

Committee of the Whole
May 15, 2019

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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 15, 2019
10:16 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

BILLS 190152, 190153, 190154, and 190155
RESOLUTION 190164

- - -

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
3 morning. This hearing is called to
4 order. This is a public hearing of the
5 Committee of the Whole regarding Bill
6 Nos. 190152, 190153, 190154, 190155, and
7 Resolution No. 190164.

8 Mr. Stitt, please read the
9 titles of the bills and the resolution.

10 THE CLERK: Bill No. 190152, an
11 ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for
12 the six Fiscal Years 2020 through 2025
13 inclusive.

14 Bill No. 190153, an ordinance
15 to adopt a Fiscal 2020 Capital Budget.

16 Bill No. 190154, an ordinance
17 adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal
18 Year 2020.

19 Bill No. 190155, an ordinance
20 amending Chapter 19-1500 of The
21 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Wage and Net
22 Profits Tax," by revising certain tax
23 rates, under certain terms and
24 conditions.

25 Resolution No. 190164,

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 resolution providing for the approval by
3 the Council of the City of Philadelphia
4 of a Revised Five Year Financial Plan for
5 the City of Philadelphia covering Fiscal
6 Years 2020 through 2024, and
7 incorporating proposed changes with
8 respect to Fiscal Year 2019, which is to
9 be submitted by the Mayor to the
10 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
11 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority")
12 pursuant to the Intergovernmental
13 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an
14 ordinance of this Council approved by the
15 Mayor on January 3, 1992 (Bill No.
16 1563-A), by and between the City and the
17 Authority.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
19 you, Mr. Stitt.

20 Today we continue the public
21 hearing of the Committee of the Whole to
22 consider the bills read by Mr. Stitt that
23 constitute proposed operating and capital
24 spending measures for Fiscal Year 2020, a
25 Capital Program, and a forward-looking

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 Capital Plan for Fiscal Year 2020 through
3 Fiscal Year 2025.

4 Today we are to hear from you,
5 the public, about the School
6 District's -- I repeat, the School
7 District's -- proposed budget and where
8 you believe the School District should
9 focus its spending priorities.

10 To assure there is an
11 opportunity for everyone here to be
12 heard, we have certain ground rules we
13 ask everybody respectfully to respect.

14 Your testimony should be about
15 the School District budget and proposed
16 spending priorities. All speakers must
17 sign up in order to testify. So if you
18 have not already signed up, please do so
19 at the table over here to my left.

20 Your name will be called in the
21 order in which you have signed up. You
22 will have up to three minutes, three
23 minutes to testify. Because we have a
24 fairly extensive list here, we want to
25 hold to that three minutes to be fair to

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 everybody so other people aren't sitting
3 around waiting for a long time.

4 We have a timer here. Real
5 professional operation here. And when
6 the timer buzzes, please complete your
7 sentence and allow the next speaker to
8 proceed with his or her testimony.

9 Mr. Stitt, please read the
10 names of our first speakers.

11 We want to recognize the Chair
12 of the School Board, Joyce Wilkerson, is
13 here.

14 Ms. Wilkerson, welcome again.
15 You had a long day yesterday. We welcome
16 you back.

17 MS. WILKERSON: Glad to be
18 here.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr.
20 Stitt.

21 THE CLERK: Hillary
22 Linardopoulos, Antoinette Holliday, and
23 Jenny Bogoni.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just hold
3 on. We have two people and three names.

4 Ma'am, you are? I know who
5 Hillary is.

6 MS. BOGONI: I'm Jenny Bogoni.

7 THE CLERK: Antoinette
8 Holliday?

9 (No response.)

10 THE CLERK: Randy McCullough.

11 (Witness approached witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We like
14 to have three people at one time so we
15 can keep moving.

16 Hillary, please, identify
17 yourself and proceed.

18 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Good
19 morning, Councilmembers. I'm Hillary
20 Linardopoulos with the Philadelphia
21 Federation of Teachers. It is a pleasure
22 to be here today. Thank you for the
23 opportunity.

24 I want to thank you not only
25 for the opportunity to come speak before

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 you today, but also thank you for
3 remaining focused on prioritizing an
4 investment agenda for our Philadelphia
5 schools.

6 While our testimony today is
7 focused on school facilities, I want to
8 make clear that other critical issues
9 remain, including teacher retention and
10 burnout, recruiting and retaining
11 educators of color, oversized classes,
12 teacher vacancies, and school counselor
13 and nurse ratios. We look forward to
14 discussing and identifying actionable
15 solutions with each of you, but today
16 let's focus on school facilities.

17 There's an urgent building
18 crisis that threatens the health and
19 safety of Philadelphia students and
20 educators. Our efforts in this space are
21 not new, and since 2017, we have worked
22 in lockstep with Councilmembers as part
23 of the Philly Healthy Schools Initiative.
24 And as a founding member of that
25 coalition, it is extremely gratifying to

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 hear that our combined efforts have
3 culminated in the District's plan to
4 immediately begin to upgrade air
5 conditioning in schools.

6 I also want to highlight the
7 work of Councilmembers Green and Squilla
8 who have authored some of the most
9 rigorous lead testing requirements in the
10 nation. Councilmember Gym's tireless
11 work to advocate for air conditioning in
12 schools has led to real commitments from
13 the District. And the establishment of a
14 facilities task force under the
15 leadership of Council President Clarke
16 and headed up by Councilmember
17 Quinones-Sanchez is also encouraging.

18 One of the most critical
19 components of making facilities
20 improvements, in addition to securing
21 financial resources, is the establishment
22 and the implementation of oversight
23 mechanisms based on best practice. By
24 collaborating with the School District,
25 we have made significant progress in our

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 efforts to improve procedures and
3 protocol.

4 Despite these positive
5 developments, we're still far from where
6 our students need to be. To provide a
7 context for just how pervasive our
8 facilities problems are, we submitted a
9 number of datasets for your review. I
10 encourage you to look through them by
11 councilmanic district, and there you'll
12 find a breakdown of individual schools'
13 conditions. Allow me to highlight just a
14 few key figures.

15 If you look at the FCI, or
16 Facilities Conditions Index, it's a
17 scientific analysis of a school's overall
18 condition and it's based on a number of
19 factors. Of the roughly 220 schools for
20 which we provided data, 155 of them are
21 classified as being in poor or critical
22 condition. In those 155 schools, 88,000
23 young people and thousands of educators
24 enter a building each day that puts them
25 at the very real risk of being poisoned.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 More than 110,000 students
3 enter schools where lead and asbestos are
4 present. Mold, another pervasive
5 environmental hazard, affects roughly 142
6 schools for which we had data. So that
7 means 88,000 students learn in an
8 environment where they are exposed to
9 conditions that affect their respiratory
10 health.

11 While the data we've provided
12 tells a distressing story, we're making
13 real progress, and we're proud to have
14 worked with many of you to establish the
15 Fund Our Facilities Coalition. It's a
16 coalition of lawmakers from all areas of
17 government as well as labor and community
18 partners, and we've convened to talk
19 about what the concerns are and what
20 actionable solutions we have.

21 So I've got good news and I've
22 got better news, and then I'll conclude.
23 The good news: For \$170 million, just
24 \$170 million, we can invest in good
25 paying cleaning jobs, window replacement,

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 moisture remediation, lead stabilization
3 and more. And even better news -- Mr.
4 Stitt, you will like this -- we are not
5 asking for all of that from City Council.

6 We are calling --

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We all
8 like that, by the way, not just him.

9 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: We are
10 calling for \$170 million from any and all
11 government sources. We're not picky -
12 city, state, and federal.

13 So I'm happy to answer any
14 questions. I appreciate all that you do
15 every day, and I thank you for your time.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
17 Thank you, Hillary, and thank you for
18 working that in as quickly as you could,
19 because we want to, again, be fair.

20 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Absolutely.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And to
22 everybody, if you have written testimony
23 and you don't have the time to read it
24 all, the whole written testimony will be
25 made part of the record.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We
4 appreciate that.

5 Whoever would like to go next,
6 and then we'll have any questions or
7 comments.

8 MS. BOGONI: Good morning,
9 Councilman Greenlee and other
10 Councilmembers. Thank you for this
11 opportunity to testify today. My name is
12 Jenny Bogoni. I'm the Executive Director
13 of the Read by 4th Campaign, and we are a
14 coalition of partners that are working
15 together to make sure children can read
16 on grade level by the time they enter
17 fourth grade, which we all know is a
18 critical marker for their future success.

19 Comprehensive research has
20 shown us what the key levers are to make
21 sure children are reading on grade level.
22 We know it's school readiness at
23 kindergarten, daily attendance, quality
24 classroom instruction, out-of-school-time
25 learning, and the engagement of families

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 in that process. This understanding has
3 led us as a city, as a coalition of
4 partners, including the School District,
5 to have a clearly articulated,
6 intentional, strategic, evidence-based
7 and, most importantly, collective
8 approach to improving early language and
9 literacy skills in all of our children.
10 The approach you see happening in
11 Philadelphia is the largest scale and
12 most complex effort of its kind in the
13 nation and, as a result, we are seeing
14 progress.

15 Here in Philadelphia, third
16 grade reading scores are up. More
17 children are participating in quality
18 pre-K, which for us is a proxy of
19 kindergarten readiness. Attendance rates
20 in the early grades are improving, and
21 more children are connected to
22 literacy-rich environments in the summer
23 months.

24 This progress is being made
25 because of the amazing work of our

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 partner organizations, of which the
3 School District is obviously one of our
4 key partners, and that is why I'm here
5 today. I'm here to ask you to ensure
6 that the District continues to invest in
7 the early literacy work that it has been
8 doing so well for the last several years.

9 I want you to know that the
10 work being done by our School District in
11 the realm of teacher coaching on how to
12 teach reading is some of the best work
13 being done in the country right now. We
14 spend a lot of time in our city
15 frustrated with the state of our public
16 education system, but in the midst of
17 fiscal struggle and a downward trend in
18 many of our social indicators in our
19 city, our District is setting a national
20 bar and showing others how to effectively
21 shift teacher practice at a system-wide
22 level in a way that's supportive of
23 teachers, but still impacts positive
24 student outcomes.

25 Several years ago, the District

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 made a bold decision to invest in
3 teachers and classrooms across the entire
4 system of elementary schools. They laid
5 out and executed a plan to provide a
6 summer training institute and ongoing,
7 embedded coaching in every elementary
8 school. As a result, you now see in
9 every elementary school in the district a
10 coach who is there to specifically
11 support teachers and adapting their
12 teaching approach around reading to what
13 evidence shows is the best way to do so.

14 Teachers are embedding more
15 phonics. They are able to personalize
16 instruction time, and they are
17 effectively using the entire literacy
18 block to meet the varied needs of the
19 students in their classrooms. You also
20 see leveled libraries of books in each
21 classroom aligned the District's
22 curricular themes. This means teachers
23 have the tools and resources they need to
24 meet the child at their literacy level
25 with appropriate strategies and

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 resources. And each year, the District
3 is renovating classrooms with furniture
4 that better supports these teaching
5 approaches. I can honestly say this is
6 the most massive, comprehensive, and
7 impactful systemic change I have ever
8 witnessed the District undertaking. We
9 are beginning to see evidence that it's
10 working.

11 In 2015, the percent of
12 eight-year-olds reading on grade level
13 has -- since 2015, that percentage has
14 increased by 8 percentage points.

15 We now know that work like this
16 to change a system takes time. So the
17 fact that we're seeing outcomes already
18 gives us hope, but we also know that we
19 have to keep going, because we're on to
20 something here. We've got the right
21 strategies. We need to continue to
22 invest.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
24 Thank you. Thank you very much.

25 Sir, please identify yourself

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 and proceed.

3 MR. McCULLOUGH: Thank you.

4 Good morning, Councilman Greenlee and

5 City Councilmembers. My name is Randy

6 McCullough and I'm the Chief Human

7 Resource Officer at Rhoads Industries.

8 Rhoads is a family-owned business founded

9 in 1896. What started as a small

10 fabrication shop has evolved into a

11 multi-discipline corporation that

12 provides industrial fabrication,

13 installation, and maintenance for

14 commercial and government projects.

15 Housed in the Philadelphia Navy Yard,

16 Rhoads has built a major operation

17 strategically placing our industrial

18 services, large fabrication, government

19 work near our maritime division on the

20 Delaware River.

21 Currently, Rhoads employs just

22 about 200 employees, a little over 200

23 employees, with our touch labor making up

24 a good number of those employees. Rhoads

25 is supported by the Eastern Millwright

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Regional Council and Boilermakers Local

3 19. Our labor is comprised of various

4 high-priority occupations such as

5 welders, production and operating

6 workers, machinists, and fitters.

7 Over the last five years,

8 Rhoads has began to expand and increase

9 its work, and we have grown extensively

10 in the volume and variety of the work we

11 perform. As we began to grow and acquire

12 new businesses, we quickly identified the

13 need to improve and expand our human

14 capital. Through internal gap analysis,

15 business growth projections, and

16 statistical labor data, Rhoads identified

17 that in order to maintain and grow our

18 workforce, we not only need to hire

19 locally, but we also need to engage the

20 workforce and education system. We

21 simultaneously needed to recruit a

22 workforce while planning to invest and

23 upscale our current and future employees.

24 Over a decade ago, Rhoads

25 Industries joined the Manufacturers'

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 Industry Partnership currently housed
3 within Philadelphia Works. The
4 partnership with Philadelphia Works and
5 CareerLink centers has evolved over the
6 years and led to a multifaceted
7 relationship that has yielded the
8 registration of our own state-registered
9 apprenticeship program, participation in
10 state-run rapid response program to avert
11 layoffs, and recent enrollment in the
12 Philadelphia Youth Network's Business
13 Education Program.

14 Through our local engagement,
15 Rhoads has worked extensively with
16 regional high schools, trade schools,
17 career technical (CTE) programs to
18 recruit new hires. These efforts have
19 included facility tours for students,
20 seminars outlining the industry and
21 career options, solidified relationships
22 as a next step to post-graduation.

23 In 2018-'19, Rhoads
24 participated in the Philadelphia Youth
25 Network's Business Education Partnership

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 grant, which enabled two CTE students to
3 come to Rhoads once a week to mimic the
4 workday while earning income. Through
5 this grant program, the participants
6 received their OSHA 10 certification,
7 extensive on-the-job training, and were
8 exposed to the rigors of the real world.
9 Our two students have been responsible,
10 engaging, eager to hone their welding
11 craft. Both come to us with skills
12 needed to secure an entry-level position
13 and have enthusiastically stated their
14 interest working for Rhoads
15 post-graduation.

16 In March, we also hosted a
17 regional weld competition and partnered
18 with the American Weld Society, which
19 both of these students attended.

20 As an employer in Philadelphia,
21 we recognize the importance and value of
22 being engaged locally and the School
23 District of Philadelphia creating not
24 only the pipeline but a viable career
25 pathway for residents of the next

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 generation.

3 Thank you for your time today.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
5 you, sir. Thank you very much.

6 Thank you all very much. And,
7 again, those written testimonies, if you
8 have them, will be put in the record.

9 Hold on one second.

10 Councilwoman.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

12 We are very pleased to have this
13 information, PFT, with regard to the
14 conditions of schools. We're glad it's
15 detailed, but it's very sad here we are
16 in 2019 and we have so many schools, and
17 it's even broken down in district, where
18 they're in such bad condition, where
19 children can get sick, everything from
20 lead paint to mold and everything else.
21 And it's just -- and asbestos. And it's
22 just unbelievable. It's very, very sad
23 that at this point and at this time in
24 the history of schools and in our city
25 that we're still living with this.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Yes.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So we
4 don't know when all of this will be done?

