



**Testimony Presented to the Philadelphia City Council
School Board Confirmations**

**By Symbol Lai, Philadelphia Mobilization and Policy Director, Children First PA
April 25, 2024**

Hello! My name is Symbol Lai. I'm here for Children First.

I'm here to testify in support of Mayor Parker's full slate of school board nominees.

I'm also here to testify in support of Joyce Wilkerson whose nomination is being held.

Ms. Wilkerson provides invaluable institutional knowledge to a new School Board comprised of many new faces who have never served the District in this capacity. She has served in the District in a board capacity since 2015 and has helped steer the District from severe budget cuts, dire fiscal straits, to fiscal stability.

You know that Children First has been here at City Hall practically every week since March encouraging City Council to increase local investment in the School District.

We want City Council to increase the share of property taxes going to the School District from 55% to 58%. This would bring in \$100 million of local recurring revenue.

One of the main concerns Councilmembers shared is that you want to know that the District is a good steward of money.

Council President, when I testified on March 27, you said that you want to make sure that every dollar given to the School District goes to the benefit of Philly students and I agreed. Children First wants that too.

One way to ensure that happens is by appointing Joyce Wilkerson. She knows how to weather storms and knows how to turn the District's fiscal situation around.

Without Ms. Wilkerson's experience, we'll have a School Board where the longest-serving member has only 2 years of experience - and ensure good fiscal stewardship of District dollars and District progress becomes that much harder.

We want Council to invest more in the School District in this year's budget. And we want the District to do what Council wants, which is to maximize all its money to the benefit of kids.

That is why I'm urging City Council to support Mayor Parker's full slate of School Board nominations including Joyce Wilkerson.

Thank you.