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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Public Citizens for Children and Youth. My name is Carolyn Adams and I have been a resident of Philadelphia for 35 years, taught courses in urban development, city problems and government policies to address them at Temple University for over 20 years and I am Board President of Public Citizens for Children and Youth. I am here today because like you, I am deeply invested in our city and the well-being of the children in our city. The future of both Philadelphia and our children are dependent, in large part, on a stepped up investment in our public schools.

The fiscal challenges that the District faces are part of a larger financial polarization that is taking place across the country. The latest United States Census data indicates that 57 percent of all children living in the United States are low-income or living in poverty. The picture is far worse in Philadelphia, where approximately 75 percent of the students in our public schools are low-income or living in poverty. The trend towards a shrinking middle class has resulted in communities polarized by income.

This economic polarization is also playing out in our schools. The concentration of poverty in the city means that our district is more financially strapped than others. It also means that it must invest more per child to achieve good outcomes than other districts where more affluent children enter school prepared to learn.

The School Reform Commission has proposed a budget that is bare bones, at best. We are grappling with a budget that will increase class sizes to a ratio of 33 to 1, leave 1 school nurse to meet the needs of 1500 students and eliminate arts, sports and extracurricular activities. These personnel and programs are resources that engage our students, facilitate learning of other subjects and prevent truancy and dropping out. Both research and our own personal experiences confirm this.

As we have these heart wrenching conversations, some districts in neighboring counties are planning to add programs that prepare students for SAT exams and Common Core standards. These are schools that suffered state budget cuts but increased local taxes to maintain small class sizes, arts, music and extra curricular activities.

But just keeping the doors open as they have been this year requires “shared sacrifice”. I am here today on behalf of the children and taxpayers who support the district’s request of \$60 million in additional local revenues. Without these funds, the city, our students, our new superintendent and the economic prosperity of our city are being set up to fail. While any discussion of the District’s financial management is fair because we all must be accountable, I believe this new superintendent has shown the resolve reduce wasteful spending at the administrative level and he’s overseen the heart wrenching effort to close schools. I am sure there are more savings to be found, but we cannot fool ourselves into thinking there will be enough to close the \$300 million plus structural deficit. This reality is best evidenced by the fact that closing 24 schools only saved \$28 million. We should squeeze every dime of waste out of the district and increase its efficiency. And we must invest because we are losing ground.

- **Over the past two years the state has cut nearly \$1 billion in education funding.** As a result, the District has been forced to cut more than \$330 million in spending for teaching and support staff and classroom supplies.
- **In the last three years, the state discarded the ground breaking school funding formula passed in 2008 that recognized the extra cost of teaching students who don’t speak English, who live in poverty or who have special needs. Right now, Pennsylvania is one of three states that does not have an education funding formula.**
- **Over the past two years, the State cut early childhood programs and the District eliminated ten percent of pre-k slots.**

Every school district statewide is in a vice due to the state budget cuts. But the Philadelphia School District is unique because it cannot increase property taxes to fill the void. It needs City Council to make those increases and that is why we are here today.

While it may feel like the District comes to you with its hand held out each year, we must remember that it is really the small hands of thousands of students asking for a chance. It may seem late in the game to put this “ask” on the table. But we should give Bill Hite credit for refusing to engage in fiscal charades that put off into the future, costs we have to pay today.

We may want the state to pick up the tab, and in our estimation they should. PCCY is doing hard work in Philadelphia and the five-county region to that end. But in our estimation, the state is unlikely to do their full part and even less likely to do anything if we are not willing to invest in our own students.

You are the first piece of the puzzle in rebuilding our schools. Without your investment the financial problems that the District faces will be exacerbated for years to come:

- **Students** will be in larger classes with fewer resources, which will further destabilize our schools
- **Teachers** will be laid off or may accept jobs in neighboring school districts where state budget cuts have had less of an impact, which will further destabilize our schools.
- **Families** with the ability to relocate may move to neighboring school districts in hopes of better educational opportunities for their children, which will further destabilize our schools.
- **Businesses** with job openings will increasingly hire from outside the city where comparatively more talented high school graduates will be in over supply.
- **The State** will be unlikely to increase its investment in Philadelphia, which will further destabilize our schools.

I know that some elected officials are wary that new funds will be used wisely. To this end, PCCY has some suggestions for recommendations that council could make to accompany its \$60 million increase in local funding

- Starting with early childhood education, as the district saves funds by contracting out its Head Start slots to community providers, we suggest that new funds be conditioned on the district agreeing to contract only with entities rated as high quality by the state – those would be STAR 3 or 4 centers; and that the district take a lead in local efforts to expand the number of young children enrolled high quality early childhood classes.

- To boost students' attendance and affiliation with school, we believe new funds should be conditioned on at least maintaining the current levels of arts instruction, sports and extracurricular activities.
- To drive down student absenteeism and support children's health, we believe that new funds should ensure that, at a minimum, the number of school nurses we have now should be maintained.
- To promote strong teams of teachers who can produce positive learning gains with students, new funds should be linked to efforts to affect the upcoming teachers union contract, specifically to permit site selection hiring in every school and end the practice of permitting teachers to transfer or be rehired outside the site selection process.

These are a just a few ways that your funds can help make sure our students walk through the doors next September and find schools that send the right signals – signals of respect, hope and a belief that every one of these students is a gem that we collectively work to polish so they can grow up and reflect the values we know the next generation will need to thrive. With that, I thank you for your time and remind you again that PCCY will actively support your effort to invest the requested \$60 million in our schools and we will continue to work with the District and others to advocate for the state to do its share as well.