5 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: So I think
6 that one of the most important things
7 that we can do collectively is, first of
8 all, ask for more money from all of you,
9 which we will frequently, right? But I
10 think --

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We don't
12 doubt that.

13 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: We will.
14 We're not shy about that.

15 But we must band together and
16 call attention to this issue as a state
17 and national crisis, because it is. This
18 is a school system that educates
19 primarily --

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: -- students
22 of color, students experiencing poverty,
23 and that's not an accident that these are
24 the conditions that are accepted for our
25 kids. These conditions would never be

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 permitted in a wealthier school district.
3 They just wouldn't.

4 So I think that the work that
5 we do together with you on the Council
6 and as a city will be critical in
7 elevating this issue to a national level,
8 and that's why we've established this
9 Fund Our Facilities Coalition, because we
10 believe that real change starts locally
11 and real change starts when we demand it.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
13 you know about the program with
14 Children's Hospital?

15 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Yes. The
16 lead testing?

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
18 Where children who have asthma and such,
19 where they are fixing their homes with
20 100 percent minority folks from their
21 areas. So that's a big to-do.

22 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Absolutely.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
24 we're working closely with them, and we
25 want to work with you as well.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Absolutely.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And

4 it's so important, so sad, and so

5 unbelievable that it's still the have's

6 who get and our poor have not's who

7 don't.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Thank you,
10 Councilwoman.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
12 you.

13 Thank you all very much. Thank
14 you for your time.

15 MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr.
17 Stitt.

18 THE CLERK: David Hardy,
19 Reynelle Brown Staley, Lynn Robinson.

20 (Witness approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: May I
23 say as they're coming forward that David
24 Hardy is just about the best person we
25 have. You all know Boys' Latin and you

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 know that he's continued to just move up
3 and to be so helpful, so professional,
4 and does everything he can to improve
5 education and help our young people, and
6 the young people whose lives he influence
7 are young professionals. They become
8 young professionals. He's the real
9 thing. He doesn't let it get him down.
10 Sometimes you read things like this and
11 you just wonder why we are where we are,
12 but when we have people like David Hardy,
13 it gives us hope that life is going to
14 get better and that we can do something
15 to improve these conditions.

16 Thank you, Mr. Hardy. And you
17 were here yesterday and your folks, and
18 we thank you for your fight for charter
19 schools and we thank you for your fight
20 for education. Thank you, and God bless
21 you.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: David,
23 before we start, we try to get three
24 people up here at a time so we keep
25 moving.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 MR. HARDY: Sure.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr.

4 Stitt, you want to call a couple more
5 names? I guess some people aren't here.

6 THE CLERK: Sure. Rochelle
7 Nichols-Solomon.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: There we
11 go.

12 THE CLERK: Jolley or Jolley
13 Christman.

14 (Witness approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Now we
17 got three.

18 And let me just remind
19 everybody, because we have a lot of
20 people to testify, please limit your time
21 to three minutes, and any written
22 testimony will be totally made part of
23 the record.

24 David, why don't you start.

25 MR. HARDY: Thank you.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Thank you for those kind
3 comments, Councilwoman Blackwell.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you.

6 MR. HARDY: Good morning,
7 Councilman Greenlee, and I want to say
8 what people said yesterday. We're going
9 to miss you around here.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
11 you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
13 true.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
15 you.

16 MR. HARDY: Good morning. I
17 come here today not to comment on the
18 budget you will consider for passage, but
19 the request that this austere body
20 ensures that the funds reflect what the
21 parents and taxpayers desire.

22 In an election year, statements
23 have been made to imply an increased
24 opposition to charter schools in this
25 Chamber. Recent comments by the Mayor

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 that he prefers fewer charter schools has
3 only added to the impression that elected
4 officials have soured on the charter
5 school model for public education.

6 As the elected body who is
7 empowered to provide oversight and
8 stewardship of governmental operations, I
9 humbly submit that this current position
10 that some of you have adopted does not
11 reflect the educational performance or
12 outcomes of the charter school model, the
13 desires of the electorate, specifically
14 black and brown people, or a realistic
15 assessment of the School District of
16 Philadelphia.

17 Reliance on anecdotal or
18 misleading information about the role and
19 success of charters can lead to dangerous
20 conclusions. Those conclusions can lead
21 to incorrect votes and lax oversight.

22 The members of this Council
23 would be wise to follow the lead of the
24 people and give them what they want.

25 Few in this city were surprised

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 that the poll conducted by the Inquirer
3 that shows Philadelphia voters favor
4 charter schools by a margin of two to
5 one. They recognize that charter schools
6 outperformed District schools. When you
7 remove the District schools that have
8 admission criteria, the results are even
9 more dramatic.

10 The large majority of children
11 who benefit from charter school success
12 are black and brown children. This point
13 is reflected in recent polls, and I have
14 one attached, to show that black and
15 brown democrats prefer charters by a
16 margin of two to one more than white
17 democrats.

18 So those you represent want
19 charter schools and they want them for
20 specific reasons. Over 70,000 students
21 are enrolled in charter schools in
22 Philadelphia. Almost 30,000 applicants
23 want to enroll. These numbers are
24 significant.

25 The Inquirer poll also stated

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 that 56 percent of the voters polled
3 think the District has gotten worse.
4 Another 23 percent say they don't think
5 it got better. Despite hundreds of
6 millions of dollars invested, 80 percent
7 do not see a positive result. That may
8 explain the high numbers of applications
9 to charter schools.

10 The total enrollment of the
11 District is still trending down, and
12 despite gaudy celebrations of marginal
13 gains, the voters have not been
14 convinced. They have made the
15 comparisons and the decisions. They want
16 more charters.

17 I hope that the Mayor will be
18 the Mayor for all children, and I hope
19 the Council will look out for the people.
20 That is what will happen if you all look
21 at the evidence.

22 Thank you very much.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
24 you, Mr. Hardy. I appreciate your time
25 and your work.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Whoever would like to go next,
3 please, identify yourself and proceed.

4 MS. NICHOLS-SOLOMON: Good
5 morning. I'm Rochelle Nichols-Solomon.
6 Thank you, members of City Council, for
7 the opportunity to provide testimony on
8 the school funding and budget.

9 I stand here today as a
10 grandparent of two Philadelphia public
11 school students. They are the fourth
12 generation in our family attending
13 Philadelphia schools and represent a
14 longstanding partnership between school
15 and community.

16 I also come here today
17 representing POWER. POWER is an
18 interfaith organization comprised of more
19 than 50 congregations in this city. We
20 are committed to building communities of
21 opportunity that work for all and view
22 quality public schools as not only
23 necessary but an essential element of
24 achieving this goal.

25 Today I believe we are at a

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 crossroads when it comes to Philadelphia
3 schools. In recent years, POWER's
4 education team joined other advocacy
5 groups to fight for local control of
6 Philadelphia schools and an end to the
7 SRC. We cheered City government when
8 they took this important step. Now, in
9 this election season, we are at the first
10 budget cycle with a new School Board in
11 place and we have an opportunity to make
12 good on the promise of that moment.

13 The budget priorities outlined
14 in the Healthy Schools agenda makes a lot
15 of sense. POWER applauds the premise
16 that advocacy groups and Council must
17 work together with community stakeholders
18 to achieve key priorities for healthy
19 schools. It connects well with our
20 congregation-based organizing and our
21 strong belief that those closest to the
22 pain must be leaders in the solution.

23 We need dedicated and targeted
24 resources that will improve school
25 climate and expand opportunities for

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 quality teaching and learning. We need
3 supports to close the gap between home
4 and build strong bridges between home and
5 school. Some schools are lucky to have
6 that, but the future of our schools
7 shouldn't be left to luck or rely on
8 flyers, text messages, or e-mails. We
9 need adequate funds to add counselors and
10 mental health and wellness supports.
11 Affluent school districts are awash in
12 those kinds of supports. Why in the
13 City, where we have so much need, don't
14 we have them?

15 Locally it's time for Council
16 to schedule hearings around tax abatement
17 and pass legislation to return the money
18 to our school budget to create safe and
19 healthy schools.

20 We are encouraged by the recent
21 announced alliance between the state and
22 local elected representatives in the PFT
23 to identify 170 million in funding to fix
24 our facilities. We urge you to find the
25 funds to fix the urgent repairs in our

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 schools.

3 We also urge our local elected
4 officials and District leaders to join
5 POWER in speaking out at the state level
6 to increase the state's contribution to
7 Philadelphia schools by distributing all
8 of the basic education dollars through
9 Pennsylvania's fair funding formula.
10 This would eliminate the current deep
11 funding disparities between
12 Pennsylvania's districts and ongoing
13 racial bias in funding to districts with
14 higher enrollments of children of color
15 such as ours. This year Philadelphia
16 will get \$344 million less than its fair
17 share of state funding, according to the
18 fair funding formula.

19 In two short days, on May 17th,
20 the nation will commemorate the 65th
21 anniversary of the Brown versus Board of
22 Education ruling that separate schools
23 for black and white students is
24 inherently unequal. Sadly, the goal and
25 the promise of Brown to provide an

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 equitable and quality education for black
3 children has never been realized, and
4 groups like POWER continue to fight.
5 Your unwavering support for the Healthy
6 Schools agenda is a fitting way to both
7 observe Brown versus Board and to do the
8 right thing for our children, and we
9 thank you for it.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
11 you.

12 Please identify yourself and
13 proceed.

14 DR. CHRISTMAN: Good morning.
15 My name is Jolley Bruce Christman and I
16 am a member of the Pay Up PPA Coalition.
17 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
18 about the School District budget.

19 Pay Up PPA is a grassroots
20 coalition composed of progressive, labor,
21 faith, and pro-public education
22 organizations. It is our goal to secure
23 a dedicated annual and recurring revenue
24 stream for the School District of at
25 least 25 million from the Philadelphia

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2 Parking Authority.

3 We know that you also recognize
4 what a difference 25 million could make.
5 We estimate that it would be enough to
6 staff every shuttered library in our City
7 schools.

8 When the Commonwealth took
9 control over the Parking Authority, it
10 came with a promise of 45 million in
11 revenue for the District, but PPA funding
12 has fallen woefully short. Given the
13 pressing needs of our children, most of
14 whom live in poverty and suffer the
15 indignities and injustice of
16 discrimination, we ask you to join us in
17 our fight to secure at least 25 million
18 from the Philadelphia Parking Authority.

19 In addition, Pay Up PPA is
20 demanding a parking authority worthy of
21 the public trust. Pay Up PPA formed in
22 the wake of the damning report on the
23 Parking Authority by the Pennsylvania
24 Department of the Auditor General in
25 December 2017. For 18 months, our

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2 coalition has attended every Board
3 meeting. We have seen the increased use
4 of executive session. We have been told
5 that the public comment section is not a
6 place for dialogue with the community.
7 The State Auditor General's report also
8 highlighted the culture of evasion at the
9 PPA.

10 There are increasing calls for
11 reform at the Parking Authority. The
12 Philadelphia Inquirer advocated a return
13 to local control after discoveries about
14 the Parking Authority's longstanding
15 Board Chair. Shamefully, this Board
16 Chair was recently reelected by a vote of
17 four to one. Pay Up PPA supports Parking
18 Authority Board member Andrew Stutzman's
19 motion for term limits of Board officers.

20 Our city needs a constructive
21 conversation about the future of the
22 Parking Authority. We ask you to hold
23 public hearings about school funding from
24 the PPA and about increasing the
25 accountability and transparency of this

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 public agency, which has far too long
3 been mired in scandals, mismanagement,
4 and governance that turns a blind eye.

5 Pay Up PPA is committed to
6 working with members of City Council, the
7 Administration, state officials, and the
8 leadership of the Parking Authority to
9 achieve this.

10 Thank you for the opportunity.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
12 very much.

13 Councilwoman Blackwell.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you.

16 We want to thank you all for
17 your testimony and for your willingness
18 to try to come up with ways to deal with
19 this issue.

20 Again, I want to thank
21 Mr. Hardy specifically for putting on the
22 record how the public feels about charter
23 schools and even what the waiting list
24 is, and we have from the very beginning
25 and, again, we applaud you for all that

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2 you do. Thank you, and God bless you.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
4 you, Councilwoman.

5 Hold on one second, David.

6 Councilwoman Gym.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
8 very much, Mr. Chair.

9 I wanted to thank Dr. Christman
10 and Rochelle Nichols-Solomon for coming
11 out here today especially to talk about
12 the need for full fair funding and the
13 options that are before City Council, but
14 the Pay Up PPA Coalition, when we first
15 started in 2016 when I first came in, the
16 Parking Authority was scheduled to give
17 about \$3 million, I think, was projected.
18 Today it's giving the most it's given
19 since we had worked together to have them
20 pay since 2007. So I think Fiscal Year
21 2019 is delivering over 14 million to the
22 schools, but I agree with Dr. Christman
23 that it's still not enough and that we
24 have a clear obligation for the Parking
25 Authority to get more money. It is a

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2 public trust and it has the
3 responsibility and urgency of doing so.

4 It takes over a quarter billion
5 dollars in taxpayer money, and it is
6 billed as the most -- we all know how
7 speedy they can be, but we need those
8 funds to go towards the public good; that
9 is, City of Philadelphia, the School
10 District of Philadelphia, and kids of
11 this city.

12 So I want to thank both POWER
13 and the Pay Up PPA Coalition for your
14 outstanding work in moving this ball
15 forward and then pledging my support to
16 make sure that we meet your goals as
17 well.

18 Thank you.

19 DR. CHRISTMAN: Thank you so
20 much, Councilwoman Gym.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
23 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
25 morning. Good morning, everyone. I just

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 want to simply say thank you for showing
3 up and offering your testimony.

4 Knowing that the PPA is a
5 state-regulated state creation, if you
6 will, have you all registered your strong
7 voices at the state level as well with
8 the Senate or the House Education
9 Committee?

10 DR. CHRISTMAN: We are just
11 beginning to do that, but we do feel that
12 this City deserves a public conversation
13 about the PPA to uncover some of its
14 practices and policies, and we really
15 call on City Council in its role to hold
16 hearings where there could be such a
17 discussion. But, yes, we are moving to
18 work at the state level as well.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So the
20 record should reflect that City Council
21 has always been on the front line of
22 encouraging PPA to do more and to do
23 better. We've not been benign in our
24 position, and that needs to be reflected
25 on the record.

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2 To Mr. Hardy, you need to know
3 that you are missed at Boys' Latin, and
4 if you could just give us an update on
5 what you're doing now and why we miss
6 your leadership at Boys' Latin, because
7 things have changed.

8 MR. HARDY: Well, I retired.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Oh, that's
10 a good reason.

11 MR. HARDY: Yeah. I retired.
12 I am the Executive Director of Excellent
13 Schools PA and we advocate for better
14 options for kids who need them.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Better
16 options for kids?

17 MR. HARDY: For children who
18 need them.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. All
20 right, then. Thank you very much. Thank
21 you.

22 MR. HARDY: By the way, I want
23 to say that we're going to miss you very
24 much. You've been a really good friend
25 to public education, and we're going to

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 miss you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
4 very much.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
6 all. Thank all three of you.

7 Let me pause one second.

8 (Pause.)

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sorry
12 about that. Mr. Stitt is going to call
13 three more names. It looks like two
14 already came up.

15 THE CLERK: Antoinette
16 Holliday, Lynn Robinson.

17 MS. ROBINSON: Yes. Am I
18 speaking into the mic properly?

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Hold on
20 one second.

21 THE CLERK: Marta Guttenberg.
22 (Witness approached witness
23 table.)

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
25 Good. We got three people.

