
Public Hearing

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before

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"State Takeover in the Jersey City School District"

LOCATION: Pope Lecture Hall
St. Peter's College
Jersey City, New Jersey

DATE: March 10, 1993
5:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF JOINT COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman
Senator Leanna Brown
Assemblyman Jeffrey W. Moran

ALSO PRESENT:

Melanie M. Schulz
Executive Director
Joint Committee on
the Public Schools



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JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
142 West State Street
CN-068 Room 305
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

C O M M I T T E E N O T I C E

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools
FROM: Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman
SUBJECT: Public Hearings

The public may address comments and questions to Melanie Schulz, Executive Director, at 609-633-6787.

PLEASE BE ADVISED OF THE FOLLOWING NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1993
5:00 P.M.
Pope Lecture Hall
St. Peter's College
Jersey City

The public is invited to address the Joint Committee on the Public Schools regarding State-Takeover in the Jersey City School District.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1993
6:00 P.M.
Kennedy High School
Paterson

The public is invited to address the Joint Committee on the Public Schools regarding State-Takeover in the Paterson School District.

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SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Chairman): Good evening. I am Senator Ewing, the Senator from the 16th District, which is Somerset County, and Chairman of the Senate Education Committee. Joining me so far tonight is Senator Leanna Brown, from Morris County.

SENATOR BROWN: Essex and Passaic.

SENATOR EWING: Essex and Passaic, excuse me. All of them -- parts of all of them.

I would like Bob Perry to say a few words before we start.

R O B E R T E. P E R R Y, ESQ.: Senators, allow me to take this opportunity to welcome you, not only to Jersey City once again, to hear from citizens and educators and community members, but also let me take this opportunity to welcome you to St. Peter's College. We are quite honored and pleased to serve as the location for this forum. We hope it will turn out to be a very fruitful evening, not only for the citizens of Jersey City who are here, but also for you, as you get some insight into our School District, what we are about, what we are committed to doing, and what we hope for in the future here.

I would like, once again, to welcome you. I am glad the snow did not keep you away. We look forward to a very fruitful night tonight. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Bob. We appreciate having the facilities here to use. We feel that these public hearings are terribly, terribly important in order to get the input from the citizens in Jersey City. I know it is a tremendous strain on most of the citizens that the State has taken over the District, but I think we all have to keep in mind that the child comes first. That is most important. The child is utmost in our minds.

We will hear from the different individuals. Also, Mr. Martin -- Joe Martin -- from Arthur Andersen, is here. Arthur Andersen just completed their first annual report of

two, which are required by the Legislature. Also, they will be going to Paterson, which is another District that has been taken over, to do a management study there, as well.

I just want to alert everyone here that I do not plan to hear any long, lengthy speeches. We have takeover. It is remaining in effect. The reports show that it is making progress. We want to hear the pros and cons from people, but we do not want any demonstrations from anyone, because we all want to get home-- Well, that clock is wrong. It says 12:00. We want to get home fairly early, if we can, but we do want the input. If you have suggestions to make, fine. We will be having another hearing in Jersey City in future months, maybe in about another five or six months. It is going to be an ongoing process.

These hearings are recorded. The staff from Trenton is here with us tonight. There will be typed up reports made from what is said, verbatim, so watch your language. I am the only one who has permission to not watch my language.

The first individual tonight will be Mr. Terrell Flood, from--

P. T E R R E L L F L O O D: From the Jersey City Board of Education.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, okay.

MR. FLOOD: I should have printed that. (referring to sign-in sheet) I can't write.

SENATOR EWING: I don't read shorthand.

MR. FLOOD: Okay, I understand.

Good afternoon, Senator Ewing, and members of the Joint Committee. My name is P. Terrell Flood, and I serve as the District's Affirmative Action Officer. In my capacity as Affirmative Action Officer, my duties range from the administration and monitoring of Board policies on equal education and employment opportunities, to a hearing officer

with special concentration on recruitment, hiring, training, transfers, promotions, PACO monitoring, etc.

At the outset of my tenure, Dr. Scambio expressed the District's, and her absolute commitment to affirmative action. Coupled with this commitment, was the total support of her office and of the District. Now the torch has been passed on to Mr. Victor Demming, the Acting State District Superintendent, and, without question, he, too, is totally committed to affirmative action in its fullest form. Today, March 10, 1993, I say, without reservation, that this commitment has, and is, being kept.

Because of Dr. Scambio, and now Mr. Demming, the Office of Affirmative Action is an integral part of all aspects of recruitment, employment, etc. I prescreen applications for minority and female inclusion, am informed of all employment opportunities, and am a standing member of all District interview process committees. This, in itself, is a major step forward.

The development and implementation of the District's Unified Equity Plan and the employment of the State's first multicultural supervisor, are two major affirmative action initiatives.

In conclusion, based on facts, the level of commitment and cooperation, etc., I envision nothing less than excellence in the areas of equal education, employment, and affirmative action in the years to come. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Mr. Flood. Are there any questions?

SENATOR BROWN: Yes. I am State Senator Leanna Brown.

In your top 20 positions in the school system here in Jersey City, can you give me any idea of the breakdown?

MR. FLOOD: We did a study -- and I have some statistics here--

SENATOR BROWN: I am just interested in the top echelon.

MR. FLOOD: Sure. We did a study of new hires from October 4, 1989 to present. I can say that basically, of the top echelon, 50 percent of the persons are minorities and women -- the top echelon.

SENATOR BROWN: You don't know how that 50 percent is broken down between minorities and women, and how much is overlap?

MR. FLOOD: I have that information at the office. If I had known that this would be requested, I would have brought it with me.

SENATOR BROWN: Through the Chair, it would be nice to have that information.

MR. FLOOD: No problem. I will be more than happy to present it to you.

SENATOR BROWN: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

I would now like to welcome Assemblyman Jeff Moran, from Atlantic, Burlington, and Ocean Counties. You had a long haul up here, so thank you for joining us.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: It's a pleasure, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR EWING: The next speaker will be Michael Donahue, Human Resource Department, Jersey City Board of Education.

M I C H A E L D O N A H U E: Welcome, Senators, and Assemblyman Moran. My name is Mike Donahue. I am in the Human Resources Department, Jersey City Board of Education. I would just like to state, before I give my little talk, that I was a resident of Jersey City for 40 years. For the last seven years, I have not lived in Jersey City. I have been employed by the Jersey City school system for 25 years; 13 as a teacher, 10 as an Assistant Principal in various schools, and the last two years in the Department of Human Resources.

Briefly, I want to inform you of the significant improvements that have taken place since the State takeover:

First, in November of 1992, there was a mayoral election in Jersey City. For the first time ever, teachers, custodians, administrators, and all other staff did not have to worry about whether they would be transferred or have a job the next day. The State has made certain that politics at City Hall do not intrude on us at the Jersey City public schools. Thank God.

Additionally, the Jersey City schools were probably the only large-city School District in the State to have fully certified classroom teachers on the first day of school. Books, teachers, and supplies were all there waiting for the students on the first day.

One of the reasons Jersey City was the subject of takeover, was because we had noncertified and inappropriately certified staff in our schools and in our Central Office. Since the State came in, I guarantee you that all staff is appropriately certified. Certification, however, does not guarantee that all our staff perform their jobs well. While the overwhelming majority of our teachers are dedicated and committed to the children, there are some who, for years, have shortchanged our youngsters, both by excessive absenteeism and by lack of competency. Since State takeover, more than 100 teachers have been brought up on tenure charges. Principals have been held accountable for accurately evaluating their staff members. For years, very few teachers received poor evaluations, before takeover.

The District has been criticized, and unfairly, if I may say so, for not having enough input from staff and community members. Let me say that prior to takeover, there was almost no input except for a few of the same people who spoke at every Board meeting. Now we have teachers and parents

on interviewing committees and on school site-based management committees.

Personnel who apply for positions in the District used to be picked by the Personnel Department. Now, neither the Superintendent of Schools nor the Human Resources Department selects staff to fill administrative and teaching vacancies. Committees consisting of principals, parents, teachers, and supervisors conduct interviews and make recommendations for hiring. In 1990, Jersey City started accepting alternate route candidates for teaching positions. Some people look at alternate route teachers as less qualified. This is not so. Candidates with extensive backgrounds in engineering have proven themselves to be excellent math teachers. Retired physicians have passed the National Teachers' Exam and have become excellent science and biology teachers. Like regularly certified teachers, we had some who were very good. Overall, it has been an excellent situation for the City to hire these people, by the way.

For the past two years, the Human Resources Department has initiated an aggressive college recruitment policy. I have arranged visitations at several of our area college campuses. Joining me on these visits are several subject area supervisors. For the 1992-1993 school year, we had to fill approximately 115 instructional positions. Through our early recruitment efforts, we were able to select what we considered the most talented and effective teachers to meet the needs of our students.

In the very near future, we will be attending career days at Jersey City State College, Kean College, Monmouth College, and Rutgers University. Mr. Philip Flood, the Affirmative Action Officer for the School District, constantly monitors the hiring practices and standard operating procedures to assure that the District's affirmative action goals are met. Mr. Flood also advises staff of all the current Federal,

State, and local policies regarding discrimination, whether it be sexual or racial.

We appreciate the Joint Committee holding this hearing in Jersey City. However, I hope you realize the political environment you have entered today. A large number of those who have spoken, or who have signed up to speak tonight, are either running for office in May or are working on candidates' campaigns. Unfortunately, this hearing will serve as a political forum for some, and will not give you an accurate picture of what is actually happening in the Jersey City public schools. Special interest groups will tell you a lot of negative things because they have not gotten what they wanted. The Hilltop Association wants a closed lunch at Dickinson High School because the school is across the street from where they live. Closed lunch at Dickinson High School is a physical impossibility because the cafeteria holds 350 to 400 students, and there are more than 2300 students in the school.

Individuals will complain a lot, but it is clear to me that they do not always have -- that they always have another agenda, and it is not "kids first." Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Mr. Donahue, is it Donaho or Donahue?

MR. DONAHUE: Donahue.

SENATOR EWING: Donahue. I'm sorry. I couldn't read your writing.

Are there guidance counselors in the elementary schools now?

MR. DONAHUE: Yes, there are. Every elementary school has a guidance counselor.

SENATOR EWING: So you have really seen an improvement, having been on the front line and actually teaching in some of the schools up here?

MR. DONAHUE: Yes, I have; I really have.

SENATOR EWING: Do you visit most of the schools in your position?

MR. DONAHUE: I try to get out when I have time. I did some evaluations this year.

SENATOR EWING: Are they in better condition now than they used to be?

MR. DONAHUE: Much cleaner; 100 percent cleaner, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Because the few schools that I visited here a month or so ago-- They were very few, but they certainly were clean. They're old, no question about that.

MR. DONAHUE: Very old, but I find that the staff -- the principals are held accountable now. They are on their staffs. They are evaluating their staffs more often, and because they are held accountable, the schools are much cleaner.

SENATOR EWING: Are there any other questions?

SENATOR BROWN: I have two questions: First of all, how does the staffing in the Central Office compare to what it was a couple of years ago? Is the number of people the same, or less, or more? You may choose your time period.

MR. DONAHUE: I'd say the staffing of the Central Office right now-- I wasn't there the first year of State takeover -- the first year the State took over the District. But I would say, being familiar with the District, that the Central Office has more people now than it had before takeover.

SENATOR BROWN: How many people are in the Central Office?

MR. DONAHUE: How many people are in the Central Office? Would you say instructional staff, or--

SENATOR BROWN: No, total bodies.

MR. DONAHUE: Four-hundred-and-fifty.

SENATOR BROWN: In the Central Office for Jersey City?

MR. DONAHUE: I think so, yes.

SENATOR EWING: I would like to interject here. Joe -- Mr. Martin -- do you have any idea? Do we have any figures on that in the study?

J O S E P H A. M A R T I N: (speaking from audience) Senator, we have those data. I don't have them with me. I think 450 is a bit high. It may be a definition issue of what is included in, in the Central Office. I will have a response for you, Senators-- (remainder of comment indiscernible; no microphone)

MR. DONAHUE: If you would like those figures, I can get them for you.

SENATOR EWING: My understanding was that there was a considerable cut in the number of people in the central headquarters.

MR. DONAHUE: I don't know how many were in the Central Office before I arrived at the Central Office.

SENATOR EWING: So it is hard for you to really say.

MR. DONAHUE: Yes, it's hard; it's very hard.

SENATOR EWING: They are in the study, Joe?

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, we have them in the work papers. I do not believe they are referenced in the report. We have a personnel profile. The supervisors in the Central Office have increased substantially.

SENATOR BROWN: Well, the relevance of this question is-- You heard the Chairman say at the beginning of the hearing that our primary objective -- and I share this feeling with Senator Ewing -- is the child.

My second question is: Where do we stand as far as how custodial services are being delivered? You mentioned that the schools are clean, and so on, and that the principals were in charge. Could you go a little bit more-- Do you have the same custodial system as before the State took over?

MR. DONAHUE: We have the same custodial system. The difference now is, when the custodial staff, through the principal, puts in requisitions for supplies, the supplies are

delivered to the schools in a much more timely manner. The custodial staff are now evaluated more often, and by being evaluated more often, they are more on the ball.

SENATOR BROWN: What does "more often" mean? What is the definition of "more often"?

MR. DONAHUE: Before the State takeover, there were instances where custodians in schools were never evaluated. Now they are evaluated at least -- at least once a year.

SENATOR BROWN: And there is no change in work assignment?

MR. DONAHUE: Yes, there has been. The principals, along with the custodians and the unions, have worked together and have redefined the job descriptions and the assignments for custodians.

SENATOR BROWN: Through some channels, or whatever-- The Chair may already have this, but I would be interested in seeing the job description of a custodian.

MR. DONAHUE: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: It is in the Andersen report, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Do you want to ask a question?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: No, I just want, first of all, to thank you for coming tonight and testifying. Can everybody hear okay with this mike?

SENATOR EWING: One is for the tape, and one is for the audience.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Which one is for what?

SENATOR EWING: Use both.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Oh, okay. Thank you.

I thank you for coming. You know, I had the distinct pleasure today -- and it was not a planned visit-- I notified our staff to notify Vic Demming that I was going to be in Jersey City today to visit the School District. I got here early today. I have to say, I have had the pleasure of meeting

Acting Superintendent Victor Demming in the past and working with him. As a career educator myself, and recognizing his expertise, I had the opportunity to spend some time with him today to go over the gap system and how the budget appears to be working with the District today.

Also, I had the pleasure of spending most of the day with Jeff Graber, the Assistant to the Superintendent, when we went around to the preschool programs around the District. I have to say, I envy the programs we have here. I think some of what you have said already was reinforced to me today by my visits. We had a number of discussions about the various curricular programs going on about the District. We visited various other facilities around the District.

I can't help but think of our past Assemblyman, Charles Catrillo, who is here, who was the original sponsor of this bill. I have to commend you, along with now Senator Palaia, who is the Senate sponsor.

When we originally debated this particular legislation-- I can remember the many hours of debate in the Assembly, as well as in the Senate. The kinds of things that were said about Jersey City schools, I could not believe. I did have the opportunity, with the help of Charles and some other members of the Legislature at the time, who showed me the School District-- As a professional educator from Ocean County -- Toms River, in particular -- I was appalled at what I saw. Let me tell you, I am impressed with what I have seen today.

We had the opportunity to spend some time at Dickinson High School. I take pride in the fact that my father is a graduate and my mother is a graduate of Dickinson High School. I know they would be proud to know that I was there checking their school out.

I have to tell you, it is a school that each and every one of you should be extremely proud of. It is the envy of those of us in suburbia, because it was a historical landmark

that appears to be extremely well-preserved. I was impressed by the custodial staff. They had no idea who I was, or what I was doing there. When I had free rein to walk the halls and to speak with people, I felt pride in the building. I felt pride in the community.

I think what we did in the legislation for the takeover-- I have to admit again that during the original concept of the law, I was not supportive of it. As a matter of fact, I lobbied strongly against it. I did eventually vote for it under duress from Charles and from Senator Palaia.

I just have to say, I look forward to coming back again. I have heard a lot of people talk about what is going to happen when the elected Board of Education takes over again. I am as concerned about that as the next guy, because if what I saw four years ago could ever happen again, it would be a detriment to the community, as well as to the children.

In closing, because I know, Senator, the weather is getting bad, and I know a lot of people want to get going, as well as myself-- I have a long ride ahead of me. But I just want to say, one thing showed out in particular today that I was extremely impressed with. Whether I spoke with a support staff personnel, whether I spoke with a janitor, whether it was a teacher or an administrator, everybody appeared to be talking about children, and it was a nice feeling. It is nice to know that a legislator from suburbia could come to the City and see that we are worried, we are concerned, and we are doing our best for the kids of urban America.

I think Jersey City -- the City itself -- should be proud, and in particular, I think the Board of Education and the administration should be commended, because what I saw today is something that four years ago I never would have believed. You should all be commended.

Thank you.

MR. DONAHUE: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Just one comment, Assemblyman: I was the sponsor on the Senate side of the bill.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: I know.

SENATOR EWING: No, no, you said Senator Palaia.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: No, Senator Palaia was an Assemblyman at the time, along with Charles.

SENATOR EWING: Okay. Phyllis D'Adamo, a parent and a taxpayer. Good. Join the crowd.

PHYLLIS D'ADAMO: Thank you.

Hi, good evening. Thank you, Senator Ewing, members of the Committee. The good Senator just took half of my speech.

SENATOR EWING: Can you all hear in the back?
(negative response)

MS. D'ADAMO: No. All right, I will try again. As a parent--

SENATOR EWING: Pull the microphone towards you.

MS. D'ADAMO: Okay. As a parent and a taxpayer -- and I have two children, one who just recently came through public school education under State takeover; one who, unfortunately, went through the Jersey City public school system prior to the State takeover -- I know the before; I know the after; and I really have to applaud the after. I have to commend, not only Dr. Scambio, Victor Demming, Judy Grannick, Dr. Graber, but everyone involved. They took on, not only a tremendous job, but a foundation of a building that was so crumbling, it would have gone down faster than the World Trade Center in New York.

The history of the Jersey City school system is known to everyone here. The same people who were here before the State takeover are still here. The saddest day will be when the State leaves. I do regret it. My children did benefit from it. I feel sorry for my neighbors' children and my friends' children, people sitting here, because it is the goose that laid the golden egg, and they want it back. They are biding their time.

I live approximately half a block from a public grammar school. My living room has a front view of this whole school yard. It's Public School No. 6. I can see visually, every day, the work, the improvement, and the conditions. Children no longer have to stand in a school yard that is littered with dog feces, broken beer bottles. Maintenance has gone on. I see it now during the summer; during the winter. These buildings have been neglected. They have been deprived. Talented teachers have gone, and sadly, talented children have been denied their God-given right.

I am sincerely afraid for my friends, my neighbors. They have young children. What is to become of them? If it were up to me, I would keep the State team. They don't have enough time. The job they took on-- Tremendous; huge. You have said most of it ahead of me. They don't have enough time to complete their work. I would truly love to see these people stay. They deserve a standing ovation for the hard work, the time, and the effort. They have taken abuse, and they will take it again, because the same people, again, are there. They want their golden goose back.

As a taxpayer, I know the game of Jersey City. Anyone who has been born and raised here, knows it.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. D'Adamo, I just want to say, as long as I am in the Legislature -- and I hope to be there for another four years, starting this coming January -- we will make sure that we keep an eye on any of the districts. There is no sense of the State taking over a district, putting the time, effort, and money into it, and then just letting it sink down again.

MS. D'ADAMO: All right. Well, Senator, the only thing I would like--

SENATOR EWING: We've got to keep it up, because without our children being educated, where is this State

going? It is just wrong. We've got to keep an eye on Jersey City, keep an eye on Paterson, and they will be monitored. Thank God for Commissioner Fitzgerald. At last we have someone who knows something about education, who is interested in education, and who thinks of the child. She is going to make sure that the monitoring -- that there is accountability out there. This is what we've got to have. If we start slipping back, we'll have to move in again.

MS. D'ADAMO: Well, as I said, I had two children. My oldest son, who is now 22-- In fact, this May he will be graduating from this institution. If he were here tonight, now, coming out of St. Peter's with a bachelor's degree in biology, he now knows the difference between what was a good education and what was taken away from him. To this day, this young man can tell you the names of the teachers who were good, and the ones who were just sitting there biding their time and collecting their paychecks.

SENATOR EWING: And health benefits.

