



June 10, 2011

Good morning- I am Shelly Yanoff executive director of PCCY, the region's major child advocacy organization. I am here to say that we must – the city must- help out here- pass some kind of tax to help the city survive, the kids learn, families work, all of us have a future- and to spur the state to provide more for its biggest city, its biggest school system, its biggest charter system. We are not talking a little impact here- we are talking about laying off more than 1500 teachers, impacting more than 45,000 kids' lives- and we are talking about the flesh and soul of this city- the people who get up every day and go to work and hope their kids will be able to grow and thrive- learn and be safe.

We are talking about the loss of work, the loss of opportunity, the loss of hope, for growth and change for this- the city- becoming not the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection but of loss. We are talking about losing some of the best and the brightest- losing the progress that we had begun to see in our kids- losing the new families that were going to stay in the city and take a chance on its schools, losing the hope of every family with kids in southwest or northeast, losing, losing numbers of people working in what was once considered a valuable and safe profession- in north Philadelphia and center city- just losing .

I understand that most people are worried-about taxes and how to keep up – but we have to. To people who still want to believe in this city and to not shatter the dreams of the five year, ten year old or fifteen year old who began to believe and care- who do not want to see any more scenes of kids weeping because the teacher had to tell the kids that she won't be back in the fall – kids feeling kicked because they lose the art that makes school work best for them- lose the school they are finally succeeding in, lose the hope that they finally can get it together.

Unless you act, and the state follows – we will be the city that looked at evidence and nonetheless threw success out- because 32 cents a day was too much in property tax to help kids succeed over the years. Is 32 cents a day really too much for us?

If everyone who lobbied against the sugar tax, the corporations, the drivers, the bottlers had a child in our schools- would they still have thought that a few cents more on an unhealthy drink was too much to pay?

If the business community could find its voice in support of kids and education, would they continue to watch silently while the equivalent of all the players in all the four national sports leagues were laid off- impacting the number of folks who fill Citizens Bank Park during a game?

Would people who feel they have no skin in the game because their kids are not in our schools really consider what happens when education closes down in a city- still think they had no skin in the game? We all have skin in this game.

To those who feel they don't want to do something because they fear a law suit- think of the history of doing the right thing being challenged by the threat of a law suit. In this city- think of the people who risked law suits when they integrated neighborhoods -and were later proved right.

Doing the right thing does take risk but with accountability tied to the dollars, it is the right thing. This is not an easy decision but you need to take it - tens of thousands of kids and families urge you to do it.

We agree that money needs to be spent on what works, and we know there is strong evidence that says support early childhood and accelerated schools; rehire those yellow buses – save lives and law suits, keep the programs and class sizes and counselors and arts and music - they work . And sacrifice summer programs and Saturday programs that don't have much attendance and that we don't know results yet.

In this time and in this place – declare a new day of real accountability; insist that our schools get better and stand ready to work at it and support it. You Council have the power- take it

Thank you