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2 Please identify yourself and
3 proceed.

4 MS. STALEY: My name is
5 Reynelle Brown Staley and I serve as the
6 Policy Director of the City Education Law
7 Center, an organization dedicated to
8 ensuring that all Pennsylvania's children
9 have access to quality public education.

10 One of the basic requirements
11 under our local Constitution --

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Excuse
13 me, ma'am. One second. What was your
14 name again?

15 MS. STALEY: Reynelle Brown
16 Staley. You called while I was out of
17 the room.

18 THE CLERK: Is Antoinette
19 Holliday here as well?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
22 right. Go ahead, continue, ma'am,
23 please.

24 MS. STALEY: One of the basic
25 requirements under our local Constitution

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2 is that at least twice a year the
3 Philadelphia Board of Education, Mayor,
4 and Council meet publicly to discuss the
5 administration, management, operations,
6 and finances of the School District.
7 Yesterday's testimony from the Board and
8 District officials about new proposed
9 investments is a welcome change from the
10 many years when discussion of the
11 District meant talk of school closures,
12 staffing cuts, and toxic schools.

13 Even with those investments,
14 Philadelphia will rank below the majority
15 of Pennsylvania school districts in
16 per-pupil spending despite taxing itself
17 at a higher-than-average rate. The
18 City's students needs and deserve every
19 dollar of the District's proposed budget,
20 and we urge Council to provide the
21 requested funding.

22 At the same time, we know that
23 additional funding from Council will not
24 resolve the District -- those District
25 funding challenges that require

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2 state-level reforms. We need the state
3 to dedicate more money to public
4 education. We need state dollars to be
5 distributed more equitably to the
6 neediest districts. We need the state to
7 provide more support in addressing the
8 facilities needs in the neediest
9 districts. And we need the state to
10 address the reality that the current
11 system of funding charter schools hampers
12 districts' abilities to meet the needs of
13 all public school students.

14 These problems aren't unique to
15 Philadelphia, and the fact that our
16 children suffer intensely but not
17 singularly makes it both necessary and
18 effective for our leaders, including City
19 Council, to work collaboratively with
20 other cities and school districts in
21 pushing for statewide reform.

22 Dr. Hite's work with other
23 urban superintendents across the state is
24 an example of the type of advocacy the
25 Mayor and Council should engage in.

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2 By implementing the District's
3 funding and spending, City Council has
4 the potential to play a critical role in
5 protecting the civil rights of the most
6 marginalized students in our city.
7 Sadly, that role is all the more
8 imperative given rollbacks and inaction
9 at the federal and state governments.

10 The most marginalized students
11 are being actively harmed by federal and
12 state policies that undermine their civil
13 rights. In the past two years, the
14 federal Department of Education has
15 curbed enforcement efforts to address
16 disproportionate discipline of students
17 of color and students with disabilities,
18 as well as protect LGBTQ students from
19 in-school harassment and discrimination.

20 Federal and state leaders have
21 directed funding and policies towards
22 making schools more like jails and
23 accelerating students' path on the
24 school-to-prison pipeline.

25 In Harrisburg, in just the past

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2 few weeks the General Assembly has shown
3 more eagerness to fund private schools
4 than the system of thorough and efficient
5 public education they're constitutionally
6 required to support. So it's important
7 that -- so we urge Council to pay special
8 attention to the needs of children living
9 in poverty, as 70 percent of poor
10 Philadelphians are sending their children
11 to district schools rather than public
12 charter schools or private schools.

13 We urge you to prioritize the
14 needs of students of color since black
15 and brown students in Pennsylvania do
16 worse than white students in Pennsylvania
17 and black and brown students in the
18 region and across the country on nearly
19 all measures of educational opportunity.

20 We urge you to focus on the
21 needs of English learners, because they
22 have the lowest graduation rate of any
23 cohort identified by PDE.

24 We urge you to pay attention to
25 the needs of students in the foster care

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 system and juvenile justice system,
3 students with disabilities, LGBTQ
4 students, students experiencing
5 homelessness, pregnant and parenting
6 teens, and each of the underserved
7 student groups that are a key part of the
8 District's enrollment.

9 When each of these groups is
10 provided adequate resources to achieve,
11 we know that the promise of quality
12 public education for all students in the
13 District will truly be met.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
16 you.

17 Whoever would like to go next,
18 please.

19 MS. ROBINSON: Good morning.
20 My name is Lynn Robinson. I'm currently
21 the Director of Neighbors Against the Gas
22 Plants and I also speak today as a
23 veteran public school teacher of 31
24 years.

25 Since 2001, part of the school

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 budget has been thrown away on
3 standardized testing and conservatively
4 messaging textbooks designed to teach to
5 the test. Standardized testing has been
6 not only used to close public schools but
7 also damage the soul of many surviving
8 schools. The first step to revive our
9 schools is to sever all contracts with
10 the testing industry.

11 Standardized testing makes the
12 child's brain a commodity, measured on a
13 daily basis against the other children's
14 brains. It turns teachers into assembly
15 line workers and minimizes a child's
16 self-concept. In this dehumanized
17 competitive environment for youth,
18 bullying becomes normal. Any bullying
19 programs are like the war on drugs. They
20 will ultimately fail if the setup is
21 rooted in pitting children against each
22 other.

23 Schoolchildren get labeled in
24 their own minds based on poorly worded
25 test questions on reading passages that

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2 are irrelevant to children's experiences
3 and sometimes intentionally boring so
4 that stamina can be tested too. The
5 system keeps economically underprivileged
6 and minority children in their economic
7 class and protects upper-class children
8 from competition in later careers.

9 Schoolchildren need cooperative
10 learning, theme-based cross-curricular
11 learning, discovery learning, project
12 learning, and a smaller adult-to-student
13 ratio. We need to ditch the poison of
14 data-driven relationships in school
15 buildings.

16 I'm here today to talk about
17 physical poison as well. Many children
18 come to school with the burden of poor
19 physical, mental, and emotional health,
20 and their families who care for them are
21 burdened with poor health as well.

22 In the poverty zones of
23 Philadelphia, we see the highest disease
24 rates, from cancer to asthma, as well as
25 the most toxic air. Those zip codes are

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2 also the hottest in the summer, baking in
3 air pollution inversions. I'm
4 specifically referring to central North
5 Philadelphia, especially the lower
6 northwest portion, which includes
7 Nicetown, lower Germantown, and lower
8 East Falls.

9 You really do have to stop
10 SEPTA's power plant in Nicetown from
11 operating. If a lie is repeated enough,
12 people believe it. SEPTA sold the
13 project to you as small and benign, using
14 outright lies and some lies of omission.
15 For the next 20 or more years, the plant
16 will add approximately 73 tons of toxic
17 material to the air.

18 It's worth noting the climate
19 crisis since children have to live in the
20 future. Most of the toxic materials are
21 greenhouse gases, and the plant will also
22 add 34,126 tons of carbon dioxide and an
23 unknown amount of methane.

24 Did you know that SEPTA has a
25 plan on paper to expand the power plant?

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2 Will you allow that too?

3 There is no excuse for Council
4 shrugging this off. SEPTA has absolutely
5 no need to generate electricity on site
6 for regional trains that pass through
7 Wayne Junction. They are doing this for
8 one reason only. Pennsylvania is a
9 fracking state. The powerful natural gas
10 industry has used politicians to pressure
11 SEPTA to buy gas.

12 The site -- I'm going to skip
13 that part. I'm going to skip that too.

14 SEPTA is afraid to lose state
15 funding, so it made this project happen
16 and dumped it into a poor black
17 neighborhood. They don't need it to
18 operate the trains. Is City government
19 too afraid of Harrisburg to stand up and
20 block the project? If you want
21 Philadelphia to get its schools
22 functioning and thriving, look at
23 destructive educational practices,
24 physical poison inside the schools, and
25 don't allow any more toxic dumping to be

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2 dumped in children's neighborhoods.

3 Stop SEPTA's gas plant. You
4 know what to do and can find the how to
5 do it.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
8 you, ma'am. And your full testimony can
9 be made part of the record if you turn it
10 in.

11 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please,
13 ma'am, identify yourself and proceed.

14 MS. GUTTENBERG: Good morning.
15 My name is Marta Guttenberg. I am a
16 member of POWER. I am a retired CHOP
17 pathologist. I say all -- I'm giving you
18 all my bona fides so that when I begin my
19 rant -- and some of you have seen me at
20 demonstrations -- you may recognize me.

21 I'm aware that a kind of game
22 is being played here, a game called Ain't
23 It Awful. A small number of City
24 Councilpersons are here to hear
25 testimony. Most of you are not here.

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2 Some of you who are here I have noticed
3 are not actually listening. I hope that
4 you will pay attention at a later time.

5 I want to remind you that the
6 organization that has been mentioned
7 already, POWER, Philadelphians Organized
8 to Witness, Empower, and Rebuild, have
9 done that heavy lifting for you. That
10 organization took it upon itself to
11 understand and document the racial and
12 class discrimination in the distribution
13 of state funding to schools. They worked
14 to bring Harrisburg to the point where
15 they passed the full fair funding
16 formula. Now they are working to send
17 the money through that formula.

18 When I visited City Council
19 before, the explanation of problems was
20 always, we can't fix it. Tell
21 Harrisburg, lobby Harrisburg.

22 We've done that. It's your
23 turn to step up.

24 I'll tell you about something
25 that you can do right here in the City of

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2 Philadelphia without asking Harrisburg's
3 permission or help. You can end the tax
4 abatements.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. GUTTENBERG: Tax abatements
7 are starving our schools. Everybody has
8 been saying to you, City Councilpeople,
9 we're here to ask for money. You're
10 sitting on a pile of money.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
12 All right. Thank you. Thank you very
13 much.

14 I know Councilwoman has a
15 question, but I think we have one other
16 person who was called up. Why don't you
17 come and then -- so if somebody could
18 yield their seat, please.

19 MS. HOLLIDAY: Good morning,
20 Council.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
22 morning. Please identify yourself.

23 MS. HOLLIDAY: My name is
24 Antoinette Holliday and I live in the
25 Third District. That's Jannie

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2 Blackwell's district.

3 My thing is, I pay taxes for
4 schools and just trash to be picked up,
5 but I'm concerned about the school that
6 I'm in, because we lost a child at B.B.
7 Comegys. An 11-year-old committed
8 suicide, everyone, and it did not get no
9 light on it. It didn't get a concern.
10 It got a little bit like this, but
11 everybody should be outraged that this
12 child is gone.

13 Bullying is a problem in our
14 schools, period. Parents don't come
15 unless their child is suspended to
16 reinstate them, only for it to go back
17 over again. We fight and constantly
18 argue about this situation.

19 Now, Ms. Blackwell and State
20 Representative Roebuck is willing to meet
21 with the teachers so we can find out what
22 teachers actually need from the students
23 and their parents.

24 Parents need to be a part of
25 their children's education. That is a

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2 must. I'm sick and tired of going to
3 that school every day and I see a student
4 cussing out a teacher, fighting a
5 teacher, throwing chairs at teachers, not
6 getting the education that they're
7 supposed to be getting. Cell phones
8 should not be in school unless there's an
9 emergency only. We are here to learn so
10 we can become better citizens in this
11 city. And I think it's a disgrace that
12 nobody is really paying attention to
13 this.

14 Ms. Helen Gym is willing to
15 work with us at all costs, as she's
16 there. She comes to the school.
17 Dr. Hite -- and Imma say it loudly --
18 Dr. Hite, I need you to come to my school
19 and pay attention, because we have 214
20 schools and we got 42 at the top, and I
21 would like to see those tops and I would
22 like to see my school, B.B. Comegys, at
23 the top.

24 We need to get together,
25 people, and start taking care of our

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2 children. They are the most important
3 people in this world.

4 And that's all I have to say.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
7 you, ma'am. Thank you very much.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
12 right. For everybody's attention now,
13 we're going to pause in the public
14 testimony for just a brief period of time
15 because we have to take care of some, I
16 guess, basically housekeeping things
17 here. So we will be back to public
18 testimony in just a few minutes.

19 At this time, we would like to
20 submit for the record proposed amendments
21 to the Capital Program and Capital
22 Budget. I will defer to the
23 Administration, Ms. Adams and team here,
24 to describe the specifics of what the
25 amendments would accomplish, but I want

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2 to add, and I'm going to say it at the
3 end too, we are not voting on anything
4 today. This is just submitting some
5 amendments to the budget.

6 (Witnesses approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

9 Ms. Adams, please.

10 MS. ADAMS: Thank you,
11 Councilman Greenlee and members of
12 Council. My name is Anna Adams. I'm the
13 Budget Director. Joining me at the table
14 is Peilin Chen, who is Deputy Budget
15 Director for Capital. We're here to
16 describe the amendments on the two
17 Capital bills, the Capital Program
18 amendment and the Capital Budget
19 amendment.

20 These two bills amend the FY20
21 Capital Budget and the FY20 to '25
22 Capital Program to add 20.3 million in
23 operating revenue, which is CR
24 appropriations in FY20; 1.497 million in
25 pre-financed loan, which is CA

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2 appropriations; 6 million in other
3 government TB appropriations;
4 approximately 5 million in state SB
5 appropriations; and 21,000 in private PB
6 appropriations in FY20. The bills also
7 reduce the FY20 new loan CN appropriation
8 by 16.9 million.

9 The operating revenue
10 appropriations will allow the City to pay
11 for the voting machines and the roof for
12 the library with operating money instead
13 of borrowing money so the City doesn't
14 have to incur the cost of debt service.
15 The other government TB appropriations
16 will be provided as seed funding for
17 Rebuild projects, and funding will be
18 added in the Commerce Department for an
19 investment in the Navy Yard quay wall.
20 This amendment also allows for the
21 fit-out of a childcare facility in a
22 public building, LED lighting as part of
23 the Market-Frankford Elevated Rail
24 project, and includes minor
25 administrative changes and technical

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2 amendments.

3 I'm happy to answer any
4 questions you may have.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Any
6 questions at all?

7 Councilwoman Gym.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So could you
9 clarify for me with regard to the money,
10 can you clarify what is the money that is
11 going over towards the new voting
12 machines? Is that part of this
13 appropriation?

14 MS. ADAMS: Yes. So this
15 allows us to use operating revenue to
16 cover the cost of -- so basically it's a
17 transfer of General Fund money to the
18 Capital Budget to cover the cost of the
19 machines rather than us having to take
20 out debt service to cover that cost.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then is
22 this a full budget amount for those
23 machines or do you anticipate that the
24 machines will cost any more than this?

25 MS. ADAMS: The cost will be

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2 more than that 20 million. We're
3 anticipating it's around the 25 million
4 mark, but we'll use kind of some existing
5 resources to cover the rest, existing
6 appropriations to cover the rest.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And so
8 you're sure that the cost of it will be
9 limited to this in terms of the transfer.
10 We just can't cover --

11 MS. ADAMS: So this is just
12 showing -- this is just allowing us to
13 transfer 20 million. This will allow us
14 to have the appropriations of \$20 million
15 from our existing General Fund budget in
16 FY19, and then it's basically allowing
17 the appropriations to be spent in the
18 FY20 Capital Budget. We're not,
19 therefore, having to borrow money to
20 cover those costs. We had originally
21 thought we would have to borrow, but
22 we're transferring money over from the
23 Operating Budget to the Capital Budget.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I just want
25 to clarify that this is the full amount

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2 that we expect to have transferred over
3 and that you'll be able to cover the rest
4 of it, you believe, through the existing
5 Operating Budget and that the machines
6 are going to be in use?