MS. D'ADAMO: And health benefits. You know, I know so many people from the neighborhood. Most of them-- There were a few when the State took over-- Their attitude was that they were going to dig into the trenches. That is what they have done, and that is what they are waiting for.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Nick Antonicello. When you come up, would you please give your name slowly over the microphone, so the recorders can pick it up?

N I C H O L A S A N T O N I C E L L O: Good evening, Mr. Chairman. My name is Nicholas Antonicello. I am the President of Local No. 2262, and I represent over 700 members of the support staff in the Jersey City School District. I have been President for the past 16 years, and Vice President for the last two years -- the first two years. I have been here as a worker over 19 years with the Jersey City School District.

From this time, I can give you a firsthand account of what transpired before the takeover and during the takeover.

I come here today to speak on behalf of the complete takeover; to continue with support for the takeover, because prior to the takeover, the school system entirely-- I speak of the Food Service Department, the Maintenance Department, the Custodial Department, and the Security Department. One by one, they were riddled with political interference from City Hall, and make no mistake about that. Thirty-five percent of our employees at that time were provisional employees. To become permanent off the Civil Service list was almost impossible, because the organization would keep you as a provisional employee to maintain control of you.

Today, over 98 percent of our members are permanent Civil Service employees in the Jersey City School District. In the Food Service Department, prior to the takeover, the food was treacherous. Neither I nor you would want to eat it. Hot meals were minimum. The cooks and the service and the personnel who were employed were there merely to get a day's pay and go on. Today, we have Civil Service employees; people who have passed Civil Service tests, who are cooks, managers, and food service workers. We provide hot meals in high schools and grammar schools. We have a Breakfast Program. We have pre-K programs in all the schools today. I am happy to report today that the school system in Jersey City-- I eat today in the school cafeteria, where I would not eat before.

Our Security Department today is held to the highest utmost. In the urban areas, as you know, nationwide, there are detectors in the schools. We don't have them yet, nor do we intend to have them. We believe that the Security Department maintains full control of our children on campus.

Our Custodial Department today is held to the highest regard of cleanliness in the buildings. Our supplies and materials are there. They are ordered through the School

District. The principal is now in charge of the plant. Prior to that -- prior to that -- the principal could care less whether the building fell down. Today, the principal is responsible for the plant: for its cleanliness, for the grounds, for the exterior and the interior of the building. We have a graffiti crew which goes around and hits all of the buildings -- the 47, 48 buildings, plus our annexes.

Our Maintenance Department consists of our carpenters, our painters, our plumbers, our electricians, our Burglary Alarm Department. We maintain burglary alarms throughout the entire system, when the buildings are open, when they are closed. When someone goes into the system, it is all recorded at the Central Office, in-house, electronically. It was designed by our own employees. It is all done in-house.

Our staff -- our carpenter staff, our maintenance staff, our Painting Department -- are all qualified employees. As you tour the system, in the last four years, three-and-a-half years especially, they have gone out and done a bang-up job cleaning these schools up. Prior to that -- and I make no bones about coming here and testifying today -- the Director of Maintenance was riddled with politics. If you didn't buy a ticket, you were shipped out. Make no bones about it. If you were on vacation, he got you when you came back. Make no bones about \$5 tickets or \$10 tickets. They were \$100 tickets. Make no mistake about it. If you didn't buy one, you were shipped out. You were kept in line politically. Make no bones about anything that happened in the Jersey City School District. I know.

When Senator Feldman held his hearings in Jersey City, I did not come here to testify because I felt, at that time, that it was too soon a period to give a fair analysis of what was going to happen. Our position was to wait and see what the State did. What I have seen in three-and-a-half years is incredible. Our schools are clean; they are maintained; they

are painted. Our custodial staff has supplies. Prior to this, our custodial workers were bringing things from home to clean the windows of the schools. I defy anybody -- anybody -- to change that statement about the workers of the Jersey City School District, especially in our local. The Maintenance Department, the Custodial Department, the Security Department are second to none in the State.

We are fully dressed with uniforms. Our contract -- our labor contract-- We were the first local under State takeover to have a contract signed and ratified by the State Superintendent of Schools; the first time in the history of Jersey City, in the history of Hudson County. We were the first local to come out and have a signed contract ratified by its rank and file prior to the expiration date of the agreement of January of 1993.

So, Mr. Chairman, I come here today to speak not only in support morally of the labor force of Jersey City, but to continue to support the watchdog attitude of the system. It is a mortal sin -- I say it is a mortal sin -- if it ever goes back to the way it was, and make no bones about that.

Yes, someone stated a moment ago that the sharks are out there, trying to wait things out. Of course they are. You are going to hear them today, and you are probably going to hear them in the future.

In closing, let me just thank the Committee -- the Senators and Assemblymen -- for taking this opportunity to come here to Jersey City. We welcome you to be watchdogs over what is happening and over how our tax dollars are being spent.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Do you have any questions, Senator Brown?

SENATOR BROWN: Yes. I am just curious. Do you have any idea how many cafeteria workers you have compared to before takeover? Is it about the same number?

MR. ANTONICELLO: No, no, no, no. The cafeteria employees prior to the takeover were the revolving door of personnel. They were not permanent. Most of them were not permanent; they were temporary employees. They would change with the administration. Those who were permanent were Civil Service employees, and they could not be touched because of Civil Service. The key to the whole thing was to keep the provisional employee because you could get rid of him. You kept him in line politically. Today, that is no more. Today our Cafeteria Department is over 200 manpower strong. It has increased over 100 percent. We have our Breakfast Program, our Lunch Program; we give hot dinners in the schools, which we never did before. More children are eating in school today than in the history of Jersey City. Prior to that, the Food Service Director couldn't boil water, nor give an order or instructions for the menu for the children of Jersey City to eat.

The Custodial Department-- Supplies are there. When you monitor it today, no one in our local purchases his own supplies anymore. Our Maintenance Department is there. We did the pre-K garden on Montgomery Street. This is the first time in the history of Jersey City that we had a pre-K garden -- in Jersey City, our Montgomery Gardens. It was the Maintenance Department and the Custodial Department that built that. That was a police department for the gardens of Jersey City on Montgomery Street. We have just opened one recently down at Dunkin Gardens -- on Dunkin Avenue. I think, Senator, you were there on opening day at the pre-K. We maintain them; we build them; we clean them; we keep security; and we feed them.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Father Santora. And, Father Santora, we will call the people in the order we wish to. It has nothing to do with whether you phoned down there. I think it is only a courtesy

that people sign up as they come in, and we take them in that order. Father? Did you hear me, Father?

FATHER ALEXANDER M. SANTORA: Senator Ewing, I called Ms. Schulz to check that out.

SENATOR EWING: Fine, we had a lot of people call, but when they come into this hall, I will run the meeting as to when we bring them up. We like people to sign up.

FATHER SANTORA: I think the order is a bit politicized, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Will you please proceed with your testimony?

FATHER SANTORA: I come before this Committee with a healthy dose of skepticism and a tinge of cynicism about what these hearings may accomplish.

This is the third such hearing I am attending, and the second at which I offer testimony as a State-appointed member of the Jersey City Board of Education, an insignificant body rendered deliberately so by the State takeover law.

The first two hearings held in December 1990 and June 1991, produced a report dated July 8, 1991 -- which I have right here before me -- which never saw the light of day because Senator Ewing did not sign off on it until the Republicans were in control of the Legislature and wouldn't dare endorse Democratic conclusions.

Why will these hearings be any different, and to what use are scores of community members' and district employees' testimony if the Republicans lose control of the Legislature in November and the Democrats ditch the results of these hearings?

I would like to think that those of us who take time to speak to you today do so because we believe that our experiences and ideas transcend partisan politics, and veer toward a common good about the future of our schools, children, District, and City.

In that fashion, let me remind the members of the Committee of some of the previous recommendations made in that July 1991 interim report:

* The State takeover law should be amended to provide that one year following the establishment of a State-operated district, the board of education shall become a voting board.

* The State takeover law should be amended to include more specific direction to the board concerning its organization and selection of officers.

* Qualified individuals with a State-operated district who were employed by the district prior to State intervention should be interviewed and considered for available positions prior to candidates from outside the district.

Yet, the local Board still is relegated to the fringe of running this District, and I see no imminent change to the contrary.

In fact, we found out that the Arthur Andersen study was actually in the District by reading a story in The Jersey Journal, and they had been here for months. Their representatives met with the Executive Committee of the Board right before Christmas of last year, one week before their interim report period ended and they prepared their findings.

If this Board was thought to be significant, we would have been the first group to meet with Arthur Andersen's representatives. I think their meeting was an afterthought that had no substantial impact on their interim report issued February 19, 1993. But I'm glad, because I think the report is superficial, inadequate, and skewed, and I wonder if it is worth the quarter million dollars it is costing the State to contract with Arthur Andersen.

Call it "interim," and also call it borrowed from everything supplied by the State team without, I think, enough evaluation of the plan and the reality to see if what's on paper is real.

Examine the exhibits -- which I have in front of me -- soliciting opinions from District employees and community members. There are no numbers to indicate how many people were surveyed, who selected them, and under what conditions the surveys were distributed. For me, those percentages are meaningless, and I have yet to meet one community member or District employee who mentioned anything about being surveyed.

Now, consider the timing of the release of the interim report. First, the State team running the schools attempts to get the elections delayed by having the Attorney General's Office rule on the takeover law. It fails to delay the elections. Now, the Chair of this Committee hurriedly convenes a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board with several days' notice, to discuss the takeover law with the real intent, I think, to craft legislation to postpone the election. Mix in the Arthur Andersen report to bolster the opinion that the State needs more time to fix Jersey City's schools.

As an addendum, The Star-Ledger reported on February 3, 1993, that Dr. Scambio has awarded a \$98,000 contract to Arthur Andersen, "To follow State Education Department school monitors as they conducted what amounted to a dry run of the State's new monitoring scheme."

People say politics in Jersey City was bad. There is still politics in Jersey City's schools, and it is no more acceptable when it is perpetrated by the State and State employees. There is no local accountability in this District, and the elections would have assured that to begin, if even in a less-than-perfect fashion.

I, too, read documents that talk about interviewing processes and appointments and maintaining stability in individual school administration. Then I talk to principals who tell me that sometimes when they try to remove incompetent teachers, the State team resists their efforts. Or principals make specific plans for their schools, only to be told it

cannot be done because it does not square with the public relations effort of the State team.

I hear how committees are forced to conclude that certain candidates pass muster and others do not.

Let's focus for a moment on Snyder, one of our five high schools and the one that presents the most challenge to the District. Keep in mind that the State's been here for three-and-a-half years. Snyder has had four principals, the current one, acting. Twelve assistant principals changed during that time. One principal from outside the District had the school held open for him until he could be free of his contract. He was summarily removed in the middle of this past year and placed in a high Central Office position. Last week, the acting principal removed two assistant principals and promoted two teachers not in the pool for promotion, to assistant principals. All this when Middle States is scheduled to visit the school next month.

I visited and toured the school with the principal this afternoon. Drilling, painting, and refurbishing are being done during school hours and in spaces where staff and students interact. I am told none of the fumes are toxic, but areas of the school smell and could nauseate people. She has no control over this work, but someone does not know how to plan and schedule.

The Snyder focus just illustrates how a few people direct this District in any fashion they deem proper, being accountable to no one -- the Board, the parents, even the staff at the schools.

Intervention in school districts may be necessary; takeover does not work. This State team has still not dissipated the hostility that would be expected when it first came into Jersey City, but certainly not after this length of time. Deus ex machina may be a device that works in literature; it does not work in school districts.

The City, the politicians, the residents, the teachers, the unions-- We are no longer the problem in Jersey City's schools. The State is now the problem. Ample time has been given to bring people aboard so we are part of the solution. It has not happened.

Let me play devil's advocate -- an appealing proposition dealing with the State -- for a moment. Extend takeover five, six, ten years, and you won't have to change any laws. The people of Jersey City will drive the State team out of Jersey City. We're tired of the massive spending, the inflated salaries, the autocratic policies, the paper chase, the fortress mentality, and the mean-spirited retaliations.

It is past time to return the schools to local control. You want our schools to be reformed, then change this law and give us a share in the stake of our students and schools. We might not be any better, but we certainly couldn't do any worse.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Ella Lawrence.

E L L A L A W R E N C E: Mr. Chairman, Senator Ewing--

SENATOR EWING: You can pull the microphone down -- that's it, closer to you.

MS. LAWRENCE: My name is Ella Lawrence. I am a former educator. I have been in retirement since 1985.

As I said here tonight, I am here because I am concerned about the welfare of our City. I raised five children. I like the word "raised." We know the accepted statement is "reared," but having raised five of my own children and two grandchildren, and having worked for the Jersey City public school system for 30 years and four months, I have had adequate experience in working with human beings, and I think the word "raised" is quite adequate, because so much input must be made working with young people.

I am concerned from more of a humane aspect -- personal, family, citizen, taxpayer aspect. I am not going to get involved with any statistics. I am concerned about the apparent erosion that has taken place in this City, as I see it. I want to say here, I was impressed as I listened to the various speakers, except the last speaker, the Father. The mental note that I made is that every speaker seemed to have been an enabler, here to give an accolade for the system. If that is his bread and butter, you can't blame him. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.

So, I am not here worrying about being fed by anybody. One made the statement-- I believe the first speaker made the statement that nobody would be here, possibly, tonight, but people who have -- I am going to use the term, the vernacular, an ax to grind, or who are political in their thinking, and if you have not allied yourself to get someone in, then you are here to throw brickbats at somebody, or stand up for somebody who you would like to see. Well, I do not belong in either one of those categories. I am just here out of civic, community, parental concern.

I can see the erosion that has taken place. It is unbelievable that we have an outsider in our house, running our house. We are told-- I attended a meeting and I voiced this sentiment before. There is no parental-- The Superintendent was at that meeting. She chaired that meeting, I believe. That was some years ago. "There is no input allowed for parents," she said. Now, who ever heard of anything like that? You are going to take my child, and you are going to teach him, and you are going to lead him, and you don't want to hear from me? I have no right of self-determination? We must foot the bills; we must pay the taxes.

SENATOR EWING: There is no input today, you say?

MS. LAWRENCE: No, not today; in the system the way it is organized in this new management, you know. Parental? No,

you can't have any part in decision making. No. So now, who ever heard of anything like that? But we are subjected to it. Some people said they want it to continue. I see that you have tried to do a good thing, which we appreciate, because every school in this City has not deteriorated. I don't want to give myself an accolade, but I came through the system. I graduated from the schools in Jersey City. My husband and I raised five children. Three of them turned out professionally: One is a dean in a theological school; another is with the judicial system; and the other -- the third one that did well -- is in business. Now, the last one did not take to books, but she is a secretary.

Now, I give an accolade to the system. There is no perfection anywhere. Regardless of what employment or what profession you find people allied with, you are going to find dedicated people, and you are going to find people who are there just sitting it out, as someone said, until the day is over; then get their paycheck and are sure of their health insurance. Wherever you go, you are going to find people like that; you are going to find imperfection, but there are also dedicated people. Let's give them their due praise.

This system was not bad. We have had some imperfections, I say again, but it was not as bad as we have painted it to be, because I know too many-- How do you really evaluate what is being done in the factory? By the product, how the product is rated when it goes out. But the problem there is, the deficient people, the unmotivated young people, the problem people, they get the accolade. They get the attention. I shouldn't say "the accolade." We are not happy about them, so we are not clapping glad hands and praising them. But they get the recognition. We see very little recognition given to our young people who do well who come through the public school system, and believe me, there are a lot of them.

I don't want to dwell on that. I am concerned about the-- I make the statement that I wish to see, as a taxpayer, as a parent, as a grandparent, and as a former educator-- I would like to see the system returned to the people of Jersey City where it belongs. This is our house; these are our children. We pay the taxes. We have done a pretty good job so far. Give us a chance. The monitoring, I would not quarrel with. You have attempted to do some good here, so naturally you don't expect to stay here and keep us, should I say incarcerated, forever. But we would expect you to be concerned to see how well your seeds will grow, what you planted here -- new ideas, new concepts that you established here.

I would not say, "Just close the door and go." You have a right to monitor and see the good -- compare the good that you have tried to do with what is going on behind you. So I would have no quarrel with that. But the voters voted-- The greatest number of votes were yes to have the public schools returned to the citizens of Jersey City. Why can't the voters be respected? Parents, everybody knows what is best for us. We must pay the dues, but we cannot have input. We have no right of self-determination.

There was something else that disturbed me. We talk about politics and politics. The thought that comes to my mind is, how much politicking went on to get us afflicted with this system? This is an affliction. Now, how much politicking went on for us to be afflicted with this current system?

When this State takeover was innovated, I recall reading in The Jersey Journal -- I have it, but I didn't-- I saved so much that my papers are putting me out of where I live. I am a collector. I read where the Superintendent and her staff toured the Board of Education. The paper-- Nobody protested. She did not protest. If it was said that I allegedly said that, and I didn't say it, I would have taken issue with it. The newspaper reported that the statement was

made -- it was in a long article, but the statement was there -- that when she saw the ethnic setup in administration and the Board of Education, she said, "This has to go." And we talk about politics; we talk about favoritism. Who would she be favoring but the people of Jersey City? We have carried on this City umpteen years, and now we don't know how to do anything right? We don't have young people-- Our teachers went through the public schools and private schools and colleges. You are not going to tell me that all of the professors that one must pass to earn a degree-- You are not telling me that they are all going to favor a person, and say, "Okay. It is okay for you to go by." No, it doesn't go like that.

I am a graduate of Seton Hall University myself. After I had five children, I returned to school and earned three degrees of my own. It is hard work. No school of integrity is going to allow anything like that. You have to earn your keep.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Lawrence, I'm sorry to try to cut you off, but we have a lot of people here who want to say something.

MS. LAWRENCE: All right. There are just two other things.

SENATOR EWING: To sum up, what you're saying is, the takeover should not be here. The takeover is not working.

MS. LAWRENCE: No, it is not working.

SENATOR EWING: Fine. I think--

MS. LAWRENCE: Give our people a chance to run our City. While we are talking about a value system, we want to go back to the waterfront and house a school -- a grammar school, I believe -- in one of those high rises, so that the children will be motivated by the skyline and Ellis Island. I have toured Ellis Island. There is nothing there to motivate anybody. I can't find one name or one reference to the

Afro-Americans there, and we have made great contributions to this country. We came in chains, but we have risen as a people to assert our rights as citizens of this country.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. LAWRENCE: This is--

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Lawrence, truly, we have to--

MS. LAWRENCE: All right, all right, but we have the Board of Education, which should be a place of dignity, over here in a factory loft, when that Board of Education should be equal to the City Hall, the Administration Building, any other administrative building of importance. Yet, we are satisfied to house that that way, while the taxpayers are losing their homes -- an unprecedented loss due to tax liens because of the financial afflictions on this City.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. The next speaker will be Charles Catrillo.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Hey, Charlie -- Assemblyman.

SENATOR EWING: Former Assemblyman.

C H A R L E S J. C A T R I L L O: For the record, my name is Charles Catrillo. I live at 214 Hopkins Avenue, Jersey City. I am a lifelong resident. As Assemblyman Moran pointed out before, in another life, it seems, I was a member of the Legislature. I was the only member of the State Legislature who was a resident of Jersey City -- there were four of us at the time that this bill was passed -- who actually voted for this bill.

I just want to remind-- Well, first I want to speak in favor of continuing the State control of our schools. Why do I say that? I just want to let the panel know what our Board of Ed was like prior to intervention. Prior to intervention, in order to become a School Board member, you had to be appointed by the Mayor. Now, I served several Mayors here in Jersey City. I know how the School Board members were picked. They were picked because they were loyal; because they

would do what they were told; and because they worked for the Mayor, not because they were good individuals. It is not necessarily that I am saying they were bad, but the qualifications had nothing to do with anything. It was whether or not you were loyal.

If you went to a Board of Ed meeting in those days, you would be struck by two things: One, the length of the agenda, and two, the length of the session itself. It would routinely start at, say, 7:00 p.m. and go until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. There would be, sometimes, 400 or 500 separate line items to be voted on by the Board. If you wanted to be promoted, demoted, transferred, hired, get a leave of absence, anything, it was a separate line item to be voted on by the entire School Board, an unheard of practice in any other school board in the State of New Jersey. That is the way they did it in Jersey City.

