jobs because they
18 really have no place to send their
19 children because they're not properly
20 prepared to go into the workforce to
21 provide for themselves.

22 Currently, children with
23 special needs make up about 14 percent
24 of the District's student population.
25 The dropout rate exceeds the student

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2 population. And looking at the budget
3 online, I did not see any initiatives
4 for this population to utilize the
5 alternative education or other
6 education initiatives so they can
7 graduate and become productive members
8 of the society.

9 Although everything in the
10 District is for all children, children
11 with special needs, especially those
12 who, due to their disability, manifest
13 extreme behaviors, are not invited to
14 participate in these programs. There
15 needs to be funding allocated to
16 provide the supports and services
17 needed for our children so they are
18 not a burden to the State via SSI,
19 welfare, or any other governmental
20 funding.

21 As to vocational education,
22 vocational opportunities need to be
23 available to children with special
24 needs. However, in order to do this,
25 there needs to be supports and

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2 services available for this population
3 to participate and learn a viable
4 skill for the job market.

5 For many students, one-to-one
6 services need to be provided to keep
7 the individual on task to complete the
8 task.

9 In addition, professional
10 development needs to be provided for
11 the professional vocational education
12 teachers.

13 Furthermore, there needs to be
14 a partnership between the vocational
15 and special-education teachers to work
16 in concert with our children so they
17 learn a marketable skill upon
18 graduation.

19 Again, while The District will
20 argue this is provided to all
21 students, children with certain
22 disabilities are not given this
23 opportunity because, in my experience,
24 the teachers don't feel our children
25 are capable of doing anything more

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2 than folding napkins, cleaning, or
3 putting tags on clothing. Although it
4 would take a partnership with the
5 business community to provide
6 opportunities for our children, the
7 District must first prepare our
8 children for these opportunities.

9 As to supports and services,
10 the District's budget does not provide
11 the necessary and support and services
12 needed for the success of children
13 with special needs. For example, if a
14 child requires one-to-one assistance,
15 schools often tell the parents they do
16 not have the money to pay another
17 staff person. Even if they have the
18 staff person, many are not trained in
19 or experienced in assisting children
20 with special needs.

21 There needs to be money
22 available to hire qualify
23 paraprofessionals to provide
24 assistance and supports for our
25 children.

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2 Before I conclude, I just want
3 to say that although professional
4 development is offered, according to
5 the PFT contract, you cannot make a
6 teacher attend a professional
7 development class, meaning if a school
8 is in a corrective action too and you
9 know there's low reading scores, you
10 can't tell the teachers in that
11 building that they have to take
12 professional development in reading
13 or, you know, techniques in math.

14 It can be offered, they choose
15 which ones to go to, and that's
16 basically it.

17 So maybe a suggestion I can
18 offer -- and I'm not sure if this is
19 happening -- is City Council could
20 participate in the upcoming PFT
21 projects.

22 For example, I've heard
23 testimony offered by Councilwoman
24 Tasco and Councilman Jones that the
25 schools in their neighborhoods are not

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 performing adequately. Well if you're
3 sitting at the PFT negotiations, that
4 can be something that can be
5 negotiated, because clearly, nobody
6 wants to tolerate our children not
7 being able to get jobs in the City,
8 that they're educating them because
9 they lack the skills needed.

10 You don't want to have a whole
11 lot of public housing. People should
12 be able to buy a home. People should
13 have the opportunity to not want to
14 live here and go somewhere else and
15 still have the funds and resources
16 that they had need to up and go
17 somewhere else.

18 I heard Councilman Green
19 saying that his constituents can go to
20 Bucks County, but Southwest
21 Philadelphia people in West
22 Philadelphia don't have those
23 resources. We have to utilize the
24 education that we have.

25 And I shouldn't -- I shouldn't

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2 have to move because of the school
3 system; I should move because that's
4 what I want to do, not because I think
5 the system is failing my child.

6 In addition to children with
7 special needs, I shouldn't have to --
8 my son's homework should not be on
9 recycled School District memo because
10 that school is not necessarily
11 supported by one of the universities.
12 He should be able to go to any school
13 and get paper.

14 My personal experience is, my
15 son went to one school, Penn
16 Alexander. They have all the bells
17 and whistles. All his homework was in
18 color. He transferred to Morton --
19 good teacher, good principal. But,
20 again, homework coming on recycled
21 memo paper. You could hardly see the
22 ink. We had to ask the principal to
23 give her the science material so he
24 can be exposed to the science
25 curriculum so when he gets to third

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 grade, he's able to attempt to take
3 the PSSAs, which has a science
4 component on there.

5 I didn't have to fight like
6 that for materials at the other
7 schools. Why should I have to fight
8 like this for this school? And
9 they're in the same geographic area.

10 When African-Americans and
11 Latinos, when they catch a cold,
12 people with special needs catch the
13 flu, because they think of our
14 children as not being capable because
15 they do thing differently, and that
16 shouldn't be.

17 And as a result, what ends up
18 happening is, you have a lot of the
19 emotional-support students and
20 learning-support students saying, You
21 know what? I'm done, I'm tired of
22 being made fun with. When I get 18 or
23 16, I'm done, I'm out of here.

24 Those are the children you see
25 starting fights. Those are the

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2 children -- not all of them, but some
3 of them you see acting quirky or queer
4 with no job skills, can't get a job in
5 the -- maybe the penitentiary system,
6 can't keep a job.

7 I mean, we just -- these
8 children are forgotten, and I think
9 it's very important that they not be
10 forgotten.

11 But we need supports and
12 services for them. Nobody should have
13 to beg the School District to hire a
14 paraprofessional to support a child
15 that you know is having extreme
16 behaviors but you don't have enough
17 people to implement the behavior plan
18 for that child. So when that child
19 drops out, it's not reported, nobody
20 goes after them and says, "Come back."
21 They're glad that that child's gone.
22 That's one less behavior that has to
23 be dealt with.

24 So I'm asking -- or suggesting
25 to Council that, A, somebody sits at

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2 the table at these PFT negotiations
3 and find out what's going on, 'cause
4 not everything is the teacher; at the
5 same time, not everything is the
6 District. Again, with the
7 professional development they don't
8 have to go or they can't say, like I
9 said, Your school is failing, you need
10 to attend it.

11 If you're teaching a
12 special-education class, you need to
13 go to these different interventions
14 that apply different strategies for
15 children with special needs so that,
16 again, you spend less time on the
17 behavior and more time getting them
18 what they need so they can get a job
19 and be productive, you know, citizens
20 in our environment.

21 And that's all I have to say.
22 And I thank you for the opportunity.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: We
24 thank you for coming in to testify.
25 And we do have people here from the

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 School District who, I'm sure, are
3 making notes of what your concerns are.

4 MS. THOMPSON: I do want to add
5 one more thing. When it comes to the
6 supplies that the schools are getting,
7 again, I would suggest that those
8 Councilpeople whose districts are not
9 performing, that whenever school
10 starts -- September 4th or I forget the
11 date right now -- to go to those
12 schools. If they say bought books,
13 then every child in those schools that
14 are performing below basic should have
15 a book.

16 If -- again, Councilman Jones
17 or Tasco, those were the individuals I
18 heard testifying. If they see that
19 those children don't have a book, then
20 the question is, What did you do with
21 the money that we approved? Because
22 it's hard to learn if you don't have
23 the materials. And that would be my
24 last suggestion.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

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2 you.

3 And may I ask, do you belong
4 to the parent-teacher's association
5 with the school that your child goes
6 to?

7 MS. THOMPSON: I don't belong
8 to the Home and School 'cause they tend
9 to have their meetings at 3:30.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
11 sorry?

12 MS. THOMPSON: I don't -- I
13 belong to the general Home and School,
14 but I don't participate in the local
15 Home and School because they have those
16 meetings at 3:30, and sometimes I can't
17 take off of work to attend that. And
18 if it was at 5 o'clock, I could go, but
19 that time is inconvenient for working
20 parents.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
22 would agree with you. I think if there
23 were more parents who said that they
24 prefer the meeting to be held later in
25 the day that that could probably be

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2 arranged.

3 But I think that if you have
4 complaints such as the paper that your
5 child is using, that should definitely
6 be brought to the attention of the
7 principal.

8 MS. THOMPSON: I did bring it
9 to her attention after the fact, but I
10 guess my concern is, I shouldn't have
11 to --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
13 what happened after the fact?

14 MS. THOMPSON: Well, now he has
15 paper. And I don't know if it's paper
16 for my child because I said something
17 or if the kids in that particular
18 class, they're all getting paper. It
19 could be, We don't want no trouble,
20 just give her what she wants, and let
21 it be.

22 But it shouldn't be that way.
23 I shouldn't have my son in two
24 different schools, and one school has
25 paper because they're supported by the

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2 University of Penn, and one doesn't.

3 So then the question becomes:

4 What are you doing with the money?

5 We're talking about something as basic

6 as paper and ink. If you don't have

7 paper and ink, then you're going to

8 have problems.

9 I shouldn't even -- I mean,

10 I'm a product of public school, I went

11 on to graduate from college, and that

12 was never an issue. I went to Henry

13 C. Lee. We had a library, we had a

14 full librarian, and paper was never an

15 issue, so I guess I'm not

16 understanding --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It

18 should never be an issue, but I would

19 strongly urge you to become more

20 involved, you know, with the school

21 that your child is going to.

22 And I know that we do have

23 someone here from the School District,

24 and I think we have people here that

25 have listened very intently to what

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2 you had to say and will be certainly
3 looking into the issues.

4 MS. THOMPSON: Okay.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
6 you very much for coming in.

7 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
8 witness is Vernard Johnson.

9 MR. JOHNSON: We're also
10 concerned -- my name is Vernard
11 Johnson. And I don't know the lady who
12 just left the table could become any
13 more involved than she is, but if she
14 could find the time, God bless her.
15 I'm saying that to say that she is
16 probably one of the most active parents
17 that I know since the time we've been
18 doing this work.

19 And the question for me
20 becomes equity. What you have in your
21 hand is a media night that's happening
22 at the Barrett School in South
23 Philadelphia, Councilwoman, because we
24 have become concerned about the
25 services, or lack thereof, that

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2 children in special education and
3 special needs are having especially in
4 the District this year.

5 You know, when we first
6 started our work in South Philadelphia
7 six years ago -- and by the way, six
8 years ago, this time, this place was
9 full of people, union members hanging
10 out the rafters. People had a real
11 feel for public education six years
12 ago. And six years later, I guess
13 we'll all go home on time.

14 I'm trying to make a point
15 when I say that. There's something
16 going on in public education in this
17 town that has killed the spirit of a
18 lot of people, and we need to
19 seriously look at that.

20 But anyway, this is a meeting
21 that the School Reform Commission and
22 its group of parents, which included
23 the lady who just testified and myself
24 and others, are sponsoring this
25 meeting to look at the services that

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2 children of special needs are getting,
3 or not getting, and we invite you to
4 come to this meeting.

