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

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, 11/10/99
2:25 p.m.

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RES. 990041 - Authorizing the City Council
Committee on Education to hold public hearings on
a proposal to require the School District of the
City of Philadelphia to educate elementary and
secondary school-aged children about the
historical event surrounding the Great Irish
Famine of 1845 to 1850.

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RES. 990540 - Calling on the City Council
Education Committee to hold hearings to
investigate the Board of Education providing
library facilities for all students within public
schools or provide for access to a planned library
program, possibly through shared resources and
either the Free Library or one of its branches, or
in some other community setting.

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PRESENT: COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN
COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY
COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILMAN ANGEL ORTIZ
COUNCILMAN FRANK DICICCO

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2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good afternoon.

4 The Committee on Public Education is now called to
5 order.

6 For the record those in attendance are:

7 I am Councilwoman Donna Reed-Miller, Chair of this
8 committee; to my left, Councilwoman Jannie
9 Blackwell; to my right, Councilman Jim Kenney and
10 Councilman Frank DiCicco.

11 Will the clerk please read the
12 resolution.

13 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 990041,
14 authorizing the City Council Committee on
15 Education to hold public hearings on a proposal to
16 require the School District of the City of
17 Philadelphia to educate elementary and secondary
18 school-aged children about the historical event
19 surrounding the Great Irish Famine of 1845 to
20 1850.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you. There
22 are two bills to be heard in this committee today,
23 and we're going to deal with the library bill
24 after this bill.

25 Councilman Kenney, you have an opening

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2 statement?

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you, Madam
4 Chairperson, and thank you all for your attendance
5 today.

6 This resolution was introduced on
7 January 26th of 1999 in an effort to bring
8 attention to the issue of a curriculum change
9 that's being requested within the School District
10 of Philadelphia as it relates to the events that
11 unfolded in the 1840s in the nation of Ireland,
12 which resulted in a major migration of Irish
13 people into various countries of the world -- the
14 most, probably, in the United States of America.

15 It's my belief that because we live in
16 a polyglot society that we live in, that it is
17 important for children of all ages, of all ethnic
18 and racial backgrounds, to have an understanding,
19 and a shared understanding, of each other's common
20 experience. And whether it's treatment and study
21 of the issues of slavery, issues of the Holocaust,
22 issues of other catastrophes that have happened
23 throughout this world's history, I believe in the
24 end, our children all have the ability to
25 understand each other's share of experiences and

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2 tragedies, similarly as we do to understand each
3 other's heroes.

4 One example that I give, in many places
5 where I've been is that through the course of my
6 educational experience, I never heard the name
7 Octavius D. Cato. Octavius D. Cato was probably
8 one of the most famous Americans and
9 Philadelphians in the history of this country,
10 responsible for the desegregation of the trolley
11 system in Philadelphia and for the voting rights
12 acts of those times, urging people, black
13 Americans, to register and vote, and was
14 assassinated at Seventh and South, on the street,
15 for his work. And the reason that I raise that
16 issue is because I was never taught about him.
17 If.

18 I and my children and other children
19 who look like me and come from the background that
20 I come would have an opportunity from to learn
21 about people like Octavius Cato, people like
22 Richard Allen, and others that we really don't
23 hear much about, we would have the ability not
24 only to share each other's heroes and study issues
25 like the Holocaust and slavery and the Great

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2 Hunger of Ireland, it would give us the ability to
3 share each other's tragedies as well and, I think,
4 bring our society much closer together and give
5 our children a much better understanding of our
6 common experiences and of our common American
7 citizenship.

8 With that said, I want to make two
9 requests of the Chair. First of all, we have very
10 good news to report. People who have been
11 advocating this curriculum in our public school
12 system, both in the city and statewide, have
13 reported to me a tremendous amount of cooperation
14 and help from the School District of Philadelphia,
15 including Superintendent Hornbeck, his staff, and
16 Mr. Epstein. I'd like to thank them for that.
17 The purpose of the hearing today is for the
18 individuals involved in promoting this to come
19 forward and talk basically about the cooperation
20 and progress that has been made in this regard.
21 It's not been contentious; it's been very helpful
22 and cooperative.

23 And, secondly, I would like to make a
24 request to the Chair, and I will consult with the
25 Chief Clerk on how we do this, but in the

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2 resolution, which says, "Authorizing City
3 Council's Committee on Education to hold public
4 hearings on a proposal to require the School
5 District of Philadelphia to educate elementary and
6 secondary school-aged children about the
7 historical events surrounding the Great Irish
8 Famine of 1845 to 1850," we're going to make a
9 request Madam Chair, that we change the word
10 "require" to "request," and I will deal with the
11 Chief Clerk's Office to attempt to change that so
12 that we have an understanding that this Council
13 doesn't have the ability to require anything but
14 to request and have received cooperation from the
15 School District in this regard. So I will make
16 those arrangements and inform the Chair of the
17 results of that.

18 And I do thank the Chair for her
19 acquiescence in allowing us to bring up three
20 panels of people who will talk about the efforts
21 that have been ongoing since January of 1999.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Thank you,
23 Councilman Kenney.

24 And I'd just like to take this
25 opportunity to thank you as chief sponsor of this

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2 resolution for introducing and calling for this
3 hearing. Our ability to be tolerant of one
4 another's differences is always fueled when we are
5 not afforded at an early age the opportunity to be
6 exposed to other ethnic group besides our own
7 history. It is our differences that allow us the
8 ability to bring so many variables and such
9 richness to our society.

10 Are there any -- is there anyone here
11 to testify on this bill?

12 I do have some names. James Mullin,
13 President of Irish Famine Curriculum Committee;
14 Robert Hurst, from the Mayo Society. Will you
15 please come up and have seat at the table.

16 Jack Worrall, past president of the
17 Federation of American Societies of the Delaware
18 Valley.

19 (Above-named individuals come forward.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And when you
21 testify, please state your name, spell your name
22 for the record, and proceed with your testimony.
23 And you can go in whatever order you want.

24 MR. MULLEN: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
25 My name is James Mullen. I am President of the

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2 Irish Famine Curriculum Committee. I'm also a
3 member of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust
4 Education.

5 It was my pleasure to meet with
6 representatives of the School District of
7 Philadelphia: Dr. Balsley, Mr. Epstein, and Mr.
8 Garrison. And we had a very productive meeting
9 with them. They drafted a letter, which I have in
10 my hand, and we're going to make some very
11 positive steps toward acquainting the students in
12 Philadelphia with the truth of what happened in
13 the Irish Famine.

14 One of the reasons why the 150th
15 anniversary of the Irish Famine is so important is
16 because it brought out an increased amount of
17 research into what really happened during the
18 Irish Famine. I was brought up thinking that the
19 Irish starved because they could only think of one
20 crop to grow, and when that crop was blighted,
21 they died for lack of imagination. The facts
22 behind the Famine are much more complicated, and
23 they can only be understood within the context of
24 British colonial rule in Ireland.

25 I'm going to be very brief, but I think

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2 that Thomas Jefferson put it that -- when he
3 wrote, when in the course of human events, a
4 famous declaration, he said, "A decent respect for
5 the opinions of mankind requires that we should
6 declare the causes which impel us to this
7 separation." And I think when we go about
8 studying the Irish Famine, we have to look at the
9 causes for the Famine. And the causes did not
10 begin with potato blight; they began with the
11 impoverishment of the Irish.

12 The Irish were impoverished over
13 hundreds of year. Their trade was repressed by
14 the English because it conflicted with the English
15 trade with the Continent. By the time English
16 laws were through in the 15th century, all Irish
17 goods had to be transported on English ships, go
18 through English ports, pay English duties. And at
19 the end, Irish trade in wool, linen, beef, pork
20 mutton, butter, cheese, fish, and glass were all
21 destroyed. And that's one step towards the
22 impoverishment of the Irish.

23 The next step was to seize the fertile
24 land in an agricultural country and drive the
25 Irish to the infertile land. This was done under

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2 Cromwell. At the same time, the Irish land owners
3 were forbidden to be east of the River Shannon
4 after 1654, and they faced the death penalty or
5 slavery in the West Indies.

6 It's been pointed out that, in a book
7 called, To Hell or Connaught, which tells the
8 story of Cromwell in Ireland, that Oliver
9 Cromwell's son, Henry, rounded up a thousand
10 "Irish wenches," he called them, and shipped them
11 off to Barbados. And he said, "Although we must
12 use force in taking them up, it is so much for
13 their own and likely to be so good and an
14 advantage to the public."

15 And this is -- these events are
16 concurred by W.E.B. DuBois. In his book Black
17 Folk Then and Now, he says, "Even young Irish
18 peasants were hunted down like men hunt down game
19 and were forcibly put aboard ship and sold to
20 plantations in Barbados."

21 The condition that the Irish were in
22 after their land was taken from them is described
23 by Jonathon Swift. The Irish were called "the
24 untrustworthy majority." Swift said, "Increasing
25 rent is squeezed out of the very blood and vitals

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2 and clothes and dwellings of the tenants who live
3 worse than English beggars. The families of
4 farmers who pay great rents are living in filth
5 and nastiness, upon buttermilk and potatoes,
6 without a shoe or a stocking to their feet or a
7 house so convenient as an English hog sty to
8 receive them."

9 The next thing that helped impoverish
10 the Irish, after losing their land and their
11 livelihood, was to have 140 years of penal laws
12 imposed upon them. Under these laws, the Irish
13 were forbidden to vote, enter a profession, hold
14 public office, practice their religion, engage in
15 trade or commerce, purchase land, lease land, or
16 inherit land from a Protestant. No Irish-Catholic
17 could be the guardian to a child, educate a child,
18 or send a child abroad to receive an education.
19 That will impoverish you too, 140 years of laws
20 like that.

21 The last one of those penal laws I
22 wanted to point out was, the British forbade the
23 practice of primogenitor so that the Irish could
24 not leave their land to eldest son; it had to be
25 divided among all the children so that over a very

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2 few generations, the Irish were living on smaller
3 and smaller plots of land.

4 I know this is a long story and it's
5 something that we're going to be working on with
6 the School District to make sure that it's taught,
7 but I have to go on to one other topic, which is
8 the amount of food that was exported during the
9 Irish Famine. This is something that I never
10 learned about going to Irish schools, but recent
11 research has shown that this is in fact what
12 happened. Free-market laissez-faire economics led
13 the British to export an abundance of food from
14 Ireland, while the Irish starved.

15 In 1845, a Famine year, over 25 million
16 bushels of grain were shipped out of Ireland.
17 Between 1846 and 1850, 3 million live animals were
18 exported, along with an increasing supply of bacon
19 and ham. During Black '47, when 400,000 Irish
20 people died of starvation, almost 4,000 vessels
21 carrying food left Ireland for ports in Bristol,
22 Glassgow, Liverpool, and London. In just 9 months
23 of that same year, 1,336,000 gallons of
24 grain-derived alcohol were exported from Ireland,
25 along with 822,000 gallons of butter.

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2 Now, what kind of a famine is it when
3 you have that kind of commodities leaving a
4 country while people starved to death. It's a
5 lack of entitlement, that's what the Irish starved
6 to death of; they weren't entitled to food.

7 I really appreciate the Council taking
8 up this resolution. I'm sure it will have a
9 tremendous impact on what our children learn. And
10 I'm grateful to the City of Philadelphia.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you, Mr.
14 Mullen.

15 Are there any questions of this
16 witness?

17 (No questions.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Then we'll
19 have Mr. Hurst, Robert Hurst, next.

20 MR. HURST: Thank you. My name is Bob
21 Hurst. I'm a member of the Mayo Association of
22 Philadelphia. And I want to thank Councilman
23 Kenney for the opportunity to speak here today and
24 for the words he spoke a little earlier.
25 Certainly, it says everything that we're here

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2 today about. I also want to thank Bob Kessler for
3 the opportunity to speak here.

4 I am here speaking on behalf of the
5 City Council's Committee on Education for
6 Resolution 990041. And I would request that the
7 School District be able to educate the elementary
8 and secondary school-aged children about the
9 events of the Great Irish Famine.

10 Between 1845 and 1850, the potato
11 plight destroyed the potato crop which was the
12 main staple and basic nourishment of the people of
13 Ireland. During this great hunger, over one
14 million people -- half of them children -- died of
15 starvation as a direct result of the potato
16 plight.

17 The real tragedy is that the so-called
18 Irish Potato Famine should never have occurred.
19 While a million people starved to death and
20 another million were forced to emigrate, food was
21 being forcibly exported from Ireland to Britain,
22 enough food to feed the entire nation several
23 times over. This period represented the bleakest
24 days of Irish history. The British government,
25 which failed miserably, later divested itself of

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2 the responsibility and instead forced the
3 accountability on the landlords. The landlords
4 evicted over a half a million people from their
5 homes, resulting in countless deaths caused by
6 exposure, disease, and starvation.

7 The continuation of the potato plight
8 led to the mass immigration of more than one
9 million people to the United States. Thousands
10 upon thousands set sail in coffin ships and never
11 arrived at their destination. Those immigrants
12 and the survivors of one of the most catastrophic
13 events in world history made, and continue to
14 make, lasting contributions to the culture and
15 history of America.

16 Each generation of school children in
17 the United States should be educated about the
18 Great Hunger in Ireland so they may develop an
19 understanding of this important historical event
20 and know the true story of this historic human
21 drama of millions of Irish immigrants who found
22 here, in the United States of America, the
23 freedom, liberty, and prosperity denied to their
24 ancestors in Ireland.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

3 Councilman Kenney?

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you very
5 much, Mr. Hurst and Mr. Mullen for your
6 presentations, and Mr. Worrall, for being here.

7 What I would like to do if possible for
8 the remainder of this panel and the next two
9 panels is that, since we have a general overview
10 of the history of what happened -- certainly not
11 as extensive as what we would like these children
12 to have through their education -- what I would
13 like to do is kind of attack the reasons or speak
14 to the reasons why it's important that we work
15 with the School District to ensure that this
16 curriculum moves forward.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.
18 Mr. Worrall.

19 MR. WORRALL: Thank you, Madam
20 Chairwoman. Thank you, members of the Council.

21 My name is John D. Worrall; people call
22 me "Jack." And Worrall is W-O-R-R-A-L-L. I am
23 the Chairman of the Economics Department at
24 Rutgers University, and I'm a graduate professor
25 of economics and industrial and labor relations at

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2 that university.

3 I am here today -- and I am a
4 professor, because when I was a child and I was
5 hungry, the people of Philadelphia did not turn
6 their backs on me. They took me to the children's
7 shelter, and the working people of this city fed
8 and clothed me. And then I went to St. John's
9 Orphanage. And my brothers and sisters, through
10 their charity, fed me.

11 And over the course of my life at St.
12 John's Orphanage and St. Thomas Moore and in the
13 regular army, I learned a lot about racism, and I
14 saw it in all walks of life and it was palpable.
15 And when I became a professor, I was determined
16 that I would speak out about it when I taught
17 labor economics and I saw people discriminated
18 against in housing and in education and in the
19 labor market.

20 And I taught the Great Famine at
21 Rutgers University in the Intellectual Heritage
22 Series. And the reason that I taught it was
23 because I wanted people of all colors and all
24 religions to understand the virulence and the evil
25 of racism. And some people who practice it, when

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2 they realize that genocide has been practiced
3 against their own people, are not so quick to
4 practice it against their brothers and sisters.

5 And I would like to thank the City
6 Council publicly, all its members, Congressman
7 (sic) Kenney for speaking out about racism. And I
8 would like to thank publicly the School Board for
9 trying to do the same in the schools of
10 Philadelphia. I would like to thank the School
11 Board for helping us to educate children about
12 racism.

13 And when people learn that at this time
14 in Ireland, 35 percent of the combined population
15 of the, quote/unquote, United Kingdom was starving
16 to death, that country paid 1 half of 1 percent of
17 GNP to feed and to clothe them, and when they see
18 people in America born in need, who need
19 education, who need housing, who need to be
20 treated with dignity and respect that all of our
21 brothers and sisters deserve, that they won't
22 visit that same kind of evil on their fellow
23 citizens.

24 Thank you very much.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Does any member
4 of the committee have any questions for any of
5 these three witnesses?

6 (No questions.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, I want to
8 thank you very much for taking the time to come
9 here today.

10 The next group is Tom Slatterly, Tom
11 Meehan, and Dan McGinley. And because we have
12 another hearing, we want to limit the
13 presentations to maybe two minutes, three minutes,
14 because we have a lot of other people to testify
15 in the next hearing.

16 I also want to recognize for the record
17 that Councilman David Cohen and Councilman Ortiz
18 and Councilman Mariano are now here at the table.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: May I say,
21 Madam Chair, before they begin, let me tell
22 everyone here for the libraries that we will begin
23 very shortly. I would have told you a little
24 later but I wasn't aware that we had another bill
25 and we're glad certainly to have this testimony.

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2 But if you'll give us just a few minutes, we will
3 give you a chance to make your presentation, and
4 we thank you also for coming.

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good afternoon.
6 Please state your name and speak directly into the
7 mike.

8 MR. SLATTERY: My name is Tom Slattery,
9 S-L-A-T-T-E-R-Y. I'm a Philadelphian who now
10 happens to be in Bucks County.

11 In 1994, as we got to the beginning of
12 the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine, I was
13 appalled at the lack of knowledge of the event,
14 which Mr. Mullen and Mr. Hurst have appropriately
15 told you, and also at all ethnic stereotyping, and
16 determined that what we need to do is get
17 information into the hands of the general public.
18 With the help of experts, we've put together a
19 Famine Education set, which we wanted to place
20 into the libraries. This is fine for educating
21 the adult community, but what is needed is an
22 appropriate curriculum -- which Mr. Mullen has put
23 together -- and some direction for people like
24 City Council to get this information into the
25 hands of young people so that young people can

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2 understand that all of us have gone through good
3 times and tough times. So far, we have been able
4 to place 59 of these Famine Education sets, a copy
5 of which is up there on your desk.

6 Now with the generosity of Bob Gessler
7 and C.C.C. Kelp, we would like to give set no. 60
8 to City Council, and that set will remain here.

9 Thank you very much.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

11 MR. MCGINLEY: Good afternoon. I'm Dan
12 McGinley, and I'm speaking for Jan Morris, the
13 President of the Philadelphia Irish Society. And
14 I want to thank the Councilwoman Miller and the
15 members of the Education Committee for having this
16 opportunity.

17 I certainly won't read the whole text
18 that I have here, but I've submitted it so you'll
19 have it for the record. But I would say that
20 there are great lessons to be learned from
21 teaching about the Irish Famine, and it doesn't
22 just concern the Irish. It really is one of the
23 worst human disasters of the 19th century. And
24 the Irish, who really make up one of the largest
25 ethnic groups in this area, have learned a great

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2 deal from that experience. And, of course, as an
3 old history teacher, we're supposed to learn about
4 history so we don't have to repeat it. And we
5 would hope that we could certainly do that and
6 teach our children that way too.

7 I, too, grew up in the home of two
8 Irish immigrants, people who had worked hard just
9 to get to this country. And there were three
10 things which characterized them. One was, they
11 were very thankful to be here, so they were very,
12 very happy about the benefits of our society and
13 never missed an opportunity to vote. Two, they
14 valued education highly because in their own
15 country, they had been only able to get a
16 6th-grade education. And, three, they were
17 without prejudice, because they had realized what
18 it was to be a second-class citizen in their own
19 country. So that those, types of lessons, I
20 learned at home.

21 Now, I am also a qualified social
22 studies teacher. And in my own studies, I didn't
23 learn about the Irish Famine and -- nor was I able
24 to teach it to students. What I've learned about
25 the Irish Famine, I learned from outside of the

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2 regular curriculum, even though I studied American
3 history, European history, that seemed to be
4 pretty much of an oversight.

5 And I would just like to close with the
6 words of Tony Blair, who apologized for his
7 government's role in the famine. And he stated,
8 "Those who governed in London at that time failed
9 the people through standing by while a crop
10 failure turned into a massive human tragedy. We
11 must not forget such a dreadful event."

12 Now, our metropolitan area is second
13 only to Boston in the percentage of families of
14 Irish ancestry. And according to the 1990 census,
15 there were 268,179 Irish in Philadelphia. The
16 Philadelphia Irish Society believes that the Irish
17 history should be taught in our schools, not
18 because we have so many citizens of Irish
19 ancestry, but because it contains so many examples
20 of a great human tragedy. It also provides a very
21 concrete example of what can occur, especially
22 when those who have the responsibility to act fail
23 to do so.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

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2 MR. MEEHAN: Madam Chairperson. My
3 name's Tom Meehan. I'm a Philadelphia firefighter
4 and have been for 25 years. I'm the past
5 president of the Division 22 of the Ancient
6 Hibernians, named after the firefighter John J.
7 Revin (ph.), who was killed, ironically, fighting
8 a church fire in a Baptist church in 1994. John
9 was a staunch Catholic, a great firefighter, but
10 he had a knowledge of Irish history, which he
11 taught me. Every day, we used to sit there in the
12 firehouse and talk about what wasn't taught in the
13 school system. We have children who went through
14 the Philadelphia school systems.

15 My division had taken it upon itself,
16 through Mr. Slatterly's help, to distribute Irish
17 Famine sets to Philadelphia schools. And on two
18 dates since 1997, we presented four high school
19 sets and six grade school sets of the Famine
20 curriculum books to the Philadelphia schools:
21 North Catholic and St. Basil's Academy, Roman and
22 Hallahan on the high school side, Our Lady of
23 Mount Carmel in South Philadelphia, St. Cecilia's
24 in Fox Chase, St. Matthew's in Mayfair, St. Peter
25 the Apostle at Fifth and Girard, St. Martin de

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2 Porres at 24th and Lehigh, and St. John's in
3 Manayunk. And we're in the process of
4 distributing more volumes this year to other
5 schools.

6 The members of my division have taken
7 it upon themselves to have Irish history taught in
8 schools and in their parishes that they belong
9 to. And we feel this is a way to urge Council to
10 take this upon them and the School District to
11 have something thought that we weren't taught when
12 we came through the City schools. One line or two
13 lines in a history book that says, There was a
14 potato famine, and the Irish died, or the Irish
15 emigrated to other countries -- what happened to
16 the four million people who used to be on the
17 Irish census in the early 1840s and were no longer
18 there in 1850? History says that 1.5 million
19 people emigrated to other countries, but those
20 other people died, and they don't show up in
21 anybody else's rolls.

22 And we would like this taught for -- I
23 mean, this is -- it was a case basically of the
24 original ethnic cleansing, and we would like this
25 taught in schools.

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2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.

4 Thank you for your testimony.

5 Are there any questions from this
6 committee? Councilman Kenney?

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you. And
8 thank you, Mr. Meehan. I appreciate your
9 sentiments.