Why? Because if you were a teacher and you wanted to get from School A to School B, you had to have a majority of the School Board members vote for it. The only way you were going to get a majority was to talk to somebody; go down to City Hall and ask the Mayor's Chief of Staff to talk to the President of the Board, and if you were politically acceptable and did what you were told, you got your promotion or your change of venue. If you weren't, you didn't.

I can remember very vividly -- vividly -- sitting in the Chief of Staff's Office of the Mayor of Jersey City, downtown in City Hall, planning a fund raiser for the Mayor. On the desk was a pile of 500 \$100 tickets. On the top of them was a little stickum, a little yellow stickum, that said, "Board of Ed." The people who bought those tickets and the people who sold those tickets are the people who got ahead. If you didn't buy and you didn't sell, or you didn't play the game, you went no place.

I want to relate just briefly a quick story on why, when I was in the Legislature, I supported this bill so heavily. I used to live right across the street from St. Peter's College, right over on Fairmount Terrace. I came out of my house one day and there was a little boy who lived down the block playing. So I just said, "Hello, how are you?" Then I said, "How's school?" He said, "Oh, school." I said, "What do you like about school?" He said, "I like art, but we have nothing." I said, "What do you mean you have nothing?" He said, "We have no crayons; we have no paint; we have no paper; we have nothing." I said, "What do you draw with?" He said, "I draw with my pencil."

Now, I get in my car and I drive around the corner. I stop at the stoplight of Montgomery Street and Kennedy Boulevard, right around the corner. As God is my witness, who pulls up alongside of me but the then Superintendent of the Jersey City school system. I look over. He is sitting in a \$500 suit in a shiny, black Buick that we bought for him. As I was sitting there looking at him, along comes this little boy from my neighborhood up the block. That is what the Jersey City school system was all about prior to takeover. It was shiny limousines for the administrators, and no crayons for the kids.

As several other speakers have alluded to, the same phony-baloney politicians who were in charge then are still here. They haven't gone anyplace. They're here, and they are waiting for you to leave. I have had it said to me a dozen times, "You know, we can't wait for those guys to get out. We'll be back." Please, on behalf of the citizens of Jersey City, on behalf of the kids of Jersey City, please don't abandon us back to that old system. I mean, we have kids that live in places that you wouldn't even want to drive past. These kids have nothing. Most of them don't even have hope. Their only chance of getting out of what they are in is to be

educated. The way the school system was run in the old days, they had no chance of being educated, because nobody gave a damn about the kids. All they cared about was moving the 500 tickets that the Mayor's Office sent down.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Are there any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Yes, Senator. Charlie, before you go, could you-- First of all, it wasn't that long ago that Charlie sat behind me and I used to hear that speech every week. It was persuasive then, and let me tell you, it is persuasive now. It does seem like another life, and I have been there long enough to know.

I have a question to ask you. You live in the community, and I am a visitor here. Voting in the Legislature when you have an impact on communities-- That is why we have hearings like this, to get the input. What do you suggest as an alternative to turning the schools back over to the community next year?

MR. CATRILLO: Well, I would like to see the State continue in control for the full term allowed under the present law, first of all. When the schools are turned back to the community, I understand that under the legislation there will be an elected School Board. That would be, I guess, a step in the right direction.

What we have to watch out for is the political influence. I mean, there has to be a set of standards. There has to be some way that the people who are appointed to the Board know what they are doing; know what they are talking about. I can remember someone being a Board of Ed member who had to resign when it was realized that she was a dropout from one of our high schools. She never even graduated high school. What kind of an example is that for the children of Jersey City? We are supposed to be educating them. We are telling them, "You guys have to stay in school and get educated

to get ahead," and sitting on the Board of Education is a high school dropout, with no diploma. That is the kind of stuff we have to eliminate.

Now, how you are going to do that, I am really not sure. I mean, you guys are in the Legislature now, and I am out -- thank God. But, there has to be some mechanism whereby we safeguard the quality of appointments, and we make sure the phony-baloney politicians just stay out of it. I mean, I am a politician, and I am proud of it, but I never, ever had anything to do-- (laughter and indiscernible comments from members of audience) I am. I can remember--

I am going to tell you something: I remember when this legislation was passed. I can remember people saying to me, "Well, you just want it so you can put somebody -- a friend of yours -- in charge." I am proud to say, as I stand here tonight, the woman who took over the Jersey City school system -- Dr. Scambio-- I have never met her; I have never spoken to her; I have never been in the same room with her. I have had no contact, no input, and I don't want any. The one thing that we politicians-- Among all the other things we do, the one thing I think we should just keep our hands off, is the school system. I mean, we can screw up public works; we can screw up the Water Department and everything else, and it is not so bad. But when you take a whole generation of kids and consign them to second-class status because they don't have an education, that's terrible. That is morally wrong.

Whatever system you come up with in order to safeguard-- Those, I think, are the talking points that you would have to be concerned with; just ensuring quality people and ensuring nonpolitical interference. Okay?

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Joy Dechert, a parent.

J O Y M. D E C H E R T: Senator Ewing, members of the Committee: Number one, let me state, as a previous spokeswoman

came up to this mike and said, everyone who has cheered for the State takeover, was employed. Let me state, number one: I am a parent. I am not employed by the Board of Education. I hold a separate job. All right? I have nothing to gain by making the statement I am making except the education of my daughter and my grandchildren. That has been number one.

I have been involved at Board of Ed meetings. My son is now 28 years old, going on 29. Since he started kindergarten, I have been attending meetings, and I have been through many Board of Eds and through many Mayors. I watched the politics being played. Father Santora, who I resent, on one hand for going ahead of me, because he came in later-- But I am glad he spoke before me. He has said that it couldn't get any worse, but Father Santora never attended a Board of Ed meeting until he was put on the Board, and he doesn't stay for the full Board of Ed meetings either. All right?

Father Santora feels that it was better before, but he has no children in the system. I have seen the improvements; I have seen the cleanliness of the schools; I have seen the cafeterias improve; I have seen education improve. I have a child now-- I am very proud, and I am glad the Assemblyman spoke on going to Dickinson, because that is where my heart is. It has been there. I am a Dickinson High School graduate. I have three grown children who are Dickinson High School graduates. I am now the proud parent of a science honor student in Dickinson High School. Were it not for the State takeover, my daughter would not have been a science honor major. She was a disaffected child who was bored in school, and the teachers let her be bored. And it is a shame, because we have some damned good teachers in the system. Nine out of ten are damned good teachers. They did not know how to reach my daughter. The State came in; we got a new principal; and my daughter took an interest in education again. She was accepted to science honor, and she is doing quite well. She is a

well-rounded student at Dickinson High School, and she enjoys school; enjoys going to school.

As I said, the only thing I wanted to gain was an education for my children. I have seen fantastic teachers being punished. Everyone in this room can remember the bloodbath of '81. When Mayor McCann was not supported for Mayor, some teachers were moved around radically; torn out of schools; torn away from children and sent all over the City, because they didn't support him, so they didn't have a right to be up in the schools where they were. They were taken away from the students.

I have seen administrators go up and down like yo-yos with each Mayor. They would be up at the Board of Ed, the next Mayor would come in, and they would be back down in the school. Punishment went on. I have not seen that recently.

The woman who spoke before me said that there has been no parental input. I have never called the Board of Ed where Dr. Scambio has not returned my phone call to ask me what the problem was. I have spoken at many Board of Ed meetings. I have gotten results.

I have no problem with State takeover. I wish the State would amend one thing in the State takeover law: Let the election be open to the public, because of the 13 members you have, I can't see voting for two or three of them. All right?

I am glad that the legislation went through to postpone the election. I think it should be open to the public, because we do have many caring people who would probably run, who could do a much better job than any one of these people has done.

We have to move and juggle around Board of Ed meetings, because the only way to get the Board of Ed into different schools, is to move the Board of Ed meeting. Aside from attending their meetings, half of them do not attend anything else. Their only interest is to go there and

filibuster at meetings. They do not bother to pick up a phone to find anything out, which we do, as parents. They have to filibuster at the meeting.

I am afraid for it to be returned to local control. I do not want to see what went on before. It can get worse. It was worse; it was much worse. As I said, I have seen definite improvement.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. The postponement of the election-- They will be getting more authority. We feel this will certainly help the attendance, so that when the election--

MS. DECHERT: But, it scares me for them to have more authority.

SENATOR EWING: So when the elections come up, they will only be selecting nine out of the 15. I think they are two short.

MS. DECHERT: But I think the legislation should be amended to open it to the public.

SENATOR EWING: Well, not the first go-round.

MS. DECHERT: I think it should.

SENATOR EWING: Okay. Thank you.

Edward Meehan.

E D W A R D C. J. M E E H A N: For the record, my name is Edward Meehan. I live at 100 Beacon Avenue.

I am in favor of extending the takeover. However, I must-- I would be very, very delinquent, as a citizen, if I didn't say that I am not one million percent satisfied with the current situation. Some of the presentations here today of everything being peachy, creamy, smack of the very old-time administrations we had before. When everything was falling apart, we had the same kind of public relation presentations, and it doesn't wash. Proof of that is the fact that in spite of the situation, there has been improvement, and there has been some administrative improvement.

Nonetheless, the majority of the voters of this City voted to end this takeover and to return this system to local control. Part of that is because there has been, in many instances, some arrogance, and a public relations disaster. I know of two. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks sponsor a national sponsorship, one of the most prestigious in the country. Our Scholarship Chairman, last year, received no cooperation from this group. As a result, not one applicant from any of the five public high schools in Jersey City submitted an application for that school -- for that scholarship.

Worse, we also sponsor a Hoop Shoot Contest, as does the Knights of Columbus. Again, neither one of these groups were given any cooperation by this group. Now, Hoop Shoot Contests are just something-- You know, it's basketball, and we are involved with learning. That is one of the most important things. We must get our house in order and, by all means, this takeover has helped to put it in order.

I am very happy to hear that a certain amount of authority is going to be given to the School Board. That is important. Nobody should be answerable to absolutely no one, only to get along with so-called reports and statistics, and things like that.

Overall, our school systems and our students are not where they were. Years ago, when we had one of the most notorious political machines in this country, the school children were never touched. This City supported a school for crippled children. It also provided two years tuition-free of college, one of the first in the State to do that. Again, the politicians back then knew what they were doing. They stayed out of education. During this time -- I think Senator Brown knows him -- Ed McGee was a French teacher in Dickinson High School, and an outspoken Republican. He wrote letters, did everything. He never was touched. Ironically, with so-called

reform regimes that came in -- they were reformers in one term and convicts the next -- the system deteriorated terribly. And, yes, there were interfering schoolteachers removed from classrooms at midterm; principals taken from one place to the other. By all means, we need outside intervention. We must not allow that to go back, and the situations are here in this community to allow that.

In order for that to be prevented we need time. What has to be done is, one step at a time. One, the group appointed must have more authority. The people involved must be answerable, and a lot of this arrogance had better go, because if it doesn't, there will be a return to the local authorities, and it will be as bad as it was, if not worse, and you will be back here in five years taking it over again, and that does not help anybody.

When you go, you should be able to go for good. Hopefully, the people will be awakened enough to take an interest in their children's education and make sure it is run properly.

Bear these things in mind: Right at this time, our City is -- the people of this City are being taxed to the hilt. They are being given these Board of Ed budgets, inflated still. There are senior citizens in the downtown section of this City who are paying \$9000 and \$10,000 a year in property taxes. That's a fact. These are not Taj Mahals, although they are fine buildings, very old ones.

These problems -- taxation, school dropouts, children who are still not receiving their education-- Until this system is returned to where it was, to where in Jersey City, Dickinson High School-- I am a graduate from there. At one time, that was one of the finest schools in the State of New Jersey. Until we return to that, regardless of which system, there are no accolades to anyone.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

MR. MEEHAN: I'm sorry, there is one other thing. Someone alluded to the situation up there in Dickinson. For anyone to engage-- Anyone who opposes-- There are pros and cons in everything. It is on balance. As members of the Legislature, you know that. To attack anybody who disagrees with me, or anybody else, as having an ax to grind, or something else-- Richie Boggiano and the Hilltop Association have done a wonderful job in that neighborhood. They are caring people. They are as concerned about this school system as anyone. I would say this: They probably disagree with me here today, but I'll be damned if I would have some outside educator who is giving this public relations, peachy, creamy presentation to denigrate him or anybody else in this City.

That is the problem. That is one of the reasons why they lost, when they shouldn't have.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Judy Piserchia?

J U D Y P I S E R C H I A: Chairman Ewing, distinguished Committee members: My name is Judy Piserchia, and I teach at P.S. No. 29 in Jersey City. I have been teaching for 21 years. My career has taken me from Jersey City's Catholic school system to the Jersey City public school system.

Last year, I was selected the 1992-1993 Teacher of the Year for Jersey City, and the 1992-1993 Teacher of the Year for Hudson County. Finally, I was one of five finalists for the State Teacher of the Year. The time restraints of today's hearing limit me to saying that a great honor has been paid to me, and I am profoundly grateful.

The relevancy of all this, however, is that I categorize myself as a teacher who is keenly aware of the professional benefits of teaching in a system which honors its teachers' efforts and performance. Dr. Scambio and her staff have put a newfound pride into the Jersey City teaching arena

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by recognizing the fine performances of teachers in our district. Without a doubt, the most energizing, exciting, and professionally fulfilling seminar that I have ever attended in my 21 years of teaching, was a three-day professional development seminar set up by Dr. Scambio for the Jersey City public schools, in partnership with Merrill Lynch and MacMillan-McGraw Hill. The State obviously understands the value of infusing teachers with new ideas, new skills, and greater enthusiasm and determination.

In the past four years, the number of workshops and in-service days offered to teachers has increased dramatically. Not only has the number of such services increased, but there is a new validity and relevance to what is being offered. Workshops and in-service days are one of the most important methods by which we, as teachers, network. It is how we return to the classroom newly energized and motivated. The State has actively encouraged and rewarded teacher input into the system. My colleagues and I have been sought to serve on curriculum and examination committees. For too long we, as classroom teachers, were isolated from much of the decision-making process. I cannot tell you how exciting it is to finally hear administrators say, "Come work with us, and together we will design a curriculum," or, "Come work with us, and we will make up midterm and final exams."

The State has supported a contractual term which sets up a fund from which my colleagues and I can apply for partial reimbursement for graduate courses successfully pursued. Again the State has recognized the necessity for teachers to continuously upgrade themselves.

Dr. Scambio's work on site-based management is well-known. We in Jersey City need to move in this direction. So many of our schools in Jersey City are in at-risk areas. A partnership between the schools' administrators, the faculties, and the community is crucial to the future well-being of our

schools. The State's representatives have put into place many programs designed to help Jersey City's teachers meet the ever-increasing challenges of teaching in a city. There is more to be done.

Teachers do not sign multimillion dollar contracts. I can vouch for that. They do not endorse sneaker lines or breakfast cereals, but they do thrive when their efforts and performances are recognized; when their input is sought and valued; and when a new standard of accountability is set across the system.

The State has taken exciting new paths in turning education around in Jersey City. "Business as usual" is no longer the watchword, and the ultimate winners are the children enrolled in Jersey City's public schools. Everyday my colleagues and I face new challenges more demanding and more complicated than those before. Resources to deal with these problems become more and more strained. We need all the help, all the expertise, all the concern, and all the support we can get. Therefore, I would urge you, Chairman Ewing, and the members of your Committee, to extend the State's mandate to supervise the Jersey City public school system.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Judy, since you have been there for several years, are you getting the textbooks and the papers and things that you did not get before? Are the supplies just as good as they used to be, or worse, or better?

MS. PISERCHIA: I have all the supplies I need. I am speaking for my school. I do not know if that is the case in all the schools, but for my school, we have everything we need.

SENATOR EWING: What about modern textbooks? Were there problems previously with textbooks, say, were they old, or anything like that, or not?

MS. PISERCHIA: From the time I entered the system, they were continually updating series. When I first entered,

it was the social studies series; then it was the science. We have just initiated a new math program. A few years prior to my entering the system, a new reading series was brought in. So, we are always keeping up-to-date. I really have no complaints there.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Judy.

MS. PISERCHIA: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Mayor Bret Schundler.

M A Y O R B R E T S C H U N D L E R: First of all, thank you for being here. I apologize for not having been here to welcome you when you began the hearing. We have our budget being introduced today, so that kept me away a little bit.

Jack, we have spoken about my interest in bringing in the State School Board. I think some of the problems, the sense that people have, is that the system is not working as well as it might. I think some of the problems we have with the school system, and some of the feelings that some of our Jersey City residents possess, are that the system isn't working as well as it should. I believe it is the result of not being able to be heard with regard to suggestions they might have.

When you come in, you are basically really coming in for input as to how to change the takeover law, but the administration of the law is extremely important also. I think a lot of us feel that with the State School Board actually being our School Board in terms of power, that the State School Board itself should come in with a quorum to gather input from the citizens. Obviously, we do have a School Board locally that can represent our concerns to a degree, but they are not truly having any power, and only really being able to speak to the Superintendent herself -- and now, himself -- there is a limit to what they can actually do on our behalf.

I personally believe that with the State School Board de facto being the School Board for the City of Jersey City,

that they, themselves, should come down for at least two days' worth of hearings over the course of the year, with a quorum, because we look at the report, for instance, that was provided-- I think the report does present some very good information, but still there is a difference between a written report and someone hearing directly from a parent or directly from a teacher how the system is going.

I was interviewed by the consultants who prepared the report, but, again, when it really comes down to providing firsthand experience of how this State takeover is working, I am just one citizen, and there are 230,000 citizens. Obviously, very few could ever be interviewed in a process like this. It would be nice for those who really want to be able to speak, who have it within them to want to say something that they think could make the system work better-- It would be nice if they had the opportunity to speak to the empowered School Board with the decision-making capability.

Secondly, an issue has been talked about by several of our speakers -- the tax burden. I think it is important that the public understand -- and it has not been understood as well as it might -- that the State has picked up the bulk of the incremental spending by the school system. Over the course of the last several years, we actually have gone up some in our local tax burden. We have gone from about \$60 million to close to about \$70 million in terms of what we are covering locally. That is actually less than we were covering in the year before the takeover after the reval, where because of the reval we jumped up and were actually spending \$90 million for one year.

So, we are spending less than that year, but over the last several years we have gradually seen the burden on the local taxpayer increasing from where we were about two years ago. That does become a real concern.

One of the things I would like to ask you to go to bat for us on is, when speaking with the Appropriations Committee,

to continue to ask the Appropriations Committee to fund all of the incremental spending, given the severe situation that Jersey City is in with its taxes right now. I might add, in particular, there was-- The Division of Local Government Services did, two years ago, suggest that we were being overly and distressfully taxed for support of the school system, and they promised us \$4 million of incremental assistance from the State, which was never delivered. As a result of this problem, that receivable has been carried for several years now on the City's books. If it is not actually paid next year, we will actually have to cover that receivable as bad debt with higher taxes, and that would be a real burden to the Jersey City taxpayers.

We have asked our local legislators to introduce legislation specifically for this \$4 million appropriation, so that that receivable finally is paid. I would ask that you go to bat for us in support of that particular legislation. Then again, as we go forward, I would ask that you go to bat for us asking for incremental assistance to cover the bulk of our increases going forward.

One final point that I think is very important: It has seemed, to me at least, that the Committee is fairly set on extending the takeover. In our private conversations, you have mentioned that it is your interest to begin the transition, however, immediately. The transition in terms of power will be a very gradual one, but you do desire to start that right away. I think that is the proper approach. I think to the degree that you can let it be known what the stages of the transition will be, I think people will feel much more assured knowing that something has begun, and that some local control is coming back step by step. But that is very important. Until the people know that we are sincerely beginning a transition, so that when we get to the end of that there will have been a return of authority to local hands which guarantees

stability and guarantees some continuity, I think people will be very nervous. All they will see is-- They will have a sense that any real transition is simply being put off. We have to know that something is truly happening.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Mayor. Do you have a question, Jeff?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Yes. Mayor, if I may, what is the present tax rate of your community, and what is your tax rate for the schools?

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: The tax rate for the community is about \$39 per thousand. The municipal tax rate is about \$18 there. I believe the school burden, off the top of my head, is around \$8 -- something like that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Fifteen dollars.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: No, no, with the reval. You're right, Mayor. Okay.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: No, it would not be \$15.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: The difference is, Jersey City, being one of the 30 special needs school districts, receives approximately 65 percent of the total funding for its educational programs from the State of New Jersey. Most other special needs school districts receive less than that. I might also add, those districts other than the 30 special needs districts are lucky if they receive less than 50 percent. And, as the Senator well knows -- both Senators well know, and I hate to remind them -- in my particular legislative district, I have communities that receive as little as 5 percent State funding for their schools, and their income aggregate is not that much different than the people in your community.

