COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PUBLIC HEARING

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

- - -

Room 696, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, June 4, 2003
9:35 a.m.

- - -

BILL NO. 030397

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PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO, Vice-Chair
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO

- - -

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THE CHAIR: This is the continuation of our Finance hearing from two days ago, the lease-back issue of the library.

Is everybody clear on that? Maybe, Clerk, you could read the title it have again, and then we will continue with our hearing.

THE CLERK: Bill No. 030397, an Ordinance authorizing the Commissioner of Public Property to enter into a series of transactions whereby the City of Philadelphia would: A, sell to the Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development a certain city-owned building located at 1901 Vine Street, the Free Library Building, provided that PAID resells the Free Library Building to a certain third party or parties;

B, lease from PAID the Free Library Building upon PAID's lease of the building from a certain third party or parties;

C, lease to PAID the land bounded by 19th Street, Vine Street, 20th Street, and the former Wood Street, the Free Library land, provided that PAID leases the Free Library land to a certain third party or parties;

And, D, lease from PAID the Free Library

land upon PAID's lease of the land from a certain third party or parties, all under certain terms and conditions.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

Debra Kahn, Secretary of Education. Thank you very much.

You have testimony you would like to make?

MS. KAHN: I do. Thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Will the Sergeant at Arms, please get the testimony.

Feel free to identify yourself and begin your testimony.

Is Candace Bell, William Penn foundation, here? Okay.

Laura Boyce, Director of Network Relations, United Way. Is Laura Boyce here? Thank you.

Thank you. Good morning.

MS. DEBRA KAHN: Good morning, Chairman Blackwell and members of the Finance Committee. I am Debra Kahn, Secretary of Education for the city. And I am joined this morning also by Karen Burke, who is the Chief Operating Officer for the School

District of Philadelphia.

We are here this morning to testify on behalf of Bill No. 030397 that would authorize the transaction to generate $60 million for three important public purposes.

First, being a $5 million expansion of the Child Care Health and Safety Fund; second, the creation of a $25 million school-based Facilities Improvement Fund; and, thirdly, $30 million to support the modernization and expansion of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

All three of these investments, which were first proposed by Mayor street in his January budget message, exemplify our Administration's ongoing commitment to improve the quality of life for children and families across the neighborhoods of our city.

My testimony will be addressing both the proposed Child Care and School Facilities Funds.

Our Administration, as you know, has really been guided by the philosophy that a community that aspires to world-class status really needs to value its children.

And that's a philosophy that's guided

our work in many ways, including our ongoing drive to improve the prospects for public education in our city, to a dramatic expansion of after-school programs.

Every year for us has been the year of the child. And our dedication to the well-being of children really starts with protecting the basics of their health and safety.

Three years ago the city got behind this effort to improve this critical aspect of child car quality by establishing a Health and Safety Fund to help providers comply with local and state regulations.

With support from this City Council and the Commonwealth, this fund has had significant benefits for thousands of children attending more than 300 family- and center-based programs that have received small grants that have made big differences to protect against injury and illness.

But the demand already exceeds the supply of funds, and for good reasons that demand is intended to grow.

We anticipate the adoption of Governor Rendell's plan for the Commonwealth to support a

prekindergarten program that would require child-care programs to upgrade their facilities if they want to qualify as pre-K providers.

Also, the city is committed to expanding its after-school and youth development programs.

In short, the time is right for the city to be an even stronger partner with community providers on behalf of ensuring the health and safety of children who are in their care.

We intend that the $5 million generated by the financing transaction would leverage an additional $5 million in private, philanthropic, and state dollars, which together could form a sustainable fund that would issue grants and low-interest loans for capital projects to nonprofit child-care providers that are renewing or are interested in securing their licensing from the Commonwealth.

These projects would upgrade health and safety conditions, such as, improving fire and electrical systems and playground equipment, and help expand their program capacity, as well.

In addition, assistance would be made

available to child-care providers to help them identify and remedy the deficiencies in their facilities.

The city would convene an advisory group of providers, child-care advocates, technical assistance agencies, and working with the Commonwealth to develop recommendations to the Managing Director for how the funds would be accessed and allocated, and develop procedures for monitoring and reporting.

A huge part of our Administration's commitment to children has been devoted to enhancing the quality of public education in Philadelphia.

With additional funding and other supports from City Council, we have made great progress for the school children of our city.

And driving our work has been our philosophy, certainly espoused by Mayor Street, that strong neighborhoods and strong schools go hand in hand.

Schools should be focal points of community activity. And rather than be dark and empty after 3 o'clock, public school buildings need to be open and alive, operating beyond traditional

school hours, to offer children and adults a variety of educational, recreational, and cultural opportunities.