7 MS. ADAMS: Yes. The total
8 cost of everything in the -- it's kind of
9 everything for the voting machines and
10 the poll books and the printers and
11 everything else. There's a combination
12 of operating money that we need to fund,
13 because some of the items aren't capital
14 eligible because they don't have a long
15 enough useful life. So, for example,
16 printers. There's a component of the
17 voting machines that are printers.
18 Printers themselves are not capital
19 eligible, and so we have included those,
20 and as you consider the Operating Budget,
21 the cost of those sort of things are
22 included in the Operating Budget. And
23 actually we have a transfer ordinance
24 scheduled for tomorrow, which also
25 includes some of those things to come out

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2 of operating funds. So the Operating
3 Budget and the Capital Budget combined
4 will allow us to cover the cost of the
5 machines and all of the other things
6 that -- at least as far as we know right
7 now. I mean, it's still a moving target
8 a little bit, but we have enough
9 resources, we believe, between those two
10 sources, the General Fund and the Capital
11 Budget, to be able to cover all of the
12 costs.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And for
14 clarity, you don't have any other
15 estimates on record that expect that this
16 cost will be significantly higher?

17 MS. ADAMS: We don't. So I
18 know that they just conformed the
19 contract for the voting machines
20 themselves, I think, on Friday or earlier
21 this week, and so we've got the cost that
22 we've assumed and that's what we built
23 into the budget. Obviously with any of
24 these projects, there's always a risk
25 that as things go along, things change,

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2 but right now we believe we have covered
3 the cost of all of these things.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And
5 then the cost is 25 million, is what's
6 the expected for the cost?

7 MS. ADAMS: Yeah. So the cost
8 in the Capital Budget is around somewhere
9 between 25 and 26 million, and then there
10 are costs on the operating side, which we
11 can get you the total of what we've
12 budgeted and where we've budgeted it, but
13 there are additional costs.

14 So, for example, tomorrow's
15 consideration at the Committee of -- on
16 the Appropriations Committee, we have
17 about 5 million showing that is needed
18 for poll books and printers in the FY19
19 budget and then there are additional
20 costs for warehousing in the Department
21 of Public Property and then there are
22 additional costs in the Office of
23 Innovation and Technology for an owner's
24 rep, sort of a consultant to help us
25 through the project. So it's in a

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2 variety of departments.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So are we in
4 the 30 million mark or are we --

5 MS. ADAMS: I think we're above
6 30 million altogether, yes, but the
7 machines themselves in the Capital Budget
8 is somewhere between 25 and 26 million.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: All right.
10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
12 you.

13 Councilwoman Sanchez.

14 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
15 you.

16 The decision to use general
17 operating money versus capital money that
18 may have already -- that we have in the
19 account, why was that made?

20 MS. ADAMS: So as we were
21 looking at the Operating Budget this year
22 in FY19, we're always constantly looking
23 to find ways that we can reduce our debt
24 service and we saw an opportunity in this
25 fiscal year as our revenues are coming in

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2 a little better than we had anticipated
3 that we thought this would be a good
4 opportunity to offset some debt service
5 costs and was going to prevent some debt
6 service costs in the future. And so that
7 was kind of the decision-making here.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Do we
9 not have enough money in our capital for
10 unutilized capital to cover that expense?

11 MS. ADAMS: So we do have
12 carryforward, if that's your question.

13 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yes.

14 MS. ADAMS: Yes. We do have
15 carryforward in a variety of departments,
16 and some of that carryforward will be
17 used kind of in the short term to cover
18 some of these costs, but most of that
19 carryforward is intended for existing
20 projects. And so as we go through the
21 budget process, we're really careful to
22 work with departments to understand
23 what -- and as we prepare the budget, we
24 bear the carryforward in mind. So for
25 certain departments, we don't give

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2 them -- we don't give them very much
3 additional appropriations in the new
4 fiscal year, expecting them to spend down
5 that carryforward first, but we go
6 through that process with departments to
7 understand how much carryforward is
8 expected for each project and the
9 timeline in which that will be spent.
10 And that's why you saw this fiscal year a
11 significant portion of carryforward has
12 been spent down as departments are
13 getting better at spending down existing
14 resources before they use the new ones.

15 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So are
16 you saying that for this year, the
17 projected capital expenses, since we know
18 that historically there's carryforward,
19 there's not enough allocated money in
20 capital for us to cover it in lieu of
21 using general operating?

22 MS. ADAMS: Sorry. I don't
23 think I fully understand the question.

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So we
25 project out, we have a \$10.9 billion

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2 capital fund, right? In that space,
3 there's not enough money to cover this in
4 lieu of using general operating as
5 projects are delayed?

6 MS. ADAMS: And that's a part
7 of our analysis that we do. So, for
8 example, in OIT, looking at their
9 projects that they had, they have some
10 carryforward, but we also know that the
11 way -- we work with them on the timing of
12 when we expect their carryforward to be
13 spent down. And so we expect a lot of
14 that to be spent down in preparation for
15 a couple of really big projects beginning
16 in FY20, including replacing FAMIS,
17 replacing TIPS, these big things that end
18 up kind of eating really quickly.

19 So with some departments, their
20 carryforward is spent on a very gradual
21 basis and you kind of just see it kind of
22 a little bit every month, but certain
23 departments it's like -- you suddenly get
24 one big chunk out the door, and so that's
25 where we look at what we need.

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2 We're pretty -- I wouldn't
3 say -- we're pretty careful about how we
4 allocate, and so I think many departments
5 would rather us give them additional
6 appropriations than we have. We try to
7 get that balance right by pushing
8 departments to spend their existing
9 resources before we give them any
10 additional or recommend any additional
11 appropriations. So I think we're getting
12 to that balance.

13 There are always going to be
14 situations that we haven't expected, but
15 working with our departments, we think
16 we're getting them to the better balance
17 between giving enough room in their
18 existing appropriations to make sure that
19 they can continue pushing forward on
20 projects and giving them new
21 appropriations, also bearing in mind that
22 with the timeline of the Capital Budget,
23 so we don't end up releasing the FY20
24 appropriations until after the voters
25 have approved in November, after we've

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2 had the bond authorization approved in
3 November. So part of the timeline cash
4 flow is can they make it through January
5 before they get the new allocations in
6 January. So that's, as we work with
7 departments, that's part of our cash flow
8 expectations.

9 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Again,
10 this is a first, and I know you guys have
11 been working this. I have a real problem
12 in us using general operating expenses in
13 light of we're in the middle of a budget
14 discussion with a lot of priorities,
15 commercial corridors and other things,
16 that we would put \$10 million of our
17 general operating on the -- that's what
18 you're asking us essentially, right?

19 MS. ADAMS: It's actually 20
20 million, but yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I think
22 this warrants a lot more conversation. I
23 know this is an introduction, but it
24 opens up a door where there's a lot of
25 other priorities. We're here listening

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2 to a lot of other priorities. Twenty
3 million in general operating, violence,
4 you know, there's just a whole lot, when
5 I think in a \$10 billion Capital Budget
6 we can find the space to cover this,
7 right, and not tangle up money that we
8 need for the budget.

9 So we'll continue the
10 conversation.

11 MS. ADAMS: I just want to also
12 clarify, previously we had shown that
13 funding that we were borrowing money for
14 that project. It wasn't like we weren't
15 budgeting for it. This just allows us
16 not to have to borrow money for that
17 project.

18 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I
19 understand the issue of the urgency of
20 the time. I just think when you have a
21 \$10 billion Capital Program, 20 million
22 shifting it, right, because you're
23 planning out five years, we can find the
24 shift. It's 10 billion. We're talking
25 about 20 million.

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2 MS. ADAMS: Just to be clear,
3 that's 10 billion all funds. The
4 portion -- I mean, the general obligation
5 portion is obviously significantly
6 smaller than that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: What's
8 the general --

9 MS. ADAMS: So now we should be
10 showing a general obligation of about 177
11 million for FY20. So just to kind of
12 just explain that.

13 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: General
14 operating fund in a year where we're
15 talking about a whole lot of priorities
16 when we have a \$10 billion space warrants
17 more conversation.

18 MS. ADAMS: I understand.

19 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
20 you.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
23 you.

24 Councilman Green, is he here?

25 Councilman Green.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

3 I just have a quick question
4 since we're talking about capital issues.
5 I know there's been a conversation from a
6 number of parties about trying to provide
7 additional resources for the School
8 District for improvements to playgrounds,
9 and there was a thought of trying to use
10 capital dollars, but my understanding,
11 that the Administration does not want to
12 use capital dollars but wants to use
13 operating dollars. So I just want to
14 make sure that's the understanding from
15 my perspective.

16 MS. ADAMS: I think part of the
17 challenge that we have on using capital
18 funds is that we don't own those assets.
19 And so we would rather -- if there were
20 kind of in that discussion, we would, I
21 think, rather prefer to use operating
22 funds, because it's -- capital funds we
23 prefer to use for the City-owned assets,
24 and School District facilities are owned
25 by the School District, not by the City.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But it's my
3 understanding you could use capital
4 dollars based on the research we've done,
5 you could use capital dollars for
6 improvements to School District
7 facilities, because just like the City,
8 they're a tax-exempt entity.

9 MS. ADAMS: I believe that the
10 Law Department has written a legal memo
11 saying just that, yes.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But the
13 preference would be to use operating
14 dollars as opposed to capital?

15 MS. ADAMS: Yeah. I think from
16 a financial policy perspective, we would
17 rather own the asset ourselves, and then
18 as we make the investment, we'd rather
19 use -- as the City is borrowing money for
20 that, we would rather use that funding on
21 City-owned assets.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And
23 my understanding, that's something that
24 the Administration plans to support?

25 MS. ADAMS: I think that's

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2 where we're going to be in conversations
3 with City Council when we get to that
4 point, yeah.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That was
6 very clever.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's a
8 typical answer, isn't it?

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I was trying
10 to sneak it in there.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I could
12 have predicted she was going to say that.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I was trying
14 to sneak in a commitment for the school
15 playgrounds.

16 But one of the reasons why I
17 think this is a good opportunity, we have
18 the Rebuild initiative where we're
19 investing in our parks, recreation
20 centers, and libraries. We have a
21 private entity that's actually making a
22 commitment to invest in our school
23 playgrounds. And so this to me is almost
24 like a Rebuild Part 2 where we have an
25 opportunity to invest in our school

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2 playgrounds, which are community assets
3 just like our recreation centers that are
4 used as part of the community, not only
5 by children during the school day but
6 also after the school day by friends
7 groups and others. So to me, it's an
8 investment, especially when you have
9 private entities willing to partner with
10 the City. This is a way to provide
11 additional space for recreation, physical
12 exercise, and enjoyment for not just
13 young people but also people throughout
14 the City of Philadelphia, and we have
15 schools all throughout the City in every
16 neighborhood of the City. So I think it
17 provides an opportunity to make that
18 investment as well as, seeing some of the
19 tours that I've done, the ability to
20 reduce stormwater runoff, because a
21 number of our school playgrounds are
22 asphalt, which adds to the stormwater
23 runoff that we have. So any time we can
24 invest in our school playgrounds and put
25 those playground materials in a more

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2 porous material so it absorbs the water
3 and does not do the runoff, that helps
4 the Water Department, helps our General
5 Fund, but also help our citizens in the
6 City of Philadelphia by having better
7 play areas that everyone can enjoy.

8 MS. ADAMS: And I know -- I can
9 speak on behalf of the Administration
10 here. We also share in the real interest
11 on improving the ability for children to
12 access playgrounds, and any opportunity
13 that we have to do that, we would love to
14 be part of those conversations. I know
15 we've already had some initial
16 conversations with Council about this,
17 and it's definitely something that we
18 share and the need to do so and the value
19 of doing so. We just need to look at the
20 mechanism of doing that.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right. But
22 the mechanism I think you suggested, that
23 it would be operating dollars.

24 MS. ADAMS: Operating rather
25 than capital, yes.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And you
3 would support that sentiment, that it's
4 something we would need to do?

5 MS. ADAMS: I think we would
6 obviously want to look at exactly the
7 details of the proposal and go through
8 that, but in general, yes, we're going to
9 be supportive of adding enough funds to
10 make sure that we can improve
11 playgrounds.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But it's
13 something we all should support.

14 MS. ADAMS: We all like the
15 idea of investing in playgrounds, yes.
16 We just need to look at the mechanism and
17 the way of doing it.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I'm a
19 lawyer. I got to keep trying.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: She's
21 only going to go so far.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I keep
23 trying.

24 I didn't cross-examine you, but
25 I'm just going to keep trying. I'm sure

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2 we'll have conversations during this
3 budget process.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
6 you.

7 And, again, I want to remind
8 everybody, we're just offering this
9 amendment today. We're not voting on
10 anything. So we have a whole room of
11 people who have been patiently waiting
12 for the school.

13 Please, Councilwoman Gym.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
15 very much, Mr. Chair.

16 I just wanted to clarify, I
17 want to make sure that other -- you don't
18 expect this to impact other capital
19 expenses that we have on the books.
20 Like, for example, we've got several
21 million in library repairs for the Free
22 Library of Philadelphia. Will that be
23 impacted at all?

24 MS. ADAMS: So this will allow
25 us -- so as you saw in -- this amendment

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2 just adjusts kind of the source of
3 funding for voting machines. It doesn't
4 cut from anywhere else to cover that
5 cost.

6 One of the challenges we do
7 have because of the large cost of the
8 voting machines, it does challenge
9 everywhere else in the budget, but we've
10 already made those kind of trade-offs as
11 we put the budget together. And so as
12 you consider the whole budget, that's
13 part of that trade-off. It's the
14 difficulty in making sure that we're
15 investing in all the right resources in
16 the right places. So we have added
17 additional funds for the Library, and
18 this amendment actually adds additional
19 funds on top of that. But, yeah, it is a
20 difficult trade-off, I think, and it is a
21 large cost. The voting machines are a
22 large cost, and unfortunately as we've
23 talked about in previous hearings, the
24 reimbursement that we're going to receive
25 from the state doesn't cover the cost of

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2 the machines for us. And so it is a
3 difficult challenge.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: All right.
5 Thank you very much.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
7 Just for the record, we're taking this
8 action now because the requirement in the
9 Charter concerning the amendments to the
10 Capital Program, before Council can enact
11 an amendment to the Capital Program of
12 this nature, we must request through the
13 Mayor the recommendations of the Planning
14 Commission. The Commission has 30 days
15 in which to respond to its
16 recommendations. So we want to start the
17 clock running now.

18 Okay. I think Councilmembers
19 have copies of the amendments. With
20 that, at the appropriate time in the
21 future, the amendments will be formally
22 offered, either while this committee is
23 in public meeting or on the floor of
24 Council. Again, this is to start that
25 clock, 30-day clock running.

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2 With that said, Councilmember
3 Blackwell will submit the amendments for
4 the record, and I recognize Councilmember
5 Blackwell for that purpose.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you, Mr. Chairman. I submit the proposed
8 amendments to Bill Nos. 190152 and 190153
9 so that they may be placed on the record,
10 with no further action though at this
11 time.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
13 you, Councilwoman. We'll see the
14 stenographer receives a copy of both
15 amendments so that they may be part of
16 the record.

17 Now, let's move back to what we
18 were here for in the first place, public
19 testimony on the school budget.

20 So, Mr. Stitt, you want to call
21 the next names, please.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I actually
23 have one question for the Education Law
24 Center, please.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's

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2 Ms. Staley. Is she still here?

3 Please.

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

7 Councilwoman.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
9 afternoon -- good morning. So please, if
10 you will, my office received a number of
11 calls regarding this category called
12 crisis for young people, and what you
13 know about that, if you can simply put it
14 on the record.

