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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC HEARING
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, December 8, 1998
10:20 a.m.

- - -

RES. 980766 - Calling for the Council Committee on
Education to hold joint hearings with state
officials and the Philadelphia City Council on
Charter Schools.

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER, Vice Chair

COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO
COUNCILWOMAN ANNA C. VERNA
COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
COUNCILMAN ANGEL ORTIZ
COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
COUNCILWOMAN AUGUSTA A. CLARK

- - -

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Eleven Penn Center Plaza, Suite 600
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2 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good morning.
3 Let me thank everyone for coming this morning. And
4 now let me formally begin the City Council Committee
5 on Education. This is a joint hearing with state
6 officials to discuss charter schools.

7 Before we make a statement, let me
8 have the clerk please read the title of the
9 resolution.

10 THE CLERK: Calling for the City
11 Council Committee on Education to hold joint
12 hearings with state officials and the Philadelphia
13 City Council on charter schools, their role in
14 relationship to the School District of Philadelphia,
15 and their future impact on education in the
16 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

17 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

18 Let me say for the purpose of a
19 quorum that we have, to my left, Councilwoman
20 Miller, then Councilman Frank DiCicco; to my right
21 Councilwoman Anna Verna. And let me give me opening
22 statement.

23 Today, Tuesday, December 8, the City
24 Council Committee on Education is holding joint
25 public hearings on Resolution No. 980766, with State

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2 Representative Dwight Evans and other state
3 officials.

4 This hearing is a joint efforts
5 between the Education Committee and the state to
6 investigate charter schools, their role in
7 relationship to the School District of Philadelphia,
8 and their future impact on education in the
9 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

10 As charter schools are a relatively
11 new phenomenon in our city and their number is
12 quickly increasing, it is important that we evaluate
13 their impact both locally and statewide.

14 I am sure that everyone here will see
15 that this will be a very informative and productive
16 hearing.

17 State Representative Dwight Evans'
18 involvement in organizing this hearing and even in
19 giving the idea, setting forth that idea, is
20 greatly, greatly appreciated.

21 And we appreciate him for certainly
22 stepping out on the charter school issue, when all
23 elected officials were afraid to do so, and, in
24 fact, taking a lot of heat for helping to create
25 these wonderful schools that have become a part of

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2 our public school arena.

3 With that, let me call on
4 Representative Dwight Evans for any remarks he may
5 have, and then other members of the committee.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DWIGHT EVANS: I would
7 first like to say good morning to all of you. I
8 would like to thank the Chairperson, Councilwoman
9 Jannie Blackwell, for, one, hosting this particular
10 hearing, as well as the other members of the
11 Education Committee.

12 As the Councilwoman expressed, this
13 is a joint effort between the city and the
14 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

15 In my view, too often, too many times
16 I think that there's been unnecessary friction
17 between the city and the state. I think it's long
18 overdue that the policymakers at the city and the
19 state level begin to work together for the interests
20 of all of the children in the City of Philadelphia.

21 Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, my
22 understanding, has visited all of the 13 charter
23 schools. And she clearly understands that people
24 need options and choices available to them.

25 In my view, that does not mean that

10 I have expressed to Councilwoman
11 Jannie Blackwell that I think that this is the first
12 in the history of not just this Council, but the
13 city, where you really have a joint effort talking
14 about city policy regarding education from the local
15 and the state level.

20 Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

25 Seeing none, we will begin our first

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2 panel. Let me note that representatives from all
3 four panels are here, and that our Superintendent of
4 Schools is certainly here, David Hornbeck.

5 And we have you on Committee No. 2,
6 so that we can first talk about who and what charter
7 schools are, and then we will quickly -- we
8 understand your time constraints, and we will try to
9 do our best to respect that.

10 Now will be Panel 1, State
11 Representatives and original charter school
12 operators. We're calling on Mr. Derrick Spahn,
13 Pennsylvania Department of Education, Director of
14 Project for Community Building.

15 Thank you for coming.

16 MR. SPAHN: Thank you, Councilwoman.

17 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Would you pull
18 the mike a little closer. And we would ask each
19 speaker to identify yourself for the record and then
20 proceed.

21 MR. DERRICK SPAHN: I am Derrick
22 Spahn, Director of the Governor's Project for
23 Community Building.

24 I am delighted to have an opportunity
25 to come here to talk about a program that Governor

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2 Ridge unveiled approximately two years ago, with the
3 express purpose and interest in revitalizing our
4 communities and investing in economic growth,
5 creating empowerment in our communities, preventing
6 teen pregnancy, fighting crime, and essentially
7 giving individuals and families hope in transforming
8 communities that have turned to wastelands into
9 beacon lights of hope.

10 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse me one
11 moment.

12 All of those, I assume, who are
13 there, if you would bring your chairs up closer to
14 the witness table, for those of you who are on this
15 committee, if you would.

16 I'm sorry. We should have moved
17 those up before we began, so that it is obvious that
18 you are a part of this committee, this panel.

19 And, again, we want to thank
20 Representative Dwight Evans for even suggesting a
21 format for us to make it a lot more organized and
22 easier for us to explore the issue.

23 Thank you. Please continue,
24 Mr. Spahn.

25 MR. SPAHN: I was appointed by

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2 Governor Ridge approximately two years ago to direct
3 the Project for Community Building, which is the
4 centerpiece of the Governor's plan to ensure that
5 all Pennsylvanians thrive in the new economy of the
6 21st Century.

7 The philosophy behind the project is
8 that people, not government, are really the true
9 builders of communities, and that inherent in every
10 community across the Commonwealth is talent and
11 potential and good will.

12 The Project for Community Building
13 seeks to tap into those qualities and stimulate
14 self-help strategies and solutions.

15 The focus of the Project for
16 Community Building are five areas that are critical
17 to community restoration and revitalization.

18 Eight of the initiatives are offered
19 under the Project for Community Building to
20 community-based organizations in an effort to help
21 communities build themselves from within.

22 Let me very quickly just talk a
23 little bit about some of those eight initiatives,
24 one of which, pertinent to this morning, happens to
25 be charter schools.

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2 The primary goal of the Project for
3 Community Building is to build community assets,
4 empower individuals and families, create
5 opportunities for student achievement, prevent teen
6 pregnancies, and improve neighborhood safety.

7 We do that by bringing together
8 approximately eight initiatives, which are the
9 Pennsylvania Community Development Bank, the
10 Self-Employment Assistance Program, the Family
11 Savings Account Program, education mentoring,
12 abstinence education, crime prevention and housing
13 opportunities, and, of course, our charter school
14 program.

15 And we also do that through six state
16 agencies which come together and are comprised to
17 make up the Project for Community Building; that
18 being the Pennsylvania Department of Community and
19 Economic Development, the Department of Labor and
20 Industry, the Department of Health, the Department
21 of Education, Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency,
22 and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and
23 Delinquency.

24 First, just let me talk a little bit
25 about those initiatives.

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2 The Family Savings Account Program is
3 a program that uses restricted funds to help
4 low-income families attain self-sufficiency through
5 savings and asset accumulation.

6 Matched savings from the state can be
7 used to purchase a new home or pay for educational
8 expenses or start a new business.

9 And the program impact is to modify
10 economic behavior in terms of creating savings
11 accounts for poor families, self-sufficiency, and
12 asset accumulation.

13 The Community Development Bank is a
14 program of the Pennsylvania Economic Development
15 Financing Authority.

16 The Pennsylvania Community
17 Development Bank makes capital available for
18 community and economic development lending and
19 provides capacity building and technical assistance
20 grants to promote the creation and expansion of
21 community development financial institutions within
22 the distressed communities.

23 And the program impact behind the
24 Community Development Banks are to promote new
25 business start-ups or expansions, assist local

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2 CDFIs, encourage comprehensive community development
3 plans, and support a network of nonprofit
4 organizations.

5 The Self-Employment Assistance
6 Program targets workers who are likely to exhaust
7 their own employment insurance benefits before being
8 re-employed.

9 And the program provides these
10 workers with entrepreneurial assistance and training
11 to create their own jobs through self-employment.

12 And the impact of that program is
13 designed specifically to create community
14 empowerment, self-sufficiency, provide communities
15 with products needed, and create employment
16 opportunities.

17 Through our Education Mentoring
18 Program, which is also offered by the Department of
19 Education, that program is designed to link
20 responsible, caring adults with at-risk youth and
21 children.

22 And the program works on the notion
23 of the pool of expectancy, which suggests that a
24 positive, respected adult can provide an admiring
25 child or youth with the ability to recognize their

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2 own qualities and their own talents.

3 And, of course, the program impact of
4 the Education Mentoring Program is to establish
5 positive roll models for at-risk youth, improve
6 school attendance and performance, and eliminate
7 potential for at-risk youths to become involved in
8 drugs and in crime.

9 The next program is the Community
10 Crime Prevention Program, offered by the
11 Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

12 Here we seek to design programs that
13 allow communities and organizations to develop
14 community-driven, community-directed strategies
15 which eliminate the factors that contribute to
16 juvenile crime and delinquency.

17 It's also a program specifically
18 designed at helping communities develop programs to
19 inoculate themselves against the disease and
20 ravishes of crime and violence.

21 Our Abstinence Education and Related
22 Services Program, offered through the Department of
23 Health, assists communities in the development of
24 strategies to reduce teen pregnancy,
25 community-directed abstinence-based education

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2 programs are -- is created to discourage and
3 postpone sexual activity and avoid pregnancy among
4 children and adolescents.

5 And, in addition to that program,
6 helping to reduce teen pregnancy, it also seeks
7 to -- there is a side benefit, in that it helps to
8 lower STDs, as well, through or Abstinence Education
9 and Related Services Program.

10 The final program that we also offer
11 under the Project for Community Building is our
12 charter schools.

13 And I'm going to read the brief bio
14 of Dr. Timothy Daniels, who heads up the charter
15 school. And it is for that purpose that this
16 gathering has been convened. And Tim then will talk
17 about charter schools under the Project for
18 Community Building.

19 Dr. Tim Daniels is the Director of
20 the Office of Educational Initiatives in the
21 Pennsylvania Department of Education. Programs
22 currently included in this office are charter public
23 schools and school performance funding.

24 An experienced field administrator,
25 Dr. Daniels has been a junior high teacher, a junior

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2 high assistant principal, a middle school principal,
3 a school district business manager, an assistant
4 superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and a
5 superintendent of schools.

6 As part of the Pennsylvania Charter
7 School Initiative, Dr. Daniels has visited charter
8 schools in Pennsylvania and states throughout the
9 country, overseeing the awarding and administration
10 of 159 charter school planning grants in the
11 Commonwealth, published several journal articles
12 about the development of Pennsylvania charter
13 schools, and spoke to numerous groups throughout the
14 Commonwealth.

15 Topics of the presentations include
16 the development and operation of charter schools in
17 Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Charter School
18 Planning grant process, and the analysis of
19 Pennsylvania charter school legislation.

20 He is currently involved in assisting
21 the six charter schools that opened in the fall of
22 1997 and the 25 that have opened in the fall of
23 1998, Organizing the fourth round of education
24 charter school workshops and planning grants, and
25 administering a \$9 million federal grant awarded to

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2 give start-up funding to Pennsylvania charter
3 schools.

4 School performance funding is a new
5 program that fulfills the Department General Fund
6 allocation of \$13.4 million for this purpose.

7 Tim chaired the task force that
8 designed the guidelines for school performance
9 funding, and his office is responsible for its
10 implementation.

11 And so now I'm going to give the mike
12 over to Dr. Tim Daniels.

13 DR. TIM DANIELS: Thank you,
14 Derrick.

15 An update on that fourth round
16 planning grant announcement from the state is that
17 33 additional grants have been awarded. And it is
18 noteworthy in this setting to tell you that 15 of
19 those grants are here in the City of Philadelphia.

20 Charter schools, a mission-driven,
21 deregulated, independent public school choice. It
22 is a mission, freedom, and independence with
23 consumer choice concept.

24 If numbers speak, Pennsylvania's
25 charters were invented right here in Philadelphia.

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2 I can recall being on the Parkway on the Charter
3 School Symposium in June of 1997 in a room that was
4 addressed by Council President Street,
5 Superintendent Hornbeck, Secretary Hickock, and
6 Governor Ridge right before the bill was signed and
7 in the Free Public Library down in Philadelphia.

8 And with that beginning, eight weeks
9 later in Pennsylvania we had six charter schools,
10 four of them operating right here in Philadelphia.

