--- PUBLIC TESTIMONY ---

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Room 401, City Hall
Philadelphia, PA
March 20, 2002
4:30 p.m.

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BILL 020031 - An Ordinance amending Section 19-1301 of the Philadelphia Code...
BILL 020032 - An Ordinance amending Chapter 19-1800 of the Philadelphia Code...
BILL 020033 - An Ordinance amending Section 19-1801 of the Philadelphia Code...
BILL 020034 - An Ordinance amending Chapter 19-800 of the Philadelphia Code...
BILL 020040 - An Ordinance authorizing transfers in appropriations for Fiscal Year 2002 from the Grants Revenue Fund...

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN
COUNCILMAN FRANK J. DI CICCO
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COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY
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COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILMAN ANGEL L. ORTIZ
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We do have a list of witnesses to testify, and I'm certain the adults would not mind if the students preceded them because they do have to take the bus.

I believe the first group of students on the list are students from the Philadelphia Student Union. Are they here? Please proceed to the witness table.

(Witnesses came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. WINTERSTEIN: Just before we start, we have two students who one is in the bathroom and I think one is right outside. They should be joining us shortly.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well, why don't you start with your testimony.

MR. WINTERSTEIN: I'm Jacob Winterstein.

MS. SIEMAROWSKI: My name is Leah Siemarowski.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Welcome.

MR. WINTERSTEIN: I'm Jacob Winterstein, like I said. I'm a sophomore at Masterman and a

member of the Philadelphia Student Union.

Our schools need money. Let me say it again. Our schools need money. If the School Reform Commission needs $45 million from the City of Philadelphia, the City of Philadelphia needs to have control over that money. You, City Council, our leaders, our representatives, need to make sure any money from the City goes to the schools, not into the pockets of educational management organizations. If the SRC wants 45 million, they need to guarantee that parents, students, teachers, community leaders and union workers have an active role in the changes that occur in their schools.

If we want our schools to change, it's going to be from the inside out. Schools will have a chance to change when students have a voice in our schools. The SRC, as of now, clearly doesn't want to address change because they aren't giving students a voice. If they did want a drastic change -- if they did want students to have a voice, they wouldn't be having their meetings at 1 o'clock while we're in school and they wouldn't be considering hiring EMO's to run our schools.

I guarantee you that when a school is a

place that students want to be, my fellow students and I will succeed and surpass all expectations. You, City Council, have control whether that happens or not. You have something the SRC wants, and before you give them that money, you need to make sure that they will guarantee that they will give what the students need.

The state has been putting pressure on the School Reform Commission to speed up the process and to hire EMO's quickly. We are urging City Council to put the pressure on the School Reform Commission to slow down and think of efficient ways to make our schools better.

From South Philadelphia to North Philadelphia, from Mount Airy over to East Falls, all across the city, parents, teachers, students, union workers, concerned citizens in general have come out in droves and stated they're against privatization, to say that they want real change in the schools. Mahatma Ghandi once said, "There go my people. I must follow them because I am their leader."

The people are willing to take the lead, City Council. We just need you to follow. Thank

you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Who is our next speaker? Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. SIEMAROWSKI: Good evening. Again, my name is Leah Siemarowski, and I am a junior at the Philadelphia High School for Girls.

Every day while I am walking down the halls, I hear them abuzz was with the phrase it can't happen to us, we're a magnet school. What the girls in the hallway are referring to is the potential privatization of a number of schools in our city. The scary thing is that the girls are wrong. It could happen to us. And I am petrified beyond belief that it will.

The answer to our problems is not to castigate us by turning control over to a company that doesn't care about our education nearly as much as it does its reputation or money. You passed the parent vote 16-1 and should now be demanding the implementation of this measure.

My friends tell me that when I'm angry I start to use big words. Well, I'm angry and the largest and most important word I can use at this

point is "education." The state doesn't care about

us, and it seems as if our city doesn't either. We are here imploring for the City Council to do anything to stop this heinous crime.

Yes, there is a problem, and yes, we do need change. But the answer is not relinquishing control and putting the district in the hands of companies bent solely on making a profit from our education. So please take into consideration the pleas of the students affected by us. We are all very concerned about our futures. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Our next witness is? You're going to have to push the button.

MR. AUGUSTINE: Hello, My name is Day Augustine, and I attend West Philadelphia High School. I am a member of the Philadelphia Student Union.

Unlike the other people that are speaking here, I'm not speaking to say a speech. I'm speaking out of just raw anger now because honestly I'm sick and tired of all the politics and underhanded schemes by the Governor. They're trying or he's attempting to privatize our district because

he doesn't care. And people have to understand as

long as he's trying to do that, we will never get the education we rightfully deserve.

See, people keep forgetting that we are the people that it affects THE most. And at this point, there is no need to sugar-coat it anymore. If the Governor wants to play games by demanding from the SRC that they do certain things in order to get the money, then I say we do the same thing.

They also want money from us. They want $45 million from us and that $45 million. And that $45 million could also go to things that students need rather than the SRC getting it and then filtering it through to a for-profit organization that's going to come in and really not do a good job.

If the Governor wants to play those games, then we have demands too with that $45 million that they want. We feel as though that the parent vote should be implemented, and if it's not, then they don't want the money that bad. And if they plan on privatizing a lot of schools, then also they don't need the money that bad. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MS. TEWALDE: Okay. My name is Selam and I'm also a member of the Philadelphia Student

Union. I'm a junior from Bartram High School.

So Monday the School Reform Commission was here asking for $45 million. I personally feel that you should not give them $45 million at all unless you make sure that none of this money goes to any educational management organization. Instead, it should go straight to the schools.

When the school board was in place, they were criticized on how they ran the schools and for the budget deficit. Then the state took over and the same problem is happening. They should make everyone understand that the problem is with the state's funding formula instead of trying to force these EMO's into our schools.

The School Reform Commission needs to provide a long-term solution to save our schools. This can't just be about cutting programs or positions, but about increasing funding for proven reforms such as smaller class sizes and more qualified teachers. This is the only way our schools will work.

City Council, you were elected by the

people. The SRC were appointed. You passed a law saying that parents must vote before any school is

privatized, and the SRC needs to respect it and support it before you give them any money.

Also, City Council, you need to play a role in educating your districts. The School Reform Commission and the state haven't put a lot of information out in the media. You need to make sure that the people understand what's going on. All these parents, workers, and even students see advertisements from EMO's given out from the Senators, and they are even trying to buy our students by sponsoring concerts and events at schools.

You need to make sure your constituents don't get walked on. We ask you to contact your people anyway you can by mailing, calling and also holding forums because this is our future at stake. The students all over have been doing their part from the beginning, and now it's your turn. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Councilman Ortiz, you want to be

recognized? You want to be recognized? Your light is on.

COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yes, ma'am. Thank

you.

Thank you for coming. And I apologize for making you wait because we were discussing prior to, and the delay, is that they're trying to rush -- they're trying to make this body make a decision, rush it through, give not only the $45 million but another 45 and then to change the way we fund public education so that we could fund and actually put out a bond for $300 million and give that $300 million to the commission that they have set up not to solve the funding problem, not to solve it, not to solve the problem, but just to get us over the hump until next year.

In fact, the Mayor -- and you heard the Mayor's representative -- wants us to believe that unless we do this, unless we pass all of these 45, $300 million bond issue and so on, public education will come to a halt. However, they're not giving us any guarantees.

Yesterday Mr. Nevels was here, and all of the other members of the commission. And we

spent over eight hours asking questions. And we got no answers. We got no answers about Edison. We got no answers about privatization. We got no answers

about real reform in terms of smaller classes, more computers, more programs.

What you heard is an accountant, an accountant recommending that we eliminate language because it is profitable and cost saving. Ancient history may become cost saving because, after all, we don't need to know about the Romans and all of the other -- and the Egyptians and so on because that's the past. We should concentrate on the future. Then we eliminate 150 teachers who teach ancient history and history. It is cost saving that is driving the issue.