That's a belief that's shared by the School Reform Commission and by our School District Chief Executive Officer, Paul Vallas. And that shared outlook has formed the basis for a great partner between the city and the school district that has produced a major expansion of supervised and constructive after-school activities for children around the city.

We now have, through a variety of means, more than 24,000 young people who are involved in constructive activities after-school hours.

And then combined with the school district, which last fall added on an extended-day program, we have tens of thousands of children who are involved in educational and other productive activities during the school week.

But even with this policy agreement at the top, there is sometimes resistance at the school level to allowing after-school community use of school buildings.

There are concerns about disruption and

potential damage to classrooms and school equipment, along with additional maintenance obligations and factor that often cause tension between legitimate users of public school buildings.

The facilities, moreover, allotted often could be better suited, more comfortable, and convenient for community and after-hours use.

From the beginning of our Administration, the Mayor has been interested in providing some kind of relief to this situation to help the school district remove obstacles that exist to community use of school buildings.

Nearly two years ago our city Planning Commission and Capital Programs office collaborated on initial work to survey school buildings to identify these barriers.

The initial findings -- and I underscore that that was a couple of years ago -- were that, while after-hours use of school buildings for both occasional use, as well as somewhat more regular use, was widespread, there were also structural conditions that deter broader use, and they drive up security and maintenance concerns and costs.

Examples of the kind of retrofitting of

school buildings that needs to be done could include making accommodations to facilities for better access for the disabled, installing gates and other security measures, dedicated doors and rest-rooms, signage, air-conditioning, upgrading auditorium seating in gyms and lighting, and revitalizing outdoor play spaces.

In some circumstances it might also be possible to build new community spaces where none now exist.

We believe it is the right time to undertake this work for at least two good reasons. First, the city and the school district remain committed to expanding the after-school and after-hour and community use of school buildings even further; and it is important that these programs operate in the most conducive and cost-effective conditions possible.

And, secondly, as you know, the school district is about to embark on a significant capital campaign of its own.

And at this beginning stage is the time when the district can most effectively allocate all of its resources and incorporate the projects to be

supported with city funds into their overall planning and implementation.

The city and the district are already working together to accomplish the multiple objectives of the district's capital plan.

First and foremost is alleviating health and safety problems and dramatically enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning environment for students and teachers.

Also important is ensuring that school sitings and improvements complement the city's initiatives in neighborhood transformation and housing development and foster rational use of public spaces and delivery of public services.

Finally, the city and the school district share mutual goals of achieving schools that are more cost-efficient to operate, while being inviting to the public and fully utilized.

Investing now to protect children in community care and to make our schools more conducive to community use can yield great returns for families and neighborhoods all across the city.

For that reason, we respectfully request that this committee report out this bill.

And on behalf of the Administration, there are many members here of the administration, and the school district representatives, as well, who would be available to answer questions.

And I do believe that Karen Burke, as well, has a statement she would like to make.

MS. KAREN BURKE: Good morning, Chairman Blackwell and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Karen Burke, and I am the Chief Operating Officer of the Philadelphia School District.

I am here in support of Bill 030397. And the district, of course, supports it, as well.

In particular, we are endorsing the $25 million piece of this that would be available to enhance school buildings out there and make them more available for community use and newer community use.

I would mention here that the demand on the school district is getting very strong. This is a nationwide trend. It is daily that community groups ask us for more access to our building.

In the past, the district has been somewhat reluctant to open the doors because it is very hard to have a system in there where you can

contain people into an area that they want to use.

So, to some extent, this 25 million available would make it possible for us to make these buildings more amenable to the community and still keep district's needs to keep its maintenance costs down.

I would also like to say now that -- and we have talked to many of you before on this -- is that, through our Capital Program, we are going to be building some new schools there.

And these new schools represent opportunities for access for the community to a number of buildings.

We are also rehabing some buildings. But what I need to point out is that this Capital Program will only address about 80 percent of the buildings.

So what we are looking for is to try to make our buildings community centers, more of them out there.

What I would also like to mention on this is that, this will allow space to be used that is not used currently. We have been turning down requests daily.

What we see in the use of the funds is that many of our buildings do not have appropriate facilities. Some of them even do not have gymnasiums. Some do not have separate entry doors that could be used. Many do not even have gates up or water fountains that would be appropriate.

We think that in opening the buildings to the community, we have a win/win situation out there.

You will have school buildings that are vital, that are used by the community all day and into the evening.

There will be a seat of democracy, if you will, in the interchange of ideas. Auditoriums could be refitted, the seats refinished.

And I am told in other states out there, where they have done efforts like this, is that they have school buildings now that are booked almost 365 days a year for theatrical performances, musical performances, and learning opportunities for everybody in the community.

So what I would like to say is that the district does not have the funds to do this increased access itself. We are delighted with the

concept, and we give our full endorsement of this proposal.

And, thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

The Chair notes that Councilman DiCicco is here, as is Councilman Nutter. This is a continuation of a hearing, so we are within legal bounds.

And if it is all right with the gentlemen, my colleagues, we will go through the testimony and then ask any questions. Thank you very much.

Candace Bell, William Penn.

We will ask that you remain, would you, Ms. Kahn, and Ms. Burke? Thank you.

Is Laura Boyce here? Sharon Ward, Child Care Policy Director? Okay.

Good morning.

MS. BELL: Good morning.

THE CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you very much, and begin your testimony.

MS. CANDACE BELL: I have some copies.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Sergeant at Arms, copies. Thank you.

Feel free to begin your testimony. Thank you very much.

MS. BELL: My name is Candace Bell, and I am a Program Officer in the Children, Youth, and Families Program at the William Penn Foundation.

And I am here today to speak in support of the establishment of a facilities fund in Philadelphia.

As you know, William Penn's commitment to improving the quality and quantity of child care in Philadelphia is both long-standing and substantial.

Since the start of the Child Care Matters Initiative in 1997, the Foundation has invested in pre-K programs alone more than 22.6 million to provide greater access to high-quality child care by supporting the training and professional development of child-care providers, and more than 3.4 million to provide capital improvement to child-care centers.

Our investments in the after-school and summer child-care programs are also substantial. Again, since 1997, the Foundation has invested more than 18 million to support programs and the

professional development to programs serving youth ages 6 to 14, and more than 1.5 million towards capital improvements to program facilities.

Based on our considerable experience in this sector, it is our belief that there is an enormous unmet need for capital improvement funds.

Because there is little capacity among providers to access conventional loans or grants, my Foundation has been working with the city to develop a working model of how a facilities fund could be constructed and financed, and doing so at a level that would adequately address the existing demand.

Establishing a facilities fund for the child-care sector in Philadelphia will provide a number of important benefits in the city and its families.

First, it will mean that more children will be cared for in spaces that are safe and developmentally appropriate.

The quality of a facility cannot make a poor program good, but it is very difficult to implement a good program without an appropriate space.

Second, having more licensed facilities

will leverage more TANF subsidy dollars from the state.

Third, the city, by taking leadership in investing in this fund, will greatly assist the leveraging of private funds for this important purpose.

Fourth, and finally, by setting up this fund, the city will join a vanguard of forward-thinking cities that have established facilities funds. These include Chicago; Boston; Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis; and Oakland, California.

As you can see, the rationale for establishing a facilities fund is strong. Therefore, the William Penn Foundation supports the city's leadership in establishing such a fund in Philadelphia.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you so much.

Sharon Ward, Child Care Policy Director.

Is Lola Rooney here? Lola Rooney is not here.

Is Dr. Susan Aronson, Director of early Childhood Education here?

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MS. WARD: She not here. I have her testimony, though.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: All right. Thank you.

Is Marian Atwood Brown, a teacher here? All right. You will be next.

Then we will recognize you, Ms. Ward, for yourself, as well as for Dr. Aronson; is that correct?

MS. WARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you. Please identify yourself and begin.

MS. SHARON WARD: Chairwoman Blackwell, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on Bill 030397.

I am Sharon Ward, Child Care Policy Director, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, PCCY.

I am here today to urge this Committee to support the proposal to invest in a Child-Care Health and Safety Fund for Philadelphia's children.

We understand that Councilman Nutter has proposed to provide $5 million to the Child-Care Health and Safety Fund through an alternative funding mechanism. We want to thank the Councilman

for his support and advocacy.

I can tell you with great certainty that we at PCCY are not financing experts. But in these discussions, it is important to keep our eyes on the prize.

We hope that the Mayor and Council can come to some agreement that allows the city to move forward on this important priority.

Each day close to 50,000 children under the age of 6 attend child care at one of 566 centers or 829 home-based programs in our city.

Children who attend child care full time will spend 12,000 hours in these settings, more time than they will spend in public school from kindergarten through high-school graduation. The quality of the facilities in which children spend all these hours makes a difference.

Too many lack natural light or adequate outdoor play space.

Children in the City of Philadelphia spend their days in centers and homes with antiquated wiring, holes in the floor, doors that pinch little fingers, radiators that scald young hands, and play areas that are inadequate or not

safely fenced in.

The early years are the time when children are most at risk of injury or communicable disease. That risk is significant.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 1997 about 31,000 children age 4 and under were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries in child-care and pre-school settings.

A 1999, a CPSC study of child-care facilities nationwide found that 24 percent had unsafe playground surfacing and almost 10 percent had unsafe cribs. 19 percent of the programs had cribs with soft bedding, a contributory factor in SIDS death.

As a nation, we have a tendency to put children in the spaces that we have, rather than creating spaces that are best suited to children's needs.