11 And to prove that I'm a Delaware
12 Valley resident, I want to show you something I
13 taped at home on my VCR.

14 This is one of those moments where it
15 worked great before the performance. And the
16 technician is not here. And if it doesn't warm up
17 and go on -- there we go.

```
18             Sometimes technology is a little
19 scary. It is still scary.
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20 (VCR presentation.)

21 DR. DANIELS: That says more than I
22 could ever say about the mission. You had an
23 operator there, a parent, student, everybody there
24 for the same reason.

25 Charter schools in the country

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2 started out in 1991, as a law in '92, with one
3 charter in Minnesota.

4 This chart went up to last year. It
5 is from the U.S. Department of Education, second
6 year study that was just released. And a lot of
7 charter operators who are here have it.

8 It shows that last year there were
9 800-and-some charter schools. This year there's
10 1,100 charter schools, with over 200,000 students,
11 in the country.

12 It is a national initiative and that
13 puts the perspective in a nonpolitical one. That
14 is, I believe, there is a difference in political
15 parties between the national and state
16 Administration, when I last checked.

17 The national Administration has first
18 of all. So this year we have all over the country
19 as I say, over 20,000 students. In the states, 31
20 charter schools with 6,000 student, excess of 6,000
21 students.

22 What does that mean for us here in
23 Pennsylvania and as a consumer of education?

24 It means last year there were six
25 charter schools. You will notice one way out in

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2 here in Mercer, near the Ohio line -- which was the
3 first charter school, which was a regional charter
4 school of two school boards -- voted 18 to nothing
5 for a charter school, one in Chester County, which
6 is a continuation of a Head Start Program, and four
7 in Philadelphia, whose operators are here today.

8 The second year, we have 31 charter
9 schools. You can see that the greater bulk of them
10 are still in Philadelphia, with 13 charter schools
11 operating. But they are spread throughout the
12 state.

13 For example, there are two up in the
14 State College School District, which are small
15 charter schools. They are each about 50 students.
16 One is a basic skills school, and the other is a
17 interdisciplinary unit school.

18 We have three operating in
19 Pittsburgh, and, as I said before, 13 in the city.
20 But that's all that's been approved.

21 There are 35 that have been
22 approved. And I want to point those out. Erie up
23 in the left-hand corner there, and Philadelphia in
24 the right-hand corner down at the bottom.

25 There are 15 approved in

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2 Philadelphia, 13 operating. There's two additional
3 approved to open next fall, Christopher Columbus and
4 Atlas at this particular point.

5 There's also a fourth one in
6 Allegheny County that's approved. The Thurgood
7 Marshal Charter, which will open next September, and
8 the Lehigh Valley Performing Arts Charter, which has
9 been approved north of here to open next September.

10 35 have been approved. And we have
11 currently 52 applications in front of 20 School
12 Boards in the Commonwealth, for those of you that
13 are keeping box scores there.

14 I will return briefly to the
15 definition of a charter school. Not to cover plowed
16 ground again, or plowed plowed ground again, but to
17 get our charter operators into their presentation
18 here.

19 Mission: I'm not going to talk that
20 that, when the people that can best talk about the
21 mission of a charter school, which varies in a
22 customized design way from school to school, the best
23 people to describe that are the chief administrator
24 officers of the charter schools.

25 But freedom has to do with

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2 deregulation. You hear a lot about, you're not
3 going to get anything different by doing the same
4 thing.

5 Well, if the rules for charter
6 schools are the same as they are for our schools,
7 after a while, you are going to have more of the
8 same stuff.

9 To get something different, you have
10 to change the rules. It is called deregulation.
11 There has been a lot of deregulation in services to
12 people in our society, and right now schools are no
13 exception. Charter schools allow for deregulation.

14 What do we mean by that? 80 percent
15 of all state laws and regulations are waived, gone,
16 but so is the local School Board policy.

17 And when I was a School Board
18 business manager, and in charge of policy, I made
19 sure we had two policy books that thick. They're
20 gone, as is any contract line.

21 Now, people have all sort of opinions
22 about no contract, no teacher's contract, no School
23 Board policy, no state law.

24 But the point is that if you are
25 waiving regulation, you are waiving it at all

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2 levels, not just some level. Everybody is giving it
3 up to let charters do something different.

4 And the last thing is independence to
5 sustain this. When you create a chart school as an
6 independent entity, it is a new sort of political
7 entity in Pennsylvania.

8 And in the eyes of the federal
9 government it is a local education agency, which
10 means on some matters it deals directly with the
11 state education agency.

12 And as we work the school districts,
13 we found, for example, that federal money is not
14 passed through the school district, but comes
15 directly from the state to the charters. And that
16 really underlines that definition of a charter
17 school as an LEA.

18 That is a distinction that does need
19 to be made. And it took a little while to work that
20 out after the bill was passed.

21 I'm not going to say any more because
22 you can't talk more about charters without talking
23 about mission, and the people that do that are
24 sitting with me at the table.

25 And I think we're going to go with

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2 first school in Philadelphia first, as we're
3 reminded by Mr. Proietta, Community Charter, High
4 School Charter was first. And the first shall be
5 first.

6 And in addition to that, I am happy
7 to say, having been there, we were there at the
8 dedication of his new addition. So not only was it
9 a new charter school last year, but it is growing
10 this year.

11 Joe.

12 MR. JOSEPH PROIETTA: My name is Joe
13 Proietta, and I am the principal of Philadelphia
14 Community Academy.

15 Since 1990, ten --

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Would you
17 spell your last name for the stenographer. And,
18 again, welcome to all of you.

19 MR. PROIETTA: Oh, sure. Thank you.
20 Joseph Proietta, P-R-O-I-E-T-T-A.

21 And John has asked me to remind
22 everyone that I'm also the President of the
23 Philadelphia Alliance of Charter Schools.

24 And I guess before I begin also, I
25 would like to thank Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell

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2 and the members of the committee for having these
3 hearings today.

4 And we also at our last PACS meeting,
5 we discussed the fact that we were so proud and
6 happy to see that newsletter that came from your
7 office. And we were very grateful for that, and we
8 wish to thank you for doing that.

9 Getting back to Philadelphia
10 Community Academy. Since 1990, ten of our students
11 or graduates have been victims of violence. We've
12 had ten funerals in the last eight years.

13 Heroin, crack cocaine are sold in the
14 public parking lot right next to the school. The
15 Inquirer reports that over 10,000 students are
16 truant from school every day within a one-mile
17 radius of our school. That's our mission.

18 The mission of Philadelphia Community
19 Academy is to save, to re-educate, to rescue those
20 students who have fallen through the cracks and have
21 become victims to a society that doesn't seem to
22 care. And caring becomes the big issue with them
23 when they come to us.

24 We've existed really for 20 years.
25 We're about to have our 20th Anniversary. I'm sure

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2 Councilwoman Blackwell and many Councilmembers from
3 our years of fighting in Council are aware of us as
4 the Community High School.

5 Because of that, we are also in a
6 very unique situation as a charter school. And that
7 situation is that we're the only charter school I
8 know of in the country that is accredited. And we
9 are a middle-states-credited high school.

10 Part of our mission and part of the
11 way we see the way in which we can carry out this
12 mission is by providing a full-service high school.

13 And our high school not only has what
14 I think is an excellent educational program, but we
15 also have a health clinic in the school, staffed by
16 the Philadelphia Health Department with nurse
17 practitioners.

18 And, as you know, nurse practitioners
19 act as family physicians and are able to prescribe
20 medication, do tests, and make necessary referrals.

21 Through our health clinic, we have
22 recently found two young women, 16 years old, with
23 morbidly high blood pressure and have been able to
24 get them the proper medical care, something that
25 might have, again, slipped through the cracks.

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2 We also provide daycare within the
3 school, and we work very closely with teen mothers.
4 And we have 11 young children in our daycare right
5 now who are the children of children.

6 We also provide full social services
7 for our students. We have a social worker on staff
8 who works full time and is able to provide help with
9 things like getting a house, paying the gas bill,
10 getting a protection order, all the kinds of things
11 that come up during the day.

12 What we want to do, and the reason
13 that we provide these kinds of services, is that we
14 want to create an environment where a student is
15 free to study, free to take their academic load and
16 deal with it.

17 Because many times -- although there
18 are problems, and we're all aware of them, in the
19 public schools -- one of the things that the public
20 schools and us as an inner-city school must deal
21 with are those problems that are going on outside
22 the school that make it impossible sometimes for a
23 young person to come into a building, sit down, and
24 do their work.

25 And on the scale that we can do that,

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2 I think we're doing a very good job. And I hope as
3 that, one of the other advantages of charter schools
4 is that we can be a model that the public school
5 system, which, of course, will have a much greater
6 impact, can follow.

7 Our attendance in our school is 86
8 percent. That's something that we're not happy
9 with. But compared to what we're surrounded by, and
10 by the problems, again, of urban education, it's
11 very high for attendance for general comprehensive
12 high school.

13 We're working on that. And we have
14 programs, including home visits, that we perform.
15 Our registrar and our social worker go out to the
16 homes and try to find out what's going on and
17 encourage students to come to school.

18 This past June we graduated 40
19 students. Over the almost 20-year history of the
20 school, we've graduated a thousand students.

21 We think they are a thousand students
22 who would not have graduated from high school if it
23 weren't for our school.

24 That's our mission. We're very proud
25 of what we do. And we're very grateful to

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2 Representative Dwight Evans, who pushed the charter
3 school all through, so that we could continue the
4 good work that we've done.

5 And I see that Councilman Cohen is
6 here. And I know that Councilman Cohen is very much
7 aware of our year-to-year-to-year struggles.

8 And one thing that the charter has
9 done for us, has given us the freedom to expand, as
10 Dr. Daniels said, has given us the freedom to grow.
11 We've gone from 180 students last year, to 250
12 students this year.

13 The charter has allowed us to get
14 bank loans. Because previously with the one
15 year-to-year-to year contract, it was difficult for
16 us to convince lending institutions that we would be
17 around to pay off the loan.

18 So that's made it possible for
19 Community High School to do construction for
20 Philadelphia Community Academy.

21 And thank you very much.

22 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
23 much.

24 DR. DANIELS: Well said. Right at
25 the mission. And open for visitors any time; right,

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2 Joe?

3 MR. PROIETTA: Absolutely. We love
4 having people come in. Councilwoman Blackwell
5 knows.

6 DR. DANIELS: Dr. Ryder is the Chief
7 Administrative Officer of the World Communications
8 Charter.

9 And I've been there a lot. And one
10 of the things that really made an impact on me was,
11 seeing his teachers teach, and then talking to him
12 about his veteran staff, is, many of his staff
13 members took significant pay cuts to teach in his
14 building. And he still had more people that wanted
15 to teach there than he had slots.

16 Dr. Ryder.

17 DR. MARTIN RYDER: My name is Martin
18 Ryder from World Communication Charter School. And
19 we are located about five blocks from here. And you
20 can walk right down Broad Street, and we're open.
21 And we invite you to come any time.

22 The mission of World Communications
23 Charter School is, we think, is a unique mission.
24 And our mission is to make sure that any student
25 graduating from that school has access, has the

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2 skills and competencies such that they can enter the
3 corporate world entry level without compromising the
4 profit margin of those corporations who are working
5 with us. And that's a tall mission.

6 And as part of that tall mission,
7 what we do is to do an extensive program with
8 corporations.

9 We have several specific programs.
10 We work very closely with the Graphic Arts Union and
11 with communications agencies and corporations here.
12 And we are working very hard to make sure that our
13 kids have those saleable skills and the skills are
14 there.

15 Our curriculum is basically an
16 academic curriculum. And we begin our students in
17 algebra and in language in sixth grade, and we make
18 sure that those children are proficient throughout
19 the program.

20 Part of what we -- part of the secret
21 in terms of how we do that is that we have mandatory
22 parental involvement. And we sort of rest our
23 laurels on that.

24 As a matter of fact, I thank the
25 parents who came to support us. Can you sort of

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2 raise your hands? Okay. Thank you.

3 (Parents stand.)

4 (Applause.)

5 DR. RYDER: And these parents came
6 out. Well, usually we have very large parent
7 meetings in the evenings. But these parents came
8 out in the morning, and a couple of them took off
9 from work just to make sure they were here.

10 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Dr. Ryder
11 would you pull the mike a little closer.

12 DR. RYDER: These parents took off
13 from work. And many of them are here in these early
14 morning hours to show support for charter schools.

15 Our population now is 450 students.
16 And our grade levels go from 6th through 10th at
17 this time, and eventually we will go from 6th
18 through 12th.

19 We in the school have -- I'm trying
20 to read my own writing here.

21 We work very closely with the concept
22 of developing human capital in our community. And
23 one of those concepts is sustaining community
24 curriculum.

25 What Derrick Spahn was talking about

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2 earlier here, in terms of putting together that
3 community model, is a process that we live inside
4 the school.

5 And we live this by involving
6 corporations and parents. And our major objective
7 is to make sure that the values of the parents and
8 community equate with those values of corporate
9 structure so that that transition from corporate
10 structure or to entrepreneurship is an easy one for
11 our children and families.

12 Thank you.

13 DR. DANIELS: Dr. Ryder, how many
14 students do you have on the waiting list?

15 DR. RYDER: We have 425.

16 DR. DANIELS: You have 450 students
17 in the school.

18 DR. RYDER: Yes.

19 DR. DANIELS: And how many on the
20 waiting list, again?

21 DR. RYDER: 425.

22 DR. DANIELS: I just wanted to make
23 sure I heard that right.

24 To my left is Taylor Frome, Chief
25 Administrative Officer of Youth Build.

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2 That's a program that's often on my
3 mind because Youth Build in York, Pennsylvania, is
4 trying to start a charter school. And it is
5 engendering a little bit of -- how shall I put it?
6 -- conversation.

7 So I know Taylor Frome has been
8 involved there, and I have, too, in helping to
9 create another charter school.

10 But in her charter school, you really
11 believe when you go out and watch them pour the
12 footers down on Cherry Street, when she is
13 reconstructing old houses.

14 I have been there and done that, and
15 I am glad I was wearing galoshes.

16 MS. TAYLOR FROME: Good morning. As
17 Tim, said I am Taylor Frome. I am the Executive
18 Director of the Youth Build Philadelphia Charter
19 School.

20 Briefly stated, our mission is to
21 provide career-based educational opportunities for
22 high school dropouts.

23 You have to put that in a context of
24 Philadelphia, where the school districts stated
25 dropout rate is 51 percent, to realize that

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2 providing opportunities for this population has to
3 have an impact on public education.

4 And we see our mission as broader
5 than what our school can do, and have put a lot of
6 time and energy into developing and maintaining
7 relationships with the school district so that the
8 work we do can have a larger impact.

9 Last year, 95 former high school
10 dropouts earned their high school diplomas at the
11 Youth Build Philadelphia Charter School.

12 The way that we are able to be
13 successful with this population is a combination of
14 providing a really high level of challenge, with
15 high expectations, and also providing the supports
16 that they need in order to meet those goals and
17 expectations.

18 The students that graduated last year
19 had an average of 97 percent attendance for the
20 year. And what that means is that they were absent
21 very, very few days.

22 That requires a huge commitment from
23 the student and a huge commitment from the staff to
24 deal with each absence. So each student is
25 accountable every day.

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2 And we do that because we're
3 career-based. We expect our students to be able to
4 succeed in the workplace when they graduate.

5 At this point our whole career-based
6 curriculum is built around construction. And our
7 students rebuild abandoned houses in three different
8 parts of Philadelphia.

9 If Councilwoman Anna Verna was here,
10 she could talk to you about the fact that we have
11 been doing housing in South Philadelphia since 1992,
12 with her support.

13 We also have been doing housing in
14 North Philadelphia for the last three years, and in
15 Germantown this year. We may do housing in other
16 parts of the city as we expand.

17 Students spend half their time in
18 classes and half their time as part of a
19 construction crew rebuilding houses. So it is a
20 serious level of investment and time that they spend
21 working on houses.

22 Last year we built 12 houses with
23 that group of 95 students. So in addition to
24 earning their high school diploma, they really knew
25 they had done something. They could see the houses,

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2 assessment for the last three years and have been
3 working with the school district on that because
4 they see that and we see that as one of the ways to
5 make education more concrete and more -- to make the
6 assessment more tied to the product that a student
7 can produce after they graduate or after they're
8 promoted each year. So that it has to be directly
9 tied to what they're able to do.

10 And we're very, very interested in
11 the larger repercussions that our program can have
12 on the district as a whole.

13 When we look at the 51 percent drop
14 out rate, there isn't any way that our school has
15 the ambition to serve that whole population. It
16 would require another system the size of the
17 comprehensive high schools in Philadelphia.

18 And that's never -- that's not our
19 goal. Our goal is to develop the methods, develop
20 the relationships to make it happen, and to maintain
21 and bring the school district along with us every
22 step of the way.

23 Thank you.

24 DR. DANIELS: Thank you, Taylor.

25 Last, certainly not least, for those of you who know

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2 him, John Skief, Chief Administrator Officer of
3 Harambee Charter School.

4 Two things. One, you just, in terms
5 of parent involvement, you know it when you go down
6 to a meeting for a small talk and 200 people show
7 up. It's nice to have an audience. And he does get
8 parent turn` out for his meetings.

9 And also as an ex-church choir
10 director myself, hearing his student body sing at
11 the Thanksgiving assembly was really wonderful,
12 too. It is a wonderful school.

13 John.

14 MR. JOHN SKIEF: Thank you, Tim. And
15 good morning to the Councilmembers and the State
16 Representative. And thank you for the parents that
17 came out in support of what we're trying to do.

18 As was said before, my name is John
19 Skief. I am the Chief Administrative Officer of
20 Harambee Institute of Science and Technology Charter
21 School. We are located at the Penn Memorial Church,
22 which is at 54th and Wynnefield Avenue. We have 240
23 students from Grade 1 to 8.

24 Harambee's mission is based on the
25 needs of our community. Our first parent interest

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2 also offer to those parents seminars in terms of how
3 to deal with their youth in these very, very
4 difficult times of trying to develop their
5 children.

6 We also believe that all of our
7 children, regardless of where they live, should have
8 the opportunity to have a challenging educational
9 program.

10 Because I lived in the West
11 Philadelphia community. My children went to a
12 neighborhood school. Although they may have made
13 the honor roll in these schools, unfortunately their
14 test scores weren't high enough to make it into some
15 of the better schools. This educational Apartheid,
16 as I call it, needs to be addressed.

17 So Harambee offers a very challenging
18 educational program, irrespective of what their
19 so-called test scores were previously, as long as
20 the children are educationally ready.

21 I have worked in the Philadelphia
22 public schools for 28 years before Harambee was
23 established. And in spite of what you heard, I
24 believe in the system. And I believed in public
25 school and I believed in change.

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2 So much so that in 1989, I became the
3 first of the restructuring leaders at West
4 Philadelphia High School. The 9th grade initiative
5 at West Philadelphia was led by me.

6 The Philadelphia Schools
7 Collaborative, which was set up to push change
8 within the public schools, employed me in many cases
9 to do workshops.

10 And through my leadership at West, I
11 helped West Philadelphia and Philadelphia win the
12 Youth Opportunities Unlimited Grant, a \$2.1 million
13 grant, which was given to Philadelphia because it
14 pushed high school reform and community
15 revitalization. I believed in the system.

16 Both evaluations of the U Grant, as
17 well as the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative
18 Initiative, the evaluations reported that the
19 Administration of the Philadelphia school system has
20 been ambiguous when it came to supporting reform.
21 The teachers' union was looked upon as being an
22 impediment to school reform.

23 With the U Grant, it was stated, for
24 the three years of its operation in which \$3.1
25 million was poured into the West Philadelphia

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2 community, that the middle-level leadership,
3 including the principal, did not really support
4 reform in the public schools.

5 I've always been about reform because
6 I've always been a resident of Philadelphia,
7 particularly of West Philadelphia, where I taught.

8 And it was only through the
9 frustration of attempts to reform the school system
10 from within, and the dissolution of the Philadelphia
11 Schools Collaborative when they pushed too hard in
12 the Philadelphia school system, and it was
13 dissolved, only through that, and once I saw the
14 opportunity of charter schools, I jumped on the band
15 wagon.

16 Much of what's supposed to go down in
17 the charter schools was supposed to go down in the
18 Philadelphia school system, had they listened to the
19 Pew Foundation's suggestions and had they gone along
20 with the ideas that were set forth by the
21 Philadelphia Schools Collaborative.

22 It was only in the failure of reform
23 that I switched over to charter schools.

24 But, I must say, I was very, very
25 naive. Because I've always seen charter schools as

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2 public schools.

3 And as soon as I got my planning
4 grant, I went to my cluster leader and said, "Hey,
5 we're going to have a charter school in our area."
6 And I am the first. I am West Philadelphia
7 cluster's first charter school.

8 I really believed that we were going
9 to have a partnership as far as education within my
10 community. But I found very early on through the
11 chartering process, with the Philadelphia School
12 Board, it became more of an adversarial
13 relationship. We talked less about education and
14 much more about finances and money.

15 My issue with charter schools is for
16 us and for this community to see charter schools as
17 a choice in public education, in which we would work
18 hand in hand with the Philadelphia public school
19 system because we had the opportunity and the
20 freedom and the independence to do some innovative
21 things.

22 Hopefully, that these innovative
23 initiatives that we had sponsored would be
24 replicated in the public schools.

25 But I guess I was very, very much

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2 naive about that. Because I do not see a
3 partnership going on with the charter schools, as
4 well as the Philadelphia public school system.

5 My issue today is one of equity. The
6 children who attend Harambee Institute and all the
7 other charter schools in Philadelphia are public
8 school children, but they do not receive the equity
9 that the Philadelphia public school receives of the
10 \$6800 and change that go to or follows a child into
11 the public school system. The charter schools get
12 5200 of that money.

13 Our special ed subsidies, which we
14 need desperately to handle our children with special
15 needs, have been denied, delayed, held up because of
16 implied mistrust and basically bureaucratic
17 impediments.

18 Regardless of the ambiguities of the
19 law, regardless of that, our children are still not
20 receiving equal resources when it comes to
21 education.

22 The most troubling situation to me is
23 the fact that if you choose, if a parent chooses, to
24 send their children to a private school, they will
25 get busing from the Philadelphia school system.

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2 If parents choose to send their
3 children to a Catholic school, they will get busing
4 from the Philadelphia school system.

5 And, more recently, if parents choose
6 to send their children to Bucks County to the Mosaic
7 School, they will get busing from the Philadelphia
8 school system.

9 But if parents choose to send their
10 children to a charter school in Philadelphia, the
11 buses run right by them. At 54th and Wynnefield,
12 there are a number of private and Catholic schools
13 right around there, and our children watch as the
14 buses ride by.

15 It's troubling to me because we have
16 an elementary school, from -- and we service
17 children from Grades 1 to 8.

18 And because I have the economic
19 means, I can drive my ten-year-old daughter to
20 Harambee for education.

21 Because the parents of Devon Smith,
22 who live in East Falls, they don't have the economic
23 means, so Devon, a ten-year-old, has to get on the
24 bus with his 8-year-old brother, his 7-year-old twin
25 brother and sister. That ten-year-old is in

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2 charge.

3 They have to take three buses on the
4 way to and from school. Sometimes the buses pass
5 them by going home from school, and it takes these
6 children hours to get home.

7 I don't know what the law is or what
8 it shouldn't be and how the law should be
9 interpreted. The final results are, our children
10 get less resources and are put in a dangerous
11 situation of trying to find their way to and from
12 school.

13 It is the idea of equity that I'm
14 really talking about. Because grants that are sent
15 in Philadelphia from the federal government and
16 private foundations, unfortunately we're locked out
17 of those grants.

18 The after school program initiative
19 that has been voted on, and I understand the school
20 system enjoys, we hardly even knew about it.

21 If we do not provide a choice in
22 public education, then we will be forced to deal
23 with those new initiatives that we do not like.

24 I would like to paraphrase a
25 statement by the late John F. Kennedy, "Those who

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2 make gradual change impossible will make radical
3 change inevitable."

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
7 much. Thank you very much.

8 And let me say, I think, Mr. Skief,
9 that you got to the heart of the matter about why we
10 need these hearings, to talk about what charter
11 schools are and even why you, all of you, are
12 involved.

13 Let me ask you, if all of you, it
14 seems to me, came from the heads of schools, came
15 from the school district, and/or why you chose to
16 get involved in the charter school system, as
17 opposed to a regular public school or maintain your
18 direction in education as it was going.

19 Mr. Proietta, let me ask you first
20 what made you pick charter and the others.

21 MR. PROIETTA: Well, I wasn't a
22 public schoolteacher. The community high school was
23 a contractor with the school district.

24 And I had been committed for well
25 over 20 years to the idea of alternatives and the

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2 idea that every kid just isn't going to fit into the
3 same system.

4 So back in 1980 -- and Councilman
5 Cohen was there when we first started in 1980 -- we
6 were looking for ways in which those kids that fell
7 through the cracks would have a way of getting back
8 into school and back into education.

9 So, basically, my whole professional
10 career has been committed to the idea of
11 alternatives and the idea that over the last
12 probably ten years or so, that the children of
13 Philadelphia deserve more than what they've been
14 getting.

15 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

16 Let me, before we continue, introduce
17 the other members of the panel who are here. To my
18 extreme left, Councilman Angel Ortiz. Next to him
19 is Councilwoman Augusta Clark, who before I assumed
20 Chairperson of this committee, held it for about a
21 dozen years, as she says. Next to her is Councilman
22 David Cohen to whom you just referred. Next to him
23 is Councilman Rick Mariano.

24 To my right, again, we introduced
25 them, the co-chair, as State Representative Dwight

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2 Evans. To his right, certainly he's one of our
3 State Representatives in West Philadelphia, my
4 district, and we're absolutely very happy to have --
5 I am getting ready to call you Councilman. State
6 Representative Michael Horsey. We thank you so much
7 for being part of this committee. And again
8 Councilwoman Donna Miller, who we introduced
9 earlier.

10 And sitting there, who has also been
11 a part of all the hearings we have and always comes
12 out, Councilman Frank Rizzo. Thank you.

13 With that, let me ask Dr. Ryder what
14 made you go this route, as opposed to the
15 traditional educational system.

16 DR. RYDER: Jannie, as you well know,
17 I had a son, I have a son, and I was in the
18 Philadelphia educational system. And we -- and my
19 wife and I decided to use public education, and so
20 we did.

21 And although my son did finally get a
22 scholarship and went on to college, the problem was
23 that we were not satisfied with his education once
24 he left 8th grade. And we found that my son was, in
25 fact, cheated.

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2 And how I say cheated is because, in
3 fact, that in his educational system, he wasn't
4 given the opportunities and the support to do a lot
5 of things that we thought he ought to do.

6 So I sort of made up my mind at that
7 point that parents needed choice. And even though
8 we had the means for choice, this system did not
9 offer other parents choice. And we had talked to
10 many, many parents there.

11 As a matter of fact, I can sort of
12 tell you, I was working as the principal of a middle
13 school when several parents came to me, knowing that
14 at that point I was getting ready to leave and go to
15 a charter school.

16 And those parents asked me could they
17 come. And they -- and probably a few of the first
18 students we had were the students that came with
19 those parents and the students that came with the
20 people who were planning with us in the charter
21 group.

22 Choice is a very, very important
23 aspect. If choice is not allowed in our system, we
24 are going to fail these children.

25 If you look straight across this

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2 board, and you can look at even your magnet schools,
3 you can take Central and Girls High and also look at
4 Engineering Science, and what you're going to find
5 is that the playing field is not equal, and it is
6 not equal for our children.

7 And I'm not going to mention any
8 statistics, but I'm going to tell this panel to go
9 up and take a look at how many minorities drop out
10 of the 9th and 10th grade at Central. I didn't say
11 West Philly, and I didn't say Bartrum, and I didn't
12 say University City; I said Central.

13 Now, if you take a look at that, then
14 you will understand why choice is the most important
15 factor that our parents have in the Philadelphia
16 community.

17 And if you take that choice away, you
18 will fail, you will continue to fail, generations of
19 our children. And that dropout rate that Taylor was
20 talking about of 51 percent is only modest when you
21 look at comprehensive high schools.

22 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
23 Taylor Frome.

24 MS. FROME: I also never worked for
25 the School District of Philadelphia. I came into

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2 educating high school dropouts from working in
3 Crisis Intervention Network and the Philadelphia
4 Anti-drug and Anti-violence Network, where I was
5 working with the young people involved in gangs and
6 youth violence and found that -- that was how I
7 discovered what the dropout rate was in Philadelphia
8 and discovered how few opportunities there were for
9 those young men and women to get off the streets
10 once they had made the mistake of leaving school and
11 getting into trouble.

12 And in forming the organization Youth
13 Build Philadelphia, we established a relationship
14 with the school district from the very beginning.
15 So that we were originally in partnership with
16 Bartrum high school.

17 Because we knew from the beginning
18 that the problem was way too big for any small
19 nonprofit, and that it needed to be deeply connected
20 to the school district and feeding what we learned
21 into the district.

22 So it's always been, I guess, part of
23 the vision to be doing exactly what we're doing.
24 But charter school status has given us the ability
25 to really step up our activities, take further --

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2 take larger steps towards developing the curriculum
3 and the teaching model, set our own standards, and
4 expand.

5 So we're very pleased to be able to
6 be a charter school at this point.

7 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

8 Let me ask John Skief. Because all
9 of us know Harambee that has been around a long
10 time. It wasn't a charter school initially, but I
11 know you had an after-school program, also. But I
12 know you've been fighting for Harambee Institute I
13 guess as long as I have known you, and that's a
14 long -- I don't remember when I didn't know you, so
15 it's a long, long time.

16 You mentioned several things. One,
17 you said that the school district provides -- and we
18 say this because our next panel will be the
19 Superintendent of Schools and people from the Board
20 who deal with charter schools. And we want to ask
21 them if they will try to respond to some of these
22 issues so we all have a better understanding of
23 where we are and where we are going in this arena.

24 You mentioned \$6800 per child, but
25 the charter schools get 5200. But you mentioned

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2 other issues, as well, special ed money and busing
3 money. And I've heard charter school operators
4 complain about issues like tokens and all of that.

5 And when I tried to check on these
6 issues, I've been told at the board level that
7 charter schools sign a contract, and they kind of
8 know what they're getting before they come, and
9 that's the long and short of it.

10 Can you give a little insight into
11 what you mean by equity or inequity?

12 MR. SKIEF: Well, if that's the
13 answer that you got, that was really an unacceptable
14 answer, the last statement that you said. Because
15 we have to look at charter schools as another
16 example of school reform.

17 And as far as I'm concerned, in a
18 community where we know and it is proven that our
19 children are educationally deficient, every cent of
20 the educational subsidy should follow the child.

21 I don't know what happens to the 1600
22 or the 1400 that the school district keeps. I don't
23 know what happens to that.

24 But I do know that we are expected to
25 do the same, if not more, with less.

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2 The aspect of special education was
3 tied to mistrust. Because at first it was believed
4 that charter schools did not have the integrity to
5 properly tag a student for special ed.

6 And then the means of getting charter
7 school funds have always been ambiguous, and the
8 recordkeeping and following the records and even
9 obtaining records.

10 Because we have had children to
11 matriculate into Harambee Institute that were on
12 behavior modification, but we didn't know that.

13 We have had children that
14 matriculated into Harambee Institute that were
15 illegally written off or taken off of special
16 education, and we had to deal with that.

17 So regardless of the problems we may
18 have obtaining records, obtaining resources for our
19 children of special needs, we are held accountable
20 by the state to make sure that we provide free and
21 appropriate education for these children.

22 And regardless of the ambiguities of
23 the law, thank you, from what I have heard,
24 Philadelphia is one of the only cities that have a
25 problem busing children across the state.

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2 So it became very, very obvious to me
3 that we were into an adversarial relationship,
4 fighting over the little bit of crumbs that were
5 brought down as far as education is concerned.

6 And I initially did not see the
7 school district as my enemy in that. I thought that
8 we needed to get together and show the public that
9 we can produce a quality educational program, and in
10 that way the public would be with us when we came as
11 a group to Harrisburg to ask for more funds.

12 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me ask
13 another question. And we will ask one of the other
14 panels to respond.

15 When a charter school -- obviously,
16 and I guess, Mr. Daniels and Mr. Spahn might in part
17 respond to this.

18 If a person decides they want to take
19 advantage of a charter school opportunity, they want
20 to start a charter school, what they first have to
21 do is get -- where do they get and file their
22 proposals?

23 Because we know charter means you get
24 a charter from the state, which means you get
25 permission from the state to have your own school.

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2 How does that start?

3 DR. DANIELS: Slightly differently
4 than just stated.

5 But it starts with, we have planning
6 grants of up to \$25,000. We have awarded now 192
7 planning grants of between 10 and 25 thousand.

8 Right in Project Community Build is
9 the application, with Mr. Spahn. He has the
10 applications here, if anybody's interested.

11 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

12 DR. DANIELS: And that is the state
13 involvement. That's a competitive grant.

14 Usually we award about between 50 and
15 60 percent of the grant applications grants. So it
16 is competitive. Of the 192 awarded, we've had well
17 over 300 groups apply.

18 However, once the group gets the
19 grant, they work as a group and apply to a local
20 School Board, as happened here in Philadelphia.

21 I believe 25 have applied before the
22 deadline of November 15 to open in September of
23 '99. And it's really, a charter is a contract with
24 the school district and the local chartering group.
25 It's not with the state.

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2 The state receives a copy of that
3 contract, we keep it in our archives, just as we
4 receive the annual report of the charter school.
5 That's a little sidebar on accountability.

6 People say, what about the
7 accountability of charter schools. You are going to
8 read a lot in the papers pro and con on that.
9 Studies say they are doing well, studies say they
10 are doing poorly.

11 But, at any rate, it is the only
12 school an annual report is required. It goes to the
13 school district and also to the Secretary of
14 Education.

15 And I will throw in the fact that
16 charter schools must also take the Pennsylvania
17 System of School Assessment, and the results will be
18 published on a profile.

19 Derrick, in terms of starting a
20 charter school, do you have anything add on that?

21 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: You said the
22 contract is between whom and whom? It is not the
23 state; it is between whom?

24 DR. DANIELS: The school district and
25 the chartering group.

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2 MR. SPAHN: Dr. Daniels has clearly
3 indicated --

4 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please pull
5 the mike. We didn't hear one word you said.

6 MR. SPAHN: Dr. Daniels has clearly
7 indicated the process of starting the charter
8 school.

9 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: We still can't
10 hear you. Pull the mike closer.

11 MR. SPAHN: Dr. Daniels has spoken
12 adequately and accurately in terms of how to start a
13 charter school. And, of course, again, the process
14 is a competitive one.

15 Once an application reaches our
16 office, we glean information from it, from the
17 project office.

18 And within 48 hours those
19 applications are sent over to the Department of
20 Education, where we then wait for that department to