10 And as you know, John was a friend of
11 mine from childhood. And I never let it go by
12 when someone mentions John that on that same
13 dreadful day, we lost firefighter Vince Acey
14 (ph.), who was an African-American firefighter,
15 who fought side by side with John at that same
16 Rising Sun Baptist church and they died heroically
17 together, which, I think, is a good message of
18 what's coming out of this hearing today.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. MEEHAN: If I may add, those two
21 gentlemen died protecting the retreat of their
22 brother firefighters as the situation became
23 untenable.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

25 MR. SLATTERLY: Thank you for the

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2 opportunity.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

4 Next we have we have Bob Gessler and
5 Tom Conaghan.

6 (Messrs. Gessler and Conaghan come
7 forward.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you. You
9 can proceed, whomever.

10 MR. GESSLER: Tom can go first.

11 MR. CONAGHAN: I'd like to thank
12 Councilman Kenney and Madam Chairwoman,
13 Councilmembers, Mr. Gessler here for inviting me
14 to give some testimony today.

15 The federation -- I represent the
16 Federation of Irish-American Societies, which is
17 an umbrella for the Irish societies and
18 organizations in the Delaware Valley. We're
19 located in Philadelphia.

20 The federation of Irish-American
21 Societies of the Delaware Valley supports the
22 teaching of the Irish Famine curriculum in
23 Philadelphia's public schools.

24 Ireland starved because its food, from
25 30 to 50 shiploads per day, was removed under

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2 armed guard by 12,000 British constables
3 reinforced by 200,000 British soldiers. Records
4 are available to prove official British intents by
5 its actions and enactments in Parliament. Ship
6 manifests are available, which show clearly that
7 thousands upon thousands of tons of food were
8 removed from Ireland during the worst years of
9 Famine.

10 Eyewitness accounts are available.
11 Just one example. The mother of Oscar Wilde wrote
12 a poem in 1847 called "The Famine Year," telling
13 about soldiers removing food from the
14 (unintelligible) families and stately ships taking
15 that food away to England.

16 The designation in the period of Irish
17 history between 1845 and 1850 as "the Great
18 Famine" has disturbed scholars for years. A
19 (unintelligible) implication that there was no
20 food. British records indicate the exact
21 opposite.

22 Irish-American children deserve to know
23 their own history. Many will be shocked by it.
24 However, the suffering endured by their ancestors,
25 their courage, their struggles and accomplishments

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2 in the new land, their story must be told.

3 Irish-American children epitomize the courage and
4 hopes manifested by the millions of Irish who were
5 compelled to leave their beloved Ireland in search
6 of freedom and opportunity in America.

7 The (unintelligible) contribution of
8 Irish immigrants was indispensable in making these
9 United States the greatest power and the most
10 benevolent nation in recorded history.

11 Thank you very much.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

13 Are there any questions of this witness
14 from anybody on the committee?

15 (No questions.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.

17 MR. GESSLER: My name is Bob Gessler,
18 County Board President of the Philadelphia Ancient
19 Hibernians. I would like to thank Chairperson
20 Miller, Councilman Ken, Mariano, and all of the
21 Councilpeople that are here today for considering
22 this resolution.

23 The purpose of this resolution is, as
24 people can hear is, just to teach the true story
25 of what happened during that awful time in Irish

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2 history. And for the reason, we feel that if
3 people understand the suffering of others and also
4 what happened, you know, after they arrived in
5 America, the treatment they got here, you know,
6 the racism, the bigotry, so maybe that people will
7 understand a little bit better that all the races
8 have experienced these types of things, and maybe
9 make each other a little bit more tolerant in the
10 future.

11 I would like to commend the School
12 District of Philadelphia. Right from the
13 beginning, they've been very cooperative with us
14 on this resolution, and they've gone above and
15 beyond what we expected them to. And we feel that
16 they might be a model of other school districts
17 throughout the state of Pennsylvania.

18 I would also ask that the statements by
19 Mayor Rendell and Mayor-elect John Street be read
20 into the record.

21 This is an issue not only dealing with
22 the Irish community, but I think that education on
23 this and learning really speaks to all of the
24 people of Philadelphia.

25 I'd like to also thank all of the

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2 members much of the Irish community that made it
3 out here today. We have representatives of a
4 majority of the Irish groups in the City of
5 Philadelphia -- the Ladies Ancient Order of
6 Hibernians, the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, the
7 Federation, and all the other groups that spoke up
8 here today.

9 So we would ask that Council would look
10 upon this resolution favorably and also would take
11 the time and read the materials that we've
12 provided to them. There's many other events
13 around this unfortunate period in Irish history,
14 including the construction of an Irish memorial at
15 Front and Chestnut, and to visit the Jeannie
16 Johnston, which is the recreation of an Irish
17 Famine ship that will be down at Penn's Landing
18 from June 1st through the year 2000.

19 So once again, I'd like to thank
20 Councilman Kenney and his staff for proposing this
21 resolution and also Councilman Miller for holding
22 this hearing.

23 Thank you very much.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

25 Does any members of the committee have

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2 any questions or comments for these two witnesses?

3 (No questions.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: All right, thank
5 you. We really appreciate your coming here to
6 testify today.

7 Councilman Kenney?

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you, Madam
9 Chairperson.

10 For the record, I'm going to submit,
11 through the Chair, to the stenographer two pieces
12 of correspondence -- one from the current mayor,
13 Edward G. Rendell, supporting this effort, and the
14 second is from the future mayor of Philadelphia
15 John F. Street, also supporting and commending the
16 efforts of this committee and of the Council and
17 of the School District in attempting to bring this
18 about. And I will submit this to the Chair today.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

21 The last and final witness for this
22 committee hearing is Superintendent Hornbeck.

23 (Superintendent David Hornbeck comes
24 forward.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

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2 SUPT. HORNBECK: Thank you very much,
3 Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee.

4 Let me simply say, with reference to
5 this first bill that is in front of Council, that
6 it has been our pleasure at the School District to
7 work with the individuals who are focussing the
8 attention of all of us on the issues arising out
9 of the Great Famine of the 1840s and 1850s in
10 Ireland. We look forward to that continuing
11 partnership. My own hope is that it won't be over
12 after we've had this first round of conversation.
13 I think that the resource that is represented by
14 the individuals that have appeared before you
15 today is really quite extraordinary.

16 I appreciate particularly Councilman
17 Kenney's comments as we began this conversation.
18 I do think that we learn immensely from each other
19 as we celebrate the diversity among us, and I at
20 least keep hoping that as we learn, we don't
21 repeat these mistakes from one generation to the
22 next.

23 I am struck, maybe as even a part of
24 the transition, by the observation that between
25 these bills that will be considered this

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2 afternoon, we are about to move from an
3 examination of the Potato Famine of the 1840s and
4 1850s to the literacy famine that exists in
5 Philadelphia and in Pennsylvania and in most poor
6 communities across this state and this nation --
7 not of the 1840s and of the 1850s but of 1999.
8 And it is one of those lessons.

9 I was struck by one of the individuals
10 who testified who noted, asking the sort of
11 rhetorical question of why did the Irish starve?
12 and then answered it by saying that they starved
13 because they were not entitled to have food. We
14 find ourselves, in my judgment, in 1999 in
15 Philadelphia and in rural and in urban
16 Pennsylvania in a situation in which the poor
17 children of this state are not entitled to have
18 reading materials in the libraries and aren't
19 entitled to have prekindergarten programs and
20 summer school. And it is partially that lesson
21 that as we teach about the 1840s and 1850s that we
22 fast-forward to 1999 and learn our lessons.

23 Thank you very much.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you
25 Superintendent Hornbeck.

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2 There are no other witnesses to testify
3 for this bill, and we're going to move right on to
4 the next bill.

5 Superintendent Hornbeck, will you come
6 back to the table. Floyd Alston, Andrew Farnese,
7 Debra Gniewek, Tom Gill, Dr. Marciene Mattleman,
8 and Shelly Yanoff.

9 The clerk will now read the title of
10 the bill.

11 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 990540, a
12 resolution calling on the City Council Education
13 Committee to hold hearings to investigate the
14 Board of Education providing library facilities
15 for all students within public schools or provide
16 for access to a planned library program, possibly
17 through shared resources and either the Free
18 Library or one of its branches, or in some other
19 community setting.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.
21 Councilwoman Blackwell?

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

23 Thank you for your patience, everyone.

24 Let me say that this legislation was initially
25 introduced in City Council on March 17, 1994, and

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2 then again on January 26, 1999. We are overjoyed
3 to finally have the opportunity to discuss and
4 explore the issue of having a library program for
5 all public school children.

6 I'm very encouraged by the excellent
7 information that I have received by many of you
8 here and also from those who are near and far. We
9 now know which schools have a library program as
10 well as which do not. I was surprised to learn
11 that out of 180 elementary schools, 110 do not
12 have a library program, but I was pleased to learn
13 also, however, that across the board, all the
14 testimony indicates that library programs affect
15 the learning, grades, and performance, and make a
16 difference in the lives of our children if made a
17 specific part of their curriculum.

18 With that, we're happy to have you here
19 today. I know that we are in a time crunch and
20 that some of you in this first panel have a
21 meeting with the Mayor. So, again, we apologize
22 for the delay and encourage you to begin your
23 testimony.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. ALSTON: Good afternoon

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2 Councilwoman Miller and Councilwoman Blackwell.

3 COUNCILMAN MILLER: Good afternoon.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
5 afternoon.

6 MR. ALSTON: It is a pleasure to be
7 here this morning on such an important issue, and
8 I will give brief but sincere comments before some
9 of the other persons before you will present.

10 It's a pleasure to be here to have a
11 dialogue with City Council about the library
12 programs and facilities in the School District of
13 Philadelphia. Superintendent Hornbeck will
14 provide you with a detailed report of where we are
15 on this issue. However, I want to make it clear
16 the Board's firm commitment to quality school
17 libraries for the children which our district
18 serves.

19 I believe that among some quarters,
20 there have been the misconception that the School
21 District administration doesn't believe that
22 libraries and librarians are important. That is
23 not true. We know that librarians and library
24 assistants are important players on the school
25 team, and that they provide critical support to

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2 what teachers are doing in the classrooms. That
3 is why we have asked that libraries and
4 instructional technology be discussed and
5 addressed at the highest level of the School
6 District.

7 For the past several years, we've had
8 an ongoing dialogue with the Association of
9 Philadelphia School Librarians who have eloquently
10 and passionately advocated on behalf of children's
11 access to books and libraries. I have spoken at
12 their annual citywide dinner and met informally
13 with librarians as I visited schools all over the
14 city. I know that librarians are dedicated men
15 and women who are doing a first-class job with
16 young people in our schools.

17 I have repeatedly assured those who
18 support libraries that we understand the
19 importance of an adequately resourced and
20 appropriately staffed library in every school in
21 this city. Yet, I know that it will take all of
22 us working together -- parents, teachers, and
23 other school staff administrators, School Board,
24 members and business community, and the business
25 community and elected officials -- for that

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2 reality to be the rule, not the exception in
3 Philadelphia.

4 In a perfect world where adequate
5 resources aren't an issue, every child would have
6 a school library, with hundreds of new and current
7 books, a certified librarian, and a library
8 assistant.

9 A library is a place where wonderful
10 things are possible, where imagination and
11 creativity are nurtured, and where magic can be
12 made. It's where the lifelong love of books,
13 information, and learning begin. Among the tables
14 and chairs, the card catalogs and stacks of books,
15 a library is a room that holds ideas, knowledge,
16 and information.

17 And let me say parenthetically, on one
18 of my visits to a library during the term last
19 year, I happened to be in one of our power
20 libraries, and a youngster came in the library
21 while I was there and he wasn't paying much
22 continuing to me, so he certainly wasn't doing it
23 for my benefit. And he walked into the room and
24 the first thing he did was take his shoes off and
25 grab a book and curled up on the couch, which is

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2 the kind of thing that, you know, you can't
3 replace that, or you can't substitute that kind of
4 informal exposure to books. And I will never
5 forget that scene.

6 Inside libraries, ideas can travel
7 through hundreds of years, across cultures, and
8 around the world from one mind to another.
9 Libraries have evolved into the multimedia
10 centers, with loads of information at our
11 fingertips -- through video and audiotapes, CD
12 ROMs, films, and, of course, through computer
13 access through the Internet. The District has
14 tried to keep up to date with managing all of this
15 information by putting more computers in library
16 networks across the state and across the country,
17 sharing resources and teaching tools.

18 I believe it is clear that this
19 district has demonstrated its understanding of the
20 value of libraries. We have supported many
21 innovations, including the introduction of the
22 outstanding Library Power Program in many of our
23 schools.

24 At the same time, some hard realities
25 intrude upon this situation. When a principal,

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2 his or her staff, and the School Council sit down
3 to discuss the needs of the school and resources
4 available to them, they often have to make tough
5 decisions, agonizing choices. They have to
6 choose, for instance, between an additional
7 classroom teacher or a librarian because of
8 inadequate funding -- a point we've come back to
9 many, many times before. We've often had to rob
10 Peter to pay Paul.

11 Is it the best solution? I don't think
12 so, and no one will argue that. But it is the
13 most practical one, in some instances.

14 Still, most school administrators have
15 tried to find ways to make research and
16 instructional materials available to students for
17 at least some of the time. Some schools have
18 redeployed their internal staff so that libraries
19 are available to our children, even though they
20 may not have a full-time librarian. Or some
21 schools have a librarian on duty only a few days a
22 week. These times have called for creative
23 thinking and ideas about how to configure school
24 budgets so that the students get at least some of
25 the benefits from a library program.

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2 Any parent who has had to balance a
3 family budget knows how heartwrenching these types
4 of choices can be. Libraries, like many other
5 parts of the District programs, have sustained
6 painful cuts. None of us have operated under the
7 illusion that these cuts haven't hurt our school
8 programs, our teachers, our classrooms, or our
9 children. That is why we drew a line in the sand
10 and refused to make any more instructional-based
11 reductions, which can have such devastating
12 effects on our children.

13 We know that libraries and librarians
14 support teaching and learning. They contribute
15 greatly to improving literacy, which is essential
16 to success in life. Give a child a love of
17 reading early on, and you will have given him or
18 her the tools to open up their world.

19 We look forward to continue to go talk
20 with City Council and other elected officials and
21 the broader community about how we can work
22 together to make libraries an integral part of the
23 educational experience for students in our
24 schools. I am convinced that between us, we have
25 the passion for the needs for children and the

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2 commitment to doing things that will give them
3 every tool possible to help them succeed in school
4 and succeed in life.

5 Thank you very much.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you, Mr.
7 Alston.

8 Mr. Hornbeck, Superintendent Hornbeck?

9 SUPT. HORNBECK: Madam Chair, members
10 of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity
11 to appear this afternoon before this committee to
12 discuss the importance of school libraries.

13 As a strong advocate of quality school
14 library programs, I was gratified to learn of the
15 interests that you and your colleagues have
16 demonstrated in our school library programs. Your
17 interest comes at a timely juncture, as the
18 current information explosion makes the library
19 program one of the critical elements in building
20 lifelong learning in our students.

21 I'm hopeful that heightened community
22 interest in this issue will make it possible to
23 identify the increased resources necessary to put
24 this support, as well as others that are equally
25 critical, to continue our dramatic growth in

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2 achievement in place in all of our schools.

3 In the course of the past several
4 weeks, the local and national media have made a
5 compelling case for the public school libraries in
6 Philadelphia, demonstrating both the depth of the
7 need and the power of a strong library program.
8 Once again, the stories have indicated the wide
9 gap that exists between the libraries available to
10 students in this city and those available to
11 children attending suburban schools.

12 Given the clear need for improved
13 library programs and the current interest in them,
14 the traditional response from me as an urban
15 superintendent might be to instruct my central
16 staff and staff in our schools that libraries
17 would immediately become our highest priority
18 item, to call for every school to have a librarian
19 by next fall, to ask you to dedicate part of the
20 City surplus toward this issue, and to pledge to
21 direct every new funding source that could
22 possibly be used for library expansion toward that
23 goal.

24 So why -- if I believe that excellent
25 libraries are a necessary part of making every

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2 child proficient, which I do; and if I have local
3 data that confirms the national data suggesting
4 that a good library programs pays off in increased
5 test scores, which I have; and if I understand
6 that the District needs to be seen as proactive on
7 this issue, which I do -- why don't I take the
8 approach that I just outlined?

9 I don't take it because that approach
10 misses the point. Such an increase would come at
11 the expense of directing principals to shift
12 resources away from other programs that, based on
13 strong data, we know to be as crucial as good
14 libraries to the development of high achievement
15 and lifelong learning skills by our children. To
16 direct school staff and communities to shift their
17 meager resources away from other effective
18 programs and into libraries would be to embark
19 again on one of those cannibalistic exercises in
20 which our principals, teachers, and parents are
21 forced to make choices that no responsible adults
22 in a just and fair society should in fact be
23 making; that is, choices between kindergarten and
24 libraries, choices between classroom libraries and
25 school libraries, choices between smaller classes

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2 and school libraries, and choices between graphing
3 calculators for high school students and school
4 libraries.

5 You know and I know that the
6 principals, teachers, and parents in schools in
7 the suburbs are never asked to make those kinds of
8 choices.

9 Let me illustrate this more
10 specifically by pointing to the coverage by a
11 representative of the national television media at
12 the Peirce Elementary School. Peirce is located
13 in North Philadelphia, 23rd and Cambria Streets,
14 and has a poverty rate of 90 percent. For the
15 past six years, Principal Shively Willingham has
16 worked tirelessly with his staff and community to
17 make the best possible uses of the resources that
18 are available to him -- not only through the
19 District's operating budget, which is funded by
20 the State and the City, but by careful and
21 creative use of federal dollars that come to
22 Peirce through Title I and other federal grants.
23 With these funds Mr. Willingham and his staff have
24 put into place full-day kindergarten, reduced
25 class size in grades K and 1, an extended year

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2 program, a tutorial program with the Allegheny
3 West Foundation, and a balanced literacy program,
4 including the 100 Book Challenge, and Steps to
5 Great Books. Each of these is a practice that,
6 evidence tells us, increases student achievement.

7 Last year, Mr. Willingham and his staff
8 squeezed out enough funds to spend \$2300 per
9 classroom on books to create in-class libraries so
10 the students could be guaranteed a wide variety of
11 materials right at hand every day, which research
12 has shown to increase student achievement.

13 Have they made progress? I'm proud to
14 say that Peirce is one of 164 schools in the
15 School District of Philadelphia that is on target
16 to making its 12-year goal of having 95 percent of
17 all of its students scoring at the proficient
18 level on the SAT-9, which will put those students
19 significantly ahead of grade level and ahead of
20 the national average.

21 But when the national media came to do
22 a story on Peirce's library, they didn't report
23 any of this story, which Mr. Willingham had
24 proudly recounted as he walked them through the
25 school. They focussed only on the story line that

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2 brought them here, noting the impoverished state
3 of Peirce's library. Mr. Willingham and the
4 cluster leader and I couldn't agree more that the
5 Peirce library is an embarrassment to all of us in
6 this city. Indeed, that's why Mr. Willingham made
7 the decision to close it. But it is only one
8 example of the inequities constantly visited on
9 the children of Peirce School by the choices that
10 the State and federal officials of this land make
11 every day in the funding levels and formulas that
12 they design.

13 I have been amazed at what seems to be
14 a growing impression that our school principals do
15 not value libraries, or that the District is
16 somehow negligent in how we support them. In the
17 past five years, there's been a 50 percent
18 increase in the District resources spent on
19 library materials.

20 Do we want better school libraries? Of
21 course, we do. No one wants a school library in
22 which children are reading outdated at best or
23 racist and sexist books at worst that can be
24 harmful to children. No one wants libraries that
25 are dingy, dilapidated, and uninviting. It is, in

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2 fact, for reasons like these that some principals,
3 like Mr. Willingham, have actually closed their
4 substandard libraries and redirected the resources
5 and the energy it took to support them to other
6 uses.

7 Like our principal at Peirce, they have
8 built classroom collections that engage children
9 and provide stimulating reading materials to
10 youngsters who have few or no books available to
11 them at home. Partners such as Marciene
12 Mattleman, who also will testify at this hearing,
13 have been tremendously helpful in raising funds
14 for hundreds of 100 Books Challenge classroom
15 collections.

16 Our principals have forged links with
17 local public libraries. I'm pleased you will hear
18 from Elliot Shelkrot shortly, because I know that
19 the Free Library has been, and will continue to
20 be, an aggressive partner in enriching the
21 learning environment for all of our children.

22 Is this enough? Of course not. But
23 not because we don't value libraries.

24 One thing that has surprised me over
25 the past several weeks that even our local press,

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2 which has consistently kept the public informed
3 about the more than \$1900 per child per year gap
4 between the resources made available to our
5 students and those available to students in the
6 surrounding 61 school districts, reported on this
7 issue in isolation rather than connecting this
8 story to its source -- the federal and state
9 funding formulas.

10 For example, on the list in the
11 Inquirer of ways that interested people in the
12 community could help our libraries -- which was a
13 grate list and which we deeply appreciate -- where
14 was the eloquent plea to citizens to write to
15 Harrisburg for fair funding for our schools?

16 Madam Chair, I suggest that we cannot
17 improve urban schools by continuing to direct
18 principals and superintendents to cannibalize one
19 set of successful programs in order to shift
20 resources to other areas of compelling need,
21 contrary to the decisions of those closest to the
22 needs of students, in response to whichever
23 inequity of the month has captured the media's
24 attention. And that's particularly true at a
25 school such as Peirce, where the evidence is clear

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2 that the decisions made by Mr. Willingham and his
3 faculty are, in fact, working for the children.

4 What I want to do, and what I know this
5 Council and our citizens, our mayor, our
6 mayor-elect and our governor want to do, is to
7 help Shively Willingham and the staff and
8 community of the Peirce School and schools all
9 across this city maintain the rate of improvement
10 they have shown over the last few years.

11 That does not mean Monday morning
12 quarterbacking their decisions, which were made
13 intelligently and thoughtfully and
14 collaboratively. It does not mean Hobbesian
15 choices between kindergarten teachers and
16 librarians, between classroom book collections for
17 the 100 Book Challenge, as Mr. Willingham and his
18 faculty have chosen at Peirce, or books for the
19 school library or between music and art teachers
20 and librarians.

21 Instead, it means taking every possible
22 opportunity for all of us who care about
23 Philadelphia students to join in the fight for
24 fair funding from Harrisburg. All of us should
25 take our energy for the particular issue that most

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2 touches our hearts and generates our active
3 participation, be it smaller classes,
4 before-school and after-school programs, or
5 preschool programs or graphing calculators or
6 classroom computers or school libraries -- all of
7 which, research tells us, results in higher
8 achievement -- and direct our energies towards the
9 necessary crusade to give our schools and our
10 children the funds they must have to continue on
11 our current upward course.