I am glad that you came in because a lot of my colleagues want to rush this through. I think we should take our time. I think we have enough time to bring back Mr. Nevels, bring back the Mayor here, even talk to the legislature about a real funding answer for our schools. And we need your support, those of us who feel that way, so that we don't rush through, so that we don't make these hasty decisions.

So I'm glad that you spoke those words because we've been trying to say those things because we cannot afford, we cannot afford this time around to not find an answer to this problem, not

only for you because you guys are almost graduating, but for those of you that are coming behind you. We have to find. Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much for coming in to testify. We appreciate it. I know you're going to make it just in time for that 7 o'clock bus.

William Mackey, Project Reach.

(Witnesses came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. SORRELL: My name is Yolanda Sorrell.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yolanda, would you please pull the microphone closer to you so that we can hear you.

MS. SORRELL: My name is Yolanda Sorrell, and I'm a member of the City Wide Youth Agency. I am here to speak on behalf of my fellow

students. These are some reasons why I think public schools should not be privatized.

Edison did allow on-site visits to classrooms, two schools by the Chester School

Superintendent, 23 percent increase in student suspensions, 61 increase in incident reports. Schools are struggling to maintain school climate that is needed for learning.

In the 2001 school year, of the first two quarters, there was a big increase of truancy by 19. The infusion of Edison Learning Now education program is slow to involve. Edison Learning Now technology is not fully operational. The majority of students and staff do not have access to the UAN and the LAN.

We request for accurate information regarding financial reports and quarterly reports for category lead programs have not been honored. Staffing assignments for Typing I and class size reduction programs have not been reported to district staff. The district has covered start-up costs for report cards, special education data entry, professional development and truancy. As a result, there is a balance of over 315 million for

which Edison must reimburse to the district.

Report requests for Edison quarterly financial reports have not been honored. There are 8 percent fewer students enrolled in district schools than at the start of Edison. Serious

incidents forms were not filed. Violence and weapons reports are slow in arriving to the school safety office. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record.

MR. KELLAN: My name is Milton Kellan, and I'm a member of City Wide Youth Agency.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The stenographer could not hear you. Could you pull the microphone closer to you.

MR. KELLAN: My name is Milton Kellan.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: How are you spelling that, please?

MR. KELLAN: M-I-L-T-O-N. And I'm a member of City Wide Youth Agency. I would like to testify today on behalf of my fellow students. My regard is toward the state take-over for the Philadelphia School District.

I feel as though in order to improve the schools that perform poorly, parents should be brought into the reform process and they should be consulted about the plans for implementing change. City Council passed a law requiring 75 percent

affirmative votes of parents before schools are privatized. There are some difficulties in enforcing the new law because of the state take-over. But the School Reform Commission could adopt a policy of involving the parents at a school and the decision about privatization.

City Council should insist that the School Reform Commission members justify the lay-off of 325 central office staff that was announced on Friday. They should ask for guarantees that any monies saved are going directly to schools and not to hiring of for-profits firms like Edison. Our fear that the savings of layoffs are being redirected to allow for contracting out and that the School Reform Commission will hire companies like Edson to replace functions formerly covered by the central office.

City Council members should follow through on implementing another law passed this

winter which will provide for them to perform a more active role in overseeing schools. With plans to privatize and break apart the school district on the table and the district controlled by the state, the role of independent oversight of schools and the system becomes very important. City Council is an

appropriate body to oversee schools. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MS. HARDY: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. HARDY: Good evening, Council members. My name is Charlita Hardy, and I am the program coordinator for City Wide Youth Agency and I'm also an advocate for the young people. And I would just like to express testimony from a couple of our young people.

They stressed the fact that the Philadelphia public school system is in a crisis, and everyone knows that we need more money and they think that money should be targeted towards hiring administrators and teachers who are qualified and have more experience working with the students. And we all think that we need reduced class sizes and to give more money towards after school programs, which

will, in turn, help youth in their development.

The students feel as though the public school system -- we know that we need money and privatization of schools is not the answer. If you privatize the schools, it will hinder rather than helping. The state take-over will only benefit the

policy-makers, politicians and for-profit companies, not the students.

People need to recognize that the students really matter. They need to contact the parents, the parents, the after school programs. Community members need to get together to work with the students. The students and the parents need to be included when decision-making. Policies -- policy-makers do not include them. If you want to make change in the community, you have to include everybody. That benefits the students.

The students are the ones that really lose out if the schools become privatized. They don't get the resources that they need. Money will go into the private companies, not the schools, not benefiting the young people.

So what we ask of you today is to please put pressure on the school reform counsel and

policy-makers to make sure that the students get the things that they need, get the resources, and get a better education to help them to succeed because they are the future leaders of tomorrow. They really matter.

What I ask you today is to please keep in mind for the youth testimonies. And if this is

the year of the child, please put the pressure on those people who are up in charge to make sure the students get what they need. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

Mr. McPherson, who is our next witness?

MR. McPHERSON: The Reverend Robert P. Shine, Sr.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Dr. Shine here?

MR. McPHERSON: He's on his way. Okay.

Ted Kirsch? He can't be here. Okay.

Venard Johnson?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Venard Johnson.

MR. McPHERSON: He's here.

(Witness came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record.

MR. JOHNSON: Good evening, my name is Venard Johnson and I'm the executive director of Healthy Family/Healthy Inc.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Johnson, just a moment. I don't know what happened to the

stenographer. Just a moment please.

(Pause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please identify yourself again for the record. The stenographer was not there.

MR. JOHNSON: My name is Venard Johnson. I passed around some packages. I'm going to read a statement, but I'd like to explain this package.

I passed around a package of information. And contained in the package is a breakdown that our organization has done regarding the test scores for schools in the Bartram, West Philadelphia group of schools, Overbrook, University City group of schools, and Franklin and William Penn group of schools.

I don't know if Council has had an opportunity to actually take time to look at these

test scores. But after sitting here all day yesterday, I thought that we might provide just some general information that might help you up understand what's happening in terms of the state scores in schools in your district.

Then if you look at it closely, following the state scores are the percent of students in each performance level. In the

performance level, the scale is explained on the cover page in terms of 5th grade, 8th grade, 11th grade, being advanced, proficient, basic or below basic.

If you just look at the first page, as an example, you'll see Beaver Middle School, Grade 8, the percentage of students taking the test in math, the percentage of students taking the test in reading, and then the actual test score. And it goes that way all the way through. And I'd like to actually thank my daughter and some high school students from West Philadelphia High School for spending so much time putting this data together.

One of the reasons we collected this data is because as everyone has been saying, there has not been much information shared in the

community either by the Mayor or by the Governor. And we're appalled by that fact. But that's where we are. And we think it's our responsibility as the citizens of this city to step up and provide the information for ourselves if our elected officials are not going to be responsible enough to provide it for us.

We also met with Mr. Baker, the

Governor's liaison here in Philadelphia, several -- just before the take-over and urged the Governor to come to Philadelphia and to meet with parents and students and, as you say, other stakeholders. And for us that hasn't happened. So we're really disappointed.

We also included in the package, so you could see what our involvement has been, just some fliers that go back as far as December about community meetings that we've been holding, a position paper around reform that my family has taken a position on, and an early article from the Sunday Delaware County Daily Times around the situation in Chester, which the young lady sat here and read from an article that is more recent and more updated about the reports of serious incidents

and other situations in Chester schools.

We think that's happening in Chester because of the reform commission moved at a snail's pace down there and the reform commission being led down there by James Nevels moved at snail's pace, kept parents at bay, kept children and students without information, knew what they were going to do like they know what they're going to do here, didn't sign a contract until August 24th, which slowed the

progress down in terms of Edison, who we're not defending their record, but slowed the process down, that didn't allow Edison to train teachers and principals, and therefore, not able to introduce the curriculum or the technology that we know is in the school. And the reason why we know it's in the school is because we visited the school.

I'd like to read my statement. It's really noisy in there. Maybe I need to bang the gavel. I would appreciate if you'd listen because I've been here two whole days.