5 I wanted to make a couple
6 belief remarks; it sounds like the
7 remarks that I made 20 years ago. It
8 seems today, Councilwoman Blackwell,
9 that more kids than ever are taking
10 medication in school.

11 As a matter of fact, the
12 School District has a billing number,
13 which allows them to bill the State
14 for a nurse observing a child who is
15 taking medication in school. They've
16 gotten really sophisticated with it
17 these days.

18 We're not quite sure where the
19 dollars go when they're reimbursed;
20 they don't go back to the neighborhood
21 schools, where the children are having
22 trouble; they seem to go into some
23 general fund that may not be benefit
24 the children fall, and there may be a
25 need to have some type of hearing

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2 again just to find out, you know, what
3 happens to the dollars that the
4 District bills the Commonwealth for a
5 nurse watching someone take a pill.

6 The single-cultured schools is
7 not a local initiative; it is a
8 federal initiative. I don't know
9 where Councilman Green is, but it's a
10 federal initiative.

11 And this year, the School
12 District received \$3 million to
13 address the persistently dangerous and
14 the dangerous schools, and they're
15 supposed to create a manual of best
16 practices from the 11 persistently
17 dangerous schools that would be
18 adopted by the other 30 dangerous
19 schools that might fall into the
20 persistently dangerous category. And
21 then that road map could be used to
22 overlay the other schools that are
23 having problems.

24 We're concerned that the
25 people who are in the buildings

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2 haven't significantly trained,
3 sufficiently trained. And there were
4 some articles in the paper last week
5 and the week before that address some
6 of the concerns that some of us have
7 about how that money is being handled.

8 \$3 million and a 8.8 percent
9 reduction in reportable incidents
10 don't add up to me. I don't know.

11 The dropout rate. It seemed
12 like the District was having a problem
13 answering the dropout rate yesterday.
14 We've been asking them the same
15 questions, and we haven't been able to
16 get answers, but if you look at the
17 number of students who are going to
18 graduate from Furness this year,
19 Councilwoman, which is, you know, a
20 South Philadelphia school, our
21 understanding is that about 483
22 students entered into 9th grade; this
23 graduating class is now made up of 138
24 students, and we understand that 60 of
25 those students are not on target to

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 graduate Furness High School.

3 The EMOs, some have done well,
4 some have not. The \$25 million that's
5 attached to -- that's assigned to the
6 schools, we believe, should stay with
7 the schools and not follow the EMOs.

8 So if the EMO manages the
9 school or if the District manages the
10 school or if it's a corrective action
11 to school that's in year 3 or 4, in
12 the past, Judge Doris Smith called
13 those "the racially isolated schools."
14 We just want you to know that they're
15 the same schools.

16 No matter who's managing those
17 schools, we believe that the
18 \$25 million should stay with the
19 school. And someone might want to
20 talk to Representative Evans, who
21 designed the legislation that required
22 the \$25 million to stay in the school.

23 So when the District was
24 prepared last year to eliminate some
25 of the contracts, the EMOs were given

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2 a one-year reprieve because the
3 District wanted the 25 million.

4 Now. There's a question about
5 where 11, maybe 13 million of those
6 dollars go. The District somehow
7 takes those dollars off the top and
8 they disappear. And so we're not
9 quite sure where those dollars go, but
10 it's something that we'd ask you to
11 talk to your colleagues on the State
12 level about. Those dollars don't stay
13 with the children.

14 The homeless (indiscernible)
15 students is probably more now,
16 Councilwoman Blackwell, than it was
17 when we looked at it when Estelle
18 Richman was the Health Commissioner.
19 And we tried to address it then, and
20 we think that it's something that the
21 School District can't address by
22 themselves, and maybe we could work
23 with the District and others to
24 address the problem of homeless
25 children.

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2 But it also seems like where
3 the kids with the most challenges are
4 get the recycled paper. So we
5 understand that at Locke School in
6 your district, Edison and the School
7 District can't make a decision who
8 should buy books for the grades that's
9 increased. And I understand from
10 meeting last night with the president
11 of the Home and School at Locke,
12 attended the meeting, that when they
13 heard that Sulzberger School was going
14 to be closing, the Locke School ran to
15 Sulzberger to get the books because
16 they didn't have books of their own.

17 And it seems like the families
18 in Fairhill, in the Fairhill
19 community, that attends Hartranft
20 School also don't have books.

21 So I'm wondering, you know, is
22 it the school that service our
23 families that have the least, that
24 schools also have the least? And we'd
25 ask you to work with us to make sure

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2 that the least of those have the same
3 level of service that the Mastermans
4 and the Centrals have. We're calling
5 for equity across the board.

6 Art and music, we heard that
7 dance five years ago, six years ago
8 now, that art and music was going to
9 become a part of the core curriculum.
10 Well, we're hearing in the dance
11 again, that art and music are going to
12 become a part of the core curriculum.

13 My youngest daughter is an art
14 student who never had the opportunity
15 to take advantage of art in the school
16 system. And when we went over to
17 Drexel just to see what Drexel was
18 offering in the area of art or
19 technical design or whatever you might
20 call it, we saw a lot of the students
21 who didn't look like the students who
22 live around Drexel taking advantage of
23 scholarship opportunities because in
24 their schools in the neighborhoods
25 where they came from, they were able

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2 to have art and music.

3 And so our kids, even in areas
4 where God has given them the talent to
5 excel, we're not developing it, and it
6 needs to be developed, because our
7 kids -- there are just some areas they
8 just naturally excel in, and we're not
9 taking them to the next level.

10 The buildings are falling
11 down. As we understand it,
12 \$6.6 billion is what it's going to
13 take to rebuild the infrastructure of
14 these old buildings. We need
15 something like 3 million this year,
16 for the year coming in, just to open
17 up clean, safe, decent schools.

18 We still have too many schools
19 without water fountains. We were at
20 Fitzsimon School today, and they got
21 nice, brand-new water fountains but
22 they're still turned off, and there's
23 no water still sitting aside the
24 fountain that when the City and the
25 EPA told the District to turn the

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 water off years ago because of the
3 lead in the water, they were supposed
4 to put water next to those fountains
5 so the children could drink water.
6 There's still no water in the schools,
7 and someone testified today about our
8 kids having to buy water. So why
9 should our children have to buy water
10 to refresh themselves during the
11 course of the school day?

12 And, um, oh, this library
13 thing. I remember when Mr. Hornbeck
14 and Council held some hearings here
15 however long ago that was, talking
16 about libraries and how we can form
17 partnerships with the public library
18 system. Do you guys remember those
19 hearings? I remember very well we
20 stood back there took pictures, and
21 many of our schools still don't have
22 libraries.

23 It seems like we're going
24 around and around and around. And it
25 seems like that somebody has to put

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2 their foot down in managing,
3 monitoring the School District so we
4 don't keep talking about the same old
5 things 20 years later, 25 years later.
6 We're talking about the same things.

7 And I'll close with this, if I
8 find it... Well, I think I'm
9 finished.

10 Oh, let me say this. No, I'm
11 not done. The way they close schools?
12 They closed a school in your district,
13 Councilwoman Verna, the Pierce School,
14 24th and Christian. Closed it without
15 a hearing.

16 They had a hearing about
17 Sulzberger School, and I know
18 Councilwoman Blackwell was involved in
19 the community meetings, but the last
20 hearing around Sulzberger School took
21 place at 1 o'clock in the afternoon at
22 440 North Broad Street, and there
23 wasn't anybody there. I don't even
24 think they notified your office,
25 Councilwoman. I don't think they

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 notified Councilwoman Blackwell's
3 office about that hearing even though
4 she was involved, you know, diligently
5 around the community meeting that held
6 a hearing without anyone there.

7 And I say this: They intend
8 to take -- they intend to take the
9 Maya School- they intend to take the
10 Maya School from West Philadelphia and
11 relocate the Maya School from West
12 Philadelphia to the Pierce School in
13 South Philadelphia without giving the
14 people in the Pierce School community
15 an opportunity to say what they think
16 they can use that building for.

17 So if you have students who
18 are sitting at the Stanton School at
19 17th and Christian without an
20 auditorium, without a cafeteria,
21 having to walk down steps to get to
22 where they meet, and the Pierce School
23 is seven blocks up the street with a
24 nice auditorium and just a nice
25 building, a nice old, small building,

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 it seems like they would give the
3 people in South Philadelphia an
4 opportunity to say, Maybe we need to
5 be using the Pierce School and giving
6 those folks an opportunity to have
7 some input as opposed to taking a
8 school out of another neighborhood and
9 moving that school into your
10 neighborhood and then telling the
11 people from West Philadelphia that
12 they're going to have first
13 opportunity to attend that school.

14 And so I just wanted to say
15 that the way they're closing schools,
16 they're giving the community no real
17 impact. If the elected officials
18 don't get involved, like I believe
19 Councilwoman Blackwell and Senator
20 Williams are around the Turner School,
21 then our communities don't have any
22 say-so about what happens to 'em and
23 with those buildings.

24 And so there are 18- and 19-
25 and 20- and 21-year-olds who are

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 eligible for a free public education
3 that are in many of those communities
4 that those buildings could be used for
5 a number of things, and so we wish
6 that you would have a conversation
7 with the School District around the
8 way they're closing these buildings
9 without getting community input.

10 Thank you very much.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
12 you very much.

13 Are there any questions or
14 comments from members of the
15 committee?

16 (No questions or comments.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
18 Seeing none, this committee will stand
19 in recess in 5:30 this evening.

20 Thank you very much.

21 (Committee stands in recess at
22 4:30 p.m.)

23 (Proceedings resume.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
25 Council is now back in session

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 regarding Bill No. 080158 and 080159.

3 MR. McPHERSON: Our first group
4 this evening will be William Mackey.

5 (Witnesses come forward.)

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. MACKEY: Council President,
8 there's packages on the table.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
10 you.

11 MR. MACKEY: Quickly, you guys.

12 Thank you for taking us now
13 Councilwoman -- Council President.

14 (Addressing students.) Come
15 on, you guys. Got to hurry up.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
17 Please identify yourself for the
18 record.

19 MR. MACKEY: Yes. My name is
20 William Mackey, founder and executive
21 director of Citywide Youth Leadership
22 Agency.

23 STUDENT: Hi. My name is
24 Ayanna Adams.

25 STUDENT: Hi. My name is

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59

2 Dulcina Cook.

3 STUDENT: My name is Rodney

4 Cook.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

6 Please just sit there until they're

7 finished.

8 MR. MACKEY: Yes, ma'am.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

10 you.

11 MR. MACKEY: Okay. I want to

12 just say tonight thanks for giving us

13 the opportunity to testify. Over the

14 years, the Citywide Youth Leadership

15 Agency has had the pleasure of serving

16 young people in the City of

17 Philadelphia since 1981.

18 And I could just tell you,

19 Council President and these

20 Councilmembers, that this year has

21 been the most challenging and hardest

22 ever. This year, our budget was

23 160,000 for 100 students for 12

24 months.