12 Madam Chair and members of this
13 Council, there is no better example of the bitter
14 choices that we have to make in this school
15 district than the concern we are here to address
16 today. In the past five years, although the
17 number of dollars per student spent on library
18 resources has grown from \$3.45 to \$5.97, the 50
19 percent increase I mentioned earlier, this remains
20 woefully inadequate. The statewide average for
21 library spending per pupil is more than \$12.
22 Funding for our libraries -- like class sizes, the
23 absence of prekindergarten, only half of the
24 summer school program, woefully inadequate
25 after-school programs, and teacher and principal

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2 salaries that trail suburban teacher and principal
3 salaries by huge amounts -- is at best unfair and
4 unjust.

5 Our commitment to continue to expand
6 our spending is contained in our document "Fair
7 Opportunities to Learn," adopted June a year ago
8 by the Board of Education in conjunction with our
9 increased graduation and promotion requirements,
10 and they are attached to this testimony for your
11 information. The Board of Education adopted those
12 as the minimum resources our children and our
13 teachers need to meet the standards necessary for
14 success in college and on the job.

15 When I submit the proposed Fiscal Year
16 2001 Budget in late January or February, among the
17 Fair Opportunity to Learn Proposals will be an
18 additional \$6.9 million for our libraries for the
19 2000-2001 school year. This will take us to the
20 State average in spending on books. In the
21 subsequent two years, we will propose raising the
22 spending on libraries to \$28 per student for
23 elementary students and \$44 per student at the
24 secondary level, the national average. These
25 funds will also increase significantly the number

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2 of schools that will have full-fledged Library
3 Power Programs with full-time librarians.

4 I will be pleased, at your convenience,
5 to respond to any questions you may have.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Are there
7 any questions of this witness from any members of
8 the committee?

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Madam Chair,
10 at your request, we'll hold our comments in the
11 interest of time, and then maybe we'll take a few
12 questions a little later.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: All right. This
14 gentleman is representing yourself. Tom Gill?

15 MR. GILL: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Marciene
17 Mattleman and then Shelly Yanoff.

18 (Above-named individuals come forward.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Mr. Farnese is
20 not here, am I correct?

21 SUPT. HORNBECK: Mr. Farnese, I don't
22 think is in the chamber this afternoon.

23 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: All right, thank
24 you.

25 MR. GILL: Thank you. My name is Tom

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2 Gill, G-I-L-L. I'm a professor of reading
3 instruction at West Chester University. I've been
4 a classroom teacher and a professor for over 30
5 years.

6 I came to West Chester University five
7 years ago to accept a position focussing on
8 teaching current and future teachers to teach
9 children in the inner city, 75 percent of whom
10 nationwide are reading well below grade level, to
11 read and become fully literate. I coordinate and
12 teach in a masters and reading program held in the
13 Bartram Cluster for 20 K-to-3 teachers in two
14 schools, a program which includes not only
15 graduate course work and reading instruction but
16 also West Chester University professors teaching
17 side by side with the classroom teachers during
18 the school day. I talked with the teachers this
19 morning, and they're waiting for me for their
20 graduate class this afternoon and will meet into
21 the evening.

22 Over my career, I've learned what it
23 takes for children to become literate. And in my
24 experience with schools in and teachers, I've seen
25 in Philadelphia and elsewhere why it too often

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2 doesn't happen.

3 I'm here today to support the
4 resolution for school libraries. It is an
5 essential piece of the literacy success puzzle,
6 but I want to share with you why school libraries
7 are necessary, but not sufficient, in the quest we
8 all have: that all of Philadelphia school
9 children become fully literate. And why this
10 Council's attempts to bolster literacy, through
11 mandated public school libraries, could ironically
12 not move the literacy push an inch if this effort
13 is not seen in the total context of the problem.

14 For anyone to learn to read and become
15 fully literate, two simple principles must be
16 honored. First, one must do much reading.
17 Reading only grows through practice, copious
18 amounts of practice. No one, no one becomes
19 literate without reading a lot, and few remain
20 illiterate if they do.

21 There are other things such as phonics,
22 word studies, spelling, and how to guide reading
23 for which we need skilled teachers. But no direct
24 instruction will ever bear the fruit of literacy
25 without great amounts of time spent in the act of

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2 reading for meaning.

3 Research has revealed that children who
4 are in the top 10 percentile in reading
5 achievement read every 8 days the number of words
6 that their grade-level peers whose reading
7 competence ranks them in the bottom 10 percentile
8 read in a year. This has been called the Matthew
9 effect -- the rich get richer and the poor get
10 poorer. And most of this reading takes place
11 outside of school, as it has been estimated that
12 nationally, elementary school children spend an
13 average of only six minutes per day reading
14 connected text.

15 One simple solution, one simple
16 principle that must be followed, then, is that
17 children must spend much of the school day
18 reading, as well as have ample opportunities to
19 read outside of school.

20 However, there is one huge catch. The
21 second principle to be honored is that reading
22 practice must take place in books that are not to
23 easy and not too hard; in other words, in books
24 that are of a goodness of fit with one's present
25 reading level. The problem is that all across

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2 America, children are given books whose level is
3 determined by the grade they are in rather than by
4 the children's actual reading level.

5 Nationally at any grade level, 50
6 percent of children read at grade level and above
7 and 50 percent read below grade level. In the
8 suburbs, where 80 percent or more of the children
9 read at grade level or above, grade-level reading
10 materials fit most of the children well enough.
11 However, in the inner cities of this country, 75
12 percent or more of the children are reading well
13 below grade level -- and not through any fault of
14 their parents or their teachers.

15 As the recent Inquirer editorial
16 stated, children from privileged literate
17 households are read to 1500 hours before coming to
18 school, while children from indigent families are
19 read to less than 50. Yet, on entering school,
20 they are given the same grade-level basal reading
21 books as suburban children. The American school
22 clique and materials have evolved to fit
23 privileged children, not all children.

24 Children who read in the top quartile
25 -- a large percentage of the children in the

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2 suburban schools -- when reading their grade-level
3 books make on an average of 1 to 2 errors per 100
4 words, can read the material fluently, and can
5 understand the material. Therefore, reading is
6 pleasurable, satisfying, and they tend to do a lot
7 of it.

8 Children in the same grade who are
9 reading in the bottom quartile -- a large
10 percentage of the children here in Philadelphia --
11 when reading these same grade-level books, make an
12 average of 18 errors per 100, read the material
13 disfluently, and, therefore, therefore cannot
14 comprehends it. Therefore, reading is painful,
15 frustrating, and they tend to avoid it whenever
16 they can. And so would we.

17 People say that challenge is good, but
18 if it were good for the goose, it would be good
19 for the gander. If we put suburban children in
20 material where they were making 18 errors per 100
21 words, it would stop their progress cold. And
22 that is what we do every day in inner cities.

23 I challenge each of you to go into
24 elementary, middle, or high-school classroom and
25 ask the students to read to you from what they are

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2 given to read. If they make more than 5 to 10
3 errors per 100 words -- 5 is better -- remember,
4 the best readers continue to grow the fastest
5 because they read materials in which they make 1
6 to 2 errors per 100 words. If you find that they
7 make more than 5 to 10 errors per 100 words, the
8 material is too hard, and little or no growth will
9 be made by trying to read that material.

10 A proper match is the secret of every
11 reading center. Emmett Betts, the godfather of
12 the reading named it "instructional level" here at
13 his reading center at Temple University. It's the
14 secret of successful intervention programs such as
15 Marie Clay's Reading Recovery, Robert Slavin's
16 Success For All, and Philadelphia's 100 Book
17 Challenge. And yet, it is the principle most
18 violated every day. It is what the school system
19 of Philadelphia has appropriately made the core of
20 its balanced reading curriculum -- that each child
21 be given a running record; that is, that the
22 teacher listen to each child read from several
23 different levels of stories to find the one that
24 is of goodness of fit for optimal growth.

25 And what does this have to do with the

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2 library issue?

3 No child can become literate simply by
4 reading the classroom basal reading book, even if
5 it were on the right level. One must read many,
6 many more stories and books. Second, the school
7 children of Philadelphia range in reading ability
8 in any one grade roughly by two-thirds of their
9 age; therefore, there's a four-year reading range
10 at 1st grade from the lowest reader to the highest
11 and a seven-year range by 5th grade. By 8th
12 grade, only 20 percent of the students read at
13 8th-grade level, and the rest above and below --
14 mainly below by grade and varying degrees. One
15 size does not, cannot fit all. There must be a
16 source of many, many books written on many levels
17 for children at each grade level.

18 Children should be reading
19 approximately 40 percent of their language arts
20 block, writing 30 percent, working on skills such
21 as phonics 20 percent, and being read to 10
22 percent. That's what's meant by a proper diet, a
23 proper balance. And Philadelphia's Balanced
24 Literacy Curriculum has this right. This means
25 that children should be reading about an hour each

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2 day. It is recommended that a third of that
3 reading should be in stories or in expository
4 informational text guided by the teacher. The
5 rest should be in class, peer, or independent
6 reading.

7 What if all the materials necessary for
8 this reading were housed in the library? An
9 elementary school with 4 classes per grade has 600
10 pupils K to 4th grade. Each pupil would need to
11 be helped to select independent reading books, and
12 each of the 20 teachers would need to check out
13 multiple copies of 15 different stories for a
14 guided reading for that week, a logistical
15 nightmare.

16 What every Philadelphia classroom
17 teacher needs is what, for all intents and
18 purposes, every suburban teacher has: classroom
19 collections of books and story sets at the various
20 reading levels that reflect the reading levels of
21 the students and a school library filled with
22 additional books at all reading levels. Each of
23 your Philadelphia elementary teachers at any one
24 grade has children reading at five distinct
25 reading levels across the school year. In order

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2 to progress our children from one to the next, she
3 needs 15 stories for guided reading under her
4 direction at their level. And in addition, the
5 child needs to read 25 story books at that level.
6 This material is what the teacher minimally needs
7 at hand in the classroom. And then children need
8 to do copious amounts of independent reading at
9 home during free time, etc.

10 As a recent Philadelphia Inquirer
11 editorial stated, principals in Philadelphia have
12 been given the autonomy to use book funds at their
13 discretion. The editorial stated that some have
14 chosen to spend the money on books for the
15 classroom rather than for the library. But the
16 truth is that they haven't been given nearly
17 enough money to even begin to minimally equip
18 either.

19 William Styron wrote a book called
20 Sophie's Choice in which a mother is given the
21 impossible, moral choice of deciding which of her
22 children doesn't go to the gas chamber. I've come
23 to know well the school principals in the Bartram
24 cluster, and they all care deeply about literacy
25 and the future of their children. But in the

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2 past, they've been given Sophie's choice. And
3 their teachers, with whom I work every day and
4 whom I consider heroes, want nothing more than the
5 chance to give their children the materials which
6 will allow them to prove to the world that they
7 are just as capable of becoming literate as you
8 and I, as your children and mine. The solution
9 for this dilemma is not to mandate that these
10 principals rob Peter to pay Paul and put their
11 meager funds into the noble goal of a better
12 equipped library.

13 I support the full funding of school
14 libraries. It is a must. But I ask this Council
15 not to play a part in the game of "Sophie's
16 Choice." Mandatory libraries, like mandatory
17 achievement, without providing the means to reach
18 that goal is not only useless, it's cruel. It
19 provides the rationale to blame the victim and
20 those good educators on the front lines who are
21 asked to accomplish a difficult tasks without the
22 necessary tools, who are asked to make Sophie's
23 choice and then held accountable for all of their
24 children's protection.

25 I really don't know Dr. Hornbeck. I've

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2 met him a couple of times but have basically seen
3 him in the paper. Actually, I wrote that before
4 the election. Since the election, I was going to
5 say he's my best friend. But I really don't know
6 him and I'm surprised at how much of what he said
7 is really in congruence with what I see from my
8 position is just purely trying to look at what is
9 the best for children to become literate. But I
10 know that he has it dead right when he says that
11 the problem is not the shifting of meager funds
12 within the city, but the inequities across the
13 Commonwealth for public-school funding.

14 Don't force those administrators and
15 teachers whom we charge with helping our children
16 become literate to play the political game of
17 selecting one shell to place one small pea under,
18 or of your selecting it for them. Sophie
19 shouldn't have been asked or forced to make a
20 choice between her children. It drove her to
21 madness. And as I work with these good teachers
22 and administrators who are trying desperately to
23 attain what they know is so very possible -- the
24 full literacy of all their students -- without the
25 necessary books, class size and support to pull it

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2 off, I fear not only for their children but for
3 them.

4 Yes, again, I ask that you support this
5 resolution. But I ask you too to realize that
6 without more support, it is only moving too meager
7 sources from one wrong to another. I ask you to
8 have the courage and the will to make the other
9 resolutions for the changes that must take place
10 simultaneously for the desired effect to be
11 achieved.

12 1. That class size be at least as
13 manageable as it is in the suburbs so that the
14 teacher has a chance at the differentiation of
15 instruction that must take place.

16 2. That each teacher be given the
17 training and support needed to directly assess
18 each of her students to determine what materials
19 and strategies will promote optimal literacy for
20 each of her pupils.

21 3. That each classroom be fully
22 stocked with stories and books of a number and
23 range of reading levels that will allow enough
24 guided and independent classroom reading.

25 4. That each school's library be fully

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2 stocked with books of all types and content and
3 staffed by librarians knowledgeable enough to help
4 each teacher help each child readily locate the
5 books that will provide the optimal reading
6 challenge, while speaking to each child's heart
7 and mind.

8 5. Last, that this Council resolve to
9 fight tirelessly and ceaselessly for full,
10 equitable funding, and resolve not to be a party
11 to any game of shifting too meager funds and
12 thereby pitting teachers against administrators,
13 administrators against parents, parents against
14 Council, the Council against the School Board,
15 rather than all joining together to work as a
16 united front for the full funding of its
17 children's public education.

18 There is no grant, no Walter Annenberg,
19 no Pew Charitable Trusts that will ever provide,
20 can ever provide, the funds that are needed for
21 Philadelphia schools to match suburban schools'
22 class size, teacher support, and books and
23 materials in the classroom and in the library.
24 But there doesn't have to be. We have the money
25 right here in the households, businesses, and

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2 corporations of this Commonwealth.

3 Public schools were formed to provide
4 equal opportunities for all, for the common good.
5 Let's all face the hard truth of the real needs
6 from where the means to meet the needs must come.
7 I urge this Council to resolve that it will accept
8 no less, that it will not be a party to Sophie's
9 Choice when it comes to its children's literacy,
10 to its children's lives.

11 Thank you very much.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
13 much.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. MATTLEMAN: Thank you. My name is
16 Marcy Mattleman. I want to thank the members of
17 Council for this opportunity. I've worked with
18 many Councilmembers in a variety of things that I
19 have done, all of which have literacy as a major
20 focus Temple University where I train teachers in
21 the teaching of reading and language skills,
22 working with both Mayor Goode and Mayor Rendell on
23 literacy, chairing the Board of Trustees of the
24 Free Library, and serving now at the pleasure of
25 President Clinton on the Board of the National

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2 Institute for Literacy.

3 In my current position as Executive
4 Director of Philadelphia Reads, I work directly
5 with schools all the time. And I've been saddened
6 through the years to see the diminution of the
7 libraries in school buildings. For more than 150
8 years, teachers were the major resource for
9 children's learning. The teacher stood at the
10 front of the room, and the chairs were in rows,
11 and there was the teacher as the resource. But as
12 classrooms have changed from rows to desks and
13 moveable furniture, work stations, computer-
14 assisted instruction, teachers are only one of the
15 many resources, and libraries are an absolute
16 necessity in every school. While Philadelphia
17 Reads has collected and distributed more than
18 24,000 books to schools -- and they've been
19 contributed by people from all over the region --
20 and funded 370 classes with \$1,000 each for
21 independent reading books for the 100 Book
22 Challenge -- and in that program, as was mentioned
23 earlier, the basic premise is, the more you read,
24 the better you read, and that is certainly
25 supported by research -- a well-stocked school

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2 library continues to be basic to any teaching and
3 learning environment.

4 Approximately 80 percent of the
5 children in Philadelphia's public schools are
6 eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. They
7 don't come from families that have lots of extra
8 money to spend on books, and many of their parents
9 are understandably concerned with their own
10 survival so they don't go to read to their kids at
11 bedtime. Many parents, as a result of social
12 promotion, which has fortunately stopped, cannot
13 read well themselves. And research shows that in
14 homes of very poor children, there is on the
15 average less than one book in a household, often
16 just a phone book. The kids for the most part
17 don't get adequate whiled child care, not enough
18 attend Head Start, these are not the kids who play
19 word games at dinner time or while riding with
20 their parents while on auto trips. They don't
21 have books of their own, nor the pleasure that
22 most of us have experienced in this room of
23 reading under the covers at night with a
24 flashlight, hoping our parents wouldn't find out.
25 Forty-five percent of those kids don't read well

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2 and independently by the end of 3rd grade, and
3 kids who don't at that stage are less likely to
4 catch up and are more likely to get involved in
5 antisocial behaviors, drop out, and become
6 delinquents.

7 There is an explosion now in the field
8 of reading. The federal government has funded the
9 Reading Excellence Act, the State has funded Read
10 to Succeed. But kids still don't have books in
11 school to learn from, to enjoy, and books to
12 remember. I think if we asked anybody in this
13 room, what book do you remember from childhood? we
14 could all remember books.

15 Research shows that the existence of a
16 school library is correlated positively with
17 academic success. Yet in the 70s, when Title I
18 money formerly earmarked for school libraries was
19 reallocated for block grants, libraries and
20 schools have been neglected. Many districts
21 instead use the money for computers and other
22 priorities. And in the '80s, when State funding
23 lessened due to budget crises, school libraries
24 stopped playing an important role in the education
25 of children.

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2 Now, Education Week reports that the
3 situation is slightly better because some states
4 are taking action. Mississippi, a state sorely
5 lacking in school library sources, has just
6 increased its funding by millions of dollars. And
7 California, the state with the worst record for
8 school library expenditures, is devoting \$150
9 million to restocking shelves, which have been
10 depleted for years. Chicago, concerned about low
11 reading achievement of its students, has created a
12 Department of Libraries and Information Resources,
13 with a \$2 million budget, and recently spent
14 \$500,000 for books.

15 Upgrading a library means getting rid
16 of books that are worn, racist, sexist, outdated
17 and inaccurate, as mentioned earlier. The
18 stereotypes the exist in the books our children
19 are using will probably shock all of you. And
20 while the name Zimbabwe came into being in the
21 '80s, you can't find it in books in many
22 Philadelphia school libraries.

23 The Philadelphia public schools have a
24 student population of 215,000 children, and
25 although all principals want school libraries,

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2 they have the discretion to spend funds as they
3 need them. And as Superintendent Hornbeck
4 mentioned, it's really unfair to ask the principal
5 to make that decision between a 1st-grade teacher
6 and a librarian, between a technology lab and a
7 librarian or after-school music.

8 Every school should have a library, and
9 that library should be the center of activity in
10 each school. Library Power, was mentioned
11 earlier, there are only 28 Library Power public
12 schools in Philadelphia. They each have a full
13 trained librarian who works with classroom
14 teachers and planning curriculum and provides
15 resources at varied levels so that all kids can
16 get involved in doing research. Many kids even
17 ask to stay in for lunch and recess. The
18 library's open all day and students come and go as
19 they carry out assignments. And because the
20 librarian is keyed into classroom studies, he or
21 she is able to help. A visit to the Hartranft
22 School will make any visitors converts as they see
23 elementary school kids using the many resources a
24 library can provide.

25 Such a program is not a frill or an

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2 option. There is ample evidence that libraries do
3 enhance student achievement, regardless of
4 socioeconomic level.

5 I'm certain that other people
6 testifying today will cite the same sorry
7 statistics. In 1997, nationally, schools spent
8 \$18.75 per child on libraries. In 1998, as David
9 Hornbeck said, Philadelphia schools spent only
10 \$5.47. And each of us needs to do something about
11 that.

12 While we can start a book drive on our
13 block or in our place of employment or, as
14 Councilman Kenney did, have a book drive, or my
15 friend Rosemary Greco, who asks everybody who came
16 to her house last Thanksgiving for dinner, all 35
17 people to bring a book, that's not long-term
18 change. We need to let principals know that we
19 care about libraries in schools. We have to
20 contact our Congressmen to support HR Bill 3008,
21 whose purpose is to amend the Elementary and
22 Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide funds
23 for professional librarians and up-to-date library
24 resources.

25 Moreover, let's make sure that the City

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2 schools have adequate funding to do what needs to
3 be done to assure that our kids learn. While
4 there is still a gap of \$1900 -- and you heard it
5 earlier, and I think it's worth repeating --
6 between the cost of an education per child in
7 Philadelphia and the average spending per child
8 for kids in nearby suburbs, our principals have to
9 make hard choices. Since the ability to read is
10 clearly the basic skill that helps assure each
11 individual's key to a future, we need to make sure
12 that school libraries are a vital part of that
13 equation.

14 Thank you very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

17 Shelly?

18 MS. YANOFF: Thank you.

19 Before I start, I just want to commend
20 the students from the Communications Charter, I
21 believe, who are models of --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Actually, they
23 have to go back. So, Mr. Shelkrot and the
24 librarians and all of you folks, Dr. Rush, good to
25 have you, we'll hope you'll be a little patient

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2 because they have to leave. So we'll get them as
3 soon as you leave so that they can get back to
4 Southwest Philadelphia.

5 Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

6 MS. YANOFF: Good afternoon, Council.

7 I'm Shelly Yanoff, Executive Director of PCCY, the
8 region's child advocacy organization. Thank you
9 for holding hearing and for the opportunity of
10 testifying. I will talk quickly and briefly.

11 A recently retired principal from an
12 elementary school in the suburbs phoned me the
13 other day to say how upset she was at learning how
14 shortchanged Philadelphia children are on having
15 access to libraries. She spoke of how exciting
16 libraries should be learning centers for children
17 and schools, and that often kids learn there for
18 the first time to become comfortable with
19 themselves and the world of books.

20 I agreed. The lack of skilled staff
21 and well-supplied libraries are just one more
22 example of how hard it is to be a Philadelphia
23 family, a Philadelphia child. Children are simply
24 not center-stage. Until some horrible thing
25 happens to them, they do not command attention.

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2 In the last election, we talked about
3 governance but we didn't talk about the real
4 stuff. We didn't talk about the real losses that
5 we watch our kids absorb year after year. As you
6 well know, you few who are here, we have lost
7 music and art and have fallen behind in the
8 comparisons in class size and teacher and
9 principal salaries and special reading programs,
10 among others things, in last decade.

11 Today, we'll talk about libraries for a
12 minute, but it's just another example of how much
13 our kids are losing. We will know note that we
14 spend about one-fifth of what's spent nationally
15 on elementary-school children for libraries, and
16 about one-eight of what's spent on high-school
17 books. We'll note that just across City Line, in
18 Lower Merion, they spend about four times what we
19 spend on library services. We will note that the
20 average number of students to librarians here is
21 almost three times the national average.