Good evening. I serve as the executive director of Healthy Family/Healthy Life Inc. Healthy Family is a private nonprofit located the Kingsessing/Paschall neighborhood of Southwest

Philadelphia and the Parkside neighborhood of West Philadelphia.

I'm also the proud father of two young ladies. My oldest daughter, Shakeya, is an early childhood education and special education major at Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. My youngest daughter, Ina, is a 10th grade student at the World Communication Charter School located at Broad and South Streets. Ina is a budding artist who also

plans on attending Cheyney, where she will major hopefully in elementary education.

My family has been proud supporters of Philadelphia public schools for many years. Our family nonprofit has provided public health services to Philadelphia public schools for the last 15 or 16 years. We assisted in the development of the Wellness Center at the Barrett Middle School in 1986 and the Health Charter Program at University City High School in 1994. This year we developed and managed the Turner Middle School Family Health, Nutrition and Resource, which we hoped that Dr. Farmby would consider visiting one day.

I have testified many times before this Council as it relates to the budget of the school

district. During this period of time I have testified about my concerns as it relates to increased funding of the district without proven student achievement. Council has increased the funding to the district each year. Several years ago Council increased the sales tax, sending extra dollars to the school district. During this period of time students at the middle and high school grades have shown little advancements in math, reading and science.

As we know, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania took control of the Philadelphia public school system because of low student performance on the 5th, 8th and 11th grade state test scores and for poor money management of the schools.

Since October 2001, and actually before it, but in this new effort, since October 2001, I've been involved along with other parents and managers of community-based organizations in an effort to bring reform to the School District of Philadelphia. During this period of time we attended school board meetings, met with former members of the board of education, students, parents, teachers and principals in an effort to develop a plan for local

reform.

I might also say that we have hired and retained the services of Dr. Dill, who testifies in front of this council last week, to work with our subcommittee on reading. We encouraged the former board of education to introduce to the public its plans for student progress and school safety. The board failed to introduce such a plan for student achievement, and the environment in many schools got worse.

I need to preface this by saying -- and I said this to Dr. Farmby yesterday, who I haven't had a lot of occasion to hold a conversation with. But I said to her yesterday that her presentation was probably the most informed presentation I've heard from a superintendent -- and I've been around for a while now -- in a lot of years in this Council. It certainly beat what Mr. Nevels and the reform commission had to say yesterday.

With the failure of the Board of Education to provide a plan, we began to look at the Commonwealth plan for improvement. During this period of time we attended community fact-finding meetings sponsored by the Commonwealth and conducted

by state-elected officials and Edison Schools. Most of these meetings proved to focus on who would get a contract or who would keep a job under the Commonwealth reform plan. Very little attention -- and we went to every one of them, every one of them -- very little attention was given to the educational needs of the children or the supports that would be given to local school staff. There was very little parent or student involvement.

Many students and parents became concerned that the process, as designed, was

providing very little opportunity for parent and student involvement. We made a collective decision to sponsor community forums throughout the Kingsessing/Paschall/Eastwick neighborhoods of Southwest Philadelphia, as well as sections of West and North Philadelphia. One such meeting was held at the Turner Middle School with Councilwoman Blackwell serving as a co-sponsor, along with Pat Evans, who manages a community-based organization in that Baltimore Avenue neighborhood. These meetings were designed to allow parents, students, school principals, teachers and other stakeholders to have more input into the process.

We also organized visited to Edison Schools in Washington, Baltimore and in Chester. And I might say my neighbor, Juan Bonn is the overseer -- I can't think of the word -- is the overseer of the Chester project. Juan is from Media in Delaware County. And I say that because in front of this Council many times I've heard that in Chester there is no local leadership. And I found that to be very untrue.

Parents, student and clergy attended this school visits. As a result of the community

meetings, we found that many students and parents were displeased with the quality of education being delivered. The visits to Edison Schools were very interesting. We may be some of the few people, Ms. Payne, myself and my daughter, who are in this room who have seen what a lot of people have accused of us seeing the upscale schools. But we would certainly be interested in answering questions of Council if they have an interest on what we saw.

Several members of our team visited Victory Schools in Baltimore. And I say this. I might say that you might consider allowing us to arrange visits for Council and your staff to some of

these schools because I don't know how you can make and take any vote without understanding what some of these companies look like, you know, be it up or be it down. And we're not advocating for these companies. But we certainly think that Council should take a position to look at them. I do not know -- and I said that. So I'm reading what I said.

After attending the full Council meeting yesterday, there are several points that I would like to share with Council. One, the School Reform Commission appointed the Honorable Mayor of

Philadelphia and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should make more of an effort to meet directly with the citizens of the City of Philadelphia. This responsibility should not be transferred to an advisory group of citizens. The board should make every effort to listen directly to citizens and respond directly to their points of view.

Public efforts -- public concerns and ideas should not be left to the interpretation of good will citizens. We do not need a buffer between the citizens and those appointed to carry out the

will of elected officials.

Two, the reform commission should meet with teachers, principals, students to listen to their concerns and advise them of the planned changes of reform. About four days a week we spend at least three hours and sometimes the entire day in a school. And a lot of teachers and staff and students really don't know what's going on. And I think that the reform commission, as well as the current administration at the Board of Education, should make more of an effort to at least talk to the teachers and students and parents that we're

aware of. That's not to say you haven't spoken to any. But there's a lot of work to be done around communicating what these changes might be.

I think, No. 3, the School Reform Commission should admit that they are dependent on the EMO's for their experience in operating schools and that the Commonwealth has no backup plan for reform. We understand that Edison Schools, it will probably lend -- let me just back up and not misquote what I've heard.

We understand that Edison Schools, from Edison schools operators and Learn Now operators,

have made a commitment to provide dollars, a substantial amount of dollars -- I'm not going to quote them because I don't want to misquote -- but a substantial amount of dollars to the other EMO's, the smaller EMO's that is being proposed would come into the city. And those dollars will be used for professional development of teachers and principals. And I understand that they're going to provide somewhere around a million dollars to each one of those organizations per school.

None of those organizations, from our view or from their view, have the capacity to manage the number of schools -- if we're talking about 60

schools, Victory doesn't have the capacity to manage that many schools. Chancellor Beacon, the next largest organization, doesn't have the capacity or the dollars to manage that number of schools.

So if you look at the test scores and 60 schools are doing poorly -- and we think it's more than 60; we actually believe the number is around 170 that should be given some immediate attention through someone's plan -- then you have to recognize that Edison is a key player in the effort as far as the School Reform Commission is concerned. And why

they're denying that and while they're acting like they're so independent from the process just bewilders me.

Four, that the school -- that the reform commission has no experience as it relates to parent and family involvement, nor do any of the consultants that they've hired. And they need to admit that their plan, from us looking at the schools, that their plan for parent involvement is solely dependent on the EMO's and the partners, if that piece ever comes about, to solicit and to crystallize parent involvement.

Five, we demand that the commission act

swiftly to secure the health and safety for students, staff and visitors to all public buildings. What's happening in West Philadelphia High School -- and that's not the only school it's happening at -- is outrageous, absolutely outrageous. We believe that the commission should do whatever it has to do -- and we don't just mean police action -- to secure the safety of the people who visit the building and live in the building every day.

Six, that the reform commission move

directly to provide quality drinking water to all schools where lead has been found in the water and drinking fountains have been turned off. And I think in the back, in the very back of the package I gave you is a list of 50 schools, 50 elementary schools probably covering all of your districts, the first 50 schools where remediation will take place. Some has already happened.

We're going to deliver to John Domzalski, the health commissioner, on Friday a plan for education or notice of the families in those schools so that they will understand exactly what the dangers of lead in the water are and how they can protect themselves from it. We're also going to

introduce to him a plan where we can talk about the dangers and problems of lead in the community in general because it's not a school district problem in isolation.