25 And it's impossible. And I

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 don't know how we made it to April,
3 beginning of May, and still have our
4 young people around. We have no
5 staff. Our utilities is about to be
6 shut off. I'm not on payroll at the
7 agency for the last six months, and
8 I'm near 60 hours a week.

9 But nevertheless, I want to
10 tell you if we had our way what we
11 would do in the City of Philadelphia
12 to restore our program and resources
13 to our young people.

14 The first thing is in the
15 package is a letter from a gentleman
16 by the name of Michael Asbell, who's a
17 prominent developer in the City of
18 Philadelphia. He's now volunteering
19 to help Citywide build our youth mini
20 mall program, which we've been trying
21 to build for, I guess, 15 years. And
22 I'll get back to that.

23 We have requested from the
24 Nutter Administration to turn over
25 property at Ninth and Cecil B. Moore

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 so we could build a Stage I youth
3 educational entrepreneur center,
4 something like the one in the
5 Northeast. Young people in North
6 Philly can have a center like that to
7 go to for education and storefronts on
8 the first floor. I'm going to come
9 back to that.

10 Right now, I'm going to tell
11 you that a quarter million, 250,000,
12 young people in the City of
13 Philadelphia are at risk, and there's
14 many -- there's four major elements
15 that make that at-risk happens to
16 them.

17 One of 'em is, 25 percent of
18 those young people are engaging -- 25
19 percent of those young people have
20 access to handguns. Twenty-five
21 percent of a quarter million young
22 people have access to handguns.

23 I'm going to tell you today
24 that 50 percent of a quarter million
25 students are indulging in some form of

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 narcotics. Fifty percent of a quarter
3 million students are indulging in some
4 form of narcotics.

5 I'm also going to tell you
6 that 25 percent of the students that
7 are average students have nothing to
8 do after school. And some of the --
9 I'm just going to tell it the way it
10 is, like I always do.

11 Some of them after-school
12 programs is really not challenging to
13 them. They not fun because they not
14 in charge. We promote -- we proposed
15 with Shelly Yanoff ten years ago to do
16 a Youth Commission, and I'm glad you
17 have a Youth Commission now. But I'm
18 going to tell you, it's a little late.

19 You need a Youth Crime
20 Commission. You need young people to
21 have chapters throughout the City, and
22 they need to have they own youth-based
23 organizations that they run. That is
24 college students in there that
25 administer the program with them but

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2 they have self-control.

3 And I need a school I.D. card.

4 Anybody have a school I.D. card? I'm

5 going to show you something, Council

6 President. I'm going to be brief.

7 I'm going to show you this.

8 Ten years ago, we proposed to

9 the Street Administration -- and I got

10 comments from the School District the

11 other day to bring it up again.

12 If you took -- and we

13 demonstrated this here a couple of

14 years ago. If you took a school I.D.

15 card, right, and you made it work at

16 SEPTA and they scan that I.D. card and

17 it logs in, right? So Governor

18 Rendell, last year, when SEPTA said

19 they was going on strike, he kind of

20 pitched it a little bit --

21 (Councilwoman Blackwell enters

22 chamber.)

23 MR. MACKEY: Hi, Councilwoman.

24 Now, if you take this same

25 school card and make it a library

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 card, I could tell you right now, that
3 very few -- that the library's not
4 utilized 25 percent by the public
5 school students but this I.D. card
6 could be a library card too.

7 You like it, don't you,
8 Councilman? Oh, you going to love it,
9 it's going to get better. 'Cause
10 guess what? It could be a health card
11 to go into the health centers. They
12 could use this card for DHS. They
13 could use this card as a curfew card.
14 They could use this card for they
15 after-school programs. They scan it
16 and then you load it, and then the
17 School District says to that cluster,
18 to that area, This kid's profile for
19 success -- to succeed for success is
20 loaded. He needs 15 hours of this, 15
21 hours of this.

22 And that's how the community
23 groups get they money, 'cause right
24 now, everybody, let's hustle. You get
25 so many kids, you don't know what the

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2 need is. You get sign-in sheet, you
3 count 'em in. That's how you measure
4 it, and you should do the
5 demonstration on 250 students that's
6 at risk by area.

7 And all you do first is, you
8 get all of the computer people, the
9 smart people, in all those places, you
10 put 'em in a room, you make the
11 computers talk to each other. That's
12 number one.

13 Then, number two, you set up
14 the service providers. All those
15 groups I told you, they set up a
16 service provider system, and they do
17 the services.

18 And then you set up the
19 deliverable system. That's all those
20 groups of kids that actually fill
21 people that work with young people and
22 have that. So you got three: You got
23 the computers, you got the managers,
24 and then you have the deliverables.

25 We proposed this. And when I

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2 proposed this, I got punished when I
3 told the other people they didn't know
4 what they was doing. You know what
5 people I'm talking about. I got
6 punished. I thought they was my
7 friends. That's what happened.

8 It's ready to go more today
9 than ever. It's in here, we proposed
10 it, we'll be happy to demonstrate for
11 any committee you have.

12 But let me go back to this
13 youth center. We have a million-
14 dollar grant that a good friend of
15 mine told me about. If I ever could
16 get that grant -- his name is
17 Councilman Curtis Jones -- then I
18 would be lucky.

19 We have a state grant that's
20 sitting in PIDC for a million dollars,
21 and we proposed to build this real
22 nice entrepreneur training center in
23 north central Philadelphia, with a
24 alternative school on top where a lot
25 of young people come.

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2 We have two requests for you,
3 and then I'm going to be quiet.

4 One is, will you please ask
5 this administration to find us some
6 money in this fiscal year? I sent
7 them the bills. It's detailed, it's
8 narrowed out this fiscal year.

9 Because you know what? Did you ever
10 watch that Will Smith movie? That's
11 how Mackie's going to be next week.
12 I'm going to be homeless with me and
13 my son, and I will be here camping out
14 at somebody's store and I'll really be
15 getting thrown out of Council.

16 But more so, Citywide, stand
17 up.

18 (Citywide kids stand up.)

19 MR. MACKEY: This is half of my
20 group.

21 I have no snack money, I have
22 no tokens, I have no staff.

23 And have a seat you guys.

24 Thank you.

25 And in this community that

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 they come from is the ones you see on
3 TV every weekend. You just punch that
4 thing on Thursday, and by Sunday
5 afternoon, you see all the shootings
6 and all the violence and all the --
7 that's the 250,000 people that we're
8 talking about.

9 So we have no money now. We
10 ask that this Council consider putting
11 us in the budget for '09, I guess, and
12 help us build this entrepreneurship
13 training center.

14 And the last thing is to allow
15 us to come do a demonstration on this
16 youth resource card. If you allow us
17 to do it, I bet you it will work, and
18 I'll bet you we help really be able to
19 evaluate, demonstrate, reduce
20 violence, produce leaders in the City
21 of Philadelphia.

22 I'm good tonight though, ain't
23 I? 'Cause I'm broke.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
25 Mr. Mackey, did I understand you to say

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2 that your budget --

3 MR. MACKEY: Was 160 for 12
4 months.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
6 165,000?

7 MR. MACKEY: No, 160. I wish
8 it was --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: 160.

10 MR. MACKEY: It's 160 current
11 through Safe and Sound, and we have put
12 all the records back through Safe and
13 Sound and asked their president, Ernie
14 Jones, to take a look at it. We have
15 put all of their necessary documents
16 that they asked for over and over with
17 the budget for my fiduciary test. And
18 it's a (indiscernible) audit. We have
19 bills that haven't been paid. I have
20 told the phone company for six months
21 the check was in the mail. The lady
22 said, "If its not there tomorrow,
23 Mr. Mackey, I'm cutting your phones
24 off."

25 We have no money. We only

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2 allowed to spend one-twelfth of 160
3 per month.

4 And let me say this to you,
5 Councilwoman. This is one that's for
6 Miss Councilwoman Tasco.

7 Councilwoman Tasco, I think
8 one time last week, we was testifying
9 here, and people could like me or
10 don't like me, but I think the message
11 is always good. When Citywide has
12 funding, you all know we out there
13 doing a lot all the time. Nobody can
14 doubt it.

15 We have professional people
16 with us right now. As soon as I get
17 all of my students back and get
18 college students trained and other
19 people, I have to turn 'em away, and
20 I'm afraid that's what's going to
21 happen again.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I
23 would just like to get this clear in my
24 mind. Were you given --

25 (Councilwoman Sanchez enters

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2 chambers.)

3 MR. MACKEY: Hi, Councilwoman.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Were
5 you given 13,000 a month from Safe and
6 Sound?

7 MR. MACKEY: Let me give it to
8 you: It's 13,000 a month to pay for
9 rent, electric, insurance, staff, which
10 we have one maintenance guy, and one
11 computer lady. Nobody else.

12 Transportation tokens, snacks,
13 janitorial supplies and all for 13.
14 And the fiduciary has to get his cut.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Oh.
16 And when was the last time you received
17 a check from Safe and Sound?

18 MR. MACKEY: Our fiduciary
19 receive a reimbursement once a month.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Once
21 a month?

22 MR. MACKEY: They submit the
23 bills and they receive a reimbursement.

24 It's never -- right now, when
25 we -- when these young people come to

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2 the after-school program, we had
3 college work study students who money
4 has run out, so they getting ready to
5 stop coming. I can't even hire 'em.

6 And we have no tokens. I
7 borrow money from everybody in the
8 neighborhood to buy these kids tokens.
9 I'm really ashamed because I have more
10 pride than that, but my determination
11 not to give up is what keeps me going.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Okay.
13 And you have sent a letter to Mayor
14 Nutter?

15 MR. MACKEY: Mayor Nutter, with
16 the backup documentation; Dr. Schwartz;
17 the Managing Director's Office;
18 Mr. Ernie Jones Verna all right.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: All
20 right.

21 MR. MACKEY: And everybody
22 else.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Now,
24 did you send them a budget that you
25 would like to see?

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2 MR. MACKEY: Absolutely. A
3 detailed budget prepared by a
4 fiduciary.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: When
6 was that sent to the Mayor?

7 MR. MACKEY: Two months. And
8 if you know, me every other day I fax
9 it and call 'em. And had these
10 students call 'em too and Councilman
11 Clarke. You know I call all the time.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Okay.

13 Are there any questions or
14 comments from members of the
15 committee?

16 (No questions or comments.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
18 you.

19 Do you want your two students
20 there to identify themselves?

21 MR. MACKEY: Absolutely.

22 MS. ADAMS: Hi. My name is
23 Ayanna Adams.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: You'r
25 e going to have to speak into the

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2 microphone.

3 MS. ADAMS: Hello. My name is
4 Ayanna Adams, and I've been going to
5 Citywide, and my brother went there
6 when he was younger.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
8 You're going to have to pull the
9 microphone closer to you.

10 MR. MACKEY: Talk into the mic.

11 MS. ADAMS: I am talking into
12 the mic.

13 And Citywide is a place where
14 you come to do your homework or get
15 the information from people, and they
16 give you a summer job and...