22 So how do we presume to expect our kids
23 to compete, to secure their share in the job
24 market in higher education? We want our kids to
25 make miracles. Some do, but many can't.

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2 Most of this, of course, boils down to
3 money. We know that you agree with us that we
4 need a fair, equitable public-school funding
5 system in this state. We are going with hundreds
6 of people next week to press the case for more
7 funding. In fact, a bill will be introduced for
8 full funding next Tuesday. We hope that you will
9 join us in pushing for that bill.

10 But even in that fight, as long as it
11 will take, school libraries will be hidden. Until
12 we really secure full funding, our schools will
13 continue to have to choose between libraries and
14 reading teachers, supplies and a host of needed
15 programs. School libraries are hidden even in the
16 school districts, competing with support for other
17 valuable needs and programs.

18 We've talked a little bit about the
19 Library Power Program. I won't dwell on it except
20 to say that 20 years ago, if you had a pilot that
21 you could show worked, you would expect it to
22 ignite the whole system. And now, instead, its
23 life is fragile.

24 Like the schools, this Council is
25 called on often to make difficult choices. You'll

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2 shortly be asked to approve more Tax Increment
3 Financing Districts, TIFs, which are built on the
4 presumption that more jobs will be created and,
5 therefore, more benefits will accrue to the City
6 and all of its citizens. We agree that we must do
7 all we can to bring in more industry, more
8 development, and more permanent jobs -- but not at
9 the expense of the schools.

10 Somehow, the current proposals have the
11 schools bearing the burden of costs of lost
12 revenue growth and the funds. The schools cannot
13 afford the loss, but they appear to have no
14 ability to resist the pressure or to argue for a
15 better deal. Thus, there will be even less for
16 libraries in future years comparatively. This not
17 acceptable.

18 You can make a difference. We don't
19 believe it has to be this way. You could assure
20 that the School District would be made and kept
21 whole from the City's expected return on the
22 funds. You could take a portion of the City's TIF
23 revenue and dedicate it to those parts of a
24 child's education and development that have lost
25 support in recent years, that are critical, that

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2 are discrete, and too often, dismissed as fringe.
3 You could specify library, music, and art programs
4 in the schools as part of the City's expected
5 return on the TIF funds.

6 We are asking today that you help take
7 the future of our children out of the shadows by
8 linking City action with support for kids. Every
9 time the City gives a benefit, every time, we
10 should build in support for discretionary funds
11 for youth, to make Philadelphia a better place for
12 people to raise children and to be a child. We
13 find the funds when kids are in crisis, but we
14 have not found the public will to secure regular
15 sustainable funds to provide our children with
16 what they need to so that they and we are not in
17 crisis, so that they and we have a better future.

18 Yesterday's news stories reported that
19 the City continues to lose more young families
20 than other cities around the nation. Whether it's
21 TIFs or bonding authorities or stadium tickets,
22 the City will not be able to grow, as I know you
23 all want it to, unless we figure out ways to find
24 more resources to support our children and
25 families to make this city a better place to raise

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2 kids.

3 We, therefore, urge that Philadelphia
4 seek funding from all resources to make the City's
5 children able to have more access to libraries,
6 more art, and more music programs, and more youth
7 development activities. Other cities are creating
8 children's trust funds and other funds to support
9 programs like this. We do not do it and we are
10 continuing to watch funding and our children's
11 opportunities decrease. We shouldn't.

12 We urge you to move the support of
13 children and families into the center of your
14 deliberations on this and all issues.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
17 much.

18 Councilman Kenney?

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you, Madam
20 Chair.

21 All of the people who have testified
22 here today so far on this particular issue, I do
23 not disagree with their concept and their position
24 on these issues. I think the problem that face,
25 and we've been facing now for a number of years,

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2 is that simply saying that it so does not change
3 the situation. Introducing a bill in Harrisburg
4 to provide full funding, quote/unquote, does not,
5 and will, not change the problem, because our
6 governor, who's going to be our governor, I guess,
7 until the year 2002 or thereabouts, and a
8 legislature that is predominated predominantly
9 Republican by a vast margin in the Pennsylvania
10 Senate and by, I guess, three or four or five
11 votes in the House, is never going to change that
12 funding formula until there is a new
13 administration.

14 And the question I have -- or I guess
15 the frustration that I feel is that what have we
16 you done in an effort to meet them and their --
17 even if we disagree with their ideologies,
18 somewhere halfway so that we could obtain the
19 dollars, or some of the dollars, that we've been
20 talking about for libraries, for smaller class
21 size, for books and materials, for increases in
22 teachers' salaries and principals' salaries. I'm
23 frustrated here today, as you are, because we've
24 talking about this stuff for years. And we
25 haven't been able to effect the political change

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2 necessary to get anything accomplished.

3 And the problem is, is that for us as
4 Philadelphians to get on a bunch of buses and ride
5 up to Harrisburg and march around the capitol
6 building makes some of those guys from the hinter
7 lands happy because they can go back to their
8 constituents and say, We've been fighting against
9 Philadelphia and that money pit out there in the
10 east, and we're not giving into them and we're not
11 giving them any more money. And guys have had
12 careers built on fighting Philadelphia in that
13 regard.

14 And I don't want to get into any
15 specific issues of vouchers and other things that
16 we've discussed over the years and people's
17 philosophical opposition to even considering the
18 discussion of things like that that have been on
19 the front burner for many people in the
20 legislature and for the governor. But simply
21 saying that we demand full funding doesn't mean we
22 get it. And simply saying that we're going to
23 request it and we're going to fight for it doesn't
24 mean we're going to get it. And going into
25 federal court means that sometimes we get thrown

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2 out. And going into State court sometimes means
3 we get thrown out more than once.

4 I mean, I don't know what we're being
5 asked to do because the comparison to the suburban
6 school districts and the \$1900 gap, which I do not
7 deny and acknowledge, in the minds of suburban
8 legislators and suburban residents exists by
9 virtue of a gap in the real-estate taxes that they
10 pay in Lower Merion, as opposed to what is paid
11 here in Philadelphia.

12 And I don't know of any circumstance or
13 political scenario where you're going to get a
14 legislator or a senator from a highly real-estate
15 taxed community to say that the 60 percent that
16 the State provides to the City, coupled with the
17 City's contribution to its own school district,
18 creates this 1900 or \$2,000 gap. You don't find,
19 and will not find, sympathy for that position.
20 That's one frustration.

21 The second frustration is an issue that
22 you've raised relative to TIFs. I believe, firmly
23 believe -- and Councilmember DiCicco can speak for
24 himself and other members can speak for themselves
25 -- that a TIF is not a tax giveaway. We have not

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2 the money to give away without the development of
3 the project. And we have been told, and maybe
4 we're being lied to, that the project will not go
5 forward and will not be developed without the tax
6 increment financing to support the financing
7 package to do the TIF.

8 So to take the position that somehow
9 we're giving tax money away that could go to some
10 other worthwhile or worthy project I don't believe
11 is accurate. Because the money that's related to
12 the TIF is not collectible unless the project gets
13 done. And if the project doesn't get done without
14 the TIF, we're not giving anything away but a
15 vacant lot or a vacant structure or an empty
16 parcel of land. And that's -- I guess the
17 frustration is that we're here banging our heads
18 against these Council walls and then sometimes
19 going to Harrisburg and banging our heads against
20 those walls, and nothing's going to change under
21 the current set of circumstances.

22 So I've been one that's advocated, in
23 the past, sitting down with the governor -- not
24 this year, not last year, but maybe three four
25 years ago, to work out some arrangement to try to

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2 trade some votes on issues of vouchers, issues of
3 charters, and public-school funding in
4 Philadelphia.

5 And no one's done that. The Mayor
6 hasn't done it, the School District hasn't done
7 it, legislators in Philadelphia haven't been
8 interested in doing it. And until we get another
9 governor -- whether it's Ed Rendell or Bobby Casey
10 or some other Democrat -- I don't know when this
11 is going to change. And I don't want to
12 sacrifice, continue to sacrifice the futures of
13 kids who are waiting as freshmen, going into
14 freshman year in high school now, going into the
15 kindergarten now, until we get a year or two or
16 three years from now, till we change the way this
17 school district's funded and its formula.

18 What can we do -- and this is a
19 rhetorical question that I don't have the answer
20 to. What can we do now, and should we have done
21 that we didn't do to put ourselves in a better
22 negotiating position. 'Cause our negotiating
23 position is simply, We need more money, you're
24 being unfair, give it to us. And they say no.
25 John Perzel says no. Tom Ridge says no. And I

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2 don't know who else to talk to, because our own
3 legislators won't be supportive.

4 No one's arguing that the legislators
5 in the State legislature in Philadelphia, both in
6 the Senate and the House, are going to be
7 unsupportive of this kind of effort to bring more
8 money to our public schools. But we don't live in
9 the state of Philadelphia; we live in the state of
10 Pennsylvania.

11 And we all want what was testified to.
12 The money's not there. And what do we do about
13 that.

14 MS. YANOFF: May I respond?

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Rhetorically.

16 MS. YANOFF: I wish I could really
17 respond because what you're asking for are very
18 hard questions. But I just want to clarify that
19 I'm not suggesting that we oppose TIFs. I'm
20 suggesting that the return on the TIFs, that the
21 City take some of its anticipated return and shift
22 it to the School District for those discrete
23 programs about which we're not -- we don't have a
24 fight. We don't have a fight about music or art
25 or libraries or what we're here about today.

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2 There are differences of opinion that
3 exist on other things, but there are discrete --
4 it seems that seems that with the TIFs, which we
5 should be trying to find every possible way to
6 bring money in, but because the legislature passed
7 -- in its authorizing legislation only allows
8 certain taxes, we're stuck with it being the taxes
9 that most impact on the schools.

10 All I'm suggesting is that we look at
11 those deals -- not to stop tell me but to say, Can
12 we shift some of that to make the School District
13 whole so that we don't -- I know we're not taking
14 money away, but we're taking growth away, and
15 everybody has to grow their dollars.

16 So that's what I'm suggesting and I'm
17 urging you not to say no to it until we think
18 about whether we could do that just on, Can this
19 be the fund for libraries. Can we say that when
20 we start getting the funds back, the payback, that
21 we give an extra bump to the School District
22 because, according to all the formula I saw -- and
23 I came to the briefing, and apart from the
24 newspapers, I also came to the briefing -- it
25 appears that the School District is having to bear

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2 a heavier brunt. It doesn't make sense.

3 That's at the local level. The other
4 local level that we were talking about was the
5 stadium issue and all issues that every time the
6 City does something, we figure out a way to get
7 the kids in the center.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excuse me.

9 Let me say, we only have -- I'm going to lose the
10 kids. I promised them that they could talk. And
11 then we can come back to this. I promised the
12 kids and I promised Mr. Shelkrot that they could
13 get in and out. And then we can explore this as
14 we need to.

15 Councilman DiCicco?

16 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you, Madam
17 Chair. I wanted to make just one very brief
18 comment and --

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we'll
20 still have you comment, Superintendent Hornbeck.
21 We don't want to cut it off; we're just trying not
22 to lose anybody.

23 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Not to get into a
24 debate on the TIF, but I concur with everything
25 Councilman Kenney said.

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2 But there is a benefit to the School
3 District as a result of TIFs, because the majority
4 of the TIFs to date that we have awarded are for
5 the development of hotels. Hotels are part of the
6 new industry, or the expansion of the hospitality
7 and tourism industry in the City of Philadelphia.
8 When tourists come into the city, they go to
9 theaters, they go to restaurants, they go to bars,
10 and they spend money. We do receive the benefit
11 of the liquor-by-the-drink tax. So the more
12 people we bring into the city to spend that
13 disposable income, either by way of conventions or
14 vacationers or what have you, we are getting a
15 benefit.

16 And I understand and am not debating
17 that we shouldn't do TIFs. And I think that, yes,
18 we can look and we will continue to look at ways
19 of taking -- we have done some of that in a number
20 of TIFs. Now, there's some TIFs where the deal
21 just won't happen if it is structured in such a
22 way that maybe the U&O, as an example, which was a
23 TIF I introduced last week, that deal won't happen
24 unless we give some relieve on the U&O. But that
25 is one of the few that had to be structured that

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2 way.

3 But understand that when that
4 development is completed, there will be a
5 significant number of new jobs created. Most of
6 the jobs will be in the service industry, creating
7 more restaurants and things of that type of
8 activity, and in addition to creating an
9 environment for people to move into the City that
10 are now suburban residents, who are looking to
11 move into Center City. They've become members of
12 our community, they spend their disposable income
13 in Philadelphia 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
14 So there are some benefits.

15 But to suggest -- and I don't think you
16 really meant it to be that way, and I understand
17 that. But for the benefit of others, that TIFs
18 are giveaways, you can't give something away that
19 you don't have. And, again, I'm not going to --
20 you and I aren't going to debate that 'cause I
21 didn't think you meant it that way. But I think
22 that is the way it is normally understood by
23 people who don't understand what TIFs are all
24 about.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

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2 And if we can hold this off just a moment, we can
3 come back to this, but the kids have to go and
4 then Mr. Shelkrot has to go, so we want to get
5 them all. We had a couple -- four rows of
6 students. We do thank them all and thank those
7 had that had to leave from charter schools that I
8 support so much.

9 We do want to ask if Mr. Vernard is --
10 Shelly, if you can stay, we can come back and
11 finish the discussion, and I promised
12 Superintendent Hornbeck that he can make a comment
13 on that. But I got to let the kids go 'cause
14 they'll lose their ride, and then we'll come back
15 to it.

16 Please come forward, the students.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Madam Chair, I just
18 want to be excused for one moment.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I have to go to my
21 office for a second but I'll be listening on the
22 -- I'll have the speaker on in there.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
24 thank you for your input in this committee.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But I have to go

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2 because somebody's been waiting for me in my
3 office for an hour.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you
5 thank you for your input in this committee.

6 (Students come forward.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
8 much. We are glad to have you. I see you are
9 here with Mr. Vernard Johnson, Healthy Family
10 Healthy Life. We're glad to have you. Please
11 introduce yourself and make your statement.

12 Mr. Shelkrot, we'll get you next. I
13 know you have a meeting.

14 Thank you. Give us your name, please,
15 and then make your statement.

16 MS. VINCENT: Good afternoon. My name
17 is Charvon Vincent, and I'm a 10th-grade student
18 at World Communications Charter School.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All right.
20 Talk right into that microphone so we can hear
21 you. Would you say your name again.

22 MS. VINCENT: My name is Charvon
23 Vincent, and I'm a 10th-grade student at World
24 Communications Charter School, and I'm serving a
25 six-week internship with Healthy Family Healthy

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2 Life.

3 We're here today to tell you the
4 importance of libraries in our schools and
5 neighborhood, and now I'm going to read the
6 library compact.

7 We believe in the library for its
8 nurturing of our children and youth, opening doors
9 to the wonder and excitement of the world of
10 ideas. . .

11 UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT: . . . Dedication
12 to literacy, giving to all a key to
13 fulfillment. . .

14 MS. VINCENT: . . . A commitment to
15 diversity, a foundation of pluralism, democracy,
16 and peace.

17 MS. MUNCU: My name is Jendayi Muncu.
18 I'm also a 10th-grade student and
19 (unintelligible).

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Spell your
21 name for us, please.

22 MS. MUNCU: J-E-N-D-A-Y-I, M-U-N-C-U.
23 And I'm also serving six-week internship.

24 . . . Reservoir of memory --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We're having a

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2 hard time hearing you. Talk right into the
3 microphone, please, and a little louder.

4 MS. MUNCU: Reservoir of memory,
5 linking the records of yesterday with the
6 possibilities of tomorrow. . .

7 MS. VINCENT: . . . Continuing of
8 knowledge ever open to the changing form and flow
9 of information.

10 MS. MUNCU: . . . Treasurer of reading,
11 where muse and spirits enrich the soul and dreams
12 ignite discovery.

13 MS. VINCENT: For these reasons, the
14 library is essential to our lives, and we pledge
15 ourselves that (unintelligible) and its support.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
17 Would you spell your first name, please.

18 MS. VINCENT: C-H-A-R-V-O-N.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

20 MS. VINCENT: Now we will be hearing
21 from my fellow peers and their experience at the
22 library and their opinions on why libraries are
23 such an essential part of our children and
24 families' progress.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

3 And always remember, students, the word is
4 library, not "li-barry." It's L-I-B-R-A-R-Y.
5 Sorry, guys. It's the former teacher in me.
6 Can't help it.

7 MS. MUNCU: My name is Jendayi Muncu,
8 and I'll be telling you what libraries can offer
9 the school and the community.

10 Students can go to the library to
11 research about colleges and do reports. They can
12 also read for fun and expand their horizons. The
13 libraries also offer special programs for after
14 school and in summer, such as the Summer Reading
15 Program, which gives children incentive for
16 reading books.

17 They can also gain access to the
18 Internet, and the library has a wide range of
19 special departments, from music to literature to
20 newspaper.

21 It is also safe, clean, and quiet so
22 people of all ages can do homework and they can
23 spend time with each other.

24 In closing, the library is not only for
25 students; it's a place for their entire family to

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2 go.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. ROBINSON: Good afternoon. My name
5 is Tianna Robinson, T-I-A-N-N-A, Robinson. And
6 I'm a 10th-grade student at the World
7 Communications Charter School, and I'm serving a
8 six-week internship with Healthy Family Healthy
9 Life.

10 Today I had a chance to visit the Free
11 Library of Philadelphia, the main branch at 19th
12 and Vine Street, and I was mainly in the video
13 department. And I would just like to take a few
14 minutes of your time to tell you about the
15 importance of the video department in the library.

16 First of all, they have videos for the
17 whole family for free, and they have a large
18 variety. They have dramas, comedies, they have
19 old TV programs such as Cheers, The Dick Van Dyke
20 Show, I Love Lucy, and many more. They had many
21 different versions of classical opera such as
22 MacBeth, Bye-Bye Birdie.

23 Not only do they have stuff for
24 entertainment, but they have educational stuff
25 like documentaries, tapes on U.S. history. They

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2 had the whole MacArthur collection, and they had
3 (unintelligible) videos and language videos.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Miss Robinson, did
6 you say Cheers was an old TV show?

7 MS. ROBINSON: Yes.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: She said yes.

9 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Did you ever hear
10 of The Honeymooners?

11 (Laughter.)

12 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: That is old for
13 me. Cheers is recent.

14 MS. RICKETCS: My name is Johnine
15 Ricketcs.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Spell it for
17 us, please.

18 MS. RICKETCS: J-O-H-N-I-N-E,
19 R-I-C-K-E-T-C-S.

20 I'm an 11th-grader at World
21 Communications Charter School. And the importance
22 of a library to me is for the high-school students
23 to have important projects to do who might not
24 have books and stuff at home, but they might have
25 the important stuff that we need, so we have to go

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2 to the library to get the information.

3 So the point is to me is the quietness
4 'cause some houses are loud, and we need
5 quietness, so we have the library to go to and to
6 concentrate when we get a good grade on our
7 projects.

8 And I also think it's good for little
9 kids to stay off the corners and off the blocks,
10 and they can go there for after-school curriculums
11 and for reading, story times, and movie times.
12 And I feel as though it's also good enough to keep
13 the teenagers out of trouble, so the teenagers
14 come -- and too, the little kids and help the kids
15 that don't have the opportunity to learn in school
16 and they can go to the library and learn how to
17 read an everything else.

18 So I feel as though the library is a
19 good thing for us to have in school and out of
20 school, to help us with the education and keep us
21 out of trouble and give us the experience with the
22 little kids.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much. You had another comment?

25 MS. VINCENT: I just wanted to say that

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2 at our school, we don't have a library, and I
3 think that it's important for us to have a library
4 because some of us don't have libraries in our
5 neighborhoods, and we depend on the library at
6 school for information, but we don't have it. And
7 I think that that's a serious problem that we need
8 to address.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

11 For those of you who didn't hear her,
12 she said that they don't have a library in their
13 school and that it's a hardship, and they're upset
14 because they don't have one in their neighborhood
15 either.

16 And you have just stated the reason why
17 we are here. I believe narrowly that we have a
18 lot of State issues to deal with, and God knows,
19 we need our share of funding, but we also need to
20 consider what we can do at our level too as we
21 structure education at the board level, to include
22 a way to have a library curriculum. So I think
23 we've got to have short-term and long-term plans,
24 small plans and bigger plans, and I'm hoping that
25 out of this hearing that we can consider that.

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2 And while I'm talking, let me too
3 welcome the principal of Peirce School who was
4 referred to in the superintendent's testimony.
5 Would you stand and be recognized. We thank you
6 for the great job that you are doing. Thank you
7 very much.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
10 much, students. Thank you, Mr. Vernard Johnson
11 for what you do and for having these students from
12 World Communications Charter School come before us
13 as interns. We thank you all.

14 And thank you, Brenda Cooper. I know
15 you're there helping to transport them. Thank you
16 very much. That's Brenda Cooper from Horizon
17 House. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And now we
20 will move right along. I know we're rushing, but
21 I'm trying to keep it moving 'cause it's getting
22 late.

23 We'll now have Elliot Shelkrot and the
24 special guests and literacy organizations.
25 Included in that, we want Janet Dubinsky. We have

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2 Rex Parker.

3 I'm sorry, Debra Gniewek. I can't
4 forget you. Your presentation was absolutely
5 excellent, and we have a lot of information there,
6 but would some of these folks come forward now and
7 have a seat so that we kind of hold you up much
8 longer.

9 (Witnesses come forward.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Ms. Gniewek,
11 certainly we want you back up, your presentation
12 was excellent. Please come forward also with the
13 panel, if you would like. Or if you want to wait
14 for Mr. Hornbeck -- how ever you're comfortable.
15 I know you were up there and we pulled you away.

16 (Ms. Gniewek responds off-mike.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay, thank
18 you, thank you. We'll come back to you.

19 And so we have the head of our Free
20 Library and we have a panel to -- I will mention
21 some names and we'll see who we have. Mary Jane
22 Zimmerman, Association of School Librarians;
23 Carol Heinsdorf, Association of Philadelphia
24 School Librarians; Karen Talarico, Friends of the
25 Free Library; Jane Hileman, Philadelphia Reads;

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2 Fran Aulston, the Cultural Alliance; Dee Phillips,
3 PFT -- if you're here; Francina Emery,
4 Multicultural Resource Center; and Janet Dubinsky,
5 Garden Court Civic Association.

6 After this, I know -- we'll get one
7 panel and I promise you we'll get you all out so
8 that we don't hold you up too late at the end of
9 the day, all right?

10 And the first one will certainly be the
11 head of our Free Library, who you just heard about
12 his great resources with old, old films like
13 Cheers.

14 (Laughter.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Francina Emery,
16 Councilwoman Blackwell called your name. Do you
17 want to just move up to the front beyond the
18 gates.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay, we're
20 ready for you. Thank you.