Seven, that the reform commission refrain from laying off workers until a central education manager has been appointed along with a CEO. We must be sure that these layoffs do not impact services to students and staff, as some of the 177-plus layoffs have. And I'll give you an

example of what I'm talking about.

School liaisons -- that's my understanding what the title is. It may not be the exact title. But the position that Barbara Still had over in the Bartram/West Philadelphia cluster. She was a person that we could go to who, as an organization providing free services to the district -- we've never asked for a dime from the district -- providing free services to the say district, she's a person that we could go to and she would pull together the nurses, the social workers, all that professional staff that weren't teaching so that we could then introduce programs and services. When those positions were reduced or eliminated, it

became very hard for community-based organizations like mine to make a contact within the school to provide service.

I know that Gloria A. C. Davis over in the West Philadelphia/University City -- West Philadelphia Bartram area academic office is new. But about five months ago when Estelle Richman was the Director of Social Services, we took Director Richman at that time to meet with Gloria A. C. Davis. Estelle actually went to her at our request

and said to Ms. Davis that we are willing, that her office, the City was willing to work especially in the Bartram cluster where there's a lack of resources, you know, in that part of Southwest Philadelphia, to work with that new leadership out there to bring services to that area. And until today there's been no response to that offer. So we find it very difficult without that liaison position to work with the school district.

Eight, that the reform commission admit that they will renegotiate -- I was really surprised yesterday when I heard Mr. Nevels testify that -- when asked a question about renegotiating union contracts, I was really surprised to hear him say that the next time the contract comes around, that's

when they'll renegotiate it. That is not now at least Edison does business.

Edison will renegotiate the contract as soon as they sign a contract. They'll start renegotiating the teachers contract. They'll renegotiate certain terms in that contract. That is part the what the problem is in Chester Upland. They signed the contract so late in the process that Edison was not able to begin negotiating with the

teachers union. I don't think they solved their situation with the teachers union until late January.

When we were in Chester visiting the schools, we saw the technology in the cabinets. Teachers were complaining that they couldn't use it. And the reason they couldn't use it because there wasn't a contract. And Edison wouldn't do any education -- I mean, any training of the teachers or the parents or the students to use the equipment until there was a contract.

So we know that Mr. Nevels was misinforming us when he led us to believe yesterday that, from what I heard, that contracts won't be renegotiated until the contract expires.

Point 10, which is my last point, that community partners, if this happens, by contract design be given the task to oversee the EMO's progress within the school as well as providing services to the school family. We understand that the partner, that the community partner will receive about 2 percent of the local school's budget to operate. I don't know if Mr. Nevels said that yesterday.

Our last point is that an independent pool of money -- and we're not talking about from this Council -- but that an independent pool of money be identified for the purposes of funding a community-based watchdog effort. We believe that the community and people in the community, from business people to students to teachers to parents, need to be a part of overseeing this process.

And I guess I'd like to close by saying that the future of Philadelphia families rests with us being upfront and honest, that we need to put aside our personal and political agendas -- and I know it's hard to put the politics aside in this chamber -- for the sake of the kids. And that's the end of my statement. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you,

Venard. And thank you for your continued interest and hard work in the community. You do a wonderful job.

Our next witness.

MR. McPHERSON: The next witness is Lois Gambolski.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

I would like to concur with your statements. Obviously, we work with Venard Johnson and his family and neighbors on many issues throughout West Philadelphia from Ritalin to lead paint to education and many, many, others. So we thank him for his continued support, continue involvement in our community.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

(Witness came forward.)

MS. GAMBOLSKI: My name is Lois Gambolski. I think it's a disgrace that the people that were here from the commission didn't think it was worthy enough to sit and listen to the students and they took off.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I think that

we may have one or two still here.

MS. GAMBOLSKI: Well, I'd like to know where they are.

The last time I checked, I was a citizen of the City of Philadelphia. I vote in my city. I follow the guidelines of my City Charter. The last time I checked, I paid my real estate taxes to the City of Philadelphia. And I also -- the last time I

checked, we wrote the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia and our freedom was found here in the city.

When were my rights taken away without my knowledge? I feel like I live in a Communist country. The state comes in and tells City Council what to do, whether they like it or not. Can't you stand up for what you believe in? When will you stop playing games at the expense of the kids?

What's with the 45 million you promised to give to the schools? We need that money with no strings attached. I'm starting to feel you are no better the state. You passed a law giving the parents the right to decide whether or not they wanted their schools privatized. Are you just a bunch of puppets or are you going to act on it?

The state came in and decided to get rid

of 325 central office positions. What will the SRC do? Hire more consults or get Mr. Whittle's artwork out of hock? Are you just going to sit there or will you make sure the money they save goes back into the schools for the right reasons?

I called to find out when I could speak at a School Reform Commission board meeting. What a

joke. They have board meetings at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Do they think that this is the year 1955 when most parents were home with their children? Are these people on some of kind of drug? Because if they are, I would like some so I could be in La-La Land with them.

The Mayor has two members on that commission. Why haven't they demanded that people need to be heard, and not on the commission's time but the public's time.

Since the state took over, I have never seen the district more demoralized than it is now. My neighbors near me are moving out in a greater frequency and a greater sense of urgency since they lack confidence in the current leadership. At least under David Hornbeck's leadership, even know there was much criticism, we at least saw rising test

scores and programs such as full-day kindergarten and teaching and learning networks that showed initial promise.

When is discipline, textbooks and painting the school seen as a novel idea? Isn't this the same state that hinders discipline approaches with judicial barriers? I have been

involved with education and fighting for kids for the last 12 years, and what is going on is like a bad B movie. It keeps coming back with the same story, same lines, same bologna, same games with no real ending in sight.

The bottom line is that you should be doing everything in your power to make sure that we get equitable and adequate funding for each and every child, not only in Philadelphia but across the state of Pennsylvania. You should all feel ashamed of yourself because, to me, the children are the last things on your mind.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The next witness, PCCY.

(Witnesses came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. YANOFF: Good evening.

MR. CHURCHILL: Good evening.

MS. YANOFF: I'm joined today by Michael Churchill. I'm Shelly Yanoff, the executive director of PCCY, and Michael is the chief counsel of the Public Interest Law Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I want to begin by urging that you make

loud and clear that the City supports its public schools. That does mean providing the $45 million for this year and next year and supporting the bond issue. We believe it is the only option. If we were willing to, quote, mortgage our future for stadiums, for real estate development, for the NTI, then schools seem to be a worthy purpose as well. But we urge that you also make clear that the City expects public fiscal and educational accountability in the management of its schools.

That means the SRC must make clear to its contractors, whoever they are, that they are, in effect, public agencies held to high disclosure and conflict of interest standards. That means that if the commission announces it's laying off 325 administrators, it doesn't turn around and spend the savings to hire outside contractors.

That means that before any contract is

given to anyone, the problem the contract is to solve must be clear, that its goals must be to help skids in the classrooms and it must make clear what the performance standards will be. There is a feeding frenzy going on out there with lots of firms planning to make money and few planning to

positively change the lives of the city's children.

Since we've lost the Board of Education's public accountability, and there's little public trust to spare in the Governor's demands for adherence to a faulty plan and apparent devotion to a faulty contractor, we would ask that the City Council make clear that it will hold hearings on any proposed significant contract work. If firms are to use public money, they should be required to abide by public processes.

We're aware of the difficulty of the position that City Council is in, but the kids are always in this position, dependent on lots of others to do the right thing. We therefore would ask that you explore ways to tie the City's increased funds to support small class size, books, supplies, summer school, et cetera, those things that we know work and will make a difference for children achievement.

We know that the money is fungible. But

we also know that the people of this city are appropriately suspicious and unwilling to have their funds fatten private providers' pockets and leave our children with thin educational plans.

Outside of the City there is a growing

recognition among both political parties that adherence to local property taxes to fund schools is inadequate, inequitable and unworkable. There are several important legislative efforts to change the way public schools are funded by having the state provide much more support through the use of broader tax resources like the income tax and having property taxes lowered in many communities. House Resolution 42, the Miccozzie and Rhodes bills are each examples of these efforts.