A failure to anticipate and address the risk of injury or disease has real consequences. It increases healthcare costs as children become sick more frequently. It increases employee absences and use of employee sick time, as parents are forced to stay home with their ailing children.

And nothing is worse than nursing a sick or injured child, particularly with the knowledge that the injury or illness could have been prevented.

It is important to remember that these children are at an age when they are developmentally unable to protect themselves.

A two-year-old can fall downstairs with inadequate railings and doesn't know enough to move around the hole that's in front of him.

Three-year-olds will chase a ball that roles into a street.

It is the roll of responsibility adults to create spaces from an understanding of child's development that anticipates their actions and prepares for them.

Since 1999, Philadelphia has begun to address the goal of ensuring safe environments for children through the establishment of the Child-Care Health and Safety Fund. This fund provides grants to home- and center-based programs for four purposes: To maintain city licensing requirements, to meet state regulatory standards, to make adaptations to include children with special needs,

and to meet health and safety best practices.

Over the past four years, the fund has awarded $937,000, in combined public and private-sector funds, in grants to 452 providers serving close to 10,000 children.

While the fund has been a great benefit to child-care programs, it has had to turn away requests every year from every part of the city.

The demand is high. Each year only 30 percent of requests are funded. And the awards, while welcome, have been very small.

For example, the Health and Safety Fund provides grants of up to $10,000 to child-care centers, but to upgrade a fire safety system in a center can cost more than $30,000. Child-care programs have been left to scramble to raise the additional funds.

Many programs lack accessible water in classrooms for hand washing after diapering, food preparation, or to facilitate cleanup from messy play that is part of a high-quality curriculum. Installation of even one sink can eat up the entire cost of a grant.

We really can no longer afford this

piecemeal approach to facilities improvement in this city. Our children deserve better.

There are a variety of factors unique to the City of Philadelphia that make the need more acute.

The city has separate, more stringent fire safety standards that must be maintained, and programs are at risk of closing if they are not in compliance.

The city, unlike the state, regularly inspects family child-care home for compliance with housing, food preparation, and fire safety code.

Philadelphia has adopted the more stringent commercial standards recommended in the BOCA Code for programs serving infants and toddlers. That is good. It means that these programs are in compliance, are providing safe environments for infants and toddlers.

To comply with these standards, which require sprinklers, fire-rated walls, and fire-rated doors in existing programs, means tens of thousands of dollars in additional costs.

As advocates for children, we don't dispute the need for these standards, but we do

question how child-care programs can afford them.

Finally, child-care programs rely upon parent fees to cover their operating costs. Most programs charge what parents in the community can afford to pay, meaning that city programs often have fewer resources than their counterparts in suburban communities. The dilemma, then, is meeting higher standards with fewer dollars.

The bill before you would provide $5 million to Child-Care Health and Safety Fund, an amount that would begin to do justice to the need in our neighborhoods.

We believe that the majority of the funds should be distributed in the form of grants, with some amounts placed in a revolving loan fund.

A $5 million appropriation could be reasonably and rationally spent over the course of five years and, when combined with private philanthropic funds, could go a long way toward ensuring that all Philadelphia children are spending their days in safe facilities that meet high-quality standards.

At least 16 states and 3 municipalities have created Child Care Facilities Funds. Several

states use general obligation bonds to support their facilities programs.

The City of San Francisco uses HUD Section 108 funds, which are repaid with general revenues. Innovative financing strategies seem to be the norm rather than the exception for child-care facilities funds.

In recent years, this Council has recognized the need to help child-care providers secure funding to make their facilities safer. These programs are in every Council district, serving working families in every neighborhood.

Without your support, the Health and Safety Fund could not have existed. I urge you to continue your commitment to our city's children through supporting an investment of $5 million.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: You are welcome. Thank you very much.

MS. WARD: This is Michelle Montgomery from the Child Care Resource Developers.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you.

MS. MICHELLE MONTGOMERY: My name is Michelle Montgomery. I am the assistant manager. I

am representing Child Care Resource Developers.

We are the grant fund managers. We have been able to effectively and quickly distribute the money that has been allocated to us.

This year alone we have had and received 293 grants, which the request was over $834,000. Of that, we were able to fund 117 grants for $234,000.

This enabled us to fund 28 centers, 8 groups, and 81 family homes. Of these, we have to look at the priority levels of urgency and necessity.

There were 16 Grant 1 priorities. These included meeting violations from L & I, Department of Health and Environmental Services, and DPW.

Meeting safety and health codes for food preparations were high on the funded list. We were upgrading fire safety systems and fire safety equipment.

As you know, these are extremely important in the safety of our small children. And some of the facilities do not have the proper funding to be able to fix these errors and to put them in compliance.