15 The School District of
16 Philadelphia yesterday provided answers
17 in how they seek to cope with young
18 people who may teeter in that space and
19 how they have some strategies on how they
20 work with young people and families who
21 teeter in that space. So if you could
22 simply put on the record your
23 understanding of what this crisis
24 category is called and what clear and
25 present danger, I believe it is.

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2 MS. STALEY: So we have gotten
3 calls from a number of families where
4 students have been -- who have had
5 behavioral issues, sometimes students
6 with disabilities, who --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Pull the
8 mic closer, please.

9 MS. STALEY: Sure.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: When you
11 say "calls," be specific about the age of
12 the child, because I'm most interested in
13 young people K through 2 for this type of
14 circumstance.

15 MS. STALEY: So I'd have to
16 talk to some of my colleagues to find the
17 exact details about the calls. I think
18 it's ranged from young students as well
19 as older students as well. I believe
20 that there has been at least one
21 situation that I can remember offhand
22 where there has been a student who has
23 been under second grade or younger who
24 was called to crisis. The examples that
25 I can remember -- and, again, I don't

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2 remember exact ages of the students, but
3 there's one student who would elope from
4 the classroom. So whenever they would
5 get anxious about something, they would
6 leave the classroom and sometimes would
7 also try to leave the school.

8 Another student would throw
9 things when they would get upset. And in
10 each of those situations what the school
11 did was rather than suspend the student
12 or in some cases what they would tell the
13 parent was that either they could come
14 pick up the student from school or they
15 would call crisis on them, because they
16 didn't want them in the school and they
17 felt that the student was being a danger
18 to themselves and possibly to other
19 people in the school. So the students
20 were basically being removed from the
21 school and referred to DHS for some sort
22 of mental health intervention.

23 We are concerned about that,
24 both because it's a problem whenever kids
25 are being involved in the system

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2 unnecessarily and --

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: When you
4 say "the system," you mean DHS?

5 MS. STALEY: Yes. Yes.

6 Because then the child can become
7 involved in the dependency system. But
8 we also think that those are situations
9 that should be handled within the
10 classroom or within the school and that
11 the students are -- that those incidents
12 aren't being recorded as suspensions or
13 removals from school. So because there
14 is a suspension ban that applies to
15 students in kindergarten, first, and
16 second grade, if there are students who
17 are in those grades who are being
18 referred to crisis, that's not being
19 reported as a suspension even though
20 they're being removed from the classroom
21 and not being allowed to be in school and
22 in some cases aren't being allowed to
23 return to school because they've been
24 essentially involuntarily committed.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

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2 Stop right there. So in those type of
3 instances, what is the role of the
4 Education Law Center and what would be
5 the preferred remedy going forward?
6 Because what's clear to me is that all --
7 the School District, Education Law
8 Center, and often times the actual
9 faculty that's involved in those
10 circumstances want the best for the
11 child, and because the professionals are
12 looking through different lenses, we end
13 up in very uncomfortable places.

14 So what would be the preferred
15 recommendation as to how those type of
16 instances should be resolved? Because
17 protocols matter and trying to figure out
18 what's in the best interest of the
19 student matters, to the extent that we
20 can avoid getting them in the system.

21 So using those as examples,
22 what are the lessons learned going
23 forward in how Education Law Center and
24 the School District can work closely
25 together on matters like that?

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2 MS. STALEY: So what we do now
3 when we get those individual calls is
4 that we contact the District, the Office
5 of Student Rights and Responsibilities,
6 and have them deal with individual
7 situations.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

9 MS. STALEY: But it's possible
10 that there are families that are having
11 the same situation happen to them that we
12 don't know about because they don't call
13 our office.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I see.

15 MS. STALEY: So we have
16 information about those individual
17 circumstances and can address them, but
18 we don't have a way of addressing what
19 could be a larger and more systemic
20 problem, one, because there isn't data
21 collected on these referrals to crisis,
22 at least not as far as we're aware,
23 because since it's not a formal
24 disciplinary procedure and there isn't
25 any reporting requirement for the

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2 District to provide information to PDE or
3 to the federal Department of Education's
4 Office of Civil Rights, there's no
5 information that we're aware of at least
6 among state and federal government
7 entities about this.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right.
9 So stop right there. I don't want to get
10 into the weeds too much. What I'm asking
11 for consideration is in instances like
12 that, is there a sit-down that's held?
13 Because you can't hold people responsible
14 for that which you have not brought to
15 their attention, because in the end,
16 we're seeking to be allies on behalf of
17 these children and not adversaries.

18 MS. STALEY: Right.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So is that
20 a part of procedure where there are
21 sit-downs monthly or whatever that gets
22 the Education Law Center and the School
23 District at the table focused on ABC
24 child, with the goal of remedying and
25 creating and fostering a remedy for their

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2 circumstance?

3 MS. STALEY: For the individual
4 child, yes. And we don't know how large
5 of a problem it is, other than the
6 individual calls that we have, and we
7 don't think that the District itself
8 would know, because there is no way of
9 holding principals and teachers and
10 people in the school accountable.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right.
12 So has that ever been formally registered
13 with the School District, what you just
14 stipulated? Has that concern ever been
15 formally registered so that we can do
16 better systemically in saving these
17 children? I'm asking the question.

18 MS. STALEY: Yes. I believe my
19 colleagues who get these calls have had
20 conversations with the Office of Student
21 Rights --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I didn't
23 say conversations. I said formally
24 registered.

25 MS. STALEY: Formally? There

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 has not been a formal conversation about
3 this specific issue where the Education
4 Law Center and the School District have
5 sat down to address this particular
6 policy.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right,
8 then. So with that said and remembering
9 what the School District shared
10 yesterday, the ask would be that that
11 happens, because -- period. That's the
12 only way we're going to do better in
13 trying to save these children who are in
14 heart-wrenching situations. There has to
15 be a formal sit-down where you share with
16 them, we need data, and if we're all
17 serious about wanting to save these
18 children, then work with us. Because
19 what we have is anecdotal experience, and
20 as you said, there could be far many more
21 instances that you're unaware of. To the
22 extent that you have the information
23 collectively, then remedies can be
24 fostered.

25 And so I wanted you to put on

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 the record where you are, because you're
3 looking at it through one lens. We get
4 the calls in our office, so we become
5 alarmed. And now we've had both you and
6 the School District at the table. So
7 what is clear to me is that we're talking
8 like this instead of like this. So that
9 that would be the ask, that there be a
10 formal sit-down to examine how the system
11 is not working and what those two worlds
12 can do collectively, collegially to do
13 better for these children.

14 MS. STALEY: Okay. Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
16 for the work that you do.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
18 you. Thank you for your time.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr.
22 Stitt, please call up three more names.

23 THE CLERK: Lisa Haver, Lynda
24 Rubin, Samea Kim.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I see

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Lisa. Okay. I see two.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 THE CLERK: Samea Kim?

6 (No response.)

7 THE CLERK: Hayden Smith?

8 (No response.)

9 THE CLERK: Dr. Molefi Asante.

10 (Witness approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

13 All right. Lisa, why don't you start.

14 Please identify yourself and proceed.

15 MS. HAVER: Good morning. My
16 name is Lisa Haver. I'm a retired
17 teacher. I'm a co-founder of the
18 Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools,
19 which is a grassroots organization of
20 volunteers. We are not paid lobbyists.

21 Good morning to all the
22 Councilpeople who are here, appreciate
23 you coming back to listen to the public,
24 and I want to thank the School District
25 President of the Board, Joyce Wilkerson,

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 for coming back and listening to the
3 public too.

4 We heard yesterday of the
5 successes achieved by the School District
6 and the challenges that it still faces.
7 Most of those challenges are rooted in
8 the fact that the District is underfunded
9 by the state.

10 The children of Philadelphia
11 deserve to learn in non-toxic buildings,
12 to have school libraries staffed by a
13 certified school librarian, not just a
14 collection of books in the classroom, to
15 learn in classrooms that are not
16 overcrowded and above the contractual
17 limit of 33, which itself is too high.

18 But there's no way we can
19 address the financial needs of the
20 District as long as we allow charters to
21 operate in the way that they do now. The
22 Pennsylvania Charter Law described by the
23 state's Auditor General as the worst in
24 the country gives great leeway to charter
25 operators in every step in the process.

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2 Once a charter school opens, it is close
3 to impossible to close it, no matter how
4 poorly it performs academically or
5 organizationally.

6 The District just concluded 16
7 days of non-renewal hearings on -- these
8 are just the legal hearings I'm talking
9 about, not even what happened before --
10 16 days of legal non-renewal hearings on
11 two ASPIRA Renaissance schools. In my
12 recent commentary published in the
13 Inquirer/Daily News, I estimated that the
14 taxpayers put out about \$10,000 a day,
15 not just to pay for our lawyers but for
16 ASPIRA's lawyers too. And after the
17 Board takes its vote, ASPIRA can appeal
18 to the state Charter Appeal Board. That
19 will take at least a year before that
20 decision is made, and we'll be paying for
21 their lawyers then too.

22 It will take years to revoke
23 ASPIRA's charter. But if the District
24 wants to close a public school, an actual
25 public school, that would take just a few

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 months, and there will be no legal
3 hearings.

4 There are several charters
5 whose renewals have been postponed for
6 two and three years because the operators
7 balk at District oversight and refuse to
8 correct their deficiencies, many of those
9 for barriers to enrollment and lack of
10 due process to students in disciplinary
11 matters, which are issues that the
12 Education Law Center has addressed. Two
13 examples, Belmont and Boys' Latin, have
14 failed to meet academic standards in
15 their last renewal and were still
16 recommended for renewal with conditions,
17 but they didn't want to adhere to any
18 conditions.

19 If this were a level playing
20 field, we'd be having a different
21 conversation, but I think most people
22 don't realize that we have a school
23 district and then every charter is its
24 own school district. Recent tax
25 information shows that the District is

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 paying about \$9 million a year in CEO
3 salaries. Twelve of charter CEOs pay
4 themselves over \$200,000 a year. The
5 charter part of the budget is the fastest
6 growing part of the School District
7 budget. We need more funding, but that's
8 not where we need our funding to be
9 going.

10 Another --

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I need
12 you to --

13 MS. HAVER: Oh, okay. Another
14 example of lack of equity, Franklin Towne
15 Charter a couple years ago expelled a
16 student for, quote, conduct unbecoming a
17 Franklin Towne student. That's a
18 violation of their charter and the PA
19 School Code.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
21 Lisa, I need you to wrap up.

22 MS. HAVER: Okay. Just my last
23 sentence is --

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you
25 have written testimony, you can submit

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 it. I want to be fair to everybody.

3 MS. HAVER: My last sentence
4 is, when I hear, as I did yesterday, that
5 charters want to be treated fairly, I
6 just really don't know what people are
7 talking about.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
10 you. Thank you very much.

11 Whoever would like to go next.

12 MS. RUBIN: Good morning. My
13 name is Lynda Rubin. Thank you for
14 having me. I am a retired school
15 counselor and teacher. I served in just
16 three schools in my 41 years of service,
17 three years as a teacher at Walton
18 Elementary School, 27th and Huntingdon,
19 followed by my first counseling position,
20 the final three months of ILC, Intensive
21 Learning Center, at 5th and Luzerne,
22 where I helped to close out this
23 alternative school. And, finally, 38
24 years as school counselor at D. Newlin
25 Fell Elementary School, 9th and Oregon,

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 from which I retired.

3 Teachers, counselors, nurses,
4 librarians, NTAs, et cetera, which I'll
5 only refer to as teachers for this
6 statement, used to enter the profession
7 as a career, not a first-time job.

8 Teachers learned about -- staying in
9 schools long term by choice used to be
10 the norm, even in difficult schools.

11 Teachers learned about the neighborhood
12 and students' extended families in order
13 to fully support them. Teachers and
14 administration sometimes clashed, but the
15 end game, their students, remained the
16 same. So what's changed?

17 Public schools have long been
18 underfunded. Governor Thornburgh told us
19 we'd have to do more with less. Governor
20 Ridge and Schweiker then embraced the
21 privatization of public schools and
22 created the SRC with the mission to do
23 just that. The business model replaced
24 the education model, blaming teachers and
25 their unions as the cause of public ed's

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 financial problems instead of Governor
3 Corbett's theft of \$3 billion of
4 education money.

5 So now we're in the
6 edu-business era. But businesses operate
7 with profit and loss ledgers as their
8 Bible. Streamline the costs of teachers
9 through hiring inexperienced staff
10 trained to teach to a product or system
11 in which another edu-business start-up is
12 selling. And always advertise that brand
13 and always lobby the politicians. It's
14 just another product. Money flows
15 upwards to investors and to expand the
16 reach of the corporation through real
17 estate deals and bond buys that are
18 guaranteed by the schools, not the
19 charters' boards. Behind the scenes
20 you'll find the names of a few legal
21 firms, real estate, construction, and
22 bond market companies that specialize in
23 charter school growth, and the School
24 District pays for all of this.

25 I've sat here and heard charter

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 schools' cries to be treated equally. In
3 reality, charter schools want to take our
4 students and the state reimbursement for
5 each of them and decry any attempt by the
6 District to oversee them, particularly
7 when it comes to their schools' student
8 demographics, especially race, type of
9 special ed disability, ELL needs, and
10 children with behavior problems. When
11 their schools don't exceed their PR
12 claims of "we can do it better," their
13 CEOs blame student poverty, lack of
14 independence and, my favorite, biased
15 treatment by the School Board.

16 Charter CEOs think they should
17 be able to open and expand schools at
18 will. They have a long-term business
19 plan that has nothing to do with
20 education. They claim to be public
21 schools, but how they invest and use our
22 money is private. We need more real
23 public schools answerable to a public
24 board.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
3 very much, Ms. Rubin.

4 Sir, please identify yourself
5 and proceed.

6 DR. ASANTE: Good morning,
7 Councilmembers, Councilwoman Blackwell.
8 My name is Molefi Kete Asante. I am the
9 author of 84 books on African and African
10 American culture, and I have served in
11 about 20 school districts as consultant
12 for the infusion of African American
13 content in curriculum.

14 I've lived in Philadelphia for
15 35 years, and the problem that I think
16 needs to be addressed in the budget is
17 actually the curriculum itself, the
18 infusion of African-centered content from
19 K through 12.

20 When Paul Vallas was
21 Superintendent of the School District, he
22 asked me to write, which I did, the
23 program for the required course in
24 African American history, and that was
25 done, but since that was done, I am not

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 sure whether there has ever been any
3 tracking of the results of the importance
4 of that course in the School District.

5 Secondly, all math and literacy
6 have to be connected to culture. If you
7 don't do that, what happens is, a child
8 enters school and does not know or
9 realize that math begins in Africa. So
10 you have children in these schools who
11 are disconnected from the curriculum, and
12 then we say that we don't have
13 achievement.

14 The only way you can get
15 achievement is to have a culturally
16 relevant curriculum. If you don't have a
17 culturally relevant curriculum, then
18 children will tune out.

19 People are interested in what
20 they attend to, and they attend to what
21 they are attracted to, and that is
22 fundamentally culture, and it's essential
23 that this becomes part of the budgetary
24 hearing and also part of the budgetary
25 emphasis when we start talking about

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 schools. This is not just capital and
3 it's not just technical. It has to also
4 relate to culture and curriculum.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
8 you, sir.

9 Councilwoman Blackwell.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you very much.

12 Thank you all, and thank you,
13 Dr. Molefi Asante. As you know, we want
14 to have a hearing dealing with curriculum
15 and ask you to come.