21 convene a review committee to begin reviewing those
22 applications, or those applicant's application who
23 are requesting a planning grant.

24 Much of the project office is
25 involved in that reviewing process. After which,

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2 those allocations are made.

3 But Dr. Daniels has adequately
4 indicated the process by which you get underway to
5 start one.

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 Let me ask that the parents again,
8 for Councilmembers who might not have seen you,
9 would the parents please, this is Work
10 Communications Charter parents, would you stand up
11 so other members of Council can see who you are,
12 people who have taken off work and made a commitment
13 to be here.

14 We thank you again for coming.

15 (Parents stand.)

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. SKIEF: There are also some
18 Harambee parents here, also.

19 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes, Harambee
20 parents, we can't ignore you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
22 Thank you all for coming.

23 Taylor, and then we will take
24 questions, Councilman Cohen and Councilman Ortiz.

25 MS. FROME: I just wanted to make a

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2 point, because in the last couple of questions you
3 touch on an issue which I think for the charter
4 school operators is part of the confusion and
5 complication in dealing with the school district,
6 which is that in the state's commitment to
7 deregulation and freedom, they turned over the
8 regulation of charter schools to the school district
9 without a lot of defining parameters.

10 So that, for us, we are told that we
11 are a local education agency with the same standing
12 as the school district, and yet we are basically
13 regulated by the school district.

14 And it turns into a lot of tension
15 and confusion, which is, I think, a piece of what
16 Mr. Skief is talking about, also, in that the state
17 will say, well, we didn't -- this is not our
18 regulation, it is the school district's. And yet as
19 an LEA, we basically are supposed to be a school
20 district, each of us, each charter school.

21 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. We
22 will field questions from the panel.

23 Councilwoman Clark.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Thank you for
25 the opportunity. I know that we have a chock full

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2 schedule this morning.

3 Do charter schools consider
4 themselves to be public schools?

5 DR. DANIELS: Yes.

6 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Do you consider
7 yourself to be equal to the school district or a
8 subunit of the school district in the locality where
9 you reside?

10 MS. FROME: I'm not sure the question
11 is what we consider ourselves to be.

12 The state considers us to be equal to
13 the school district and subordinate to the school
14 district both.

15 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But you can't be
16 both. You can't be both equal to and subordinate
17 to.

18 First I want to know what you think
19 of yourself as being, and then I will ask the school
20 district what they think of you as being.

21 And the more we define who and what
22 you are, the easier it is going to be for your
23 consuming public to understand and know who to ask
24 for what.

25 MR. SKIEF: We do see ourselves as a

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2 public school and we see ourselves as a choice,
3 another alternative, in public education.

4 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: All right. Now,
5 that's --

6 DR. RYDER: I think that's even more
7 important.

8 In order for us to survive, if you
9 look behind you, we have to have freedom and
10 independence.

11 And as you well know, Ms. Clark, in
12 terms of looking at the freedom to develop our
13 curriculum and to make those relationships and
14 partnerships, we have to mate with business,
15 industry, parents, and community.

16 Then to say that we are subordinate
17 to and therefore governed by regulations that have
18 already proven to be failure would limit our
19 successes.

20 The fact that we are charters and can
21 do things that are slightly different and offer
22 alternative educational designs and processes to the
23 school district is extremely important. And in
24 order for that to happen, we have to maintain that
25 independence.

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2 MR. SPAHN: One other point should be
3 noted. And that is, another question may be, not
4 necessarily what they feel themselves to be. I
5 think an important question is what they feel
6 themselves not to be.

7 And, that is, competitors of the
8 school district, or even enemies of the school
9 district.

10 And certainly the Governor's intent
11 here is to create schools of choice. Not
12 necessarily making charter schools opponents or in
13 competition with public school systems, but rather
14 providing an opportunity for choice and empowering
15 parents and teachers and communities to design
16 custom-designed educational programs to meet the
17 specific needs of children and, indeed, specific
18 talents of children.

19 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilman.

20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We have two
21 classes here from Roberto Clemente School, one over
22 there and one over there.

23 Kids, will you stand up.

24 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Welcome.

25 (School students stand.)

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2 (Applause.)

3 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
4 much. Councilman Cohen.

5 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you.

6 I think these hearings are very
7 important because I know of no other subject that's
8 been as confusing for the public and for me
9 personally.

10 For example, right at the moment, I
11 would say I'm opposed to charter schools, I'm
12 opposed to vouchers, but my mind is open.

13 But I've always been supportive of
14 what Mr. Proietta did, and that seems to have been a
15 very early example of the charter school.

16 His case was very clear and easy,
17 because he was dealing with children who had fell
18 through the cracks, they were out of school and
19 somehow, miraculously, his faculty, he himself, put
20 together a curriculum, put together a lot of side
21 issues that helped educate a group of children that
22 the public schools said were not educable because
23 they had dropped out. That was a very clear case.

24 These other cases are not so clear to
25 me, and it may be because I don't understand them.

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2 So I have a few questions I would
3 just like to direct to different members of the
4 panel in an effort to get a better understanding.

5 To Mr. Ryder, I think it was you,
6 sir, who spoke of the Central High dropouts. And
7 that would be a matter of very deep concern.

8 Let me ask you, does your charter
9 school, have you accepted Central High dropouts?
10 And, if you have, what has been the record in your
11 case?

12 DR. RYDER: Okay. My charter school,
13 first, has only been in business for two years. I'm
14 not Joe and John and Taylor here, who have 10 to 15
15 years or better behind them. I'm -- at the time
16 this was organized, I was the new kid on the block.

17 So we haven't had that many Central
18 students apply to us, because last year we only went
19 to 9th grade. This year we are going to 10th
20 grade.

21 And I'm sure if they would apply, I
22 would be happy to accept them.

23 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Well, and if they
24 do apply, and I hope they do, we would like to hear
25 what happens to them, how you fill in the gaps which

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2 caused them to drop out of Central High School.

3 That would be very important.

4 The word "choice" is not a word that
5 attracts me because I'm for choice and I'm against
6 choice.

7 For example, when it comes with
8 respect to women's right to choose, I'm for choice.
9 When it comes to choice moving away from public
10 school education, I'm against choice.

11 So the word "choice" itself is a very
12 difficult one. Under some circumstances choice
13 seems to me good, and other cases I find myself in
14 opposition.

15 What I would like to know from any
16 member of the panel is, how does the charter school
17 differ from the vouchers as a potential threat to
18 the public school system?

19 DR. RYDER: One of the things -- I'm
20 going to take that one from my colleagues.

21 One of the things about charter
22 schools, you have to understand, is that it is a
23 public school, it is not a voucher school.

24 The second thing about the concept of
25 choice is that while you may be able to say whether

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2 or not you are against it or for it, most parents
3 don't have that choice. They can't say whether they
4 are against it or for it.

5 If the public school fails that
6 child, guess where that child ends up? You know, he
7 ends up with that parent.

8 That family will continue to carry
9 the economic burden of that child whether or not the
10 public school is successful or fails.

11 And, incidentally, when you look at a
12 charter school, if a charter school fails to provide
13 that educational choice, fails to provide that
14 quality education, or doesn't make its mission, they
15 close down. Now, I would like for you to understand
16 that.

17 What we're saying here is that if a
18 charter school fails to provide a quality education,
19 they will be made to close down. And --

20 COUNCILMAN COHEN: By whom?

21 DR. RYDER: And it is that parent's
22 choice that either makes it or break it, and it is
23 those -- and it is that concept that it is a
24 performance-based program that allows charter
25 schools to survive or not to survive.

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Could I hear from
3 the other members of the panel? Mr. Proietta?

4 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: And I will
5 note that in my experience with meeting all the
6 charter school directors and principals, they have
7 absolutely the parental input and support that,
8 unfortunately, many of our neighborhood public
9 schools lack.

10 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I think that's a
11 very important factor.

12 (Applause.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

14 MR. PROIETTA: I think that
15 throughout American history, we have come to the
16 conclusion that monopolies don't work.

17 And, as John mentioned, and he was
18 quoting President Kennedy, there are two ways to go
19 about breaking up monopolies.

20 And one way is that you can go a very
21 radical route. And as you mentioned vouchers, that
22 might be the most radical route, or supporting
23 private schools. Or you can go with a kind of
24 controlled, temperate reform.

25 And charter schools present that

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2 because charter schools are public schools, are
3 regulated by the state in the way the public schools
4 are.

5 And I know we've talked a lot about
6 deregulation, but most of the essential rules apply,
7 health, safety, discrimination. Those laws all
8 apply to us in the same way that they do to the
9 public schools.

10 And, therefore, I think, we are able
11 to offer an alternative, offer something that
12 challenges the public schools, as well as supports
13 the parents.

14 COUNCILMAN COHEN: May I ask you, Mr.
15 Skief?

16 MR. SKIEF: Yes. I would also like
17 to add that since 1967, there have been many reform
18 initiatives within the public schools, such as the
19 Parkway Program. There's nothing new in what's
20 going on with charter schools.

21 When the Pew Foundation put in, I
22 guess, around \$16 million into the Philadelphia
23 school system for reform, if you look at the mission
24 of what supposedly was reformed, you will find that
25 the charter schools meet that.

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2 But I'd also like to remind you that
3 the Clark report, which was the evaluation team of
4 the Pew Foundation money into the Philadelphia
5 school system, stated that under Dr. Constance
6 Clayton, her leadership and promotion of that school
7 reform was ambiguous.

8 They said that a major impediment
9 were the work rules that were established through
10 the PFT.

11 Now, these impediments, both
12 administratively, as well as through the workplace,
13 were impediments to the change that was supposed to
14 go on within the system. And it seemed that the
15 system was not able to reform from within.

16 One of the things that you'll find
17 within the school system today is that we have
18 clusters of schools and we have small learning
19 communities in which teachers come together as
20 teams.

21 Well, a team is just that, people who
22 have common missions, people who have the same type
23 of commitment.

24 But when that team is made up of
25 seniority and the work rules that have been set up,

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2 they become impediments to change.

3 And, once again, through the failure
4 of change from within, we get charter schools. And
5 charter schools are the last effort in public
6 education to provide a meaningful alternative in
7 public education.

8 The failure of charter schools, along
9 with the failure of public education, will give you
10 the very thing that you don't want, and that's
11 vouchers.

12 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Mr. Skief, just
13 one question. Could you be specific on the
14 impediments? You have referred several times to
15 them, the impediments created by the union.

16 MR. SKIEF: Well, in terms of the
17 union, when you have seniority as being the reason
18 why teachers are coming together, or the only way
19 teachers can come together -- let's look at the one
20 that I had in West Philadelphia High School, the
21 Community Development Charter. That's what we
22 called it when I was at teacher at West.

23 We never had a science teacher.
24 Never had one. Because every time one came in, they
25 were either a substitute. We didn't have the choice

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2 of choosing a science teacher. Every year we had a
3 different one because of the work rules.

4 We had a good one, but she couldn't
5 stay because she had to pick another school because
6 someone was more senior to her. These are just some
7 of them.

8 Now, as a leader in the school
9 restructuring effort, I would go to the school
10 district collaborative meetings, and I would hear
11 about all of the wonderful innovations and changes
12 that we could do.

13 But then I would bring it back to my
14 school and try to do it, and my principal really
15 wasn't interested in that. And sometimes department
16 heads weren't interested in that.

17 So --

18 COUNCILMAN COHEN: But the
19 principal's action was not governed by the union,
20 was it?

21 MR. SKIEF: No, it wasn't. But as I
22 said, in that Clark report, that evaluation said, it
23 stated, that the Administration was not clear in its
24 support of the reform.

25 Because, you see, once that reform

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2 was suggested, that means that the power basis of
3 many of those entities like department heads were
4 all gone, that the principals had to share power
5 with community and parents, and listen to teachers,
6 share decisionmaking. You know, these were the
7 changes that were bantered about, but the reality
8 never came.

9 And in my situation, I've been out
10 and out suspended because -- in my own school
11 because I believed in what was said at these
12 meetings.

13 COUNCILMAN COHEN: A very persuasive
14 man.

15 May I just ask Ms. Frome for her
16 version.

17 MS. FROME: I can understand your
18 concern about vouchers and the ways that charter
19 schools and vouchers are often mentioned in the same
20 phrase in terms of ways to give parents more choice
21 about charter schools.

22 From the school operator's point of
23 view, I think that there are substantial
24 differences, in that we are a part of the -- we are
25 a public school, and we are part of what I would

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2 consider to be the school system's education reform
3 efforts.

4 And I think that, for me, that's the
5 substance of the difference, is that, as far as I
6 can tell, the voucher system really just gives the
7 parent a choice, but does not create a relationship
8 between the institutions that then get those public
9 funds and the larger system. There's no impact on
10 the group as a whole.

11 We have an opportunity where we are
12 now, which we still haven't completely actualized,
13 for charter schools to become a resource for the
14 school system in terms of systems and ideas and
15 grass-roots-generated assessment of what parents can
16 contribute.

17 I think that that's part of the goal
18 of charter schools that's been difficult to
19 implement, partly because of the struggles over
20 money.

21 But I think that, for me at least,
22 that that's a big piece of what the potential for
23 charter schools is.

24 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Did that cover the
25 suburban school in Bucks County that's a for-profit

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2 school, and I think it's considered a charter
3 school? Is there anybody here that --

4 MR. PROIETTA: Pennsylvania requires
5 that the schools be not-for-profit. So, therefore,
6 the way that those schools are set up is that they
7 hire Mosaica as an administrative body to run the
8 school on a contract. But the school is not a
9 for-profit school; it is a nonprofit school.

10 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I just have a lot
11 of questions about that.

12 DR. DANIELS: The board of directors,
13 the board of trustees of that charter, is not a
14 for-profit. And the provider of instructional
15 services is the Mosaica Corporation.

16 I want to say something about choice,
17 and it has to do with a personal perspective. Both
18 of my children went K through 12 through West
19 Chester area school district. I am very proud of
20 what they did.

21 But as a lifetime public school
22 employee myself, my satisfaction was increased by
23 choice. My wife happens to teach at the Westtown
24 School, the oldest continuously operating public
25 school in the country.

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2 And as a spouse, we get almost a zero
3 tuition option for our children. I had the choice,
4 and I kept my kids in the public school. But I felt
5 better about it because I had the choice.

6 When Dr. Ryder points out the fact
7 that some people don't have the choice because their
8 spouses don't teach in alternative, if you choose
9 the public schools, you are going to feel a lot
10 better about it.

11 So if there is choice, people that
12 remain in the public schools by choice, their
13 consumer satisfaction comes up too, because people
14 want to be there.

15 And when you want to be there, then
16 achievement is bound to come up, if everybody agrees
17 on that.

18 COUNCILMAN COHEN: For the record, I
19 have four children. They are all adults. Every one
20 of them went K through 12 through the public school
21 system.

22 DR. DANIELS: Mine, too. I only have
23 two.

24 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Under
25 circumstances where many other parents were

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2 making -- we didn't call it choice then, but making
3 other choices.

4 But I believe if a case can be
5 demonstrated that charter schools strengthen the
6 public school system, it is clear to me it is a very
7 positive movement.

8 If, on the other hand, if the
9 evidence indicates that charter schools weaken the
10 public school system, then I think it's as strong a
11 negative. And it's that that I am struggling, and I
12 think most people in the city are struggling to
13 understand.

14 We don't know enough. And your panel
15 that is been very, very helpful in beginning to
16 define the parameters.

17 And I thank the Chair for the
18 privilege of asking these questions.

19 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

20 MR. PROIETTA: Can I respond very
21 quickly?

22 And my very quick response is that
23 whether or not charter schools will strengthen the
24 public school system is up to the public school
25 system.

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2 We're here, we're doing a good job.

3 And if we get the cooperation and if we work as a
4 team, then I think that will happen.

5 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I think all of you
6 ought to stay here for the next panel, because we'd
7 like to have your response to what the public school
8 system tells us.

9 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. We
10 will hear from Co-chair, State Representative Dwight
11 Evans, and then Councilwoman Clark.

12 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Thank you,
13 Madam Chairperson. I want to again thank the
14 Chairperson for convening this particular hearing.
15 Because, as Councilman Cohen and Councilwoman Clark
16 and Councilman Ortiz said, this is a great exchange
17 and it is important.

18 And I guess the question I want to
19 ask, because this charter school is going into its
20 second year, I want to ask the question about the
21 friendliness of the city school district, as well as
22 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

23 And I hear that question. The School
24 Board will always say that this school district is
25 the most friendliest charter school school district

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2 of the 501 school districts. I hear that constantly
3 of the school district saying how friendly it is.

4 I'm curious to know that when the
5 School Board votes to approve charters, and you have
6 the policymakers saying one thing, what happens when
7 you begin to deal with the people who are within the
8 process, below the policymakers of the Board, when
9 it comes down to how friendly they are first.

10 And secondly I ask that same
11 question, even though Dr. Daniels sat at the table
12 and everyone else, because this is helpful as we
13 deal with the budget in Harrisburg next year and as
14 we move to the whole review of this particular
15 legislation, how friendly are people in terms of
16 being child centered, the school district as well as
17 the state. How child friendly are they?

18 MR. PROIETTA: Well, as President of
19 the Philadelphia Alliance of Charter Schools, I hear
20 a lot of complaints. And my own experiences with
21 the school district have not always been good. And
22 friendly is not the tone that I would use to
23 describe what has happened.

24 I believe that there's no discussion,
25 no consultation, no input when it comes to dealing

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2 with the school district.

3 That decisions, as you said, that on
4 the highest levels appear to be very charter
5 friendly. That when they work their way down
6 through the system, that they don't become that way
7 any longer, that they're not carried out in a way
8 that would be considered charter friendly.

9 The issue of input, the issue of
10 consultation, is something that really, I feel, is
11 important. Because it seems sometimes that people
12 are sitting around in their offices downtown at 21st
13 and the Parkway, where there are no children, and
14 they're making up rules and they're making up
15 regulations and they're coming up with new ideas of
16 things that we should do. Very often we have to
17 change them after they come out.

18 I made up a list of things, I made an
19 appendix to the annual report. It turned out that
20 the appendix wasn't correct.

21 It asks for personal information
22 about special education students in a public
23 document. It amazes me that nobody saw that.

24 What happened is, we happened to get
25 it in our mail at the same day that the Director of

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2 Special Education from the state was in our
3 building.

4 I took it over to him and showed it
5 to him, and he immediately called the school
6 district to tell them, "You can't put this on a
7 public document." I don't know how these things
8 happen.

9 We are sent a memo from the school
10 district telling us that if we exceed the cap, that
11 that's a violation of our charter.

12 And so I have to go and call members
13 of the School Board, talk to people, try to get them
14 to back off from that.

15 And after I've been told by the
16 School Board that it's not a violation of our cap,
17 we won't get paid for anyone over the cap.

18 But if we have 250 students in our
19 cap, we have 251 students in our school, we haven't
20 violated our a charter. I then get the memo resent
21 to me again.

22 We put our attendance on the
23 computer. We send in requests for change of
24 records. But then they come up with a brand-new
25 form just for charter schools that we have to fill

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2 out and send in to them.

3 Again I talk to the School Board.

4 The School Board says, well, we really didn't
5 authorize that. I don't really see why you have to
6 do it. Then they come around again a few months
7 later and ask for it.

8 They send us a completely
9 unintelligible financial summary. I don't -- you
10 know, we get this thing, we give it to our auditor,
11 the auditor doesn't quite understand what it is
12 about.

13 The law seems to say that they're
14 supposed to pay us 12 equal payments over the year,
15 with the right to reconcile in quarters, at the end
16 of the quarters. But they are reconciling daily.

17 They asked us to go on their computer
18 system, which we did. They then said to us that
19 they wanted us to put our attendance on it. And as
20 independent LEAs, we didn't think that was right.
21 So we had to fight that, and then they backed down
22 from it.

23 As John has pointed out, they don't
24 pay for transportation. I don't think any of the
25 current charter schools have ever received 100

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2 percent of the special ed money that they have
3 requested. I know right now that we haven't.

4 We have gotten some since the
5 beginning of the year, but we haven't been paid for
6 every student.

7 We're not sure whether those students
8 who they did eventually decide to pay for, whether
9 they went back to July 1 and paid for them or not.
10 That's going to be very difficult to figure out.

11 And I think --

12 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Proietta,
13 if you would keep your points, and we will have the
14 opportunity to ask those questions.

15 MR. PROIETTA: Okay.

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Hornbeck
17 has to leave, he has told me twice. Councilwoman
18 Blackwell is ready to bang me on the head.

19 But we want to get your points.
20 Don't lose them. We want to ask all those
21 questions. And certainly we want to have the
22 opportunity to ask Mr. Hornbeck, while he is here.

23 DR. DANIELS: Briefly, and into the
24 mix and into the discussion, this relationship that
25 we're talking about, in any change of delivery of

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2 services of this magnitude, you have regulatory
3 groups.

4 The PIC, the Pennsylvania Insurance
5 Commission; the PUC; the Federal Trade Commission,
6 the Securities and Exchange Commission. The full
7 definition of this bill will not be complete until
8 our regulatory body, the Charter Appeal Board, the
9 CAB, sits on July 1, when some of these things can
10 be sorted out.

11 Until that time -- and the bill was
12 written that way with a moratorium. Until that
13 time, the full independent nature of an LEA and a
14 charter can't be defined because it's more of a
15 local deal.

16 Once the appeal board is in place,
17 then, as with any delivery of services changes with
18 a regulatory board, we'll see the full impact of the
19 bill. And some of these questions can be more
20 adequately resolved at this time.

21 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right. We
22 really want to, and we want to hear more. We hope
23 that you will stay so that we will have an
24 opportunity to explore.

25 We are really, really at an important

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2 part of this hearing. We want to have Panel 2 come
3 forward before they leave, and certainly want to
4 thank all of you for where the rubber hits the
5 road.

6 (Applause.)

7 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

8 All right. We understand the
9 Superintendent's schedule, and we want to give him
10 an opportunity to begin right away.

11 We thank you and all the members of
12 the committee. We would ask you, Mr. Hornbeck, to
13 begin immediately, as we understand the constraints
14 under which you function.

15 And with that, Mr. Hornbeck.

16 SUPERINTENDENT DAVID W. HORNBECK:

17 Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman, members of
18 the Council, Mr. Evans, Mr. Horsey.

19 I appreciate the opportunity to
20 appear before you to testify about charter schools
21 and commend the Chair for, as Chairwoman of the
22 Education Committee, constantly being on top of the
23 really crucial issues of this city.

24 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

25 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: It is an

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2 important leadership that you provide.

3 I think as has been noted before,
4 that the impetus for charter schools, along with
5 vouchers and home schooling, arise primarily from
6 dissatisfaction with the public schools.

7 Thus, I begin this testimony with a
8 brief report on the achievement status of
9 Philadelphia's public schools. That's where the
10 vast majority of our children will attend school,
11 whatever forms of alternative opportunities might be
12 created.

13 Two years ago, the Philadelphia Board
14 of Education set a goal of 95 percent of our
15 students reaching carefully defined world-class
16 standards in reading, math, and science in one
17 student generation of 12 years.

18 I am happy to say that we're on our
19 way to meeting that goal. The district has exceeded
20 the two-year performance targets set by the Board in
21 our first accountability cycle.

22 Moreover, the results from our own
23 testing program were corroborated recently by our
24 students' participation and achievement on the
25 Pennsylvania state tests, as well.

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2 That fact is that our students read
3 better, do math better, and know more science.

4 In the context of the higher
5 standards and the tougher tests, 241 of the 249
6 schools made progress, and 145 of our schools
7 exceeded the very high two-year performance targets
8 set for them.

9 Moreover, these 145 schools included
10 our lowest-income schools, our racially isolated
11 schools, and our schools with the highest
12 proportions of youngsters whose first language is
13 not English, as well as students in schools at the
14 higher end of the income scale.

15 But what is most notable are not the
16 145 individual school stories and the thousands of
17 individual classrooms in these schools, although
18 they are wonderful stories to tell.

19 What is most notable is that we have
20 been able to bring success to scale. There are more
21 than 103,000 students and 6,000 teachers in those
22 145 schools.

23 I'm not describing the hot house
24 effect of carefully calibrated experimentation. I
25 am describing the remarkable progress resulting from

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2 hard and smart work by ordinary students and
3 teachers and principals and parents who, if you just
4 counted the 145 Philadelphia public schools
5 exceeding their performance targets, would
6 constitute the 23rd largest school district in the
7 United States. Larger, for example, than Washington
8 D.C., Detroit, Boston, Denver, or Cleveland.

9 With that as prelude, let me make
10 three specific points about charter schools.

11 First, the School District of
12 Philadelphia supports the underlying principles of
13 the charter school movement because these principles
14 form the basis of our own reform agenda, children
15 achieving.

16 That's the reason I was present on
17 the day that the bill was announced at the Free
18 Library, to which Mr. Daniels referred.

19 We are in favor of accountability for
20 results, for community ownership, for local control,
21 for deregulation, and I might add some of the other
22 areas of flexibility that have been held up.

23 I hope, in fact, that the state
24 legislature will consider extending some freedoms to
25 this Administration that you have deemed appropriate

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2 for another Administration, should the state decide
3 to want to run the schools themselves.

4 The facts about our support speak
5 louder than any rhetoric. In less than two months,
6 after the state's charter bill was signed into law,
7 Philadelphia approved four out of the five charter
8 school applications it had received for 1997-'98,
9 making Philadelphia home to more than 90 percent of
10 the state's charter school enrollment for that
11 year.

12 And in '98-'99, Philadelphia
13 approved an additional 11 charters, 2 of which have
14 been deferred until 1999-2000.

15 Philadelphia is now home to almost
16 half of all the charters in the state and more than
17 half of the state's charter school enrollment. And
18 we have accomplished that without any increase in
19 administrative staff.

20 Second, the school district does have
21 some very real concerns about flaws in the state
22 legislation.

23 When we speak out about these flaws,
24 we are seen as anti-charter. But we must be aware
25 that a drain on the school system translates into

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2 charter schools for every student enrolled, even if
3 that student was formerly enrolled in a parochial or
4 private school, and for which we never had any
5 corresponding expenditure which could be reduced
6 even if they did leave in groups of 30.

7 In Philadelphia's charters,
8 approximately 1 out of every 3 students enrolled in
9 a charter school was not formerly enrolled in one of
10 our public schools.

11 The school district never paid to
12 educate those children before, but it is paying now,
13 which means we have less money to spend on the
14 students still in the system.

15 The theory is that we would have had
16 to educate them in our schools, if they had come to
17 us. But the fact, not the theory, is that most do
18 not.

19 Moreover, when children do come into
20 the school district, since the change in the school
21 finance formula in the early '90s, we have to
22 educate them without a corresponding increase in the
23 state's subsidy.

24 Three, while the district is capped
25 on how much money it receives from the state for

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2 services to special education, charters are not.

3 Furthermore, charters receive a
4 payment that is based on an average of what the
5 district spends on all its special ed students,
6 including the severely disabled.

7 It may cost the school district ten
8 times more to educate a severely disabled child than
9 a mildly disabled child. No charters currently
10 enroll severely disabled students, yet we pay the
11 charter schools an amount built on an average
12 expenditure that assumes they enroll severely
13 disabled students in the same proportion that we
14 do.

15 But our concerns are about the flaws
16 in the legislation, not the charter schools, per
17 se. This leads me to my third and final point.

18 Charter schools should be our natural
19 allies, particularly around the larger issue of
20 funding for public education.

21 More money for public education in
22 Philadelphia means more money for Philadelphia's
23 charter schools. Consequently, we should be forging
24 alliances on school funding, not fighting over the
25 same small pie of funds.

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2 I'd like to turn your attention to
3 the kinds of information contained in the Citizens
4 Guide to the Philadelphia School Budget, produced by
5 Greater Philadelphia First to the Greater
6 Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition.

7 The publication was produced to help
8 citizens have a clear picture of where school funds
9 come from, where they go, and how Philadelphia's
10 funding compares to that of other school districts.

11 The data shown in the Citizens Guide
12 is compelling in many ways for both charters and
13 traditional public schools.

14 First of all, it shows a growing
15 funding gap across Pennsylvania since the state
16 placed a freeze on its formula for education
17 funding.

18 In 1995-'96, for example, using the
19 Pennsylvania Department of Education's own
20 calculation of selected expenditures, the average
21 Philadelphia area suburb spent almost \$1600 more per
22 pupil in '95-'96 than Philadelphia did. Even the
23 statewide average is \$600 more per pupil than
24 Philadelphia.

25 I emphasize the \$1600 figure because

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2 Southeastern Pennsylvania is our marketplace where
3 we compete for teachers, for example, not rural
4 Pennsylvania.

5 Lower Merion spends \$4196 more than
6 Philadelphia, and Radnor \$5721, almost twice as much
7 as Philadelphia.

8 In the past, the amount the state
9 gave to school districts in Pennsylvania depended on
10 a formula that took into account the number of
11 students, special needs of the district, its ability
12 to raise local taxes, and other factors.

13 However, in 1993, the state placed
14 what is, in effect, a spending freeze on that
15 formula. The freeze means that no matter how fast
16 enrollment grows, state subsidies do not keep pace
17 with enrollment.

18 In actual dollars, this has meant
19 that the state subsidy to Philadelphia grew by 2.1
20 percent since 1993, compared to 10.9 percent for the
21 rest of the state.

22 When adjusted for inflation, the real
23 value on a per-pupil basis went down by 5.9
24 percent. All this happened while enrollment in
25 Philadelphia went up by 11 and a half percent.

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2 So the legislative belief in money
3 following the child is reflected in the charter
4 school legislation, but it does not follow new
5 children coming into the Philadelphia School
6 District.

7 The state often points to the fact
8 that it provides more than half of Philadelphia's
9 funding, 53.4 percent in '97-'98, as a reason why
10 it shouldn't provide more, implying that
11 Philadelphia should fix the problem by raising local
12 taxes.

13 But we need to put this in a larger
14 context. In order to enlarge the local share of
15 education funding, Philadelphia would have to raise
16 property tax or cut funds from other city services;
17 such as, police protection, transportation, and
18 trash removal, to name a few of the key services
19 that are funded by the city. This simply doesn't
20 make sense, in my judgment.

21 Philadelphia residents already pay
22 more of their income in local taxes than residents
23 anywhere else in Pennsylvania. Far more, in fact,
24 than residents of New York City or Boston or
25 Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles.

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2 A little more than 75 percent of city
3 taxes collected from schools are property taxes.
4 Unfortunately, the value of property in Philadelphia
5 has not risen as fast as it has in the rest of the
6 state; 9.2 percent in Philadelphia, more than 30
7 percent in the rest of the state.

8 When adjusted for inflation,
9 Philadelphia's increase is a mere 2.3 percent, while
10 the rest of Pennsylvania shows growth of 22.7
11 percent.

12 Furthermore, while public school
13 enrollment has gone up in the last eight years,
14 overall city population has gone down. We have a
15 dwindling tax base to work with.

16 While the number of families living
17 in poverty across the state has dropped almost 20
18 percent in the last five years, it has actually
19 increased by almost 10 percent in Philadelphia,
20 stretching the resources of this city already.

21 This problem will only worsen when
22 the public assistance changes begin to take effect
23 in March.

24 I close with the following
25 observation: There is a connection between the

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2 expectations we have for our children, all
3 children -- those in public schools, charter
4 schools, parochial schools, and private schools --
5 and funding policy.

6 Disadvantaged children are at a
7 cross-roads. Those with whom we have historically
8 failed, those from low-income homes, children of
9 color, and those for whom English is not a first
10 language, need our collective support in all of
11 those schools and political power exercised on their
12 behalf, giving them reason for hope in the future.

13 Anyone who cares about all the
14 children, in my judgment, cannot limit their efforts
15 to experiments with vouchers, charters, home
16 schooling, or other efforts that serve only a few.

17 While those initiatives have their
18 place, our policies and our practice must extend
19 real opportunity to all of our children.

20 Madam Chairwoman, the reason that I
21 have to leave is that I have a speech at a
22 foundation going again with a tin cup in my hand.
23 And I apologize for that.

24 I have with me the people who
25 actually address the day-to-day issues that

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2 particularly were beginning to be raised at the end
3 of the last panel. Germaine Ingram, who is the
4 Chief of Staff; Clarence Armbrister, who is the
5 Managing Director; Jackie Sparkman, who is the
6 General Counsel of the District; and Dianne
7 Castelbuono, who is my Special Assistant, who, among
8 other duties, has the responsibility for overseeing
9 the administration of the charter program in the
10 school district.

11 And they will, of course, be glad to
12 answer any of those detailed questions that any
13 members of the panel may have.

14 If there are a couple of things that
15 are of an over-arching policy character that I can
16 be helpful with initially, let me stay for another
17 five minutes and try to respond to those, and then,
18 with your permission, skidaddle to see if I can't
19 put another couple of bucks in the till.

20 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: I will ask
21 one, and open it up to everyone else, since we have
22 time constraints.

23 My question is, I have visited all
24 the charter schools. And I have always felt, as I
25 feel from your testimony, that the charter states

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2 are in the middle of this state/local funding
3 fight.

4 And they kind of feel like the child
5 who gets pushed every way and don't know how to
6 survive, and feel victims of something that's bigger
7 than they are. That's my impression from visiting
8 all of them.

9 I have heard them complain about
10 tokens and money for busing. And we know they're
11 funded 76 percent, and the rest they're supposed to
12 raise. But they seem to have problems even with
13 that, albeit they have some kind of contract, a
14 contract that they signed with you.

15 They still seem to have problems
16 getting what John Skief called equity, and even with
17 the contract they sign.

18 I know that's a very general
19 question. But in terms of those issues that go
20 under equity, like busing and tokens and special ed,
21 can you give us an answer about that?

22 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Well, let
23 me start that answer and leave perhaps some of the
24 details of it to Clay and to others after I have to
25 leave.

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2 But I think you're absolutely right,
3 which is a part of what I was trying to say in my
4 testimony.