17 MR. MACKEY: Tell them about
18 your brother.

19 MS. ADAMS: I told her. My
20 brother went there when he was younger,
21 and they gave him summer jobs every
22 time he came and they gave him stipends
23 and stuff so he had money during the
24 summer so he wouldn't get in trouble.
25 So that was a place where he could go

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2 to stay out of trouble.

3 MR. MACKEY: Good.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
5 you very much.

6 Please identify yourself for
7 the record.

8 MS. COOKE: Hi. My name is
9 Dulcina Cooke, and I go to Dobbins High
10 School.

11 Basically, I think that we
12 need support in Citywide because, you
13 know, a lot of youth nowadays, we
14 don't have anywhere's to go. And,
15 like, we need programs during the
16 summer because, like, you know, you
17 see a lot of kids fighting and, you
18 know, doing a lot of stuff they
19 shouldn't be doing, and that's because
20 we don't have anything to do, so we
21 just find other things to do, like
22 stuff to get in trouble and stuff.

23 So we really need a lot of
24 support at Citywide because if, you
25 know, with support at Citywide, you

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2 know, it would be more stuff for the
3 kids to do. A lot of kids would be
4 off the street, and it would just
5 help, you know, the community.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
7 you.

8 Mr. Mackey, where do you meet
9 now?

10 MR. MACKEY: This is really
11 going to be hard. About a year ago, we
12 got evicted out of a facility -- about
13 a year, ago we got evicted out of a
14 facility. We been there for 15 years
15 and had invested a lot of money when
16 Safe and Sound cut our grant and we
17 couldn't pay the rent.

18 We had a miniature golf course
19 in North Philadelphia on this lot at
20 910 West Cecil B. Moore. And one
21 night, we had two big trailers put on
22 the lot and electric.

23 We meet at trailers in north
24 central Philadelphia. It's not
25 adequate space and it's very

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2 expensive. Once a week, we have to
3 pay for a waste company to come in and
4 do the waste and do the water. And we
5 owe him \$15,000, and he's only doing
6 it because when he comes over, he sees
7 us servicing young people.

8 I have not enough desks in my
9 office, but fortunately, we've been
10 able to put the Internet service on,
11 our computers on, and some other
12 stuff. And I've just been blessed
13 with good young people; I could tell
14 you that.

15 I've really -- in the old
16 days, I would overspend and be in
17 trouble. And now, I don't have
18 anything to spend. I would rather be
19 in trouble for overspending and taking
20 my young people on college tours and
21 buying them pizza in the evening and
22 helping them with books and sneaks and
23 stuff like that and incentives than,
24 right now, ducking everybody. I duck
25 everybody. I literally duck everybody

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2 now 'cause I owe everybody. And I
3 still do it for my young people.

4 And it's painful. It really
5 is. I'm a real proud person, but I
6 would do anything for these young
7 people. I have pleaded with the
8 Nutter administration all year long to
9 look into our funding situation. And
10 I guess they trying to figure out
11 what's going on. I have pleaded to
12 Mr. Jones.

13 And I just want to say this at
14 the end: You know, people can say
15 what they want about me, but I have
16 had a professional fiduciary to
17 prepare the accounting records and
18 everything.

19 All these students right here
20 is doing 500-word essays. They can't
21 commend the program without the report
22 cards. I mean, we running a real
23 tight ship right now. And I'm just
24 proud.

25 And anybody can come to the

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2 door and do an imprompt [sic] visit.
3 The place is clean, it's ran tight,
4 it's good.

5 And when I spoke to the other
6 administration, it was not -- I'm
7 going to say this. With all of the
8 money that has been spent in the last
9 eight years on youth services,
10 Philadelphia should be the model, but
11 I have -- like I told you before last
12 time, I must have a twin brother
13 'cause everything I proposed over
14 there they tried to duplicate. And a
15 lot of times when you duplicate, it's
16 a fake and it don't work.

17 And I just have to tell the
18 truth. We empower young people to get
19 into the community to do the things
20 they need to do and build pride. It's
21 no pride with young people right now.

22 If we had that money and had
23 our regular budget right now, these
24 kids would be on TV every month doing
25 community-service projects, the mock

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2 trial, the computer lab, the youth
3 mini mall presentation, the arts and
4 culture division, our health division.
5 We had a health patrol. We did a
6 blight arrest patrol. We went around
7 the City and removed blight.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
9 you.

10 The Chair recognizes --

11 MR. Mackey: We even had
12 neighborhood cookouts -- just one more.
13 We even had neighborhood cookouts where
14 we outcooked Councilman Jones one time.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: The
16 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

17 COUNCILWOMAN Tasco: I --

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Oh,
19 your light was on.

20 COUNCILWOMAN Tasco: No.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Okay.

22 MR. Mackey: Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
24 you.

25 MR. Mackey: Thank you,

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 Councilman. Thank you, Councilpeople.
3 Thank you, Council President
4 Councilwoman, thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
6 You're welcome. Thank you very much.

7 MR. Mackey: Stand up, you
8 guys.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. Mackey: You did a great
11 job.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Okay.
13 Our next witness?

14 MR. McPherson: Our next panel
15 is the PDR Swimming Team, Marcus Foster
16 Pool.

17 (Witnesses come forward.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
19 evening. Please identify yourself for
20 the record and proceed with your
21 testimony.

22 MR. Major: Good evening. I'm
23 Mike Major. I'm the president of the
24 PDR or Marcus Foster PDR Parents
25 Advisory Group. In addition to myself,

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2 there are a number of other children
3 who want to also make an appeal this
4 evening.

5 We're here because of the pool
6 closings in general and the closing of
7 Marcus Foster in particular. I took a
8 look at some statistics. And, you
9 know, there are approximately 175 rec
10 centers throughout the City, and
11 imagine the impact of closing 63 of
12 them. And that's what has happened
13 recently, where about 4 of the 11
14 pools are run by the School District
15 have been closed, which represents
16 about 36 percent of the pools.

17 I just had a couple of
18 questions for the School District.
19 One is, you know, how did things get
20 to this point? Who knew about the
21 problem before it got to the point of
22 having to close the pools?

23 And then the follow-up
24 question is: What are the -- what
25 about the remaining seven pools; are

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2 they headed for the same result? What
3 is the impact of closing Marcus
4 Foster?

5 Located in the Nicetown
6 section of Philadelphia, the pool was
7 first opened in 1980 as a brand-new
8 facility, contrary to how it was
9 portrayed in the movie "Pride," which
10 shows it as a broken-down facility.
11 It was named after the former
12 principal of Simon Gratz High School,
13 and it recently became one of the four
14 pools that has been closed by the
15 School District.

16 The following statistics are
17 supported by the USA Swimming
18 Foundation website:

19 Nine people drown each day in
20 the United States.

21 In ethnically diverse
22 communities, the youth drowning rate
23 is two to three times higher than the
24 national average.

25 One in three kids in the

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2 United States is overweight and at
3 risk for obesity-related diseases.

4 From September 2007 until
5 April of 2008, when the pool was
6 recently shut down, Marcus Foster did
7 its share to counteract the above
8 numbers.

9 Forty-five children learned to
10 swim at the Marcus Foster Swimming
11 Pool. Note: More of that could have
12 been taught, but the condition of the
13 pool required the cancellation of two
14 classes.

15 The April (indiscernible)
16 swimming class had a waiting list of
17 60 children.

18 The September 2008 class, that
19 will have to be cancelled, already has
20 a waiting list.

21 The 2008 summer camp season
22 will see approximately 400 children
23 impacted by the closing of the Marcus
24 Foster Swimming Pool. And one of the
25 camp directors is here this evening,

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2 Sandy Allen, from Zion Baptist Church.

3 In addition to that, the
4 summer season of 2008 will also see
5 children of the Nicetown community
6 with no local place to swim this
7 summer.

8 While those are the facts
9 about looking back, I'm also going to
10 try to look forward, as we talk about
11 how we -- and I want to emphasize
12 we -- can solve this problem.

13 I noticed on the School
14 District's five year financial plan
15 the discussion of a shared services
16 task force that talks about
17 after-school programming in general
18 and swimming in particular.

19 Every day, from about 4
20 o'clock until 7:30, I know where my
21 child is: She's in the pool,
22 practicing. And if, indeed, as the
23 Safe Night Initiative indicates and
24 sponsored also by the School District,
25 most violence happens between 3:30 and

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2 5:30 p.m., then we need more programs
3 that not only keep kids off the street
4 but provide for not just structured
5 programming but the opportunity for
6 much more.

7 I just want to give you a
8 couple of facts about the team, and
9 I'll be done.

10 It's coached by Jim Ellis. Jim
11 has recently served as the US National
12 Team coach. Tracy, who you will be
13 hearing from, was the first African-
14 American swimmer to qualify for the
15 Middle Atlantic Zone All-Star Team. And
16 Matt Scanlon, who's also a middle school
17 teacher at Baldi, Matt swam at Weidner
18 University.

19 The team was founded in 1971
20 and has had a long-storied history of
21 success, beginning at Sayre Middle
22 School and moving to Marcus Foster Rec
23 Center in 1980. PDR swimmers have
24 competed internationally and nationally
25 at the highest levels of the sport.

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2 Consistent with Coach Ellis's
3 desire to expose swimmers to other parts
4 of the country and different lifestyles,
5 PDR swimmers have competed in such
6 places as: Paris, France; Rio de
7 Janeiro, Brazil; Sidney, Australia, and
8 Fukoalma zzz, Japan internationally; and
9 in 17 states; and in over 29 US cities,
10 including Boca Raton; Orlando; Ft.
11 Lauderdale, Florida; Mission Viejo;
12 Pasadena, California; and Honolulu,
13 Hawaii.

14 As an educator himself, Coach
15 Ellis knows the value of education. PDR
16 swimmers using lessons learned under his
17 tutelage have gone on to compete at some
18 of the top institutions of higher
19 learning in America, including:
20 Dartmouth University, the University of
21 Pennsylvania, Princeton University,
22 Howard University, University of
23 Virginia, Northwestern University,
24 Swarthmore University, and the
25 University of Pittsburgh, to name a few.

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2 PDR swimmers have also competed
3 at the 1992, '96, and 2000 Olympic
4 trials. During the period of over 13
5 years, PDR had no fewer than two
6 swimmers listed among the national age
7 group top 16 rankings. PDR swimmers
8 have represented the United States in
9 the Pan American games and the Pan
10 Pacific games. Team swimmers have also
11 held three junior national records and
12 one junior national east record and four
13 national age group records. In
14 addition, we have a number of our
15 swimmers who are on the team today who
16 have achieved and won numerous awards.

17 And I guess one of my
18 questions, one of my frustrations over
19 the years has been, how could a team
20 with this kind of success not have
21 received virtually any support at all
22 from the School District and from the
23 City of Philadelphia?

24 And with that, I'll shut up
25 because there are a whole bunch of other

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2 folks who want to talk as well.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. FREELAND: Good evening.

5 My name is Tracy Freeland. I'm an

6 assistant coach with PDR.