If Philadelphia politicians could act together with the many political leaders from other districts in support of this approach, Philadelphia children's educational interests will be served. We need you to work together on this.

But time is needed. So we return to asking that you act on behalf of the children who need you. It is not an easy question. It's not an easy situation. Yesterday Councilwoman Tasco echoed

the feeling of many when she said that this was more about contracts than about children. And then she requested who will put Humpty Dumpty back together again when this chapter is ended. That question will haunt us as well if we in the City do not

support the children now. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Good evening.

MR. CHURCHILL: Good evening. My name is Michael Churchill from the Public Interest Law Center.

In addition to supporting the remarks of Ms. Yanoff, I want to offer you two specific suggestions that might begin to deal with the issues that I've heard Councilman Nutter, Councilman Ortiz, Councilman Kenney address earlier, which is this is admittedly, according to the testimony you heard yesterday, just a stop-gap situation that you're in and there's no guarantee as to what the state is going to do in the future.

My suggestion is that rather than rely solely on the Mayor and his negotiations with the Governor, that you go forward on a second track working directly with the 360 school districts in every county in the state who have enormous fiscal

difficulties in their schools just like you do. Although they are not facing the desperate deficit that you have immediately, all of those districts, 360 of them, have at least $1,500 gaps between what

they can spend for the education for their students with what the well functioning, highly successful districts in the state are spending.

They are therefore in the same position you are of having inadequate local finances to support quality education. We should be after setting up a clear record that this Council is not looking only for money for Philadelphia by itself but supports good education for all students around the state and that you should -- and that it is prepared to make allies with these other 360 districts.

You should go on record immediately that you support the Miccozzie bill, the Successful Schools bill, or some other equivalent that will provide adequate funding formulas for all districts in the state. You should do as our ancestors did, form a committee of correspondents that puts you directly in contact with each of those trying to build a legislative majority.

360 districts out of 500 from every county in the state forms a legislative majority if you get your act together. And it is time to do it. You recognize that the process that you're going

down now provides no safety to you in where it is taking you. And frankly, it is time to stop complaining that there aren't solutions and start working for them yourselves and developing a record that you're for them. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Our next witness.

MR. McPHERSON: Barbara Dowdall.

(Witness came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. DOWDALL: Hi, my name is Barbara Dowdall. It's D like David, O-W-, D again, A-L-L.

Good evening. My name is Barbara McDowell Dowdall. I am the English department head at Dobbins Randolph Area Vocational Technical High School in Philadelphia. I'm a graduate of the Philadelphia High School for Girls, a resident of Germantown, 13th Ward, 4th Division, and the parent of a 1999 graduate of Central High School.

I want first to thank you Council for your courtesy is in scheduling public hearings at a

time of day when working people, both school staff and parents, are able to be here. I also want to thank you for your courage in passing the parent

vote bill and for your persistence in demanding the right to be involved in determining the direction of expenditure for the school district.

To me, the greatest tragedy of the entire school take-over process is the widespread and overwhelming feeling of powerlessness create in our city by the callous insensitivity of state officials and their appointees. The phrases "it's a done deal" and "there's nothing we can do" have washed across Philadelphia, entered the cores of our brains and rendered thousands of otherwise vibrant and active citizens mute and inactive.

Only this body, as an entity, and a handful of state legislators have reached out to the stakeholders in this drama and said your voice needs to be heard. You are entitled to participate in your own destiny.

As a member of Philadelphians United to Support Public Schools, I have worked for more than half a year in concert with other parents, school employees and community activists to get out the

message that full and fair funding, smaller schools and classes, and adequate resources are the essence of and the requirement for reform, not remote or

tangential issues. My personal message is brief, I hope, and threefold.

We need to recognize the district's immediate and continuing loss of trained staff, talented staff. It is folly to spend precious dollars on consultants bearing borrowed and dusty ideas. And finally, the responsibility to analyze with care rather than condemn with abandon.

As a department head, I am more frequently asked to write letters of recommendations for staff members anxious to find a stable environment and fair income. Our district has had a wealth of outstanding and dedicated teachers. It is untenable for them to remain.

An exit letter of explanation would cite the lack of reimbursement for graduate school credits, a salary significantly below that of neighboring districts, lack of adequate supplies, updated computers and books, exhaustion and discouragement at the experience of acquiring and distributing tattered books from the Philadelphia Book Bank, lack of sufficient counseling staff,

inconsistency in policies regarding discipline, and city-wide tolerance for the violence and

disrespectful behavior whose greatest impact is on the hard-working and deserving students.

My letters of recommendation have been all too successful in gifting other districts with staff we so dearly need to retain. We are in no need of assistance with teacher turn-over.

At a community forum in North Philadelphia several weeks ago, EMO's like the Edison, Mosaica and Victory trotted out ideas that have been already tried and that have succeeded in Philadelphia and elsewhere. None is new, unique or represents something that we, the current staff, couldn't do, given the resources, self-determination and time to implement.

Edison claimed a mystical ability to weave together direct instruction easily accessed on the worldwide web, core knowledge already implemented and coached by our own teachers union, and thematic units, a concept at least 30 years old and one presented in detail at, among other places, the 1978 conference of the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English that I planned myself. To

charge millions in consultant fees for this easily accessible material is a scam of the first order.

Finally, I feel I must address the remarks yesterday by one member of Council who likened the school district to a train on a disastrous course and you need to allow its final destruction through a collision. My own daughter graduated from this train in 1999. She is currently a dean's list student at New York University.

I have taught students in Philadelphia who have been admitted to the University of Pennsylvania on full scholarship and to Harvard early decision. Our system produces championship chess teams in inner city schools, magnificent music in the schools still lucky enough to be able to offer it, playwrights, film makers, essayists, athletes and activists, some of whom you met this afternoon.

Glib blanket statements of condemnation show an unwillingness to grapple with the realities and challenges of our system. And they sap the energies of thousands of staff and students struggling mightily every day to create a system of which we can be proud.

Council has already shown itself to be

the caring partner that our system, staff, parents and students truly need. May you be encouraged in your perseverance in this endeavor. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very much.

I just want to say to Shelly and Mike and all the people who are here, I want to thank you them for their continued support of public education. Tom Gilhool, Debbie Wiener, all this crew and Shelly I met back in the early seventies when they were fighting for full funding for the school district then.

Their children are long out of the school system. They probably could find something better to do.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And they're still fighting.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: But they care about children and they're still fighting and we're still here. And Shelly had me passing out petitions to recall my council person because he wouldn't fund the public schools. So that's how we met.

And I want to say thank you. You're still around and you're still fighting for children, and I want to say I appreciate it.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Our next witness.

MR. McPHERSON: Helen Gym.

(Witness came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. GYM: Good evening. I want to thank Dierdre Farmby for being her because I think it's taken a lot of courage, personal courage and some fortitude to be able to show some commitment to listen to public testimony, not only through SRC meetings but also to come out and hear them at City Council today. So I would like to point that out.

My name is Helen Gym. I'm a parent of two children, one of whom will be entering public schools in September. I'm also president of Asians American United and a member of Philadelphians United to Support Public Schools, a coalition which has been working since August to create a voice for quality school reform and meaningful community involvement in the reform process.

I first want to take -- it's not my desire to be antagonistic with the School Reform

Commission. But I do want to take issue with comments that SRC Commissioner James Nevels said yesterday that the goal of reform is to create choice.

We live in one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to school funding equity. We live in a state whose financial commitment to public education has dwindled to its lower point in 25 years. And in this context how we can demand choice when our only choices are poor ones?

It's not like we don't already have choice. We have private schools, parochial schools, magnet schools, and the most charter schools operating in the state. Choice is not the issue for us. We're beyond choice. What we want is a system where choice doesn't matter because every school is excellent. The fact that choice is held out for poor children like the holy grail of public education tells me that reform based on choice doesn't have anything to do with changing the fundamental inequities in our system.