5 That this is another one of those
6 examples where those of us, in my judgment, who are
7 each of us too poor, fuss with each other, rather
8 than focusing attention where it really belongs.

9 And I think, that's the reason I
10 think, that charters and the school district ought
11 to be natural allies in this process.

12 In terms of the specific amounts of
13 money that make up the whatever it is \$5300, and the
14 90-something-hundred-dollars, those numbers are
15 simply derived, from our judgment, as to what the
16 law says.

17 They're not made-up numbers. They
18 are an assessment from our perspective on what the
19 law says about transportation, what the law says
20 about food services, what the law says about these
21 other things.

22 There is the observation from time to
23 time that we make money off of charter schools. I
24 would be pleased to open those books to anyone, for
25 you to discover that, in fact, this year we lose \$12

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2 million.

3 And what we've got to do, both in the
4 public schools, in the charter schools, if vouchers
5 ever come to pass, is to be about the business, on
6 behalf of all kids, to delivering for them.

7 And that's why I appreciate your
8 leadership in convening this panel. Because I do
9 believe, even though we obviously have differences
10 among and between us, that the folks who are
11 committed to charter schools -- because it is a
12 tough business to run a charter school -- are also
13 committed to children.

14 So the issue is not about kids; it is
15 about a law which, in my view, had good intentions,
16 but also has some essential flaws in it.

17 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Questions?
18 Representative Evans.

19 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Mr. Hornbeck,
20 you indicated a policy question, and I would like to
21 ask you somewhat of a global policy question.

22 And I guess the question I would like
23 to ask you is, you indicated that the School Board,
24 yourself, have certainly been the most friendliest
25 to charter schools in terms of its growth and

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2 opportunity in the state.

3 My question to you is, have you or
4 the School Board in some very specific way used the
5 charter schools in terms of research analysis?

6 Because it would appear to me if you
7 indicated and the School Board indicated how
8 friendly you are, then I would think in the year or
9 two years that it's been in existence, that either
10 you or your Administration would look at those
11 charter school and say what works, what doesn't
12 work, what can we do better. I am asking you the
13 question.

14 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Well, I
15 think that's right on target.

16 Because one of the reasons the
17 charter schools make sense is, when they actually do
18 begin to produce some results, we will have a basis
19 for looking at what works.

20 As a couple of the operators just
21 indicated, it's been -- they have not even had at
22 this point the three years of outcomes that permit
23 me to say that 145 of our schools have made dramatic
24 gains. It's not their fault; they just came into
25 existence two years ago.

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2 Certainly one of the things that I'm
3 extremely interested in is to see the growth
4 patterns in the charter schools in reading, math,
5 and science.

6 And as soon as that data exists, in a
7 way that it does for public schools, then we will
8 want to take advantage of that.

9 It is my hope, for example, that in
10 the spring, we will have identified a half a dozen
11 or more public schools that should become
12 demonstration schools for various instructional
13 practices.

14 And I would hope that we would see
15 the opportunity, if they would like to do that, in
16 which one or more of the charter schools would also
17 become demonstration schools not for charters or for
18 private or for public, but for kids, so that we can
19 grow together.

20 So as soon as there is data so we
21 know whether it works or not, then absolutely that
22 will be something we want to look at.

23 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: In other
24 words, are you saying to me you either have a
25 mechanism in place currently or you do not have a

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2 mechanism in place, although the charter school law
3 is relatively new and this is only the second year,
4 do you within your office or does the Board itself
5 have any type of mechanism in place to do evaluation
6 or is tracking what's taking place in the charter
7 schools?

8 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Sure. It
9 is the same accountability system, in effect, that
10 we have got in the public school system. Because we
11 wouldn't want to compare apples and oranges.

12 And in each of the charters is the
13 requirement that the same outcome measures be used
14 as in the public schools.

15 So that when, for example, in these
16 145 schools, the reason I say that they made
17 dramatic improvements and have done it faster than
18 Chicago or Houston or any of these other big cities
19 that get touted, it is because we have a systematic
20 way of looking at reading, math, and science.

21 And the same will exist-, when we
22 have the data from the charter schools.

23 All we've got at this point is the
24 baseline data in four of the charter schools. We
25 don't even have the first year of the comparative

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2 data.

3 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: I guess my
4 question is, who is in charge? When you said that
5 it is under -- it is already under the
6 accountability, who is in charge of that
7 accountability regarding the charter schools?

8 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: The office
9 that would track that would be Catherine Connor's
10 office.

11 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Second
12 question. Have you encouraged as a policy, you or
13 the Board, any conversions of existing public
14 schools or any clusters, have you encouraged any
15 conversions?

16 Have you, for example, gotten your
17 people to organize, going to a school and saying to
18 a particular school that we would like for you to
19 become a charter school.

20 We are going to organize the parents,
21 we are going to organize the teachers we are going
22 to organize the staff, and we are encouraging you to
23 become a conversion.

24 Have you set that as a policy?

25 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: For the

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2 first two or three years, even before the law
3 passed, while people were talking about it, the
4 answer is yes, particularly initially with the
5 cluster leader Karen DelGursio and the Strawberry
6 Mansion cluster.

7 In the last six months, the last
8 round, the answer is no. Because I've reached the
9 conclusion that, at this point, the conversion to
10 charters and the additional expenditures that are
11 necessary out of charters, we can't afford it.

12 And it would be like -- the charter
13 effort at this point, the 15, which is, as I say,
14 we've supported, would be like my putting a new
15 school district initiative on the table and saying,
16 "Please give me \$12 million because I've got a
17 great idea."

18 I may have some great \$12 million
19 ideas; I just don't have \$12 million.

20 And so the notion of conversion, both
21 of clusters, as you and I in fact have talked about,
22 both at the cluster level and at the school level,
23 is in theory a very attractive one.

24 Indeed I've said before, I would like
25 to have what, in effect, are 259 charter schools in

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2 the public school system.

3 I think the kind of flexibility and
4 setting standards and dealing with equity and all
5 that belongs to the central part, but people ought
6 to have the flexibility and the freedom at the local
7 level.

8 So when we get -- if we could get the
9 flaws in the law straightened out, so that it
10 doesn't end up with some of the problems that exist,
11 I think that makes a lot of sense.

12 And, in fact, if we extend some of
13 the things that arise out of collective bargaining
14 agreements, so that it is more attractive to the
15 half of the teachers voting, and so on, then I think
16 that's going to begin to happen. And I think that's
17 all to the good.

18 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Last question,
19 Madam Chairperson. You tried to reconstitute two
20 high schools. And, unfortunately, you, as you know,
21 you certainly was not successful as you went through
22 the labor issue.

23 In those particular high schools,
24 which obviously you talked about your -- you
25 measured your success in the numbers, and obviously

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2 high school reform leaves something to be desired,
3 in my observation, my sense is, why don't you try to
4 get those high schools to be converted to charters,
5 since you were not successful in terms of
6 reconstituting those particular schools?

7 Because I would think those schools,
8 in the case of Olney and Audenried, would be prime
9 to be converted. Obviously you thought it should be
10 changed, and obviously, you know, it didn't seem
11 like you put any resources.

12 And I'm talking about resources. I'm
13 not talking about fiscal resource. I'm talking
14 about resources of manpower of your office to say,
15 "We're going to go in that school. And since there
16 are some barriers to change, we are to go into that
17 school and we are going to try to get that school to
18 convert to a charter, so you can do the things you
19 want to talk about."

20 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: In the case
21 of Audenried, I'm happy to say there has been real
22 progress there. And so I guess while we might have
23 lost the battle there, we've, in my judgment, won
24 the war.

25 And there is a faculty there that's

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2 moving ahead, kids are moving up, they are
3 performing better, and so on.

4 In the case of Olney, I would be
5 enormously interested in the percentage of faculty
6 necessary to convert being lowered. Because I think
7 that there might be some very interesting things
8 that go on at Olney.

9 As you sort of alluded to -- and
10 certainly people have noticed from the newspapers -
11 I've not been enormously successful with the faculty
12 at Olney.

13 And the prospect of 51 percent of
14 that faculty voting to convert because I ask them
15 to, I confess, I think at this point is somewhere
16 between remote and nonexistent.

17 But very radical changes there, as
18 you have also noted, I think, need to take place.

19 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: But in the
20 meantime, I guess my only concern, if you are
21 talking about a child-centered system, children
22 achieving, and you are saying that you haven't been
23 successful in a particular high school, children and
24 parents are caught in the middle.

25 They are caught in the middle, with

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2 adults who may not be focused or interested in the
3 children. It seems like, are you giving up in terms
4 of fundamentally trying to do something with that
5 particular high school?

6 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: No, not at
7 all. And I think that you will begin to see
8 additional things take place at Olney even during
9 the course of the spring.

10 And it may even be that the state
11 legislature can strengthen our hand in some of those
12 ways that I alluded to a little while ago, and as
13 we've talked about in other settings.

14 Madam Chairwoman -- thank you very
15 much, Mr. Evans -- I really have to go pretty soon.

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Hornbeck,
17 just one question from Representative Horsey.

18 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Absolutely,
19 Representative Horsey.

20 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: We don't want
21 to do this, and that is make a comparison, but I am
22 going to ask you to make a comparison today by
23 asking you, are charter schools at an advantage or
24 disadvantage relative to public schools?

25 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Well, I

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2 think in terms of substance, I think an awful lot
3 that's going on in the charter schools is very good
4 for the children that are in charter schools. And
5 that's the reason that I support charter schools.

6 I think that there are two ways in
7 which charter schools, in the way they've been
8 treated so far in Pennsylvania, are bad for public
9 schools.

10 One is, I illustrate with the fact
11 that it takes \$12 million out of the 259 schools, of
12 kids that are left, and puts it someplace else.

13 And I don't begrudge that to the
14 charter schools; it just ends up hurting the kids
15 that are left behind.

16 And, secondly, I fear that there are
17 people who are in favor of charter schools that,
18 having passed charter schools, think that they've
19 really done something for the large number of
20 children. When, in fact, they have done something
21 very important for some children.

22 And we have a long history in this
23 city of doing things for some children, but not
24 enacting policies that are good for all children.

25 And if folks could join together and

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2 be in favor, as the School District of Philadelphia
3 is, and has demonstrated, in my view, both charter
4 schools and the kids in public schools, then I think
5 that we can solve these problems together, and I
6 think good things could happen.

7 So on the whole, I think, we continue
8 to think, we are reviewing however many applications
9 this year. How many did we get? 25 applications.
10 We are plunging ahead with this.

11 We are trying to have the two things
12 come together because the kids are the same in the
13 final analysis, and that's our focus.

14 May I be excused, Madam Chairwoman,
15 please?

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
17 Councilwoman Clark has agreed to waive her
18 question.

19 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Thank you
20 very much.

21 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: The rest of you
22 get triple.

23 SUPERINTENDENT HORNBECK: Thank you
24 all very much.

25 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

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2 Let me add that --

3 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I am going to
4 ask my questions of Germaine and Clay and the other
5 panel from the school district.

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: But let me
7 say, to kind of flip the Superintendent's remark
8 about charter schools being helpful for some
9 students, I think public schools can only be helpful
10 to the students in those schools, and that goes both
11 ways.

12 So I am sure that since charter
13 schools are public schools, that when they talk
14 about the dropout rate being 51 percent, that
15 somehow that will be better this year when they
16 average in now the excellent attendance that takes
17 place in charter schools.

18 So it seems to me we are still in a
19 position, since we are still all public schools, of
20 rising or sinking together.

21 And that out of this hearing, we
22 begin to see the problems that one can feel the back
23 and forth, the antagonistic feelings and activities
24 and actions that are taking place as charter schools
25 try to be creative enough to not only come up with a

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2 building and figure out architecturally what you do
3 and try to order books and try to put programs
4 together with less money, but feel kind of like a
5 stepchild of the system.

6 I think that these hearings have made
7 that, all of that has come out in the open, which is
8 very, very important for the public to realize so
9 that we can begin hopefully to set up some
10 mechanism.

11 When Tim Daniels talked about an
12 appeal process, we didn't have an opportunity to go
13 further into that. But at some point before this
14 hearing is over, we would like to revisit that
15 question, and who that appeal process involves.

16 Is it the charter schools somehow
17 with the Board or with the state? But that's
18 another question that we kind of cut you off,
19 Mr. Daniels, that we would like to revisit further.

20 Any questions from the panel?

21 Councilwoman Clark.

22 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Madam Chair, I
23 think, first of all, these hearings are enormously
24 important. Because this is an issue that has been
25 simmering that needs the bright light of day.

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2 it always was, and it is very difficult to see the
3 bright tomorrow.

4 It may well be that the charter
5 organizers have not done as good a job as they hoped
6 to in positioning the school as an asset and
7 resource, and not a competitor.

8 Now, if you will just accept that
9 this might be a fair assessment of where you are,
10 then there is a chance of solving the problems
11 without having bodies all over the floor, like the
12 third act of a Shakespearean tragedy.

13 Give me some numbers as to how many
14 students have left the Philadelphia Public School
15 System for charter, and how many have come from
16 other sources to charter schools.

17 Now, the superintendent says
18 something like two out of three, didn't he, or was
19 it one out of three?

20 MS. GERMAINE INGRAM: About one-third
21 of the charter school enrollment, as we understand,
22 come from parochial or private school. The other
23 two-thirds come from traditional public schools.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Now, he speaks
25 of not being able to reap the savings of the reduced

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2 population because the students don't come in neat
3 blocks of 30 and, therefore, you are not able to
4 reduce the teacher load by having one child less in
5 a classroom. Is that a fair assessment?

6 MS. INGRAM: That's accurate.

7 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: When do you see
8 yourselves being able to recoup this year's losses
9 of one out of this class and three out of that
10 school? How does that one day work itself out?

11 MR. CLARENCE D. ARMBRISTER: We have
12 actually start today recoup some of those savings.

13 I think the point that the
14 Superintendent made, for example, is that we have in
15 total enrollment in charter schools about 3,000
16 students, let's say.

17 And let's say if you had an average
18 class of 30 students, you know, one might conclude
19 that you might be able to reduce the school
20 district's teachers by 100, let's say one teacher
21 for every class.

22 Unfortunately, as the Superintendent
23 indicated, that does not -- the students don't leave
24 in neat packages of 30, so for every 30 students you
25 can reduce a class.

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2 But we did and we have taken into
3 account, there are some savings because of the
4 reduced population in the charter schools.

5 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Mr. Armbrister,
6 at some point we are going to need you to put some
7 numbers.

8 MR. ARMBRISTER: I am going to give
9 YOU A number right now.

10 The number THAT we have calculated
11 with respect to the current fiscal year for savings
12 for teachers that we didn't have to budget is about
13 \$3.6 million.

14 And that's included -- when the
15 Superintendent talks about the net costs of charter
16 schools to the district, that has been taken into
17 account.

18 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So but for the
19 3.6, the cost would have been 15, and not 12?

20 MR. ARMBRISTER: That is correct.

21 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: All right.

22 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: I am
23 absolutely trying to figure out why there is all
24 this fighting over 3,000 students out of almost
25 214,000, and why charter school operators -- I don't

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2 agree with my colleague that charter school
3 operators have maybe done all they can. I think
4 they have done all they can and all everybody else
5 can do.

6 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I was only
7 speaking for myself.

8 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Right.
9 3,000 students out of 214,000, for
10 people to have to suffer and go through what charter
11 school operators are going through, to me, is just
12 kind of unbelievable.

13 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But some of this
14 is growing pains, Madam Chair.

15 And I don't want to have a back and
16 forth with you. Because I know that just because we
17 disagree wouldn't make either one of us right or
18 wrong; it would just make us different.

19 But I am just now trying to get a
20 record as to what has been the experience of the
21 school district, and what you can expect when the
22 growing pains level itself out, as it surely will,
23 when the newness wears off and you become just
24 another institution providing education in
25 Philadelphia under the broad umbrella of the public

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2 school system.

3 Because I'm still seeing it as public
4 school. I do not see it as two competing systems.

5 MS. INGRAM: I think it's very
6 difficult to answer your question at this point in
7 part, and in large part, because of the newness.

8 You know, to what extent there will
9 be the -- we will continue the significant increase
10 in the number of charter schools, three years, five
11 years, ten years from now, that's hard to say.

12 There are -- charter schools aren't
13 disbursed throughout the district evenly. So there
14 are some geographic areas of the district that have
15 larger concentrations of charter schools than
16 others. Those are --

17 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Ms. Ingram,
18 introduce yourself to the record, so that the
19 transcript will be clear.

20 MS. INGRAM: Germaine Ingram, Chief
21 of Staff, School District of Philadelphia.

22 So those are types of factors.
23 Charter schools are different sizes. They are
24 diverse in the great organization that they
25 accommodate. Most of the charter schools at this

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2 point serve elementary school students.

3 So those are the types of variations
4 and factors that will, to a great extent, determine
5 the degree to which we can get to a point where
6 there is a corresponding reduction in outlay for the
7 school district, as there is an increase in the use
8 of charter schools as a choice.

9 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But isn't that a
10 reasonable way for charter schools to develop?

11 Shouldn't they start off educating
12 primary grades, and then, as that need progresses,
13 then go to middle school, senior? Does that make
14 sense?

15 MS. INGRAM: I think it depends on
16 where the need is within a community.

17 As Representative Evans says, has
18 indicated, there are people who may look to charter
19 schools as an alternative to addressing some of the
20 needs of our high schools. And we wouldn't want to
21 deny those communities the opportunity to do that.

22 It also depends on the particular
23 expertise of the people who want to start a charter
24 school. We would want to see people apply their
25 expertise in the area where they are most capable.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So each charter
3 is granted based on an assessment by some panel of
4 the abacus ability to do the job they say they want
5 to do; is that correct?

6 MS. INGRAM: That's where we look
7 first. And what's the intention, and how, what's
8 your capacity to reach that intention of providing
9 effective education.

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: And we certainly
11 haven't gotten anywhere near maxing out on meeting
12 the defined educational deficiencies in
13 Philadelphia.

14 But what is the school district's
15 concern, what is your gut concern, about the
16 proliferation of charter schools?

17 MS. INGRAM: Our --

18 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Let me take
19 dollars out.

20 MS. INGRAM: Our principal -- you
21 know, I don't know whether you want to call it a
22 concern.

23 Our principal desire is to have
24 charter schools serve as a vehicle for expanding
25 instructional options for parents and communities.

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2 And we have an interest in seeing
3 that charter schools provide effective education,
4 provide equity, and deliver on the promise that is
5 indicated in the legislation, to expand those
6 opportunities.

7 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I would like to
8 follow up on Representative Evans' question. Who
9 and where in the district is this ongoing assessment
10 taking place?

11 And when problems are encountered,
12 what is offered, and what praise is offered? How do
13 we lower the adversarial tone and fling open the
14 welcome gates?

15 MS. INGRAM: Well, let me say this:
16 We aren't -- we don't take, the school district does
17 not take, an adversarial posture towards charter
18 schools.

19 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But, Germaine,
20 there are people who think you do.

21 MS. INGRAM: I understand that.

22 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So let's just
23 establish that you think you are not, and they think
24 you do.

25 And now I am asking you to tell me

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2 what steps and what process you have in place that
3 integrates them as part of the growing Philadelphia
4 Public School offerings.

5 MS. INGRAM: Let me say two things.

6 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: No, please
7 don't. And listen, Germaine, you respond to me.
8 Okay?

9 MS. INGRAM: Well, I just expect a
10 level of respect from people that we are trying
11 to --

12 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: No lecture; just
13 deal with me.

14 MS. INGRAM: We have devoted a great
15 deal of administrative capacity to try to bring this
16 system, which, as you say, is new.

17 We have been -- we have not been
18 provided with funding for administrative support of
19 the process and the program that we have had to
20 mount in order to approve charter schools, in order
21 to fund charter schools, in order to provide the
22 type of ongoing recordkeeping and assessment that's
23 occurring in this process.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Somehow you have
25 provided the funds and somehow they are here.

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2 Now, how will you assess how well
3 they do what they say they're going to do?

4 MS. INGRAM: Part of our process is,
5 part of the charter obligation of every charter
6 school, is to take the Stanford 9. That is our
7 essential mechanism for determining whether charter
8 schools are progressing in their student
9 achievement.

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But that's test
11 scores; that's one.

12 What's another measure?

13 MS. INGRAM: That is our principal
14 measure.

15 What you need to -- that's our
16 principal measure. In addition to that, the state
17 requires that each charter school submit an annual
18 report that covers a number of areas with regard to
19 the instructional program, the facilities.

20 All the principal areas of the
21 legislation are addressed in the annual report that
22 charter schools submit to the state in the school
23 district.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: What would be an
25 indicator to you that they were not doing well?

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2 Would attendance? Would dropout?

3 What other things do you look to?

4 MS. INGRAM: The same indicators that
5 we look to for our own schools.

6 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Put them on my
7 report. What do you look to?

8 MS. INGRAM: I am about to say that.
9 We look to test scores.

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Test scores.

11 MS. INGRAM: That's one thing that we
12 look at for traditional public schools, and that's
13 what we would look for in charter schools.

14 We would want to look to see how many
15 children were leaving or are being suspended or
16 being expelled from charter schools, and the reasons
17 for that.

18 We would certainly look at
19 attendance, look at persistence, how many children
20 who start in a charter school progress to graduation
21 or the culminating grade of that charter school.

22 We would want to look at climate
23 indicators; you know, to what degree children and
24 staff and parents feel that the school provides a
25 safe and supportive environment.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: How would you
3 test the last thing you just said, the degree to
4 which children, staff, and parents believe that they
5 have been provided a safe environment? How would
6 you test that?

7 MS. INGRAM: I think principally you
8 have to talk with those constituents, those children
9 and staff and parents.

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: And do you?

11 MS. INGRAM: We have not. We have
12 not as yet.

13 Let me add this --

14 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Sure.

15 MS. INGRAM: -- the law states that
16 charter schools are independent schools.

17 And part of the difficulty here is
18 that when we have asked questions of charter
19 schools, very often the response we get back is
20 that, "We aren't responsible to the school
21 district. We are independent."

22 And so I think that part of -- one
23 thing that needs to be clarified by the state or by
24 whatever mechanism the state uses to followup this
25 process is to bring greater clarity as to just what

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2 accountability charter schools have, and to whom,
3 and --

4 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: That's exactly
5 point my. And until we get that cleared up, we are
6 always going to be bumping into whether you are fish
7 or fowl, whether you are in, out, whether you are
8 part of us or an adversary.

9 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Could you
10 identify yourself.

11 MR. ARMBRISTER: Clarence Armbrister,
12 and I just wanted to piggyback on the point that
13 Germaine was making. I think it is a point that
14 Mr. Tim Daniels made that really should be
15 underscored.

16 Which is that, I think he said that
17 the state is now preparing regulatory guidance that
18 might be available in July. So we have been working
19 with a statute, but without the fill-in, the
20 regulatory guidance, to interpret many of the gray
21 areas that both the charters on one side of that had
22 to interpret and we on the school district have had
23 to interpret.

24 So that's been a very difficult
25 problem, to try to go through this mine field to try

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2 to interpret the legislative intent of a bill that
3 was passed rather quickly, and which we attempted,
4 quite frankly, somewhat miraculously, to implement
5 in that very short period of time in the first round
6 in which we actually got four charter schools
7 approved.

8 So we are looking forward to the
9 regulatory guidance and the interpretations that
10 come out which will help answer a lot of these
11 questions.

12 But there is this tension, a very
13 significant tension, between our regulating the
14 charter schools, to the extent that we can, and
15 their independence, which in many respects we try to
16 honor.

17 And it is something that's not just
18 between the charters and the school district. We
19 have it in the school district.

20 I mean, we have people within the
21 school district who misinterpret, who
22 misunderstand. And it is a constant vigilance on
23 our part as the senior staff to try to make sure
24 where we are not trying to step on the charter's
25 toes and give them the independence.

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2 So we have had, quite frankly, some
3 of the instances that Mr. Proietta identified are --
4 have resulted because there have been confusion
5 among our own staff, quite frankly.

6 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: There is
7 confusion in this room as to what is and what is not
8 a proper role and relationship between the two
9 entities of the public school system. Okay?

10 And I listened to your language, I
11 listen to provider's language. And you could hear
12 that we/they language that I'm dealing with because
13 it is new.

14 When the regs are finally written --
15 and lawyers know that between writing the law and
16 implementing, you have to have the regulations to
17 say what is permitted and what is expressly
18 prohibited.

19 You will at least have the benefit of
20 these years of experience that will go into the
21 regulations, hopefully.

22 If we can keep from getting so
23 fiercely adversarial that we start to protect turf,
24 we can come up with regulations that are good for
25 all of us.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But I think we
4 are going to have to work at that.

5 And until we do that, I am going to
6 ask everybody to kindly sheath your sword, okay, put
7 the safety on your gun, lock the safety, let's try
8 to get through this test period -- which all of us
9 have to admit this is a test period -- to see.
10 We're testing a concept. And I think that that's
11 our best shot.

12 Madam Chair, I will not go further at
13 this point. Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
15 Representative Evans.

16 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Thank you,
17 Madam Chairperson.

18 I would like to deal with the issue
19 which I've heard a great deal about, this cost
20 question of this number.

21 And I want you to correct me if I
22 make a mistake. I think the number you talked
23 about, I heard you and the Superintendent talk
24 about, \$12 million is what the school district has
25 lost. And I guess my question is a couple of

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2 things.

3 Obviously when this law went into
4 effect, which was 1997, and the school district
5 certainly has its fixed costs, and the school
6 district at that particular time already had
7 contracts in place, so obviously you did not have
8 the flexibility, there were changes made, so you
9 couldn't just turn around and make changes in the
10 system as a result of the fixed costs.

11 Can you explain in a very specific
12 way, very specific, what exactly do you mean by you
13 have lost \$12 million?

14 Because I heard Councilwoman Clark
15 indicate that after some conversation, that you have
16 a savings of 3.8, yet I heard the Superintendent say
17 you are losing money. I am very curious. Tell me.

18 And the numbers I heard -- and,
19 Gussie, I have not always been too good at math -- I
20 heard one-third comes from the parochial and the
21 private schools, two-thirds comes from within the
22 system.

23 And I am trying to figure out if
24 one-third comes from the outside and two-thirds come
25 from within the system, then are you saying as a

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2 result of that one-third, that's the loss of the 12
3 million? You have to explain that.

4 MR. ARMBRISTER: I would be happy
5 to. And bear with me, if you can. Let's start on
6 the expenditure side.

7 As you know, the state provides a
8 formula -- and I have copies of the calculation of
9 how we arrived at the per-pupil expenditure that we
10 provide to the charter schools.

11 For the current fiscal year that
12 number is \$5,246.

13 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: For the
14 charter school?

15 MR. ARMBRISTER: For the charter
16 school.

17 So for every student who is enrolled
18 in a charter school, the school district is required
19 to provide -- and this is a regular ed -- we are
20 required to provide \$5246 for each of the students,
21 the regular ed students.

22 If you bear with me in terms of the
23 pro forma that I have here with me --

24 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse me.
25 Councilwoman Clark asked that you repeat that figure

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2 and the class of people.

3 MR. ARMBRISTER: Certainly. It is
4 \$5246. And that figure is derived from a state
5 formula based on total expenditures of the school
6 district.

7 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is this per
8 charter school child?

9 MR. ARMBRISTER: Yes. It is
10 basically a calculation for regular ed children --
11 nonspecial-education children is probably the best
12 way to describe it.

13 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: But for
14 charter schools?

15 MR. ARMBRISTER: This is for all
16 students, actually.

17 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Because you
18 mentioned 6800 --

19 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: One thing
20 Mr. Armbrister should explain, there is no specific
21 language in the law that says \$5200 per child.

22 What he is describing is, there are
23 criteria that follows the child driven by a
24 formula.

25 And then from the analysis that the

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2 school district has done, they make a transaction of
3 the 6800. And then they -- there is a gap between
4 the 6800 to the 5200, that I am interested also in
5 that gap between that 52 to that 68, and how do you
6 come to the interpretation.

7 Because you are either come to the
8 interpretation based on law or regulation. And I
9 would be very interested in how you make that
10 determination, since there is no specific language
11 that says 52 versus 68.

12 MR. ARMBRISTER: The clerk is handing
13 out to you --

14 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: 52 is their
15 number.

16 MR. ARMBRISTER: Right.

17 The clerk is handing out to you right
18 now the forms that we used to calculate the per
19 pupil revenue for the charter schools. And maybe
20 that's the best place to start on this.

21 You have one -- I will wait until he
22 finishes passing that out.

23 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Mr. Armbrister,
24 it is our practice to provide materials to the
25 committee.

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2 If there are additional requests, we
3 will try to provide them. That is not yours to
4 explain; that's ours to explain.

5 MR. ARMBRISTER: Yes, ma'am.

6 If we look at the one entitled, on
7 the third line, Total 1997-'98 expenditures, and
8 then it has parenthesis at October 1997, this is the
9 calculation that the state provides us to calculate
10 the per-student expenditure for charter school
11 students.

12 We start out with the total
13 expenditures of the school district, which is on
14 that top line of \$1.5 billion, \$1,529,822,300 --

15 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Excuse me.
16 That's the school district's budget?

17 MR. ARMBRISTER: That's correct. And
18 this is in the law. This is explicitly set forth in
19 the law.

20 And, in fact, I have a copy -- and I
21 have multiple copies -- of the form that we actually
22 file with the state that includes these numbers.

23 And what the formula tells you to do
24 is to take a total number of expenditures, and
25 deduct from those expenditures those items listed

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2 below, which include monies for special education
3 programs, which is noted on the form as \$153.8
4 million.

5 They tell you to deduct nonpublic
6 school programs. The school district did not have
7 any expenditures in that category, for example.

8 Adult education programs, for which
9 the school district spends \$1.7 million. Community
10 junior college education programs, for which we have
11 no expenditures in that column.

12 Student transportation services, \$50
13 million. Facilities acquisition, construction, and
14 improvement services, for which we have no
15 expenditures.

16 Debt service, the amount that we pay
17 on the bonds that we borrowed to build schools, and
18 et cetera, of about \$53 million.

19 Internal fund transfers. These are
20 fund transfers among what we call our enterprise
21 funds. So food service funds, things like that,
22 that the general fund supports from time to time of
23 a half a million dollars.

24 And then the federal expenses which
25 are, in effect, the Title 1 grants that we receive,

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2 which are noted here as about \$144 million.

3 Now, these are the categories based
4 on the state form that we are required to deduct
5 from our total expenditures.

6 Then the total deduction --

7 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Let me stop
8 you.

9 When you say deduct the federal, you
10 are deducting the federal because the federal money
11 is going directly to the charters?

12 MR. ARMBRISTER: Are intended to go
13 directly to the charters, that is correct.

14 So they should not receive the -- and
15 my philosophy. Excuse me.

16 But I think the philosophy of all of
17 these deductions, quite frankly -- and maybe
18 Mr. Daniels can speak on behalf of the state -- but
19 we interpret the philosophy of these deductions is
20 that it would not be appropriate for the school
21 district to pass on the revenue because these are
22 not generally expenses which the charter schools are
23 going to incur.

24 That is my interpretation of what the
25 state law provided. But that's the basis for the

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2 deductions.

3 So when you get down, the total
4 amount of those deductions total \$405 million. And
5 you come up with a net expenditure of \$1.1 billion.

6 The formula then tells you to go
7 forward and to take what we call the ADM, or the
8 Average Daily Membership, which is basically the
9 enrollment of students to use a --

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: This is
11 enrollment, not attendance?

12 MR. ARMBRISTER: This is average
13 daily membership, so it is effectively enrollment.
14 It is enrollment.

15 So 214,397 students, as we report to
16 the state. And you basically divide that number
17 into the net expenditures, and you come up with
18 \$5,246.

19 Now, what the math will -- and then
20 the bottom half of the table reflects -- excuse me,
21 reflects the calculation for the additional amounts
22 that charter school students who are deemed to be
23 special education students would receive.

24 And that calculation is based on the
25 special education program expenses versus the

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2 average daily membership based on those numbers.

3 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: One thing I
4 would like to, if I could, say to the members of the
5 Council.

6 You heard the Superintendent make a
7 statement about special education. And the
8 statement was made that the difference between
9 charter schools and regular special ed was that in
10 1993, special ed was changed.

11 And the reason that the state changed
12 special ed from what was called excess costs is
13 because school districts were abusing special ed and
14 was dumping individuals in special ed to get more
15 money.

16 And the reason that the state changed
17 the formula is, basically, it hasn't come up with a
18 formula that it can strike a balance between school
19 districts dumping individuals in special ed, and
20 gaining \$10,000 more, versus to how they figure they
21 strike a balance.

22 So if you hear local school districts
23 scream about, well, you don't pay us for special ed,
24 and there is some question about decisionmaking by
25 local school districts in terms of where they put

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2 kids in special ed and do those kids stay in special