7 And Mike pretty much said

8 everything about the program. I'm a

9 product of the program. I started

10 with the program when I was four years

11 old. I'm 40 years old right now.

12 Every day, we started at Sayre

13 Recreational Center. My mother would

14 drive 45 minutes, my brother and I, to

15 practice and back every day, Monday

16 through Saturday, from 3:30 to 6. And

17 it was a vehicle for us to do

18 something.

19 I traveled all over the

20 country because of swimming, and if I

21 have swimming, I wouldn't have been

22 able to travel all over the country.

23 I grew up in a single-parent family.

24 And in 1980, we moved to Marcus

25 Foster. I've seen it deteriorate from

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2 1980 to 2008 without too much
3 maintenance going on.

4 I earned a full scholarship to
5 Howard University, and without
6 swimming, I don't think I would have
7 been able to go to college. I know my
8 mother wouldn't have been able to pay
9 for college. So I'm a product of the
10 team.

11 As soon as I graduated from
12 college, I pursued my career in
13 education. I've been teaching health
14 and physical education for 18 years
15 and have been coaching and giving back
16 to what PDR gave to me for the past 18
17 years.

18 Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

21 MS. LUZIER: For the record, my
22 name is Sharon Luzier, and my children
23 swim on the PDR Swim Team.

24 We have some information that
25 we passed out. Along with that is a

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2 document, a petition that was
3 circulated by the Nicetown CDC, with
4 400 signatures of people who live in
5 that immediate vicinity who are
6 protesting the closing of the pool.

7 Earlier this month, as I was
8 preparing my regular evening, which
9 was sending my kids off to swim
10 practice and then to leave work in
11 time to pick them up along with a
12 number of other children from our
13 neighborhood, I got a call about a
14 half an hour later and was told that
15 the pool was closed indefinitely. And
16 this was a couple of weeks after at
17 least five kids from the swim team
18 swam, including my children, swam in
19 the Junior Olympics. So it was just
20 such a downer for the children.

21 This is a superior-ranked
22 swimming team. The coach, Tracy,
23 doesn't -- is modest in his skills.
24 He could coach anywhere. Jim Ellis
25 could coach anywhere. People all over

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2 the country have tried to get them to
3 leave Marcus Foster, leave the kids
4 behind, but they have a dedication to
5 this team that is just quite
6 remarkable.

7 We're -- the City of
8 Philadelphia is privileged to have
9 such coaches that can take kids, get
10 them into the ranks of the elite swim
11 meets that they often take children
12 to.

13 The facility is Marcus Foster.
14 I passed out some pictures. They were
15 pretty bad. There were always puddles
16 everywhere. When it rained outside,
17 it seemed like it was raining even
18 harder inside.

19 But there were a lot of bright
20 and cheerful things always going on
21 there. There were inspirational
22 bullet boards, Swimmer of the Month,
23 there were lots of children taking
24 swim lessons there who would come
25 early to watch the swim team practice

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2 and be motivated, and a number of the
3 on the swim team now were children who
4 were taught how to swim in the swim
5 lessons that go on there.

6 Even with such facilities, you
7 often thought, Why are these
8 facilities so run down? Why is a hose
9 from the utility closet piping hot
10 water into the pool all the time?

11 But meanwhile, the kids were
12 competing very well, going throughout
13 East Coast: the Black History Meet in
14 Washington, D.C., which children from
15 all over the country attend; the
16 Junior Olympics; the Pan American; the
17 Olympic time trials; and other elite
18 meets, right along with the kids from
19 the private swim clubs that have so
20 much beautiful facilities and cameras
21 under water that analyze their strokes
22 and things along those lines.

23 But we had Jim and Tracy, the
24 superior coaches that, without such
25 amenities, were able to do comparable

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2 things with our kids.

3 And I think what we really
4 would like the Council to know is that
5 we are aware that the School District
6 has acknowledged serious problems with
7 the pool and how much they cost to
8 run; that is certainly a reality.

9 They have indicated that they don't
10 have money to make repairs and that a
11 shared service task force will examine
12 the pool situation. We also read the
13 newspapers and see that such task
14 forces have been established many
15 times before and have not really gone
16 very far.

17 And I guess what we want the
18 City Council and the School District
19 to know is that these are really kids
20 in great programs that are waiting for
21 these decisions and suffering as a
22 result of the School District's lack
23 of maintenance of these pools. And we
24 just hope that this situation will
25 stay in the forefront of your mind.

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2 Again, I have the petitions
3 from the Nicetown CDC. Unfortunately,
4 no one could appear from there today
5 'cause they're having their board
6 elections tonight, and everyone has to
7 be there for that, of course. But
8 it's signed by 400 of the neighbors in
9 the immediate area of the pool.

10 I'd like to have the swimmers
11 just stand up for a minute. Many of
12 them are wearing their medals, and
13 those are all medals that they've been
14 to --

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. LUZIER: And I believe that
17 maybe one or two of them might have
18 something very brief to say, if that's
19 okay.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
21 would just like to ask a question,
22 please. What is the cost estimate to
23 repair the pool? Does anybody know?

24 MR. MAJOR: No, we don't know.
25 Typically, the pool -- as a volunteer

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2 parents group, our focus is really on
3 the team and swimming. The details of
4 the facility and the cost of operations
5 we don't have any exposure to at all.

6 The School Board really runs
7 the pool. They came in one day and
8 said, "We're done. You're done."

9 (Addressing Mr. Freeland.) Go
10 ahead, Tracy.

11 MR. FREELAND: The School
12 Board, they just locked the doors of
13 the pool. And they put it in the
14 Capital Budget. You know, we don't
15 have any say or have any knowledge of
16 what's going on or how much it costs to
17 fix.

18 All I know is -- I don't know
19 what that means exactly, but it's
20 going to Capital Budget, and it's just
21 closed indefinitely.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Is
23 anybody from the School District here
24 that could respond to this?

25 (School District rep in

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2 audience stands up.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Do
4 you mind approaching the witness table?

5 The Chair recognizes
6 Councilman Kenney.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

8 Just one related question. I
9 would expect that if money could be
10 found to do the repairs, it would
11 probably need to close it during the
12 course of the repairs. Have you
13 anticipated a location where you could
14 continue to practice and train and
15 compete while that work would be going
16 on?

17 MR. MAJOR: Yeah. We
18 secured -- Jim has a number of
19 relationships throughout the City and
20 so he has spoken with the coaches at
21 LaSalle.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

23 MR. MAJOR: And right now, we
24 are practicing there on a temporary
25 basis.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It

5 sounds like a wonderful, wonderful

6 program.

7 (Addressing School Board rep.)

8 Do you mind taking the witness table?

9 The Chair recognizes

10 Councilman Jones.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Also, I

12 acknowledge that great team that you

13 have, and I look with pride at the

14 young people and their accomplishments.

15 As a former track coach, I know what

16 that feeling is through the eyes of a

17 child being able to see them achieve.

18 One of the options also is the

19 pool being built on Wissahickon Avenue

20 by Reverend Bonnie (sp.), which

21 they're trying to build an

22 Olympics-sized pool, which is in the

23 4th Councilmatic District, by the way.

24 And that -- is that a

25 long-term goal of yours to locate in

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2 that facility?

3 MR. MAJOR:

4 MS. LUZIER: That would be a
5 dream of ours, certainly.

6 MR. MAJOR: Yeah, I'm actually
7 a part of the campaign leadership team
8 trying to raise the funds.

9 Right now, yes, the Salvation
10 Army received a grant from the Joan
11 Kroc Foundation to build a super
12 community center. They've got the
13 funding -- or they're raving the
14 funding for that.

15 In addition, there is a
16 separate campaign being run right now,
17 trying to generate anywhere between 6
18 to about \$15 million to build either a
19 25-by -- a 25-meter-by-25-yard pool;
20 or, as you indicated, to build dream,
21 which would be an Olympic-sized
22 50-meter pool.

23 But challenge right now is
24 that it all has to come from private
25 funds. So if anybody has any deep

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2 pockets, we need to know.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm just --
4 long-term, it is the Salvation Army's
5 interest to recruit them there. The
6 difference between a 25- and a 50-meter
7 pool is what is the difference between
8 the \$4 million or so that it takes to
9 build it. That's just as a point of
10 information, Madam President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
12 That's fine. Thank you.

13 MS. BOLGER: Hello. Carly
14 Bolger, School District of
15 Philadelphia.

16 I don't have the figures with
17 me on the cost to repairing the pool,
18 but I'd be happy to get them for you
19 by tomorrow.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: If
21 they are in the Capital Budget?

22 MS. BOLGER: I'd imagine they
23 are.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: When
25 it would be anticipated that work would

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2 be started and what is the completion
3 date for the repairs.

4 MS. BOLGER: I'd be happy to
5 get that for you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
7 you.

8 MS. BOLGER: You're welcome.

9 MR. FREELAND: Can I say one
10 more thing, please?

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
12 Please.

13 MR. FREELAND: A bigger --
14 something that's really important is,
15 in the summertime, that pool is --
16 houses a lot of kids. It's where kids
17 go to hang out all day. And you know
18 how it is in the summertime with
19 violence. I really -- it's very
20 important for you to try to get the
21 pool fixed by the summertime.

22 Like I said, that pool is
23 where kids hang out for somewhere to
24 be safe. You know, 3, 400 kids come
25 there a day for safety, you know,

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2 because they don't want to be on the
3 streets.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: How
5 long has the pool been closed?

6 MR. FREELAND: For about four
7 weeks now.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: They
9 probably have to put that out for
10 bidding. I just don't know what the
11 status of that is, but we will hear
12 from the School District.

13 Who is your District
14 Councilperson?

15 MS. LUZIER: Councilwoman
16 Miller.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
18 Miller? Okay. We will follow through
19 with this with Councilwoman Miller too,
20 and I would suggest you be in
21 communication with her.

22 But we will get the
23 information. I just don't see how
24 it's possible.

25 Do we have somebody from the

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2 School District to say whether it's
3 possible that this would be rehabbed
4 by summer? In all likelihood, I don't
5 personally see it happening. I'm sure
6 you don't know what the status of that
7 is at this point, do you?

8 MS. BOLGER: Not off the top of
9 my head. I could call back to the
10 office right now to find out.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Would
12 you, please.

13 (Two young swim team members
14 come to witness table.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Okay.
16 Do you want to identify yourself for
17 the record. Good evening.

18 PDR SWIMMER: Good evening. My
19 name is Deja (sp.?), and I'm a swimmer
20 on PDR, and I was just writing
21 something out of the blue after I read
22 the newspaper with my mom and stuff
23 like that.

24 My team, my wonderful team,
25 the team that changed Philly, but is

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2 it known? No. There is a team out
3 there that we need to recognize. My
4 coach, Jim Ellis, is trying to make a
5 change in our communities. He has
6 coached many black people. He has the
7 discipline. Some of his students are
8 on the way to the Junior Olympics.
9 Don't you see the promise? Coach
10 Ellis puts his whole heart into the
11 team. He tries to help kids succeed.