21 MR. SHELKROT: I'm Elliot Shelkrot,
22 Director of the Free Library. I would like to
23 thank Council for inviting me to make a
24 presentation this morning. I've distributed my
25 testimony. I'm not going to read it all. I would

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2 just like to summarize what I believe are the key
3 points.

4 I'm specifically addressing the issue
5 in the resolution that talks about how the Free
6 Library of Philadelphia and perhaps its branches
7 can do things to support the school library
8 program. And I'd like to cover three main areas.

9 One is the different difference between
10 school libraries and the public library; second of
11 all, what we are doing to support youngsters in
12 Philadelphia who are in school; and, third, a
13 brief -- some recommendations.

14 The Free Library is, of course, the
15 public library for the City of Philadelphia. We
16 have 49 branches and 3 regionals plus the Central
17 Library, and a library for the blind and
18 physically handicapped.

19 The library is an educational and a
20 cultural institution that supports recreational
21 reading, lifelong learning, and provides
22 information for people of all backgrounds.

23 The Free Library is staffed. The
24 librarians are professional master's-degreed
25 librarians who, along with many, many support

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2 staff, provide the information and cultural
3 resources that our libraries have to people of all
4 ages throughout the City.

5 The school libraries, on the other
6 hand, are educational institutions that support
7 the curriculum and the classroom learning needs of
8 the children they serve. School libraries are
9 staffed by teacher-librarians. They are teachers
10 who also have training and background in working
11 with libraries. And their skills are to instruct
12 youngsters on how to use the library, how to seek
13 information, and especially how to help the
14 teachers and the students in the classrooms and in
15 their instructional program.

16 There has been a great deal of research
17 on the importance of libraries and the importance
18 of school libraries specifically. I won't go over
19 that in my oral testimony, but I believe it's
20 important to understand that there is a
21 distinction, although our public libraries do a
22 great deal that support the efforts of the schools
23 and the educational programs.

24 And I want to tell you a little bit
25 about some of those programs. There's over a

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2 dozen of them. I'm not going to go over a dozen
3 programs, but there are five key programs that I'd
4 like to tell you about.

5 The first is the visits to schools that
6 our librarians make. Our librarians visit every
7 single school in the School District of
8 Philadelphia twice a year --- every elementary
9 school and every secondary and every multigrade
10 school. In addition to that, we visit the
11 parochial schools and the non-public schools and
12 do our best to reach the new charter schools and
13 other educational institutions around the city.

14 At these visits to the schools, we
15 visit classrooms, we talk about the library
16 resources, we talk about the richness of the
17 resources that one can find in the library, and we
18 try to give an instructional program that is
19 useful to youngsters in school and in their
20 educational program.

21 Our LEAP Program, which is our
22 after-school program, for the first time this
23 year, with City Council, with City funds and the
24 support of City Council, added to the private
25 money that we have been to get from various

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2 foundations. We now have the LEAP after-school
3 programs in 40 of our branches, and for the first
4 time, it is 5 days a week.

5 The primary intent is to meet the needs
6 of parents who are working so that we can be a
7 part of the solution to that growing problem of --
8 well, the problem isn't that more parents are
9 working; it's the challenge to make sure that in
10 this welfare-to-work environment, that there is
11 after-school care for the youngsters. In that
12 program, some 70,000 youngsters will partake,
13 getting assistance with their homework and getting
14 instruction using computers, and getting help in
15 our cultural enrichment programs.

16 An added component to that is the team
17 leadership assistance. In every single branch of
18 the city, there are at least two young people,
19 teenagers from the high school, who are hired by
20 the library on a part-time basis to help after
21 school and occasionally on Saturdays, are given
22 special training by college students in the use of
23 technology so that they can help their peers,
24 their little brothers and sisters, their parents,
25 their grandparents in using the new information

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2 technology in the schools. They have in and of
3 themselves put on 2,000 different -- over 2,000
4 different workshops in 45 library locations around
5 the city.

6 Another key component of our program to
7 support the activities in the schools are class
8 visits. Last year 4,500 classes from the schools
9 -- from the public schools alone, I should say --
10 came to our libraries, where we provide
11 orientations to the libraries, we provide story
12 hours, help with special research projects. And
13 these are done during the two mornings a week that
14 most of -- that our branches are open. Our
15 regional branches are open three mornings a week,
16 but our branches are only open two mornings a
17 week.

18 One of most exciting projects that we
19 are now involved in involves a collaborative
20 program with the School District as we went
21 together to seek federal money that was
22 administered by the State. It's focussed on
23 electronic resources. And this is at the Edison
24 Cluster, working with the high school as well as
25 the five other schools -- Potter, Welsh, Julia

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2 DeBurgos, and others in that cluster.

3 And the purpose of this is to see if we
4 can develop a seamless web of information, that
5 youngsters in the schools can go to the catalog,
6 the online catalog and find out not only what they
7 have in their school but what is available in the
8 schools nearby and what's available in their
9 neighborhood branch or the Central Library. And
10 not only find out what books are there, but the
11 beauty of this program -- and it is just in a
12 pilot now, we are trying to get a sense of how it
13 would work most effectively and efficiently and
14 what the cost would be.

15 But the beauty of this program is that
16 it also enables the many, many specialized data
17 bases that we buy with taxpayers money to be
18 available to the youngsters in the schools from
19 the computers and the school libraries or other
20 places. The only thing they need is a Free
21 Library card -- something we hope and we are
22 trying to make sure that every youngster in the
23 schools have.

24 And some of these special databases are
25 Spanish language databases, databases on

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2 African-American history, well over 5,000
3 different magazines, many encyclopedias. And if
4 we can in this model learn how to do this
5 effectively, I believe it offers an opportunity
6 for an economic way to provide a vast amount of
7 material and resources for youngsters in every
8 school in the city.

9 The question is, what more can be
10 done? We could do a lot more. We could open our
11 libraries five mornings a week instead of just
12 two. We could have our libraries open on Sundays
13 so that families can come together on another
14 day. You know that we now have our branches open
15 on Saturdays but we know that there are more
16 families who want to come to our libraries and
17 just don't have the time. And there are other
18 things.

19 But we can't do these things at the
20 expense of the public library system, which is now
21 coming into a greater flowering, with the help of
22 City Council and the private money, because the
23 public library, of course, serves the needs of
24 youngsters of all ages as well as the parents and
25 grandparents.

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2 But I do believe that if we work
3 together, if we find some new ways of working
4 together, perhaps we can find some economical way
5 to use what additional money we can find to
6 provide better services in the schools.

7 And I would propose a panel, a
8 blue-ribbon panel, of three people appointed at
9 the executive level from the School District and
10 three people appointed by the Board of Trustees of
11 the Free Library at an executive level to come
12 together and prepare a detailed report of what are
13 the collaborative programs that can be developed.

14 And I believe that everything should be
15 on the table in this collaborative approach and
16 this blue-ribbon panel. Everything from, sure,
17 opening our libraries more on the -- during the
18 days, opening them on the weekends. But also some
19 other things. Perhaps exploring what York,
20 Pennsylvania has done. It's a different program,
21 it's a way where the public library in York
22 contracts with the school library to provide
23 school library programs in elementary schools.
24 Similar things are done in Reno, Nevada and New
25 Orleans, Louisiana. And I think a blue-ribbon

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2 panel can look at things across the board and find
3 ways that, with additional money, services can be
4 provided to make sure that youngsters in our
5 schools have library service. Because the public
6 library in and of itself cannot do it. The public
7 library is there to reach everybody, to have a
8 broad range of resources for everyone the
9 community.

10 The truth of the matter is that good
11 libraries cost good money. There is no way to get
12 around that, but this focus should be of this
13 panel of how we can effectively and efficiently
14 come up with the best model to use to provide
15 school library services in Philadelphia. Perhaps
16 maybe not the model that's been used before,
17 perhaps not any model that any city or any
18 community has seen, but I believe that a panel
19 working together, we can find the ways that the
20 Free Library and the School District can work
21 together to provide the best possible library
22 services for the children of Philadelphia.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
25 much. Madam Chair, is it okay if I make a --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Sure.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

4 Certainly this is excellent testimony
5 and just the kind of -- just what we were looking
6 for, some solutions to deal with our issues. And
7 certainly may I ask the superintendent if he is
8 willing to engage in such a blue-ribbon panel with
9 three members from the School District, and as
10 Mr. Shelkrot offered, three members from the Board
11 of Trustees of the Free Library?

12 MR. SHELKROT: Yeah, appointed by the
13 Board, yeah.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Appointed by
15 the Board?

16 SUPT. HORNBECK: Madam Chair, we would
17 be delighted to participate in that. The
18 Philadelphia Free Library has been a great partner
19 all these years, and we would look forward to
20 finding even additional creative solutions, many
21 like the ones that Mr. Shelkrot points to.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: In addition, we
24 would offer a member of the City Council Education
25 Committee to also serve on the panel.

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2 MR. SHELKROT: Great.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you
4 for your testimony.

5 Councilman DiCicco?

6 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you, Madam
7 Chair. And good afternoon, Mr. Shelkrot.

8 I just have two questions. And if you
9 don't have the answers today, I would appreciate
10 it if you would make the information available to
11 the chair of this committee.

12 Your testimony indicates that of the
13 approximately 54 libraries, there are only a few
14 of them that are open in the mornings. How many
15 of them are not open in the morning?

16 MR. SHELKROT: No, every one of our
17 libraries are open in the mornings. Our branches,
18 our 49 branches, are only open two mornings a
19 week.

20 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Of the 49
21 branches, then how many are not open?

22 MR. SHELKROT: Well, all 49 are open 2
23 mornings a week.

24 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Okay, two
25 mornings. So then the rest of the week, they're

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2 not open. And what hours are they open now?

3 MR. SHELKROT: I'm sorry?

4 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: What hours are
5 they open for the two days a week?

6 MR. SHELKROT: On those two -- well,
7 let me clarify. What we have is a staggered
8 schedule. There are many people who say, Look, we
9 can't get to the library during the daytime, we
10 come in the evening. So we have our branches
11 scheduled in a way that two mornings a week,
12 they're open from either 9 to 5 or 10 to 6,
13 depending on the needs of the community. And the
14 other 3 days a week, they're open from noon or 1
15 o'clock to 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening,
16 depending on the needs of the community.

17 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Okay. Two things
18 I need you to answer and if you could do it in
19 writing is, what would the cost be if we were to
20 entertain keeping the libraries open on Sundays,
21 branches whatever?

22 MR. SHELKROT: Okay.

23 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: And what would be
24 the costs involved for all of the libraries to be
25 open in the mornings?

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2 MR. SHELKROT: Okay, I don't have that
3 with me, but I would be happy to put it together.

4 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Yeah, all week,
5 for five days a week.

6 MR. SHELKROT: Five days a week.

7 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Okay, thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: The next person
9 to testify will be Mary Jane Zimmerman.

10 MS. ZIMMERMAN: Thank you. Good
11 afternoon. And thank you for asking me to
12 testify. Can you hear me? Can you hear me?

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes.

14 MS. ZIMMERMAN: I've been sitting here
15 for quite a while. I represent the Association of
16 Philadelphia School Librarians. I've been
17 president of that association for four years now,
18 the end of my second term. And I've been with the
19 School District of Philadelphia since 1987. I
20 have worked in an elementary school -- I was at
21 George Washington Elementary School at Fifth and
22 Federal for five years before coming to my present
23 position in 1992 as a demonstration library at
24 William Penn High School in North Philadelphia.
25 Before that, Mr. Shelkrot may recall, I worked for

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2 the Free Library for ten years, and I ended my
3 career at Passyunk branch library.

4 First of all, I have some serious
5 differences of opinion with both my former boss
6 and my present one, which I'd like to address at
7 this time. First of all, I would like to address
8 the idea that the implication that in opening the
9 school -- these branches of the library on given
10 hours would solve our problem.

11 My last position, as I said, was a
12 branch librarian and children's librarian at the
13 Passyunk branch, at 20th and Shunk. And as the
14 librarian in charge of children's services, I was
15 given a list of schools in our service area for
16 which I was responsible. These included two large
17 elementary schools, two parochial schools, and a
18 small private school adjacent to the branch.
19 Given the number of schools and children, any
20 meaningful regular class visit would have been
21 impossible, and the branch collection inadequate.
22 And although the library was packed with children
23 in the afternoons, the afternoons could not make
24 up for what should have been an active school
25 library program.

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2 The branch closes at 5 p.m., three days
3 a week, as Mr. Shelkrot talked about, and was only
4 open till 8 p.m. on Monday and Wednesday
5 evenings. But these evening hours, even the
6 Saturday and Sunday hours that you discussed,
7 would serve only those children whose parents
8 could, would, and saw the value of bringing them
9 to the library.

10 Although I made every effort to contact
11 teachers to clarify assignments and coordinate our
12 efforts, my work could not possibly make up for
13 schools which lacked a quality, in-house library
14 program with a trained professional. And for the
15 School District to imply, even indirectly, that a
16 school can cut its librarian and/or library
17 because of the availability of a branch library in
18 its vicinity is short-sighted and, in my opinion,
19 abdicates the school's responsibility to fulfill
20 one of the main thrusts of Mr. Hornbeck's Children
21 Achieving plan.

22 I'd like to quote to you from the
23 "Cross Cutting Competencies" section of the
24 District's curriculum's framework, and this is
25 part of my testimony, which you have.

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2 Students who are competent in
3 problem-solving will:

4 1. Identify concrete issues and
5 abstract ideas and recognize that there are
6 resources available to explain these issues and
7 ideas.

8 2. Make decisions based on
9 information, data, and/or research collected.

10 3. Collect, review, summarize, and
11 organize data from a variety of contexts.

12 4. Analyze and select appropriate data
13 that expands knowledge and meaning.

14 5. Apply and represent data
15 appropriately.

16 6. Compare and contrast information
17 and knowledge.

18 7. Plan probable strategies for
19 solving an identified problem, device a plan to
20 the problem, and evaluate the data selected and
21 reexamine and collect more data if necessary.

22 I have no idea how one incorporates
23 this set of competencies into the total curriculum
24 without having a well-funded school library
25 program in place, staffed by a professional

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2 librarian who can work along with the classroom
3 teacher together to integrate the research process
4 into the very fabric of the teaching and learning
5 community.

6 There's -- a phrase that Mr. Hornbeck
7 used was that this is the inequity of the month.
8 This is a particular sticking point with me. As I
9 said to you, I came to the School District in
10 1987. I've always been a member of the
11 Association of Philadelphia School Librarians,
12 which is a professional association that goes back
13 over 25 years.

14 I was very -- I became really, really
15 active in it when the program started to
16 deteriorate. At that time, since we did not feel
17 that the District, you know, or the Association
18 really was addressing the problem, a group of us
19 what were members of the Association formed an ad
20 hoc committee. We got the attention of the media
21 at that time, we talked to School Board members.
22 It didn't take off, the program had not
23 deteriorated enough.

24 I was elected President of the
25 Association of Philadelphia School Librarians.

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2 And on many occasions, I have spoken to the School
3 Board, and on many occasions, I have detailed how
4 local decision-making has been a disaster for this
5 research-based program. In fact, we have provided
6 them with the APSL report, which details over and
7 over again the research that shows that not
8 classroom libraries, not classroom collections,
9 not small learning communities, but a professional
10 school library program staffed with professionals
11 and with adequate clerical staff are key to
12 improving student achievement.

13 In spite of this, this is left up to
14 local decision-making. And although in many
15 cases, there are hard choices, sometimes the
16 choices are not wisely done. And the implication
17 becomes that this is not important. This is
18 mandated, that is mandated. This is nice, but you
19 can cut it if you want to. And after a while, the
20 institutional memory of a school, of an elementary
21 school, is not very long. Once the school -- once
22 the library is gone, people don't remember what
23 they had. There's a saying that you don't know
24 what you don't know. And you can't remember or
25 have nostalgia for something that you never had.

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2 When I was at the elementary school
3 that I talked about, I replaced a librarian who
4 had been there for 17 years, and there was a
5 full-fledged library program in place. I was
6 there for five years, and I expanded this program,
7 including a research-based program starting with
8 the 2nd grade. When I left, unfortunately, the
9 program was cut. Now there is no library program
10 there, and nobody at George Washington Elementary
11 School probably remembers what it was like.

12 On the high school level, I know only
13 too well what the impact of the lack of school
14 programs on the elementary program has once the
15 kids reach the high school level. When they
16 haven't been taught the research process, when
17 they haven't had a school library which is staffed
18 with materials of all reading levels, they reach
19 high school with no understanding or appreciation
20 of what a wide variety of literature can do for
21 them, and they know nothing about the research
22 process, and we have to start from scratch. I can
23 no longer assume that 9th-graders even know how
24 the fiction books are organized. And the public
25 library cannot take the place of this.

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2 No, this is not the inequity of the
3 month. This is something that has been happening
4 over a period of approximately ten years. And
5 finally, it has gotten so bad that it has gotten
6 the attention of the media.

7 Classroom collections -- sometimes it
8 would be wonderful if we could have both. But in
9 fact, the funding of classroom collections can
10 take away from a well-funded library because each
11 classroom teacher assumes that this nice little
12 collection will suffice.

13 As other people have addressed,
14 children need to choose from a wide variety of
15 materials, and they don't just need story books;
16 they need to have a wide variety of materials on a
17 wide variety of reading levels, and they need to
18 be taught the research process by a professional
19 teacher-librarian.

20 I personally feel that the 100 Book
21 Challenge is much better met by funding the school
22 library. In fact, unfortunately, although APSL
23 and myself have addressed the Board over the
24 years, and we have, as Mr. Alston mentioned, had
25 an ongoing dialogue every year, more and more cuts

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2 are made to the point where we have lost 110
3 professional library positions that we once had.

4 If it had been funded adequately all
5 along, if more proper use had been made with the
6 funds that we have, our libraries would not have
7 declined to the point that they have. I think we
8 need to make better use of the funds that we have
9 now and provide a mandate for this very important
10 program. I could go on for a long time, but I --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
12 thank you. And we have a lot of folks who want to
13 testify. Thank you very much.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
16 much. Next is Carol Heinsdorf. Are you Carol
17 Heinsdorf?

18 MS. HEINSDORF: Yes, I am.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

20 MS. HEINSDORF: Excuse me, please, but
21 I think Debra Gniewek has been --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: She has been
23 here forever, and her testimony's absolutely
24 excellent.

25 MS. HEINSDORF: Do we want to hear from

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2 her first? May I suggest -- I will --

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
4 thank you.

5 MS. HEINSDORF: I will yield my chair.

6 MS. GNIEWEK: Thank you. I'm Debra
7 Gniewek, the Activity Manager for Library Programs
8 and Services for the School District. And I'd
9 really like to thank City Council for looking into
10 something that I feel has been neglected for years
11 and years and is really criminal, it's criminal.

12 I have this written testimony and it's
13 in the form of answering the questions that
14 Council originally asked the District. But I
15 really have to tell a story that happened today.
16 I'm a storyteller, like most high librarians are,
17 and it speaks to me about why this has to be a
18 mandate and why it can't a part of local
19 decision-making.

20 I went with Kathleen Kennedy Manzo,
21 who's a reporter from a national newspaper,
22 Education Week, which is the most widely read
23 education newspaper in the country. And we
24 visited two libraries. And at one library, the
25 principal did make the decision to close the

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2 library. I don't agree with the decision, but I
3 respect him for doing it because he's the only
4 principal in the District that said, These books
5 will not do for these children.

6 And he's right. I would have preferred
7 that he build up the central collection, because
8 we have a method in the Library Power schools of
9 rotating classroom collections, and that way,
10 they're inventory- controlled. They get to all
11 the classrooms, but the children also have the
12 choice of coming to the central library. So we
13 really immerse the children in books at every
14 single reading level.

15 And where Mr. Gill made his point about
16 classroom collections, he really hasn't seen the
17 Library Power Model in action. And as Steven
18 Krashen's research says, Children do three times
19 as much reading when there is a central collection
20 with professional librarian as opposed to just
21 classroom collections.

22 But what happened at this school, the
23 second school, where the principal has a library
24 but no staffing, there has been no money going to
25 the library at all. And she was very, very proud

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2 of what they had been doing. She said, We get to
3 do research in here. The teachers bring the
4 classes in and they do research, and they really
5 do a wonderful job.

6 And I went to the shelves and within
7 two minutes, I went to the collective biography
8 section and I looked at the books on inventors,
9 and there were seven books, and the copyright was
10 1955, 1960, and 1963. Two of the books had three
11 copies each. There was not one African-American
12 inventor in those books. That is not acceptable.

13 This is not a frill. How can we have a
14 library for these children to do research and
15 they're going in there, and they are told that
16 this is what's going on in the world. That might
17 have been the propaganda of the 1960s, but it's
18 something that we know is not true.

19 I have more show-and-tell. This is
20 from a library that's improved lately, and they
21 had a celebration last night, and the librarian
22 gave me this book, You Will Go to the Moon. And
23 on the first page, it tells the children about how
24 man hasn't been to the moon yet --"man" hasn't
25 been to moon yet, but one day, he will be.

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2 This is about how families live and the
3 way families live is, Well, all families are all
4 white, there's a mom and there's a dad, there's
5 two children. Mom stays home and cares for the
6 children and dad goes out and earns a living.

7 Colonial Life in America has an
8 illustration of happy slaves working on the
9 plantation. This is in every elementary school
10 library that's not Library Power. On the page
11 after the illustration, it talks about the life of
12 the slaves. They had their own cabin. In some
13 cases, there was a school. No value judgments are
14 put on this, and this is what our children are
15 expected to do research in.

16 I can go on and on.

17 This is about how fun it is to be an
18 American while it puts down every other culture in
19 the world. It was written during the Cold War.

20 This is one about careers. We're a
21 district that has a really strong career program.
22 And this is one that I found in the elementary
23 school about airline stewardesses. It has a
24 picture of Vice President Nixon getting off the
25 plane, greeting the stewardesses. The end of the

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2 book has the great finale for the stewardess.

3 Even though she has to retire when she gets

4 married worried, isn't it worth it?

5 This is not a frill, this is not

6 something that we say, Oh, we have to rob Peter to

7 pay Paul for. This is something that is

8 absolutely essential for our children. And I

9 don't know how many more times we have to do this

10 research to say -- Keith Curry Lance did it in

11 1993. And what he said was, overall expenditures

12 on students do not make a difference. But if you

13 gear that money to the library, school libraries

14 expenditures, professional staffing assisted by

15 clerical assistants have the most impact on

16 student achievement and reading scores. His

17 research was repeated by Steven Krashen in 1993,

18 who looked at 20 years of reading research and

19 said that school libraries make the biggest

20 difference. Krashen repeated it again in 1997.

21 Now Keith Curry Lance did the research

22 in Pennsylvania, and he hasn't published it yet.