So I think by asking the Legislature for more-- I think you should be here suggesting that we give you less. I think what we've got to do is put the responsibility back on the shoulders-- If we are going to give them the rights and

the privileges that some of you are speaking about, the rights to run your schools, I think you have to recognize that with the rights to run your schools comes the financial burden. The financial burden of running the schools which I represent is being paid for by the taxpayers. Now, you want control of your schools back, you can rest assured that you are going to get support from me, but you are going to pay for it.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Assemblyman Moran, I think one thing you should be aware of is: If we went away from a property tax-based system towards an income tax-based system for the covering of local expenses-- That is actually conceivable as an approach, but as long as we have a property tax-based system in a city as we have here in Jersey City, where only 30 percent of your people are property owners, you would have a ridiculous burden placed upon a very few shoulders. That would never be affordable. You would bankrupt this City, and you would drive out the last of our middle class.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: But, Mayor, who owns the other 70 percent of the property?

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: It is rental -- apartment buildings.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Okay, but if--

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: We have rent controlled apartment buildings. So the point is, in this City, those are not fully assessed properties, because they are not full market properties. So by the system we have, if you did what you are suggesting, the result would be a bankrupt Jersey City, and essentially the last of the middle class would be driven out of Jersey City. The result would be ultimately higher costs for the State, because you would have lost the people in Jersey City who essentially, you know, run the schools; who provide the jobs; who keep the neighborhoods together. That is not a tenable solution as long as we have a property-based tax system. If you go toward an income tax-based system, that

might, by virtue of spreading the burden, make such a suggestion conceivable.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: But, Mayor, 50 percent of the funding formula is income driven.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: The point is, the collection-- Whatever the funding formula is driven by, the collection itself is coming from the property taxpayers, so the property taxpayers cannot suffer a higher burden.

Let me mention that when I came into office, we had our collection rate down to 78 percent, and we had a 3.9 percent tax rate on real value. That is the highest in the United States of America. We have a \$10,000 per capita income in this City. We have, again, 22 percent of our people who were in default, some because their income was less than their tax bills. There is no way they would be able to pay.

We have done a good job of getting our collection rate up and our taxes down, so I think our taxpayers are beginning to have hope. But that hope will be eclipsed if the school system takes more, even as we are trying to take less. Our tax cuts are eliminated by virtue of the county increasing their spending 20 percent a year, as they have been doing, and the school system 8 percent, which is where you are this year.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Joanne Kenny.

J O A N N E K E N N Y: Senator Ewing, Committee members: My name is Joanne Kenny. I am an English teacher in Jersey City, and have been for the last 25 years. I felt it was important for me to speak on behalf of the State intervention because I firmly believe that what we have done over the last three-and-a-half years has been extremely beneficial for teachers, for staff, but most importantly, for the students in our District. I believe that now we have a firm foundation on which we can build a more progressive and equitable educational system for our children.

I can say this because I have seen, over the last 25 years, many changes at the Board of Education. I have seen changes at the Central Office, between schools, and within schools. Many of these changes have been positive, but many of them have had a negative effect on the staff and on the students. Lack of consistent policies, curriculum, courses of study, are just a few of the areas that were not addressed prior to State intervention. These inconsistencies had created an atmosphere within the District that made it extremely difficult to work.

When the State came in, specifically Dr. Scambio and her team, many thought it would just be another abrupt change for the worse. But anyone who is seriously involved in, and committed to, education in our District knows that the new programs and services that the State has begun, in conjunction with the school staff and administrators, have had a positive effect and made the right changes in the right direction.

But I can only speak about what I know directly involves me and my students. I have seen more of my children at Ferris High School enroll in advanced placement and honors courses, something that we did not have before the State came in. They now attend annual student convocations where valuable information has been made available to them about colleges and other vocations. That did not exist before the State came in. The schools are cleaner. In Ferris High School, after 10 years, the air-conditioning works. That did not exist before the State came in. We also have grills on our radiators. They were not there for close to 10 years.

The schools are cleaner. The graffiti has been removed from inside the building and from the outside of the building. The students participate in District-wide Student Council meetings; District-wide Honor Society meetings; and they have fair and equitable midterm and final exams. All

these events and programs have been the result of what the State, the administrators, and the teachers have done together.

I have been affected directly, not only because my students have reaped many benefits over the past few years, but also because I have worked in a new program called Administrative Intern. I work with Dr. Graber at the Central Office, and I have been involved directly in helping to improve communication between the Central Office and the schools. I have learned a tremendous amount about administrative duties and procedures, and believe me, it has been a very enlightening experience. There is no doubt in my mind that in a few years I would personally like to see our own administrators and teachers assume the top leadership roles at the Central Office.

I know that this time will come soon. However, I honestly feel that the State's work is not done. For the sake of the students who need as much stability as possible, it is important to let the work that was begun three-and-a-half years ago continue until all programs and services have a strong foundation, and then we can build an educational system that can, and will, be a model for others around the nation.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Next will be Richard Boggiano.

R I C H A R D B O G G I A N O: Good evening. I would like to just start off before I read what I have written by saying, there are 14 people on your Committee -- the Joint Committee -- and there are only three of you here tonight. That is just an observation I made while sitting here. I also noticed that only three are from urban areas.

Gentlemen, ladies: I welcome the opportunity to be present before this--

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Boggiano, are you a parent, a teacher, a Board member, or what?

MR. BOGGIANO: I am President of the Hilltop Neighborhood Association. You will have to excuse me. I just got new glasses, and I am having a hard time with them.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: I'm sorry?

MR. BOGGIANO: I am President of the Hilltop Neighborhood Association. I am not here pro or against the State takeover. I am here to express my views, and the views of many of the people of this City.

I welcome the opportunity to be present before this Joint Committee on the Public Schools. I have been a resident of an urban area all my life; a police officer for more than 20 years; and an official community activist and spokesperson for the Hilltop Neighborhood Association for nearly 15 years. The Hilltop Neighborhood Association and I have been quite vocal in defending the rights and improving the lives of neighborhood residents. Our attempts to communicate with School District officials to resolve area problems has not been easy.

For over 10 years, representatives of the Hilltop Neighborhood Association have met with five different Superintendents of the Board of Education. Our purpose was to alleviate the numerous problems associated with Dickinson High School. Dickinson High School has a cafeteria that cannot accommodate the approximate 2500 students during the three lunch periods. The cafeteria can only accommodate 400 students per lunch period. The major problem for our area is the hundreds of students let loose in our neighborhood. There have been numerous fights, acts of violence, and drug abuse. The students congregate on street corners and residents' porches. We would like to see the lunch periods closed.

Among our deepest concerns are the evasiveness and unwillingness State-appointed school administrators seem to exhibit when confronted with community needs and recommendations. Among other concerns, we have asked the School District to consider the following:

* Reduce the student population by redistricting the Dickinson High School cluster.

* Expand the cafeteria. Build an addition if necessary. Currently, Dickinson High School is involved with renovative construction. This could be an opportunity to focus on the cafeteria.

Simply by keeping the kids on campus, the School District would be able to better monitor activities and diminish some problems the students, the school, the police, and the community encounter with an open lunch. And by the way, we had a meeting two weeks ago and we suggested they start with freshman year next year.

Neighboring cities, such as Bayonne, Newark, etc., seem to respond to the needs of their community. Why can't Jersey City?

The Hilltop Neighborhood Association had three meetings with Dr. Scambio and presented her with the numerous problems and issues we face daily in our neighborhood. Dr. Scambio did upgrade and renovate the existing cafeteria, but it still cannot accommodate all the students for the lunch periods.

We have expectations from school officials when we send our children to school. We expect them to provide the students with a desk, books, etc., yet if you send your child to Dickinson High School, you have no guarantee that your child will have an appropriate place to eat lunch.

Two weeks ago, the Hilltop Neighborhood Association had a meeting with the current Superintendent, Mr. Demming, and other school officials. They openly admitted there is a problem with Dickinson High School, but they can't do anything about it. Mr. Demming promised the Hilltop Neighborhood Association that he would get back to the representatives of the Hilltop Neighborhood Association in two weeks. Well, two weeks have come and gone, and we have yet to receive a response from him, or from any other school official. We are appalled

by the lack of cooperation we have received from State officials.

We want the Committee to know that the children cannot be properly fed at the Dickinson High School cafeteria, and therefore 2000 students are placed on our streets daily. State school officials should make an effort to respond to the problems and views of the people who live near Dickinson High School.

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak before you. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Senator, if I may?

SENATOR EWING: Certainly.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: You know, I find it interesting that I come 130 miles and I hear a similar problem to one I hear at my own Board meetings about the youngsters leaving the school for lunch and going downtown to the community; very similar to the situation you have at Dickinson, where the people in the community say, "Why don't you keep those youngsters in the schools? Feed them there so that they are not roaming the streets of our community."

But it's ironic. Five minutes later, you have the business community standing up and saying, "Wait a second. If it weren't for that clientele recognizing the kinds of things we have in our windows, so that later on in the day or on the weekend or at night they can encourage their parents to come back and shop in our community--" So, you have both sides.

You know, as a building administrator, and one that has tried, on a number of occasions, to reschedule and do the kinds of things you are talking about, if you have ever tried to sit down and work out a lunch schedule in a nine-period day for 2300 students, making sure that it is nutritious in the period of time in which they get to eat, it is almost an impossible task, especially when you only have a seating capacity for 400 students. I am not defending what the

Superintendent's office does at Dickinson High School, but some day sit down and try to figure it out.

Are there other solutions? Yes, there are many solutions. We have lived through it in suburbia. I have heard your argument a number of times. Boards of education in my district have called me to talk to me about it in their communities. But one very interesting thing has happened in my experience over the years that I have been an administrator. You have situations where you have a board of education that passes a policy, and I have seen them where they started in the ninth grade, and in the fourth year -- it is nine through 12 -- and all of the youngsters-- When you have a youngster who is a sophomore who is 16 years old, and he goes to the office and signs out to go out and eat, you have no legal right to stop that youngster from leaving. You cannot take a youngster's civil rights away with a board policy. And it gets worse as the youngster gets older, because when a youngster turns 17, and he or she has a car, then you have the argument that says you have to provide appropriate parking within the facility of the school. Now they are driving their cars away from the school and they are coming back, and you have congestion problems within your community and in your neighborhood. That does not appear to be a problem yet in your particular neighborhood, but you can rest assured that it will be when the economy turns around and gets a little better.

I don't think it is a two-week solution timetable that you could really work on. I feel for you, and I feel for your community. I also feel for the Superintendent's office and the Board of Education, trying to come up with a solution, because I have lived through it. There are no answers. The answers are sitting down and not having people concerned about whether the youngsters have a place to eat. I think the concern should be, what is educationally best for the youngsters. If keeping the youngsters in the school is going to help the school and

help the community, fine. But if it is not going to help the school and the community, then you ought to go back to the drawing board. I think that is where you are right now.

MR. BOGGIANO: Mr. Moran, when I started to give my talk I said, "For 10 years with the Hilltop Neighborhood Association, through five Superintendents, we have been having meetings." I think that is long enough for a Board of Education to be able to figure out the solution to the problem.

Secondly, they always tell us, "Oh, we don't have the facilities to feed them at Dickinson," which we recognize. We're saying, enlarge the cafeteria; build a new cafeteria. If the U.S. Army can feed 10,000 men in three hours, I'm sure they can feed 2000 people at Dickinson.

The problem is, don't compare. I said this before: Three of you out of 14 are here today. All 14 of you should be here today, number one. Then, three of you are from urban areas. Do you have the problems that we have here? I would like to compare our police statistics to your town's police statistics. I would like to compare the people from your neighborhood, and let them get up and speak, and the people from our neighborhood, and let them get up and speak. I know what is going on. I am not saying-- I will say, unequivocally--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: I am not going to argue with you as to who is here. I am here. You know, I traveled 120 miles, and I have a snowstorm to drive through. Wait a second, let me finish. If you want help and you want solutions, I mean, that is why we're here. I mean, we are not here to be badgered by the fact that somebody else is not here.

MR. BOGGIANO: What I am saying is, I wish the 14 of you were here.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORAN: Oh, so do I.

MR. BOGGIANO: All right. Problems exist; they have existed for years -- for the 10 years that I have been the President of the Hilltop, and we have not seen any result.

SENATOR EWING: Well, the questions that we get here, Mr. Boggiano, we are going to be looking into, to see if we can get some of the answers ourselves. But certainly as far as building a new cafeteria, or expanding it, that is certainly not going to be done in a short period of time.

MR. BOGGIANO: No. But from the time it was suggested, 10 years ago, nine years ago, eight years ago, right down to this year, we keep on getting pushed off. You know, "Nothing we can do; nothing we can do." I was told, "The building is historic. We can't touch it." That is not correct. I am on the Historic Commission in Jersey City, and you can certainly build another building there, or you could certainly add to it, as long as it conformed to the structural design.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Peter Murphy.

P E T E R T. D. M U R P H Y: Thank you, Senator, and members of the Committee. I had originally asked if it would be possible to, besides giving my own comments, read into the record a very brief statement by a gentleman by the name of Dominic D'Agosto, who represents the National Westminster Bank here in Jersey City. So, really, we could kill two birds with one stone, with your permission -- if you don't mind.

SENATOR EWING: Fine, certainly.

MR. MURPHY: I will start with his comments. I think I should tell you something about Dominic very briefly. He grew up in Jersey City; attended grammar school and high school in the public system of Jersey City; and rose to the position of Executive Vice President of the former First Jersey National Bank. He is now Vice President of Community Affairs for National Westminster Bank, New Jersey, which is a huge employer in this town.

His words: "I would like to place myself on record as, first of all, supporting the takeover of the Jersey City

School District by the State of New Jersey under the leadership of Dr. Elena Scambio in October of 1989.

"For too many years the School District, but most especially the children, the parents, and the taxpayers of the Jersey City community, suffered from a variety of abuses and from the neglect in the District. It is no wonder that the morale of the Central Office personnel, principals, supervisors, teachers, students, and parents reached an all-time low. In addition, student performance was negatively impacted by those conditions.

"Since the takeover, there has been substantial improvement in the critical areas as outlined in the independent evaluation report by Arthur Andersen & Company of the Jersey City public schools. Those areas are leadership in management, educational program and service, community relations, public information, finance, and facilities. The team that is now in place in the School District has the knowledge, talent, and commitment to continue the upward trend that has been established since the schools' takeover.

"As the old saying goes, 'Rome wasn't built in a day,' nor did the Jersey City School District find itself in its diminished position in 1989 just overnight. It is my opinion that it will take more than the original five years anticipated to turn this District around. Much more needs to be accomplished, and these high quality professionals should be given the opportunity, along with this type of accountability, to achieve the goals outlined at the beginning of the takeover process. It may take from three to five years additionally to accomplish those goals.

"Education is the keystone to a progressive, growing, and thriving community. I think we can all agree on that, even if we disagree on the hows and whys of it. Jersey City has been given the unique opportunity in this process to create a School District that will meet the needs of the entire

community, not only through the end of this decade, but into the next century.

"I fully support the efforts that the State Superintendent and his team are now making on behalf of all of the citizens of Jersey City. Very truly yours, Dominic D'Agosto, Vice President"

I would now like to add my own words to that, if you don't mind. For the record, my name is Peter Murphy. Like many other people here, I happen to live, I guess, two golf shots from this building. I have spent 27 years in Jersey City. I built a career here in Jersey City. As has been mentioned earlier, politics seems to come in and out of the discussion, and I do believe that that had an awful lot to do with what happened that was wrong in the Jersey City School District.

I might categorize myself, however, as a retired politician. In 1989, I ran for Mayor in this City, along with nine other candidates. The nine of us agreed that the schools should be taken over. However, I did something about it. I sued the School District to stop the wasteful spending of taxpayers' dollars on legal fees, which were in excess of a million dollars. Now, I am not mentioning that to highlight my efforts on behalf-- I mention it because it is a very good example of what was happening in the good old days. That million-plus dollars of liability and payments arose over a \$7500 retainer agreement at one of those Board of Education meetings that Charles Catrillo mentioned earlier.

That was happening at the same time, while there were inadequate or no supplies; schoolrooms were going unpainted for literally decades, as you know; and, of course, the infrastructure of the entire system and the morale of the people -- all of the people involved who are buyers into the District -- were at an all-time low. I am happy that we succeeded in that suit, and I am happy that the School District

was turned over; not that I am particularly proud that this happened in our City, but I think it gave us an opportunity to change things around.

Also for the record, you should know that I represent the Hudson County Chamber of Commerce as its President, and I represent the constituency there that has a vital interest in a School District that will succeed. There are predictions that are reliable that indicate that Jersey City could become the largest city in the State of New Jersey by the turn of the century, if not before. It deserves nothing less than a world-class public education system.

The reason that is happening is because -- and the public record will show -- that 25 out of the 109 major moves that happened in New Jersey last year-- Twenty-five of those companies came to Hudson County, many of them to Jersey City. They are looking for a school population that will be able to fill the jobs, and fill them very soon.

Let me just describe to you a few of the efforts that are already in place that are happening in partnership with this School District, that could not have happened before. The Business Education Alliance-- You have probably heard of it; you have probably looked at it; you probably talked about it. It is one of the really remarkable, wonderful things that is happening with the partnership of the School District, Merrill Lynch, and other major employers in this City.

In addition to that, members of my Chamber, businesspeople who are vitally interested in the progress of this School District and its students, have independently formed the Jersey City Education Foundation. This is not a Foundation that gives away \$200 or \$300 for class trips, although those are certainly very important and we will help to find those kinds of dollars. The mission -- the published mission -- of this Foundation is to help make systemic change happen in this District. It took us a year to find the first

thing we wanted to do. I am happy to report that as of two weeks ago, we have finished the first phase of that. And that is that we have, in partnership with the School District, in partnership with the Partnership of New Jersey -- employers throughout the State and local employers -- paid for, at no cost to the School District, principal training in management, so that these people can manage in the new environment. I don't care if you have been involved in education a year or 10 or 30 or 40, everybody knows that if you have a good principal, you are most likely going to have a good school. We must give those people the tools to accomplish that.

As of two weeks ago, all 36 principals in the Jersey City School District have gone through that program. It is not a one-day shot. It is three-and-a-half intensive days, followed by 15 weeks of follow-up work under supervision, and then one full, again, follow-up day discussing their projects.

I mention all of those because I think it can give a tone and an understanding of the change that has happened at the Central Office and in the classroom and in the school buildings in this City. I have made it a personal mission of my own to go to those sessions and watch the interaction as it happens between and among the principals and the people who are managing the seminars.

I am sorry, I forgot to mention that included in those seminars were 12 selected people -- senior people -- from the Central Office, the purpose of which was to make sure that the communication bridges were built; that they knew whom they could call, who they could rely on, or when they had problems. That has succeeded, and now we are moving on to step two. I hope that in the spring of this year, the Foundation and the Chamber and other businesspeople who are interested in successful education enterprise in Jersey City, will be announcing another set of programs that will get closer to the classroom and the children.

One more thing: Our Chamber of Commerce is so concerned about education in Jersey City and in Hudson County, that it is specifically noted in our Mission Statement. To that end, over the last several years we have put together a mentoring program where we have 240 businesspeople going into the classrooms in three school districts in Hudson County, 70 percent of them by the way in the Jersey City School District, touching over 2400 children. These are not one-hour sessions. There are many businesses that take this so seriously that they spend three days a month with their adopted schools. They talk to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders about things like ethics, citizenship, and how to prepare for the workplace that is coming at them very fast. A book report that is due next Friday isn't much different than a report to the manager that is due next Friday. It is important to learn those skills and those disciplines early, and now. The result is that the Chamber of Commerce -- my directors and my membership -- fully support the takeover. We believe that if it is another year, two, or three, that is necessary to accomplish those goals, then, by all means, please do it, and you will have our support.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Mr. Murphy. Let me just ask you a question, Mr. Murphy. I wonder whether it might be feasible in places such as Jersey City, that when we do go back to a completely elected Board of Education, that we do it, say, by wards. I understand there are five wards in Jersey City, so you could have a representative from each ward, and then four at large, which would make up your--

MR. MURPHY: There are three at large. If you are talking about the composition of the City Council, there are six--

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but how many wards are there?