12 The City needs to start
13 thinking about our young people. You
14 say we need change in Philadelphia.
15 Well, there are people in Philadelphia
16 who really do want to make change,
17 like, for example, my coach.

18 Here you have a golden
19 opportunity to change Philly, but you
20 just brush it aside. You say that
21 young people need to get off of the
22 street. Well, what about PDR? My
23 team has children in the pool often.
24 After they come home from school, they
25 go straight to swimming, from 5 p.m.

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2 through 8 p.m. or 4 p.m. through 7
3 p.m.

4 My question is: Why shut it
5 down? Just because you can't afford
6 to fix a pool doesn't mean anything.
7 You have enough money for new building
8 and to fix streets; why not for people
9 trying to make a change?

10 (Applause.)

11 (Cheers.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Do
13 you want to identify yourself for the
14 record.

15 PDR Swimmer: Hi. I'm Howard.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Hi,
17 Howard.

18 PDR Swimmer: Okay. I've been
19 on PDR two-and-a-half years, and it
20 took me one year to come and be known
21 as -- because I went to the Junior
22 Olympics. Now, it took me hard work
23 and good coaching from Tracy and Jim.
24 It took, like, uh... Wait. It took a
25 lot of work and, like, the coach liked

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2 to make it to the JO's. It takes a lot
3 of time. You work hard and you do a
4 lot of stuff.

5 If you close down this pool,
6 then that would take a lot of things
7 away from people. And, like, people
8 could get lazy judge and just eat a
9 lot of food and get fat. Like with
10 swimming, you lose weight, you feel
11 good about yourself instead of just
12 saying, "Man, I'm a slob, I just do
13 nothing" should they shut down that
14 pool.

15 So I was just saying, like,
16 that pool means a lot to everybody.
17 Everybody had joined and came into
18 that pool and swam. We had started
19 swimming lessons at that pool. And,
20 like, when that pool is closed, where
21 we going to have those swimming
22 lessons for the people who want to
23 swim?

24 So I was just saying that if
25 you going to, like, not close down the

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2 pool, PDR. That's it.

3 (Applause.)

4 (Cheers.)

5 MS. LUZIER: This is one of our
6 swimming leaders here.

7 (Witness comes forward.)

8 PDR SWIMMER: Okay. Hi. I'm
9 Chelsea. I'm one of the oldest people
10 on the team.

11 I've been swimming with PDR
12 for about seven, eight years. I
13 started out with Tracy and I moved up
14 to Jim, and over the years, they've
15 really helped me not only evolve as a
16 swimmer but as a person also
17 through -- like, we have morning
18 practices and it's a lot of hard work
19 and dedication and giving up so much
20 to do to swim.

21 And so, when you shut down our
22 pool, what do we do after school? Now
23 you find something other to do. I
24 guess swimming kind of provided us
25 with an alternate, like, solution to

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2 do or something to do after school.
3 So we go to the pool and we swim. And
4 it's a lot better than what half of my
5 friends do or most of my friends do.

6 And, like Tracy said, he got a
7 scholarship, so he inspired us to keep
8 swimming 'cause most of our parents --
9 or some of our parents, I should say,
10 can't afford to pay for college, so
11 swimming is our road to college.

12 So when you cut off our
13 resource, like when we don't have a
14 pool to practice at, it kind of cuts
15 off our future because swimming is our
16 future, and we really need to use it
17 to get to where we need to go, so we
18 need a facility to practice at.

19 So, hopefully, our pool can be
20 reopened so we can continue to pursue
21 our dream.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
3 evening.

4 MS. ALLEN: Good evening. My
5 name Sandra Allen, and I'm the day camp
6 director at the Zion Summer Day Camp.
7 I'm speaking on behalf of the camps.
8 I'm only one here today.

9 But we have been swimming at
10 Marcus Foster for -- well, I've been
11 there for -- it's been years, like a
12 long time, almost 20, 30 years.

13 And we swim twice a week. And
14 when I received the news that the pool
15 had closed -- and I am working on our
16 program for the summer -- I was
17 devastated. Now I'm looking for
18 another place for the children because
19 they love to go to Marcus Foster, they
20 love the swimming, they look forward
21 to it. And that was one of the assets
22 that helped. And we try to expose the
23 children to as much as we possibly
24 can.

25 And I'm just hoping that the

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2 School District can find it, some way
3 that they can try to get the money
4 or -- for the summer.

5 What I'm saying is, I know
6 it's a long wind for this summer, and
7 I'm in agreement with you. I'm not
8 sure whether or not it will be -- we
9 will be able to utilize the pool this
10 summer, but I am just asking you,
11 please, could you find it in your
12 hearts to find a way?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
14 you very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. WILLIS: I'd like to say
17 something if I can.

18 (Witness comes forward.)

19 MR. WILLIS: Good evening. My
20 name is Emerson Willis. I am a parent
21 of two swimmers at PDR.

22 I first became aware of the
23 team in the late '80s, early '90s, and
24 I read a article in the New York Times
25 about how the team had made the

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2 national championships, which they
3 went on to win over a couple of years.

4 And I had the opportunity,
5 when I -- and this was all before I
6 had children. But I knew that, as a
7 parent, that water safety was the key,
8 'cause I wasn't a great swimmer.

9 Growing up in Philadelphia, it's hard
10 to swim in the fire hydrant, it's real
11 hard. But I knew that what I wanted
12 to do was have my boys water-safe.

13 And so I went through some
14 steps to make sure they knew how to
15 swim, but as they were being
16 developed, when they first learned,
17 their first coach said, "You need to
18 take your boys up to PDR and see Jim
19 and Tracy and Mr. Woody." And that
20 was in 1999.

21 And in '99, the team was very
22 strong, very large, and it was doing
23 very, very well. But over the years,
24 as the pool began to deteriorate,
25 people stopped coming because they

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2 were concerned with the facilities.

3 And so, if it's at all in your
4 hearts -- 'cause I've seen the success
5 of this team. I often tell people
6 that everyone that I've seen go
7 through this program that reaches
8 their senior year in high school has
9 gotten money for college through
10 aquatics.

11 Okay, when we go to the
12 Baltimore Aquarium and we're watching
13 the different -- you know, the fish
14 and the sea and things like that, the
15 children -- I can say to my sons, you
16 know, "You can be a marine biologist,
17 you can snorkel, you can skin-dive,
18 you can do all of those things,"
19 things that kids don't normally get to
20 do, that they don't even entertain.

21 But through this team and
22 through this program, I've -- we, as a
23 family, have been able to develop, and
24 I've seen other kids do it.

25 So I just wanted to testify

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2 today on behalf of the team and PDR
3 that if anything can be done to keep
4 this program going, 'cause the
5 success -- there's written, there's
6 movies, it's books, and for the City
7 to let it just go by the wayside would
8 be a travesty.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
10 you very much.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It
13 sounds like a wonderful, wonderful
14 program.

15 We're waiting to hear if
16 somebody from the School District has
17 any information.

18 MR. MCPHERSON: They're still
19 making phone calls.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
21 They're still making phone calls.

22 However, I wish we did have it
23 within our power to simply say that
24 this should be rehabilitated, but we
25 in Council have the sole

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2 responsibility of reenacting the
3 taxes.

4 We will, however, be in touch
5 with the School District. We will
6 certainly let Councilwoman Miller, who
7 is out, I think she has a very bad
8 virus, she will be informed of your
9 presence here tonight and exactly what
10 the problem is.

11 (Ms. Bolger returns to witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
14 Perhaps we have an answer now.

15 MS. BOLGER: We have somewhat
16 of an answer.

17 The status of the three pools
18 that have been closed is that we have
19 affirmed assessing the conditions and
20 the corresponding cost estimates that
21 go along with those, and we're
22 anticipating the results of that back
23 by the end of May.

24 However, currently in the
25 Capital Budget, there aren't funds to

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2 fix these pools with the rehab costs.
3 However, it is one of the items that
4 we have on the agenda to explore on
5 the Shared Services Task Force, so
6 it's something that we're looking and
7 willing to work with on the City to
8 figure out how to get this done.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There is
10 no money; is that what you said?

11 MS. BOLGER: We're waiting for
12 the estimates, but there is currently
13 nothing in the Capital Budget.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: There
15 is money in the Capital Budget?

16 MS. BOLGER: No.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Oh
18 there is not.

19 MS. BOLGER: Right.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So I
21 would really like to be up front with
22 everybody who is here. Would you say
23 that it's not very likely that the pool
24 will be rehabbed this summer? By the
25 summer?

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2 MS. BOLGER: I think that would
3 be unlikely given that we're not
4 getting the estimates back until the
5 end of May.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do
7 you have to put them out for bid?

8 MS. BOLGER: I'm sorry?

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Would
10 they have to go out for bid?

11 MS. BOLGER: I don't know the
12 answer to that.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
14 Mm-hmm.

15 MR. FREELAND: What are the
16 other two pools you're talking about?

17 MS. BOLGER: William Penn and
18 Rhodes.

19 MR. MAJOR: I think if there's
20 no money, then is it likely that they
21 won't -- that the pool won't be open at
22 all? I mean, if you don't have any
23 money in the budget right now and
24 there's no funds, I mean, that sounds
25 like a "never" to me.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: There may
3 not be money in this budget because
4 they don't have the estimate, but once
5 they get the estimate, they can
6 determine how much they have to put in
7 the budget.

8 MS. BOLGER: And these are
9 questions that I can get you more
10 detailed answers to tomorrow. This is
11 just the information that I had ready.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
13 Chair recognizes Councilman Kenney.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: While we're
15 all well aware of the bidding
16 requirements that the government has to
17 go through to get things done,
18 repaired, or built, there are emergency
19 opportunities for health and life-
20 safety issues that don't have to be bid
21 as stringently as building a new
22 building or doing a rehab that's not of
23 an emergency nature.

24 And since there's young people
25 and other people using the facility

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2 and since because it's aquatic and it
3 needs to be safe and it needs to be
4 clean and it needs to be -- there's
5 lots of, I guess, lots of scenarios
6 you could put together to make this an
7 emergency repair as much as a normal
8 three-part bid rehab.

9 So one of the suggestions that
10 I have, Madam President -- Madam
11 President? The suggestion I would
12 make is that maybe your office or
13 Councilwoman Miller's office could
14 prepare a letter to the District,
15 asking them to consider this an
16 emergency, life-safety repair and
17 perhaps cut through some of that
18 bidding red tape that is required.

19 The other issue is the issue
20 of the three pools. I mean, at this
21 point now, I only see one group
22 advocating for one pool as opposed to
23 the other two, and I'm not saying that
24 they don't have similar -- they
25 probably don't have similar programs

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2 as this or if they have any programs
3 at all.

4 So maybe this ought to be the
5 priority and ought to be handled
6 through a life-safety effort as
7 opposed to just the normal bidding
8 processes.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I
10 think it would be very --

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: We
13 would be very happy to do that, but I
14 think that the group should go before
15 the School District's hearings. When
16 is their next hearing?