3 ed for their entire existence there in the education
4 institution, and the problem is, it doesn't seem
5 those kids are coming out of special ed, and the
6 state and the General Assembly is taking the
7 position, people need to figure out a better
8 system. It is an issue we will probably address
9 this year.

10 But I want you to be clear. When the
11 statement is made, well, the state just put a cap on
12 it, it is driven by local school districts who just
13 didn't, in my view, deal with it in an honorable
14 way.

15 MR. ARMBRISTER: If I could address
16 the last point, which is the difference. I would
17 call your attention to that \$405,000.

18 And this is where I think charter
19 schools, who indicate that there is this difference
20 between what the school district spends per child,
21 which is the total cost, would be the \$1.5 billion,
22 versus what they receive, which is the base on the
23 \$1.1 million.

24 And if you divided the 214,000
25 students into the \$405,000, you would have just

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2 under \$2,000, maybe 16 or 17 hundred dollars, which
3 I think represents the difference that many of
4 the -- you know, that was represented here today as
5 the difference between what the charter schools get
6 and what the school district actually spends.

7 But, again, you would have to ask the
8 state as to the rationale for the deductions that
9 they required us to make in calculating the
10 formula.

11 So that, in fact, is the basis for
12 that distinction.

13 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: But it seems
14 to me, Mr. Armbrister -- I understand what you are
15 doing is, basically what you are doing is, you are
16 bringing the gross amount down of the Philadelphia
17 School District, and then you are dividing in the
18 number of 3,000 in a less amount. So you figure
19 that's basically why they should receive less.

20 MR. ARMBRISTER: We're not doing it.
21 We are doing --

22 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: I understand
23 you are saying that the state. But my question is,
24 when you say student transportation services, which
25 is \$50 million, how is that line item listed?

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2 MR. ARMBRISTER: That is what we
3 report to the state as to what we spend every year
4 for student transportation.

5 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: And you are
6 saying that charter schools do not necessarily,
7 based on state law, this is what you're saying, do
8 not necessarily qualify for state transportation, so
9 you, in a sense, are removing them from being
10 eligible for that.

11 MR. ARMBRISTER: I am not saying
12 anything. I am following the rules that the state
13 provided. And I think you would have to ask the
14 state for the rationale.

15 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Do you have
16 specific language either in some type of regulation
17 or law that says --.

18 MR. ARMBRISTER: Actually, I have a
19 form that the state requires us to fill out that
20 tells us what to deduct.

21 Do you have a copy of the law with
22 you? Because the law is pretty clear, and it is not
23 ambiguous.

24 This is one of the few places in the
25 law where it really is not ambiguous. This is not

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2 left to interpretation at all. We are following the
3 exact edict of the state law.

4 We are going to find that for you.
5 We have a copy of the law with us.

6 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Madam
7 Chairperson, if I could at some point, Dr. Daniels,
8 I think it would be appropriate if we brought him to
9 get some clarity between the Department of Ed's
10 interpretation, if we could bring him up to the
11 panel.

12 Dr. Daniels, can you come up to the
13 panel. I would like to get some clarity on this
14 issue of these line items that Mr. Armbrister has
15 described.

16 Have you seen a copy of this?

17 DR. DANIELS: Yes, I have; both here
18 and in my office. So I had pre-knowledge.

19 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Do you have a
20 copy with you?

21 DR. DANIELS; I can share.

22 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Can you
23 respond to what Mr. Armbrister just described?

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Mr. Armbrister,
25 you were about to share a form with us which you

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2 said required certain reports.

3 MR. ARMBRISTER: Sure. We have the
4 form, and we have also found the appropriate
5 reference in the legislation.

6 We don't have multiple copies.

7 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: We have Xerox,
8 obviously.

9 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Go ahead.

10 DR. DANIELS: The \$50 million for
11 transportation.

12 Basically, the law was set up to not
13 pass through to the charters costs that school
14 districts were incurring that weren't relevant for
15 charters.

16 For example, in many counties in the
17 Commonwealth, school districts pay a significant
18 contribution to community colleges, whatever line
19 that is, Function No. 1700, whatever. I am an old
20 business manager, but the memory is fading. So they
21 don't pass it through.

22 Now, that's not relevant to
23 Philadelphia. But there are some other costs that
24 aren't passed through because the district would
25 still provide the services; therefore, the district

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2 should retain the money.

3 So specifically on transportation,
4 since the law envisions charter school public
5 students having access to transportation, as they
6 have now for public schools and nonpublic schools,
7 Section 1361 of the law was specifically put into
8 the bill by reference to bus 10 miles beyond a
9 border of any district.

10 And I can tell you there are some
11 suburban districts west of the city whose kids are
12 coming into charters. And in some cases they are
13 arranging transportation, if it is within 10 miles.
14 They are following the law.

15 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: So you are
16 saying --

17 DR. DANIELS: So they keep the money
18 to provide the service.

19 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: They retain the
20 obligation, as well; is that what you're saying?
21 They keep the money.

22 DR. DANIELS: Correct. There are two
23 purposes --

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Let me clarify
25 for myself.

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2 They retain the money, and they
3 retain the obligation to transport students to a
4 reasonable district. And according to 1361, that
5 reasonable district is 10 miles of the city's
6 boundaries?

7 DR. DANIELS: Correct.

8 So transportation funds are deducted
9 and kept in the school district because any
10 transportation services provided to the charter
11 school are provided by the school district.

12 And if you look at the common
13 practice in interpreting this law throughout the
14 Commonwealth, whether it be Erie, whether it be
15 State College where they considered this issue very
16 carefully, they are providing busing both to charter
17 schools beyond 10 miles and to charter schools
18 within their district at the same level of service
19 that they provide to the other students of their age
20 range.

21 Now, in terms of the state point of
22 view on this, we issued over a year ago a basic
23 education circular to that effect. Every other
24 school district --

25 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Do you have that

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2 circular with you, or a copy of it?

3 DR. DANIELS: I don't. It is in
4 every charter's operators manual. And I believe all
5 our school districts have a copy of that manual.

6 I can get you a copy.

7 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Would you
8 provide that to the Chair.

9 DR. DANIELS: Representative Evans
10 has seen a copy of that, where we clarified that it
11 should be provided at the same level.

12 And I am not being disagreeable for
13 the sake of being disagreeable.

14 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: You are not
15 being disagreeable at all.

16 DR. DANIELS: The school district is
17 providing transportation in that fashion. And there
18 is a difference in the outlook between the
19 Commonwealth and the School District of Philadelphia
20 in that regard.

21 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Dr. Daniels, I
22 would like to say this particularly to my colleagues
23 to the Council.

24 As Councilwoman Clark said earlier, I
25 think that the purpose for this hearing is to really

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2 figure out a way that it is not we versus us. It is
3 really a process to try to figure out if we can do
4 clarity.

5 I don't think that court is the way
6 to solve things, and I don't think that, obviously,
7 getting into these legislative battles. So there
8 does seem to be a difference of opinion.

9 The state did put out a particular
10 position that clearly stated throughout the
11 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania -- and obviously the
12 school district has to answer to the state.

13 I would like to have the school
14 district answer in a very specific way why haven't
15 you, if every other school district around the issue
16 of transportation, why haven't you in a very
17 specific way adhered to what the Department of
18 Education has stated, which is the organization
19 which we in the General Assembly empower to oversee
20 501 school districts, why haven't you in a very
21 specific way adhered to what came down from the
22 Department of Ed without going to court?

23 MS. INGRAM: We didn't take ourselves
24 to court on this; we were sued by someone else on
25 this issue.

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2 But I am going to allow Jackie
3 Sparkman, our General Counsel, to address this
4 issue.

5 REPRESENTATIVE MICHAEL HORSEY:

6 Excuse me. May I ask the same question in a
7 different way?

8 Why hasn't the school district
9 developed a funding process for charter school
10 children?

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. INGRAM: I am sorry; I am not
13 sure I understand the question.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: The gentleman
15 stated that you are bound to provide transportation
16 under a formula for children in Philadelphia; isn't
17 that correct?

18 DR. DANIELS: It is issued on a basic
19 education circular over a year ago, that is
20 correct.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: We have a new
22 educational structure known as charter school. This
23 involves children.

24 Why hasn't the school district
25 developed a process for getting those kids to those

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2 charter schools?

3 If they fall into the process in
4 public school, or parochial school, and they are now
5 members of charter schools, why hasn't the
6 Philadelphia School District developed a formula to
7 get them to those charter schools?

8 MS. INGRAM: Basically because --

9 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Which is the
10 same question that Mr. Evans asked.

11 MS. INGRAM: And I understand that
12 now. I didn't understand that when it was asked
13 originally.

14 Basically our answer to that is
15 because we feel that the bulletin that Mr. Daniels
16 refers to is not consistent with the charter school
17 legislation itself.

18 And I will let our General Counsel
19 respond further.

20 JACKIE B. SPARKMAN, ESQ.: Jackie
21 Sparkman, General Counsel, School District of
22 Philadelphia.

23 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Pull the mike
24 closer. We can't hear you. We know Panel 3, you
25 are pushed.

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2 We are going to try to tie this up
3 and ask all of you to stay for more questions, get
4 Panel 3 before we lose one of the main participants,
5 and then we are still going to tie all this up.
6 Thank you.

7 Talk a little louder into the mike.
8 And identify yourself first.

9 MS. SPARKMAN: Jackie Sparkman,
10 General Counsel, School District of Philadelphia.

11 And my answer is somewhat constrained
12 by the fact that we are in litigation over that
13 issue.

14 But the law very clearly says to all
15 school districts, you are to provide charter school
16 students within your borders transportation on the
17 same basis that you provide your own students.

18 The Philadelphia School District does
19 not transport all of its students. We have definite
20 rules about who gets transportation and under what
21 circumstances.

22 We provide transportation. We don't
23 provide transportation, for example, to most of our
24 kindergarteners because we try to provide them an
25 education facility within their communities.

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2 We transport children for
3 desegregation purposes. We transport special
4 education students, when that's required by their
5 IEPs.

6 We cannot afford to transport all of
7 our students. And, in fact --

8 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Can I
9 interrupt you?

10 Isn't that really the issue about
11 costs? Because what I heard you say is that you
12 have rules. Obviously your rules, your policy,
13 which is established by your School Board, is
14 derived from -- where are your rules derived from?

15 MS. SPARKMAN: If the question goes
16 to if you have a pie and ten groups of expenditures,
17 and your pie only satisfies eight, within what you
18 have, you divy up to satisfy as much as you can.

19 So if your question was going to is
20 money part of the reason for your rules? No doubt.

21 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: That's what I
22 hear.

23 But what I'm trying to get a sense of
24 is, I heard one thing from the state department,
25 which is the department that regulates every school

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2 district. You would agree with that?

3 You would agree that the department
4 regulates every school district; right?

5 MS. SPARKMAN: Absolutely.

6 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: You would
7 agree to that?

8 MS. SPARKMAN: Absolutely.

9 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Since you
10 agree that the department regulates every school
11 district, then I do not understand how, if you tell
12 me about some rules, and I'm trying to figure out
13 what's the basis of the rules.

14 Is the basis of the rules the school
15 district's policy or is the basis of the rules the
16 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania? Which one is it?

17 MS. SPARKMAN: No. No. No.

18 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: The rules
19 regarding transportation.

20 MS. SPARKMAN: To the extent that
21 State College might be transporting everyone, the
22 law as passed, as announced by the Supreme Court of
23 this Commonwealth, is that no public school district
24 has any obligation whatsoever to transport any
25 child. So every school district in this

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2 Commonwealth creates its own transportation rules
3 and guidelines. Some school districts don't
4 transport any students.

5 So the state doesn't require every
6 school district to transport. To the extent that
7 you transport, you have to treat charter schools and
8 public schools the same.

9 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: I yield to the
10 Councilperson.

11 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Ms. Sparkman is
12 it your interpretation that the state regulation
13 requires you to extend to every charter school
14 student the same transportation as you would to
15 every noncharter school student, not more and not
16 less?

17 MS. SPARKMAN: Yes.

18 We are to provide -- well, first,
19 when the statutes were first written, they were in
20 written in terms of public and nonpublic. And we
21 are required to provide nonpublic school students
22 transportation on the same basis as we transport
23 public school students.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So that pulls it
25 into one system. Whatever you provide for your own

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2 system, you provide for them in terms of
3 transportation?

4 MS. SPARKMAN: Yes.

5 And now charter schools have been
6 added to the mix.

7 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But we already
8 established that charter schools are public
9 schools.

10 MS. SPARKMAN: Yes. And they are two
11 prongs of a public school system today. They are
12 separate prongs.

13 Sometimes when you're talking about
14 it, you are trying to say that they are an offshoot
15 of our prong. They are not. The state law makes
16 them separate, independent schools.

17 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But however they
18 got here, they are here, and they are now a part of
19 you. They are a part of -- everybody I ask says
20 charter schools are public schools.

21 MS. SPARKMAN: They are public
22 schools, but they are not part of the School
23 district Of Philadelphia.

24 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Well, why are
25 they in other districts across in Commonwealth,

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2 which the Philadelphia school district is a part of
3 this Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, why is this being
4 treated somewhat different than other locations?

5 DR. DANIELS: Every other location.

6 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Every other
7 location.

8 Why is this being treated -- I don't
9 understand, why does this Philadelphia School
10 District think it is above the law and it is
11 unique? I don't understand that.

12 I don't understand, if every other
13 school district, if every other school district is
14 adhering to what the Department of Education is
15 stating, I don't understand with whatever you just
16 expressed, why do you think you are above it? I
17 don't understand that.

18 MS. INGRAM: We certainly do not
19 think we are above the law.

20 We do think that we have a right to
21 express our view of what is an appropriate
22 interpretation of state law.

23 And if it becomes necessary for a
24 court to determine what that interpretation is, then
25 that's the way that the Democratic system provides

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2 for people to have issues of law determined.

3 And we cannot speculate or make a
4 judgment as to why other school districts have
5 responded to this issue in the way that they have.

6 REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: I guess this
7 would be my last comment, Madam Chairperson. I
8 apologize, because I don't want to be argumentative
9 with anyone. Obviously this will be solved in
10 court. And I personally think it is a mistake from
11 a perception standpoint.

12 Now, you may argue from a legal
13 standpoint. And you and Clay seem to be very
14 intelligent and adept attorneys, and that's great.
15 But you are going to lose from a perception
16 standpoint.

17 Because my observation is that if 500
18 other school districts are addressing this
19 particular issue because of common practice in some
20 way, I think it is a mistake.

21 I am just giving you my opinion. I
22 am no lawyer. I am giving the perception of the
23 John and Jane Q. Citizen.

24 MS. INGRAM: We appreciate your
25 opinion.

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2 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Madam, members
3 of the panel, we will hear these last two questions
4 from Councilman Cohen and State Representative
5 Horsey.

6 And then we will bring up Michael
7 Carp and Panel 3 and ask that you stand by, because
8 we are not done.

9 Just as in the case of Superintendent
10 Hornbeck, we don't want to lose an important panel
11 member.

12 MS. INGRAM: Chairwoman, we all can't
13 stay here this afternoon. We have some other
14 obligations that we have to address.

15 So we will try to stay as long as we
16 can and have someone here throughout this session.
17 But we all cannot stay for the duration of the
18 afternoon.

19 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly. We
20 all have other obligations, too. Please work with
21 us.

22 Now, we excused the Superintendent,
23 but we will ask that you work with us. We all have
24 other obligations.

25 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Madam

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2 Chairperson, I just have one observation to make
3 just one quick one, and that is, you have not
4 answered my question.

5 My question is, why hasn't the
6 Philadelphia School District developed a process, a
7 plan, a plan, for transportation of charter school
8 kids? You have not.

9 You just said you have gone to
10 court. You just said there is nothing in the
11 provision. But the Philadelphia School District
12 hasn't developed a plan for charter school
13 children.

14 I mean, the state will mandate one,
15 if that's what you're interested in. But why hasn't
16 the Philadelphia School District done that?

17 (Applause.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: With that, we
19 are going to holdup, our stenographer has to
20 change.

21 So we will take a break for a few
22 minutes to allow that time.

23 (Short recess.)

24 - - -

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2 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Last question for

3 3.

4 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you, Madam

5 Chair. If I were sitting at the desk at the table

6 where the school district representatives are and I

7 were asked the question that Representative Evans

8 asked, I think I would want to be able to say "we

9 treat the charter students the same as we treat the

10 public school students," and I'm mystified that I'm

11 not hearing that. And I hear a lot of other things

12 that I have great difficulty understanding, "we're

13 in court, we can't talk," all of which from a public

14 point of view is not healthy conversation.

15 Why can't you say "We treat charter

16 students just like all other public school

17 students."

18 MS. SPARKMAN: Thank you, Councilman

19 Cohen. I'm sorry, I thought I did say that, that we

20 provide transportation to the charter schools on the

21 same basis that we provide transportation to our own

22 students. If they're special ed students whose IEP

23 requires that they have transportation, they get

24 transportation.

25 COUNCILMAN COHEN: All right. Thank you

2 for that answer.

3 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: We'll ask you to
4 stand by.

5 Panel 3. Thank you. We know we're
6 rushing everybody and we know we're holding up
7 everybody at the same time. Everybody's testifying
8 does not have a schedule, and we're sorry to rush
9 everybody.

10 I will read Panel 3 names: Charter
11 school representatives, Ms. Gail Hawkins Bush,
12 Alliance Charter School; Ms. Madeline Shikomba,
13 Center for Economics & Law Charter School; Mr.
14 Hector Bonilla, Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community
15 Bilingual Charter School; Mr. Michael Carp, who has
16 to leave, Family Charter School, so we're asking him
17 to come up immediately and make his presentation;
18 Dr. Vuong Thuy, Multi-Cultural Academy Charter
19 School; Dr. Phil Esbrandt, Drexel
20 University/Foundations Technical Assistance Center
21 for Public Charter Schools; and Dr. Gail Meister,
22 Drexel University/Foundations Technical Assistance
23 Center for Public Charter Schools; West Oak Lane
24 Charter School; and also Ms. Christine Wiggins
25 Imhotep Charter School.

2 Michael Carp, would you make your
3 presentation first? Would somebody pass him a mike
4 because he has to leave. I promised him this
5 morning, and we want to allow him to make that
6 presentation and then we will continue. Thank you
7 very much. We will not call on Mr. Michael Carp,
8 Family Charter School to make his statement.

9 MR. MICHAEL CARP: Thank you very much,
10 Councilwoman Blackwell, and thank you everybody who
11 is with you today. I just wanted to say that our
12 charter school, which is Family Charter School, has
13 dedicated itself to serving the children in the
14 Mantua Section primarily who we felt had the most
15 needs. We actually went to the local elementary
16 school and we asked the principal to identify for us
17 the children who are in the pre-K and the K program
18 in her school who had the most needs and needed the
19 most help. We went to the public housing
20 development, we went to the Scattered Site Housing
21 Office, and we asked all these people which children
22 are most at risk, which children have the most
23 needs, We'd like to work with them and give them a
24 very humanistic approach and a very intensive
25 approach to help them and work with their families.

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2 We view it as a whole family program.

3 I think what you'll find, if I divert
4 just for one for second, among all the charter
5 schools that you've seen here and from my experience
6 in speaking to all the charter school people, every
7 charter school is special in that it is really,
8 truly committed to a section of the community which
9 is identified. Some work with older children, some
10 work with younger children, they're all different
11 ranges. But what you will find consistently is the
12 charter school groups have said we have a group of
13 people who are not well served by the system as it
14 is and we want to put our hearts and our soul in to
15 dedicating ourselves to giving a better life to
16 these children. And it's that compassion, that
17 sense of commitment which translates through the
18 whole school. That's really -- to explain to
19 everybody, that's I think the most important single
20 thing that makes these schools work. It's that
21 human element that the leadership in that school and
22 the staff together with the leadership have really
23 imbued into the students.

24 In our school, I say our most singular
25 attribute is we view it that every child that's in

3 emotional commitment that we want that child to
4 succeed. We take the view that every child has a
5 right to have a decent life, that every child has a
6 right to be loved, every child has a right to go
7 forward into their life with some kind of strong,
8 good self-image, and not just educational piece, but
9 also the sense that someone loves that child, that
10 someone cares about that child, and that child can
11 grow up in an emotionally healthy atmosphere.

12 We, in fact, doubled the number of
13 people in each classroom after the first week
14 because we saw the devastation that many of these
15 children felt. We have 14 children in a classroom.
16 After the first week, we had an aide in every
17 classroom besides the teacher because we saw that
18 children needed that extra nurturing. But that's
19 typical of the kind of feeling that the charter
20 school folks often have. They really want to reach
21 out and help the children.

22 In our school, again, we are seeing that
23 by early on putting in the effort to working with
24 the children, being patient, and especially working
25 with each parent. I'll give you an example of a

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2 couple of things we do that are a little bit
3 different. We start off with attendance. By the

4 way, our school has children, mostly kindergarten
5 and 1st grade. We have one combined class of 2nd
6 and 3rd grade. In every year we will add on another
7 grade. As the kids get older, we'll move on. But
8 we start off with attendance. We want every kid to
9 be in school every day. When we have parents who
10 don't deliver the kids to the school, we call up
11 immediately. When no one's answering the phone,
12 when the mother is sleeping, when there's a problem
13 getting the child to school, we go to the home, we
14 pick up the kid, and we bring that child to the
15 school. We instruct the parents, "We want your
16 child in school every day."

17 We extend that to working with parents.
18 We require the parents to drop off the child into
19 the school building, not just the kid walks over.
20 We expect the parent to drop the child off every
21 morning and pick the child up inside the school
22 building every afternoon. We're able to have
23 contact almost every day where necessary with the
24 parent. Where the parent doesn't bring the child
25 and someone else does, we will contact the parent on

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2 the telephone in the afternoon, in the evening, we
3 will follow through to speak to the parent. But

4 again, our focus is -- and we do have parenting
5 programs, but the focus is having everybody have a
6 strong personal commitment to helping that child to
7 do well. And that's what we feel is necessary for
8 children. And I will tell you, we have seen in the
9 last three months -- we've already been in
10 operation three months -- a truly dramatic
11 improvement with many children who being at the
12 beginning of the school year we thought maybe would
13 not be able to work out very well, would need a lot
14 of special assistance, would need a lot of
15 individualized learning programs. And we've seen by
16 having a lot of compassionate understanding with the
17 child, there's been a big different.

18 By the way, another thing is different
19 from a lot of other schools, we never send a child
20 home from school for discipline. When a child does
21 not act well in school, we have found the child has
22 to be worked with and talked to. But for us, saying
23 to a child, "you misbehaved, you're being
24 suspended," this does not help the child. This
25 teaches the child that if you want to get out of

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2 going to school, just misbehave and they'll reward
3 you by sending you home. But again, this is all
4 part of the that compassion and dedication to the

5 child that we have found to be successful. It's not
6 easy, but that's why charter schools, hopefully,
7 will get more public support because of the
8 dedication that all of us in the movement have to
9 truly focusing on the child. That's our basic
10 thing.

11 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me say that
12 this school is in my area. It's located in Mantua.
13 This school has a lot of parents who are fourth
14 generation folks who receive assistance. It's in
15 the same area as McMichael Public School where we a
16 kid, a youngster named Tylon Kyler (ph) to
17 meningitis I guess about a year and a half ago and
18 with whom many of the parents -- these are like
19 fourth generation kids who've come from broken homes
20 and who've had a very, very difficulty time.

21 As you know, Mantua is sandwiched
22 between Drexel and Penn, and these are people who
23 have fought back to say, "We're not leaving, we love
24 our community and we'll survive."

25 And what Michael Carp is bringing to

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2 treat a whole family, he calls it Family Charter
3 School, to double the adults who are in the
4 classroom, to try to reach out to make sure a whole

5 family eats, to try to really, really take on people
6 at the bottom rung of the ladder and to seriously be
7 involved with them is a 24-hour-a-day job. And all
8 that it entails, going to homes, interacting with
9 these families in this community really, really are
10 he absolutely deserves to be commended, and we
11 personally and certainly this committee and all of
12 us owe you a sincere debt of thanks for what you're
13 doing. We thank you. Thank you for being here.

14 MR. CARP: Thank you very much, Jannie.

15 (Applause.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Gail, you can
17 introduce yourself and then proceed with your
18 testimony. Thank you.

19 MS. GAIL HAWKINS BUSH: I want to thank
20 you very much for having this hearing today. I
21 think it's been both worthwhile for the school
22 district as well as for the charter school movement.

23 I'm Gail Hawkins Bush, and I am the
24 chief operating administrator and director of the
25 Alliance for Progress Charter School, which is

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2 currently located in a temporary facility on North
3 Broad Street, but as of January 1, we will be
4 located 18th and Cecil B. Moore Avenue.

5 We are founded by Women's Christian

6 Alliance, which is the oldest social service agency
7 in North Philadelphia. It's over 80 years. It was
8 started by a black female doctor, Dr. Coppen to
9 foster programs for foster children and specialized
10 social services. We are from K to 3. We have three
11 Kindergartens, two 1st grades, two 2nd grades, and
12 one 3rd grade. We are open from 7:00 in the morning
13 until 6 o'clock at night. We are a 11-month school
14 with a total wrap-around services. I'm very lucky
15 this afternoon to have several parents from the
16 Alliance for Progress Charter School. I ask that
17 they raise their hands. Some of them were here
18 earlier, as well as our parental engagement
19 coordinator Jacklyn Winston who works hand in hand
20 with our parents.

21 We believe very firmly that young people
22 in particular this age need to be steeped in
23 standards, computer technology, as well as foreign
24 languages. We teach two foreign languages from the
25 kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. We are very

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2 much meeting a need in our community because of the
3 influx of lots of housing development, and we are
4 fortunately located across from a local public
5 school and we're providing a need because of our

6 class size. We are 22 class size in all our
7 classes. We originally were going with two
8 kindergartens, and we found the need was so great
9 that we decided to open a third kindergarten.

10 We are very much involved in the
11 partnership between the parent and student as well
12 as the school. And so we work very, very closely
13 with the parents. We have embarked on some very
14 creative endeavors. We're getting ready to launch
15 what we call the observation card which will be like
16 the said report card but it will have a joint
17 feedback from the teacher as well as the parent so
18 that we can work very collaboratively together with
19 our students.

20 Because we are fortunate enough to be
21 founded by Women's Christian Alliance, we can offer
22 the kind of intimate social services designed to
23 make families whole in that particular North
24 Philadelphia area.

25 We are very excited about our new

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2 facility, and we will moving in our new facility as
3 of January to start the new student year. Our
4 parent participation is overwhelming. We get more
5 parents out than I've seen in other endeavors that I
6 have been involved in in education in Philadelphia.

7 And you all know that I come from a long history of
8 both higher education as well as being a consultant
9 to many educational agencies here in Philadelphia.
10 Thank you.
11 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Questions?
12 MS. BUSH: I have some brochures if
13 you'd like to pass them out.
14 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: How many students
15 do you have?
16 MS. BUSH: We currently have 167
17 students.
18 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: What's your
19 anticipated capacity?
20 MS. BUSH: Our anticipated capacity
21 eventually will be almost 300 students.
22 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Do you plan to
23 maintain primary grades or are you going to go up
24 through the middle grades?
25 MS. BUSH: We are looking to going up to

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2 middle grades. That is our future goal. At this
3 point, we'll take the third grade to the fourth
4 grade, the fourth grade to the fifth grade, and
5 we're chartered to the sixth grade. We are very --
6 the board at Women's Christian Alliance realizes

7 there's a great need for additional forms of
8 education in our particular area. So they would
9 like us to consider going up to the eighth grade or
10 perhaps even into high school once we reach that
11 plateau.

12 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But your plan as
13 you're presently structured is K through 12 --

14 MS. BUSH: K through 6.

15 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I mean K through 6
16 to be added one grade at a time.

17 MS. BUSH: Right. Or two grades,
18 depending on the need. But we find that in your our
19 particular area, as you know, Councilwoman Clark,
20 there is a great need for the earlier services such
21 as kindergarten and comprehensive kindergarten care.

22 As I said to you before, we are from
23 7:00 in the morning until 6 o'clock at night. We
24 have a full breakfast program and lunch program, and
25 we provide both before-school and after-school care.

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2 We're also an 11-month school, which is a very
3 different kind of concept.

4 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: You said that, I
5 wasn't quite sure what I that means. What does an
6 11-month school do and how does it compare to a 9 or
7 a 10-month school.

8 MS. BUSH: Well, we will keep our
9 students involved in an educational process
10 practically up until the end of July 30th, and then
11 August, everybody needs a vacation, August will be a
12 free month both for the teachers as well as the
13 students. But we will engage them in, to coin
14 another person's phrase, edutainment during the
15 summer that will then grasp the concepts that
16 they've learned for the full year. So education
17 will be an ongoing process.

18 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So your kids don't
19 go to school from September until June?

20 MS. BUSH: No, they'll go from September
21 until July. We started September 13th. We opened a
22 week later, but they will go from September to July.

23 We also -- other than just the normal
24 holidays, presentation as we call them, the
25 Christmas holidays and Thanksgiving, our school day

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2 is longer and we attend school longer. Our school
3 year is longer.

4 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: How do you do with
5 respect to holidays? Is the holiday schedule the
6 same as the Philadelphia School District schedule?

7 MS. BUSH: We don't have some religious

8 holidays off, and we're not off on certain major
9 holidays that we feel that it's important for our
10 students to be involved in school.

11 As you know, our community is steeped in
12 latch-key kids, and so for us, having our particular
13 student population with us is much more of a benefit
14 kind of educational experience than it would be for
15 them to be at home.

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: May I? Just to
17 pursue that further, do you do this within the
18 funding the school district provides?

19 MS. BUSH: Yes, we do.

20 COUNCILMAN COHEN: There's no additional
21 funding?

22 MS. BUSH: Not at this point, other than
23 supplementary grants that we're all entitled to and
24 are expected to apply for.

25 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Well, I don't

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2 understand how you manage the longer school year and
3 the longer school day.

4 MS. BUSH: Well, I contracted my
5 teachers for that longer school period.

6 COUNCILMAN COHEN: The teachers stay
7 there that time.

8 MS. BUSH: Yes. We have a before-school

9 program and an after-school program. We have
10 teachers that we've contracted from September to
11 July 30th.

12 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Do your teachers have
13 prep hours?

14 MS. BUSH: Yes, they do. And they get
15 professional development. They're contracted -- by
16 contract, they are required to attend professional
17 development sessions once a month. We have teacher
18 meetings every two weeks. We're very steeped
19 because we have some collaborative relationships
20 with some of our universities in our area.

21 COUNCILMAN COHEN: What percentage of
22 your teachers are certified by the State?

23 MS. BUSH: 75 percent of our teachers
24 are certified by the State.

25 COUNCILMAN COHEN: In other words, would

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2 you meet the regular requirement?

3 MS. BUSH: Yes, we meet -- we just went
4 through a very intensive evaluation from the State.
5 We all did. And ours was very successful. We had a
6 very fair and just evaluation.

7 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I would think so.
8 And you are to be congratulated.

9 MS. BUSH: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Gail, just let me
11 be clear. You have teachers who come to work at 7
12 o'clock in the morning?

13 MS. BUSH: No, no, no. I'm sorry. Our
14 teachers start at 8:30. I don't want to mislead
15 you. We have a before-school program. That is, we
16 have part-time people that work in that
17 before-school program. We have one of our teachers,
18 though, who operates and administers the
19 after-school program that starts from 3:00 to 6:00.

20 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So her day is
21 adjusted or his day is adjusted?

22 MS. BUSH: No. She works from 8:15 to 6
23 o'clock.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: At the same rate
25 as a person who works from 8:30 --

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2 MS. BUSH: No. Her teaching salary is
3 contracted through the Alliance for Progress Charter
4 School. Her after school component which is
5 connected to the Freedom School is contracted
6 through Women's Christian Alliance.

7 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I just want to be
8 clear that as wonderful as your staff is, and I know
9 some of them and I know them to be wonderful and I

10 know the work that you're doing, they do regularly
11 work a fairly standard school day.

12 MS. BUSH: 8:15 to 3 o'clock.

13 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: And an elongated
14 school day actually is a before-school program and a
15 after-school program?

16 MS. BUSH: Right.

17 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Managed by
18 professional teachers as well as part-time people in
19 the before-day and part-time people in the
20 after-school program?

21 MS. BUSH: Yes.

22 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: And you do this to
23 accommodate working parents whose schedules require
24 them to drop their children off and still get to
25 work on time and get home from work without breaking

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2 speed laws in the evening.

3 MS. BUSH: Exactly.

4 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Okay. What has
5 been the acceptance of this program? How old are
6 you?

7 MS. BUSH: How old am I? Oh, we just
8 opened --

9 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I don't mean you as

10 a person.

11 MS. BUSH: I was going to say, wait a
12 minute, Councilwoman Clark. Can we talk here? Is
13 this a matter of record? And we know each other
14 well. I'll let Dwight deal with that. Is that on
15 the Scrabble board or what?

16 (Laughter.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I mean as a
18 program.

19 MS. BUSH: We opened in September. We
20 opened on September 13th.

21 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: All right. I thank
22 you very much. I wanted to ask those questions to
23 clarify the record.

24 Thank you, Madam Chair.

25 MS. CHRIS WIGGINS: My name is Chris

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2 Thomas Wiggins. I am the principal of Imhotep
3 Institute Charter High School. Imhotep is
4 I-m-h-o-t-e-p. And we are a math, science, and
5 technology twilight school. Right now we are at
6 7500 Germantown Avenue, and soon we'll moving to
7 21st and Godfrey in the community that is known as
8 West Oak Lane Germantown area. We service, as many
9 of our schools do, high school students. And I