MR. MURPHY: Six.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, six wards. All right, then three at large.

MR. MURPHY: Right.

SENATOR EWING: But, do you feel we would be more apt to get individuals representing the children living on the-- I mean, if we did it by wards, instead of-- (indiscernible comments from audience)

MR. MURPHY: We are getting a lot of prompting from the audience. I think the question was addressed to me.

SENATOR EWING: No, I am not asking the audience; I am asking you.

MR. MURPHY: My feeling is that when we finally get to the full elections of Board members, that it should be opened up to the entire public.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, yes, but I mean the candidates-- You could elect a candidate to the School Board from Ward 1, one from Ward 2, one from Ward 3, and then three at large.

MR. MURPHY: It certainly has merit, because they could reflect what is going on in that local community.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Do you have anything, Senator Brown?

SENATOR BROWN: I am curious, just a show of hands, about how many think at large, and how many think-- Just for fun. You know, you have all been very good about sitting here, and we do want input.

The question was asked by the Senator. How many of you in the audience, at this moment in time, would vote for electing your School Board members by ward, and how many would want at large? (indiscernible comments from audience; no microphone) No, that is a third option, the combined.

SENATOR EWING: Catherine Todd.

CATHERINE TODD: May I go on record to say that my name is Catherine Todd? I live at 563 Montgomery Street, which is Montgomery Gardens. I represent a group of people, a group

which very few people in this audience would take any time with. Those are the people who live in public housing. I have a few friends I can look at out in the audience where I can say that they will come into the public housing unit to give service to our children. Because of such negative reviews about the people who live in public housing, those of us who live in Jersey City do not want any concern with them, only at election time.

I am proud to tell you that since the State took over, we do have pre-K in my development, which is Montgomery Gardens on Montgomery Street. A. Harry Moore has just opened up a pre-K. Also from the Jersey City Board of Education, they have provided us with teachers who come in to work with our teen post. Oh, we have a lot of good things that are going on in public housing. But unfortunately, some of our people who live in Jersey City do not think that we are about anything.

I am Chairperson of the Cooperation of Resident Management in Jersey City. Also, I am the Secretary of the citywide Board of Jersey City Public Housing. I am representing the Housing Authority of Jersey City this evening. I want to say, if we all come together and try to strive to work for all -- may I underline all -- children of Jersey City--

I understand the cop who spoke prior was talking about the children inside Dickinson High School. He wanted to keep them in there and not let them out. Well, I want to say to you: If we turn around, all of us with children, at one time, and all of us did things that our parents did not like us to do-- This is a different day, and I understand that, but I will say that we have been given an opportunity. We are working to take care of our own children who live in public housing. I can announce that this is the third annual Achievement Against the Odd Luncheon that public housing, which is Montgomery Gardens-- Our school is Ferris High School. We

have numbers of children who are moving on to higher education. We, as the family that is in Montgomery Gardens, are supporting them by giving them a book scholarship each year to go to whatever college they select.

So I want everyone to know that Jersey City public housing is a part of Jersey City, New Jersey. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I would like to add, we are making a study now of the various programs, like Head Start and Good Start, to see if we can't do something about combining them all together so we can have more of them. I think every public housing project should have those prekindergartens.

MS. TODD: I must say that we do have Head Start in just about all of our developments here in Jersey City. We have just contracted with Head Start in Jersey City. We gave them more space to expand their Head Start there. We also are utilizing in September our parenting program, so the parents who live in our development can receive their GEDs. I am proud of the young people, and I am proud of the people who live in public housing. I must tell you, all of us are not on drugs. All of us are not drug dealers. All of us are not having babies. We are succeeding and moving on.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Sheryl Sullivan. Next up after Sheryl will be Dennis Frohnapfel.

S H E R Y L S U L L I V A N: Good evening, Senator Ewing, and other distinguished guests.

SENATOR EWING: Speak up.

MS. SULLIVAN: My name is Sheryl Sullivan. I am a native of Jersey City. I have been in the District for over 20 years. I have worked as a teacher in the Jersey City school system for some 17 years, and in the last three years I had an opportunity to work in an administrative capacity.

I am in a unique position, in that I have been able to see the District pretakeover and posttakeover. I can honestly say that before State takeover-- The State has broadened the opportunities for minorities in the District. Prior to State takeover, as a gentleman said before me earlier this evening, ability and competency had nothing to do with one's opportunity to advance in this District. It was based on backing the right candidate. The "old boy" network was very much in effect before State takeover.

I would like to also add that I was driven by my dedication and commitment to kids before the State takeover, and I continue to be. My only interest -- and I am speaking from the heart right now -- is that we get past the politics and begin to address the needs of our kids.

I get very emotional about this. I have lost, in the last two years, five students. Five students have died. They have been killed, some of them very innocent bystanders. I mean, while we are arguing back and forth over politics, there are kids who are dying. As I said, I get very emotional.

The District has certainly made some significant changes. Progress has been made. As the woman, Ms. Todd, just got finished saying, there has been a substantial increase in the pre-K. Dr. Scambio recognized the importance -- the critical importance of educating and nurturing children early. That initiative has definitely been embellished and worked on, to a point where we now have double or triple the number of pre-K children in our District.

There is the Magnet Program in all of our high schools, a program I had a personal hand in the development of. The health care profession at Snyder-- That is giving students a chance to develop their personal interests and tap an early interest in their careers. There is a partnership with the University of Medicine and Dentistry which I think was extremely innovative. That is housed in Snyder High School.

That is giving many of our students an opportunity that they never would have seen before. The business magnet, the legal professions magnet in Lincoln High School--

As I said, I am going to be here. I was here before State takeover; I will be here after. I would like to make a personal appeal to the people in this audience who genuinely have children -- the interests of children in their hearts, to start channeling their energies and efforts into coming together to start building on, and continue to build on the foundation that was laid, and continues to be laid by the State.

The other initiative that the State-- Besides the Magnet Program, I think there has also been-- I was a teacher for 17 years, and I have also seen uniformity and more consistency with regard to the curriculum and the delivery of instruction. There are now standard midterms, uniform District midterms, throughout the District. As Ms. Kenny mentioned, there is recognition of academic achievement. People might say that I speak on behalf of the State. Yes, I do work for the State, but as I said, I think I speak from a unique point of view, in that I was in the Jersey City school system before the State takeover. I just want to see the foundation that has been started -- that we continue to build on that, so that the transition from State takeover to posttakeover is as smooth as it possibly can be, and that the people in the community who want children to be educated, and who want to see them learn, and who want to see them not just survive, but to succeed -- that those people have an opportunity to deliver those kinds of services to our children.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Cheryl.

Dennis? Is he here? (affirmative response from audience) Following Dennis will be Catherine Verdibello. Yes, I'm sorry, sir.

D E N N I S F R O H N A P F E L: You get high marks for your pronunciation, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: I didn't take languages at school.

MR. FROHNAPFEL: First of all, I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak about the State takeover of the Jersey City public schools. My name is Dennis Frohnappfel.

Secondly, I do not have an ax to grind, and I do not hold a high paid position with the District, if you please. However, I was a lifelong resident of Jersey City until this year. I am a product of the public schools, a graduate of Dickinson High School. I am a 22-year veteran employee of the District, presently assigned to Lincoln High School. I serve in the Principal's office as his Administrative Assistant, and I serve as Head Clerk for the school. I am also the former President of the Educational Secretaries Association, which represented some 250 support staff within the District. I held that position for 10 years.

Thirdly, my purpose in speaking is to express my support for the State takeover in Jersey City. It has been about three-and-a-half years since the takeover began, and while I am cognizant that reforms may not be progressing as quickly as proponents -- or as well as opponents would like to have realized by this juncture, I think it foolhardy to think that any group of educators could possibly turn a District around with Jersey City's unique problems and demographics, a District politically corrupted for more than two decades, in a time frame of five years.

During my long tenure with the District, I spent 13 years assigned to the Superintendent's office, where I witnessed firsthand the political carnage that brought about the State takeover of the public schools in the first place. Since the takeover began in October 1989, the District has undergone many significant changes. Aside from the District

being taken from the hands of the local politicians, the entire administrative organization has been restructured, and there is positive evidence of improvement in organization in six areas of administration, which I would like to briefly speak about.

1) The athletic program: Aside from the cluster reorganization of the schools, the high school athletic program has been restructured and expanded to include intramural activities at the elementary school level.

a) The eligibility requirements for participation in athletic activities were unified throughout the District, including raised academic standards.

b) The employment of a full-time athletic director for each cluster. The creation of this unique position provides the time and necessary funding to operate and coordinate athletic activities for all students.

c) The increase in funding, together with the implementation of expedient purchasing procedures, provided for the purchase of much needed athletic equipment, such as uniforms, supplies, software, shoes, and sports apparatus.

d) The inclusion of elementary schools, grades six, seven, and eight, in such intramural activities as basketball, volleyball, and track, which provides our kids with opportunities for intracluster sports.

e) The inclusion of primary grades four and five in athletic activities at the discretion of the building Principal. These lower grade athletic activities are usually an extension of the existing physical education program.

f) The creation of a summer camp called Equity Camp, which is open to any athletic team member. This Camp affords our inner-city kids an opportunity to improve their skills, both athletically and academically. Moreover, this Camp is designed to take advantage of the recreational facilities within Jersey City; for example, Lincoln Park and our own public high schools.

By the expansion and proper funding of a broader athletic program, our kids are afforded opportunities to interact with their peers, while at the same time gaining useful knowledge which teaches sportsmanship, fair play, encourages education, and ultimately provides our kids proper direction to grow and become productive members of society.

2) The budgeting process: The procedure has been changed from the line item process to zero-based budgeting. This process of allocating dollars decentralizes the organization and encompasses all levels of the organization from top to bottom. This inclusive practice has allowed the faculty and staff to decide how funding is allocated.

3) In the area of personnel policies: The process of employment and assignment of personnel was changed to include school principals, department heads, as well as faculty and other support staff to collaborate in the decision making on hiring and assignment. The restructuring of the Human Resources Department decentralized the former hierarchy organization, whereby these decisions were the exclusive prerogative of the manager of personnel.

For example, in Lincoln High School, we needed three additional special education teachers and two teacher aides to facilitate compliance with State regulations on class size. Because of the collaborative policy, these existing vacancies were filled.

4) In the area of purchasing procedures: This area of the business office was completely restructured. The purchasing of much needed textbooks, teaching supplies, and equipment were expedited. Since takeover began, Lincoln High School alone has been able to purchase approximately \$173,000 worth of new textbooks; \$229,000 worth of teaching supplies; and \$188,000 worth of new equipment. For the first time in my long tenure with the District, textbooks and supplies were on hand for the opening of school in September in 1991 and in 1992.

5) To briefly name a few academic programs: Aside from the implementation of procedures for greater accountability for administrators, faculty, and support staff, several programs deserve mention:

a) The Preschool Program, with several locations throughout the District, affords parents the opportunity to send their kids to school prior to attending kindergarten classes.

b) The Tutorial Program, which is before school and after school, provides opportunities for kids to receive assistance when they are in danger of failing subjects.

c) The newly instituted Law Magnet Program at Lincoln High School, which prepares students for careers in paralegal, criminal justice, or law.

And the last area, food services. In this area alone, there has been a complete turnaround in how the cafeteria services are delivered. Citing Lincoln High School as an example, the cafeteria staff rose from two full-time workers to four full-time and four part-time workers. An average of 200 choice hot lunches are served daily. Moreover, in September 1992, a Breakfast Program was implemented, and approximately 85 nutritious breakfasts are served daily. In addition, much needed new equipment has been purchased, such as refrigerators, warming ovens, slicers, and toasting machines.

In addition to all of the positive changes implemented since the takeover, a District-wide student code of conduct was formulated and put into practice. A new set of standard operating procedures -- SOPs -- were formulated and implemented. A long-range facilities plan is in operation, which covers the years 1990 to 1994. Also, a resource directory was formulated and distributed annually to all schools and departments.

Everything considered, the aforementioned changes have all impacted positively on the District. However, while all of

these changes were in the process of being formulated and/or implemented, there was still a School District to run. The implementation of educational programs and/or policies cannot be written in stone. Sometimes there is trial and error, but this process can slow progress. We need the State to remain in Jersey City to continue the policy of "kids first."

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. We appreciate it. Catherine Verdibells.

CATHERINE VERDIBELLO: No, Verdibello. There is an "o" on it.

SENATOR EWING: That doesn't look like an "o" on here. We'll send you back to writing class.

MS. VERDIBELLO: It has been a while since I did my Palmer exercises.

SENATOR EWING: Are the two of you going to talk? (witness is accompanied by another person)

MS. VERDIBELLO: No. My name is Catherine Verdibello. I am making a joint statement with Claire Davis, who is listed as the next speaker.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. VERDIBELLO: So we will cut your list a little bit. All right?

In January 1993, Authur Andersen issued a favorable evaluation report for the State-operated Jersey City School District, recommending an additional three years, for a total of eight, of State control. We, the undersigned, have sent two children each through the Jersey City public school system; have played active roles in the Parents' Council and the PTA at both the school and citywide levels; and have served on numerous ad hoc advisory committees for the Jersey City Board of Education both before and after takeover.

It is from this perspective, as knowledgeable, concerned, and involved parents, that we take exception to

several of the conclusions in the Andersen report for the following reasons:

1) An increase in public school enrollment of 9 percent is attributed to improved management by the State team. We disagree. There is little basis for concluding that a recent increase in public school enrollment says anything at all about the management of the School District. As graduates of the Rutgers University Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development with Masters in City and Regional Planning, we maintain that the increase should be seen entirely as a function of demographics and economics.

In other words, the school-age population is currently rising -- nationally, as well as locally -- and we have been through a severe and prolonged recession creating financial strain on households previously able to afford private school tuition. Why should the State team be given credit for this?

2) The State team is praised in the report for its long-range facilities improvement plans, including plans for new school construction. New school construction, in particular Elementary Schools Nos. 28, 17, and 3, in that order, was incorporated into the Jersey City School District's Master Facilities Plan as early as 1983. We know, because we served on an advisory committee that worked on the Plan. School No. 28 was near completion when the State team arrived. It took over six months for the team to resume work on plans already in progress for the building of a new School No. 17.

In the three-and-a-half years since takeover began, a site for a new School No. 3 has yet to be selected. Any other concepts for new schools, such as the Portside fiasco, are just that: concepts, not fully developed plans. We fail to see where progress has been made or why the State team should be given credit for simply carrying out a portion of a Plan already in place at the time of takeover.

3) While we would agree that there has been some improvement in maintenance, this is due to the management, not of the State team, but of the Director of Maintenance who held this position before takeover. Principals' ability to supervise day-to-day janitorial and maintenance work was also instituted several years prior to takeover.

Are we saying that the State team deserves no credit at all? No. Reporting, especially financial reporting, is now being done on a timely basis. Building principals have more control over their individual school budgets. Standard Operating Procedures have been developed, adopted, and implemented, where before there were none. And some of the administrators hired by the State team are highly qualified and competent. In addition, following the last regular mayoral election in 1989, there was a very notable absence of the disruption once caused by personnel reassignment normally following a change in City administration every four years.

But is this sufficient justification for an extension of takeover for an additional three years? For all the improvement in paper processing, test scores -- still the primary yardstick for measuring effectiveness -- have not improved. Programs which were effective before takeover, such as the Acceleration and Enrichment Program, Academic High School, High School of Visual and Performing Arts, Dickinson Science Program, Lincoln High School Model English Program, and the Extended Day Primary Center have continued to be effective. But where is the accomplishment in that? The 21st Century Careers Initiative Program, highly praised by Arthur Andersen & Company, has yet to produce concrete results in terms of either falling dropout rates or higher college admissions and/or postgraduation employment rates. Several innovative changes such as the House Plan high school management system and the cluster system of organization have proven ineffective. And, last but not least, we have recently

witnessed organizational disruption at the school level with not one, but five transfers of administrative personnel at Snyder High School, all during the middle of the school year.

When the law enabling takeover was passed, we were assured that we would have a more efficient school system at a lower cost to the local taxpayer. This has certainly not proven to be true in the last three years. Despite an increase in State aid accompanied by up-front funding -- something the prior school administration never had access to -- the local school tax portion of our property tax bills has still risen each year. From where we sit, the School District's operation is no more, nor less, efficient than at time of takeover -- and it is certainly not costing us less.

Are we then suggesting that we return to the way things were before takeover? Again, the answer has to be no. There is no question in our minds that there were serious deficiencies in the School District prior to takeover. However, the question still remains, after three-and-a-half years of State control: Is takeover the best way to address and correct those deficiencies?

We suggest that the children, staff, and taxpayers would have been better served if the State had sent in teams to work with the District administration to improve standards and delivery of educational services, while retaining State control over personnel hiring and evaluation, as well as finances. Instead, the State literally "threw the baby out with the bath water," by demoting not only those that were found to be incompetent and ineffective, but also a number of highly qualified, experienced administrators, devaluing their work and losing valuable expertise in the process.

We strongly recommend at this juncture that the Joint Committee go back to the drawing board and start from scratch to develop new and more effective legislation, with new input from both local districts and from the State Department of

Education. While the intentions of the State takeover law may be commendable, we maintain the practical results are neither effective nor cost-efficient.

Thank you for your attention. By the way, neither of us is running for political office, nor do we have an ax to grind.

SENATOR EWING: I have a question to ask you. You're saying there were no groups that came in from the State Department of Education to help the people who were running transportation, to help with the business management, or to help with the curriculum? That just flies against everything that we have been told and that we understand definitely was happening. In your monitoring session, where you are getting the different evaluations, the final step before takeover is sending teams in to help the various areas. If they can't still improve after being shown how, then the takeover takes place.

MS. VERDIBELLO: There were compliance teams sent in.

SENATOR EWING: What?

C L A I R E D A V I S: There were compliance teams sent in. There were monitoring teams sent in. There were reports written. There were things that were documented, and people were asked to change. I think what we are talking about, is that over the five years that we have had State control, we could have had a different system implemented where people worked side by side; where there was authority given to the State in the areas of personnel, in the areas of finance, perhaps even in the legal areas. But to have taken over the entire administrative function, including the superintendency and the areas of curriculum, we feel lost to our District some valuable expertise in personnel. We feel there were people--

SENATOR EWING: You say there were no teams that came from the Department of Education to work, say, in the curriculum section with your people up here? Nobody ever came?

MS. DAVIS: It was my impression, and I did--

SENATOR EWING: No, not your impression. I am asking what occurred.

MS. DAVIS: Well, let me say this: I do not work for the Board of Education. As a parent who did chair a committee to review the monitoring, and who reviewed all of the reports, it was my impression -- and having met with the compliance team, and having been interviewed during the monitoring process -- that the State teams were there primarily to observe and to write reports.

SENATOR EWING: That is incorrect. We will have to get the copies maybe. If you will give the stenographers down here your name and address, I will see if we can't get copies of what their reports were, to show that they were actually up here working. I cannot believe that there were not teams sent in, the way they were in Paterson, who actually worked with the various sections, whether it was on the management part, or curriculum part, or transportation, or whatever it might be. Actual physical bodies came from the State to work with people.

MS. DAVIS: But, the definition of a compliance team is to oversee whether you are complying with the State requirements in terms of reporting and documentation. Those were the teams that I saw whenever I was there, or met with. So, if there were other teams, I don't know about them, but I am in possession of all of the State monitoring reports.

SENATOR EWING: Senator Brown?

SENATOR BROWN: Yes. You mentioned the question about costs. Where you may not know the answer, I would hope that someone, through the Chair-- I am just sort of curious about the per pupil resource behind each student before takeover and the per pupil resource behind each student now. Obviously, there are more students now, so there is a different number to divide by, and there is a total budget which is different. I am sort of wondering how it has changed.

MS. DAVIS: We are not the people to ask.

SENATOR BROWN: I know, but you gave me the excuse to ask the question, so I am sure it is in the report someplace.

MS. DAVIS: It's a good question.

SENATOR BROWN: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: One last question: There was a comment made earlier this evening that there is no parent input now. Is that true? I mean, you are parents today, or you were parents?

MS. DAVIS: We are both parents. We believe there is input today. We believe there was input before, also.

SENATOR EWING: Fine, all right, but there is input?

MS. DAVIS: Yes. We do not agree with the statement that there is no parent input.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Gerry Brancato, please. Mr. Brancato will be followed by Carol Stallaci.

G E R A R D J. B R A N C A T O: Good evening, Senators. Thank you for providing this opportunity for the community and staff of the Jersey City School District to address this Joint Committee.