16 Many of you know he's written
17 at least some 13 books and travels. He's
18 away as much as he is here, but what his
19 contributions to school, we've asked them
20 over and over -- we've had him meeting
21 with folks, with Dr. Hite to talk about
22 this and to present materials. He's
23 there. He has the materials. We just
24 have to get the School District to
25 finally agree to make it a reality.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 So I'm hoping -- I know Joyce
3 Wilkerson is here. I know many of you
4 from the School District are here. I
5 hope you've heard this. You'll hear it
6 again. We will be having hearings again
7 before we recess on curriculum, because
8 nothing could be more important.

9 We talk about youngsters being
10 interested. We talk about crime. We
11 talk about them being focused on where
12 they're going. And Dr. Molefi Asante is
13 saying it, has prepared the work, is
14 prepared to take us there.

15 So I can only say thank you,
16 Dr. Asante. We will fight for this with
17 you, and we thank you for sticking in
18 there.

19 DR. ASANTE: Thank you very
20 much.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
22 you.

23 Hold on one second, folks.

24 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown,
25 you had something?

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Two
3 remarks. First, I want to salute Lynda.
4 I know well of your longtime tenure with
5 the Philadelphia school system and your
6 devotion to young people, particularly
7 young people with disabilities. So that
8 should not go unrecognized.

9 MS. RUBIN: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To
11 Dr. Asante, I know well of the books that
12 you've written and your intellectual
13 prowess with regard to African American
14 history. So thank you. What I need is
15 clarity. And so what I know is that
16 African American history is taught at
17 least at the seniors across the system,
18 and the record should reflect, as
19 Councilwoman Bass knows and Councilwoman
20 Sanchez, that it was Sandra Dungee Glenn,
21 who was a School Reform Commissioner, who
22 helped make that happen. So I know that
23 it's in place in the system. So help me
24 understand where your concern is. Is it
25 that the academic achievement is not

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 tracked? What is it?

3 DR. ASANTE: That's right.

4 Well, two concerns. The first one is
5 that. In terms of that class, we don't
6 know what the impact of that class is.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Stop right
8 there. As a researcher, when you say
9 "impact," are you talking about the
10 notion that students are tested? Because
11 it's not going to be found on SAT exams,
12 and it was a very intentional,
13 appropriate decision rendered by the
14 School Reform Commission that this be
15 taught across the system.

16 DR. ASANTE: Right. Thank you,
17 Council Lady. What I want to know is
18 whether or not it makes a difference in
19 the lives of the students to take that
20 class and whether or not there is an
21 interest in that class.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So do you
23 have an instrument, a measurement, a
24 tool?

25 DR. ASANTE: I can create one,

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 but I'm asking of that of the School
3 District. I don't know. I mean, I work
4 at Temple. I'm not working for the
5 School District.

6 But the second thing is, what
7 I'm asking for is from K through 12 an
8 infusion of African and African American
9 content in every grade level and in every
10 subject area.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So as an
12 African American, I would think that
13 appropriate. As a former teacher, I
14 would think that essential.

15 Have you offered a curriculum
16 that does that? Is there a
17 municipality --

18 DR. ASANTE: I have that, sure.
19 I've worked in 20 school districts, yes.
20 I do that. I have that.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So what
22 you want the School District to do is
23 simply expand their current teachings of
24 African American history. Is that what I
25 hear you're saying in terms of clarity?

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 DR. ASANTE: Well, I'm not sure
3 whether there has ever been in
4 Philadelphia a comprehensive infusion of
5 African American content. This has been
6 asked since 1960s. Dr. Ed Robinson asked
7 for it in the 1980s. I don't think it
8 has ever happened. I think that this is
9 what we're asking for.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
11 Well, I needed to hear the clarity --

12 DR. ASANTE: Thank you very
13 much.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- of the
15 concern.

16 And so to Councilwoman
17 Blackwell's statement, have you had a
18 chance to sit down with the leadership at
19 the School District either at the Board
20 level --

21 DR. ASANTE: I have.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- or
23 Dr. Hite?

24 DR. ASANTE: I have.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And so

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 those discussions and conversations --

3 DR. ASANTE: They're ongoing.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,

5 then. Thank you very much.

6 DR. ASANTE: Thank you very

7 much.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,

9 Mr. Chairman.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

11 you.

12 Hold on. One more.

13 Councilwoman Bass.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,

15 Mr. Chairman.

16 I just really wanted to thank
17 you all for being here. And so of
18 course, Lynda and Lisa, for your years of
19 advocacy and hard work on behalf of our
20 kids, and Dr. Asante for your years of
21 dedication. And culture matters. The
22 cultural connection is really very, very
23 important. And so I just really wanted
24 to say thank you so much for all of the
25 work and also I wanted to acknowledge

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 that the institute is in the Eighth
3 District on Germantown Avenue. So thank
4 you so much for all that you do.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. HAVER: I just want to
7 thank you too for asking your question
8 yesterday about whether or not public
9 neighborhood schools are going to be
10 closed. We've been asking that, and I
11 appreciate it.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh, yes.
13 Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
15 all very much. Thank you for your time.

16 Mr. Stitt, our next group.

17 THE CLERK: Tomea Sippio-Smith,
18 Ginny McGill, Mama Gail/Leah Clouven.

19 (Witnesses approached witness
20 table.)

21 THE CLERK: Casey Trapp.

22 SERGEANT-OF-ARMS: She's not
23 speaking. They got three students.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please,
25 whoever would like to start. Identify

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 yourself and proceed, please.

3 MS. MCGILL: Okay. Good
4 morning to the officers of City Council
5 and all in attendance. My name is Ginny
6 McGill and I am a proud alumni of the
7 School District of Philadelphia and I
8 currently have a child in first grade at
9 Samuel Gompers Elementary public school
10 in West Philly.

11 One of the key conversations
12 I've been having with my community in the
13 past few weeks is the issue of what's the
14 proposed budget for the 2019-2020 school
15 year, especially in regards to the
16 teacher cuts that will be made next year
17 in my child's K through 8 school. I'm
18 just about positive that my neighborhood
19 school isn't the only one facing this
20 issue, but I will speak from my
21 experience and as I have promised many
22 parents who couldn't make it here in
23 person due to work or family obligations.

24 I'd like to paint a picture.
25 Picture No. 1, a few months back my son

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 came home with a letter notifying us that
3 our school had been identified as being
4 in the lowest 15 percent performance in
5 the state and that each child enrolled at
6 the school would have an opportunity,
7 scholarship, to be enrolled and educated
8 outside of our community and outside of
9 our district.

10 Picture No. 2, there are 18
11 children in my son's first grade class.
12 Most of you are now saying, what are you
13 complaining about? That's a dream come
14 true.

15 The issue is the acuity. Three
16 children in the classroom are accessing
17 fate in their least restrictive
18 environment and with a diagnosis of
19 autism, one of them being my child. And
20 three children have a 504 plan. How do I
21 know? I'm a parent volunteer at my son's
22 school.

23 I'm not sure what the
24 educational needs are in the other first
25 grade class moving to second grade in the

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 fall, but I have eyes, and I cannot see
3 these two classes being combined next
4 year, with one teacher responsible for
5 educating and meeting special education
6 needs as proposed for next year's budget
7 affecting grades K through 5.

8 After doing some research with
9 my fellow community members and other
10 parents looking into how large class
11 sizes impact the quality of a child's
12 education, we came across some
13 information which supports our desire and
14 need to keep things the way they are at
15 the very least, not take away from a
16 school that is already struggling.

17 Before getting into stats, the
18 third picture I would like to present is
19 one that has worked and has allowed the
20 school to improve from a place where it
21 was set to close a few years ago. It's
22 in a hard place, sure, like the rest of
23 the 20 percent of schools on that list,
24 but doesn't meet the -- that doesn't meet
25 the state's criteria, but what are you

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 communicating to parents, community
3 members, and teachers and students by
4 taking very basic things away like
5 teachers when the students are already
6 struggling and the teachers are already
7 undersupported?

8 The Center for Public
9 Education, an initiative of the National
10 School Boards Association, endorsed a
11 study entitled "Project Star," which
12 included nearly 80 schools in 42
13 districts, including 7,000 K through 3
14 students from families ranging from very
15 poor to very affluent. Our Secretary of
16 Education, Betsy DeVos, says class sizes
17 don't have a correlation to student
18 achievement. In fact, she says the
19 opposite. Larger class sizes would allow
20 students to collaborate more with their
21 peers. Most of the research shows that
22 when class size reduction programs are
23 well designed and implemented in the
24 primary grades, K through 3, students'
25 achievement rises as class sizes drop.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 The project outcomes of Project
3 Star were smaller class sizes in early
4 grades boost academic achievement. A
5 class size of no more than 18 students
6 per teacher is required to produce the
7 greatest benefit, and minority and
8 low-income students show even greater
9 gains when placed in small classes in the
10 primary grades.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
12 Ms. McGill, I'd ask you to please -- one
13 more sentence, please.

14 MS. MCGILL: If interested in
15 what is going on in our small community
16 school, come and visit and see for
17 yourself.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
19 you. Thank you very much. Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 Ma'am, please identify yourself
22 and proceed.

23 MS. SIPPPIO-SMITH: Yes. Good
24 morning. My name is Tomea Sippio-Smith
25 from Public Citizens for Children and

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Youth. Thank you for the opportunity to
3 present testimony regarding the funding
4 and budget for Philadelphia School
5 District.

6 Philadelphia City Council has
7 made a concerted effort to meet its
8 obligation to public school students by
9 providing and supporting sorely needed
10 funding to Philadelphia students. City
11 Council has increased the City's
12 contribution to the School District, and
13 now as local taxpayers, we are now
14 outpacing the amount of revenue the state
15 is contributing to Philadelphia, one of
16 the school districts in the state that is
17 the most underfunded.

18 Philadelphia's local school tax
19 effort, based on the state's calculation,
20 is the 17th highest in the state.
21 Obviously Harrisburg is not carrying its
22 fair share. It is choosing to support
23 plans for a \$100 million expansion of a
24 program that fails to benefit the
25 majority of the state's students.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Philadelphia City Council thus
3 is to be commended. Because of sustained
4 investments at the local level,
5 Philadelphia students continue to make
6 gains.

7 We support the use of the
8 District's positive fund balance to
9 repair facilities for our students to
10 make sure that no student enters a
11 classroom with peeling lead paint, damp
12 floors, or other environmental hazards.
13 We must also make sure that classrooms
14 remain a safe temperature for our
15 students and staff. Students cannot
16 learn when they are in stifling rooms.

17 We encourage the District to
18 work with Council on a plan to outfit
19 every building with efficient air
20 conditioning and ventilation systems for
21 our students and staff.

22 We also applaud the efforts to
23 rebuild the school's playgrounds and
24 ensure that they are safe places. These
25 projects are an expense one time, and

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 more should commence with a portion of
3 the prospective end-of-year balance.

4 Additionally, with respect to
5 recurring costs, the District's budget
6 proposal includes millions to expand
7 student counseling services and the
8 addition of 50 counselors or student
9 support staff. At the same time, the
10 budget includes millions more to pay for
11 educational services for children who are
12 living in institutions, more than was
13 spent this year.

14 While these services are
15 certainly needed, if the School District
16 had ample resources, it could hire
17 additional school psychologists to help
18 so many students who walk through the
19 schools' doors suffering from trauma.

20 Again, while the City Council
21 and the District are doing more to
22 support Philadelphia students, the state
23 has not done its fair share. So much
24 more could be done for Philadelphia
25 students if Harrisburg was on the same

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2 page. Classrooms could be treated and
3 repaired. Class sizes could be reduced.
4 Libraries could be expanded. Technology
5 could be more accessible to more
6 students, and students who need
7 additional supports and resources like
8 counselors and mental health services
9 would have access to the tools they need
10 to be their best selves.

11 Students perform better when
12 their school districts are well funded.
13 It is a simple equation really. The
14 City's economic growth will continue to
15 increase as we fund schools at the state
16 level as we do the local.

17 City Council and the School
18 District can't do this alone.
19 Pennsylvania must step up by increasing
20 basic education funding by \$200 million
21 more through the state funding formula
22 this year, 50 million more for special
23 education, and 10 million more for career
24 and technical education.

25 They sound like big numbers,

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 but when we think about the cost of
3 educating 1.7 million across the state,
4 it's really minimal. The state is --

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am,
6 please wrap up.

7 MS. SIPPPIO-SMITH: Sorry.
8 Sure.

9 If we want our economy to
10 strengthen and grow, the state must do
11 what the City has done and continues to
12 do for our community: Commit to the
13 resources to make it happen.

14 Thank you for investing in our
15 students, and we ask that this year you
16 do the same.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
18 you. Thank you very much.

19 Thank both of you.
20 Councilwoman Gym.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: For Ms.
22 McGill, we'd love to be able to talk to
23 you a little bit about Gompers. We're
24 just looking at your school budget. So
25 happy to talk to you a little bit more

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 about what's happening at the school.

3 Your school is a Community
4 School; is that correct?

5 MS. MCGILL: Correct.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And have you
7 seen any benefits from the Community
8 Schools program?

9 MS. MCGILL: Absolutely. I'm
10 on the Community School Committee there,
11 so most -- primarily our partnership with
12 St. Joe's has really been beneficial to
13 our regular ed and special ed children,
14 because they have the kidney center
15 there. So they have been infusing
16 resources - people, money, events - into
17 our school and discounts for some of the
18 programs they offer. That's one of the
19 most beneficial partnerships I've seen
20 through the Community School initiative.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. Well,
22 we certainly don't want to see Gompers
23 lose two teachers, and special education
24 is a really important issue, so we'll
25 follow up with you.

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2 MS. MCGILL: Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
4 for coming in.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
6 you.

7 Thank you both. Thank you for
8 your time.

9 Mr. Stitt, I think we have some
10 students.

11 THE CLERK: Yes. Casey Trapp
12 and the three students that are here for
13 Casey Trapp. And would you mind just
14 giving your names as soon as you come up
15 so I can...

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good high
19 noon. Please.

20 THE CLERK: Can you just give
21 your three names really quickly.

22 MS. HORSEY: Lexa.

23 THE CLERK: What's your last
24 name? First and last name.

25 MS. HORSEY: Horsey. Lexa

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2 Horsey.

3 MR. PENA: My name is Michael
4 Pena.

5 MR. WITCHER: My name is Corey
6 Witcher.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
8 you. Whoever would like to start,
9 please.

10 MS. HORSEY: Good morning. My
11 name is Lexa. I am a junior representing
12 Bodine High School for International
13 Affairs, and we are speaking on behalf of
14 the funding of arts.

15 In our school, we lack stable
16 required programs such as full-time
17 music, band, dance, and theatre. These
18 are programs that should be implemented
19 into all schools so kids can truly have
20 the opportunity to express themselves.
21 Yet we are neglected of this opportunity
22 due to the lack of space, funding, and
23 opportunity.

24 Kids should have the
25 opportunity to become well-rounded people

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 and have the option to pursue all
3 opportunities. This is the time when us
4 children should be learning life and what
5 it can offer. Yet we are not allowed to
6 because we are always forced to choose
7 between the things that are required.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
9 you. Thank you very much.

10 Please.

11 MR. PENA: First and foremost,
12 good morning, everyone. Thank you for
13 allowing me to speak here today. My name
14 is Michael Pena and I represent Bodine
15 High School, along with our advocates
16 around the world.

17 To start off, I would like to
18 begin with a question. What
19 differentiates the human to other
20 species? I'd argue it's our ability to
21 express ourselves in a manner that
22 requires creativity. This requires
23 painting, music, drama, and many more.

24 From the beginning of
25 civilization, art was a part of people's

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 lives. It played a part in cultivating
3 our culture as we know it. We see this
4 in the case of Northern Australia that
5 are full of ancient art.