With this fundamental difference in mind, I want to ask again what I believe Councilman Ortiz phrased yesterday, which is the essential

concern many of us have about the SRC and its budget planning. Are we going to do what's right by our children or what's cheap? Because in Philadelphia where children are educated at less than half or a little more than half of what the surrounding areas educate for, doing what's right by our kids and doing what's cheap is mutually exclusive.

But as Mr. Doosey showed, the SRC is clearly concerned about what's cheap in reform. Yesterday we heard for the first time that the SRC intends to cut Esau positions city-wide despite the fact that immigrant students in this city struggle to receive pedagogically appropriate and equitable services. This Friday the School Reform Commission, yet another mysterious budget move, intends to announce an unprecedented contracting of district services and management to outside companies and institutions, chief among them Edison Schools.

They have cut 325 jobs downtown and threatened to cut more programs and services. It's not cutting Latin that I'm worried about. I'm angry about not having science labs in every school, about having Phys. Ed. teachers teach advanced math, about not having four years of foreign languages offered

in every school so that kids can go to college, about the lack of librarians, nurses, counselors and resource personnel in almost every school.

But yet the SRC came here today stating they want $300 million more. For what? If it's not for teachers, programs or community involvement, then for what? Because I want to know how much of that $300 million is going to Edison Schools, Edison whose most ambitious project to date is the Chester city school system. I think this Council needs to have a hearing on Edison's performance in Chester city before it gives any kind of money to the Philadelphia public schools.

Chester city's report shows that nearly 1,000 students out of 1500 students at Chester City High School were suspended in less than six months; that non-English speaking students were not being referred for services and were placed in classrooms where there was no say ESL teaching or materials; that there was zero criminal record and background checks for Edison's new hires; that Edison owes $300,000 to the Chester city school district for basics like report cards, which they failed to issue anyway at the interim period in seven of nine

schools. There was an appalling lack of professional development and training where teachers cannot even produce the curriculum they're supposed to be teaching.

For years this state has denied money to Philadelphia, and now that we're running the show, they have suddenly realized that they need hundreds of millions of dollars for themselves. For Councilman Kenney, this is what I believe to be the other key difference about that $300 million bond issue: That we're not in control; the state is. They wanted our schools. So they took them. So now they're dealing with them.

I say let them, but don't let them pick their own terms. The situation we are in is untenable, now or later. The SRC plan's plan is tenable. Their plan to cut services to special needs children, to privatize workers, to allow essential services, programs and personnel to be drained from this district, these are fundamental questions of equity, accountability and quality that are at stake. So we are coming to Council to ask them for some leadership on this issue.

I do not want these Council hearings to

be for show. I do not want to have spent two and a half hours this afternoon to come here and listen to two days of City Council testimony only to have a $300 million bond and $45 million in cash provided to school district without hearing the voices of what people have said. I believe that City Council should not be simply satisfied to grill SRC members for a day or two but not create some follow-through to make sure the SRC is in line with the City's vision for its schools.

We're asking you not to be satisfied to merely have a law on the books that requires parents' votes and City Council oversight while the SRC thumbs its noses at both processes, but to actively in your own districts and schools begin a process by which parents and community members can be involved, review and assess and ultimately judge the reform measures which are coming their way. We're asking you to not simply stand by and allow the SRC to be the sole determinants of the finances of its district and wait for a new governor to make his way into office in another year, but to demand accountability, equity and quality in the delivery of these services.

The nation's eyes are on Philadelphia and the eyes of Philadelphia's citizens are on this Council. There is more at stake here than political expediency. Your decision on the $300 million bond issue and the controls you put on that money will be something we live with for the next three decades. We will not forget your choice on this issue. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. McPHERSON: The next witness is Reverend Shine.

(Witness came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening, Reverend. Thank you for coming. Please proceed.

REVEREND SHINE: Madam Chairlady and members of City Council, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the funding issue and the obvious crisis of the Philadelphia School District now headed by the School Reform Commission as a result of a take-over or alias partnership.

The take-over, a.k.a. partnership, has become a hot topic since before December 21, 2001,

and more especially since that date. My goal today is to try to provide a little light to go along with the heat. There may be, however, a little personal perspective to help focus the passions that have moved us to this point in how well our city's children should be educated. Should they receive a quality education, and if so, at whose expense?

That is the concern of Black Clergy, and it ought to be the concern of this Council, as I know it is for every parent of school age children. And I'm here to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves because this is a matter that demands public involvement that has been egregiously denied.

It is true that many of our students have been performed up to standards nor expectations. It is equally true that the district is suffering from an unprecedented budget deficit and relations between the school district and many state legislators are worse than they have been for a long time.

We are all aware that far too many of our students receive poor test scores and alleged well above average spending, systemic mismanagement and overall educational malpractice that marked the

Philadelphia School District. We're told that these were the conditions that left the state officials no choice but to enact a strong, even drastic, plan for recovery for the seventh largest public school system in the nation.

Our school district is comprised of 265 schools, 21,000 teachers and more than 215,000 students. Anywhere from 68 to 82 percent are after African-Americans, 19 percent to 10.5 non-African-Americans, and 13 percent to 7.5 other. In other words, 147,560,000 to 177,940 students are African-American; 41,230 to 22,785 are White; and 28,210 to 16,275 are other.

If any of these figure inaccurate, in part, it is because many of the non-African-Americans are being removed from the district to private or parochial schools. And this creates the situation where their parents do not like paying for education that their children are not getting now, and the current law allowing for state take-over expands the powers of an oversight commission and opening the door to privatization. I thought voucherization was a dead issue. And should this be not the case, then public education is

planned to fail.

How many of our City Council members were asked to be a part of a review panel relating to the proposition of declaring our schools distressed in the first place? What input did this Council provide as to the state or city administration on public education and reform?

It is the belief of Black Clergy that this City has the expertise to assist in determining what works and what does not work in the best interests of delivering quality education to our children. What we are sure of is the controversial for-profit firm bidding to take over our school system is not the way to go.

We have learned and have been more aware that the schools on Edison's positive list of test scores gains are barely floundering or that the school district contract with Edison has been severed in many other cities and states. We are aware that at least seven schools defined as Edison's positive have been cited by their state's educational departments as failing to improve.

Testimony of this serious nature I contend you are equally aware of and more. The

question then is should we put students already at risk in greater harm's way by selling them off to a profit-making organization. Who is it that is really being auctioned off, given the above percentages?

What I can best contribute to the discussion of educating urban children is the Black Clergy's opposition to this disparate reform. As you understand, I will not try to anticipate the outcome of this experimental process, for that's what it is. But some vigilance must be constant, persistent and continual. The future of our children, our students is in jeopardy if appropriate funding is not forthcoming.

The fact that the commission is in place, we will hold them accountable for the wide range of matters that support and deliver quality education to our children. There will be no retreat from Black Clergy's commitment to serve as a watchdog, and you will hear us loud and clear when things are improved significantly or insufficiently. We will praise or we will raise cain. We want to see the inclusion of the clergy, parents and other advocates immediately. We want to believe that this

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commission is compassionate enough to realize that their success depends largely on community support.

My job and the job of all of us in public life is to strive mightily to ensure that our students have an opportunity to accomplish according their abilities and to achieve in public school commensurate with their counterparts in surrounding counties. The progress that our students can make depends on many factors, and one must be reduced. That is the politicizing education to the extent that our students irreparably either mis-educated or are under-educated.

Now, after more than four decades, America was racially segregated both by law and custom, even after Brown versus the Board of Education. Now here in Philadelphia it is by law and political culture that this take-over occurs because of lack of funding. That's a question.

In the past, the Philadelphia School District and its numerous advocates have continuously appealed to Harrisburg for appropriation of adequate funding. The issue of funding has been the debate in Harrisburg for years, and it is going on now.