23 But the state librarian called me yesterday and

24 told me that the data is stronger than ever that

25 if you have a library program, with open access

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2 for the children, if you have resources, if you
3 have a professional librarian and clerical
4 assistants, if that librarian works with the
5 teachers and works with the students, then those
6 student have the highest scores of any students in
7 the state on the PSSAs in reading.

8 The research has been done on an
9 international level, over 32 countries. A man by
10 the name of Ally (ph.) did research and found out
11 that by having a strong library program, you can
12 make up the difference between rich and poor
13 nations. And then locally, we did it again. We
14 compared our Library Power schools to the
15 non-Library Power schools, and the children in the
16 Library Power schools scored higher on the reading
17 portion of the Stanford 9 Achievement. Not only
18 that, but they found that Library Power benefited
19 high-poverty children more than anyone. It really
20 makes up the difference, the gap between the rich
21 and the poor. And this is what we're looking for.

22 I have answers to the questions and I'd
23 be happy to, but I guess my plea is, I'm really
24 begging you to take the surplus from the city and
25 earmark it for the libraries. And I'll tell you

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2 that if it's not earmarked for the library, in 80
3 percent of the cases, it won't get there because
4 the principals don't have a vision of what the
5 school library can be, they don't know what it can
6 be, they've never seen it. Their experience of
7 the school library is their own experience from
8 when they were school children 30 years ago and
9 they were being educated to work on an assembly
10 line.

11 Now we're teaching children how to
12 think and how to research, and the most important
13 skill is the skill that the librarian teaches
14 them, which is the skill of how to find
15 information, how to evaluate it, and how to use
16 it. So most of our principals don't have a
17 vision.

18 And I said to Kathleen Manzo Kennedy,
19 when we say these books on the shelves and the
20 principal saying that this is a wonderful program,
21 I said, I could give her \$10 million and she would
22 not spend it on the library, she would not choose
23 to do that.

24 So I really am begging you to earmark
25 those funds for our school libraries for the sake

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2 of our children. It really, really does make a
3 difference, I've seen it.

4 I also want to invite you to visit the
5 Library Power schools and see it, because it's not
6 just the numbers; if you can see the looks on the
7 faces of these children, you would know that it
8 works.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.
12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: May I say that
14 your testimony was as good as the written
15 documentation. And let me say for the -- we would
16 like to, if the Chair will agree, to make the
17 entire testimony a part of the record. And there
18 are five questions here that are questions and
19 answers.

20 1. How many schools have library
21 facilities in their building?

22 2. Are there schools that provide for
23 the use of library facilities outside their
24 building?

25 And all these questions are answered.

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2 3. How is the determination made
3 regarding whether a school will have library
4 facilities? Who makes those decisions?

5 4. How much money is allocated in the
6 School District budget for the operation of
7 library facilities? How much for capital
8 improvements in library facilities?

9 And these are all really, really
10 important questions on this whole issue.

11 5. For those schools that do have
12 libraries, are textbooks made available to the
13 children for their use when there is a shortage of
14 books in the classroom.

15 Important questions.

16 So for anyone certainly who would like
17 a copy of this, the committee would certainly make
18 it available, and we certainly, if the Chair
19 agrees, will make this entire testimony a part of
20 the record.

21 MS. GNIEWEK: Thank you.

22 I guess there are two things that I
23 just found out yesterday that I just wanted to add
24 to my testimony. What I found out by getting the
25 figures from New York is that we are now the

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2 lowest funded per-pupil library program in the
3 nation. We're the lowest.

4 And the next thing that I found out
5 from the Keith Curry Lance research is,
6 everybody's always saying that technology --
7 there's no proof that technology works. Well, the
8 new Lance research says that if you put networked
9 computers in the library, it does have a positive
10 effect on student achievement. And yet, we've had
11 no major initiative to put the network computers
12 in the libraries.

13 So I just wanted to add those two
14 things 'cause those are pieces of research that I
15 just learned yesterday.

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I don't have any
17 records here, but I would like to know if either
18 the Chair or the former Chair knows, what does the
19 public school system spend for libraries? What is
20 their investment in it in dollar terms?

21 MS. GNIEWEK: There is nothing
22 allotted. The decision is made by individual
23 principals. So currently, we have a figure of
24 \$5.97. That makes us the lowest in the nation,
25 except we believe that that figure is very high

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2 because we had 60 non-reporting schools and we
3 believe, as we get more information -- originally
4 we had 65 -- the non-reporting schools are
5 spending nothing.

6 So even though we have a figure that's
7 the lowest in the nation, we believe it's even
8 lower than that because of the non-reporting
9 schools.

10 COUNCILMAN COHEN: You mean there is no
11 central mandate?

12 MS. GNIEWEK: There's no central
13 mandate. And the national average is now \$36 a
14 child, 1997 to 1998 data.

15 COUNCILMAN COHEN: It only gets you to
16 about three innings of a ball game.

17 MS. GNIEWEK: I mean, we would be
18 thrilled with the national average. We don't even
19 approach it.

20 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Do you have any idea
21 what the national average is?

22 MS. GNIEWEK: The national average is
23 about \$28 per student in elementary schools and
24 about \$43 per students in high schools. So we say
25 about \$36 per student. And what they're saying

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2 nationally is, this isn't enough. And it isn't
3 enough, but look where we are.

4 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Where?

5 MS. GNIEWEK: We're the lowest -- we're
6 \$5 --

7 COUNCILMAN COHEN: We're nowhere.

8 MS. GNIEWEK: We're nowhere. I mean,
9 where we are is books about inventors from 1955.

10 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Even I'll be young
11 if I go by the years in those books, right?

12 (Laughter.)

13 MS. GNIEWEK: Me too.

14 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Yeah. All right,
15 thank you very much.

16 I -- I -- I don't think it's a secret
17 we want to let out of the city. We have to
18 correct the situation first before we can let any
19 information go out about our library system.

20 We never knew that. I've been in
21 Council many years. I just always assumed that
22 libraries were kept up to date, that they were
23 useful to students, and that they gave the
24 students the right point of view, or at least the
25 options of the right points of view, you know, to

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2 follow. But, apparently, if books are going to be
3 30, 40, 50 years old, it's not going to be very
4 useful. It may be harmful.

5 MS. GNIEWEK: They are damaging, very
6 damaging to our students.

7 And the other thing that the research
8 showed is that you really need a professional and
9 a clerical person in there to really give the
10 students the instruction that they need. They
11 really need to learn that research process. They
12 can't memorize all the facts they need to know for
13 the 21st century. But if they learn how to use
14 information and evaluate it, then they're set.
15 They really are.

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Mr. Epstein, I have
17 to address you. You're a man of words. How can
18 you tolerate such a situation?

19 You don't have to answer that but I'd
20 like you to, I'd like you to. I'd like to
21 understand what is the philosophy that -- is it
22 just the tightness of the dollar?

23 (William Epstein comes forward.)

24 MR. EPSTEIN: I am William Epstein,
25 Director of Government Relations.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Can you hold on
3 just a second.

4 MR. EPSTEIN: Sure.

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I need to leave.
6 And as Chair of this committee, Councilwoman
7 Blackwell will proceed. I have a meeting outside
8 of City Hall that's already been scheduled, and I
9 have to -- actually, I should have been there at
10 5.

11 But I just want to personally thank
12 everyone for coming today to testify about this
13 important issue. And I, like Councilman Cohen,
14 never really realized that the libraries are so
15 outdated. I do have a daughter at a school that
16 doesn't have a library, but we use Northwest
17 Regional and we buy books and those kind of
18 things. So I just want to personally thank
19 everyone for coming.

20 The hearing will continue.
21 Councilwoman Blackwell is going to Chair it.
22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thanks, Donna.

24 Mr. Epstein?

25 MR. EPSTEIN: Thank you, Councilman.

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2 I'm William Epstein, Director of Government
3 Relations for the School District.

4 I think the superintendent, Councilman,
5 responded fairly thoroughly to the dilemma that we
6 face in this regard, that we do not have adequate
7 resources to do the many things that we need to do
8 to make our children whole. And lack of libraries
9 and librarians is one of them.

10 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Well, I just
11 wondered how that --

12 MR. EPSTEIN: I wouldn't want anyone to
13 walk out of this room under the impression that
14 the superintendent, the people that work for him,
15 the teachers in our system, the administrators are
16 at all comfortable with the fact that books of
17 that nature are in our libraries.

18 I'm not certain why we don't take books
19 like that -- and not being a librarian, I can't
20 answer this question, but why we don't -- I know
21 if I had any books like that in my office, they'd
22 be in the trash bin, because they certainly don't
23 do my children any good or your children any good.

24 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Well, that's why I
25 made the remark about the possible harm that they

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2 do.

3 MS. GNIEWEK: They do. And when --

4 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I'm very concerned.

5 Frankly, we worried about school size, we worried
6 about safety, we worried about the administration
7 of drugs. Councilwoman Blackwell kept us busy
8 with a whole group of issues. The one issue we
9 fought for so long, we never had to raise because
10 we felt very comfortable that the libraries would
11 be outstanding in the schools. And --

12 MS. GNIEWEK: They're among the worst
13 in the nation, they really are.

14 And the reason that these books are
15 still on the shelves is that when I go into a
16 library that doesn't have a librarian and I
17 suggest to the principal that they get rid of 95
18 percent of the collection, which is what I say
19 they refuse, because they believe that something
20 is better than nothing, and I totally disagree.
21 And there are some teachers in the District who
22 believe that something is better than nothing,
23 too. I believe that the books are damaging and
24 that they should not be there.

25 The other thing is that the librarians

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2 are no longer given time to do an inventory to
3 weed the books. And they always do have to get
4 the principal's permission to weed them. And,
5 again, the principal is not a professional about
6 this and very often assumes that something's
7 better than nothing.

8 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you, Mr.
9 Epstein.

10 MR. EPSTEIN: If I could suggest. I
11 very seriously doubt whether there's a teacher in
12 the Philadelphia school system using books like
13 that -- of the kind that Debra cited.

14 COUNCILMAN COHEN: These people think
15 there are.

16 MR. EPSTEIN: And if there are
17 teachers, we need to have an internal discussion
18 about it to resolve that issue because that is not
19 the standard that the School District aspires to.

20 MS. GNIEWEK: That's what I'm saying.

21 COUNCILMAN COHEN: How do we know that?

22 MR. EPSTEIN: Excuse me? Our standards
23 in key subjects are very clearly laid out, and I
24 doubt that it includes anything of the nature that
25 Miss Gniewek has cited here.

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2 So, again, I'm not the expert in the
3 area here and I'm not -- certainly not a
4 librarian, you know that. And I'm not a teacher,
5 either, but I'd be shocked if any of the teachers
6 in the School District were using any of the books
7 that Miss Gniewek cited.

8 MS. GNIEWEK: The children are using
9 them.

10 MR. EPSTEIN: But that's --

11 MS. GNIEWEK: As I said, Mr. Willingham
12 is the only principal that said that that is not
13 acceptable.

14 MR. EPSTEIN: If they're on the shelf, I
15 don't doubt that a child might pull them off, but
16 I'm sorry, you said teachers were using these
17 books, and I --

18 MS. GNIEWEK: Well, I mean, I went to a
19 school where the reading teacher said that
20 something is better than nothing and it's better
21 for them to have something to read rather than
22 nothing.

23 MR. EPSTEIN: I agree with you that
24 that's not true.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Epstein, I

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2 would dare to say that this hearing isn't over
3 yet. So if you listen, we have other people who
4 may shed a little light on this as well.

5 Thank you. Excellent testimony.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
8 thank you.

9 All right. Please identify yourself
10 for the record and continue.

11 MS. HEINSDORF: My name is Carol
12 Heinsdorf. That's spelled H-E-I-N-S-D-O-R-F as in
13 Frank.

14 Councilwoman Blackwell and committee
15 members, I'm hoping this is as short as the
16 Ghattysburg Address, so please pay attention.

17 While a member of Mayor-elect John
18 Street's Education Summit Resource Team, I
19 explained to my team how the Library Power tenets
20 of certified teacher-librarians, open access,
21 flexible scheduling, teacher collaboration,
22 quality, up-to-date book collections, and
23 attractive facilities supported effective academic
24 programming for both teachers and students.

25 After my emotional outpour, I was

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2 assured by the co-chair of this summit, Marge
3 Dugan that my team members already understood and
4 supported those school library tenets. Miss
5 Dugan's comments lead me to believe that you, the
6 City Council Committee on Education members, also
7 understand and support these Library Power tenets,
8 which are increase proven to increase academic
9 performance.

10 Pat Mazzuca, the principal of Clemente
11 Middle School in North Philadelphia, supports
12 Library Power, and that's where I am the school
13 librarian. We have a dynamic school library
14 program serving 1,000 students a week.

15 While in the former East Berlin last
16 June on a school exchange, I witnessed the high
17 level of academic performance expected of
18 students. Only 10 percent of the schools in
19 Germany have school libraries, and the library in
20 school we visit was tiny, staffed by a clerk, and
21 usually closed. My home stay's son said it didn't
22 really matter because he had so much school work
23 to do that he didn't have time to read.

24 The glaring cultural difference that I
25 observed was that the level of performance was

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2 high because students were taught to perform.
3 German students are taught to do; however, they
4 are not taught to think. Teaching students to
5 think, to identify the question, and know how to
6 find the answer to it is culturally a very
7 American activity.

8 There is no better place to teach our
9 children to identify a question, synthesize
10 information, and find the answer for themselves
11 than in a good school library while they are young
12 and a captive audience. The public school
13 children of the City of Philadelphia deserve your
14 support of good school libraries.

15 Not in my written testimony is a
16 practical suggestion, because I've heard you want
17 suggestions. When the budget sheets are handed
18 out in the schools each year in March, if you look
19 at where the librarian is on there in an
20 elementary school, the librarian comes under the
21 principal and before a counselor. In the middle
22 school where I am, there is the principal, the
23 assistant principal, the librarian, and then the
24 counselor. Several years ago, all of the teaching
25 positions -- art, music, whatever -- were

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2 integrated and made one with the classroom
3 teacher. The librarians were never integrated.

4 When there is limited funding in a
5 building, a responsible principal is going to look
6 at where they can make the biggest single cut with
7 the least effect, and the librarian is right up
8 there. That's why the certified professional
9 librarians are let go first, because that's where
10 the principal can save the most amount of money.

11 Now, I say all that needs to be done --
12 I don't know how much work it would take -- is to
13 take that librarian out of that position on that
14 individual school budget and integrate it with a
15 classroom teacher. They will be cheaper to hire.
16 It's just a suggestion.

17 A negotiating point was asked for
18 earlier -- this also is not in my testimony. But
19 when we can have our children read and think and
20 synthesize information, they are going to be kept
21 off the welfare rolls, which are shorter all the
22 time, I understand. But if Philadelphia can keep
23 its children literate, what better reason could
24 you have in Harrisburg for funding school
25 libraries? It's good for the City, which takes

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2 less money from the State. Common sense.

3 Thank you for your concern.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
5 much.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Karen
8 Talarico?

9 Please identify yourself for the record
10 and make your testimony.

11 MS. TALARICO: Yes. Good afternoon --
12 or I guess I should say "good evening." I'm Karen
13 Talarico and I'm the Executive Director of the
14 Friends of the Free Library. And I'm here today
15 to address the issue of having the Free Library
16 provide library services to the City schools.

17 The Friends are staunch supporters of
18 libraries and literacy, especially where children
19 are concerned. For many years, the Friends have
20 organized the Read Together Coalition, which every
21 year sponsors among its programs "Love Is Reading
22 Together Week," a program which many of the City
23 Councilmembers have participated in.

24 The Friends think the Free Library does
25 a terrific library in the area of providing

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2 library services for children. And many of those
3 programs were already detailed by Elliot Shelkrot
4 when he testified so I won't go into them again
5 here. And I think that if you visited one of the
6 renovated branch libraries and seen one of the
7 children's departments, you know what a wonderful
8 place they are. They have computers in them, they
9 have a very nice collection of books geared toward
10 children, and they're staffed by a children's
11 librarian.

12 But the Friends believe that the Free
13 Library should offer services to the entire
14 community, and we think that the library does that
15 admirably. Our concern is that the resources of
16 the library will be spread just a little too thin
17 if the library is given the mandate to furnish the
18 library programming for City school students.
19 Unless those programs are fully funded and
20 staffed, other aspects of library service may
21 suffer.

22 We're worried about what's going to
23 happen to the segments of the community that the
24 library has to serve in addition to the children,
25 to the preschoolers who come for story hour, to

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2 the senior citizens who rely on the library as a
3 place to gather and find reading material in a
4 peaceful setting, to job seekers who need the
5 resources of the library to help them find work,
6 and to scholars who use the resources to help them
7 research.

8 There are those who feel that the
9 library isn't open enough hours and doesn't have
10 enough staff to fully serve their communities
11 right now. What will happen to the oldest and
12 youngest segments of our library-users if the
13 libraries and librarians must focus more time and
14 energy on our school students?

15 You know, right after the school year
16 began this year, I received a phone call from a
17 5th-grade teacher who told me that his classroom
18 had no library and his school had no library. He
19 knew that the Friends were engaged in the practice
20 of collecting used books and reselling them and
21 distributing them, and he wondered if I could help
22 him out well.

23 Well, of course, I was happy to help
24 out. And I had the staff of the bookstore put
25 together five cartons of books for this teacher.

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2 But when I looked at the books, I felt really bad
3 sending them to this teacher. Those books were
4 really well-worn, they were well-read, they were
5 underlined. We had to guess at whether they were
6 appropriate for the grade level of the children
7 because none of us are professionals on that
8 level.

9 But I called him up and he came down
10 and he picked up those five cartons, and he was
11 really thrilled. He told me that a used book is
12 better than no book -- something that I think
13 you've heard before this afternoon. But I still
14 feel bad about sending those used books to the
15 kid. And I continue to get calls because now the
16 word is spreading that the Friends can supply
17 books to the schools that don't have libraries and
18 don't have classroom libraries.

19 We're happy to try to accommodate those
20 requests, but I feel personally that the kids
21 deserve new, up-to-date books in their school
22 libraries. And I think they need to have books
23 for research, enrichment, and leisure reading
24 right in their own schools, if not in their
25 classrooms.

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2 So in closing, I would urge you not to
3 shortchange the children of our city. Provide the
4 libraries in their schools, staff them with a
5 teacher-librarian who can teach how to use the
6 library as part of their curriculum. And that
7 will allow the Free Library to continue to provide
8 services for all members of the community, young
9 and old alike.

10 Thank you for your time.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
13 much.

14 I now have two of my friends from West
15 Philadelphia -- the Director of the West
16 Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, Fran Aulston, and
17 certainly to the right of her is Janet Dubinsky,
18 President of Garden Court Civic Association.
19 Thank you, ladies. Thank you for your patience.

20 Please introduce yourselves for the
21 record and begin your testimony.

22 MS. AULSTON: I'm Frances Aulston,
23 F-R-A-N-C-E-S, A-U-L-S-T-O-N, Director of the West
24 Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and the Paul
25 Robeson House. Good afternoon -- or good evening

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2 now.

3 Madam Chair, Councilmembers, parents,
4 educators, and students if there are any left, and
5 members of the general public, on behalf of the
6 hundreds of thousands of children who have
7 benefited from a substantial educational process
8 and because of their determination and because of
9 advocates like you who are represented here today,
10 and on behalf of the board members, parents, and
11 children of the West Philadelphia Culture Alliance
12 and the Paul Robeson House and Institute of Civic
13 Responsibility, thank you for the opportunity to
14 address this afternoon the importance of library
15 programs.

16 As a former librarian with the
17 Philadelphia Free Library for the last five years
18 of my library career and a library assistant for
19 25 of my 31 years in library service, I learned
20 the importance of strong supportive library
21 programs. Those years offered me an opportunity
22 to see children cram into the library after school
23 hours with only standing room, children eager to
24 learn.

25 On a personal note, I can appreciate

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2 the value of open access to library materials.
3 For as a child growing up in Richmond, Virginia, I
4 experienced blatant racism in the schools and
5 public libraries. As a black child -- we were
6 called "colored" at that time -- the only library
7 that I had access to was the public library, 35
8 blocks away from my home. I, as well as many
9 black children, walked 30 blocks and more to
10 borrow books -- only to be embarrassed by the
11 librarian telling us that we were not allowed to
12 touch books in the for-whites-only section of the
13 library. Nevertheless, with the many limitations
14 affirmed by racism and the limitations in the
15 selection process of substantial reading
16 materials, we as black children persevered and
17 achieved academically.

18 That was fifty years ago and not much
19 has changed, as we listened today, when we look at
20 the negative message we are sending our children
21 by closing libraries, reducing professional
22 library staff and resources.

23 I believe that we can all agree that
24 the fundamental reason that our children's
25 academic success is that the family or parents are

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2 involved with their educational process. Yes,
3 libraries are important, a key tool for family
4 involvement. It's the fundamental library
5 structure where subject matter can be accessed
6 through print and non-print materials. Because of
7 the lack of commitment that some City and State
8 officials demonstrate for full-service libraries
9 and schools, many students have inadequate
10 resources to receive their maximum potential in
11 the educational process.

12 Library facilities and strong library
13 programs are an absolute crucial part of their
14 educational experience. Having libraries included
15 in the school facility enables students to
16 complete homework assignments, to check out books
17 to aid in their subject matter, and increases
18 their reading ability.

19 The library should be the main hub for
20 learning, the public school library. It's
21 important to note that other community settings
22 are secondary support systems. Library
23 instruction must first start in the public
24 schools. The Free Library's mission, in part, is
25 to supplement the curriculum.

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2 Once this resolution is passed -- and I
3 have faith in God that you will pass it -- call on
4 us who are on the main line, the front line,
5 educators who have many positive solutions, as
6 you've heard today. If you're interested in
7 forming a task force, I would suggest that you add
8 to Elliot Shelkrot's model, the blue-ribbon model,
9 and include panels from the community, the
10 leadership in the community, as well as parents on
11 those panels.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. AULSTON: It's also important to
14 remember that within the school structure as an
15 integral part of the learning team, the
16 professional librarian should always be included
17 to aid teachers in the location of the appropriate
18 grade-level material for their students. This is
19 essential in order to help student locate books to
20 aid in the research design that students must now
21 have in the Philadelphia public schools.

22 Full-time librarians are also essential
23 to aid the administration to quickly locate
24 educational materials and educational-related
25 materials. Librarians are also essential to

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2 strengthen their schools' collection and resources
3 with the latest innovations in both print and
4 non-print forms.

5 The library is also a different
6 learning environment. As you heard the students
7 say today, it affords a quiet, clean and safe --
8 now the children told us this today place -- that
9 they might have to read. Also, it's a place where
10 they may select a book that they would not
11 ordinarily share information with their parents.
12 The library setting allows students to seek
13 information that they do not want to talk to
14 adults about but that they may be able to discuss
15 with a professional librarian.

16 The library facility is conducive for
17 textbook reading, to do research, to read for
18 pleasure. And all of the things are enhanced by
19 quality library programs and settings.