We then also were able to fund five

grants for Priority 2. These would address special-needs issues.

Some of them are making bathrooms handicapped accessible, telecommunication device for the deaf, and making doorways wheelchair accessible.

We move into the third priority, which is still extremely important. These are general health and safety issues that are necessary.

Making hand-washing accessible to the child care area, again to reduce the spread of disease; safety features for doors, simple things like putting in thumb-turn locks; putting in fire-safety-rated doors; improving air quality, simple things like air purifiers and using HEPA vacuums.

Smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide detectors are high on the list to keep our children safe.

We also have to provide safe storage for toxic chemicals. That would include cleaning materials.

Fencing in play areas for our children to play safely in. In the neighborhoods where there are animals that are allowed to run free or even

abduction of children, we have to be careful, making sure our that our children are safe in their play areas.

Safe window treatments. Again, a simple thing like removing venetian blinds that have cords that dangle.

Age- and size-appropriate bathroom fixtures to make sure that our children have these types of things available to them.

When you come down to the actual amount of money that's available per child with the grants that we funded, we could fund $139.95 per child.

That is a small price to pay for the amount of important necessities that are necessary in each of these child-care areas.

Also this year we were able to bring into service a health consultant. This service was accepted overwhelmingly by the providers. The providers were very open to this new process. And of all of the applicants, we only had one that turned it down.

Our health consultant goes in, gives them advice, looks at their services, tells them what they might need, and offers any kind of

consultation.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

Marion Atwood Brown, teacher.

Is Alma Doumbouya, Child Care Specialist, here?

And what about Nancy Quaglia, Assistant Executive Director, of Associated Daycare, are you here? All right. You will be next.

Good morning. Thank you very much. Identify yourself for the record and begin your testimony. Welcome.

MS. MARION ATWOOD-BROWN: Good morning. My name is Marion Brown. I work for the Pre-school Project. I am also on the Board of the Child Care Center of Bustleton United Methodist Church, and I have been a child-care teacher for about 25 years.

I want to say thank you to all of you on the Council for having these hearings and for considering the Health and Safety Fund of the expansion of the facilities fund. And especially thank you to Councilman Nutter for introducing this measure.

In Philadelphia, in working with child

care, we are taking old buildings and trying to retrofit them for new uses.

We are also working with new codes that give us a greater margin of safety, but also create additional burdens on child-care providers.

Children need fresh air, they need water, they need sunlight. It is very hard in our current buildings to give children these basic things.

Many child-care centers are located in church basements or in converted factory buildings. These situations have virtually no windows, so many children go from morning until night without any natural light in their environment.

Children need fresh air. Getting outside is challenging, especially when there is not adequate outdoor play space or when the play space does not have safety surfacing that children need.

The facilities fund could help with the surfacing and the fencing that many daycare centers need.

We have already heard some references to water. Health and hygiene in the classroom and in life starts with early training in hand-washing.

And this is very difficult when you have to go down the hall to wash your hands.

I recently visited a center where I noticed that the staff/child ratio in the room was out of compliance with DPW. This was a licensed center that routinely does pass their DPW inspections, but at that moment there were not the number of teachers in the room.

I called this to the staff's attention and wondered about it. And they said, oh, the problem is that a three-year-old little boy had to go to the bathroom ten minutes before bathroom time. So a teacher had to leave the group and take the one child to the bathroom, and leaving the rest of the group without adequate supervision.

These kinds of things can be addressed with the help of a facilities fund. It is not possible for providers on their own and with their own child-care budgets to address them.

I am particularly aware of these realities in relation to my own church, Bustleton United Methodist Church, child care, in Councilman O'Neill's district.

We started a child-care program at our

facility in 2000. Our church is a pretty well-maintained facility. It was built in the '40s, as opposed to many churches in the city that were built over a hundred years ago. So we thought that this would work pretty readily in our building.

However, we found we had to put in over $50,000 of building improvements in order to meet current code requirements.

Our building is divided into two sections, the education wing and the church wing.

The education wing, where we started, cost us about $30,000 to replace doors and improve fire-detection systems.

In order to expand our program into the large hall located under the sanctuary in the church wing, we had to upgrade and include several double fire doors -- had to be custom made because they were not routine sizes of doors -- and a more sophisticated alarm system.

This additional $20,000 of expenditures was impossible for us to fund.

The church did manage to cover a part of it. And thanks to the existing Health and Safety Fund, we were able to get the rest of this

accomplished and to start serving the school-aged children.

The Health and Safety Fund must continue also because it is financially in the best interest of our city.

There are thousands and thousands of children in unlicensed child care and churches and recreation centers and in family homes. A lot of these children are infants and toddlers, and many are school-aged children.

Most of these children are from families who would qualify for TANF or subsidized child-care funds if they were in licensed facilities.