I am clear on what limited facts I have, among which is a the commission's powers to supersede the authority of school officials, or rather, to dissolve the school board and become directly responsible for the district's $1.7 billion budget and all of its academic programs. The commission has taken aim at and has removed programs, policies and management structures that, in their view, negatively affect the district's performance. Or was it to find money for some for-profit enterprise to come in?

You can fool some of the people some of the time but not all of the time. It is not our concern that Edison takes a risk each time it agrees to manage a public school. It is our concern for the risk to which our children are exposed. We know how political power can be used to affect the quality of life of a people. What you do in the after aftermath of these hearings on behalf of this city I hope will not be a capitulation or acquiescence to a way of educating our children that has no guarantee that they will succeed.

Black Clergy again is opposed to an Edison take-over of the any of our schools. As a

fact of life, however, the Black Clergy, on behalf

of the community of which we form a vital and important part, is also here to make it known that as the moral stewards, religious leaders in this city, that we have a proposal to establish a management system for education that will provide and deliver the quality of education that is necessary for our children's advancement in society.

This concept of ours recognizes the role of the community, the students, teachers, parents and business sector. This proposal uses a holistic approach covering the entire child, including psychological, medical, social development, in addition to -- in Philadelphia it is by law -- I missed my place, Madam Chairman. Let me continue.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You're going to have to -- if you go to the next page.

REVEREND SHINE: That's what it is. I see that now.

Many before have come here, and we will be of help long into the future. To choose to ignore -- and I want to repeat that, Madam Chairman. That nine times I called Mr. Nevels' office and nine times he refused to speak to me as president of

Black Clergy or to any member of Black Clergy

organization. The last time that I called his office I was told that his book was closed and his calendar filled and he will not meet with the Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity.

I think that is reprehensible and unacceptable. If he thinks that his business in this city is with the business enterprises or in the best interests of the local people that he serves, then his business ought to be with the clergy of this city and the people that we represent. I think that's outrageous. Unless and until Mr. Nevels and members of his commission see fit immediately to meet with Black Clergy, I'm sure that there are other opportunities that we will have to do otherwise in regards to his arrogance. And I put that very mildly.

I want that clearly to be understood that the way that he received us, the way he treated us is outrageous. And also, they were not truthful about having met with the Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity. They were not truthful at all, as reported in the Daily News. And I wanted that to be on record here. Unless they meet with

the clergy of this city, then other measures are deemed necessary. I think that for his belligerent

attitude towards us, that is certainly most unacceptable. And someone should advise him contrary to his present action, Madam Chairlady.

Now, again, the Black Clergy are hopeful that you will give consideration as we've looked at the Miccozzie proposal aimed to guarantee that Philadelphia, among other school districts, have enough money to achieve a level of funding in what he calls a successful school budget. This funding level -- and we agree for this Council's support of it -- if possible, is based on the actual average per-pupil spending of 33 districts in the state that performed best on the PSSA, the state standardized test. The targeted funding level for each district would then be adjusted to give more districts with a large percentage of low-income students, students with disabilities or English language learners.

Had this plan been adopted, approved or passed, Philadelphia would have been just over $2 billion, one-third more than the school district actually spent. Under this plan, per-pupil spending here would have increased about $2,000 per student

to $9,437. This plan would have increased the state's share of Philadelphia school costs to 76

percent, and thereby allow the district to achieve that higher level of spending. From what knowledge we have under the Miccozzie plan, Philadelphia itself would be expected to contribute roughly $77 million less for schools than it contributes now, allowing for a 14 percent decrease in local taxes.

Perhaps, as idealistic as we are, we too have been supporters of the Successful Schools Budget Plan that, in our belief, would have equalized per-pupil spending between the rich and the poor school districts across the state, while at the same time giving relief to people struggling with rising property taxes, particularly senior citizens on fixed incomes.

I think I should I should say before closing that this term of this commission illustrates something that I said earlier in this report. It gives no consideration about the next governor being able to interrupt the reform agenda as it now exists. It is the Black Clergy's belief and contention that this law is unjust, unfair, and lacks the spirit of a nation that is now calling for

mutual benefit of all of its people for the strength of our country.

This law does not give the next

administration the right nor the privilege to engage in the idea of progress except it be the status quo of the current political will. Unless and until we become totally dissatisfied with the status quo, we will not have a positive alternative to what the city can do to educate its children.

I ask your aid to the Black Clergy in its aforementioned endeavor. It is up to you, I believe, City Council, to work out a way that is beneficial for our beloved city in educating our children and delivering them quality education. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much, Reverend. We appreciated your coming in to testify.

MR. McPHERSON: The next witness is Sarah Gilliam.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Sarah Gilliam here?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please call

the next witness.

MR. McPHERSON: The next witnesses are Tom Doyle and Bill Gormley.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record.

(Witness came forward.)

Do you have copies of your testimony?

MR. BRADLEY: I have testimony. I also a paper that I would like distributed.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Fine. Thank you.

MR. BRADLEY: My name is David Bradley.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

THE WITNESS: Good evening. I'm a policy analyst with the Keystone Research Center in Harrisburg, and I hold a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The Keystone Research Center is a nonpartisan independent think-tank with a mission that focuses on issues of economic opportunity, and is a leading source of independent analysis of the Pennsylvania economy and labor market. The report which I'll discussing, which the Keystone Research Center released yesterday, takes a look at one of

the ways that the $2.7 million Edison report suggested that the Philadelphia schools could save significant amounts of money by outsourcing operations and maintenance work. Our findings

suggest that this claim does not stand up to scrutiny.

Keystone undertook this analysis because of the intense debate regarding the state take-over of Philadelphia schools and also because of our longstanding interest in the performance and job impacts of privatization. We previously addressed this issue several years ago in the context of the debates about nursing home privatization.

What did the Edison report say about outsourcing of maintenance and operations work? This work includes groundskeeping, custodial work, maintaining and operating the heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems. The Edison report said that Philadelphia's maintenance and operation costs are out of line with other schools, 50 percent higher on a per-student basis than the mid-Atlantic region, 40 percent more on a square footage basis. It also said that outsourcing represents a significant savings opportunity.

Finally, the report said that districts that have outsourced maintenance and operations have realized savings between 10 and 30 percent. The source on this last claim is, quote, interviews with

an external service provider, end quote. I would have thought that the $2.7 million would buy more credible evidence than this. When you look closely, this claim is not credible.

Edison's claim that the Philadelphia maintenance and operations costs are high is based on a flawed comparison. Edison uses the American School and University magazine survey. This is the annual maintenance and operations cost study (indicating). And they use the mid-Atlantic region, of which Pennsylvania is a part, to compare Philadelphia's expenses.

However, 23 schools responded to the survey from the mid-Atlantic region. 12 of them were rural. The magazine picked out the middle cost district and called that the regional cost, which Edison compared with Philadelphia. The middle cost district in this survey enrolled about 2500 students. The Philadelphia School District enrolls over 210,000 students. The biggest district in the

entire survey from ASU had 76,000 students. The point is this is apples and oranges.

What does apples and apples tell us about the Philadelphia School District's costs? First, citing a 1998 Council of Great City Schools

Analysis that included a comparison with other urban large school districts, the council found that Philadelphia's maintenance and operations costs were about $472 per pupil. The urban average was $517.

In addition to this, Keystone collected figures for six other of the 12 biggest school districts nationally. What we found was that Philadelphia was in the middle of the pack. And that's detailed in the report that I handed out.

It's not that Edison doesn't know how to make good comparisons. When looking at spending per student overall, Edison did compare Philadelphia to Houston, Clark County, which is Las Vegas, and Broward County in Florida, school districts of similar size. Yet when they chose to look at maintenance and operations, they compared Philadelphia's cost to small rural school districts and then said, Look how expensive Philadelphia is.

As a final check, we looked at the wages

of the two main maintenance and operations occupations in the school district versus the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Building engineers are paid slightly below the metropolitan average, about two dollars below per hour. Cleaners are paid

slightly above the Philadelphia metropolitan average, about a dollar per hour.