10 wanted to correct the record. I heard the School

11 District say that most of the charter schools were
12 elementary. There are 13 charter schools, eight of
13 them service middle and high school children. So I
14 think that math teaches me that there are more
15 serving middle and high school students in this City
16 addressing the needs of middle and high school
17 children. Our school day is 12:30 to 6:00. We have
18 a before-school program that has the students going
19 to places of work or across this community being
20 involved in education, and they are all required to
21 do service learning in before-school program, and we
22 are multi-site. Once a week, like today, there are
23 50 students at the African-American Museum. There
24 are students that go to Arbory for science. There
25 are students that will be going to Freedom Theater.

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2 They go to the libraries, but it is part of their
3 actual school day to travel once a week and learn
4 from around the City of Philadelphia and use those
5 resources that are available to them.

6 I wanted to make note that my colleagues
7 all are concerned in talking to you about children
8 families, parents, community, education, teaching
9 and learning and realize that some of our challenges
10 come from the issues of School District of

11 Philadelphia who basically had lawyers and
12 accountants talking about issues. And we basically
13 are dealing with how we can address the needs of
14 children in this City. So most of us came up with
15 an idea that met the needs of children and families
16 in this City.

17 I am a School District of Philadelphia
18 child. I went School District of Philadelphia
19 schools. I had all of my children to attend School
20 District of Philadelphia schools and I am the child
21 of two administrators from School District of
22 Philadelphia. So I have a strong love for public
23 education. My only reason for opening a charter
24 school is realizing that there were needs of a lot
25 of parents and children that were not being met in

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2 our traditional public schools. And I also know
3 when we talked about school reform, as a former
4 teaching and learning network facilitator trying to
5 go into the classrooms and work with school reform
6 where doors were shut and people were told not to go
7 in deal with change in the Martin Luther King
8 cluster, not being allowed to work with teachers for
9 the benefit of children, that charter schools came
10 about because many of us wanted to do that after
11 school reform and make it happen now.

12 As a parent of a child that was in the
13 top 10 percent, but yet when she went to the college
14 was said that she was a remedial reader, I was
15 concerned because I totally supported public
16 education and thought that sending my child to
17 public school was the best thing I could do for her.
18 And then sitting there and having college professors
19 say that this child did not have writing skills or
20 research skills to do a research paper because in
21 the traditional schools it is not mandatory to do a
22 research paper until grade 11 or 12. And yet and
23 still colleges and university want our young people
24 to be able to do research and to write very well
25 they need to start it in elementary school. So

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2 we're not trying to have an adversarial relationship
3 with any system, we're just trying to do what's best
4 for children and address the needs of our parents.
5 Generally, I know that in working with
6 all of the directors, I see a completely different
7 environment than when I went to cluster meetings or
8 meetings with administrators that were only dealing
9 with my school or my building or my environment.
10 Everyone comes together to see how we can support
11 each other and help the children in this community.

12 The equity issue is a big issue
13 especially because as community-based organizations,
14 we need support to make sure all of our children get
15 the same things as a child in the School District of
16 Philadelphia. A charter school cannot write a \$38
17 million check to go and build a building for their
18 school. They must find a way in that same basic
19 operating budget which should be just for the
20 program, to not only build a school, pay the salary,
21 have a after-school, before-school program, have any
22 other extra program, everything has to come out that
23 operating budget. And quite often, it is a
24 challenge because it is moved by the community. We
25 just need to make sure that the School District of

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2 Philadelphia, the City and all see us as public
3 school and that our children get what is fair and
4 equitable and free public education since that's
5 what our parents in community asked for.
6 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.
7 MR. HORSEY: What was your name again?
8 MS. WIGGINS: Christine Thomas Wiggins.
9 MR. HORSEY: Thank you.
10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good afternoon. I
11 have a question for Gail, and I guess Christine can
12 also respond. This is regarding the equity issue.

13 I met with Christine and a few of her staff on
14 Friday, and Yvonne Epps and I were having a
15 discussion about the communication school. And,
16 Gail, you're building a new school. And in your
17 testimony you said that there's a collaboration that
18 you have with several universities. I don't want to
19 get into all the details or don't really want to
20 know a whole lot, but how can you do a new school
21 and -- is it because of some outside fund-raising?

22 MS. BUSH: No. Our school, as you know,
23 and perhaps I didn't make that clear, we are founded
24 by Women's Christian Alliance. Woman's Christian
25 Alliance is, as you know, one of the oldest social

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2 service agencies in North Philadelphia; it's over 80
3 years old. And our school -- and when we say we're
4 building a new school, we have to make that real
5 clear. Yes, it is a new facility, but it is a
6 modular facility which makes a big difference in
7 building construction, as you are aware of. Because
8 we were founded by Women's Christian Alliance,
9 Women's Christian Alliance then decided that in
10 order to bring this to fruition that they would
11 lease a building for our particular use as a school.
12 And we've had some angst because we have not been

13 able to get into that building. We will be moving
14 in that building very shortly. And so we had to
15 seek other options for space such as the Y and the
16 OIC Human Service building. Our collaboration with
17 the local universities is not in dollars. It is in
18 kind, professional development. My personal
19 relationship, I am, as you know, a full-time ABD
20 student at Temple, and I was lucky enough to have
21 some working relationship with the School of Ed. So
22 we formed those partnerships that way, but not with
23 dollars. And I have to make that real clear. Of
24 course, you know this, Donna, that the --
25 Councilwoman Miller, excuse me. The charter school

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2 law does not allow us to buy any kind of facility.
3 We have to renovate within certain specifications
4 and certain rules and regulations. So WCA which is
5 our founding agency, and that's very important,
6 under the leadership of Marilyn Rivers decided to
7 deal with this because of the need of their
8 particular survey in the community, and as you know,
9 what's going on as far as the development of housing
10 and the increase of people moving into that part of
11 North Central Philadelphia. There's no doubt that
12 there's lots of movement on Cecil B. Moore Avenue.
13 I mean, it's amazing to see what happened, but we're

14 not reaping any kind of empowerment zone money or
15 any kind of specialization based on that other than
16 our relationship with Women's Christian Alliance
17 which is the founding agent for the Alliance for
18 Progress Charter School.

19 I don't know whether I've answered your
20 question, but I wanted to make that clear.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: You did.

22 MS. BUSH: Our collaborative efforts
23 with -- and that's a plus for us. As the other
24 directors know, that we are fortunate enough to have
25 an agency that is steeped in history and tradition

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2 in that community and to be connected with that.
3 But we have universities, as you know, are crying
4 and colleges. Michael Horsey knows this, I have a
5 very long intimate relationship with Community
6 College of Philadelphia. I've been working there
7 for too many years to even mention because then
8 Councilwoman Clark will understand how old I am. So
9 quite frankly, that is what I bring to the table in
10 essence in developing this particular process. But
11 it's all in kind, and that's important.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: That's great. And
13 people also ask how did West Oak Lane Charter

14 School, Representative Evans, seems as if in terms
15 of just their facility just a little different, a
16 little bit better, and I was wondering if it's
17 better for a charter school to connect itself with
18 maybe a CDC or with an organization such as Women'S
19 Christian Alliance.

20 MS. BUSH: Time will tell. There's
21 another piece of it, though.

22 MR. ESBRANDT: I'd just like to mention,
23 my name is Phil Esbrandt and I'm the executive
24 director of Foundations. One of the sets of
25 observations we will be making about some of our

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2 work with charter schools deals with just that kind
3 of concept and we take a look three different kinds
4 of organizations that the current charter schools
5 seem to fall in the categories, and that's one of
6 them. Having some association with CDC or community
7 based organization, and it's had success already.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.
9 I do have a couple more questions. Does your
10 faculty belong to the PFT? Are they unionized?

11 MS. WIGGINS: No. Charter school law
12 says that they have the right to form or they have
13 to do that, but they can't belong to PFT to the
14 current organization as representing the teachers'

15 union in the City.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Why is that?

17 MS. WIGGINS: That's part of the state
18 law, that's part of the state law.

19 MR. EVANS: Councilwoman Miller, they
20 can organize, all the schools can organize. People
21 can organize the school. It can be the PFT, it can
22 be the UAW, anybody, or their organization. They
23 can organize.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Earlier when Dr.
25 Ryder testified, he said that -- I don't know

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2 whether he said it or Mr. Skief said it. That one
3 of the good things about a charter school is that
4 they can be independent of the state mandates that
5 make it burdensome to do some of the things you've
6 talked about in terms of reform. What are some of
7 those mandates that seems to be a barrier to improve
8 the quality of education to our children? Anybody
9 can answer.

10 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: While he's
11 coming, let me say that State Senator Shirley
12 Kitchen was here, so we do want to note her for her
13 attendance and to thank her. She couldn't stay, but
14 she did come and we want to acknowledge her presence

15 at our hearing. Thank you.

16 MR. SKIEF: John Skief is my name. One
17 of the most important impediments is the fact that
18 if you -- nowadays, the public school system is
19 divided into what is called small learning
20 communities. Each one of those small learning
21 communities has a mission or something that brings
22 the teachers around that. One of the important
23 things for a charter school is that we can choose
24 who our staff will be. So therefore, those who are
25 serious and committed to what we're trying to do can

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2 be a part of us. A lot of the work rules which
3 forbid certain things to go on, we can do and we
4 have the opportunity to do. So it's those types of
5 bureaucratic things which have been identified
6 within the public school as impediments we're free
7 of.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: If they unionize,
9 won't you still have those kind of things happen?

10 MR. SKIEF: Well, as far as we're
11 concerned, we have to, charter schools must provide
12 the same benefits as the public schools do. And as
13 far as I'm concerned, if you relieve the need for a
14 union, that is, you listen to your teachers, you
15 take advice and consent from your teachers, and

16 you're fair to your teachers, then we don't have to
17 worry about some outside entity deciding for us
18 what's best for our children.

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Well, I've heard
20 that teachers have helped paint and helped clean and
21 helped fix up buildings and all those kinds of
22 things that you just don't normally don't have. I'm
23 used to doing that type of stuff coming from a
24 nonprofit world where everybody wore a lot of
25 different hats. Okay, thank you.

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2 MR. ESBRANDT: Again, Phil Esbrandt from
3 Drexel University Foundations. There's a lot of
4 flexibility, but there's also a lot of ownership so
5 people who start an organization begin to build it
6 from the bottom up have a certain pride and
7 ownership of that which they then translate into
8 personal action to get things done. And so there's
9 a commitment to participate with leadership to make
10 the school work, something that also cuts across the
11 parents that want to be involved as well as staff
12 members.

13 I think all these groups will explain in
14 some way how that happens because that's part of
15 their record so far.

16 DR. VUONG THUY: Good afternoon, Madam
17 Chairperson and Members of the City Council and also
18 State Representative. I don't know your name, but I
19 know.

20 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Michael Horsey.

21 DR. THUY: Excuse me for that. My name
22 is Vuong Thuy, V-o-u-n-g; the last name, T-h-u-y. I
23 am not the Principal of a charter school, but I'm
24 the headmaster of a charter school. I am the
25 headmaster of the Multicultural Academy Charter

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2 School in the Logan Section of Philadelphia, one of
3 the poorest neighborhoods. You represent us,
4 Councilwoman.

5 At this point, we're serving 125 student
6 from many different part of the world, from Asia,
7 from Europe, from South America, from Africa. Next
8 year we will serve 150, and the following year we'll
9 serve 200. Our children are international, many of
10 them LEP students. LEP means Limited English
11 Proficient student. They come as far as Northeast.
12 Many of them are children of Russian emigrants or
13 Ukrainian emigrants. I'd like to talk about that.
14 That create a problem for us.

15 I realize that this hearing has been
16 going on for quite a while and many of you have not

17 had a chance to relax or to take lunch. I'm not
18 here to brag about our school. I'd like to take
19 this opportunity to show to you that the concept of
20 charter school does work. For example, our daily
21 attendance is 95 percent, and we have one or two
22 latenesses every day; sometime none.

23 I remember vividly five years ago when I
24 was still a teacher at Olney High School, the new
25 principal and he raised the attendance rate from 40

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2 to 60 percent, and he got \$150,000 award. And we
3 are achieving now up to three months 95 percent. So
4 we must have done something right. Beside that,
5 when we have the first parent meeting, 85 parents
6 out of 125 show up. For 18 years I was serving at
7 Olney High School, I did not see many parents
8 showing up for that. Here again, this is an
9 indication that we must have done something right.

10 Talking about the staff, 100 percent of
11 our teachers are certified, 100 percent. And we pay
12 them from 8:00 to 3:30, but many of them stay until
13 6 or 7 o'clock every night, weekend as well. Don't
14 think that I'm exploiter. They volunteer their
15 time. They must love the school, they must like the
16 children. When I was teaching at Olney high school

17 I came to the school five minutes before 8:00 and I
18 left 2:30, and now my school day is 6 o'clock in the
19 morning until 9 o'clock at night, seven days a week.
20 If you don't believe me, pick up the phone; I'll
21 answer the phone. So there's dedication right here.
22 Why do we dedicate ourselves? Because we believe
23 this will change the public education.
24 We are a public school. Many times the
25 parent called the School District of Philadelphia,

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2 they were told we are not, we are a private school.
3 And that is very misleading and very troublesome for
4 me. There are many things that I feel troublesome
5 because of communication between the School District
6 of Philadelphia. Many of you have covered these
7 issues very well, but let me remind you of the law.
8 The law right here that you and other people wrote.
9 Section 172 say transportation must be provided to
10 our students. So if the School District of
11 Philadelphia refuse to do that, then maybe the staff
12 have to do that.

13 Now, we lost so many students. Most of
14 them came from Russia, from Ukraine and they could
15 not come to school because there's no
16 transportation. And the children emigrants, they do
17 not have money to pay for the transportation.

18 Believe me, some of them was crying. They wanted to
19 come to school, but they can not because of this.
20 There's something wrong right there, right here.

21 And also communication from the School
22 District has been troublesome many times. They make
23 the public statement saying that they work with us,
24 they support us, they do everything to make us
25 survive. This is an example. In October, we

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2 received communication from the School District of
3 Philadelphia about free workshop. And there's \$333
4 per participant, \$333 per participant, and they said
5 they want to work with us, they want to support us.
6 I'd like the City Councilmembers and Lady Chairman
7 to have a copy of this. This is really bothersome
8 because it seems to me, and I hope that I'm not
9 wrong, that they want to make some money out of
10 this. To pay \$330 for workshop, that doesn't make
11 sense to me.

12 Now, here again they say that they open
13 the facility for you to use. When we contact
14 neighborhood school, "yes, you're welcome to use our
15 facility, but we don't have any time for you." That
16 bothers me, too. If they cannot provide it, don't
17 make the statement. That is bothersome and

18 misleading.

19 Now, we have educated dropouts and
20 former gangs of -- students who are former gangs.
21 We're going to showcase the school on the 10th of
22 December when the Indochina-American Council
23 supporting organization will have the 16th annual
24 award dinner. Many of you have received invitation.
25 Come, we'll showcase to us.

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2 So my point here is that I left the
3 public school system after 18 years of service
4 because I believe that this work and I think is
5 working and very much for your attention.

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Dr.
7 Thuy. A question from Councilman Cohen.

8 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Doctor, was this Bowl
9 Content Institute, was this available to the
10 teachers in the regular schools and did they have to
11 pay the tuition?

12 DR. THUY: No.

13 COUNCILMAN COHEN: The tuition was
14 charged to teachers in the charter schools but not
15 in the rest of the public schools?

16 DR. THUY: Correct.

17 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I think your
18 complaint is well made.

19 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes, and we would
20 hope that the School Board would take Mr. Ingram
21 will take a flyer back.

22 And Mr. Armbrister, please take one of
23 these and then if you would report to the Chair of
24 this Committee, we will make -- myself and Dwight
25 Evans as co-chair, we will make sure that we

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2 communicate the response to other members of the
3 committee and to charter schools.

4 Question from Councilwoman Miller to Dr.
5 Thuy.

6 DR. THUY: May I ask one more thing
7 about transportation? When I was at Olney High
8 School, all the students, Limited English Speaking
9 student who live outside the neighborhood school was
10 provided with transportation. And we have many LEP
11 students in our school right now. I'd like to you
12 look into that to see if there's any equity in that.

13 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. I'm
14 sorry, question will be for Mr. Armbrister. We'll
15 let them testify, but Councilwoman Miller has a
16 question for you with regard to this.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: With regard to
18 funding, special ed funding. I wasn't in the room

19 when the School District's panel was up. It's my
20 understanding that the charter schools received
21 special education funding but that funding does not
22 include additional dollars for mentally gifted
23 children whom it's my understanding is also --
24 regular public schools, it's my understanding they
25 receive money mentally gifted as well as the

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2 learning disabled under special ed, and someone told
3 me that charter schools cannot receive that funding
4 for mentally gifted kids.

5 MR. ESBRANDT: Under Act 22, the special
6 education funding mechanism was changed so that
7 there would not be a reliance upon funding for
8 individual classifications, but that the funding
9 would be averaged for a variety of classifications
10 in the local school district and so a flat rate is
11 now applied for special a ed student attending a
12 charter school.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Irregardless to
14 whether they're mentally gifted or whatever. You
15 want to add something?

16 MR. ARMBRISTER: Yes. Clarence
17 Armbrister, managing director of the School
18 District. I'm advised by Ms. Castelbuono that with
19 respect to mentally gifted, the definition that's

20 used for funding purposes is a federal definition,
21 and apparently the federal definition does not
22 recognize mentally gifted as a classification, is my
23 understanding.

24 MR. ESBRANDT: That is correct.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Does that mean that
3 payment is made on the basis of the mentally gifted
4 child being a special ED child?

5 MR. ARMBRISTER: It means exactly the
6 opposite, Councilman, that they're not because it's
7 not recognized under federal law.

8 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Councilwoman Miller's
9 point was very well taken.

10 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Bonilla.

11 MR. HECTOR BONILLA: My name is Hector
12 Bonilla. I'm the principal of the Eugenio Maria de
13 Hostos Community Bilingual Charter School. Our
14 story is similar to the others. Hopefully by early
15 spring of 1999, we'll be in a new facility on North
16 Fifth Street and Cuyuga. We are a dual immersion
17 bilingual school for the Spanish and for the
18 English. We also have a core value system that we
19 insist that all our students adhere to, citizenship

20 cooperation, fairness, honesty, integrity kindness,
21 pursuit of excellence, respect, and responsibility.

22 We are located in one of the most
23 economically depressed sections of Philadelphia, and
24 we decided that we wanted to have smaller classes.
25 So we are limited to 20 students per class, and

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2 presently we have 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. We will
3 have a 7th grade next year, and by the year 2000
4 we're going to add an 8th grade. We have an
5 extended year. We went from September 8th, and our
6 class will last until July 16th. We have an
7 extended day. We start classes at 8:30 sharp and we
8 let them out 4:15 in our present facility. When we
9 move to the Cuyuga Street facility, we will go to 5
10 o'clock. Eventually the plan is to have programs
11 from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Because we are in a
12 depressed community, it is our belief that sometimes
13 our kids need to be with us more than other places.

14 We have all of our parents have to sign
15 a contract to have their students the matriculate in
16 our school, that they will participate in the school
17 and that they will adhere to the rules of the school
18 and that includes helping students with homework.

19 We also have a Parents' Council which
20 now has recently constituted itself, which means

21 eventually that the majority of our school board
22 members will be parents. And again, I repeat, that
23 since we serve a disadvantaged community, and
24 although our students all over the City of
25 Philadelphia, we earmarked the Hunting Park area as

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2 our target area. However, since we're not located
3 on Sixth Street and Lehigh, we've had to provide bus
4 services to our students who live in Hunting Park
5 area because most of them come from very
6 disadvantaged families, and that is costing us \$700
7 a week. Our projection is that by the time we open
8 up our new building, that will cost us between 80 to
9 \$90,000 to bring our students to our school.

10 At present we have 93 percent attendance
11 rate. I think that measures favorably with any
12 other -- with the School District's standards.

13 I don't want to editorialize, but I've
14 heard a lot of speakers. And again, the other
15 principals or headmasters of the charter schools, we
16 all say the same story, we deal with children.
17 That's our primary reason for doing this. I've
18 heard some things said by people from the School
19 District. I'm a new kid on the block, I'm not
20 native to Philadelphia so I'm not privy to some of

21 the stuff that happened before. However, I do know
22 that federal law requires that special ed students
23 be bussed. But that's not really something that's
24 coming out of the goodness of the heart of the
25 District of law Philadelphia, that's mandated by

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2 federal law.

3 And yesterday I lost a student, an
4 outstanding 4th grade student because her mother who
5 is a full-time student in a physicians' assistance
6 program at Temple University who walks four miles in
7 each direction with a 10-year-old and a 6-year-old,
8 drops of the 6-year-old at another school, then
9 drops off her daughter at our school, had to leave
10 because she no longer has an automobile. Secondly,
11 she has a sister who has a problem with substance
12 abuse so now she's had to take in children of her
13 sister, which means that she has to take those kids
14 to another facility. So rather than come to our
15 school which she wishes to be at, she has to take
16 them to a school that's closer to her, not
17 necessarily her choice. Her choice is that because
18 of economic constraints, she has to take her
19 children to the school that's nearest to her
20 neighborhood school as opposed to the school that's
21 going to provided her children with the best

22 education.

23 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr.

24 Bonilla. Truly sorry. Thank you.

25 We have Dr. Gail Meister.

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2 MR. ESBRANDT: Madam Chairperson, there
3 is more school at the table to make a
4 presentation -- two more, excuse me. And then maybe
5 Gail and I can make our presentation.

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right. Ms.
7 Madeline Shikomba, you want to go next, Center for
8 Economics and Law Charter School.

9 MS. MADELINE SHIKOMBA: Hi, my name is
10 Madeline Shikomba, spelled S-h-i-k-o-m-b-a. I'm the
11 director of the Center for Economics and Law Charter
12 School. I would like to extend my heart-felt thanks
13 to Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell and State Senator
14 Dwight Evans for the support they've given me and my
15 school during the past couple months. Without their
16 support and help, I don't think I would be around
17 here today. And I'd also like to extend my thanks
18 to Ann Verna for her support.

19 As you know, my school ran into some
20 difficulty in the past couple weeks in terms of the
21 location of the building in which we were in. The

22 owner of the building had misled me in terms of the
23 situation in terms of how fast he would have the
24 building ready. And as a result, some of the things
25 that were supposed to be ready were not prepared to

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2 have ready. And our building was shut down because
3 it violated certain fire code regulations.

4 Despite the fact that it was shut down,
5 we were able to reopen and relocate ourselves within
6 two weeks at the Lincoln University Urban Center.
7 Despite the shutdown, to attest to the faithfulness
8 of my parents, I only lost 40 students out of 183
9 students I had. Now, that tells you the faith that
10 the parents have in the charter schools by the fact
11 that they remained with me. In fact, during our
12 shutdown, we gave out educational packets so that
13 the students would not lose too much time in terms
14 of their education development. And many parents
15 when I told them that I wasn't sure if we'd be able
16 to find another location said that, "Well, I will
17 keep my child home until you do." So you can see
18 that they believed in the program. They believed in
19 my program and wanted to stay with my program.

20 Since we have reopened, we have
21 readmitted at least six students who had transferred
22 to other schools. And today in the past week we

23 have admitted three new students who were never were
24 even in the school. So that also attests to the
25 fact of how strong people believe in the charter

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2 school and also in a program that I am conducting.

3 If you read the newspaper articles, the
4 articles dealt with the building. It didn't deal
5 with my program or say anything negative about my
6 program because my program is strong and it's a very
7 good program. We offer courses in economics, math,
8 science, language, English, entrepreneurship, and
9 computers. Macon has allowed us to use their
10 computers, and so our students are now involved in a
11 computer program.

12 We are now at the point where we are
13 asking the State to give us our funding because we
14 are in compliance with them as far as we understand.
15 We have submitted our budget, and that was due to
16 some misunderstanding on the part of my accountant
17 as to what he was supposed to do. But a budget was
18 submitted. We are compliance with our staff.
19 Everyone is certified except for one teacher. And
20 we also received our certificate of occupancy from
21 Lincoln, and we're in the process of negotiating
22 with them for a lease. So we feel that State should

23 be willing to release our funding that they have
24 held up and so we're asking them to release our
25 funding.

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2 The School Board has, because of our
3 lack of CO and a lease, we have not signed our
4 charter. However, because we do have both of those
5 now inhand, we expect to sign our charter very soon.
6 They have sent in an investigating team to
7 investigate my program, but my understanding from
8 what I've talked with the team, they have not found
9 anything wrong with my program per se and I do not
10 expect to have any negative things in the report
11 that they will be sending in.

12 Again, I'd like to stress the fact that
13 parents are gung ho for charter schools. They want
14 us and they feel that we can answer a need that
15 they've been missing in terms of their children's
16 development, and I think that we can fulfill those
17 needs.

18 I do not think that the crisis that I
19 was involved in is in any way negatively impacting
20 upon nor should it be negatively impacted upon the
21 charter schools. Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
23 much, Ms. Shikomba. We know of your struggles and

24 certainly support you. You've really been, quote
25 unquote, hanging in there.

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2 MR. HORSEY: Excuse me, Madam Chairman.

3 May I say one thing for the record?

4 When we implemented charter school
5 legislation a couple years ago, we recognized that
6 some charter schools would have growing pains. So
7 being cognizant of that, I'm willing to send a
8 letter Secretary Hickcock and try to get your
9 funding also. Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

12 MR. TOD REYNOLDS: Good afternoon. My
13 name is Tod Reynolds. I'm the director of
14 operations for the West Oak Lane. West Oak Lane
15 Charter School opened up on September 15th of this
16 year through no small effort of State Representative
17 Dwight Evans and the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization
18 Corporation. We were fortunate enough to be of the
19 charter schools to work with the CDC who was
20 established in the community and it was a large,
21 large effort on their part that enabled the school
22 to open up. We currently have 548 students in our
23 school, kindergarten through fourth grade with plans

24 to go to 5th grade next year and a grade each
25 subsequent year. Our curriculum is science and

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2 technology based. We have over 110 computers being
3 placed in the last rooms and the computer lab in the
4 school. So students and parents will have a large
5 amount of access to the curriculum and the things
6 that will be done in the classroom. We have a very
7 successful parent volunteer program where parents
8 when they come in the morning have the option to
9 stay with their student in the classroom and act as
10 volunteers to see the activities that are going on
11 in the classroom and to work throughout the building
12 supporting the staff and their child while they're
13 in the school. We have a large after school program
14 that services 75 to a hundred young people from the
15 school on a daily basis and they are through various
16 activities until their parents can come pick them up
17 that goes through approximately 6:30. We have a
18 successful program that is working very well and
19 students are being monitored and they're working in
20 small reading groups and their reading levels are
21 being chartered at an early stage where if there are
22 any problems they can identified and dealt with in
23 an early basis instead of waiting until they're in
24 the 4th, 5th, 6th grade to identify those problems.

25

I'll be brief because I know other

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2 people have things to say. But some of issues that
3 have come up concerning transportation and
4 allocation are very important issues, but as my
5 colleagues have also brought up, the lack of funding
6 or capital for facilities to be built, there are a
7 lot of new charter schools that are coming into
8 existence, there are a lot of existing charter
9 schools that wish to expand, and the lack of funding
10 in the charter school law to accommodate or to
11 assist us in expanding these schools to service more
12 children I think needs to be addressed.

13 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
14 much.

15 Let me say to those on the next a
16 committee meeting Health and Human Services
17 Committee, we are sorry to delay you. We have one
18 more panel to hear so my guess is we'll be here a
19 half hour and then we should be done. We have one
20 or two speakers here and then we have one more panel
21 and we will done. We have wrap up and be done. But
22 I think it will take us a half hour if anybody's
23 waiting or has to make a phone call or step out for
24 a minute. Thank you.

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2 Blackwell, Councilmen and Councilwomen and State
3 Representatives, it's a pleasure to be here and
4 share the microphone today with a number of educator
5 entrepreneurs. I use that phrase warmly to describe
6 these people who have more than stuck their necks
7 out to make a difference for their school and their
8 community. Actually, one other way I describe this
9 group, they help communities achieve dreams. That's
10 how we look at the start of charter schools in the
11 State of Pennsylvania.

12 My name is Phil Esbrandt and I'm the
13 executive director of the Drexel University
14 Foundations Technical Assistance Center. Freddie
15 Reesehead heads the Division of Education at Drexel
16 and Ronda Lower (ph) who is the CEO of Foundations
17 formed a partnership last year. The partnership was
18 originally designed to develop charter schools and
19 charter school models. That program led to the
20 formation of a Technical Assistance Center. We have
21 worked with in the last 14 months 70 charter
22 founding groups and operators, 70 different schools.
23 Most of those, I'd say about 90 percent of those, in
24 Pennsylvania, although we've worked in other states
25 as well.

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2 There is a different dream for every one
3 of those 70, a different plan, a different concept,
4 yet all of them, I found, have been on target with
5 holding children first and trying to serve parents
6 and community in very positive ways. To try to put
7 a handle on these 70 groups, Gail and I have worked
8 to try to identify them in small groups, in groups
9 of three. And Gail Meister who is the Associate
10 Direct for the Technical Assistance Center will
11 start to review and give you some of the
12 characteristics of the group and some of the
13 background generally that has described this
14 movement in charter education today.

15 MS. GAIL MEISTER: Good afternoon. I
16 think you've heard in the descriptions of how people
17 got started with their charter schools, as we have
18 heard, there are three different types. We
19 characterize them as grass roots groups of
20 individuals who may not be educators; they might be.
21 They might be parents who get together because
22 they're seeking a more appropriate education
23 experience for their children. They're not
24 associated with any particular non-profit groups.

25 The second kind of group are those that

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2 represent existing non-profit or profit making
3 groups that deliver educational services to children
4 or provide other youth serving activities. These
5 have some kind of experience in the community
6 already and exist as organizations. Generally
7 speaking they're providing supplementary services
8 and then now seek as charter schools to expand into
9 the schooling area.

10 The third type of group we see is a
11 group that is associated with something like a
12 community development corporation. They seek to
13 establish a school because it's an outgrowth of
14 their mission to serve the community and to
15 revitalize the communities they serve. Schools for
16 these groups are instruments to attract or retain
17 families in the neighborhoods and serve as a means
18 for improving the educational outcomes they want for
19 their whole community.

20 There's some implications for these
21 three different types as they struggle to become
22 charter schools to acquire their resources and the
23 facilities they need to have smooth operations.
24 Just some of the things we see very quickly.

25 For the grass roots groups that he have

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2 no kind of affiliation with a settled or established
3 group institution, they labor under the disadvantage
4 of institutional informality and newness. They lack
5 a formal organization. They lack the kind of
6 history such an organization would bring. They also
7 lack the resources to absorb the planning that has
8 to go into the long and careful planning that has to
9 go into establishing a charter school, and they lack
10 access to capital.

11 For the second category of groups that
12 seek to establish charters, those that are existing
13 preschools or private schools or other youth serving
14 organizations, they actually have an advantage when
15 they seek to become charter schools that they have
16 some established policies and procedures and so
17 they're able to start up more smoothly. They have
18 an initial advantage.

19 Thirdly, the charter schools which grow
20 out the association with community development
21 organizations have a deep advantage in terms of
22 resources because those organizations with which
23 they're associated have track records in the
24 community, they have proven ability to obtain
25 financing, and they often have facilities for a

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2 school.

3 An issue that also affects how charter
4 schools work is size. There is several ways that
5 size impacts what charter schools can do and become.
6 Now smallness is generally a characteristic that's a
7 positive distinguishing feature for charter schools.
8 Starting small and staying small allow an
9 organization to solve some of the issues of identity
10 and unity and leadership and vision that are
11 problems for larger organizations. But in
12 Pennsylvania it's economically infeasible to be too
13 small because they have to look to fund-raising and
14 large volunteer efforts to provide the kind of
15 capital and resources they need to run their schools
16 that is not provided by the per pupil allocation.
17 So it's a problem especially in the first year we
18 are they're at their smallest.

19 MR. ESBRANDT: The Technical Assistance
20 Center has five full-time employees, but it has 40
21 part-time consultants that work a little bit or in
22 great detail with individual charter planners and
23 operators. Some of the major issues we would like
24 to reinforce came out dealing with financing and
25 facilities today for many of the speakers. From our

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2 observations, there are some very credible
3 partnerships that have been created through charter
4 schools that may not have been possible without the
5 start-up of charter schools. Some of the
6 facilities, YMCA's community centers, church
7 community centers, all have now served as facility
8 partners with some of the charter schools. So some
9 of the citations Gail made about the cost of
10 start-ups and the inability of small groups to be
11 able to finance certain facilities needs are made up
12 by a community commitment and a partnership with
13 charter schools.

14 As indicated, charter do not receive any
15 subsidy from the State concerning renovations, small
16 amounts of construction, and purchase of property,
17 which could lead to charters. I've heard from more
18 than one charter planner that the good facilities
19 are gone. Where do you go to next to find the
20 facilities that can be converted to charter schools?
21 There are only so many abandoned A & P type stores
22 or factory buildings or office buildings that can be
23 utilized for charters. And so some provision needs
24 to be provided to establish a revolving loan fund or
25 bond fund at the state level so that subsidies can

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2 be made to support the school renovations and
3 constructions that needs to be done.

4 We are also disappointed this year that
5 the conversion process was not followed through on
6 through a number of school districts, including
7 Philadelphia. Approximately 15 charter school
8 groups attempted to move from the planning document
9 stage to the application stage through a conversion
10 process. Some of those schools, the faculty and
11 parents voted. In other schools, they realized they
12 couldn't get majority votes and they couldn't get