6 Art has been around since
7 before it was even called art. So why is
8 it taking a back seat?

9 I will admit that art has come
10 on the rise in terms of having a
11 presence, with 90 percent of schools
12 having some form of an art program.
13 However, one point neglected is that less
14 than half include theatre and dance and
15 music together. It is against every
16 student's constitutional right to not
17 have equal access to dance, music, and
18 art.

19 I'm aware there have been many
20 advances to the fight to include the
21 presence of art in Philadelphia schools.
22 If this were an easy problem to solve, it
23 would be solved already. So there's
24 still work to be done.

25 A goal coming directly from the

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 School District to Philadelphia states
3 all teachers, principals will have
4 adequate funding and physical resources
5 for art learning. Let us take a step in
6 the right direction and allow more
7 funding for the arts.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
9 you.

10 Please.

11 MR. WITCHER: Again, my name is
12 Corey Witcher. I'm here to present the
13 statistics that our school kind of had
14 went over.

15 So the large majority of our
16 school or our class suggests that art
17 helps with different viewpoints and
18 different self-expression. So with
19 self-expression you may not -- like
20 certain students may not be able to have
21 the ability to talk to other people.
22 Like one of the more common things was
23 that many people would want to like do
24 things to themselves that are not really
25 like helpful to them and may like

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 jeopardize their current future. So we
3 feel as though art is more so like
4 something that you can relieve your
5 stress and your anger like through
6 feeling.

7 So one of the main points that
8 we had came up with was that a lot of
9 people can't play sports. Like obviously
10 like high school students, we have
11 sports, like clubs and all that stuff.
12 But like I said, a lot of people don't
13 have the necessary talent to carry out
14 that sport and they can't just pick up
15 like a basketball or a football or
16 anything for that matter. So in this
17 case, art comes in.

18 So like I said before, we feel
19 as though art is important because --
20 it's not just a certain visual art. It's
21 not like painting, coloring, drawing.
22 It's more so theatre, music, and we feel
23 as though that these things need to be
24 more enforced upon not just our school
25 but schools in general, because like my

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 colleague had said, that we all have the
3 right to have music, theatre, visual art,
4 and so forth, but we're not getting these
5 type of things. These are more being
6 pushed to the side rather than just being
7 brought up as like a general topic that
8 should be in discussion of these
9 decisions that you guys are making.

10 That's pretty much it.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
12 Thank you. Thank you for your comments.
13 They all make a lot of sense. Thank you
14 very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr.
17 McDermott, please call the next names.

18 THE CLERK: Chanina Nugroho,
19 and then we have Philadelphia Student
20 Union. So Amir Curry, Qawyyah Powers.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Are all
23 the folks coming up from the Student
24 Union? We'll have three at a time at the
25 table. If you want to sit in those

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 chairs right there.

3 All right. So, please, you can
4 start. Identify yourself and proceed,
5 please, whoever would like to start.
6 Speak right in the microphone. There you
7 go.

8 MR. CURRY: Good morning. My
9 name is Amir Curry. I'm a member of PSU
10 and I'm a senior at Science Leadership
11 Academy at Beeber.

12 The past four months
13 unrepresented high school students across
14 Philadelphia organized against an
15 amendment to Policy 805, a policy that
16 would heighten the policing of black and
17 brown youth in every high school in
18 Philly.

19 The Board of Education and the
20 School District of Philadelphia were
21 derelict in their duties. Their primary
22 role is to protect students, ensure that
23 the policy that they implement
24 facilitates learning communities that
25 provide wellness, student development,

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2 and cultural responsiveness.

3 What we witnessed two months
4 ago with the vote confirming the
5 amendments to Policy 805 was, very simply
6 put, negligence. There is already
7 distrust of law enforcement in poor black
8 and brown communities, and rightfully so.
9 Moving the same law enforcement apparatus
10 from our neighborhoods to our schools
11 will not create safe learning
12 environments for students. It will
13 simply consolidate trauma.

14 Tremendous student opposition
15 was present, yet the policymakers
16 irresponsibly ignored and devalued our
17 organizing and dissent.

18 Standardizing a metal detectors
19 mandate that would ultimately criminalize
20 thousands of black and brown youth is not
21 only negligent, but it's an inaccurate
22 assessment of the priorities of schools
23 across Philadelphia.

24 The current state of high
25 schools in Philadelphia is abysmal.

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2 Several high schools are overpopulated,
3 thus unable to focus on the needs of
4 individual members of the learning
5 community; lack updated learning
6 materials; teacher turnover is high; if
7 they have counselors, they are often not
8 enough to accommodate the student body
9 and are often overexhausted, which
10 neglects the social and emotional
11 well-being of students.

12 Our schools are repressed
13 through systemic divestment, and those
14 who are paying the price are the primary
15 stakeholders - students, the same people
16 schools are supposed to serve.

17 The amendments to Policy 805
18 constructed by the School District
19 includes values like integrity and
20 safeguarding student welfare. Yet I am
21 unable to understand how a \$30 million
22 policing budget will resolve any of the
23 aforementioned failures.

24 The leadership of Philly
25 schools prides themselves on equity and

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 educational justice. Yet it appears
3 there are no resources to introduce any
4 of those values into schools. However,
5 there are resources to be appropriated to
6 the expansion of the school-to-prison
7 pipeline.

8 A police officer's primary duty
9 is not to counsel youth. A counselor's
10 is. A metal detector can't ensure you
11 have the resources to succeed in school,
12 but a teacher can.

13 I am here to implore City
14 Council to reduce the policing budget
15 proposed by the School District by 50
16 percent and instead invest in the
17 resources that will actually
18 substantially improve schools and
19 safeguard student welfare.

20 We need to increase the amount
21 of counselors, implement new social and
22 emotional support systems, and introduce
23 culturally responsive programs.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 you.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Whoever
5 would like to go next.

6 MS. NUGROHO: Good morning,
7 City Councilmembers. My name is Chanina
8 Nugroho. I am currently a freshman
9 attending Furness High School and a
10 student leader at VietLead. Today I am
11 here instead of at school because I want
12 to talk on behalf of my friends and
13 teachers about a range of issues
14 impacting our life and health.

15 Let me start off by mentioning
16 that the fundings lost from the ten-year
17 tax abatement, which amount to hundreds
18 of millions of dollars in the past few
19 decades, are benefiting wealthy
20 developers and residents more than
21 communities who need them the most.
22 Public schools are such communities, and
23 one of them is Furness High School where
24 I'm going.

25 The majority of Furness High

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 School lacks basic facilities, including
3 clean bathrooms, gardens, lead-free
4 walls, furniture, and updated textbooks.
5 I've only been in this school for barely
6 a year and I already have noticed so many
7 things that shouldn't be okay. In fact,
8 my friends who have been here longer told
9 me that the quality of our classrooms are
10 going from bad to worse.

11 As we all know, the conditions
12 in our school building affect the
13 students' mood, and you can see it
14 clearly in our school. Classrooms are
15 not organized properly, badly damaged
16 textbooks which affects how students
17 might behave and study at class. Some
18 students have trouble focusing in class
19 because there are holes in our classrooms
20 that allow for rats to stay in. There
21 are damaged rooms, lack of chairs, no
22 aircons, and damage in the walls. That's
23 why some students are not comfortable
24 staying in classrooms for hours. Just
25 two days ago, one of my friends, while

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 taking the Keystone test, had a piece of
3 chipping paint fall on his head, but we
4 are here, supposed to stay in this room
5 and stay engaged despite the truly
6 crumbling conditions.

7 School is supposed to be safe,
8 but my school is not, and I know there
9 are many other schools with similar toxic
10 conditions. It's not just about lead and
11 asbestos, which are serious and have
12 caused long-term health impacts on
13 students and school staff. I want to
14 also talk specifically about the fact
15 that many schools, like Furness, don't
16 have proper AC or heating system. My
17 ESOL classroom, Room 209, is a literal
18 oven when it gets hot outside, and it's
19 not the only room in Furness, which is,
20 again, not the only school that have all
21 the issues.

22 I'm holding with me a petition
23 for my peers and teachers to request
24 proper AC to be installed in our
25 classroom. We learned in our classes to

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2 back our reasoning with evidence, and I
3 believe our health and life should be
4 evidence enough for this. When sitting
5 in extremely hot classrooms for a long
6 time, we get anxious, have temper issues,
7 can't focus, and can have heat strokes.
8 These are only a few of the impacts we
9 have already felt from lack of proper AC
10 in our room that you can read more in our
11 petition.

12 Because of that, I am here
13 today while my other friends are taking
14 Keystone tests in unsafe conditions to
15 ask the City Council to end the tax
16 abatement so we can regain some fundings
17 to fund improvement of school conditions.
18 And when we get extra funding, I want to
19 ask the School District of Philadelphia
20 to put any new money on your budget
21 coming from the City to prioritize fixing
22 these conditions, such as AC, heating,
23 lead, asbestos, and crumbling walls, to
24 name a few. We need the adults to take
25 action now so we can stay engaged in

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2 school and with good health.

3 Thank you very much.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
5 you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please.

8 MS. POWERS: Before I start, I
9 would like to ask something of you all.
10 Please do not get up while I am talking.
11 I feel like that is disrespectful.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Pardon
13 me?

14 MS. POWERS: Like a few times
15 people got up from the table and went
16 around the room, and it kind of felt --

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Well,
18 we're trying to get the hearing in order,
19 ma'am. We have people that keep calling
20 and wanting to speak. So we're trying to
21 get everything in order so we can move it
22 as smoothly as possible.

23 Please identify yourself and
24 proceed.

25 MS. POWERS: My name is Qawyyah

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Powers and I am a member of PSU and also
3 a freshman at Science Leadership Academy
4 at Beeber.

5 First, I want to start off this
6 testimony by saying that our school needs
7 a lot of improvement and attention,
8 starting off with the air conditioning,
9 which needs lots of improvement. For one
10 thing, our schools have absolutely no AC.
11 According to the U.S. News, an analysis
12 published by the National Bureau of
13 Economic Research comparing students'
14 test scores with average temperatures
15 suggests that when classrooms get too
16 hot, it prevents students from learning
17 as well as they would in more comfortable
18 temperatures, with lasting impacts on
19 students' future success and the ability
20 to contribute economically. It also
21 found that adequate investment in school
22 infrastructure; namely, air conditioning,
23 can mitigate the negative effects of hot
24 weather.

25 If you were so interested in

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 our learning and our attention in class,
3 you all would get us air conditioning
4 systems, and rather than cancelling
5 school on hot days in the summer, we
6 would be able to come to school and be
7 comfortable. What if this was your job
8 with no AC? Would you be happy that
9 you're staying home and not getting paid?
10 That's the same thing that's happening to
11 students. The only difference is that
12 we're losing our education.

13 We most definitely need more
14 counselors -- we also need more
15 counselors in our schools rather than
16 police officers, because there are a lot
17 of people that experience a lot of
18 trauma, injuries, or that have mental
19 problems that could really benefit from
20 the counselors. The counselors provide a
21 lot of support and sort of an extra
22 backbone for a lot of people, and if
23 students know that they can't go to
24 anyone else, they know that they could go
25 to the counselors and talk to them so

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2 they could calm down and have a nice calm
3 conversation and talk about their issues.

4 Last year, an analysis of data
5 from the ten largest public school
6 districts in the country by the website
7 the74million found that four of those
8 districts employ more police officers
9 than counselors. And I know this is
10 true, because you could go to schools and
11 see five police officers and one
12 counselor in the entire school and go in
13 the classes and see people having
14 emotional breakdowns.

15 If you know that -- if you
16 think about it, this is also a race and
17 poverty issue. This is -- more affluent
18 large districts with higher portions of
19 white residents seem more likely to
20 employ ample counselors and lower numbers
21 of school police. I find the fact that
22 this is a race and poverty issue to be
23 disrespectful, because when you live in a
24 high-poverty rate area, you see a lot
25 more than if you were to live in a

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 low-poverty neighborhood. So if you go
3 to a school in a high-poverty rate area,
4 then you will want more counselors and
5 fewer police officers, because you see
6 enough cops outside of school. So you
7 shouldn't have to deal with them in
8 school too.

9 Today I am not only asking for
10 you to put this money towards greater and
11 better things for students in schools,
12 but I am also asking you to give students
13 a different view on school and a
14 different view on life and how we're
15 seen. Walking in a school and the first
16 thing you see are police officers, this
17 would make me feel like a criminal and
18 like I'm always being watched, and the
19 questions I had 24/7 are: Am I the
20 target? Did I do something wrong or is
21 it just because I am black?

22 Answer me -- answer this for
23 me: Which is it? You could change my
24 train of thought in a second. Rather
25 than me coming to school seeing the

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 police, I could come to school and see
3 the counselor and talk to them about how
4 I feel in school versus how I feel out of
5 school, and they could help me have a
6 better perspective on life.

7 I am also aware of the fact
8 that you guys get \$3.6 billion for the
9 School District and you use \$30 million
10 for police in schools, when all of that
11 could go to school improvement. And I
12 have been wondering lately, how much do
13 you guys spend on that nice School
14 District building, which, unlike our
15 schools, is nicely air conditioned.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
17 Thank you. Thank you very much.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
20 Councilwoman Gym.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I just
22 wanted to say one thing to the students.
23 First of all, great job. I appreciate
24 all the work that you've done in
25 testifying. Many of us were following

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 the issues around the metal detectors in
3 the schools. We had testimony yesterday
4 that talked about how the District is
5 understanding the issue of air
6 conditioning, and thanks to all of your
7 work, 23 schools in September -- or in
8 the fall will have air conditioning in
9 every classroom. That's only a small
10 portion of the schools that need it and
11 deserve it, and very few of them are high
12 schools. So we got a long way to go, but
13 you are pushing us on a path that we
14 haven't been on in a long time.

15 So I want to appreciate all the
16 young people who are speaking today.
17 Really, really grateful for your voices
18 and your passion.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 THE CLERK: You can identify
22 yourselves for the record just so we make
23 sure that we check your names off.

24 MR. CARTER: Hello, Council.

25 My name is L'Tajh Carter. I am a senior

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 at the Mathematics, Civics and Sciences
3 Charter School just down Broad Street
4 across the street from the School
5 District building, and I am also a member
6 of the Philadelphia Student Union.

7 In 2013, the School District of
8 Philadelphia enacted radical budget cuts.
9 Guidance counselors were nowhere to be
10 found. The positions of nurses were
11 vacant, and schools were left to compete
12 for funding in a desert deprived of
13 water. These cuts have only rose
14 awareness of how deep schools were in
15 decisions, leaving only visual accounts
16 of poor conditions in facilities, little
17 to no attention towards the needs of
18 students, and even the death of two
19 students in an institution that's
20 supposed to ensure the safety and
21 guidance of students.

22 These cuts have only further
23 escaped the legibility of the School
24 District, creating doubt that they have
25 the ability to manage the fostering of

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 bright hopefuls and the aspiring
3 ambitions of youth.

4 March through April of 2019,
5 the School Board sits in unison to review
6 codes and policies related to the conduct
7 of schools. What they will probably
8 mention is that they are healing the
9 wounds of the 2013 budget cuts by
10 reintroducing the arts to elementary
11 schools and rehiring guidance counselors.
12 But what they will tremble to mention is
13 their approval of Policy 805 enabling the
14 requirement of metal detectors in every
15 Philadelphia high school. And not only
16 that, but that their financial budget
17 planning for the 2019-2020 school year is
18 more so focused on keeping money in
19 pockets rather than encouraging fruitful
20 education.

21 The people spoke vividly
22 against these decisions. Testimonies
23 after testimonies were made, to no avail,
24 and appearances after appearances were
25 made in vain.