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Tomorrow
18 night, I think.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May 7,
20 May 14th.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is that the
22 SRC hearings?

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
24 Mm-hmm.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But I think

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 if we put them on notice now that we're
3 --

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We
5 could do that.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: But
8 at the same time, I mean, as impressed
9 as we are, I would like the members of
10 the SRC to be equally impressed and
11 know what the importance of this issue
12 is to the entire community.

13 When is the next --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May 7th
15 and May 14th.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: May
17 7th and May 14th? At what time?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
19 Immediately following the SRC meeting
20 at the Broad Street School District
21 offices. May 7th, at 5 p.m. The May
22 14th meeting following the 1 p.m.
23 following the SRC meeting.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
25 must the group call beforehand to be on

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2 the witness list to testify?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes,

4 they do.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They

6 have to call the day before, 5 o'clock.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Could

8 you come up to the witness table,

9 please.

10 MR. MAJOR: While he's coming,

11 Tracy just whispered in my ear that

12 University City, which is where he

13 teaches at, has been closed now for

14 three years. So I think if we're not

15 on top of this and don't keep a fire

16 lit, you know, we run the risk of this

17 just dragging on.

18 I think beyond that, Jim, with

19 his contacts with USA swimming, I

20 think if the School District would be

21 willing to talk with us, maybe we

22 could -- you know, if they open to an

23 emergency, you know, we're willing to

24 try to kind of help at least find the

25 people who could maybe expedite this,

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 but they got to be willing to work
3 with us.

4 MR. GALLARD: Fernando Gallard,
5 Director of Media Relations, School
6 District of Philadelphia.

7 The next opportunity to speak
8 in front of the SRC on the budget, the
9 first one is May 7th, at 5 p.m.; and
10 May 14th, immediately following the
11 1 o'clock regularly scheduled SRC
12 meeting.

13 If you would like to speak at
14 the SRC budget meetings, you have to
15 call the day before, and it's going to
16 be before 4 o'clock, and you have to
17 call 215-400-4040. That's
18 215-400-4040.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do
20 you have that number? Were you able to
21 get that number?

22 MR. MAJOR: No. He talked too
23 fast. I'll get it from Sharon.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay,
25 great.

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2 MR. MAJOR: I locked my PDA.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Very

6 well.

7 Councilwoman Tasco, did you

8 have a comment or question?

9 COUNCILWOMAN TESCO: No. I'm

10 fine, thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank

12 you.

13 MR. MAJOR: Thank you for

14 hearing us also. We really appreciate

15 it.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank

17 you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: And,

20 again, we think it's a wonderful

21 program. I know that everyone here is

22 impressed with it. Thank you.

23 Our next witness? Do we have

24 anyone else that would like to

25 testify?

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2 Please approach the witness
3 table, sir.

4 (Witness comes forward.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
6 evening, sir. Please identify yourself
7 for the record.

8 MR. DETAMORE: I'm Gregory
9 Jordan Detamore, a high school student.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
11 Proceed with your testimony, sir.

12 MR. DETAMORE: Okay. I have a
13 prepared statement.

14 Good afternoon. My name is
15 Gregory Jordan Detamore, and I'm a
16 Philadelphia public high school
17 students and also a member of the
18 Philadelphia Student Union.

19 We, at the Student Union,
20 along with other organizations that we
21 work with, feel that there's a -- we
22 have a lot of questions about
23 transparency and accountability and
24 the decisions that the School District
25 makes. We feel that all too often

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 students, parents, and community
3 members are left in the dark about
4 School District decisions.

5 We have serious concerns with
6 the way the District handles the
7 release of information. It seems the
8 District only releases information
9 that absolutely has to be released
10 under the narrowest interpretation of
11 the law.

12 There's a great wealth of
13 information that can, and should, be
14 made public but is not. The most
15 pressing information is information
16 about charter schools and educational
17 management organizations. This
18 includes detailed financial reports,
19 evaluation score cards, and
20 recommendations on renewal.

21 In general, there's a lack of
22 transparency and accountability about
23 how decisions are made to award
24 contracts. Where is the quality
25 control?

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2 This leads to another
3 important subject: that of educational
4 management organizations, or EMOs.
5 EMOs such as Edison operate many
6 schools in the District. While they
7 are contracted to improve the quality
8 of schools, data shows that they have
9 not improved the schools any more than
10 other District schools; in fact, they
11 have shown the least amount of
12 improvement when compared to other
13 District schools and charters.

14 So why are they getting an
15 additional 500 to \$800 per student?
16 How can we allow companies to try to
17 make a profit off some of the
18 lowest-performing and vulnerable
19 schools?

20 Another important point to
21 discuss is the District's seeming
22 neglect to inform the public of
23 important decisions.

24 An excellent example is that
25 of the West Philadelphia plan. The

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 District currently has a plan to shift
3 around many schools in West
4 Philadelphia. Turner is supposed to
5 be to closed, Parkway is supposed to
6 be moved to Sulzberger, Sulzberger is
7 supposed to be closed, Maya is
8 supposed to be moved to Pierce in
9 South Philly, and University City is
10 closing in two years for renovation.

11 Many residents are still
12 confused about the plan and are upset
13 about not being informed about much of
14 this as the events have been
15 unfolding.

16 Council has an important role
17 to play here in making sure that
18 constituents understand the big
19 picture of what's happening with
20 schools in their communities.

21 Now we come to the budget. We
22 feel that the budget process is not
23 what it should be. We want a process
24 with real community input and more
25 public meetings. The District has

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 responsibility to walk the community
3 through the budget.

4 I was unsettled by the news
5 that some members of Council might
6 feel that because there's a low public
7 turnout at these meetings, schools
8 must be improving. I think that the
9 public tired of coming to meetings
10 just to testify when we feel that our
11 input is not being taken seriously,
12 not to mention that we are actively
13 discouraged from coming to these City
14 Council hearings by School District
15 personnel who tell us that City
16 Council doesn't have any power; I
17 assume we weren't the only ones who
18 were told that.

19 But here we are with this
20 proposed budget. We would like to say
21 that we are not satisfied with it.
22 Where are the real reforms for
23 corrective actions to schools? We
24 want to focus on improved teacher
25 quality and equity along with smaller

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 classes in schools.

3 One program that was very
4 successful in the past was the Office
5 of Restructured Schools, or the ORS.
6 The ORS was created in 2002 to improve
7 21 low-performing schools. It
8 provided teacher-coaches, more
9 professional development, more
10 parental involvement, extra staff, and
11 smaller classes. Then, in 2005, it
12 was mysteriously closed.

13 We have continued to ask the
14 District why it was closed, and to
15 date, they have failed to give an
16 explanation. You call that
17 transparency?

18 In conclusion, Council must
19 exert its influence to increase the
20 transparency and accountability in the
21 School District and on the School
22 Reform Commission. Council also has
23 the responsibility to make sure that
24 community residents understand what is
25 happening to their schools and have an

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 opportunity to make meaningful input
3 in the budget and School District
4 decisions.

5 Since education is key to
6 empowering our communities, a real
7 effort needs to be to made to make
8 sure that everyone is involved.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
10 you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
13 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
14 Blackwell.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much.

17 Good evening. What school do
18 you attend?

19 MR. DETAMORE: I go to
20 Masterman, and I live in West
21 Philadelphia.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
23 Wonderful. I'm glad you do.

24 We appreciate all of the
25 statements you've made. Apparently,

1 4/29/08 - WHOLE - BILLS 080158,59
2 the only school that will close in
3 June, as you know, is Maya Parkway.
4 And the Turner School is now being
5 considered for various charter
6 schools. They're looking at that.

7 But I'm happy to meet with
8 you, with your group to talk about
9 what we hear. As you know, obviously,
10 we understand our responsibility to
11 you and to the community, and as I
12 attend all of the meetings and learn
13 often, as you do. But there's a lot
14 going on in reorganizing schools in my
15 district, in West and Southwest and in
16 other places.

17 So we look forward to meeting
18 with you. And if you call my office,
19 I'm happy to meet with you or your
20 group, the Student Union, or whomever,
21 many of them. We already meet with
22 them and we'll go from there, okay?

23 MR. DETAMORE: Okay.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you.

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2 MR. DETAMORE: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
4 you.

5 The Chair recognizes
6 Councilman Jones.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
8 for coming in and giving your
9 testimony.

10 As a former vice president of
11 Philadelphia Student Union, I look
12 forward to working with you and the
13 group and as an alumnus of that
14 association to hear your input, take
15 it very seriously.

16 And despite what you may hear
17 from the School Board, we do have
18 power, even if it's just the mic, and
19 we will use that to make sure that
20 they're as transparent as possible,
21 thus allowing resources to go back to
22 their primary mission, which is to
23 educate the students of Philadelphia.

24 So I look forward to working
25 with you.

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2 MR. DETAMORE: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
4 Madam President.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
6 you.

7 Good evening. Please identify
8 yourself for the record.

9 MR. SKLAROFF: Good evening.
10 My name is Jan Sklaroff. That's J-A-N,
11 S-K-L-A-R-O-F-F. I have a prepared
12 statement.

13 Dear Members of Council and
14 Council Speaker Anna Verna: My name
15 is Jan Sklaroff. I am a former
16 teacher in the School District of
17 Philadelphia and a citizen, voter,
18 minority inspector at the polls for
19 seven years, and a return Peace Corps
20 volunteer in the Republic of Armenia.
21 I have a master's degree in secondary
22 education.

23 I taught at Furness High
24 School, and my principal at Furness
25 high school -- I'll omit the name and

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2 I'll just say "principal at Furness
3 High School." And I did my student
4 teaching at Fels High School in the
5 School District and worked for one
6 year at Olney East High School. And
7 my career was ended at Furness High
8 School in April of 2007.

9 I taught at Furness High
10 School from October 2006 until April
11 of 2007. I was a fully appointed
12 teacher for almost two years in the
13 School District of Philadelphia. I
14 believe that I was illegally kicked
15 out -- Jan Sklaroff was illegally
16 kicked out of his school by the
17 principal of Furness High School and
18 placed in a basement by the
19 superintendent, at 427 Monroe Street.
20 This was a basement that had bars on
21 the windows and was unheated. The
22 District office is now at 6900
23 Greenway Boulevard.

24 On March 17, 2007, my union
25 representative from South Philadelphia

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2 told me via the telephone, "Jan, if
3 you don't call the Safe Schools
4 hotline or go to the police if
5 students threaten you, I'm going to
6 wash my hands of you like Pontius
7 Pilate did with Jesus Christ and have
8 nothing to do with you."

9 On March 23, 2007, I did as my
10 union representative from South
11 Philadelphia told me and I called the
12 Safe Schools hotline, which was manned
13 by Jack Stolsteimer (sp.?) when a
14 student threatened me. This is quite
15 common in the School District of
16 Philadelphia.

17 The call that I placed at the
18 Safe Schools hotline was placed around
19 the time of the Frank Byrd and Ed
20 Klein incidents. These were teachers
21 who were physically attacked by
22 students in the Philadelphia School
23 District and injured. The Frank Byrd
24 case made national news.