Philadelphia children and child care could be bringing in millions of dollars in state and federal child-care subsidies.

However, because these facilities do not have the resources to meet facility requirements and remain unlicensed, in some cases, the care of these children strains and drains the economic resources of their families and of our city.

Our city, our child-care providers, our recreation centers, our churches and community-based organizations need to use our resources to

supplement the state subsidy dollars provided through the Child Care Block Grants.

And the key to developing this aspect of sound fiscal management for the child-care community and for our city is to invest in a greatly expanded Health and Safety Fund or facilities fund.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you for your testimony.

Ms. Alma Doumbouya, Child Care Specialist, Northwest Interfaith Movement. Would you identify yourself and begin your testimony.

MS. ALMA DOUMBOUYA: Thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Alma Doumbouya. I work at the Neighborhood Child Care Resource Program as a family child care specialist. And for nine years I was a family daycare provider myself.

So I am really here, if anything, the voices of the providers who could not be here at 9:00 a.m. because they are caring for the children. They are trying to make sure the children are safe.

And I would like to also thank you for what has been done. They would like to thank you for what you have given them in the past.

So they did apply for the grants. They used them to improve their programs to the best of their knowledge.

Thank you, Jannie Blackwell, for your bringing this vote, bringing this to the floor.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you.

MS. DOUMBOUYA: I would like to speak in a voice of, maybe, Barbara Murray, who has been doing daycare for 20 years, and after those 20 years things began to break down.

Well, the steps were repaired, there was a grant. The Health and Safety Grant helped pay for that.

When I was a daycare provider, I had to build a fence around my yard so the children could have freedom to play.

There are many voices that are home wondering, is this going to continue. Because they would like to improve their program. They would like to continue to keep the place safe for the children.

And if you can think of how it would be if there wasn't any help. There is not enough help. There is always more needs. There is more doors

that need to be replaced, more screens that need to be on windows for the children to have more air to breathe while they play, a cooler place, a warmer place.

Please, could you consider. This grant will help the centers, the family daycares.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

Nancy Quaglia, Assistant Executive Director, Associated Daycare.

After Ms. Quaglia. Is Laura Boyce here now?

Good morning. Thank you very much.

MS. NANCY QUAGLIA: Good morning. Thank you very much. My name is Nancy Quaglia, and I am the Assistant Executive Director and Director of Family Daycare for Associated Daycare, a nonprofit agency whose mission is to provide quality child care to low-income families in Philadelphia.

I am here today on behalf of the providers, the family daycare providers and the center providers, who have received grants and who could not be here today because they are home and in the centers taking care of the children.

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We operate two licensed daycare centers and 40 registered and licensed daycare homes throughout the city, primarily in North, South, and West Philadelphia.

Our daycare centers, Franklin Day Nursery in South Philadelphia, which was established in 1906, and Hope Day Nursery in North Philadelphia, which was established in 1907, have been fortunate recipients of the Health and Safety Grant, allowing them to install fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, major repairs such as electrical upgrades, plumbing work, and roofing to our aging brick row homes.

Without the Help and Safety Grants, city agencies, such as L & I, the Fire Department, and the Health Department would have no difficulty citing these centers for violations and possibly closing them down.

The agency, which, as I said, is nonprofit, has very limited resources. And the cost of repairs have risen dramatically throughout the years.

The Health and Safety Fund has been a God send for us and the children that we serve. Our

family daycare homes have also been fortunate recipients of the Health and Safety Fund.

Family daycare providers traditionally make less than $10,000 yearly, while providing care to our most precious resource, the children, especially those under the age of 3.

The grants, which only are $1,000 per family daycare home, have been enormously helpful for these providers.

The providers creatively use their money prudently to create and maintain a safe environment to promote a healthy social and emotional development for each and every child.

The Health and Safety Grants have been used for radiator covers, fire extinguishers, handrails for children with physical disabilities, HEPA vacuum cleaners, and such minor things as carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors.

Providers care for children because they believe every child needs and deserves a healthy start in life, not to make money. The grant money allows them that opportunity, and it is important that more money is funneled into this fund.

Please remember that without the child

care, your constituents cannot work or attend school. Without quality child care, children cannot receive the early education they need to start school. Quality child care does make the city work.

I urge you to consider the increase in money. Anyone in the business of child care knows that we are not in it for the money.

This is an opportunity for the City of Philadelphia to demonstrate its commitment to the child-care community. But, more importantly, it has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to our most precious resource, the children of Philadelphia.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

MS. LAURA BOYCE: Good morning. I am Laura Boyce, Director of Network Relations for United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

United Way's mission is to lead, inspire, and mobilize donors and volunteers to improve the quality of people's lives in our community by focusing on three key areas: Children and youth, adult independence, and healthy living.