On December 11, 1990, I appeared at the public hearing before the Subcommittee on School Intervention of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools. I presented then, as I will tonight, three perspectives: First as a resident home owner and among the highest taxpayers in our country; two as a community leader and community activist; and three, as a well-experienced educator and employee of my community School District. Please permit me to present tonight in a frank and up-front manner.

Since that 1990 hearing, the Joint Committee has sponsored just one Jersey City public forum where concerns regarding our School District could be readily sought from the community and employees. Despite limited input from Jersey

City residents, parents, and staff, this Committee has chosen to make recommendations to their colleagues in the Legislature to enact changes in the takeover code and allot moneys to ancillary resources.

May I suggest that prior to this Committee recommending significant changes in the law, you consider scheduling more frequent meetings so that additional input from within our community can be realized. Two public hearings in three years is not impressive, nor representative of accurate feedback.

For more than 25 years, I have served the children of Jersey City as teacher, administrator, and Learning Disabilities Consultant on a child study team. Prior to State takeover, I testified against my friends and colleagues, indicating that some of the services provided to our children were often inadequate. I alienated fellow workers. However, I knew in my heart that there was inappropriate administration and misuse of power. Moreover, it was evident then that District policies needed to be revamped; that in-house communication was limited; that staff morale was low; that transportation of our special education children was a mess; that classified children were placed according to District needs, instead of child needs; that the District budget was too high; that the District employed too few specialists to meet the needs of our educationally handicapped children; that harassment and intimidation tactics were utilized, attempting to quiet the outspoken; and that cronyism provided jobs.

These and other behaviors continue to exist. Instead of local politics, we now have State politics. Is there really a significant difference in whether the State Commissioner appoints a superintendent or the Mayor appoints a superintendent? The format is the same; the spirit is the same; the intention is the same; thus the result has been the same.

I am concerned and intimidated by the unprecedented power that our Superintendent of Schools has had endowed by the takeover provisions. Nowhere in the history of our country has a superintendent of schools been given unlimited decision-making abilities to do as that office chooses, and to answer to no ongoing monitoring body whatsoever. The Superintendent has the clout to spend tax money freely; hire and fire at will; decide educational policy; and overall, to do anything at all that office chooses, without any checks or balances from any source. Superintendents should not be omnipotent; only God is that powerful.

I believe the Joint Committee was premature in recently rushing through an amendment postponing the election of our Board of Education. Some reputable Board agency or committee should have input into decisions made by the Superintendent of a State-operated District.

I am concerned with some of the administrators who were appointed by the Superintendent. I have seen superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, and other influential District administrators come and go. With them they brought into this District their team, their loyalists, their cronies. This current District administration has done the same thing. I am skeptical about these high salaried appointments and the perks that go along with their position. Some decisions they have made appear questionable. Some of these administrators lack competent administrative and leadership qualities. Leadership is not something that comes automatically with a doctorate degree or loyalty to a higher ranking official. There is something wrong when so many administrators in this District must resort to threats, intimidation, and reprimands. I believe effective leaders know that they get better efforts out of their staff by working with staff, by helping them, and by showing them how to be productive. Rapport is essential. The need for too much

pushing usually indicates too little leadership. This is the reality in Jersey City.

Permit me now to address the Department of Pupil Personnel Services for whom I and all child study teams render services. This division of Central Office is chaotic. My observation and experience are that there is a diminution of services to our children, and a disrespect for the specialists working with educationally handicapped children. May I provide examples?

Pupil Personnel Services functions under the guidelines of Public Law 94:142 and N.J.A.C. Title 6, Chapter 28. There is serious noncompliance with these codes. Child study teams are designated by this New Jersey statute to identify, classify, place, and devise individual education programs for these children who are experiencing significant behavioral, emotional, physical, neurologic, psychiatric, and learning disabilities.

SENATOR EWING: May I just interrupt you? We were going to have a meeting the other night, but unfortunately Dr. Osowski couldn't make it. He had an injury to his eye. We will be holding a-- It is not going to be a public meeting, but it will be regarding special education. I just told Melanie Schulz, our Executive Secretary, to put your name on the list. I will invite you to that meeting.

MR. BRANCATO: Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: So, you don't have to go all through these details right now, because, I mean, you bring out points we want to hear about later.

MR. BRANCATO: Well, perhaps-- If you don't mind, it will only be a few more minutes. I do have some other things to say.

SENATOR EWING: Oh yes, but I want you to save the other things for the special ed, because we do want to look into that.

MR. BRANCATO: Thank you. I am concerned that the Department of Pupil Personnel Services has been known to refuse to comply with the classification and placement recommendations of the child study team. Superseding the child study team is inappropriate and illegal. The needs of the District should never come before the needs of the child.

I am concerned with superfluous paperwork. As an example, the State-operated District requires thousands of classified children to be rereviewed in April of every year, despite the fact that those cases may have been completed only months before. Child study teams experience significant problems dealing with their enormous caseloads. Too much direct contact time is already taken away from our children, parents, building administrators, and teachers. Their expertise could be better utilized with more involvement, prevention, intervention, and consultation.

I am concerned with confidentiality of information related to our special needs children and their parents. District policy now requires individual education programs to be placed in the pupil's school cumulative folder. School filing cabinets are often open to secretaries, regular education teachers and teacher aides, community aides, and others. I believe the intent of the law was to maintain these records in a less trafficked and more secure area.

I am concerned with the transportation of our special education children. Too frequently, children are left stranded. This District policy is for the child study team to phone their supervisor's secretary, who will then report to the Transportation Department. This is simply poor procedure. Parents need an immediate response regarding the transportation of their child to school. Moreover, too frequently bus personnel deal inappropriately with the children. Some children exhibit behaviorisms characteristic with their

disability, such as hyperactivity and emotionalism. It is important that bus personnel be knowledgeable about handling children.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Brancato?

MR. BRANCATO: Yes, sir?

SENATOR EWING: The special ed part we will bring up at a meeting where you can sit down with myself and Dr. Osowski and some other people.

MR. BRANCATO: Okay.

SENATOR EWING: We have a lot of other people to hear from tonight.

MR. BRANCATO: I understand.

SENATOR EWING: I will have to cut you off otherwise.

MR. BRANCATO: Okay. I will continue on.

SENATOR EWING: You went right back into it again, so, please, get into the part you want other than special ed.

MR. BRANCATO: All right, I will. Thank you.

I am concerned with the delays in computerization of documents. In October 1992, a computer was placed in my child study team's office. Currently it remains nonfunctional; absolutely no access to the computer is available.

I am concerned with retaliatory mannerisms of State administrators. I understand that I am outspoken with regard to policies, procedures, and services to children and parents. However, I feel it is inappropriate for the District to attempt to harass and intimidate me; to single me out, and to require only me to follow specific directives. On numerous occasions, I have communicated with the Commissioner's Office regarding professional and community concerns. I provided documentation verifying assertions to the Subcommittee, as well. Yet neither the Commissioner's Office nor the Committee has been involved.

I am concerned with the apparent unhealthy morale. I believe this Committee would be shocked at how many individuals

feel negatively about some administrators and the unnecessary frustrations of their jobs.

I am concerned with dozens of other issues within our District. I have discussed some of these issues personally with Dr. Scambio and Dr. Foster. Many problems have been effectively dealt with, and were ameliorated. However, too many District deficiencies continue to be given just a cursory response.

Finally, I am concerned with the glowing progress report presented to the Joint Committee on the Public Schools by Arthur Andersen & Company regarding the progress of the Jersey City State-operated School District. As reported in The Jersey Journal on February 9 and February 10 of 1993, this independent evaluator has been hired by the Joint Committee to conduct a two-year, \$340,000 independent assessment of the District. Reportedly, this assessment consisted partly of interviews and mail surveys with Jersey City residents, teachers, and administrators. How did the Andersen Company come to the conclusion that the takeover is working, when the majority of residents, administrators, and staff believe significant problems continue to exist?

In November 1992, the majority of resident voters indicated by referendum their lack of confidence in State control. In January 1993, the Jersey City Principals and Supervisors Association publicly announced their dissatisfaction with State leadership. Since State takeover, District staff have continually voiced their concerns regarding superfluous paperwork, low morale, poor leadership, and questionable policies.

It was premature for the Andersen Company to make a recommendation for the State to continue control for three more years. It is apparent that their research is both limited and skewed. More extensive input from residents and staff is required. The children, staff, and residents deserve the full

two-year study before the Legislature enacts any law. Give us \$340,000 worth of services. Then make a more informed recommendation.

Thank you for your attention.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Brancato, there is no law being changed right now. The original legislation called for an outside management study being made. Nothing is being changed because of their first annual report, like an interim report.

Also, the Superintendent is appointed by the Commissioner and the State Board. You have to remember that. Also, I would like you to send me -- and I will give you my card -- a list of these perks that you said here publicly were given to certain people in the system. I would like to see what they are, because I could not agree more.

MR. BRANCATO: Offhand--

SENATOR EWING: No, I didn't ask you offhand. I will give you my card. We have other people to hear from now, but I do want to see what those perks were. The decision to change the election for the School Board was simply done in order not to get involved in the current oncoming Mayor's election, because of the problems that exist in Jersey City with politics, unfortunately, and the school system. We want to keep them separated as much as possible. That is why the legislation passed to delay it for one year.

Thank you.

MR. BRANCATO: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Carol Stallaci.

C A R O L S T A L L A C I: Good evening, everybody. My name is Carol Stallaci, and I am a resident of 161 Chestnut Avenue.

I would like to stress the urgency for consideration of a closed lunch period at Dickinson High School. If you don't live in the neighborhood, you don't understand the importance of the problem, because at least two to three times a week you have gang fights, at which time children are being

slashed with chains and knives. Guns are used. Personal property is destroyed. It has come to the-- I don't know the proper word, but it has come to a head, where these children are out of control. They are not the neighborhood's responsibility. They are accepted as enrolled students to a certain school. If the school does not want to take responsibility-- The police cannot do anything because of their age. So, what is left?

That is the main reason-- All of the students are not bad, but the problem is, the few hundred who do control there, they really go at it. That is why we would like to have a closed lunch.

Thank you.

SENATOR BROWN: Thank you very much.

The next person who is listed is Paula Ray.

P A U L A R A Y: Good evening, Senators. My name is Paula Ray. I am a resident of Jersey City, and have been so for the past 28 1/2 years. I live -- or I should say, I reside in Hudson Gardens, which is directly across the street from Dickinson High School. It is a public housing development, not a project.

First off, I would like to say that I am here for one reason, and one reason -- two reasons, honestly. I am here because I am a mother. I do not have any children in the Jersey City public schools, but every child who walks the street could be my child. I am concerned, number one, about their education. Are they getting the best education that is due them? Whether their parents are home owners or renters, they are entitled to the best education that this country can give. From what I have seen, I honestly wonder if they are receiving the best education that can be given to students.

The second thing is, as a resident of Hudson Gardens, I live directly across the street from the school, as I said. I am personally afraid to go out in the middle of the day

during the lunch period. I do not go out unless it is absolutely necessary, and when I say "absolutely necessary," I mean when there is something I must have, like medicine or something like milk or bread, something urgent to have in the house when my family comes home in the evening.

I am a housewife, but I am a resident. My husband pays taxes. I am a taxpayer. I may not pay real estate tax, but, guess what? The Federal government and the State government take theirs before my husband and I get ours. So in effect, yes, we are paying for the Jersey City schools.

One of the answers I see for Dickinson High School-- They say it is not possible to keep the youngsters in for lunch. Okay, the cafeteria, I grant you, may not be big enough, but with all of the brains in the educational system, why has no one thought to use trailers on the grounds. Dickinson High School has quite extensive ground around the school itself. Why not, particularly in the warm weather, allow the students to eat on the grounds, so that they don't personally torment the neighborhood, and the other students?

One other point that needs to be made: Yes, there are excellent students in Dickinson High School, and I applaud those children. I wish, and I pray that they achieve as much as they can possibly achieve, and that they also go as far in life as they wish to go, or dream to go. Okay? But, understand that their rights as students must not supersede my right, or anybody else's right in that community to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Their happiness and their liberty does not give them the right to infringe upon my life, my liberty, and my happiness. Their right of free speech does not give them the right to yell "Fire" in a crowded room and then stand back and watch the chaos. Those students who are chaotic and cause problems for the school and the other students-- We need an alternative school. For three-and-a-half years the State has been here, and no one --

no one -- has tried to do anything about an alternative school. All the brains in Trenton, all the brains in the Board of Ed-- What has happened? Where have they been?

I am a housewife and a mother, and I know you need an alternative school. It is a fact: You need one. You need one for high school, and you need one for elementary school, so that the children who do need -- who are disruptive can have special attention. They can have special attention. They can get an education. Yes, even though they are disruptive, they are entitled to an education, but their education must not inflict on the other students, and it must not inflict on the rights of the community.

I have to say, sort of in closing, I am a visually impaired individual, and I will tell you something: I have nerve, and I have gotten to the point in my life where I don't like to go out during the middle of the day. But, guess what? I refuse to be a prisoner in my home. I refuse. My husband works darned hard for the money to help to support this country. That makes me have as many rights as anybody else in this country, including the students. I am concerned for them, but you have to understand. When you say the cafeteria won't hold students. Well then, find an alternative. We have been fighting for 10 years. Don't you think we're tired? You just got here. You have no idea what we have been going through for 10 years, and it has nothing to do with--

As a black woman, I'll tell you what: It has nothing to do with color. I have a visual problem, so a person, to me, is a body. Their color does not matter to me. A disruptive student, or a student on the street who accosts me or makes me feel uncomfortable, I couldn't care if they were purple with green stripes. I just don't want to feel uncomfortable.

SENATOR EWING: Paula, thank you very much. I think Senator Brown has a question.

SENATOR BROWN: I do have a question. As much as I would like to back up your statement, in my district we were having some discipline problems on school buses. I was in on this meeting, and I said, "You know, there is no cotton-picking reason to have this particular problem. The school bus driver seems to just stop the bus, and nothing else happens." I can't believe that the administrators in charge of a school can't somehow get across respect for the neighbors, regardless of who is running the schools. (applause)

MS. RAY: You know, I agree with you in that respect, but I have to say in all honesty and with all due respect to you in your position, you do not have to walk that street every day. I do. You are not -- and I will be very blunt with you, Senator-- I am going to be very blunt. You are not visually impaired; I am. You do not have to put up with what I have to put up with.

SENATOR BROWN: I am agreeing with you. All I want to say to some of you here is, you know, our problems are not all that different. One of my son's classmates was found murdered and floating in the Passaic River. So, you know, we all have our cross to bear, and we just have to go forward and make it crystal clear that we have to expect more from all of us. That is why we are here tonight, because we basically care.

MS. RAY: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Tom Favia, to be followed by Holly Wojciechowski.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You know, I--
(remainder of comment indiscernible; no microphone)

SENATOR EWING: Is your name on the list?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Well, it will be called then.

T H O M A S J. F A V I A: Senators, I am Tom Favia. I am the President of the Jersey City Education Association.

I have been listening to all of the previous speakers, and I guess I am in the enabler category. I don't know. I represent 2600 teachers, 600 teacher aides, and 200 secretaries. I have heard people stand up here and talk about politics and intimidation and the fact that they have nowhere to go. It is like I have been standing here for 15 or 20 years listening to the same thing over and over again. In fact, one of the ex-politicians got up here, and I don't think he has any idea what goes on in the Jersey City schools, but he happened to know about 500 tickets. They were not sold to teachers, I can tell you that. They were not sold to teachers.

Probably the most stabilizing influence in this whole school system has been the teachers' union. When people get up and talk about administrators who changed over from time to time, I wonder if they really know what they are talking about. I really do, because for the last 25 years, the union had, in their contract, a promotional process that probably no one in the State had. You had to take a professional exam administered by ETS. You did not get interviewed unless you scored in the top third of that interview, whether you were the Mayor's son or whether you were the Governor's son. Unless you could get to ETS and change that score--

SENATOR BROWN: Which you can't. I used to work there.

MR. FAVIA: Okay, all right, then you can verify that. You could not get into the oral part of that exam. One of the changeovers that Commissioner Cooperman used in his campaign about takeover, which was misinformation-- He spoke in Atlantic City and cited one of the reasons why he wanted to take over the District, which was that only in September they changed 32 administrators -- just like that. He failed to say that the reason why the Board did that, was because the union took the Board to court, and because we had a Superintendent who was politically appointed -- he lasted about two years; the same Superintendent who called our teachers "bastards"

professionally, in the paper-- This Superintendent abrogated our contract and the promotional process.

We took him to court. It took us two years to win that case, but we won it. So, by law, and by court order, 32 administrators had to be replaced. It wasn't done politically. That changeover that Mr. Cooperman was illustrating was not the true facts in his presentation. He failed to say that that was the reason. Now if he said the previous Superintendent appointed these people illegally, then he would have been accurate.

So, what I am saying is, a lot of the statements here-- I have seen these people before. I don't think they are accurate. Am I happy?

SENATOR BROWN: Are we making progress?

MR. FAVIA: Are we making progress? Well, let me say this: When the State came in -- and let me say this also on the record -- the union was against takeover. All right? We were against takeover because we had seen with the last administration definite improvements, as what they said to politicize the District-- There was definite improvement going on there. A lot of the new programs the State has now have been expanded on, and they have done a very good job with them, mainly because they were successful in eliciting the money from the Legislature, which prior to that we had been unsuccessful in doing.

I think our problem in the beginning -- and I think from what I understand is going on in Paterson, too, from talking to people there -- is, when the people from the State came in, I think the perception was that everybody was a political appointment, and that half of the administrators and teachers were incompetent. Therefore, when they went to the promotional process that they established, they really did not look internally through our people. Fifty percent of them were appointed from outside the District. Some of them were good;

very fine people. There are some that I don't think were really suited to teach in an urban District like we have today.

SENATOR EWING: What do you feel about the system today compared to before?

MR. FAVIA: Well, let me say this--

SENATOR EWING: What suggestions do you--

MR. FAVIA: Well, let me say this.

SENATOR EWING: Just a minute, Mr. Favia.

MR. FAVIA: Let me say this.

SENATOR EWING: Just a minute; just a minute. This is not a union meeting here.

MR. FAVIA: Okay. I am going to give you the suggestion, because Dr. Scambio--

SENATOR EWING: This is not a union meeting.

MR. FAVIA: All right. Dr. Scambio--

SENATOR EWING: What suggestions do you have for improvement?

MR. FAVIA: I am going to give them to you; I gave them to her, and she began to listen to me.

I think after the first year, year-and-a-half, they began to realize that there is a tremendous amount of talent within our District. She changed, with some of our recommendations-- She changed the promotional process. It is not perfect, but I don't think there is any promotional process that is perfect, because if there are 180 people who want a job, and you make 10, 170 think the process is poor. I have lived through that even with ours. I mean, we still think ours was the best. We still think you should take an exam. We still think that that list should be promulgated as objectively as possible, and that only the top people should be interviewed for that position. That is what we strive for.

There was no politics. People say "politics." I heard people stand here and blatantly say that. I can't accept that, because that was the policy prior to Mayor McCann; the

policy we instituted in 1968, until Mayor McCann came in and appointed his Superintendent and threw out that promotional policy. Up until that time, I challenge anyone to tell me that someone was appointed because he knew the Mayor. I challenge that. I challenge anyone who got up here and said that. They don't know what they are talking about.

SENATOR BROWN: But Mayor McCann's first reign was what year?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: '81.

SENATOR BROWN: Oh, '81.

MR. FAVIA: That was the beginning of the demise. I must say this: The only Mayor -- and I have been in this system for 38 years -- that has ever given a commitment to the educational system of this City, was Mayor Cucci. When someone said all nine candidates were against the takeover, he lied. There were eight. Mayor Cucci was not for the takeover.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: There were 11 candidates.

MR. FAVIA: Okay, there were 11. Then 10 were against the takeover.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: What did he contribute?

MR. FAVIA: He contributed \$91 million to education.

