

Testimony to City Council
Doha Ibrahim, Student Board Representative
School District of Philadelphia
May 20, 2020

Council Members, my name is Doha Ibrahim. I am a senior at Lincoln High School and I serve as a student representative to the Board of Education. In light of the financial conversation you are having today, I would like to share with you the comments I shared with the Board at their budget hearing last month. I am making these comments on behalf of my graduating class.

We are members of the class of 2020. We are the students that will not be able to celebrate our hard work and accomplishments as a result of the measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This year there will be no prom. We will not be able to say goodbye to our friends before heading off to college; and most importantly, we will not be able to walk across a stage and proudly accept our high school diplomas.

The class of 2020 has demonstrated to be an exceptional group of students. We started kindergarten in 2007, the year the great recession hit; and we have felt its impact throughout our schooling. In Philadelphia, this means that we have spent much of our education in classrooms with too many students, in schools without enough nurses and counselors, and learning under leaky roofs.

As we grew older, the school system started to improve. Teachers were able to provide more basic supplies, libraries started filling empty shelves with books and we started to see more technology being readily available to students. These changes were able to happen as a result of the significant work and advocacy by our school communities, district leaders and elected officials. Because of your hard work, our school system is no longer in fiscal distress.

Prior to the arrival of COVID-19 to our country, the District was gradually restoring staffing levels, the academic performance of our public schools was improving and the District would have had a balanced budget to allow for more investments in our schools.

Unfortunately, this is now in serious jeopardy. We know that you have serious budget considerations in front of you. But I ask, if City Council does not stand up for our students and our schools, who will?

Our public schools have made tremendous strides forward, and we cannot afford to take any steps back. We cannot have the future generations relive our 2007 school system. At this critical moment, we are asking you to honor the class of 2020 by safeguarding the education of all future classes by showing that education funding is too important to cut. Don't send our schools backward. Please do what it takes to fund education at its current level. Finally, as I conclude my testimony, I hope you will think of a public education student you know, and why their educational future is too important to jeopardize.

Despite these challenging times, the class of 2020 will continue moving forward. We are proud of the education our system was able to provide us, and we look forward to seeing it advance.

Thank you for listening to student voices.