20 Even if additional funding is received
21 through Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell's
22 resolution, because of the bureaucracy and
23 Councilman Kenney's remarks today, it will take
24 ten years, another generation, before a student
25 can graduate with adequate skills for a successful

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2 and productive adult life.

3 On behalf of our children, I
4 wholeheartedly request Council's immediate
5 consideration to support this resolution to hold
6 hearings to investigate the Board of Education
7 providing library facilities for all students
8 within the public schools.

9 I thank you, in the absence of Madam
10 Chair and Councilmembers, for the opportunity of
11 your time and consideration to address you this
12 afternoon. Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you
14 very, very much thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Miss Dubinsky.

17 MS. DUBINSKY: Hi. My name is a Janet
18 Dubinsky. I am President of Garden Court
19 Community Association and also the Education
20 Chair. And I want to thank our library
21 chairperson, Lottie Gotchlet (ph.), for coming
22 today to support us. And she's done a spectacular
23 job with what we have.

24 (Handing photographs to Councilman
25 Cohen.)

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2 Councilman Cohen, for your perusal --
3 Councilwoman Blackwell has already seen the
4 library. This is an instant tour of the school
5 library. If a picture is worth a thousand words,
6 these are 9,000 words.

7 Diane was very much on the mark. Last
8 week in the school library, I pulled out off the
9 shelf at random:

10 Let's Go to Africa, in which it states
11 that the Union of the Society Africa is run by
12 people whose grandparents came from England and
13 Holland. A little out of date. On the shelf last
14 week.

15 We have people teaching languages in
16 the Republic of the Congo. No one in the village
17 owns shoes. We have people in grass huts because
18 that is the way they live. I am not African-
19 American, obviously, but this doesn't make me feel
20 any better as a member of the human race.

21 We have here a music book first
22 published in 1896. This was weeded from the Lee
23 School library only early in 1999. The last print
24 date on it, I believe, is 1930. Some of you may
25 be familiar with the author Jacqueline Suzanne.

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2 This is a book that evidently belonged to her
3 mother, who was a music teacher at Lee School.
4 Current? I think not.

5 Diane mentioned about heroes that were
6 relevant to our current curricula, that there were
7 no African-Americans mentioned. I have it marked
8 "nothing to identify with." Birthdays of Freedom
9 -- no African-Americans. From early man to July
10 4, 1976, has anything happened since then? Yeah,
11 I think so.

12 Role models. Our school is at least 80
13 percent African-American, 20 percent Asian. I'm
14 sure he's a very famous man, I'm sure most of our
15 students eat his food. This is a biography of Ray
16 Kroc who, in one place, states that -- this will
17 be interesting. As a child, Ray did enjoy
18 reading. After 10th grade, Ray quit school. Well
19 that might have been all right for Ray, but it's
20 not all right for our kids now to get ideas like
21 this in their heads.

22 Play Time in Africa, which is, once
23 again, a tour with the happy natives.

24 And one of our real winners -- the
25 picture story, as Diane said, of a colonial

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2 plantation. It's equipped with all the slave
3 quarters and the happy, smiling slaves and
4 everything else you could imagine.

5 These books, except for the one that
6 was only pulled last week, have been pulled within
7 the last six months. These were current books in
8 what you see is left of Lee School's library.

9 I have a great fondness for Lee School.
10 It's a K-through-8 school and I went there K
11 through 8. I'm also a graduate of West Philly
12 High and I still live and work in the community in
13 which I was born.

14 These books, these six books and those
15 nine pictures, which anyone is free to look at
16 afterward if they'd like to, are worth 15,000
17 words so I'll just cut down to the last few.
18 These will, hopefully, say more to you than I
19 could about the state of this school library,
20 which exists today as not even a skeleton of its
21 former self. I say "self" because to many of us,
22 a library is, or should be hopefully, a living,
23 interactive entity.

24 Lee School, including library, has no
25 current access to the Internet as well as no

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2 computers in the library to enable children to do
3 research as well as to read for pure enjoyment.
4 They have no books to take home.

5 A community should be able to support
6 and encourage a school library on a volunteer
7 basis, not the necessity to build one from one
8 from scratch. We shouldn't have to choose between
9 a music teacher, who -- by the way, the music
10 teacher at Lee School asked me to mention that the
11 music teacher needs some recorders because we have
12 no instruments either. We have a music teacher
13 but no instruments.

14 What we have is a K-through-8
15 1,000-student school, with no functioning library
16 or librarian. These children feed directly into
17 the high school. We are a part of the West
18 Philadelphia Cluster. West Philadelphia High
19 School is right across the street from us.

20 These kids are going to high school
21 without having used a school library in years if
22 at all, if ever. Walnut West one of our closer
23 libraries, and as some of you may know, Walnut
24 West has been greatly marginalized -- its hours,
25 its space, and its operating facilities. And it's

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2 certainly not accessible to everyone.

3 We have one Lee parent who is herself a
4 Lee grad who mentioned to me and said very sadly
5 that even if you could afford a laptop computer,
6 it's not exactly something you take to bed, use a
7 flashlight under the covers, and cuddle up with.
8 They're very nice, they're very technological,
9 it's wonderful, and we need them. But a book is
10 something tangible that can belong to you and you
11 alone. And a new one, as the lovely lady from
12 Friends of the Free Library said, occasionally is
13 a nice thing to have. It's yours. It builds a
14 foundation.

15 Bonding with books, as most of us have
16 learned, is our own lifetime reward. We hope that
17 we can give our children the same opportunity as
18 we have had. How can they respect the printed
19 word and learn to love it if they don't have
20 access to it?

21 And this is not a matter of self
22 aggrandizement on our community Association's
23 part, but we felt so strongly the desperate
24 straits of Lee School's Library, which
25 Councilwoman Blackwell has seen, and this is a

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2 school at which Councilwoman Blackwell has also
3 taught in her former career. We felt so strongly
4 at our last board meeting that we voted 1,000
5 dollars seed money to Lee School's library, with
6 hopes of matching it many times over through the
7 community and its members and its businesspeople
8 and individual contributions.

9 This is only a start, this is not
10 something we should have to do. We already have
11 people volunteering their time. This should come
12 from the State, the City, the School Board. This
13 shouldn't be necessary for us to grovel for things
14 and to beg for a better life for these kids.

15 It's not a solution, what we've done,
16 but it is hopefully a beginning. And with
17 Council's help, with the State's help, with the
18 School Board's help, we can build on what we are
19 doing and hopefully turn this around because it
20 has very little left to go in terms of going
21 down. There is no other way but up.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
24 much.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me say
3 that it is obviously very painful for me. I was
4 so disappointed. I can see Miss Rodriguez's
5 friendly face when I taught there, the librarian,
6 and all that goes along with it. Elsie Hart knows
7 those days. And when I walked in and when I asked
8 whether or not the principal -- and when I asked
9 Cheryl Hazzard if she had a librarian and her
10 answer was no and then I toured the library, I
11 knew why. Why could you waste a person when you
12 don't even have books. So it's very, very
13 disappointing when we approach a millennium and we
14 are to move forward and yet we're moving back in
15 many ways.

16 And I certainly thank both of you Fran
17 Aulston and Janet Dubinsky, and I thank Garden
18 Court for caring enough to try to solicit
19 volunteers and to do a collection to try to make a
20 difference. Thank you all. You all you've been
21 just great.

22 And let me invite the other folks up
23 who are here. Please come over to speak. And
24 it's been a wonderful testimony, and I'm sorry
25 that everyone who started is not here, but we're

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2 going to continue to keep going.

3 Identify yourself for the record,
4 please.

5 MS. PHILLIPS: Dee Phillips.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Dee Phillips.

7 Of course, I know you. Philadelphia Federation of
8 Teachers, Dee Phillips. And Francina Emery,
9 Multicultural Resource Center.

10 Please identify yourself for the record
11 and make your testimony.

12 Mr. Parker, you can sit down right
13 there. Thank you.

14 MS. PHILLIPS: Good evening
15 Councilwoman Blackwell and Councilman Cohen. I am
16 Dee Phillips. That's P-H-I-L-L-I-P-S. I'm Vice
17 President of the Philadelphia Federation of
18 Teachers and Special Assistant to the President.
19 I am honored to bring you greetings from our
20 President, Ted Kirsch, who is presently out of the
21 country. He asked me to offer testimony on behalf
22 of PFT with regard to the current status of
23 libraries and librarians in the School District
24 and Council Resolution No. 990540.

25 However, because the hour is late and

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2 because a lot of what is in my testimony has
3 already been stated, I'd just like to summarize
4 what is here, and you have the full text for the
5 record.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We'll make it
7 a part of the record.

8 MS. PHILLIPS: Thank you.

9 We do applaud this initiative to
10 investigate library facilities and staffing in the
11 School District. And it is clear that a school
12 library staffed by a professional librarian, with
13 appropriate funding for instruction and materials
14 and technology resources, is an invitation to
15 learning. It sends a clear message to our
16 students that indeed, they are as important as we
17 say they are. Anything less than that sends the
18 wrong message. And, unfortunately, the facts and
19 the reality do send the wrong message.

20 And you've heard this data today, but
21 it just bears repeating that out of 188 elementary
22 schools, 110 are without full-time certified
23 professional librarians. And, in fact, there are
24 schools where the library is closed all or for a
25 part of the week. There are schools where

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2 libraries have been completely dismantled. And
3 there are about 55 schools where the library is
4 entirely without professional staff or that are
5 staffed by volunteers or there is staff pulled
6 from their other duties.

7 And I ask you to imagine the following
8 scene. Your doctor has told you that you are in
9 need of heart bypass surgery. However, due to the
10 lack of funding, instead of a fully qualified
11 anesthesiologist, a wonderful volunteer will
12 administer the anesthesia, would you allow this to
13 happen? I don't think so. So how, then, are we
14 allowing some of our children to receive total
15 library services from volunteers and others to
16 receive no library services at all?

17 And to exacerbate the situation, the
18 Pennsylvania School Code no longer mandates a
19 librarian in every secondary school. As a result,
20 here in Philadelphia, principals are beginning to
21 cut the secondary-school librarian positions.
22 Central East Middle School, right now, does not
23 have a librarian. George Washington High School,
24 one of the largest comprehensive high schools in
25 the District, is slated to become the first high

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2 school in the nation -- I repeat that, in the
3 nation -- without a certified school librarian.

4 The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
5 believe that a quality library with a full-time,
6 properly certified and qualified librarian should
7 be the center of the instructional program of the
8 school. A certified professional school librarian
9 can provide the expertise necessary to ensure that
10 that happens.

11 Librarians are not simply custodians of
12 books but are those whose certification and
13 training have given them the knowledge and skills
14 to develop plans and processes for assisting
15 children in learning to communicate and how to
16 access information. They provide information and
17 the use of technology that support the mission,
18 goals, and objectives of the school and enrich the
19 student learning environment.

20 A school library is neither a
21 convenience, nor a luxury. It is essential to the
22 growth of young minds.

23 Our students deserve school libraries
24 that contain appropriate -- that means up-to-date
25 -- collection of books, materials, and other

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2 resources. And libraries can provide greater
3 access for students, staff, and parents to the
4 Internet, instruction of databases, and a host of
5 other electronic resources.

6 The Free Library of Philadelphia is one
7 of our great community resources, but it cannot
8 take the place of a school library, and we cannot
9 accept the idea that one can replace the other.

10 Unfortunately, while we are demanding
11 more and more from educators and students, we are
12 giving them less and less support. If we expect
13 our students to meet higher standards, we have to
14 give them opportunities to do so. It is clear
15 that we need more to achieve and sustain better
16 academic progress.

17 Education has become the focus of
18 national, State, and local government initiatives.
19 Therefore, we have a rare opportunity to effect
20 significant and lasting improvement in our
21 schools. You can build on this momentum by
22 providing educators and students with the
23 resources and funding necessary to accomplish what
24 we all want for our children, and that is the
25 opportunity to learn and achieve at the highest

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2 level.

3 Thank you for your kind attention.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you Miss
5 Phillips, thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Miss Emery?

8 MS. EMERY: Good evening, Councilwoman
9 Blackwell and other members who are present. My
10 name is Francinia Emery, and I am grateful also
11 for this opportunity to address some issues
12 regarding the state of libraries in Philadelphia,
13 and I'm not going to go into any detail because
14 everything that I was going to say has been said.

15 I am the Director of the Multicultural
16 Resource Center in Philadelphia and, therefore, I
17 get into schools a great deal, not only in
18 Philadelphia but across the country. But in
19 addition, I am probably one of the most recently
20 appointed members of the Governor's Advisory
21 Council on Libraries in Pennsylvania.

22 And I have to concur with Councilman, I
23 think it was McKenney (sic), who spoke about the
24 way in which Philadelphia is viewed by the people
25 on this Council as well as in other places in the

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2 government and that -- I don't know why, I'm
3 unfortunately the only member on the Council from
4 this area, from anywhere in southeastern
5 Pennsylvania and very often the lone voice for
6 public school libraries, because most of the
7 support goes for school libraries, public school
8 libraries, because most of the support goes to the
9 public libraries and not the school libraries, and
10 certainly more to libraries in other than urban
11 areas. The urban libraries in the schools are
12 very much neglected, and so I'm there, I'm new,
13 I'm learning, and I'm in the minority in a lot of
14 ways.

15 I only have to add a couple of things
16 to what has been said already. One is that I
17 really, really highly commend Debra Gniewek, who
18 is the person now in charge of libraries in the
19 School District, for her exemplary dedication and
20 untiring work toward the improvement of all of our
21 school libraries and especially her work towards
22 the implementation of the Library Power Program in
23 the few schools in which it exists in
24 Philadelphia.

25 I feel as if that's a mountain-top

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2 experience for me when I go into Library Power
3 schools, because in those schools, which are 10
4 percent of Philadelphia schools, they are fully
5 implementing Library Power, which is an exemplary,
6 cost-effective elementary school library program
7 where spaces have been refurbished to accommodate
8 appropriate books and technology which supports
9 all aspects of the curriculum frameworks and
10 where, with the guidance of an accessible
11 professional librarian, teachers and kids become
12 unmistakably proud, independent teachers and
13 learners, communicators who are appreciative of
14 their own cultures and of the cultures who are
15 different from themselves.

16 And from their extensive study of
17 Library Power schools, Offenbergs and Clark
18 reported that Library Power schools scored higher
19 on SAT-9 reading than comparable schools without
20 that quality school program. They also concluded
21 that Library Power may provide the most benefit in
22 poverty schools.

23 In addition, as a former principal and
24 District teacher and principal in the School
25 District of Philadelphia for 16, 17 years as the

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2 principal alone, I feel that the librarian, the
3 placement of a librarian in a school should not be
4 left completely to the discretion of the school
5 principals. It's extremely important that people
6 realize the real power and importance of that
7 librarian and that media specialist, which a
8 librarian is, in the school.

9 As the principal of the school where I
10 was, which was a middle school, for the whole 17
11 years that I was a principal, my librarian and my
12 library was both physically and instructionally
13 the center, the hub of the school. And the
14 librarian, the consummate professional in our
15 school library, was a key member of my
16 administrative cabinet. I didn't know she'd be
17 sitting back there today. There she is, Elsie
18 Hart, who was a really integral part of everything
19 that happened in that school and certainly the
20 prime supporter of the instructional program. So
21 I can personally testify to the extreme importance
22 of having a qualified, certified librarian in a
23 school.

24 And, of course, I ditto everything that
25 the other people have said here this afternoon,

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2 and I feel that knowing that all of the research
3 is showing that a quality school library program
4 is the best predictor of academic success in a
5 school, we cannot play around with this idea. We
6 must fund full-time librarians and we must equip
7 our librarians, our libraries, and our collections
8 in our libraries with appropriate materials that
9 will help our children to achieve optimum success.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
13 much.

14 Rex Parker for State Representative
15 Roebuck.

16 (Mr. Parker comes forward.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
18 proceed, Mr. Parker.

19 MR. PARKER: I will keep the
20 Chairperson's promise and not keep you long.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

22 MR. PARKER: You said that the
23 representative's statement will be read into the
24 record. So I would just like to read the last and
25 then give a few comments of my own. As I've

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2 stayed here for these three or four hours and not
3 really expecting to, it was totally unrehearsed,
4 but it was very, very challenging and a very good
5 idea.

6 The Representative James Roebuck says,
7 "It is my intent, as State Representative, to
8 continue to fight for the students in our schools
9 to ensure that one of the most valuable resources
10 in our schools, public school libraries, are not
11 front. I will continue to raise awareness of the
12 value of the school libraries and the positive
13 role they play in producing leaders and scholars
14 for our nation.

15 "In conclusion, I would like to
16 commend the Education Committee for holding these
17 hearings for the issue that is directly affecting
18 our children and their immediate future, quality
19 of life."

20 Now, as I've sat here and I've
21 listened, I'm the Representative's administrative
22 aide, and I will take the message back to him to
23 say that this is a very viable mission that
24 everyone is on. And of the people that I've heard
25 speak today -- Steven, Diane, and Elliot from

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2 their different perspectives, I didn't get their
3 last names, but they're the ones who offered a
4 plan. And if that plan that they have presented
5 in piece could come together, I think that we'd be
6 well on our way, as if you do not plan, you're
7 planning to fail.

8 Thank you very much for letting me come
9 before you, and I will relay the content of this
10 meeting to the Representative.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
12 much and thank for your patience earlier today,
13 and we know you were here for the earlier part of
14 the committee, so you've been here all day, but we
15 thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: To all who are
18 left, we want you to know that we do have a
19 prepared statement from State Representative
20 Roebuck that will be made a part of the record
21 with many details and it certainly gives us an
22 overview of what's going on across the country as
23 well as across Pennsylvania.

24 Now I certainly want to ask you to come
25 forward, please: Elsie, Mr. Wiesman, Lauren

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2 Douthit, and Janice Banks.

3 Who else do we have left? I'll go
4 through the list and if you are here, please
5 come. These are my charter school people, you
6 know I love my charter schools.

7 MS. BUSH: We love you. Is that a
8 matter of record?

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
10 thank you. And I promise when we have another
11 hearing, you will be first. That's a promise. I
12 know you've been here a long time, and we do thank
13 you.

14 I also have Delores Shaw, Sharon
15 Fisher, Nancy Ribik, Sharon Avent, Maurice
16 Okereke, Judy Weinberger, and Lillian Brown.

17 So, please, we are ready to hear you,
18 and I thank you so much for your patience. I
19 promise you that, you know, we don't want to
20 certainly hold up you scholars, and we appreciate
21 your patience and we do love the work that you do
22 and your commitment to children.

23 Thank you very much. Elsie, why don't
24 you begin. Identify yourself for the record and
25 proceed with your testimony.

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2 MS. HART: Thank you very much for
3 having us. My name is Elsie Hart E-L-S-I-E,
4 H-A-R-T, and I am a working public school
5 librarian.

6 One thing I do want to state that was
7 not -- that I do not include in my testimony is
8 the fact that when Milton Shat was governor, he
9 convened a State committee on libraries. From
10 that, we had a full State hearing, and then we had
11 a national committee on libraries, and I was a
12 part of all of that, so it will give you an idea
13 of how long I have been working and fighting for
14 school libraries.

15 Most of the benefits that came from
16 that conference did go to the public library and
17 school libraries. Although I fought all the time
18 for school libraries, we received very few
19 benefits from it.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Miss Hart, may
21 I say that I guess I've known you for nearly 30
22 years, and you were fighting for libraries when I
23 first met you.

24 MS. HART: Yes.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So we know

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2 your commitment goes back.

3 MS. HART: Yes. Jannie and I taught in
4 the same school at one time, at Tilden Middle
5 School.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

7 MS. HART: Thank you for allowing me to
8 speak to you about our school libraries. School
9 libraries are in a state of crisis. Many
10 administrators seem to have lost sight of the real
11 reason that we have schools. Schools exist to
12 educate children and should not be used to make
13 money or to serve as a forerunner to a penal
14 institution.

15 Community assistants formerly assigned
16 to the library at the Pickett School are now used
17 to monitor bathrooms, keep children out of the
18 hallways, and to break up fights. I no longer
19 have a full-time or a part-time library
20 assistant. At one time, I had what is known as
21 two full-time LIMAs, and those are Library
22 Instructional Materials Assistants.

23 Teaching classes of students how to
24 unlock the many treasures found in our storehouse
25 of knowledge known as the IMC, which is an

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2 instructional materials center, is my primary
3 concern. The name change came about as we
4 incorporated more than books.

5 I also spend a great deal of time with
6 small groups individualized instruction. Arriving
7 early and staying late, as I do, still does not
8 give me sufficient time to take care of the matter
9 of clerical and other behind-the-scenes operations
10 that must be done. That includes taking
11 inventory, ordering supplies, books, and
12 magazines, typing library cards, processing new
13 books and other materials, repairing books,
14 running the video for the school's closed-circuit
15 program, taping for teachers when requested, and
16 other related tasks. I keep a backlog of
17 unfinished work, and my request for catchup time
18 during the summer falls on deaf ears.

19 Under the present budget process,
20 principals now have the power to regulate school
21 library finances. As a result, we no longer meet
22 State standards. With our present enrollment of
23 782 students, I should be allotted \$2,967 for the
24 school year. That only amounts to \$3.45 per
25 child. However, I was limited to \$2,000 as my

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2 total budget this year, and that breaks down to
3 \$2.59 per child. Today, hardback books cost a
4 minimum of \$10 each. I had hoped to initiate the
5 100 Book Challenge this year, but I fell short by
6 \$500 to start with just one classroom.

7 I do hope, ladies and gentlemen, you
8 can help us find a source that will allow a more
9 realistic approach to our financial problems than
10 the one presently in place. Think what others in
11 the outlying districts are doing for their
12 students. Just think, with an adequate library
13 staff and a proper funding how we could cut out
14 many of the discipline problems plaguing our
15 schools. Children would be so interested in their
16 school work, they would not be taking the time to
17 get into mischief.

18 I have been asked why I do not retire
19 and let someone else take over. My position would
20 probably be eliminated, and I don't want that.
21 This year, the home economics classes were
22 eliminated, and our school had already lost the
23 electrical shop, the wood shop, and the
24 instrumental music teacher. I hear that instead,
25 we are getting a truancy court to be housed right

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2 in our building.

3 You may be wondering why I have not
4 mentioned technology. We do have a technology lab
5 in our school. However, my computer has been down
6 since last June, five months, and thus far, I've
7 received nothing but promises for technical
8 assistance. Many principals believe that any
9 information needed can be found on the Internet.
10 Our children need to know what they have found,
11 how to cross-reference it, how to use it, and how
12 not to be guilty of plagiarism.

13 With a new curriculum project required
14 for 8th-grade graduation, the school library has
15 become doubly important. As City Councilmembers,
16 you fully understand the importance of researching
17 an issue. Students specifically need to
18 understand how to organize their research, how to
19 take notes with proper footnoting, where to find
20 sources and cross references, how to do their
21 bibliography.