25 Within minutes of my call.

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2 The principal found out that I was the
3 teacher who called the hotline and had
4 me sent to her office. She was not
5 pleased. I subsequently learned that
6 non-tenured teachers who call the Safe
7 Schools hotline are very vulnerable to
8 retaliation by ruthless principals. I
9 was not the exception.

10 Within days, the principal at
11 Furness High School at Third and
12 Mifflin Streets retaliated against me.
13 I was kicked out of Furness High
14 School upon the beginning of Easter
15 break, on March 30, 2007.

16 Indeed, the principal at
17 Furness High School washed her hands
18 of me, as Pontius Pilate did with
19 Jesus Christ, and had no use for me
20 despite the fact that my department
21 head wrote in a letter of
22 recommendation, which I have, from
23 March 8, 2007, that I, Jan Sklaroff,
24 was a diligent, hardworking,
25 responsible, and highly recommendable

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2 teacher.

3 My union representative told
4 me that "the principal is very angry
5 with you and wants you out of her
6 school."

7 On March 30, 2007, I was
8 instructed to go to 427 Monroe Street
9 in the South Philadelphia District
10 office. For 11 days during my Easter
11 break, I was in limbo. The principal
12 was going to conduct investigatory
13 meetings while I sat in the basement
14 at 427 Monroe Street in solitary
15 confinement in -- as I said, in an
16 unheated room that had bars on the
17 windows in early April. It's very
18 cold in early April. In a room that's
19 unheated, I was required to use a
20 blanket.

21 I was denied an attorney to be
22 present during these investigatory
23 meetings. The basement, as I said,
24 had heavy bars on the windows.

25 During the time I was in the

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2 basement doing absolutely nothing at
3 the taxpayers' expense, I got sick. I
4 had to be rushed to the hospital on
5 April 15, 2007, for what turned out to
6 be a vasovagal condition that's caused
7 by undue stress. Remember, I was
8 being greatly pressured to leave the
9 School District because of my call. I
10 was given an EKG.

11 I was being subjected to a
12 witch hunt very similar to the
13 McCarthy Era. The sole purpose was to
14 ask me for my job regardless of due
15 process, of civil rights, and my civil
16 rights were violated. On April 30,
17 2007, the superintendent kicked me out
18 of the basement.

19 In June, the School District
20 of Philadelphia inexplicably took out
21 over \$3,000 of my salary from the time
22 I was in the basement; no reason given
23 whatsoever. For the months of June,
24 July, August, September, October, and
25 November, the District would tell me I

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2 would be paid the stealth money that
3 was taken out of my paycheck and then
4 cut, stop it, and then audited. This
5 happened over three times.

6 Countless hours on the phone
7 with payroll were incurred by me. And
8 I tried to recover my monies with no
9 success. Again, no reason for taking
10 out my money was given. I've since
11 been double-taxed by the Internal
12 Revenue Service.

13 Also during the time, specific
14 dates were given to me when I would be
15 paid. I was counting on being paid
16 and was repeatedly, I feel, deceived.
17 In September, payroll demanded that I
18 prove that I was in this highly
19 secured basement.

20 Leslie Henley, John
21 Frangipani's confidential secretary,
22 said that I was very thorough about
23 signing in and out, and I indeed
24 proved that I was in the basement.
25 The timesheets were sent to payroll.

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2 In November, I was still not
3 paid. Payroll said outright that I
4 had not been paid and I would not be
5 cut a paycheck. This, again, is over
6 \$3,000.

7 I demanded to know why.
8 Payroll said that I had to call their
9 attorney, the attorney for the School
10 District. I called the attorney and
11 left a message. I received no reply
12 from the attorney. I waited two more
13 weeks and then was directed by my
14 attorney, Ellis Saul, to demand the
15 money or sue the District.

16 I went to payroll and spoke
17 with the payroll department head. I
18 also wrote to Tom Brady, Acting School
19 CEO, and my attorney, Ellis Saul, of
20 King of Prussia, wrote a letter to the
21 school's attorney.

22 At this time, my unemployment
23 compensation case filed against the
24 School District was ruled in favor of
25 the School District. The decision was

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2 cast on November 31, 2007.

3 All of a sudden, my money was
4 released over seven months after I was
5 in the basement. I received my check
6 on or about September 10th. This is
7 seven months after I did the basement
8 duty. Again, I have been double-taxed
9 of my money by the IRS.

10 Finally, the School District
11 of Philadelphia has successfully to
12 date fought my unemployment
13 compensation, even though they admit
14 that they were going to terminate me
15 regardless. The School District of
16 Philadelphia has fought my Workman's
17 Compensation case even though I was
18 brutally placed in a basement for no
19 legitimate reason other than
20 retaliation.

21 There's been no legitimate
22 reason for holding up my money, as was
23 done for seven months. I ask that the
24 School Reform Commission -- I notice
25 that Heidi Ramirez was here -- issue

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2 an apology for the unspeakable
3 treatment I have received from the
4 principal and the superintendent.

5 I ask that an investigation
6 take place to find out why I was so
7 horribly treated.

8 I ask that an investigation
9 occur to find out why my civil rights
10 and human rights were trashed by these
11 individuals.

12 I ask that the people who put
13 me in the basement be punished. They
14 deserve punishment.

15 We do not put teachers in
16 basement, we do not put human beings
17 in basements. My health has been
18 affected by the brutal treatment I
19 received. It is time for an
20 investigation. We are not Nazi
21 Germany; this is America.

22 Teachers with master's degree,
23 who, by the way, have no 204s,
24 negative writeups, with the School
25 District of Philadelphia whatsoever do

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2 not deserve to be placed in basements.

3 And, finally, I was also in
4 the peer intervention program.
5 According to my union, my South Philly
6 union chief, school employees are not
7 supposed to be retaliated against if
8 they're in the peer intervention
9 program.

10 Okay. Again, thank you for
11 time, and I appreciate you listening
12 to my story.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you very much.

15 Are there questions?

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I don't
17 have any questions, Madam President.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Hit
19 your mic, please.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I don't
21 have any questions, but I'm concerned
22 about this issue because this is the
23 second witness we've had today to
24 discuss this matter, and we have
25 encountered other issues like this with

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2 people not testifying but at least have
3 raised that procedure of putting people
4 in the basement and trying to oust
5 them.

6 And I think we will ask the
7 School District to -- we need to talk
8 to them about that.

9 MR. SKLAROFF: May I make a
10 comment?

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
12 Certainly.

13 Thank you, Councilwoman.

14 MR. SKLAROFF: Thank you.

15 I want to point out that
16 teachers are very fearful. The School
17 District can be ruthless. And a lot
18 of teachers I talk to are simply too
19 afraid.

20 They've done everything they
21 could to harm me, so there's nothing
22 more really they can do. So I'm not
23 that fearful still.

24 I'm still very fearful of the
25 things that they could pull, but I'm

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2 encouraged by Councilwoman Tasco's
3 remarks.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you.

6 MR. SKLAROFF: Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
8 Councilman Clarke?

9 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
10 Madam Chair.

11 Good afternoon.

12 MR. SKLAROFF: Good afternoon.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Young man,
14 what's your name again?

15 MR. DETAMORE: It's Gregory.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Yeah, I
17 just want to say first that I would
18 like to thank both of you all from
19 testifying. I took interest in some of
20 your testimony.

21 I know that there are some
22 concerns about whether or not
23 Councilmembers actually listen and pay
24 attention and take with some level of
25 seriousness the testimony here. And

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2 you may look around the room and don't
3 see members here, but we do hear you,
4 we do understand the problems
5 associated with some of the issues
6 relating to the School District.

7 I took particular interest
8 with one of the statements that you
9 said, that the School District -- and
10 you didn't reference a particular
11 person, and I'm not going to ask you
12 anybody's name 'cause they're going to
13 obviously deny it if approached by
14 that by the fact that City Council is
15 viewed as being powerless as it
16 relates to policy and operations of
17 School District.

18 And while I would like to not
19 characterize it that way, but to some
20 degree, I think sometimes -- and I can
21 only speak for myself, but sometimes,
22 I do feel that way.

23 Unfortunately, under the
24 current system, which is with the
25 SRC -- and we have great members on

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2 the SRC, so I'm not talking about them
3 as individuals, but this whole process
4 has been set up where there's this
5 shared level of responsibility between
6 the State and the City.

7 And the State has, you know,
8 the majority of members on there. In
9 the old days, it was all City
10 appointees, so you had some level of
11 influence as a Councilmember because
12 you had to interact with the Mayor who
13 was the appointing entity.

14 I'm a little concerned that as
15 that has transpired, we are not
16 necessarily in a position to influence
17 policy like I would like. We find
18 ourselves on an annual basis probably
19 getting one bite at the apple to have
20 the level of questions about
21 operations that we need to have, and
22 that's during the tax reauthorization
23 time, which is now, the budget.

24 Unless there's the need to get
25 some additional funding in the School

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2 District over the course of the year,
3 frankly speaking, we don't have really
4 have any interaction in this kind of
5 format, and that's concerning 'cause,
6 at the end of the day, a
7 Councilperson's ability to really get
8 information and show the seriousness
9 of the inquiry from us happens in this
10 room.

11 If you talk to a lot of
12 people, they hate coming in this room
13 because they know that they have to be
14 responsive in a way that they don't
15 have to be any other way.

16 I would like to say that in
17 Council, we're actually talking about
18 internally coming up with a process
19 that in a periodic way during the
20 course of the year that we talk to
21 members of departments to find out the
22 status of the progress throughout the
23 departments and the requests that
24 we've made and not wait until the next
25 year's budget process, but sometimes

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2 it's too late.

3 I would actually say -- and
4 I'm assuming that members of the
5 School District are listening -- that
6 in some periodic way that they come
7 back before this body and give us a
8 status report, 'cause I know over the
9 last two days, there was significant
10 issues raised and significant
11 questions, and a lot of it wasn't
12 answered, understandably because they
13 had to get back to us, but I would
14 really like to see a process that
15 would allow us during the course of
16 the year to really get a -- somewhat
17 of a report card on what's going on
18 with the School District and the
19 educational process as it relates to
20 our young people so we can truly be
21 engaged and truly be responsible for
22 the operation of the School District
23 and ultimately the education of our
24 young people.

25 So I hear you. If you want to

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2 send me a little note about who told
3 you that, that we're powerless, that's
4 okay, but I'm sure that they won't
5 acknowledge that. But I just want to
6 say that we hear you and we take
7 serious what you're talking about
8 today.

9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 MR. DETAMORE: Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
12 Madam Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
14 you very much.

15 Are there any further
16 questions?

17 (No further questions.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you very much.

20 Is there anybody else to
21 testify here today?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Seeing
24 none, this hearing will be recessed
25 until May 1st, at 9 a.m.

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2 Thank you very much. Thank
3 you all for coming. Thank you all for
4 your patience.

5 (Proceedings end at 6:58 p.m.)

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JOSEPHINE CARDILLO
Registered Professional Reporter

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