13 information about the cost of converting a facility.
14 In areas where there are very few students
15 proportionally to ten years ago, using a facility, a
16 part of the school could be used for a charter
17 school or the entire school could be. But without a
18 definition and an agreement on what it costs to
19 convert from public school operation normally in a
20 school district to a converted charter school,¹ that
21 becomes an impossibility. So we recommend that a
22 committee be formed to be begin to work with state
23 officials, local school district officials and some
24 people in charter school conversion process to try
25 to develop a formula that can be used, not only

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2 Philadelphia, but state wide, to guide the
3 respective sides through the process because
4 voluntarily I don't see too many school districts
5 and charter applicants seeing eye to eye on the
6 process as well as the cost for the conversion. So
7 we recommend that the task force become part of the
8 consideration that the legislature that makes this
9 coming year.

10 We also are in the process looking at
11 the differences in the start-up experiences of
12 charters in their first year. The experience for
13 many schools has been the opening, the approval and
14 then actual work to get the school open has been
15 very close to the opening day of school. In part,
16 the State Department to their credit has begun to
17 try to shorten the amount of time it takes to get
18 start-up funds available to the local charter
19 approvals. And so what we see this year as planning
20 for this next round for applicants to be approved
21 state wide which should make money available as
22 close to April 1st as possible. So we're seeing in
23 many application budgets a full-time position for a
24 principal, for instance, for from July 1 to June 30,
25 '99 to 2000. But we're also seeing one-quarter of

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2 principals from April 1st of '99 to June 30th of '99
3 to be involved in the planning process and
4 successfully organize the very large number of
5 details that are necessary to open a school and to
6 go from nothing through a construction process
7 through a program development, hiring all staff,
8 developing policy or regulations that govern how
9 we're going to take this vision and implement it,
10 try to extend it from a month or two or three to at
11 least five or six months prior to the opening
12 school. I think we will guarantee more success and
13 fewer starter problems in the first year if the
14 State Department and local charter applicants that
15 are approved work on that start-up funding earlier.

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
17 much. Certainly we will have one statement and then
18 we will ask our last panel, Panel 4, to come
19 forward. Mrs. Wiggins wants to make a statement.
20 And if my colleagues don't mind, we will waive
21 questions in the interest of time.

22 MS. WIGGINS: I just wanted to say, I
23 know it came up earlier about Central, that Imhotep
24 does have students from Central, we have students
25 from Bensalem, from Cheltenham, from Darby who take

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2 public transportation. I have students from Sol and
3 a couple of the 38 process schools, so I wanted to
4 make sure -- I hear you talk about a lot our young
5 people who are at risk that are applying for these
6 charter schools. But I also have a lot of our
7 academically talented young people from across this
8 City applying for these charter schools, and it's
9 not just at risk children.

10 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
11 much. Your point well noted. Thank you so much.

12 Ms. Pat Halpin-Murphy, Director for
13 Government Relations Philadelphia Federation of
14 Teachers; Ms. Shelly Yanoff, Philadelphia Coalition
15 for Children and Youth; Ken Campbell, Advantage
16 Schools; Venard Johnson, Healthy Family Healthy
17 Life; Dr. Walter Palmer, The Philadelphia Coalition
18 for Education Reform and School Choice; Ms. Janet
19 Dubinsky, Garden Court Community Association; and
20 Mr. Eugene Bivens, N.A.A.C.P. We're glad to have
21 all have all of you.

22 And we will say to the next committee
23 meeting that this is our last panel. Commissioner
24 and all who are here, this is our last panel and
25 we're glad you get a chance to hear what we do on

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2 the Education Committee, but we know this was not

3 your plan. But we thank you for your patience.

4 And certainly this last panel, I know

5 many of you, I know Janet Dubinsky was here at 8:30

6 or 9:00 this morning. I know all of you have been

7 around all day long, Ken from out of town, and just

8 we thank you, thank you for your patience and we're

9 sorry it's taken so long to get here, but we're

10 grateful that you persevered. And as Councilwoman

11 Clark says, you certainly developed a fore-record on

12 what has happened here and what the issues are.

13 Shelly, you want to begin?

14 MS. SHELLY YANOFF: Thank you,

15 Councilwoman. Good afternoon, legislators and

16 councilpersons. I want to thank you for having me

17 here. I'm Shelly Yanoff, Executive Director of

18 Philadelphia Coalition for Children and Youth. I

19 want to thank you for having the hearing. It is

20 critical that we establish a public record about

21 what's going on in all of the schools in the City

22 and in the charter movement as well. We believe the

23 questions are important ones, and hearings such as

24 this one will begin to answer whether charters can

25 be major instruments of change and positive for the

2 kids, not only that attend them, but throughout the
3 system, or whether they're sort of boutiques on the
4 education highway.

5 In many ways charter schools can
6 strengthen public schools because they can operate
7 differently, reshape their practices to meet student
8 and teaching needs, and implement different
9 practices because kids must be and can be reached in
10 a variety of ways. Since charter schools can throw
11 off some of the system-wide constraints, they can
12 show us by some of the results and practices what
13 differences some changes can make under what
14 circumstances. And that what was Representative
15 Evans you were alluding to earlier, is a system in
16 place to do that.

17 It is hoped that the learning from some
18 of the experiences can be brought then to the larger
19 system. But charter schools also can hurt the
20 public system by draining off needed resources by
21 unfairly avoiding trying to educate the less able or
22 fewer children with special needs by promising to
23 provide quick fixes and by isolating some children.

24 In order for charter schools to help in
25 the critical task of educating the City's children,

2 there must be educational, fiscal and governance
3 accountability. You've heard today about
4 educational accountability and about some fiscal
5 questions. I want to skip down; the hour is late.

6 I want to say that if we could do a
7 couple of things in changing the charter law or
8 practice, we probably could cut down tremendously on
9 the adversarialness of the atmosphere. The main
10 thing I think is if the State could create a
11 separate pool for charter funds, then the public
12 system will not feel that it is being jeopardized
13 when one child from the 3rd grade in this school and
14 two children from the 4th grade go because -- in
15 fact, the Commissioner of Health is here, and her
16 previous experience will tell you when you close one
17 system, you don't see start seeing savings for a
18 while. And so the system that you're seeing in one
19 school, you can't start closing a classroom just
20 because 5 kids or 10 kids have left. And so you've
21 got a real loss with a public system this way, and
22 that's been explored earlier today. So if the state
23 could, number 1, create a separate pool of dollars
24 for charter schools and then hold the school
25 districts harmless for the first five years and then

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2 see how big is the pool, what has happened, what can

3 we do, what is the results, then we would
4 tremendously advance, I think, both the atmosphere
5 and our ability to see what's going on.

6 The second issue is that there's been a
7 lot of discussion about transportation. And
8 Councilwoman Blackwell, you co-authored a resolution
9 in the spring to deal with the fact that it costs
10 Philadelphia school kids alone in the Commonwealth,
11 we are the only ones that it costs kids who are in
12 high school or who choose to go to a school not in
13 their neighborhood, not who were sent because of
14 special ed needs or deseg, but who choose. Those
15 kids don't get bussed or free transportation. It
16 costs them \$9 had a week; \$9 a week in a school
17 district in which 80 percent of the kids are
18 eligible for free or reduced lunch is a lot of
19 money. So that when you see the argument and
20 tension over transportation, it is a sense of
21 unfairness that the public school kids feel and
22 families feel because they're not having their
23 children bussed in the same way or provided free
24 tokens. So if we could seriously deal with the high
25 cost of SEPTA tokens for all of our kids, whether in

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2 private or public school, we would advance that wall

3 a lot and, again, have more of a sense of equity
4 then we've seen so far.

5 Further, if we're not willing to create
6 the pool of dollars -- Representative Evans, you and
7 I have discussed this before. If we would then take
8 the cap off of the State funding and start again
9 having one shot, one reimbursement for each child in
10 the school district that comes in, then the funds
11 could more easily follow the child. But they can't
12 follow the child if they don't start with the child,
13 and they currently don't. At least that's my
14 understanding of the current state formula.

15 All in all, I think that charters can be
16 a tremendous instrument for change if we monitor
17 them, if we make sure that we give the governance
18 issues the kinds of tools that are needed in order
19 to make decisions, and we don't set up competition
20 unfairly for funds in the earlier days particularly.
21 So we would urge you to hold the systems, all of the
22 school district -- and I was talking with people
23 from Bucks and Allegheny last night about this. If
24 we would hold the districts who are sending kids to
25 charter schools harmless in their funding pattern

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2 for a period of five years, then we could assess and
3 then we might see what works and what doesn't and we

4 would have severely cut down on the animosity or
5 adversarialness of the system. Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 Ms. Pat Halpin-Murphy, Director of
8 Government Relations Philadelphia Federation of
9 Teachers.

10 MS. PAT HALPIN-MURPHY: Thank you,
11 Chairwoman Blackwell. Thank you for inviting us
12 here today. I'd like to thank also Councilman
13 Cohen, Representative Dwight Evans and
14 Representative Mike Horsey Michael.

15 I'm here today for the Pennsylvania
16 Federation of Teachers, and I do bring greetings
17 from Ted Kirsch and Jerry Jordan from the
18 Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. Also, my
19 colleague Janet Rider from the Pennsylvania
20 Federation of Teachers is her, or at least she was
21 earlier, and I'd like to recognize her as well.

22 Pennsylvania is now in its second school
23 year for charter school operations. It may be early
24 to reflect on the specific record of charter schools
25 established in the fall of 1997. And it is

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2 certainly, in my opinion, too early for those
3 charters opening in the fall of 1988 to look at them

4 in any specific way. However, I think it's an
5 excellent time to look at the impact of charters on
6 the public school system and its children, and I'd
7 like to make two points in that regard.

8 First is that charter schools cost the
9 school district over \$12 million a year. And of
10 course, we support the funding of the charter
11 schools. That's the law; that's what needs to
12 happen. However, currently, this money is taken
13 away from the instructional program for children in
14 the regular school system in order to be given to
15 the charter public schools. And we do of course
16 recognize the charter schools are public schools.
17 And an I agree with many of councilmen and
18 representatives who was making that point today. I
19 don't think that that in general is understood by
20 the public at large that the charter schools are
21 public schools. But this \$12 million is lost to the
22 regular public school students. Also this
23 \$12 million expenditure nearly wipes out the total
24 of City Council special \$15 million appropriation
25 for the school district. Each year recently the

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2 council has appropriate had special amount of money
3 for the school district, and as it turns out, the
4 amount of money lost in funding the charter schools

5 almost wipes out that appropriation. The state does
6 not fund the cost of the charter schools, with a
7 small exception and that is for those children who
8 are transferring from private or parochial schools
9 into charter school, and there's a small pot of
10 money to reimburse the school district for that
11 additional cost. But the State does not fund the
12 charter schools.

13 And actually, Shelly Yanoff and I did
14 not coordinate our testimony, but we did come up it
15 seems with a somewhat similar idea. And that is for
16 the State of some responsibility for this funding.

17 Many of you may know three weeks ago
18 right before the legislature adjourned for the
19 session, there was a voucher bill circulated in the
20 Senate caucus and in a few other places. In that
21 proposed voucher school bill, there was language
22 that would have held the local school districts
23 harmless had a voucher proposal passed. It's
24 unfortunate that the charter school bill did not
25 contain a similar provision. I don't think it's too

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2 late, but it did not that contain that provision.
3 So you have an unfortunate situation -- and it isn't
4 just the Philadelphia School District, by the way.

5 It's all of the school districts. You've probably
6 read about Neshaminy and, I think, Bensalem, they
7 were not aware that a particular charter school was
8 opening in their area, didn't budget for it and they
9 had to appropriate money that left their budget
10 completely out of whack for this school year. And I
11 would suggest to you that when you're reviewing what
12 happened today, that you consider if there is some
13 way to hold the school district harmless for the
14 very appropriate costs of funding the charter school
15 system. The state does not make that provision.

16 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: May I ask you a
17 question on that point?

18 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes, Councilwoman.

19 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Is it then your
20 suggestion there needs to be a separate line item at
21 the Harrisburg level for charter schools so as to
22 not reduce the grant for the Philadelphia Public
23 Schools?

24 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: That would be one
25 way to handle it, a separate line item.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: The traditional
3 Philadelphia Public Schools.

4 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes.

5 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: We're having such

6 problems with the language here.

7 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes, that would be

8 one very, I think, expeditious way of handling it.

9 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Is there any

10 movement of which to do so?

11 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Perhaps

12 Representative Evans might be in a better position

13 and more knowledgeable about that than I would be.

14 But I certainly would make that recommendation, and

15 we would certainly support that kind of effort.

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Ms. Halpin, what

17 answer do you give to the suggestion made by many

18 people that since the charter schools came into

19 existence, the public school system is educating

20 less children and that the funds are allocated

21 fairly according to the formula that was presented

22 to us previously by the school district?

23 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Perhaps I'm not the

24 most appropriate person to comment on that,

25 Councilman Cohen. But my understand is that the

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2 funds are allocated to the charter public schools on

3 the basis that was provided for in the charter

4 school legislation. And many of the concerns that

5 both the district and the charter schools have

6 really are in areas that are outside the law. I
7 think probably both groups agree that if you look at
8 the specifics provided for in the statute, the State
9 requires the local school district all across the
10 state to fund their local charters in a very
11 specific way, and my understanding is that
12 Philadelphia as well as the other districts are in
13 fact doing that.

14 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you.

15 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: The second point
16 that I would like to make in this regard is that
17 starting in 1999 a state appointed board will be
18 able to approve the creation of new charter schools
19 that a local school district has disapproved. The
20 school district here in Philadelphia will no longer
21 control what charters operate in Philadelphia, nor
22 will any local school district have final say on
23 what charters operate in their district. This has
24 enormous quality and cost implications. Those
25 charter schools that have been approved so far both

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2 here in Philadelphia and other areas around the
3 state, have genuinely been community initiated
4 schools that have grown from local needs and from
5 local people. Once you move away from that, you are
6 opening the possibility of others instituting

7 charter schools in the district, and neither
8 Philadelphia School District nor the Philadelphia
9 City Council will have any say about that. You may
10 in fact think that a particular charter school
11 application is not worthy either because of the
12 quality of their management or for whatever reason
13 when they seek approval, and the local district may
14 say, no, it doesn't meet the criteria. But that
15 decision can be overturned.

16 I'd also like to make note that the
17 charter schools that have been approved so far have
18 in fact be genuine non-profit organizations in
19 Philadelphia. We're beginning to see for-profit
20 companies operating charter schools. Now, the law
21 says that the governing body must be non-profit, and
22 in fact, the letter of the law last been met, but
23 we're increasingly seeing both here in Pennsylvania
24 and in other areas throughout the State, for-profit
25 change quite frankly looking to start charter

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2 schools in a much wider basis. And I think we've
3 seen that in the Philadelphia area as well.
4 Mosaica, which is a for-profit company opened a
5 charter school in Bucks County. In fact, many
6 Philadelphia children are going to it. And recently

7 Mosaica announced that they're going to be opening I
8 believe three additional charter schools in the
9 suburban right near Philadelphia but right outside
10 our borders. And starting in 1999, the local
11 school district is going to have really has no say
12 over. There will be another board can approve them.

13 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Excuse me. If you
14 can't do it directly, how then does the State look
15 the other way and permit it to be done indirectly?
16 If it can't be a for-profit and run a charter
17 school, it is a legal fiction to have a non-profit
18 run the school and then sub out the actual operation
19 of the school to a for-profit. I mean, we're
20 certainly capable of seeing -- that's not even
21 opaque, that's just clear.

22 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: I can't disagree
23 with you, Councilwoman Clark. But that in fact is
24 what is allowed under current law and is beginning
25 to happen. And I would suggest to you that it's

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2 probably going to happen on an increasing level.

3 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: So Goddard and all
4 of the proprietary schools will start to mine this
5 rich load of ore.

6 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: I think that's
7 something we definitely have to consider as a

8 possibility, and I think the ability of a non-local
9 board making that decision increases the
10 possibility. So this is two general points I'd
11 like to make.

12 Additionally, we know that this
13 committee the council persons and the state
14 representatives are concerned that Philadelphia
15 children receive the best education possible,
16 whether those children are in regular public schools
17 or charter public schools. With this in mind,
18 however, we ask you the following -- and this is in
19 no way a comment on any existing charter school and
20 certainly is not a comment on any charter schools we
21 heard about today. These are overall concerns that
22 we have that we'd like to alert you to. And we'd
23 like to ask that you insist charter schools be
24 staffed by certified teachers. And I was delighted
25 to here from Dr. Thuy and others that there are

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2 schools using certified teachers. We believe that
3 all professional staff must be appropriately
4 certified. Currently only 75 percent are required
5 properly certified in the charter schools. We
6 believe that is a defect in the law and we think
7 it's going to come back to haunt us, our children,

8 and the charter schools.

9 Secondly, we ask that you insist that no
10 charter school discriminate on the basis of
11 religion, race, culture, economic status, or any
12 other unique feature. Again, I want to emphasis
13 this is no comment on any of the existing charter
14 schools, but this is a concern that we have seen
15 because of developments in other areas of the
16 country and we're concerned about that. Also be
17 particularly vigilant that no charter school screen
18 out children with disability. Charter schools are
19 public schools and must not be allowed to
20 discriminate. We also ask that you insist that
21 charter schools be institutions designed to generate
22 financial profit for investors. One for-profit
23 company is already operating in Bucks County and
24 enrolling Philadelphia students. We think that is
25 just the beginning.

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2 And my last point is that we've heard
3 testimony and we know from our own experience that
4 there are a number of children who have great
5 difficulty in public schools, particularly the older
6 children, and have a great difficulty functioning in
7 current regular public school system, and
8 alternative schools have grown up both within the

9 public schools and outside. In fact, one of the
10 original charter schools, Community Academy, was one
11 such school. And we think that for those students
12 who -- particularly we have students that come back
13 from incarceration situations and we think maybe
14 charter schools might be an appropriate aspect for
15 those particular students.

16 The Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers
17 and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers stand
18 ready to work with you as you evaluate the impact of
19 charter schools on Philadelphia school system and
20 school children, and we thank you very much for
21 holding this hearing. Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you so
23 much. Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Madam Chair?

25 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilman

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2 Cohen, a question for the PFT?

3 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Ms. Halpin, were you
4 here during the earlier panels?

5 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes.

6 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Throughout the
7 discussions, I noticed an underlying criticism, not
8 only of the school district, but of the unions that

9 represent these school district employees. And I'm
10 wondering, I'm hoping that somehow or other the
11 charter schools do not become a vehicle for
12 anti-union activity, and I'm also hoping that the
13 school unions are concerned about the criticisms
14 they've heard so that maybe at some point we can
15 come together so that the labor organizations are
16 not viewed as impediments, I think that was the word
17 that was continually used, as impediments to the
18 fully effective teaching of students, particularly
19 students that don't seem to be learning as we would
20 hope they would in the public school system. But I
21 would like to see the day when we don't have
22 demarcation around union represented schools and
23 non-union represented schools. I just think it's an
24 area that everybody's got to pay a lot of attention
25 to. I cannot accept the notion that have unions

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2 which exist to protect the people that perform the
3 services can in anyway been detrimental. And I just
4 think it's a subject that all public service unions
5 have to consider. And I'm hoping that in whatever
6 fashion unions work that they consider that.

7 One other question to ask. There were
8 also questions raised about organization and the
9 ability to organize. I believe I understood that

10 there's no impediment to union organization to
11 charter schools, is there?

12 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: The law specifically
13 provides that charter schools may be organized under
14 Pennsylvania's Act 195, Collective Bargaining Law.
15 The restriction is that they may not belong to the
16 same collective bargaining unit, U-N-I-T. I spell
17 that because people sometimes thing I'm say "union."
18 They can belong to the same union but not the same
19 what they collective bargaining unit. So that is
20 provided for under the charter school law.

21 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I'm just not clear.
22 They may not be in the same bargaining unit as what?

23 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: As the employees in
24 the regular public schools. A way to compare it
25 might be with the way AFSCME is organized who works

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2 for the City of Philadelphia. Each of the different
3 bargaining units, like the water employees are in
4 one unit, the trash collectors are in another unit,
5 the social workers may be in another unit, but they
6 can all belong to the same union.

7 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Except that in the
8 examples you cite, people are perform being
9 different duties. I would understand that teachers

10 in the charter public schools are performing the
11 same function as teachers in the traditional public
12 schools.

13 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes. And we
14 advocated in the legislation --

15 COUNCILMAN COHEN: As Councilwoman Clark
16 says, and I think I have to accept it, it seems like
17 an artificial distinction. But that's the law, you
18 said.

19 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes, I think it's
20 very artificial. And we proposed in the law that
21 the charter school employees be allowed to organize
22 in any way that they see fit just as any other
23 public workers are entitled to, but we did not carry
24 that argument.

25 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Your suggestion makes

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2 an awful lot of sense. Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Pat, one of the
4 things that organized labor needs to do is insinuate
5 itself into this dialog because its silence is being
6 construed as opposition.

7 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Well, we're here
8 today for that purpose.

9 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: I understand that.
10 But this just can't be "an" episode. There has to

11 be a continuing dialog with unions actively involved
12 in it or else you will be seen as the impediment;
13 and if you don't speak up, it will be on your own
14 head that you haven't taken the opportunity to help
15 structure a position that everybody can live with.
16 And I do think unions have been very, very silent
17 with respect to this.

18 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

20 Representative Mike Horsey.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Just one or two
22 questions real quick. So a person who goes from the
23 Philadelphia School District and works for a charter
24 school, he gives up his or her union membership?
25 How does that work?

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2 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Yes. I taught in
3 the Philadelphia Public Schools. If I was still
4 teaching at Simon Gratz and left to teach at one of
5 the charter schools, I would terminate my employment
6 status with the Philadelphia Public School and I
7 would become an employee of that charter school.
8 And that charter school would be able to set the
9 terms of my compensation and working conditions with
10 the exception that the law does provide that they

11 have to provide health benefits and that I would
12 still stay in the state retirement system. But
13 other than that, you're not under the protections of
14 the PFT contract.

15 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: I don't know if
16 this is an appropriate question or not. Has your
17 encouraged members of charter schools to join or
18 come or become or to be unionized?

19 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: We are very open to
20 the employees of charter schools becoming organized.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Has your union
22 encouraged such organization?

23 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: There are
24 conversations going on as we sit here,
25 Representative Horsey, and I would be happy to talk

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2 with you appropriately about that where I would not
3 be perhaps getting into an area that is, you know, a
4 private situation. Not private to me, but private
5 to the employees and the school involved.

6 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: I understand.
7 Just one last question. What is the total number of
8 teachers who work in the City of Philadelphia, just
9 teachers?

10 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Approximately
11 12,000.

12 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: And what is the
13 total number of paraprofessionals?

14 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Paraprofessionals?

15 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Yes.

16 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Well, there's
17 approximately 26,000 employees in the school
18 district. Approximately 12,000 of those are
19 teachers. The others are paraprofessionals,
20 non-teaching assistants, other --

21 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: So the general
22 percentage rate is 50/50, a little less than 50/50
23 teachers, so on and so forth.

24 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Right. Something
25 slightly under a majority are teachers.

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2 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. I
4 think we can continue this discussion. We were
5 talking to Representative Evans about folks who
6 start all over when they have benefits, and he was
7 talking about people being a sabbatical. So I guess
8 at some point in our growing pains we'll have to
9 deal with that as an issue. And I've been
10 approached by many charter schools about them trying
11 to have people from their other schools work with

12 them and work with them part-time, which we're told
13 they have been told they can't do. That's another
14 issue that seems to be a real problem and kind of a
15 punishment. And when I asked the School District
16 about it, they said it was the City's fault somehow.

17 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: I don't know what
18 the status is on sabbaticals. Sabbaticals are
19 provided for state law, not by local district
20 arrangement. And I'm sorry, but I've never really
21 thought through that issue or looked into it. If
22 the charter school employees are public school
23 employees, then conceivably they would be covered by
24 the sabbatical arrangement. But I can't speak
25 authoritatively on that until I look it up, but I'd

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2 be happy to do that.

3 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: At some point we
4 really would like that issue resolved. I've had
5 many, many charter school operators complain about
6 people that worked with in their other jobs before
7 they came not being able to work with them at night
8 or on weekends or run some program, another sports
9 program and that sort of thing because of city law.

10 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: It's not city law.
11 That I do know definitively. In terms of
12 sabbaticals or working for two different school

13 districts, it's not a city issue. Now, there may
14 be, if they work City Recreation Department, there
15 may be city ordinances that cover that.

16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: I mean people
17 who work in other schools. A lot charter leaders
18 came out of the public school system. They, of
19 course, have relationships with people in their old
20 schools, their former schools. And they are told
21 that those former employees, as long as they work
22 for the same school district, they cannot in fact
23 work with them part-time or on weekends or at night.

24 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: That's the law
25 governing sabbaticals, which says that if you

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2 accept --

3 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: Oh, if you're on
4 sabbatical.

5 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Yes, if you're on
6 sabbatical you cannot then accept paid employment.
7 I believe that's how that is written.

8 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: You couldn't work
9 for anybody.

10 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: But if you want to
11 work in a volunteer status or if -- a person that's
12 dead on the horns of the dilemma, they have to

13 decide whether they want to stay in sabbatical
14 status or whether they want to be employed. But you
15 can not have the benefits of both because they
16 collide in the law on sabbaticals.

17 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilman
18 Cohen.

19 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Just one question.
20 In the charter schools, they get paid by check.

21 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: I assume that. You
22 have to ask --

23 COUNCILMAN COHEN: What's on the check?
24 Does it Philadelphia School District or does it say
25 the name of the charter school?

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2 MS. HALPIN-MURPHY: I would perhaps
3 would ask that someone from a charter school would
4 be a better position to respond to respond to you,
5 Councilman Cohen.

6 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I think you're right.
7 Is there anybody here from the charter schools that
8 would know the answer?

9 Before you answer, does it apply also to
10 the Mosaica School?

11 MR. SKIEF: Well, one of the benefits of
12 a charter school is that you can do your own
13 contracting. And so therefore, any employee of mine

14 will get a Harambee Institute of Science and
15 Technology check.

16 Just to clear up the other statement
17 that was made, I was formerly a teacher in West
18 Philadelphia High School, but I was also a teacher
19 of their evening school, their teacher preparation
20 program, their in-service program which I taught in
21 the evenings. Once I got my charter, I was told
22 that if I worked for a charter school, I could not
23 in any way work for the public school on my own
24 time, during the summertime or any other time. So
25 it goes both ways. Also, those teachers who are

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2 working in the public schools that may want to work
3 after school with my school have been prohibited
4 from doing that.

5 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: And what is the
6 reason for that?

7 REPRESENTATIVE HORSEY: Is that in the
8 charter school legislation?

9 MR. SKIEF: Once again, when
10 Philadelphia is unique, Philadelphia is unique to
11 other districts around. I had never heard anywhere
12 across the state that you cannot work after your
13 employment for a charter school or vice versa.

14 That's the rule.

15 MS. SPARKMAN: John knows I've told him
16 he can work anytime he wants to, as long as he
17 doesn't want to get paid. There's a provision of
18 the Philadelphia charter, the home rule charter
19 against dual employment. It says if your employee
20 is getting part of his salary out of the City budget
21 cannot go over work for the State or for the school
22 district or anyone else. You can't double dip.
23 There's a provision in the charter against double
24 dipping if your salary is paid for out of the city
25 treasury. So I've told John, sometimes we have

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2 summer institutes that are being paid for totally
3 out of grant funds. The not money's come from the
4 City.

5 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: But if it's all
6 the school district, how are you double dipping when
7 everybody works for the school district?

8 Excuse me, I'm sorry. We should
9 identify you for the record.

10 MS. SPARKMAN: They do not work for the
11 school district, they work for the charter schools.
12 They are not working for the School District of
13 Philadelphia.

14 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: This is one in

15 and out questions. On one thing that seems to the
16 advantage of the board it seems they are out, and on
17 other instances they're in. This is the in and out
18 whole nature of all of this business that creates
19 problems.

20 MS. SPARKMAN: Part of the things we're
21 talking about here are some ways that the laws are
22 inconsistent and need to be changed, and this is one
23 of the things we're bringing up. This is one of
24 those instances.

25 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKMAN: Thank you. That

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2 was Jackie Sparkman and Clay Armbrister from the
3 school district for our stenographer. They are
4 listed under Panel 2 of your listing.

5 Janet Dubinsky. Thank you for
6 patience to all of you.

7 MS. JANET DUBINSKY: That's all right,
8 Councilwoman. I'm very happy and pleased to be
9 here. I don't come as a member of the professional
10 education community. I come as a representative of
11 a 50-year-old community organization, Garden Court
12 Community Organization, of which I am currently
13 proud to be the vice president and education chair.
14 We're in Councilwoman Blackwell's district, and I

15 believe part of our district is also in
16 Representative Horsey's area, including the school
17 I've been working most closely with which is a K
18 through 8 school, the Henry C. Lee School, which I'm
19 sure he knows quite well.

20 I came to this as a novice on charter
21 schools, and I did a lot of homework to play
22 catch-up. I've taken a great deal of interest. I
23 spend much time every week over at Lee working with
24 the parents, working with teachers, working with
25 various projects questioning the administration,

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2 questioning the students, which is led me into the
3 exploration when I was asked to testify about
4 charter schools.

5 We have a lot of problems in the school
6 system that until you actually set foot in the
7 schools on a daily basis are not necessarily
8 apparent to everyone. I'm going to try to bring my
9 focus around where we started. Do we need charter
10 schools? Quite probably, we do. They are here
11 whether we like it or not. They're in 26 states.
12 They're in the State of Pennsylvania, they're in the
13 District of Columbia. This is something that we
14 have to deal with. Some people may like them; some
15 people may not. Many people in the general

16 community even among so-called, quote, educated
17 segments of the community have to be made to
18 understand that, A, they are not voucher schools;
19 people don't understand that, that they are part of
20 the public school system. And there seems to be a
21 lot of confusion about that here today.

22 We found that in Lee School this is
23 certainly one area among those of us who work with
24 the parents and the teachers could be something that
25 could be explored. I wouldn't have necessarily

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2 thought that a couple months ago until I did some
3 charter homework with getting some information from
4 your colleague Representative Robuck's office. And
5 doing my homework, I did not realize, for instance,
6 that a charter school could be set up as a sub-set
7 of an already existing public school. This is
8 something that would help deal with among other
9 things probably both gifted and behavioral problem
10 children depending upon which end you wanted to
11 approach it.

12 I think that I'm not going to make a big
13 long statement among all of you who are far more
14 versed in educational matters than I am except to
15 say that this is something that needs to and must be

16 further explored to afford all the children in this
17 school district the best education that we can give
18 them, and I don't see that that's necessarily
19 happening as things stand at moment. So we can't
20 around to turn down any explosion that we can
21 achieve to further and better the education of our
22 children whether they be K through 8 or across the
23 street at West Philly High 9 through 12. These kids
24 need all the help that we can give them.

25 I myself don't have any children in

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2 school district. I am a product of the Philadelphia
3 public schools, K through 12. And I am a tax-paying
4 home-owning citizen in this City. And my interest
5 isn't personal; I don't have a personal ax to grind,
6 I don't work for the school district. I try and
7 work for our community in general and try to bring
8 the best I can to it, and that's what I'd like us
9 all to try and do for our kids. If this means
10 further explosion by all of us and a little
11 accommodation on each side for possibility of
12 charter schools, I think it's something we need
13 strongly to consider. And therefore, I personally
14 support this resolution that we continue to explore
15 it. And basically that's what we're here about, to
16 see -- to bring it to it's most basic terms, should

17 we go forward, should we go backward? We're
18 approaching a new millennium. Things aren't the
19 same as they were when I was in school. My
20 suggestion is that we go forward.

21 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms.
22 Dubinsky and thanks for all the volunteer work you
23 do at Lee School.

24 Ken Campbell, Advantage Schools.

25 MR. KEN CAMPBELL: Good morning. I am