22 Imagine being a young person attempting
23 to write a term paper in high school or college --
24 and speaking of high schools, I think someone
25 mentioned that the George Washington High School

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2 would soon be without a librarian. I want you to
3 know that Germantown High School presently does
4 not have a school librarian.

5 Students come to me without knowing how
6 to look up an author. Do you look up the first
7 name or the last name? is a frequently asked
8 question. I am here to teach our middle-school
9 students, and I stick with them because they are
10 the hardest group to convince that they must
11 become serious about their education. That is the
12 reason why I'm still working as a teacher of
13 library practice in the middle school.

14 I say again, if I retire, my position
15 may be cut. It is also the reason why I am here
16 today seeking your support. In the 29 years that
17 I have been my school's librarian, we have posted
18 numerous role models and news-makers. To name
19 some of them: Ozzy Davis, actor, humanitarian;
20 Rick Williams, ABC channel newsman; the late
21 Honorable David P. Richardson, Jr., State
22 Representative; Former Judge John Braxton; Poet
23 Sonya Sanchez; Author Muriel Fieldings; and
24 illustrators E.B. Lewis and Jerry Pinkney. I
25 always try to bring people to the school that the

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2 children can associate with much later.

3 I extend to you an open invitation for
4 a visit at anytime. Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 Very disheartening. Thank you so much.

8 Mr. Wiesman?

9 MR. WIESMAN: Well, actually, not that
10 I'm going to say the last is the best, but I
11 really was the last add-on, and Mrs. Brown and her
12 two colleagues here really should have an
13 opportunity to talk first. And I won't keep you
14 once I get my chance.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

16 Then I would like to ask Miss Douthit,
17 who I've known from college days. And, you know,
18 I'll make one short statement only, and that is,
19 you charter-school principals or the pioneers in
20 education, and you're to be commended for all that
21 you do. And we're with you a thousand percent.

22 MS. DOUTHIT: Thank you so much,
23 Councilwoman Blackwell.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

25 MS. DOUTHIT: Good evening, everybody.

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2 Our perspective from Universal
3 Institute Charter Schools is a perspective that
4 reflects our charter interest. I'm Lauren
5 Douthit, Chief Administrative Officer and
6 Principal of our new school.

7 Let me say that we view the perspective
8 of relationships with the public schools as a
9 vehicle of really promoting partnerships. And for
10 Universal Institute Charter School, we have
11 already pursued a partnership with our local
12 public school, Stanton Elementary, and a
13 relationship with the principal, Mr. James Otto,
14 on pursuing vehicles for working together, number
15 one, on technology, and number two, utilization of
16 library resources.

17 Let me just read excerpts from my
18 statement here that you have in front of you. Our
19 perspective is, any service that facilitates
20 access to information is a program that is crucial
21 to students being prepared for the challenges of
22 the 21st century. Access to information is
23 paramount to all of us who have a vested interest
24 in the education of children, particularly
25 students in the inner city. And particularly for

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2 our charter school where we have a
3 school-to-career focus curriculum.

4 Parents and educators alike are highly
5 motivated to see that the acquisition of
6 information and informational services is made
7 available to all of our students. In the
8 educational arena of standards-driven curriculum
9 and instruction, we must ensure that appropriate
10 links to information exists for urban students.
11 Today's learning environments must provide
12 substantive resources for teaching research skills
13 for problem-solving and higher-order thinking
14 schools.

15 If inner-city students are to be
16 adequately prepared for communicating in a
17 multicultural world, it is paramount that they are
18 able to use various types of informational
19 services made available through qualified school
20 personnel and rich library collections. The need
21 exists for library facilities from the Board of
22 Education in Philadelphia to be available to any
23 public school. Let us remember that public taxes
24 pay for public schools.

25 Last spring, I personally attended the

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2 All Is All Conference sponsored by the School
3 District of Philadelphia's Office of Best Practice
4 where one guest presenter highlighted the gross
5 discrepancies in reading achievement that occurs
6 in urban versus suburban communities. According
7 to this research, one significant factor was the
8 lack of substantial school library services to
9 students in urban communities. For students in
10 the inner city, access to school-related reading
11 materials is more likely to occur through
12 school-based library collections and programs. If
13 we do not recognize the significance of this
14 belief on behalf of children, we do the future of
15 our communities and our city a great disservice.

16 As our newly-elected mayor, John Street
17 professed to parents of our Universal Institute
18 Charter School just two weeks ago, quote, Make no
19 mistake, charter schools are public schools. We
20 should be equally concerned about the quality of
21 services and instructional programs in all of our
22 schools.

23 Universal Institute Charter School and
24 our community development organization, Universal
25 Community Homes lend support to this endeavor

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2 towards equalizing the educational playing field
3 as it relates to access to the library facilities
4 of the School District of Philadelphia for all
5 public schools.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
7 much. Thank you. Gail Hawkins bush.

8 MS. BUSH: Good evening. In the
9 essence of time and the other people, I will make
10 it very short. You know, Councilwoman Blackwell
11 and Councilwoman Cohen, that I've addressed this
12 body on numerous occasions dealing around the
13 issue of education.

14 As the Chief Operating Administrator of
15 the Alliance for Progress Charter School, which we
16 are in our second year and we are located at 19th
17 and Cecil B. Moore Avenue, we're owned by Women's
18 Christian Alliance, which is the oldest social
19 services agency in the City of Philadelphia,
20 founded over 80 years ago by a minority female.

21 We are in a precarious position. We
22 are across the street from a local public school
23 that does not have a library, but we utilize the
24 Cecil B. Moore Library at 23rd and Cecil B. Moore
25 Avenue.

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2 One of the first calls that I got in
3 the community was from Mrs. Rule, who is the CEO
4 of that local library, inviting us and our
5 teachers to the school. Subsequently, all of our
6 grades, K through 4, walk the six blocks -- rain,
7 sleet, snow, or shine -- to the library to utilize
8 those facilities. Now, we have a small library in
9 our school. It's a small donated library, but
10 this, of course, is a larger library. I think I
11 want to echo what my colleagues said about this
12 whole issue of collaborative partnerships, and I
13 would be remiss, as you know, Councilwoman
14 Blackwell, if I wouldn't make certain
15 recommendations that I think can help with the
16 blue-ribbon committee, can help work with the
17 collaborative partnerships in the community as a
18 charter school. Because we are a public charter
19 school, we should and have access to all the
20 particulars.

21 One of the things that concerns me
22 that's different in the charter schools is that we
23 are the charter schools for all people. And when
24 I say that is, we are open in most cases a little
25 bit more than our brothers and sisters in the

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2 public school. And I would like to propose, and
3 you might like to investigate to the blue-ribbon
4 committee, that schools that have libraries in the
5 areas where there aren't any libraries, that these
6 schools become the lotus of control, become hubs
7 of the community that are not only open from 8 to
8 2, or 8 to 1, or 8 to 12, but are open on weekends
9 so that kids in the communities can utilize the
10 libraries of all the things that we talked about.

11 Now, we are steeped in our institution
12 in the curriculum frameworks. We are guided by
13 those principles, rules, and standards. We
14 utilize all the issues based on diversity, cross
15 cutting competencies, and all the multiple kinds
16 of forms of education that our young people need
17 to have.

18 We don't know for sure whether the kids
19 in our community -- and need I remind you that
20 19th and Cecil B. Moore has the highest rate of
21 crime in most cases, health inequities. Ninety
22 percent of our students receive free and reduced
23 lunch and on and on and on and on and on. I don't
24 have to bore you with those kinds of horrible
25 statistics about the community.

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2 What I need to see is the schools
3 becoming an integral part of the community, not
4 just open during those prescribed 190 days, 900
5 school hours, but be participatory as active
6 agents for educational change in the community.

7 As an charter school CEO, I am a
8 systemic reformer, but I like to put the word
9 "sustaining" systemic reform, and we've got to be
10 about this business of sustaining our young people
11 so they become productive citizens.

12 The other issue I'd like to recommend
13 that you might want to investigate, as you know,
14 I'm a classmate of yours, I'm from the Bronx, and
15 I never forget that. And I grew up in an
16 environment where public transportation was
17 affordable. We cannot afford to put our kids on
18 the bus at 19th and Cecil B. Moore Avenue to
19 travel the six blocks to 23rd street because, you
20 know, it's a little convoluted there to use the
21 library, so we walk. Why not -- and Elliot and
22 Mrs. Rule were very kind. We mailed Free Library
23 information home to every parent so that every one
24 of our 204 students this year have library cards
25 and their parents have library cards.

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2 But why couldn't, during the school
3 time, that the library card give you free or
4 reduced fare on the bus if it traveled to a
5 library. Why does a teacher have to secure a
6 private bus or walk her class through all kinds of
7 inclement weather to the library? Why can't that
8 library card be a ticket for other kinds of things
9 based on what we do in the community?

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Excellent
11 idea.

12 MS. BUSH: You know, those are the
13 things that I think are important.

14 The other thing is, when I think about
15 my parents, who are young, perhaps receiving
16 certain kinds of services that are, of course,
17 being taken away from them, who work all the
18 time. Our institution is open from 7 in the
19 morning till 6 o'clock at night. So we have a
20 proviso for all kinds of people who have varied
21 work schedules. Looking at these libraries in
22 these communities, we need to make them actual
23 hubs for other kinds of activities in addition to
24 the books, where people can get -- of course, we
25 offer GED and all those other kinds of specialized

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2 courses, but the libraries need to get the pulse
3 beat of the community.

4 Now, Elliot mentioned earlier that
5 they're open, like, from 9 to 5 or, you know, 4 to
6 whatever. Maybe we need to do a census based on
7 what is the pulse beat of that community. I work
8 in a community that 12 o'clock to 7 o'clock is an
9 active time. I live in a community where 7 in the
10 morning till 4 o'clock is an active time. So we
11 need to begin to look at our communities and
12 service the people in the communities for those
13 needs.

14 I could go on and on and on and on with
15 ideas and suggestions, but one of the things I
16 think is very vital to this issue of libraries in
17 schools is what we heard earlier when we heard
18 about Cato and all of the issues about -- let me
19 say to you, I am steeped in history, I understand
20 the concept of history, but our young people need
21 to learn the diverse issues of history. The
22 bookstores don't offer it, and they're not going
23 into the bookstores because the average young
24 today who goes into Borders either at Broad and
25 Cecil Moore or 17th or 18th and Walnut is being

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2 followed, is being looked at, is being questioned
3 as to why that person is in that bookstore.

4 So we've got to make libraries the
5 kinds of receptive places that are warm and
6 welcoming to the people in our community. That's
7 the other piece of it. You know, you got
8 turnstiles and all these other magnets and every
9 kinds of things that you have when you go into a
10 library.

11 The other thing is, let's look at this
12 whole issue of those of us who perhaps still have
13 the library book somewhere in our libraries at
14 home or in a book or our college book. Let's look
15 at this whole issue of where we are in forgiving
16 those people who have old books.

17 Now, the book bank full of books from
18 the District. Half of my library is filled with
19 the Clemente book bank of people throwing away
20 books. I remember reading very openly about all
21 the books that were thrown away back of the public
22 library and the people went in and found them.
23 Let's look at forgiving our public citizens who
24 have had some inequity in not returning the book
25 or not having the money to return the book. And

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2 when it comes down to feeding your child or
3 returning a book, need I ask you what is the
4 priority?

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you so
7 much. And, again, the testimony was great. And
8 to those who are still here, yes, we go back to
9 college days too. Thank you, thank you.

10 Miss Brown?

11 Thank you so much. Identify yourself
12 for the record and begin.

13 MS. BROWN: My name is Lillian Brown.
14 And I'm a retired school librarian, and I want to
15 speak to something that is maybe a little touchy.
16 It's something that disturbed me.

17 It's like school meetings where parents
18 come, the parents that you would like to speak to
19 are not here. But this concerns some principals
20 who seem to feel that after schools are wired for
21 computers that they have a resource base and
22 libraries are not needed.

23 A friend of mine who went out -- and as
24 I said before, the principals who I would like to
25 speak to are not the ones who are here. She was

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2 out on sick leave and when she came back, the
3 school library and some rooms in the school had
4 been wired for computers, and half of her
5 collection was thrown out. And when she asked the
6 principal about it, he said, Oh, we don't need
7 these books now, we have the computer. And she
8 said, Well, what about the kids' book reports? He
9 said, Oh, I didn't think of that.

10 So I think that in the way of
11 solutions, we need some admonition and love, you
12 know, kind of enlighten people that a database,
13 the CD ROMs, and the Internet do not take the
14 place of a good, well-organized book collection
15 and a certified librarian. They are two different
16 things.

17 And I'd like to say to the Honorable
18 Madam Chairperson -- I thought Anna Verna would be
19 the one I'd be addressing -- and to the other
20 members of City Council and the educational
21 committee, I'm not anti-computer or anti-Internet,
22 for I can testify that the computer is a wonderful
23 tool and there are many resources on the
24 Internet. There may be found information on
25 astronomy, geography, history and government,

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among other things. There are lists of recommended books and best-sellers. On the Antarctic Peninsula, ice shelves are crumbling faster than anyone had predicted, and that information is on the Internet. It is possible to find out what percentage of Haiti's female population is illiterate by looking on the Internet, and careful research will show a Microsoft balance sheet. If a person wishes to find the characters in the book Moby Dick, it is only necessary to explore the Internet.

However, in order to read a copy of Moby Dick, one must take a trip to the library because that is where the book is.

As children move through various stages of development, they need to be introduced to the world as it is, and not only the one that they happen to see. Books open windows on those parts of the world that a youngster may not know about. It is literature where the customs, the social mores and values of a society are presented and promoted. In literature, the reader meets characters who behave in ways that are good or not so good, and the reader must decide, is this the

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2 kind of person that other people admire, or do
3 they avoid him?

4 In order to grow and mature into
5 responsible, productive adults, children have to
6 read and report on those books they have read.
7 Reporting on literature develops thinking skills
8 in children such as when and where does the story
9 take place, who is telling the story, who is in
10 the story, what happens to them, what is the main
11 idea of the story, and how was it expressed?
12 Children need this encouragement of reading in
13 order to develop reasoning skills and
14 understanding of the written word. This is part
15 of the Charles maturation process.

16 There needs to be a collection of
17 appropriate literature in each school so that
18 teachers and students may have adequate material
19 when it is time to advance the student in this
20 phase of his growth. A repository of good
21 literature is necessary for reading development,
22 and this cannot be found on the computer.

23 The computer is an addition to the
24 library. It is another way of packaging or
25 presenting facts. It cannot replace a repository

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2 of literature anymore than can canned or frozen
3 foods replace the farmer. Literature is the
4 entity in which children learn to respect their
5 culture, along with its customs and values of
6 other people as well as that of his own.

7 And that's the only point I have to
8 make.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
10 much.

11 Mr. Wiesman, identify yourself for the
12 record.

13 MR. WIESMAN: Yes, I'm Gerry Wiesman.
14 I'm a former employee of the school system, I was
15 a special-class teacher, counselor and principal.
16 But presently, I'm a volunteer in an
17 intergenerational reading program at the John F.
18 McCloskey School, so that's where I'm grounded
19 from.

20 I wanted to say before I get to this,
21 and I'm only going to pick up some points. Tracy,
22 I'm sorry. We addressed this testimony and I hope
23 your colleagues can read it. But to Council
24 Chairperson Miss Verna, and I'm in error for that
25 so please accept my apologies to, Miss Blackwell.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Oh, certainly.

3 MR. WIESMAN: The other thing I do want
4 to say is I want to thank Councilman David Cohen
5 for staying here. Of course, I'm not surprised.
6 He's had a tradition, really, of being interested
7 and concerned about what happens to the people,
8 and certainly for Chairperson, at this time,
9 Councilwoman Blackwell.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

11 MR. WIESMAN: What I really want to say
12 is just a few issues really agreeing with what was
13 said earlier. There was some wonderful testimony
14 here. But basically, one of the concerns I have
15 is that there's an equity issue here. A few years
16 ago, Superintendent Clayton raised the question of
17 equity, that all of the students need to be taught
18 the same thing, that there wasn't going to be a
19 population that got a better education than some
20 of the others. And when you are denying access to
21 a library for all children -- and I hear that
22 there's 110, so that there's means only 70
23 libraries that are available for children. That
24 should be for every child.

25 Now, the second issue is that the

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2 librarian -- there's been enough talk about the
3 professional, certified librarian. That is an
4 active learner. She brings to the child and the
5 teacher the collaborative process that needs to be
6 inserted in the learning process. Okay, I will
7 not throw stones at any other position, but a
8 library needs a certified professional librarian.

9 Another thing is that we have seen that
10 the libraries have been dismantled or diminished.
11 When you do that, you are denying the child or the
12 student the access for self-learning and the
13 opportunity to select their own literature for
14 pleasure and information. And in a democracy,
15 personal choice is an important component of
16 individual freedom.

17 Lastly -- now I'll get off my box. The
18 John F. McCloskey School is an example of -- this
19 is where I'm coming from -- of this current
20 funding dilemma. While it has a library, it has
21 not had a librarian for three years. While it has
22 successfully -- because that's what we're saying,
23 go out and get money. While it has successfully
24 competed for funding grants and is involved in the
25 100 Book Challenge, its students are still denied

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2 equal access to current information with its many
3 components.

4 A library, not a classroom library, but
5 a library here would be cost-effective because the
6 materials are shared. In this one space, all can
7 come together and use what is there.

8 Lastly, and I hope this is not off the
9 wall, I don't think anybody asked -- I'll pick on
10 you, Councilman Cohen, asked you to become the
11 Councilperson. That was an activity you chose and
12 pursued it. I say that in the sense that you are
13 the leaders and responsible in some way for this
14 to be a liveable city. And while the school
15 system is a separate entity, I would hope that you
16 can exercise what you see as you do your
17 responsibility to make this a city for all of the
18 people. I think it's about time we stop signed
19 supporting the dumbing down of education.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

22 MS. BUSH: I want this to be a matter
23 of record. From 2 o'clock till 6:15, we've heard
24 about the 100 Book Challenge. What's interesting
25 is that charter schools, which are public schools,

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2 and that's a free service to the public schools,
3 are not included in the 100 Book Challenge. We
4 are not even considered for the 100 Book
5 Challenge. And a lot of us certainly can't afford
6 it independently.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And that's
8 unconscionable and unfair.

9 MS. BUSH: Exactly.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we will
11 deal with that as an issue. This committee will
12 deal with that and we will and ask for a response
13 along with all the other information, along with
14 update on what's happening on this proposed
15 blue-ribbon committee.

16 Do we have anyone else here who would
17 like to testify? Sir, please come forward and
18 testify. And then -- well, I appreciate all of
19 your patience and then we will be on our way.
20 Please forgive us for holding you so long. And
21 regret that we were unaware that they were having
22 another hearing before this one on this day.

23 Please identify yourself for the record
24 and make your testimony. Go ahead, sir..

25 MR. OKEREKE: Good evening, Honorable

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2 Jannie Blackwell and members of the City Council.
3 My name is Mr. Maurice Okereke. I'm currently the
4 librarian in the public schools, a State certified
5 librarian.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Can you spell
7 your name for the stenographer, please.

8 MR. OKEREKE: Yes, O-K-E-R-E-K-E.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
10 Oh, yes. I have you on the lease.

11 MR. OKEREKE: My colleagues had to
12 leave because they were pressed for time.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I think I
14 called you earlier but I mispronounced your name
15 so you probably didn't recognize it. I'm sorry.

16 MR. OKEREKE: I see, sure.

17 First of all, I thank you for giving us
18 the opportunity to testify on behalf of the
19 students and staff of the Mitchell Elementary
20 School and the surrounding Mitchell School
21 community.

22 Our plight is lamentable. Most of the
23 things that I have to say have already been said
24 so I'll make it as brief as possible and hit the
25 nail on the head.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

3 MR. OKEREKE: There is no justification
4 whatsoever in any civilized society for closing
5 libraries -- repeat, no justification whatsoever.
6 I come from a different culture, an African
7 culture. Why? Libraries are to get information.
8 The academic eye of any institution. When we
9 close libraries, we are sending the wrong signal
10 to our children, that libraries have no place,
11 have no values at all in the civilized society.

12 I can't forget what happened not too
13 long ago in the library, where I have only two
14 computers, only one is connected. A school of 7,
15 800 student. Two of my student asked me Mr. O. --
16 that is what they call me. They said, We can't
17 believe that we only have two computers, one
18 connected to the Internet for whole school. For
19 800 students, Councilpersons, isn't this
20 outrageous?

21 We -- this country prides itself,
22 claims to be the richest and the greatest of all.
23 Why then can't it provide for its youngsters who
24 are going to be the future of tomorrow? That is
25 what -- believe me, sometimes I -- it -- I don't

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2 know what to say. Sometimes I -- I get confused.
3 So this is a very serious matter. And every year,
4 more than five elementary school libraries are
5 closed and more will be closed this year. We have
6 no listening centers in my library. Sitting rooms
7 are (unintelligible).

8 So let me make it brief, please,
9 Councilpersons. I would like you to send
10 delegates to the various public schools. Let them
11 report to you. Honestly, you will not believe
12 what their investigation will dig out. Okay.

13 So and I also I thank the President of
14 the -- Mrs. Zimmerman, the President of the school
15 library, and Debra -- Miss Debra Gniewek and the
16 other library practitioners. They really a
17 picture, a facsimile, an exact picture of what is
18 going on in the public school today.

19 Before I hold my tongue, let us all
20 remember that what we do to children today, they
21 will do to our society tomorrow. I thank you very
22 much.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you so
24 much.

25 (Applause.)

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2 MR. OKEREKE: I'm sorry, forgot one
3 thing. Solutions, solutions. As Miss Debra
4 Gniewek suggested earlier, please, we are
5 appealing to you to take some of the surplus, the
6 City surplus and apply it to our youngsters'
7 education.

8 Secondly, most of the educators -- the
9 principals don't know the values of libraries. It
10 is time somebody brought them together to
11 enlighten them on the values of libraries. They
12 don't know at all.

13 Thank you again, thanks a lot.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
15 much, sir. And it is unfortunate that sometimes
16 in a democracy, we take so many things for
17 granted. We thank you for your commitment to
18 education and to Mitchell School. Thank you.

19 Do we any comments from members of the
20 committee?

21 (No comments.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me thank
23 Councilman Cohen and let me Councilman DiCicco for
24 hanging in. Let me thank Councilwoman Miller's
25 staff and mine as well. And let me say then that

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2 at this time, the education hearing -- this
3 committee hearing will be recessed hearing will be
4 recessed subject to the call of the Chair.

5 Thank you all. You've done a great
6 job. I think we've made our case. Thank you all
7 God bless you and thank you.

8 (Adjourned at 6:26 p.m.)

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JOSEPHINE CARDILLO,

Registered Professional Reporter