SENATOR EWING: Well, let's get to the point. Is the system working now? Where would you put--

MR. FAVIA: Is the system working now? It is working better now than it did when they came in. Am I perfectly happy with it? No. If they are saying they don't have an avenue to complain, that is a fallacy. We have filed over 250 grievances in the last three years. We have had dozens and dozens of arbitrations. So I don't know where they're going. Every issue that had to be addressed, was addressed by the union. If you didn't go to the union and you had your own political clout, then you could do that. But one thing is different

now. There isn't a phone you can pick up. You can't call the Mayor; you can't call a Councilman. That has changed, and that was changed at the bargaining table. Professional ideas were advanced. I am not happy with it. I still think administrators are protected. I am concerned with DYFS laws that you legislators have to deal with. We are having a rash of people being charged with allegations. Teachers are being suspended, with pay, but I don't think that is the answer, because of DYFS. The DYFS law, the way it is written--

SENATOR BROWN: I have a bill in that is addressing that.

MR. FAVIA: Well, I hope you do, because it is a real serious problem in the urban districts.

The other thing I am concerned about, is that we have a Mayor now who is advocating vouchers. I know, Senator Ewing, that you are a great espouser of vouchers and choices. I'm telling you that--

SENATOR EWING: No, I am interested in them.

MR. FAVIA: Oh, you're interested. Well, let me say this: That would be the destruction of the public school system in this City; the destruction of this system. Any attempt of that nature-- To have a Mayor advocate that-- If he thinks that is the solution to this public school system's--

SENATOR EWING: All right. Mr. Favia, we are not going into politics now. You have made your statement. Is there something else you want to recommend to improve the system?

MR. FAVIA: To improve it, I would say this: If you are going to take over a District again, I think you should come in with a staff of five to ten people -- professional people with a staff -- two years prior to your decision to officially come in -- two years prior.

SENATOR EWING: Well, they were here, what, three or four years prior.

MR. FAVIA: No. They came in to monitor and evaluate. I am talking about a staff of people who come in and have control and have input, and are able to veto contracts, veto transfers, veto personnel changes, things of that nature. I think a staff of five to ten people, professional people, to handle the various areas -- curriculum, personnel, the business area, finances -- and have veto powers. So that what the recommendations are from the State Monitoring Committee, they address them, they make sure they carry it out. If they can't do that in two years, then I say, you can come in.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Holly? Is Holly here? You're not bowling tonight, Holly?

H O L L Y W O J C I E C H O W S K I: No, not tonight.

SENATOR EWING: What, did you bowl, and then came down?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Yes, I did.

SENATOR EWING: Holly will be followed by Walter McDermott.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Good evening. My name is Holly Wojciechowski. I live at 75 Country Village Road. I wasn't planning on speaking tonight, and I'm not going to take up too much of your time. I certainly won't belabor some of the good things that have been highlighted from the previous speakers. I will admit that there is a lot of truth in some of the wrongs that have also been highlighted. I don't agree with all of either.

I do want to mention, specifically, though, that I do take exception to people using the phrase, "let loose," when they speak about students at lunchtime. I do not believe our students are animals, and I don't believe they are let loose, with the implication, from a cage.

SENATOR BROWN: Well, there does seem to be some neighborhood tension, which is not unusual. You get town/gang relations always.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: I just object to the term that the students are let loose. I'm not particularly happy in my own area, when I'm sitting outside waiting for my children who are in the elementary level, and the children come out en masse. Anytime you have a large number of students coming out in a short amount of time, I'm sure it's extremely disruptive to anyone who happens to be in the area, whether they're just waiting or whether they live there. There are serious problems that need to be addressed.

As far as the takeover law itself goes, there have been many positive things that happened. A lot of the programs that have been expanded were in existence, or at least in the planning stage, before takeover was in effect. But I still believe it is to the credit of the administration that did come in to continue with those programs, and to expand upon them.

In my looking through different areas of the takeover law, do I believe that some innocent people were hurt? I do believe that. I believe there were some very conscientious, caring individuals who were hurt by the law, and I deeply regret that that has happened. But I also know that sometimes that is unavoidable. We're willing to accept -- or we're told we have to accept the idea of friendly fire. I don't want to make the comparison, but I think in some ways it may be a good comparison.

If takeover, or if poor performance by students were merely a product, or a result of poor administration or lack of caring, then maybe we would be where we wanted to go. But the sad situation is, that poor performance is not just an administrative casualty. There are multiple reasons for poor performance of students. It's a social issue that the community and the District has to take responsibility for at a State level and at a local level.

I think that until we're able to address some of those underlying causes, State takeover will never be able to

accomplish the goals that they wanted to accomplish. I also believe that at the time of State takeover, we find ourselves with our students in a triage type of situation, where we have some that we don't believe we can do anything for, that they have been passed over too many times; and there are some that we're just hoping, with fingers crossed, that if we can get to them, they will succeed.

I don't really know what the answer is.

SENATOR BROWN: Excuse me for interrupting, but do you believe--

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: That's okay.

SENATOR BROWN: Do you believe that under takeover, there have been more bridges built to the community than before; yes or no?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well, I don't think that's fair to ask for a yes or no answer, but--

SENATOR BROWN: Well, we have to do green light/red light down at the State House from time to time, so I'm not asking anything of you that I don't have to do myself.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: I believe there have been attempts to build bridges. I believe there are a number of reasons why those bridges either were not built, or that there were definitely some impediments to those bridges. Part of those impediments were inherent in the takeover. There was a lot of resistance from the community and from the people who work here, some of it rightfully so. The majority of, not resistance, but people who have really worked very hard and have done their best for all these years, felt hurt, because they are not acknowledged for the good that they had been doing, in spite of the adverse conditions.

SENATOR BROWN: I'm sorry. I missed how you're involved in the system? Obviously, Senator Ewing knows you. Do you teach in the system?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: No, I'm a Board member.

SENATOR BROWN: A Board member, okay.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: I am a parent with two children in the school system.

SENATOR BROWN: I'm sorry. Forgive my ignorance of-- It just sort of helps, the frame of perspective.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: As I said, I think part of the resistance came just inherent in takeover, and partly because sometimes things just--

SENATOR BROWN: What's been your major accomplishment as a Board member since takeover.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: My major accomplishment? Well, some-- I have been accused -- I hate to put it that way.

SENATOR BROWN: No, no, no, no.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: No. I have been accused of being pro-administration. I don't feel that I am pro-administration. I really feel that I am pro-children. I just tend to operate by focusing on the positives while acknowledging the negatives. I just operate differently than some of our other Board members have chosen to do.

I think my biggest contribution has been to be able to bring to the District things that I see or hear that I believe can be helpful ideas.

SENATOR BROWN: So there has been a role for the Board in this last couple of--

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well, that's another thing. I take serious exception to being called insignificant. I, in no way, consider myself insignificant, and if I had, you can rest assured that my husband and my two children would not be home now waiting for me to get there. I could find much better time--

SENATOR BROWN: Where do you have your Board meetings?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: The Board meetings rotate to different school buildings. That was done mainly to give some of us an opportunity to see different school buildings.

SENATOR BROWN: Super, super.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: I think we have the capacity to make an impact. However, I do think that the idea of transition and a formal plan -- a formal transitional plan -- is absolutely necessary. We certainly need it as a Board, and I do believe the comment made that the community needs to see that we are moving toward where they want to go. That's all.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Holly.

Walter McDermott, to be followed by Lavinia Bryant.

W A L T E R M c D E R M O T T: I'm Walter McDermott. I'm a lifelong resident of Jersey City, and I'm a product of the Jersey City public schools. I'm also an employee of the Board of Education as an Attendance Counselor.

I must say that sitting here tonight--

SENATOR BROWN: I'm sorry, but what is an Attendance Counselor?

MR. McDERMOTT: An Attendance Counselor counsels youngsters and their parents, and helps them to attend school -- truant youngsters, children who are neglected by their parents -- enforces the compulsory education laws in the District, State laws, also the--

SENATOR BROWN: So you go after the children.

MR. McDERMOTT: --neglect laws.

SENATOR BROWN: I'm sorry. You go after the children? Who are your young ones that you help?

MR. McDERMOTT: The students.

SENATOR BROWN: I know, but how do they find you? How do you find them: by nonattendance at school?

MR. McDERMOTT: Well, things have changed quite a bit since the elimination of the Attendance Department. But basically, referrals are taken from school teachers and school administrators. It's our job to investigate why the youngster is not in school.

SENATOR BROWN: And how large is this Department?

MR. McDERMOTT: There are only 14 people for the entire city, and the workload is just overwhelming. I'm responsible for two houses in Dickinson High School, plus an elementary school which is the size of many high schools in other areas.

SENATOR BROWN: What's the delinquency rate?

MR. McDERMOTT: We have-- Right now the attendance rate for the District is 90.3. Now what that means is that every single youngster throughout this school system would average 18 days out of school. So, obviously, we have some children that are good school attenders, but there are others who have very, very difficult problems that may be out 50, 60, 70, or 80 days.

Our job is to find out what is going on in those homes, make the proper referrals to agencies such as the Division of Youth and Family Services, work with the Hudson County Welfare Board, the Juvenile Probation Board, the Municipal Court of Jersey City, private social agencies, and others to remediate the problems.

SENATOR BROWN: Okay. What was the rate before takeover.

MR. McDERMOTT: Well, the rate before takeover-- I can tell you what it was. It was 89.9 in April of 1989-'90, and in 1990-'91, it was 90.4. So there has been some recalculation presently from the way we did it. We have a partial hospitalization unit at the Jersey City Medical Center, and a Teenage Expectant Mothers' program in the Medical Center. Those particular figures are now improved, and are calculated in the attendance rate.

So, what you're talking about in effect, if you're following me, with a different calculation, attendance overall would be lower now than it was before takeover, when there was an Attendance Department.

But that's not what I'm here to talk about tonight. You got me started on something else.

SENATOR BROWN: Well, I'm sorry, except down in Trenton this is a subject of great concern, because, obviously, we're putting billions of dollars into the school system, which, if no one is there, raises problems.

MR. McDERMOTT: Correct, correct. In fact, there was someone who wanted to bring to court a suit on thorough and efficient education, indicating how can anyone receive a thorough and efficient education if you're putting money into classrooms, since it doesn't do you any good unless the students are in the classrooms.

We have a Truancy Task Force that was initiated in Jersey City some years ago, and that was achieved through a block grant, which was written by myself -- \$52,000, the District received -- myself, August Redling who was then the Supervisor of Attendance, and Brad New, who is the grantsman for the Jersey City Board of Education. Half of that money had to go back to the State, because the State takeover came in, and they didn't utilize the money in time, and we lost that money.

So we wound up buying one bus. Presently, that bus is back on the road. It has been out of commission for two months because, under the takeover, Mr. Brancato was talking about the transportation of special needs students, to get health exams, to be reevaluated, etc. That bus that we got through a grant has been used for the transportation of those students. Prior to that we had two drivers in the District, and they had a car. Those drivers were terminated, and I don't know what happened to the car.

So we're taking out a Truancy Task Force bus for those reasons, which-- I mean, I think it's totally bogus. When you write a grant and grant money is earmarked for a specific purpose, you shouldn't be using it for other purposes.

There have also been some administrators that have used the buses to attend some conferences. I don't agree with that either, especially when these administrators have cars and get free gas over at 2 Harrison Avenue, on the property of Lincoln High School.

But you got me off here.

SENATOR BROWN: I'm sorry. The major point about takeover that you wanted to make?

MR. McDERMOTT: The major points I wanted to make: I agree with Ms. Davis and Ms. Verdibello. I think they were absolutely on the money in their comments. In fact, I can state that those parents were at every single Board meeting that was ever held: before takeover, during the takeover process, and after the takeover. They know what they are talking about. They are concerned parents, period. They have no interest in holding public office or getting a job with the Board of Ed.

SENATOR BROWN: I believe if they did--

SENATOR EWING: Let the man talk, let him talk.

Go ahead.

MR. McDERMOTT: Ms. Wojciechowski also was on a Board when Ms. Davis and Ms. Verdibello say that the State is taking credit for some of the programs that were already in effect. They're absolutely true.

In fact, it was mentioned here tonight about the Student Code of Conduct. That Student Code of Conduct -- it was called a different name -- was established by a panel that we chaired, and Ms. Wojciechowski was on it. The name was changed. The Storm Street School, which was a school for truant youngsters who were 14 to 16 in elementary school, is now called the Bridges Program, which the State takes credit for. That was established by another gentleman who wrote a grant to establish that program.

SENATOR EWING: What do you feel should be changed from what's being done now? Do you see any improvement since the takeover, or are there some specific areas that we should be looking at again?

MR. McDERMOTT: Senator, I have tremendous concerns. I was adamantly for the takeover. I was with Charlie Catrillo, down in Trenton. I wrote the newspapers. I stood up at Board meetings and talked about it. We were for it.

I am concerned when some peoples' rights are stepped on. An example: There was a gentleman from the Maintenance Department talking about Civil Service. I had a supervisor who got his job on his own, Civil Service. He was an excellent man. He headed the Attendance Department. The monitoring team, when they came in, gave him a glowing recommendation. In fact, they said the Attendance Department should be expanded, that we don't have enough people. "How can you do this monumental task with so few people?"

His reward, when the State came in, they said, "Oh, well, we can't keep you." They abolished his job, even though he had Civil Service protection, and I think that is tremendously wrong.

And there are other people who were hurt by this.

SENATOR EWING: What was his name.

MR. McDERMOTT: August Redling.

SENATOR EWING: August who?

MR. McDERMOTT: Redling, R-E-D-L-I-N-G. A man who had experience with Probation, with the Division of Youth and Family Services, both in Essex County and in Hudson County. Also a man who was with the Hudson County Welfare Board, an excellent supervisor.

SENATOR EWING: Okay.

MR. McDERMOTT: And there were others who were hurt. When somebody said before, about throwing the baby out with the bath water, they were right. I don't think this team came in

and looked at Jersey City, at the positive things that were going on here. We were expecting people to come in and right what was wrong; not just throw the whole process out.

We had the impression that there were people looking at us like everything in Jersey City was garbage, and everybody connected with Jersey City was a piece of garbage. That was the attitude, and that is the attitude, whether it's right or wrong, that people still feel today.

There are people who do not want to get up and speak out. They are afraid. They are hoping that this takeover ends nice and quietly, and are very concerned about an extension of it. To say that the people of Jersey City are not competent to handle their own school district, and are not competent to know what they were voting for in that nonbinding referendum is an insult to all of the citizens of Jersey City. We're such buffoons that we didn't know what we were voting for? We're such buffoons that we're confused and we don't know what's good for us? Nonsense.

Tonight we heard something, people mentioned things about paint and cleanliness, and all this other kind of stuff. That's fine, but do you know what it comes down to, a lot of it? Dollars. The old administration said, "We don't have the money." I was at a Board meeting when they were arguing over the Superintendent's salary. He wanted \$65,000. Well now we have a Superintendent that has \$114,500.

SENATOR EWING: What was the year of the \$65,000?

MR. McDERMOTT: It was just prior to the takeover.

SENATOR EWING: Well, how many years?

MR. McDERMOTT: Well--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: '89.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: '88, it was about '88.

MR. McDERMOTT: The Board stated, "We don't have enough administrators. This is too big a job." Yeah, we have

administrators; we have three clusters. We have an Assistant Superintendent, an Associate Superintendent, a Cluster Supervisor, we have--

SENATOR EWING: Do you see any improvement today?

MR. McDERMOTT: Your Honor, I think that--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: "Your Honor"?

MR. McDERMOTT: He is "Your Honor." He's a Senator.

SENATOR EWING: You address the Honorable John H. Ewing. That's what the title is.

MR. McDERMOTT: He's entitled to be called Your Honor. That is correct.

Senator, you know the protocol. I'm not out of order here.

SENATOR EWING: I didn't say you were.

MR. McDERMOTT: All right. But we have to enlighten some of our folks in the audience.

SENATOR EWING: Listen, you're talking to me, not to them.

MR. McDERMOTT: We also talk about the schools, P.S. No. 17, as an example. There were State recommendations that were made that are not being followed -- things in the Administrative Law Judge's report.

One thing is that our schools, our elementary schools, are too big. We talk about children getting lost in these giant schools. The recommendation was we need to have small schools. In fact, the old Board was criticized for this big plan about School No. 17, which takes up an entire block.

Is it one block or two? How big is it?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Less than two acres.

MR. McDERMOTT: Less than two acres. It's going to change the school in terms of the feeling. The State said, "Whether you agree with this or not, there is literature that says schools should be smaller." Yet we're going ahead with that plan, a plan that was started under the old Board.

We also need-- We talk about decentralization. The Senator who left wanted to know if there are more administrators. Well, the fact is, we talk about decentralization on paper. However, the administrators are placed on the schools' payroll. So it looks as if there is more money going to the schools when, in fact, you have more administrators, and they are all still housed at 346 Claremont Avenue. So we're decentralized in name only.

It's a concern. It's a concern for the taxpayers. I don't know if we're getting the value for the dollar, and I think that Jersey City, now that the takeover has taken place-- And I'll tell you this, Senator, that one of the big things about takeover, the value it has, it's a deterrent.

I was talking to a superintendent in another school district. He was very concerned about what was going on in Jersey City. He was concerned because, at the time, just before the takeover and thereafter, they were concerned that they better get their acts together because they didn't want to be taken over. That's the value of it.

SENATOR EWING: That's right.

MR. McDERMOTT: So now the State has shown, "Look, we mean business. If we're going to tell you to do something, you should do it." I think the warning has been served. I think in Jersey City the message is clear. I think the City is ready to take back control of this system, and I think there are many, many good people here, more than competent, superior people, who are able to do this job. I would hope that the plan, as originally written, the plan that I was in favor of, the plan that some of the others were in favor of here, is carried through, and we do not have an extension of the takeover.

There is much more I could say, Senator, however, I know time is short. There are other people who want to speak, so I'll end and say good night.

SENATOR EWING: Well, thank you very much.

MR. McDERMOTT: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: But also, just as a parting word to you, the law does not say it has to end in five years. That impression has got to be gotten over by people. There is no cutoff, definitely, at the end of five years.

MR. McDERMOTT: I understand that, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Rightly or wrongly, that's the way the law is written.

MR. McDERMOTT: I understand that, and I think that is primarily the main concern of the citizens of Jersey City. We made our statement, we'd like to adhere to the five-year plan.

Thank you, again.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

James, or Johanna? (no response) S-O-M-- She signed in just above Shirley Nickols, and just below Arthur Williams, who is not here?

Are you the lady?

S H I R L E Y Y. N I C H O L S: No, I'm Shirley.

SENATOR EWING: What is your name?

MS. NICHOLS: Shirley.

MS. SCHULZ: (Committee Aide) Was there someone who signed in with you? (no response)

SENATOR EWING: Shirley Nichols, then?

I'm sorry, Shirley.

MS. NICHOLS: That's okay. Good evening.

SENATOR EWING: Good evening. Speak loudly enough so they can hear you in the back, please.

MS. NICHOLS: My name is Shirley Nichols. I'm a taxpayer and a soldier, and I'm a parent. I have a daughter that goes to Snyder High School.

SENATOR EWING: Pull the microphone a little bit closer to you, so they can hear.

MS. NICHOLS: (witness complies) Is that better? Can you hear me.

SENATOR EWING: Okay.

MS. NICHOLS: I have a daughter who goes to Snyder High; she's a freshman. In the last two years that the State has taken over, I noticed that the test scores haven't improved, personnel changes have been made in the middle of the school year, and recently, we had two very positive role models at that school taken out.

Not enough supplies are there. My daughter comes home and she's constantly asking me for supplies that the school should give her, such as paper, pencils, and books. I'm a single parent, and this is very cost-effective for me.

I would like to know, where is the QEA money due us, which Governor Florio created two years ago? The class sizes are totally unacceptable. Some classes have 40 pupils in them, and that's because there just aren't any teachers and they have to double. I've sat in some of these classes. I went to the school--

SENATOR EWING: Have 40 children, you say?

MS. NICHOLS: Forty pupils in one class.

SENATOR EWING: Go ahead.

MS. NICHOLS: I would also like to speak about the unsafe conditions of the school. I would recommend the Board to get a copy of the "Lincoln High School Facilities Committee Report to the Board of Education," which came out in February '93. It's eight pages long. These are problems which are wrong with the school. Why hasn't this principal been put under disciplinary action or something. Eight pages long of things that are wrong with the school. That's pretty bad.

I just don't see, you know, anything that warrants why the State should stay an additional three years. A lot of School Board members who are not here, and didn't even speak-- You know, they won't speak. They don't agree with the system, and they won't speak because of the vendettas which have already happened.

I don't know. As a parent, I'm just curious, what's going to happen next? Is it going to get better or is it going to get worse?

SENATOR EWING: How long have your children been in school?

MS. NICHOLS: Well, she's a freshman now.

SENATOR EWING: Have you seen any improvement from when she went to school?