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2 Ken Campbell from Advantage Schools. And I'll start
3 out by saying I am actually proud to be from one of
4 the companies that a lot of people like to talk
5 pretty negative about right now, which one of the
6 for-profit companies operating schools around the
7 country. We operate exclusively in urban areas
8 where kids, we believe, need it most. I'm going to
9 talk to you today not really about Advantage Schools
10 because that's something I do now and I haven't done
11 that long. But I am going to talk about what I've
12 done for the past three years or three prior to now,
13 and that's working in support of public charter
14 schools in Washington, D.C.

15 I'm a big supporter of public charter
16 schools, and I'm big supporter because we need to

17 talk about and find innovative solutions to help
18 kids. There's been a lot of talk about money today.
19 But you know what? Kids are out there struggling,
20 and I'm not ashamed to say in most cases those are
21 kids of color. Those are kids of color who are
22 stuck in communities where they don't have options
23 and who are stuck in schools where they don't have
24 options. So we can talk a lot about where the
25 dollars go and that sort of thing but there were a

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2 whole group of parents back here in the back of the
3 room that send kids to some of these schools and
4 right now they feel like that's the only lifeline
5 they have to make sure their kids are able to get a
6 quality education. So let's kind of put it in right
7 context if we're going to talk about charter schools
8 and what it is they're designed to do and that's to
9 help kids.
10 We've had a lot of talk about where the
11 money goes, does the school district -- are they
12 treated unfairly because dollars flow with the kids.
13 I haven't heard a lot of talk today from the school
14 district about what they're doing to retain some of
15 those kids. They have, in my opinion, a monopoly
16 right now. And I can guarantee you right now,
17 Microsoft is not allowing AOL and all these other

18 places to just step into their market and take their
19 customers without a fight. Microsoft each day is
20 becoming more and more innovative to keep people
21 attached to and working with Microsoft. People
22 don't want to leave because they provide a quality
23 product. And so I really think what we should focus
24 on and what I would like to hear the school system
25 say is, "this is what we're doing in response to.

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2 This is how we hope to address these issues." And I
3 think with a little more innovation and a little mor
4 creativity, they can negate of the some of the pull
5 that charter schools have right now pulling students
6 away from the public schools. And I guess all the
7 creativity right now is just in the charter schools,
8 and I think that has to change.

9 I would like to see much more cordial
10 working relationships between the school system and
11 charter schools. I think it's a natural. I think
12 there are a lot of things they can learn, not just
13 how well students perform, but how do you pay
14 teachers. All charter schools don't pay teachers
15 the same way. All charter schools don't evaluate
16 teachers the same way. Not all charter schools use
17 the same curriculum or the same teaching methods.

18 How the school is the school structured? How much
19 power do the teachers have? How much power do the
20 parents have? Why are charter schools getting 95
21 percent attendance with kids who have dropped out of
22 traditional public schools. All those are the types
23 of things that I believe the public school system
24 should be studying and not simply waiting for the
25 Stanford 9 to come out to see how well the students

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2 have done at the end of year. I think there are
3 ongoing lessons.

4 Each charter school is very different.
5 It's impossible to lump them all together and say
6 charter schools did X or charter schools did Y. A
7 charter school is simply a vehicle, and a group of
8 people have gotten together and done a whole lot of
9 work to put a proposal together that they think is
10 going to be effective with kids. And some of those
11 are going to work, and quite honestly, some of those
12 are not going to work. But right now in our public
13 system, a lot of schools aren't working, but
14 nobody's really looking at them to figure out are
15 they working; and if not, why not? So I think we
16 need to do some of those things.

17 I think there are a lot of impediments
18 right now to charter schools for them getting up,

19 open and operating on time and starting on time the
20 way they're supposed to be. I hope the City can do
21 some things about that. In Washington, for example,
22 we were able to get the fire marshall to come in to
23 talk to our charter school groups, you know, eight,
24 nine months in advance to say "this is what this
25 process is all about." So that when it's time, you

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2 know. We were able to get the person who does
3 contracting and procurement for the City to come in
4 and talk to the charter schools so they could say,
5 "when you go to buy your books these are the type of
6 things you have to think about, these are the type
7 of records you have to keep." All those sorts of
8 things are just obstacles that are kind of in the
9 way of these schools and it's a very sharp learning
10 curve that they have to go up in order to be able to
11 operate effectively. So I would hope that the City
12 can help, you know, to bridge some of those gaps
13 tort schools.

14 And another thing I think is very
15 important is finding a way to just provide general
16 for. I was listening to one of the charter
17 operators talk about some of the problems she had,
18 but my question would be how many people in the City

19 or the school system picked up the phone and said,
20 "hey, I hear that you're having some problems. Is
21 there something I can do to help?" These are all
22 kids, kids who in most cases don't have any other
23 options. And it seems like there's a whole segment
24 of the community that's just kind of pushing them
25 away and say, "because you went to a charter school,

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2 you're on your own and whatever you get is what you
3 deserve." And that bothers me, it just bothers me.
4 Finally, I think another way the school
5 system can really help is just to provide more --
6 they can actually provide fee-based services to
7 schools. There's some expertise that you have in
8 the public school systems that charter schools don't
9 yet have that can really make for a win win
10 situation for both. One good example would be
11 employee background checks. All schools have to do
12 them. Why not pay the public school system do them
13 for you when they're doing them for everybody else?
14 What about athletics. There are any number of ways.
15 Charter schools aren't looking for a free ride.
16 They are looking for some equity and they are
17 looking for some help in ways to make this whole
18 thing work for them.
19 I have a prepared statement. I think

20 you all have a copy of it. I just totally blew that
21 away just interest of time. But I just wanted to
22 kind of give some general thoughts and comments
23 after the conversations that I heard today. I mean,
24 I really want to see public schools, traditional
25 public schools rise to the challenge. I want them

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2 to do more innovative things. I want them to
3 increase the amount of programs that are available.
4 I want them to be able to look at every parent and
5 say, "Hey, we have a program that's going to work
6 for your child here is why." And if you haven't
7 seen a charter school application, I don't know if
8 anybody has one with them, by the time you get
9 finish it's about that big. That's for a single
10 school to operate because think they can do a good
11 job with kids. I would encourage every public
12 school to have to do the same job, even half, you
13 know. Even half, I think would be a big plus.

14 And Madam Chairman, thank you for
15 inviting me. It's been interesting day. I've
16 actually enjoyed it quite a bit.

17 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you for
18 coming. We know you come from out of town, that you
19 come Washington and also Boston. We appreciate you

20 coming in and being so patient with us all day.

21 Councilwoman Clark is twisting my arm,
22 but it's the only question. We have three people,
23 Mr. Bivens and Dr. Walt Palmer, and Vernard Johnson
24 in order that they choose, and we are done. I
25 promise.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Mr. Campbell, I
3 thank you for your comments, and I wish we had more
4 time because I am one who has a very strong
5 skepticism about proprietary schools. And nothing
6 that I've heard from you today has done anything to
7 dissipate my skepticism and I can't do it on the
8 record. Maybe you and I will stand out in the hall
9 and have a go at it. Still, all of us have the same
10 shared hope that young people will be educated to a
11 level that permits them to function as adults,
12 either in advanced education or directly into the
13 world of work. But quite frankly, in Philadelphia
14 it is all a hope because we don't have enough
15 experience to go on. We now must look at the
16 components of these systems and guess at whether we
17 have enough of the right things to make it work.
18 And I have devoted this day, not looking for ways to
19 kill it, looking for ways to support it. And I
20 listened creatively to see whether there are things

21 that I in my 12 years of chairing the Education
22 Committee and almost 20 years here can contribute.
23 Public education is not perfect. But it and labor
24 unions made the middle class. And when public
25 education was as new as charter schools, they had a

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2 100 percent attendance rate. So let's not brag
3 about our attendance rate until the newness has worn
4 off and people are then starting to exercise that
5 natural apathy when the newness is gone.

6 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Gentlemen, in
7 any order.

8 MR. VERNARD JOHNSON: My name is Vernard
9 Johnson. I'm the director of Healthy Family Healthy
10 Life, Inc., and I'm the parent of a 7th grader at
11 the World Communications Charter School.

12 I had a daughter who graduated from
13 Philadelphia Public Schools, and by her report card,
14 was a good student and decided that she wanted to be
15 a nurse and went to community college, and we paid a
16 year for remediation. We wanted to pay for her
17 education as best we could. That's why as a family
18 we chose community college because it was something
19 that we could do for our daughter in terms of paying
20 for her education and not having to have her pay a

21 grant or a loan back. And the year that we had to
22 pay for remediation was really a surprise to us
23 because she was a good student. Next year she's
24 going to go to Westchester and we won't be able to
25 pay for that, but she won't have so much to pay

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2 back. I wanted to say that because we've been
3 supporters of Philadelphia Public Schools. But you
4 can't sacrifice your own and then sacrifice another
5 one and get the same results. So in 4th grade, the
6 elementary school that my 7th grader who is now in
7 7th grade was in was having some serious discipline
8 problems, and my fourth grader began to complain to
9 us about it, and we took her out in the middle of
10 year and sent her to a private school and paid
11 tuition for two years. And this year we decided
12 that when we had an opportunity to apply to the
13 charter school that Dr. Ryder operates, we did so.
14 And she's a happy kid right now. She's happy
15 because she's around a bunch of kids who are happy
16 being in that school. And they believe they're
17 learning. I asked her why she's so happy. She
18 says, "I'm learning." She didn't actually think she
19 was learning in the private school that we sent her
20 to, so it's not that you always get what you give
21 your dollars for. I wanted to make that point.

22 On the other side of this, my company
23 has a focus on public health. And we focus a lot of
24 children and children's health and children's
25 safety. And for six years or so we were active in

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2 the traditional Philadelphia Public Schools where we
3 called in the question in front of this Council and
4 other places their concern about the children's
5 health and safety to the point that one nurse, at
6 least when we were active in the traditional public
7 school was responsible for 1500 students' health
8 care. And we're now working -- and had no
9 intentions of changing. We were disappointed that
10 we don't believe that the traditional public schools
11 have a very good plan for emergencies and disasters,
12 not just fires, but emergencies and disasters. And
13 it's like beating your head against a brick to get
14 them to understand what you're talking about. So at
15 some point you want to move on. So we've moved on
16 and are more involved in charter schools in
17 Philadelphia and in Chester, and they seem to have a
18 willingness, this kind of open-arm kind of approach
19 where they're willing to at least sit and listen and
20 to invite others in who can help them develop health
21 and safety plans and curriculum that can help -- I

22 think the biggest part in I'm saying is to help
23 develop curriculum that it may not always be a
24 licensed teacher, a licensed professional who bring
25 to you what you need. Certainly the firemen may not

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2 be a licensed profession. But he certainly can come
3 into a school environment and talk to children and
4 talk to teachers and other staff about the health
5 and safety of a school and what needs to happen and
6 help build that into the curriculum. That's what
7 I'm seeing at least in charter schools here in
8 Philadelphia at this point.

9 We're involved right at this moment with
10 a construction company. I don't think they mind me
11 saying their name, Barkley White Construction
12 Company, where the president of that company and
13 partner have been meeting with Dry Ryder and his
14 staff in the World Communications Charter School to
15 look at developing a constructions trade curriculum,
16 something that I think is sorely needed, not just
17 for the children in this town, but for the adults as
18 well so that we can study the construction trades
19 and industry that we've been locked out of. Our
20 children could study that at an earlier age and
21 qualify for apprenticeships in the trades when they
22 become seniors or Grade 13. That's something that

23 we had a hard time working with the traditional
24 public schools in introducing those kinds of
25 programs.

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2 I just want to tell you about the
3 connection between the charter school and the
4 community. This lady over here from Garden Court
5 was talking about that. I think that there's a
6 spirit that exist, I don't know that it's a new
7 spirit. I think people just been waiting for an
8 opportunity. There's spirit that exists between
9 charter schools and communities that I don't believe
10 exists in a traditional public school, at least for
11 us. And I want to give you a couple examples of
12 some things that we're doing in the Worlds
13 Communications Charter School and then get out of
14 here to go meet 30 of our health club students who
15 meet every Tuesday at 2:30. We'd invite you to come
16 and see what we're doing with them at the school at
17 Broad and South.

18 There is a critical need in southwest
19 Philadelphia for better services from retailers who
20 sell food. And a lot of the stores in our community
21 sell food especially dairy products that are
22 expired. The dates have expired. I'm glad to see

23 the health commissioner in the room so she can hear
24 what we're saying on this piece. A lot of mothers
25 who are entitled to WIC commodities shop in these

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2 stores where the items are a day or two away from
3 expiring if they haven't already passed the
4 expiration point. We're working with students both
5 in Chester and at the World Communications Charter
6 School here and in what we call an action research
7 project. That project involves them going out into
8 the Kingessing Paschall community in southwest and
9 researching what stores exist in the community, what
10 they sell, and looking at the expiration dates of
11 the products that they sell, especially the milk.
12 And we're going to release a report soon about what
13 we have found.

14 On Friday this week we're going to
15 Washington with 20 students from the World
16 Communications Charter School here and 20 students
17 from charter school in Chester to meet with former
18 Mayor Goode who is with the Department of Education
19 and the Secretary of Education as well as some
20 people from the Department of Agriculture to discuss
21 a couple of things. One is America Reads. Our
22 students are going to get involved with the America
23 Reads program. They are going to kind of cross what

24 they do with American Reads and connect that to a
25 good solid nutrition program. And we're hoping that

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2 the Department of Education and the Department of
3 Agriculture will work with our kids here in
4 Philadelphia and in Chester to support their efforts
5 to open and operate a food cooperative in southwest
6 Philadelphia, one where we will have fresh fruits
7 and produce available for sale but we're also going
8 to explore what it takes to sell WIC commodities.
9 And the students are also working with people of
10 Haitian decent and Asian decent and helping them to
11 write down what their concerns are about the foods
12 that are available through the WIC program.

13 Now, a lot of folks may say "well, what
14 does that all have to do with anything," but it's
15 addressing a major issue that exists in our
16 community and the charter schools both charter
17 schools, both charter schools, the one here and the
18 one in Chester, were open to working with us on that
19 effort and having their kids do the research
20 project. And I just use that as a basis to say that
21 I think there's a good opportunity for the
22 traditional public schools to look at what charter
23 schools are doing in a short period of time to

24 develop relationships in the community.

25 I'll close with this, these two points.

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2 I've been to about four parents meetings this year
3 at the World Communications Charter School that has
4 450 students. There haven't been less than 200
5 parents at any one of those meetings. For me, that
6 is a change. The first meeting that I attended was
7 at the Board of Education the auditorium right down
8 the hall from Superintendent Hornbeck's office where
9 there were about 400 parents who signed the sign-in
10 sheet. I think that's a change. It shows
11 something.

12 The other point I want to make is this:
13 This guy other over here was saying about the
14 dollars, we talk about dollars today and we talked
15 very little about curriculum, what's being offered,
16 what kids are learning. I don't hear any squawking
17 when a kid goes on office role and the school
18 continues to get the money but the kids out in the
19 street. I don't see anyone going after him or her.
20 All I see is a district that let's the kid stay in
21 the street, be on office role, and gets the dollars.
22 I think my oldest daughter was a good student and a
23 good person. I think my 7th grader is a good
24 student and good person. I think that my wife is

25 good person. I think I'm a good person. We're

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2 active in our kids' education. We're active in the
3 community. When we left the district, there was no
4 effort at all to ask us why or if we wanted to come
5 back what conditions we wanted to come back under.
6 It was like, "bye, see you later," and the only
7 thing that they're concerned about now is the
8 dollars that really belong to my child and my family
9 that could be used to support us to make sure that
10 she gets a quality education.

11 I heard a concern about not
12 discriminating against the disabled. But at the
13 same time I heard that maybe charter schools would
14 be a great place for those returning from
15 incarceration. If that's not discrimination, I
16 don't know what it is.

17 And, you know, I'm not much on profit
18 organizations doing what I consider to be public and
19 private sector work, but we've allowed Tenent to
20 come into this town and to provide health care for
21 folks without really understanding what they're
22 going doing and who they're going to serve when the
23 times get hard. So I'm willing to work with anyone
24 who is willing to work and has demonstrated that

25 they're willing to work with our kids for the

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2 betterment of the kids and for the communities that
3 we live in.

4 And I'll close with this: The
5 construction people that we're working with are
6 concerned that the school district isn't producing
7 the kind of student to be the kind of employee that
8 they want. And I think if we have an opportunity to
9 mix the professional world with our kids and their
10 education in schools, I think we should take the
11 opportunity to do it. And if the traditional
12 schools have shut down their wood shops and their
13 metal shops and their autobody shops, if there's an
14 opportunity to bring an Ike Tillman from Ledlow
15 Autobody into a school that wants to put a focus on
16 that trade and Ike doesn't have a teaching
17 certificate, I think we need to find a way to get
18 the Ike Tillmans of the world into the classroom.
19 So I would caution you about listening to the
20 rhetoric around, make 100 percent of the
21 professional staff teachers because you see what
22 we've got right now with 100 percent of the
23 professional staff being teachers. We've got a
24 state representative who's concerned about a school
25 in his area. We've high school in South Philly that

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2 they say is producing well and is questionable if
3 those statistics are real. We've got the School of
4 Science and Engineering on the disabled list based
5 on the schools own evaluation plan, it needs special
6 attention. And the old head around the teachers are
7 not teaching our kids because they maybe come from a
8 different ethnic background has kind of raised its
9 head again. So that's what I wanted to say. Thank
10 you for letting me be here.

11 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
12 much. Thank you Vernard.

13 Dr. Walt Palmer.

14 Thank you, all of you for your patience.

15 DR. WALTER PALMER: Only councilwoman
16 Jannie Blackwell could get me to come early and say
17 late.

18 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: But I've done
19 this to all of you before. But I promise next time
20 you will be first. Vernard, Walt, Dr. Bivens, I'm
21 telling you, they're always last, but I promise next
22 time, and I say that on the record.

23 DR. PALMER: First of all, I want to
24 thank you, Councilwoman Blackwell, for inviting me
25 here. My name is Walt Palmer. I am director of the

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2 Palmer Foundation which is a research training
3 institute on social justice and social action which
4 I've run for over 40 years. I'm also here
5 representing the Philadelphia Coalition for
6 Education Reform and School Choice and the
7 African-American Grassroots Coalition for School
8 Choice. I also recognize State Representative, my
9 dear friend, Dwight Evans, and State Representative
10 Mike Horsey as well.

11 I'm want to say up front that the notion
12 of charter schools is not a new notion. Today we
13 heard a lot of people talk about charter schools and
14 talking about it as if it somehow just came out of
15 the blue. Charter schools have been for years, or
16 the concept, the model of charter schools have for
17 years been alternatives to education which was
18 absent in various communities. Historically in
19 American society if it were not for alternative
20 schools many African slaves would never have been
21 educated. If it not for Christian decent people
22 white and black setting up alternative ways to
23 educate the slaves, they would never have gotten
24 educated. Poor white indentureds of Europe and
25 America would have never gotten educated had there

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2 not been models of charter schools, schools
3 operating without a charter both in pre-colonial and
4 post-colonial period. The idea that charters are
5 new also disturbs me because clearly in the 1900s
6 when the great migration of blacks from out the
7 southlands to the north when they were meeting
8 hostility northern whites, they too had to find
9 alternative ways of education. African-Americans
10 were late to get into education in elementary,
11 secondary, junior high schools, and colleges in
12 American society. We need to constantly remember
13 that.

14 You talk about charter schools and
15 alternatives, you talk about choices. Everybody in
16 America has choices, particularly the middle class.
17 Today I'm here to talk about black and poor because
18 the truth of the matter of the 217,000 students,
19 over 75 percent are African-American and/or
20 Hispanic. Of the numbers you talk about 50 percent
21 to 60 percent or more dropping out before they
22 finish high school, we're talking about largely
23 African-Americans and Hispanics whose numbers drop
24 out faster than African-Americans. In American
25 society we have gone through almost several hundred

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2 years of white skin approach and black skin
3 disadvantage, which clearly is phenomenal which
4 suggest the social hierarchy maintained a status of
5 whites different than that have blacks. The truth
6 is that unless we look towards alternative ways born
7 within the community many times outside of the
8 structures for finding ways to deal with these
9 social conditions, there is no answer.

10 I'm an educator. I've been an educator
11 all my life. When I graduated from high school in
12 the 1950s, I set up my own school, the Black Peoples
13 University of Philadelphia at 329 South 52nd Street,
14 and ran it for 30 years. And it was there that John
15 Skief learned about alternative education and
16 reform. It was there that Dr. Ed Robinson was able
17 to hone his skills in helping to train people in the
18 community. It was there that young David
19 Richardson, the former state representative, learned
20 his skills. And the list can go on and on of people
21 in Philadelphia who took advantage of alternative
22 education when it was not popular in the 1950s and
23 '60s.

24 In the 1950s cents and '60s after I had
25 acquired a degree in education and had already

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1
2 passed certification for teaching both in day and
3 evening schools, while I was still teaching in my
4 own school for 30 years, I helped to organize and
5 lead a demonstration for reform in the City of
6 Philadelphia against the Board of Education. On
7 November 17, 1967, through the help of and the call
8 of young African-American students in the junior
9 high schools and high schools, we orchestrated a
10 call for a shut-down of the public schools of
11 Philadelphia for educational reform. Over a hundred
12 thousand children marched out of the schools and a
13 significant number marched on the Board of
14 Education, but we had already trained some 25 or 30
15 students representatives on how to negotiate with
16 former Mayor Richardson Dilworth and Superintendent
17 Mark Shea and were successful in negotiating for
18 reforms like a student Bill of Rights, like a dress
19 code, like being able to have their representation
20 inside the history books. America American was not
21 a reality before 1967 in the public schools of
22 Philadelphia.

23 The public schools of Philadelphia has
24 been good for a lot of people. And I believe in
25 public education and I support public education,

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1
2 particularly good public schools. But I take the
3 same stance that former secretary of education Bill
4 Bennett takes, be damned public education if it's
5 destroying our children, shut it all down and start
6 all over again. Radical approach. Certainly our
7 state legislators and our City Council people are
8 never that radical, and we don't expect that. But
9 clearly they've got hear the moaning and crying of
10 the new, the neo-slave, young black men and women
11 and young African-American poor and young Hispanic
12 poor and poor whites who are trapped in a system.
13 The problem is not just more money to solve it,
14 because we're talking about a problem which is
15 structural, a problem indeming, a problem that is
16 institutionalized, a problem that has cultural
17 pressure, imposing cultural values on children who
18 can't rise to meet the same demands we put on them.
19 Charter schools were a natural outcome.

20 Teachers unions were not in favor of
21 charter schools in early days. I helped five years
22 ago to help legislation which went into the State of
23 Pennsylvania, and I personally lobbied and fought to
24 try to get people like State Representative Evans
25 and State Representative Mike Horsey and others in

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1
2 the black caucus to take the leadership in education
3 reform in the City of Philadelphia because what's
4 good young black African-Americans and young
5 Hispanics is good for young whites as well. We've
6 proven that through a hundred or more years of
7 fighting with civil liberties. When blacks acquired
8 those civil liberties, guess who else got them? All
9 people in American society. Charter schools are not
10 an experiment.

11 When you talk about charter schools,
12 holding them to a standard that we've never held the
13 public schools to charter schools have yet to talk
14 about having these large disparities. Truly a good
15 strong charter school is a progressive school which
16 allows us to be able to have not 75 percent teacher
17 certification, but only 50 percent. You need less
18 teacher certification. Martin Luther King and
19 Albert Schweitzer could never have taught in a
20 public school without being certified. What do we a
21 miss when we in fact put the same constraints on
22 everyday people who are fighting for their lives?
23 It's a battle of their lives. This is not a battle
24 of money, which is really what this issue is more
25 about than anything else.

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1
2 Education is a growth industry in
3 American society. The fight against charter schools
4 and this whole idea of the driving of money lies
5 more around the fact that people want to maintain
6 the status quo because of privilege. If in fact we
7 maintain the status quo, the people who have
8 traditionally been able to get the contracts will
9 keep them. The people who continue to get the
10 promotions will keep them; the tenure, will keep
11 them. The people who will continue to buy or sell
12 the toilet paper, the pencils, the books, they'll
13 keep it. The construction contracts will stay in
14 the same place, they'll keep them. It's a golden
15 opportunity for African-Americans to see themselves
16 not being students, but to run their own schools,
17 become entrepreneurs.

18 The State of Pennsylvania put 15 to 17
19 billion dollars a year in education. That's an
20 awful lot of money. And yet what happens is we do
21 not get the same bang for our buck. If we were in
22 fact in a business holding people to a business
23 standard, the product that we now see coming out of
24 most of public schools would force that business
25 into bankruptcy. And no banker would put more money

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2 into it. No, the charter schools are good. The
3 charter schools need support. The State needs to go
4 further.

5 Tim Daniels and others need to really
6 lobby for greater capitalization so many of these
7 schools when they're starting up have greater
8 start-up capital. They need to reduce the down time
9 for them getting the money to operate. It's a
10 business opportunity. Wouldn't it be wonderful if
11 in fact many of the African-America churches on
12 every corner had a school? Wouldn't it be great if
13 they replaced the bars with schools? But as long as
14 African-Americans don't believe they have the
15 ability to control the education and run the
16 education of their own children, they'll leave them
17 in the hands of other people.

18 Representative Clark makes a good point.
19 Teachers' unions are seen as adversaries because
20 they block the doors for many of reforms. You
21 cannot do that and at the same time be seen as a
22 person who is participating. Public education has
23 magna schools which are great. Nobody wants to shut
24 down Jenks, nobody wants to shut down Henry, nobody
25 wants to shut down good schools. But often times

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2 those who criticize the faults of the school system
3 are often times seen as pariah within the community.
4 They attempt to shut their voices down. Well, mine
5 is not one of those that can be shut down.

6 Special education can be handled in
7 public schools and also in charter schools, and more
8 money should be made available for that. We need to
9 recognize the fact that there's a culture within the
10 public school system that you're fighting, a culture
11 of nepotism, a culture of internal controls, a
12 culture of greed, a culture of politics, a culture
13 of special interests. And that is why there is much
14 resistance.

15 It is conceivable that the public
16 schools will have to learn and do as all other
17 business do in America, consider the possibility of
18 out-sourcing. Larger is not better. We don't ever
19 need to see again two and three and four thousand
20 children inside of one great big megalopolis, all
21 concrete.

22 I've challenged the black clergy, where
23 were they when the fight for reform was going on?
24 Where was the black clergy when in fact prayer was
25 taken out of the schools? Where is the black clergy

2 when dogs are allowed to come in and sniff? Where
3 is the black clergy when in fact lockers are being
4 searched and seized? First and fourth amendment
5 rights being violated. Where are were they? Where
6 are they now? You cannot really support two
7 masters. The gift they may get from union alliances
8 and from political alliances are not sufficient.
9 They're not sufficient.

10 Charter schools are often times been
11 used and seen in the same way as some of the people
12 sitting behind me are treated. It's all right but
13 not in my backyard. The truth of the matter is if
14 it's all right for one, it's all right for all. We
15 won't take those who may be mentally challenged in
16 our backyards or those who may in fact be
17 mis-educated in our backyards, but we'll take
18 prisons and halfway houses in our backyards. More
19 driven by profit and greed than it is by need.

20 Clearly, I think what happens is it's
21 very, very important for us to look at education
22 reform in its totality. It is impossible for us to
23 not to talk about public education and the
24 maintenance thereof. At the same time, it's
25 impossible for us to talk about meaningful reform

2 and not take into account home education. It may be
3 as many as 10 percent of the American population who
4 have the ability to have children in school are
5 educating themselves in their homes. You cannot
6 talk about reform without talking about charter
7 schools and magna schools. It's a part of the
8 equation.

9 Finally, you cannot talk reform without
10 talking about scholarships and vouchers, where
11 parents will be given the right to choose a school
12 of their choice and the money should follow the
13 child. Because in America, the American democracy,
14 it's fundamental. Freedom is the ability to make
15 choices and know what the consequence of the choice
16 is before you make it. Most Americans have
17 understood that and have had choice. But the poor,
18 particularly African-American poor and Hispanic poor
19 seldom get the choice to pick housing, to pick a
20 job, to pick education. Those who would dare block
21 the door for those reforms are really the enemy of
22 the people whether they're black or white. Middle
23 class black people suffer from some of the same
24 malaise that often times their counterpart white
25 middle class professionals suffer from, too, and

3 operating and selecting choice to send their
4 children to the school of their choice and at the
5 same time would have the audacity to talk against
6 the prospect of the poor having the same right.
7 Thanks you.
8 (Applause.)
9 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Dr.
10 Palmer.
11 Last, but certainly not least, Mr.
12 Eugene Bivens. And we're sorry your wife Dr. Bivens
13 had to leave but we thank you both.
14 DR. EUGENE BIVENS: I have copies of my
15 presentation here.
16 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
17 DR. EUGENE BIVENS: I'm Eugene Bivens
18 representing the NAACP Education Committee.
19 At the outset, we want to say that we
20 lament the fact that the public schools have
21 declined to the point where this public hearing has
22 to take place. Public schools could have been saved
23 if school districts had reformed disciplinary
24 procedures so that youngsters who wanted to attend
25 school could do so in a safe environment. Most

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2 acknowledge that charter schools and vouchers were

3 first proposed to establish safe school environments
4 for pupils and fearful parents.

5 This could have been done if school
6 districts shortened the process of due process when
7 transferring an unruly pupil to an alternative
8 setting. The signatures of 80 percent of the
9 teachers of a disruptive pupil should be enough to
10 have that pupil transferred to a discipline school.

11 There are other reforms that
12 unsuccessful school districts failed to address.
13 Such failures include: The failure to develop an
14 administrators exam recruit the most committed
15 individuals.

16 Two, the failure to adopt or examine
17 strategies used successfully elsewhere and pleaded
18 for by the public. Such strategies are now being
19 used successfully in charter schools such as
20 uniforms in the schools, cameras in the classroom,
21 cameras on school buses, and finally the use of
22 phonics so pupils can learn to read. The
23 Philadelphia Inquirer articles of August 25, 1998
24 and March 19, 1998, pages listed here report these
25 successes. The American Teacher newsletter states

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2 that the Learning First Alliance, an alliance of 12
3 organizations that includes the AFT, NEA, and

4 national organizations representing school boards,
5 principals, school administrators, teacher
6 educators, parents and others issued a paper calling
7 on educator and policy makers to adopt policies
8 consistent with available research on how to teach
9 reading effectively. That research, asserts the
10 paper, calls for a strong emphasis on phonemic
11 awareness.

12 Superintendent David Hornbeck has
13 steadfast refused affirmatively act on the use of
14 phonics in the teaching of reading. We posit that
15 the main reason young males lose interest in school
16 is because of their inability to read. These tragic
17 circumstances lead to low self esteem often an even
18 more tragic journey into criminal behavior. An idle
19 mind is a devil's workshop.

20 These strategies, rejected by
21 unsuccessful school districts, can now be
22 implemented in charter schools. This is good.

23 The charter choice is not to be confused
24 with the voucher choice. The proposed voucher plan
25 as reported in the Philadelphia Inquirer would give

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2 parents \$350 to \$1,000 per child, based upon income.
3 A voucher system would lead us back to

4 the same old problems. The same unready pupils
5 would be forced upon the schools, and there would be
6 further destruction of what is left of the public
7 schools. A myriad of other problems would ensue.
8 Inept administrators would cause school after school
9 to fail. When schools fail, we find brand new
10 materials that unsuspecting teachers ordered, now
11 out on a school platform waiting for the trash
12 truck, promoting further waste. I've seen it. I've
13 seen it with the Keystone school. What then happens
14 to the child who wants a transcript to attend
15 college and his high school has closed? This is
16 only one example of what vouchers could bring about.
17 To a lesser extent, same could happen to charter
18 schools.

19 The idea to establish a joint State/
20 City committee to guide us through this critical
21 period of educational and social development is
22 good. We hope that joint hearings lead to this
23 initiative.

24 Certainly we cannot go on with charter
25 fighting the school districts for scarce resources,

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2 each with their own bias. A house divided cannot
3 stand.

4 Nebulous areas of funding like

5 transportation, where the school district claims
6 inability to perform, need to be attended to.
7 Possible recruitment of some of the parents to be
8 licensed bus drivers with the appropriate vehicles
9 may be one solution.

10 A joint, odd member, City and State
11 Charter School Committee funded by both bodies, with
12 staff from the Education Committees of each, may be
13 one method of alleviating the growing pains of
14 charter schools in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania
15 Department of Education should have representation
16 on the committee. The committee should elect its
17 own chairperson. The Pennsylvania Department of
18 Education should have the task of initiating the
19 formation of the committee with authorizing
20 legislation.

21 Let us move on. Thank you for
22 listening.

23 CHAIRWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much. We certainly thank you for staying all day.
25 We apologize to the those committee members for the

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2 Health and Human Services Committee. We did not
3 mean to delay you. We did not expect some of my
4 colleagues asking questions that would delay you.

5 We hope your hearing goes as well as ours has. And
6 with this, if there are no further comments or
7 questions, we would recess the committee subject to
8 the call of the Chair. Thank you.

9 Certainly, all of the guests who were
10 here, let me say a special thanks to State
11 Representative Dwight Evans who co-Chair and State
12 Representative Mike Horsey, all the guests who came
13 out of town, all the people from across the State.
14 All those who represent private company and
15 interests were all contacted by State Representative
16 Dwight Evans and his office, and we certainly thank
17 him because we could not have had a hearing without
18 the State being involved. Thank you.

19 (Hearing adjourned at 4:10 p.m.)

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

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I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing

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proceedings of the Council of the City of

6 Philadelphia of December 8, 1998, were reported
7 fully and accurately by me, and that this is a
8 correct transcript of the same.

9

10

11

12 RE: COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

13

14

15

16

17 Lisa C. Bradley, RPR
18 and Notary Public

19

20 Debra A. Whitehead, RPR
21 and Notary Public

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