This is all a way of saying that we didn't see a lot of room for saving dollars through slashing wages. Maintenance and operations costs are about 10.5 percent of the district's budget. Salaries in this category are about 5 percent, including 3.9 percent for custodial salaries. Available evidence indicates that it would be hard to save more than a few tenths of 1 percent of the school district budget, if that, through outsourcing. This is part from the 10 to 30 percent Edison claims.

In a city in which concentrated poverty is a primary challenge the schools face in trying to deliver quality education, creative more poverty wage jobs seems an odd approach. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We do appreciate your coming in. This

is very helpful information. Thank you.

MR. BRADLEY: You're welcome.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness.

(Witness came forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Doyle,

you're a very, very patient man. You've been here all day yesterday and all day today.

MR. DOYLE: Tell that to my members. They have a different opinion.

(Laughter.)

MR. DOYLE: I apologize for not having a typewritten notes, but I actually wrote this after this morning's hearings and in the break in between. I will have copies available after they're typewritten.

Good evening, Counsel President Verna, Councilwoman Miller and all other council members. My name is Tom Doyle and I'm the president of Local 1201. I represent the maintenance mechanics, bus chauffeurs, bus attendants, school aides, building engineers, cleaning personnel, warehouse and printshop workers, and asbestos abatement employees.

These employees are the backbone of the

district. Without them, the system does not function. We are among the lowest paid, yet are the hardest working employees in the district bar none. A majority of our members make from a low of $10,651 a year to a maximum of $22,460 a year. Remember, that is a majority of our members. And that top

rate of 22,460 is made by approximately only 125 of our 2,000 members who are in this category.

We are not the problem, but we are a major portion of the answer. Our bus chauffeurs and attendants are at their locations at 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. in the morning leaving to pick up students to take them to school. Our building engineers open up at 5:00, 6:00 or 7:00 a.m. to check their buildings, light them, run heat, and clean broken glass and drug syringes and containers left in the schoolyard from the previous night of drug and alcohol abuse. And this goes on day after day and night after night, 365 days a year.

Our cleaning members walk into trash-strewn buildings every day because of the lack of supervision and cafeterias that look like landfills because the philosophy is if it's on the on the floor it's 1201's problem. Our mechanics

have to repair and replace everything, over and over and over again because of the destructiveness of some students, and with a limited amount of resources. All of our members every day face those problems, but we do it and do it willingly.

Yet we are threatened with layoffs and reductions constantly. I heard Mr. Doosey say

yesterday that the PFT and CASA are getting 4 percent raises this year. Well, 1201 received half of that. And the reduction in overtime is mostly in our bargaining unit. The reason for overtime is because when I came into office we had 4251 members. We currently have --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. How many members?

MR. DOYLE: 4,251.

We currently have 3,884. That is a loss of 367 employees across all departments. And that is in a period of just over four years. And that figure will grow substantially by the end of this school year, as it does every school year ending. So we will have to do more with less again.

Facilities did not receive an increase in funding for eight years. Everything went to the

education side. And we understand that. But don't blame us when repairs aren't made and cleaning can't get done because of lack of supplies. It is not our fault. We did not cause it. We do what we can, and we will continue to do so.

After all this, our members have been subjected to the outrageous lies and claims by

Edison Incorporated. They recommend in their report that the school district can save money by contracting out facilities and transportation. That is our entire bargaining unit. I say to you that is absolutely not true. We do it faster, better and cheaper than anyone.

The SRC has received this information from facilities management showing that the district's costs are cheaper while Local 1201 has heard nothing from the SRC. I ask why. Mr. Nevels has said he recognizes the important role that 1201 provides in the delivery of educational services to the district. We are happy to hear this. But talk to us before you bring in outsiders and for-profit companies like Edison. Hear our side of the story. That is all we ask.

This unit has sacrificed deeply. We

cannot any longer. We are below bone. We are down to the marrow. If further reductions are made to us, this system will not be able to function and the children of Philadelphia will not get the quality education we all want for them and they justly deserve.

We have a major stake in their education. Why? Because 90 percent of the children

of our members go to public schools in Philadelphia. So yes, we have a vested interest and that is our own children, not just our jobs. We can't live outside the city. We live here. We work here. We pay our taxes here.

We are a part of the fabric of this city, a fabric that does not tear or fade, a fabric that lasts and will be here when Edison is gone or Renaissance or any of the other failed companies who are looking to make a profit on our children. And they will fail because that is their track record, a track record that we have been informing the parents about at many community forums, forums like the one we recently attended at 29th and Dauphin Streets last week where the representative from Edison Incorporated stated, and I quote, the wonderful

thing about choice is you have the right to fire us after five years.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I was stunned when I heard this. This is not a wonderful thing because if this happens, as I believe it will, you have another lost generation of students, students from the 8th to the 12th grade who will be lost perhaps forever, who will be flipping

hamburgers at McDonalds instead of having the opportunity to become functioning, taxpaying home-owning members of their community.

Therefore, I ask the SRC, who I think is trying to do a conscientious job, that they continue a methodical and meticulous analysis under great political pressure from a Republican administration who is more concerned with political patronage than our children. I ask this Council to continue to ask tough questions and demand answers to those questions.

I ask that both parties read the report from the Keystone Research Center, which you just received, in an objective manner and realize that for-profit companies are not necessarily going to be accurate and truthful when they are paid millions of

dollars to recommend changes and then recommend themselves to institute those changes, a conflict of interest if I ever saw one; a company who is on the verge of bankruptcy and will most likely go under if they don't get a contract here in Philadelphia, a company who has never made a profit and probably has a larger deficit than the school district; companies who are affiliated with local elected politicians and schools who are not only performing at worse

levels than the Philadelphia School District schools, but are among the worst performing schools in the state of Pennsylvania.

While we are improving, they are failing and failing miserably. I ask that you don't kill the messenger because I fight for my members and try to give accurate, precise information to protect their jobs. That Local 1201 is not here to blow smoke and save our vested interests only, that we have made our sacrifices and continue to every day; that everyone realize in our last contract we made compromises that afforded the district savings such as reducing our engineering pay rates from 11 to 4, such as agreeing to get additional training for mechanics so there isn't what is referred to as

handing off and they eventually will all become multi-crafted; creating a new overnight shift for buildings that are utilized till late in the evening; that this bargaining unit contributes over $400,000 per year for the last 11 years, well over four and a half million dollars total to fund varsity sports in this city.

If not for Local 1201, there is no basketball, football, baseball, soccer, field

hockey, et cetera, et cetera. Girls and boys both, sports combined. What do we receive for this? A patch on the uniform sometimes. This also pays for the coaches, referees, officials and others who happen to be in another bargaining unit, not ours. And we are the only union that does this.

That our transportation members volunteer their time free of charge for the Special Olympics every year to transport and help our special needs children to have their day in the sun on a Saturday in May from dawn till dusk. I can go on and on and on, but I won't.

In conclusion, I ask that the SRC, the school district, this Council, the Mayor, the state legislature, Senate and Governor to consider the

good hard work that we do. Consider the distributions we make. Consider our children. Consider the fact that after all of you are done and gone, that all the children of this city will still need to be educated, to have the opportunities that we hope for them, for all them to come true, and that it is not again our fault; that we do not cause this problem, but we can and will be part of its resolution.

Do not eliminate our jobs, but rather,

increase our funding so we can better serve the parents and children of this great city and to ensure that our children get what they justly deserve. Work with us and we will work with you to achieve a school district that can be a model for all to emulate and be second to none. Thank you for this opportunity and your patience, and may we achieve greatness together in the school district. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. McPherson, are there any other names on the witness list?

MR. McPHERSON: No.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do we have anyone else to testify? Do we have anyone else to testify?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Seeing no one, this committee will stand in recess until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. Thank you all very much.

(Proceedings adjourned at 8:01 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE

WE HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing proceedings of the Council of the City of Philadelphia's meeting of the Committee of the Whole, on Thursday, March 20, 2002, are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by us, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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BRIAN L. RASCO, COURT REPORTER

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