We are involved with both pre-school and

after-school programs that so desperately need the proposed Child-Care Facilities Fund.

Effective pre-school and after-school programs have been linked to a community emphasis on high-quality education, provide our children with fuel for the engine of success in school and in life.

These programs develop our kids in many ways. They improve their critical thinking and problem-solving capacity, their social and group dynamic capacities, and their language and communication skills. They also expose them to new worlds of experience.

As previously noted, United Way is deeply connected to our community's after-school and pre-school programs. In the past year, over 6300 children received pre-school education at over 90 United Way affiliated sites, while 144,000 children and youth attended United Way-affiliated nonschool-hour programs.

These programs are committed to quality and are often frustrated by their ongoing difficulties with their facilities.

These facility problems drain resources

away from the focus on quality educational and social services for our children.

Let me offer you some real-life examples of the needs in our communities, culled from our review of over 100 programs.

We see programs on a daily basis that would benefit from your leadership in assuring that resources are available to provide fire escapes and automated fire alarm systems, to provide handicapped-accessible interior and exterior ramps, repair leaky roofs, install bathrooms in sufficient number for children attending programs, and to upgrade plumbing and sinks in existing bathrooms, to add additional classrooms so that successful programs can enroll the children in our neighborhoods to want to attend them, assure appropriate heating and cooling systems, and to install appropriate refrigeration systems.

These facility problems cause impediments to our community's efforts to assure high-quality programs for our infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kids, and teens.

From our work in this area, we know that we have not yet achieved that necessary local system

of high-quality pre-school and after-school programs in this community.

For example, research commissioned by United Way in conjunction with the city and the school district found that individuals who work with young children are sensitive to them, but the overall quality needed to support child and health and safety, as well as school readiness, is minimal.

Let me assure you that facilities are part of the solution to a network of quality programs for our children.

Addressing the facility problems is essential to our overall work in creating a strong local system of quality early childhood and after-school services.

We urge you to support an investment of $5 million in the Child-Care Facilities Fund. Thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

Is there anyone else to testify on Bill No. 030397? Please come forward.

Is there anyone else? Thank you very much.

MS. WILHEMENA STEWART: Good morning and

thank you for allowing me to speak. May name is Wilhemena Stewart, and I am the Director of the Office of Child Care.

I am here to urge your support for the proposed increase to the Child Health and Safety Fund and to ask that Council work to ensure the program's expansion.

As recently heard on a television commercial, a politician said, "We have strangers raising our children." Well, there is nothing we can do about that because working mothers of young children work because of need, not desire to be away from their children.

However, we can do something about the environments of those care-givers that are taking care of the children.

Many child-care programs lack resources to improve facilities to prevent injury, illness, and ensure healthy learning environments for thousands of those children under the age of 5.

Child-care programs need financial help to comply with the city codes, so as to continue to provide nurturing environments for the children under their care.

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Philadelphia city departments that regulate child-care centers and homes should have as their main goal to eliminate disease, provide hazard identification and reduction.

I ask that Council work to ensure the fund's expansion and to ensure that the majority of funds are available as grants.

Most child-care programs are underresourced, especially those serving the poorest children. They are in no position to repay loans.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

Is there anyone else who would like to testify on this bill?

(Public Hearing adjourned.)

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PUBLIC MEETING

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

- - -

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2003

- - -

Public Meeting conducted by the Committee on Finance, held in Room 696, City Hall, Philadelphia,

BILL NO. 030397 - 6/4/03

Pennsylvania, on the above date, to consider action on the following:

BILL 030397

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO, Vice-Chair

COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO

- - -

THE CHAIRWOMAN: All right. We have a quorum present. To my right we have Vice-Chair Councilwoman Tasco, to her right we have Councilman Brian O'Neill, to his right we have Councilman Nutter, we also had Councilman DiCicco in the room.

And, therefore, we have a quorum present, and we are happy to vote on this.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco for a motion with regard to Bill No. 030397 to report it out of committee with a suspension of the Rules so that it can be heard in Council tomorrow.

Councilman Nutter, can you give us a motion with regard to Bill No. 030397, library sale lease-back.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I actually wanted to ask a couple of questions. But if that's the Chair's pleasure, I mean, we can.

THE CHAIR: Yes, then we can go to our other Finance hearing issues of the day.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: So you just want a motion?

THE CHAIR: The Chair would like to leave the Public Hearing into the Stated Meeting start of our duties and to entertain a motion with

regard to Bill No. 030397, to report it out of Committee with a favorable recommendation and a recommendation for suspension of the rules so that we may hear this at our next session of Council.

Then we have our other Finance hearing issues to deal with. But this is just because we continued it until today at 9:00.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Madam Chair, I would like to at least make some comments before, if the bill is going to move.