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2 In the words of Julien Terrell,
3 we no longer consider the credibility of
4 the School Board and this, along with
5 many other events, are the reason why we,
6 the people, including the Philadelphia
7 Student Union, stand in front of you
8 today still fighting.

9 As a citizen of the United
10 States, as a student of the School
11 District of Philadelphia, and as a youth,
12 I ask that whenever you deliberate on the
13 school budget, I ask that you keep the
14 voice of students in mind, that you aim
15 for the improvement of education for
16 every school and for every student, that
17 you make sure that these schools have
18 what they need to properly educate these
19 students without making them feel less
20 than, that these students can be safe and
21 that they can be trusted without the use
22 of extreme policing, extreme policies
23 against their needs, and metal detectors,
24 as previously stated, and that you build
25 upon the rubble left not only by the 2013

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 budget cuts but the constant neglecting
3 of the voice of students.

4 Five years ago -- excuse me.
5 Six years ago, teachers, staff, students
6 were abandoned by the exact -- the very
7 institution that was supposed to care for
8 them. Do not let this history repeat
9 itself.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Please identify yourself first.

15 MR. YANG: Good morning, City
16 Councilmembers. My name is Darren and I
17 am currently a sophomore at Furness High
18 School.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Give
20 us your first and last name, if you
21 would.

22 MR. YANG: Darren, and Yang is
23 my last name.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Would
25 you spell your last name.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 MR. YANG: Y-A-N-G.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you.

5 MR. YANG: I am also a student
6 leader in VietLead, and I'd like to read
7 my testimony.

8 So growing up in Indonesia, I
9 felt that my school back then was way
10 worse than what other schools could have
11 offered and provide across the globe.
12 However, that opinion of mine has changed
13 when I got here to Philadelphia starting
14 to observing on the way that schools are
15 here. From chipping paints, non-working
16 ACs to crumbling conditions, schools are
17 not a safe environment for the students
18 here in Philly. Most importantly, lead
19 has been a really major problem
20 preventing us from constructing our dream
21 garden, a garden that is greatly desired
22 by us, the students, parents, and
23 teachers, to start creating an
24 eco-friendly facility that benefits both
25 the environment and the people.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 How does it benefit us, some
3 might ask? Well, if you had asked the
4 students what would they had wished for
5 their schools' condition right now to be
6 better, the majority of them would say
7 the school lunches. That is just one of
8 the reasons why we wanted to build the
9 garden in the first place, to grow fresh
10 and enjoyable ingredients for our lunch
11 rather than eating those sad-looking
12 pizzas, cheese breads, wilted salads that
13 schools have been serving, and not even
14 in enough quantities.

15 Despite all of that, though, we
16 at VietLead actually fought together with
17 our teachers and parents for very
18 significant changes towards Furness's
19 environment that allowed us to start a
20 brand new garden in the backyard this
21 spring. We won \$130,000 from the School
22 Board to repair the lead situation that
23 we've been facing throughout the whole
24 year, but that was just the beginning.
25 We need billions of dollars more to make

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 sure schools in Philly are completely
3 safe, because we know Furness is not the
4 only school with structural problems.

5 Last month, some of my peers
6 were able to meet with Dr. Hite to talk
7 about our asks for healthy schools. One
8 of those proposals was to have a garden
9 in every school in Philly, and Dr. Hite
10 wholeheartedly agreed with that, citing
11 that it's something that the School
12 District has already been working on.
13 That's great. We, from then on, proposed
14 this idea to our community and were able
15 to gather their thoughts and ideas to
16 come up with what we call the One Garden
17 Per School plan. After what happened
18 last year when we had already planned a
19 lot for the garden and then seeing it
20 fail miserably because of the toxic
21 environment we had, we were pretty upset
22 because we had to delay the whole process
23 for a year. And that is why we've been
24 discussing with our community to create a
25 policy of having one garden per school.

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2 With a garden in each school,
3 people would not only have access to
4 fresh foods, but would also have access
5 to a space that will improve our mental
6 health. Just one hour a week is a good
7 place to begin for improved mental
8 health.

9 If we had a garden, we could
10 also have a mural that each school
11 community creates ourselves that will
12 stand as evidence of the vision that each
13 school community wants to build towards
14 together.

15 School districts should
16 consider providing schools enough money
17 not only to repair the current building
18 conditions in schools, but schools need
19 land for their gardens to happen. So
20 make us - students, teachers, and our
21 community members, instead of
22 developers - the priority in the School
23 District budget.

24 In short, I hope that City
25 Council should consider our community's

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 proposal that each school should have
3 access to their own land to build their
4 own gardens, a safe non-contaminated
5 healthy garden that would benefit the
6 whole community and improve the physical,
7 mental, and emotional health of the
8 students. But for this to happen, we
9 need to end the lead and building
10 condition problems in numerous public
11 schools in Philadelphia by ending the tax
12 abatement and prioritize fixing those
13 problems.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. YANG: And also as an
17 additional note, I had to miss school to
18 attend and speak here today. And for
19 that reason, please do also consider
20 having these hearings on education during
21 the time where we, the students, can
22 actually attend.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you. Thank you very much.

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2 MR. TERRELL: Thank you. Thank
3 you for your testimony. I get to go
4 after you.

5 Hello. My name is Julien
6 Terrell and I am the Executive Director
7 of Philadelphia Student Union. In this
8 capacity, I will be submitting testimony
9 based on discussions and feedback
10 received from our members and several
11 other students, parents, and teachers my
12 organization has met with this past
13 school year, unfortunately who were not
14 able to be present given the flawed
15 scheduling and process of this school
16 budget hearing.

17 Before I start, I'd like to put
18 it officially on record. For those
19 people who are directly impacted by the
20 budget and should be able to participate,
21 they would have to miss two days of
22 school. This is counting yesterday's
23 hearing that was all day, including
24 today, that in order for them to
25 participate, they would have to miss two

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 days of work or school, and that's an
3 unnecessary burden that's put on the
4 people who are actually impacted by the
5 budget.

6 So I want to be able to call
7 attention to the nature of how decisions
8 are being made and that culture and
9 preface that as part of my testimony.

10 Every year, the School District
11 should be receiving at least \$344 million
12 more from the state to meet the needs of
13 operating the programs, managing the
14 facilities, and providing the necessary
15 support to principals to provide both
16 quality and equitable education. In
17 addition to the efforts of the District
18 in advocating for more funding in
19 Harrisburg, there should be equal
20 attention and focus on how the funds
21 already secured should be spent, with
22 extra scrutiny placed on increased
23 spending.

24 Our organization has conducted
25 at least 250 workshops this past school

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 year alone. These range from weekly
3 sessions with our members, in-school
4 discussions that have involved a larger
5 student body, visioning forms where we've
6 asked students to think about their ideal
7 school environment, restorative justice
8 workshops, and surveys of buildings and
9 learning conditions.

10 The common thread in all these
11 interactions have been clear that the
12 staff do not need to be committed to
13 policing, but they need staff that are
14 committed to their development and
15 providing guidance and also proactive
16 ways of looking at pathways to
17 graduation.

18 Not once have we heard the
19 request for more police officers or added
20 security infrastructure. However, we
21 have directly heard about safety and the
22 conversation that needs to be more
23 nuanced. There are several students who
24 have shared experiences where they didn't
25 feel safe and were concerned about the

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 impact of removing officers and metal
3 detectors. It is a discussion our
4 members and staff welcome, because it
5 means that we are thinking critically
6 about the problems at hand and how to
7 address them seriously.

8 Through discussions, we have
9 found out that their concerns about
10 safety is more about police. It's about
11 the environments we are cultivating, and
12 these students are attending schools
13 where there are enough counselors and a
14 safety team plan rather than implementing
15 plans based on fear.

16 So the only solutions that are
17 presented usually are about officers,
18 metal detectors, and without any real
19 study of the harm they cause. We place
20 officers that have less criteria and
21 cause needed for interaction with
22 students than an officer on the street
23 and who have more authority than
24 principals of the schools when these
25 altercations happen.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 The District is proposing to
3 increase the spending of \$29 million
4 total from last year of school police to
5 36.6 million.

6 I'm going to paraphrase for the
7 rest of it.

8 There is no process to justify
9 why we're adding at least \$2 million to
10 the funding. There is no justification
11 why there's at least 100 personnel gap
12 between the school police officers and
13 guidance counselors. There is no
14 justification for why we continue to
15 spend upwards of millions of dollars when
16 we have only seven librarians in the
17 entire School District. And yet we
18 continue to hear that this is a need
19 around safety. There are no metrics.
20 There is no evaluation process that is
21 put in place to look at the current
22 operations of the Office of School
23 Safety, but yet we continue to hear that
24 we need to be able to add them. Right?

25 So not only do we need to talk

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 about a deep freeze, but I want to be
3 able to put in a new provision
4 specifically around any spending that has
5 to do with school policing should go
6 through a risk assessment, right? Often
7 time the burden of proof is put on the
8 organizations that are not nearly as
9 well-funded as the School District, and
10 yet when they come with proposals before
11 you, they have no justification to be
12 able to show what their offices are
13 currently doing, let alone the
14 justification for needed funding and
15 edict.

16 I also want to be able to make
17 note that in writing -- this is in
18 writing from Dr. Hite and at several
19 meetings where they were told that the
20 amount of the police officers were
21 supposed to be decreased and that the
22 amount of funding were supposed to be
23 decreased. This is in writing from their
24 office, and yet it has not been done.

25 We also know that on at least

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 two occasions a complaint system, which
3 is only the second of its kind in the
4 country, not only has not been shared
5 with its own staff, but was not shared
6 with parents when an altercation was
7 happening. Those officers were not
8 fired, but they were moved to other
9 schools, and those parents were not being
10 told that an officer who has a record of
11 abuse and assault was moved into their
12 school. Yet we continue to hear
13 justification that we need metal
14 detectors, which require more school
15 police officers, more school police
16 officers, more surveillance cameras.

17 So we're asking the City budget
18 not only to disapprove the added
19 spending, but also to pass the new
20 amendment, right, where there needs to be
21 a risk assessment if any future spending
22 is going to be added, and that should
23 start with an audit of the Office of
24 School Safety.

25 You all are putting officers --

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 I'm not saying you all, but you all are
3 responsible for officers being in
4 schools, where they have more authority
5 than the actual principal, and most of
6 these principals don't even know what
7 they're supposed to be doing in the first
8 place. This is a dangerous precedent
9 that has been setting. It was a
10 dangerous precedent that was set in by
11 the passing of Policy 805, where we had
12 students, teachers, and parents who
13 testified for three months against the
14 edict, and at one meeting -- it was the
15 community meeting that our organization
16 was not present at -- that justification
17 was used as the sole reasoning for why
18 that policy should be passed.

19 So we're asking the City
20 Council to step in and to add a new
21 precedent, that if you really want to
22 start talking about safety, let's have
23 very real conversations and not just
24 conversations that use myths and fear to
25 be able to talk about safety, especially

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 when we understand that school policing
3 and all police are already causing harm.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much.

8 Just for your information, we
9 had two night sessions, and maybe you
10 folks didn't know. You all gave very
11 important testimony. We want to thank
12 you.

13 Councilwoman Gym.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: No. Thank
15 you very much, Madam Chair. I just
16 wanted to acknowledge the work of Student
17 Union on the issue of safety. L'Tajh,
18 Darren, thank you for your testimony as
19 well.

20 This is going to be an ongoing
21 issue. We have made -- thanks to the
22 work that Student Union and young people
23 have done, I think the District has made
24 strides in moving towards more -- we've
25 doubled the number of -- well, we've

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 actually tripled the number of social
3 workers in the public schools. We're
4 increasing the number of counselors. But
5 the bigger question that you're putting
6 on the table is, are we seeing a decrease
7 in surveillance and policing in our
8 schools, and we've got to be able to show
9 that these things are going to result in
10 the decrease on the policing end. It
11 doesn't matter if we have hyper-policed
12 schools. We've got to reduce that.

13 And I want to thank all three
14 of you and the entire youth groups who
15 are here today for really pushing us to
16 go towards that, and we're going to need
17 to continue to be in partnership with the
18 young people, make sure we keep on with
19 our town halls, student town halls
20 especially, so we can see some real
21 movement going.

22 So thank you very much.

23 Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 you again.

3 THE CLERK: Bill Lockett.

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 THE CLERK: Is there anybody
7 else here to testify that has not signed
8 up?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you. Welcome. Please give your name and
12 then begin your testimony.

13 MR. LOCKETT: My name is
14 Phillip Lockett, and I want to thank you
15 for having this panel and giving us a
16 chance to voice our opinion, which is
17 rare these days. But my topic is, with
18 all the good intentions and the programs
19 that I heard yesterday and today for the
20 students, you have a back door where the
21 children can emancipate themselves out of
22 school at the age of 16. And they hit
23 the street with no high school diploma,
24 no work reference, and no guidance for
25 any kind of employment.

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 Now, with all those great
3 programs I heard y'all discuss yesterday
4 while I was watching on my TV, I didn't
5 hear anything about that back door, where
6 tons of children are dropping out of the
7 public school system. And when they hit
8 the street with no high school diploma
9 and no work reference, who you think
10 hires them? This is why we have open-air
11 drug dealers, corners in every
12 neighborhood around every school who
13 takes those young children and destroys
14 their minds. And you wonder why we have
15 shootings every day.

16 We have initiation shootings
17 where if a guy want to get in, he has to
18 do a crime to get in. So you and me
19 sitting in the car, one of us going to
20 get shot because they got initiation.

21 If you look at the statistics,
22 every last one of these shootings in
23 Philadelphia by the youngsters, they were
24 all high school dropouts.

25 Now, I'm for the Philadelphia

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 school system, and you not going to make
3 these budgets to put forth these great
4 programs and you got a back door wide
5 open for failure. It makes no sense.

6 We got tons and tons of
7 children being affected because of the
8 school buildings that they go to. You
9 have drug dealer children in these
10 schools, and then you cover yourself by
11 saying, well, bullying is now a federal
12 offense. Well, the bullying goes on
13 after school, at the playground, at the
14 supermarket, and then it comes back to
15 the schools, and you wonder why we got to
16 keep the good children safe. It's
17 because we need to upgrade that back-door
18 policy, that if the children wants to
19 emancipate themselves, at least let them
20 have a job, have a sponsorship for a job
21 or something. Do not put them on the
22 street so that the drug dealers can hire
23 them.

24 And with that, I yield, and
25 thank you, panel, for giving me the

1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.
2 chance to voice my opinion, because I'm
3 out there and I'm the guy that got to
4 deal with them, and I need your help to
5 straighten out that back door.

6 Thank you very much.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much. We thank you very, very
10 much for those important comments and for
11 your efforts to try to help and save our
12 youth. We're very, very grateful.

13 We thank you all for being
14 here. We are going to recess until 1:00
15 p.m. It should be a very short session.
16 We did advertise until 1:00, just in case
17 someone comes in to testify.

18 We thank you all. Thank you,
19 Councilwoman Bass. Thank you,
20 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, Councilwoman
21 Gym. And we'll see you all at 1:00.

22 Thank you all who have been
23 here.

24 Thank you, Ms. Wilkerson.

25 (Short recess.)

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1 5/15/19 - WHOLE - BILL 190152, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: The
3 Education Committee is called back into
4 session -- that is, the Committee of the
5 Whole is being called back into session.
6 Thank you for the correction.

7 We see no other folks here to
8 testify. Seeing none, this Committee
9 will stand in recess until the call of
10 the Chair.

11 Thank you, everyone.

12 (Committee of the Whole
13 adjourned at 1:05 p.m.)

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