I had planned to ask a series of questions. If the bill is going to move, I respect the Chair's request. I want to make a couple of comments before we actually take a vote on it.

THE CHAIR: That would be fine, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

One, there have been a number of people who have testified with regard to this proposed transaction. And at the previous hearing I had asked a number of questions about the transaction.

And I want to make sure that the record is very clear and that the people who testified

understand my view and concerns.

First and foremost, the three proposed uses of the funds, the $5 million Child-Care Health and Safety Fund, the $30 million Free Library Expansion Fund, and the $25 million School-Based Facilities Improvement Fund, I wholeheartedly agree with the intention of the need for funding for those three priority items.

I have expressed, though, a somewhat separate concern with regard to not the need for the $25 million in School-Based Facilities Improvement Fund, but just how that would work in conjunction with the proposed one and a half billion dollar borrowing by the Philadelphia School District.

I heard the testimony earlier, but there have been some concerns expressed about coordination between the city and the school district on those funds, as well as, I believe, legitimate legal concerns with regard to the impact of Act 46.

But putting those issues aside, what I have tried to do, and also want to clear up any confusion, I have put forward an amendment in a totally separate bill, with a totally separate funding source, for $5 million for the Child-Care

Health and Safety Fund as further demonstration of commitment to that funding.

And I think the people who have testified here today -- and I agree with everything that you have said -- I think at the end of the day your concern, I would think, is more to have the $5 million, as opposed to where exactly it comes from.

And as Ellie Shalcrot testified, I think, as long as it comes from a legal source, you would probably be happy about it.

So I do support the $5 million for the Child Health and Safety Fund, but I have concerns about its source.

With regard to the library expansion, there has been a bill already introduced that would support the Free Library expansion, actually, in an amount up to $50 million for its expansion.

Those funds could only be used for the Free Library expansion and renovation project. And the library would have four and a half years time to make that borrowing. And those funds would be available to them and would serve as the kind of guarantee, I think, for the fund-raising purposes.

With regard to $25 million for the

schools, I have already talked about my concern about that.

So I want to make the record clear in terms of my support for these needed funds. The only issue has been the source of the funds and the nature of this particular transaction, and I don't need to go back through all of those issues.

So with that, Madam Chair, I am pretty much finished my statement. And if we are going to move this, that's fine with me.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you, Councilman.

Council O'Neill, you wanted to make a statement?

COUNCILMAN O'NEILL: Yes. Very briefly, Madam Chair.

I can't support this bill as it is.

I concur entirely with Councilman Nutter on the issue of the child-care fund. I don't think there is anyone on this Council that won't work diligently to find a legal source for that money. And I believe we can do it from one of several different sources.

And the sale/lease-back, while it is not something I think we should do except in dire

circumstances, I will accept the Administration's position that this is a dire circumstance based on our Capital Budget situation.

And we are at $30 million for a sale/lease-back for the library itself. And if all the money was staying there, I would be voting for it.

But I think when you bring in the 25 million for the schools, which is a legitimate issue, also, but not this way, not through the library sale/lease-back, I'm not going to support it.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you for your statement.

Does anyone else have any comments they would like to make?

Councilwoman Tasco.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Yes, I would like to comment to say that I concur with the statements of Councilmen Nutter and O'Neill.

Certainly we support the library and the expansion, and will be supporting the bill that Councilman Nutter has introduced, as my co-sponsor

of that bill, to provide the money for the library.

On the daycare fund, we are looking at other options to find money for that. And there are existing programs in this city where daycare providers can access dollars through their Commerce Department for loans towards daycare improvement.

We will pursue that, as well as other options, to support the need for housing, for the upgrades for daycare facilities.

So I concur with my colleagues on this.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you very much.

And the Chair notes that it is a very, very serious issue. Many people are concerned about us selling our major assets and our beautiful historic buildings.

This is a very, very, very important issue. And we can only say that we hope we are at that point where we must do this.

All right. Having said that, Councilman Nutter, would you entertain the motion.

Councilman DiCicco, would you entertain a motion for me, please. It is with regard to Bill No. 030397.

COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you, Madam

Chair. I move that Bill No. 03097 be reported out of this Committee with a favorable recommendation and a further recommendation that the rules of Council be suspended.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Is there a second?

I will second it.

(Duly seconded.)

THE CHAIRWOMAN: All in favor, aye.

Opposed?

The Chair notes that there are two aye's, Councilman DiCicco and myself. There are three nay's, Councilman Nutter, Councilman O'Neill, Councilwoman Tasco.

Therefore, this bill fails and is not reported out of this Committee.

We thank you very much.

(Public Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing proceedings of the Council of the City of Philadelphia of Wednesday, June 4, 2003, were reported fully and accurately by me, and that this is a correct transcript of same.

RE: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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DEBRA A. WHITEHEAD