MS. NICHOLS: Not at all since--

SENATOR EWING: Not at all.

MS. NICHOLS: Since the beginning of September she's had two principals, okay? She's had two vice principals removed, and she's been in some of those classes where she had to go to other classes because she didn't have a teacher, you know?

So, it's pretty bad, and it's getting worse. She comes from a very positive home. Like I said, I'm a soldier, I'm a taxpayer. I'm a young single mother, and I'm very worried about my daughter, because in three years I have to get her ready for college. I want her to go to a good school that's accredited.

SENATOR EWING: In what high school is she a freshman in?

MS. NICHOLS: Snyder High School.

SENATOR EWING: Snyder?

MS. NICHOLS: Yes.

I'm just really concerned about what can the State do to make Snyder and Lincoln better schools, you know, a better school program.

That's all I have to say. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

MS. NICHOLS: You're welcome.

SENATOR EWING: Melanie, where's the next person?

MS. SCHULZ: Yvonne Balcer?

Y V O N N E B A L C E R: Yvonne Balcer, 283 York Street. The reason why I brought up my concern about my placement is because Mayor Bret Schundler signed in after me, and obviously he spoke a long time ago. I know, being that you're a very fair person, you would not have had him come before me, I'm quite sure.

We're talking about meetings--

SENATOR EWING: You're talking now, so don't worry.

MS. BALCER: Okay. Well, I have to go to a meeting also, the same meeting that he is at.

I do attend meetings, and I attend every Council meeting in my City, so I really am appalled -- in the last six years I have missed one Council meeting -- that 14 people that I pay taxes to, cannot come here. I am appalled by this, considering the amount of money that I pay in terms of property taxes, as well as State taxes, to support a bureaucracy called the State of New Jersey.

The budget for education is the highest in the nation of the 50 states. We spend more money in the State of New Jersey on education than any other state, in the State of New Jersey.

Now, I want to get back to Jersey City. We're a very poor community, but on May 17, 1989, the best paid school district out of 16,000 school districts in the nation was Jersey City. We are the highest paid in terms of salaries. Right now, New York City is using their ads to get a good contract by bringing up Jersey City.

So the problem we have, when we said that there is politics in Jersey City, there is politics now on one level, and there is politics before, including within educational systems. You don't have a poor system who has the average income now is \$29,000 for each family. The average in the State of New Jersey is \$40,000. But Jersey City, not Montclair or Short Hills, is paying the highest salaries. So that's how the system works.

Now let's get back to the politics that exist right now. There was an ad, locally, last year, asking for Board members. So, I, as a concerned taxpayer -- I'm one of these people who pay over \$10,000 a year for a three-family house -- I applied, because there is waste in the system. I was interviewed. Lo and behold when they-- Later on they took the names and they had to readvertise again. Then they picked another person who was politically correct.

This person, named Mariano Vega, who was appointed by Mayor McCann to be on the Planning Board, admitted to the newspaper person -- Debra Yaffee, who was here -- that he was asked by the State to apply. The issue was, they wanted somebody to broaden the color spectrum of the place.

Well, sir, I have 14 nationalities, but my color is green, because I pay tax dollars. They are playing politics in this City.

I'll show you another way they are playing politics. I have a copy of something called, "The Jersey City Public School System." We're building schools. This is something my tax dollars paid for: on the year, capacity versus enrollment. This was paid for, "Jersey City Public School System, Long-Range Facilities, 1990-1994," Tighe, Doty, Carrino, P.A., in Secaucus.

This is page 50 of that report: "On the elementary level, there will be an excess of 1491 seats in 1990-1991, declining to 1040 in 1993, and rising to 1248 with the opening of School No. 17.

"The high school shows an excess of 1990 seats in the 1990-'91 school year, rising slightly to 2050 in the school year 1991-'92, and dropping again to 1949 by the school year 1994-'95."

Now, if you look at the school budget -- and I read budgets, I went to the last school hearing -- the school list says that we have 700 less children in the school system

compared with last school year. So what Ms. Scambio does -- I'm not really against it -- she does a pre-K system to raise the numbers up. But there are less kids in the school because of the birth rate, according to the census. I'm going by the census that I saw and the system that was here, and by the report that Ms. Scambio published in the newspaper when the budget was published, because I have a copy of that. That's public information, and you should read it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. BALCER: I have a copy of that. I also attended the Board of Education budget hearing in Dickinson High School in March of 1992. The first thing that people said up there is that this is a great budget. We ask a half-a-million dollars less of taxpayers.

Guess what? My taxes went up. And I have to say that Mayor Bret Schundler was new to the system. Our taxes for the Board of Ed is between \$15 and \$12 per thousand; it is not \$8, because our tax rate is \$39, and the city government portion is \$18, and the county is around \$6 or \$8. So he was off. But he's new to the system, and I'm not. I read budgets.

Now, let's get back to this. There is no accountability. Have you seen a claim statement when they make claims every month? I have. I have a copy of it. I attended a Board of Ed. meeting in January of this year. I'm looking at claims. Well, by comparison, the old School Board estimate were conservative people. What do we have for \$6.9 million in claims, that does not include teachers' salaries. We have catering services; we have traveling; we have T-shirts; we have furniture; we have cars. Hey, we had that under the old School Board estimate, and that budget was \$140 million a year, not \$280 million a year.

So within a system that has doubled, my taxes on the State level have risen, and my taxes locally have risen. Now if you want accountability in this system, the first thing you

must do is make the children and the parents who use the system somewhat accountable, because as Mayor Bret Schundler said, "One third of the system pays the tax bill; two-thirds do not." And the two-thirds, unfortunately -- now I'm making a general rule -- do not pay taxes. So they are not that much accountable. That's unfortunate. Public housing does not pay taxes. Low-income housing does not pay taxes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's not true.

MS. BALCER: They do not pay Board of Education taxes.

SENATOR EWING: Yvonne, just a minute. The public, please. We are not going to--

MS. BALCER: Excuse me, this is a public forum.

SENATOR EWING: Yvonne, just a minute. We are not going to have a debate in here about the taxes. We are asking you, Yvonne, as to what you feel is wrong with the takeover, if you have--

MS. BALCER: Okay. Let me get back--

SENATOR EWING: Just let me finish. I want to hear from you what is not being done that should be done, and whether there is anything good being done by the takeover or not?

MS. BALCER: Okay. Let me explain something. I am behind School No. 3. Their yard faces my backyard, and since the takeover has been there, they have been modernizing the school, and when the school system is in School No. 3, I definitely go. So at the last school meeting I asked, "Since every summer they have been redoing School No. 3, why are you building a new School No. 3, since you have been putting in millions of dollars worth of materials -- windows, doors, painting and scraping?" "Oh, we have to build a new School No. 3 because the school is antiquated."

Well, last summer, from July to the end of August, they drilled, they banged. I called and I said, "What chemical are you using, because I'm smelling it in my house 24-hours a

day? Are you taking precautions in the lead removal, because my next-door neighbor has a baby, and I grow vegetables in my backyard?" Well, I called up and I spoke to the gentleman who is head of the section of Ferris High School, Pasqual, (phonetic spelling) I believe his name is?

SENATOR EWING: I don't know.

MS. BALCER: He got back to me and said he would inquire. Well, he never did. In the meanwhile, through the whole time, my neighbor's baby is back there, and we see the lead from the fire escape coming in. There's no protection. I've been asking, "What's happening?" There is no accountability to the public.

I would like to know what I was breathing in that was making me sick for a long time. I thought I had the flu.

SENATOR EWING: Are your children in this school?

MS. BALCER: No, my children are much older, but that's the school system behind me. My backyard faces their backyard.

SENATOR EWING: But you don't have any children in the school?

MS. BALCER: No, I do not.

So that is no accountability. I still do not know what happened in terms of the chemical that was used. I do not know if my backyard is free of lead or not. I asked them that, but they never got back to me.

I don't know if they're going to build-- Why are they building a new No. 3 School, if every year they're pouring in millions of tax dollars in there? There is like, "Well this is a credit card to spend, so let's spend it."

And talking about budgets. In the City's budget under the reval, as the Mayor said, we went up in value, so therefore we have more money to bond. Now, getting back to the City's portion, we're bond to the max. But the Board of Ed scares me,

because under the bonding capacity-- And by the way, when they sold the bonds last time, nobody in the school system knew about it. I got a copy by asking.

The Board of Ed has right now, that scares me, \$488 million in bonding credit, which means, "Hey, they can build things under this system without any public input," and that happened with Dickinson High School. They wanted to build a new Dickinson High School at Reservoir Property. There was no public hearing. I asked, "When will the public be notified?" And I was told, "Well, we don't have to," because under the State system they don't have to impact or ask my permission, even though I do pay the bonding under the other part of the tax bill.

Now, what annoys me is that they use a system that Bret Schundler said is falsifying the issue. The year before State takeover, locally, Jersey City gave the Board of Ed \$45 million in local property taxes and \$2 million for bonding debt. The year after that, the reval, the system went up. We had to give them \$90 million from local taxpayers.

Then people appealed. They're saying when I inquire about-- Which is a double-- We're now paying \$78 million. I'll get back to this, how much it is--

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but I want to hear about the takeover.

MS. BALCER: Well, I want to hear--

SENATOR EWING: No, I want to hear about the takeover. What--

MS. BALCER: This is part of the takeover. Give me a chance.

When I approached the Superintendent of Elections about the cost of the taxes, she said -- Mr. Demming and also Ms. Scambio at various times say -- "You're paying less money than before." They're using an artificial year and telling us

that we're going down every year in taxes. What I'm trying to say is that they are lying and deceiving to the public. That makes you not feel good.

SENATOR EWING: What is happening with the education system for your children? Is it being improved or not improved?

MS. BALCER: Put it like this: There are 20,000-plus kids in the system. Every child in this school system I feel for them, because when they come out of school and get a job, they're not going to have any jobs because business is leaving because of the tax burden.

I feel as though we're putting a great deal of burden on the next generation in the name of education. We're not educating these kids. We're putting dollars in someone else's pocket. This is a real serious issue, because if you look at the City's budget, we are--

SENATOR EWING: I'm not going to go into that. I'm very sorry. We're going to have the next speaker, Yvonne.

I'm very sorry.

MS. BALCER: Well, I'm concerned about these children, because there are no jobs.

SENATOR EWING: You can give your remarks-- You can write them up and give them to the stenographers here, and we'll put it in the record. The record will be printed.

MS. BALCER: I'm concerned about them having a job, because there are no jobs when they graduate, because the tax base has been eroded, and they're making it even worse.

SENATOR EWING: Louis DeStefano, please?

MS. BALCER: Thank you for your comments, sir, and thanks for putting the Mayor above me.

L O U I S D I S T E F A N O: Are you ready? Louis DeStefano, 420 Liberty Avenue.

This is kind of outrageous to me that only one member of a 14-member body is here. But I can only expect that--

SENATOR EWING: Let me just say something, publicly. I don't know what other commitments other legislators have.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Me neither, but they're paid by us.

SENATOR EWING: No.

MR. DiSTEFANO: No, they're not? Well, it's irrelevant, right?

SENATOR EWING: Well, wait just a second. Certainly, we get a salary. But it doesn't necessarily mean they have to attend every single meeting. This is not a nine-to-five job.

MR. DiSTEFANO: I know, it's part-time.

SENATOR EWING: The Legislature is a part-time job.

MR. DiSTEFANO: I hope everyone hears this.

SENATOR EWING: And the other individuals, other legislators, have jobs. They're either doctors, they're car salesmen, or lawyers, or something of that nature.

MR. DiSTEFANO: That's great.

SENATOR EWING: I happen to be retired--

MR. DiSTEFANO: That's beautiful.

SENATOR EWING: --so I've got the time to put in. Also, a transcript is being made of the hearing which every Committee member will get a copy of.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Yeah, and I'm sure they'll read it in great detail. It's awful. This State stinks.

SENATOR EWING: The what stinks?

MR. DiSTEFANO: The State stinks.

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Stinks to high heaven.

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MR. DiSTEFANO: You're in Hudson County, right? The political hotbed of the nation. The town that raised Hauge in control of this whole State, and put two presidents in, if not more.

So no matter what anyone at this dias says, when they say no politics is involved, they're either ignorant or they're liars. More likely they're liars, because that's all you get here. You want to know about the Board? You want to know about elections? You talk about ward voting.

SENATOR EWING: No, we want to know about the takeover. That's what we came up here--

MR. DiSTEFANO: The takeover?

SENATOR EWING: I could care less what goes on politically in Jersey City.

MR. DiSTEFANO: No, no, you want to know about a vote -- a Board of Ed vote, right? You were talking about that earlier.

SENATOR EWING: No, I want to know how-- Do you have children in the school system?

MR. DiSTEFANO: Does it matter? No, I have none.

SENATOR EWING: It's just a question I wanted to ask.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Okay, none.

SENATOR EWING: What?

MR. DiSTEFANO: None.

SENATOR EWING: But from your perception of it, from talking with friends in the neighborhood or something who do have children, do they see an improvement in the educational system, or has it gotten worse, or are there some suggestions? I mean, should we push ahead and have kindergarten and prekindergarten in every school? Should we have Head Starts in every single place we can put them in? Those are the sort of things we want to know.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Senator, this is what they see, what they read. They read we have a Superintendent that is making \$115,000, that can raise the salary whenever she feels like, and has no one to answer to.

SENATOR EWING: Well, that's not true.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Well, that's what they see.

SENATOR EWING: I'm saying, I want to correct some of the misapprehensions on this thing.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Okay.

SENATOR EWING: The salary is set by the Commissioner and the State Board. They just don't say, "Well, I'm going to give myself a \$10,000 raise this week."

MR. DiSTEFANO: Well, she just gave herself a raise this year.

SENATOR EWING: She didn't give it, the State does.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Well, okay. Well, she doesn't deserve--

SENATOR EWING: I'm not even sure she got a raise. I don't know what it was, quite frankly.

MR. DiSTEFANO: She's making \$114,000 a year.

SENATOR EWING: She's no longer here, though.

MR. DiSTEFANO: When she left she was making that. Now she's making something else, good for her.

SENATOR EWING: She's making less.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Do you want to know what else they see? They see a dumping ground for Montclair elite. That's what they see. The people in Jersey City see a dumping ground for Montclair elite. That's what you want to know. That's what they see.

SENATOR EWING: Fine. How's the takeover working?

MR. DiSTEFANO: They see no input. They see a Board that has the power of a toenail to an elephant. You know, no power at all. That's what they see.

SENATOR EWING: That's true.

MR. DiSTEFANO: That's perception, all right? I don't know how true it is, because I've been to Board--

SENATOR EWING: That's true, but that's being corrected, slowly.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Okay. All right. Now the election, all right? This is what they see with the election. It's going to cost \$500,000 for an election. Should we have it? "No, we shouldn't have it; yes we should have it." And if we have it, there's only going to be people who are on the Board that are going to be voted for. A meaningless election. That's what they see. You asked, I'm telling you.

SENATOR EWING: It's been delayed for one year.

MR. DiSTEFANO: I know that.

SENATOR EWING: The original legislation, when we made it up, called for that. Now maybe by the time the next election comes around, that will change to some degree. I don't know whether it will or not?

MR. DiSTEFANO: Do you want to know what I think the structure of your election should be?

SENATOR EWING: What?

MR. DiSTEFANO: Now, we earlier talked about ward elections, the woman that the Senator left-- There are six wards in Jersey City, and three at large candidates, right? Now, the more equitable way to have an election for the Board of Ed would be to gerrymander the City into-- There are 90,000 registered voters in Jersey City. You gerrymander into 10,000 apiece, and you would have nine elected Board of Ed members. This way you would have a more representative body, instead of at large representatives that have no constituency to answer to.

SENATOR EWING: Earlier I asked for comment on what the general feeling was that maybe -- just as a thought -- to try to work it out so that Jersey City, when they come to the general election for school boards in the future, would elect one representative from each one of the wards, and three at large. We don't want to gerrymander the City again. The people know where they vote in Ward 1, they know where they vote in Ward 6, and if you start dividing the City up again, they won't know where they're going to go to vote when. So the thought is to make it one for each ward.

It might not work out that way, we don't know. But it's a thought we're looking at.

MR. DiSTEFANO: It's more equitable. It's more equitable if you gerrymander it to 10,000. This might be a catalyst for the City to follow, because the at large represents no one at the present time, because if you were to talk to an at large candidate they'd say, "Well, I represent

"A" Ward," because that's where they come from, or "B" Ward, but they hardly ever say, "I'm an at large Councilman or Councilwoman, and I represent everyone."

SENATOR EWING: Okay.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Now my last comment is about Mr. Gerry Brancato, who gave a presentation earlier. I know him very well. I've known him for several years, and his dedication to the system is beyond reproach. He had every opportunity to leave this City, and he didn't. He remains a stalwart of his community. I would hope that you would read his documentation on the takeover, and see the inconsistencies that he has documented over the past three years. It would help you and your colleagues in having a more general view as to what's going on.

I believe the State should not remain in Jersey City for more than the five-year period. And if they do continue, that their budget should be brought up for review in front of the City Council if at all possible for the residents, because you have a bigger forum. Now you would have two bodies looking at it, the Board and the Council. This way, the residents -- and you've heard this before, they pay the highest tax in the nation, right here: \$39 per thousand. That's confiscatory. We pay the highest in the nation. There's no community that pays this, all right?

Now the Board of Ed has a large budget, and it should be reviewed at every public forum possible to get the most input. Okay, Senator?

SENATOR EWING: Well, you can't go to the municipality, because we don't vote -- the citizens don't vote on a municipal budget. A lot of people feel -- I'm one of them -- that if we're going to vote on school budgets, we ought to vote on municipal budgets, and we ought to vote on the county budget.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Well, before takeover, the school budget was brought before the Board -- the school budget was brought before the Council. I don't know if you're aware of that. The Council had the last word on the Board of Ed budget. Were you aware of that, in Jersey City?

SENATOR EWING: If it's defeated, it goes to the local Council to have changes made, which then goes down to the Department of Education to be approved or not approved. In other words, the local council might cut out a half-a-million dollars of a budget, and then it goes down to the Commissioner. But they don't vote on the initial budget.

MR. DiSTEFANO: No, they vote on the final budget.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: No, they don't.

MR. DiSTEFANO: The Board of Ed? The Council does not vote on the final budget?

SENATOR EWING: No.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Even before the takeover?

SENATOR EWING: The Board of Education does their budget, period, simple. If it gets defeated, it then goes to the local governing body, which in Jersey City is a Council. Where I live it's a Township Committee. They in turn do what they want, or either, say, "Well, it's all right the way it is," or "Take \$100,000, or \$500,000, or \$5 million out," depending on the size. Then it goes on down to be approved by the Commissioner. Then it can be appealed from the Commissioner's cut, if they want to.

There is one community out in my County, South Bound Brook, that will not know until May or June of this year as to what the final outcome is of their budget, because they've appealed it back up to the Commissioner again.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Do they run on a State timetable, or a-- Do they run on a State timetable?

SENATOR EWING: No, they run the same time that you do. But I'm just saying there is a long delay in it because of that process.

But the Council does not vote on the initial budget, or anything of that nature.

MR. DiSTEFANO: Okay. Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, sir.

Next is Patricia Dunham, followed by Doris Massey.

P A T R I C I A G. D U N H A M: Good evening. My name is Patricia Dunham. I am a resident of Jersey City. I have been a teacher in the District for 20 years, and I have been involved in the Parents' Council of Jersey City for 12 years, and I am presently their First Vice President.

I just want to say a few things. One, when Level III monitoring was taking place, and we were in that, it was a very adversarial situation here. There are good feelings and bad feelings, and concerns, and upsetment, and you've heard all of that tonight. The only thing, I felt that when we went through State monitoring in Level III, that when the State came in, they should have come in on their feet, running. They did not come in with a corrective action plan; they did not come in with-- I mean, they knew what the problems were, but they didn't have the plan in place and their reorganization in place.

I felt, at that time, that they should have had it in place from day one, not waiting six months to do a reorganization, or extending it another year, because it took-- If they understood what the problems were, they should have been able to have that kind of plan in place when they arrived.

SENATOR EWING: Let me just interrupt you for a second on that, because the feeling in Trenton is, that instead of giving them six months to get in gear, they be given a year, because they don't necessarily know enough about the District until they get the feeling, and see the personnel and everything, to come in and say, "This is it."

MS. DUNHAM: My problem with that was that, the fact that they were here monitoring and evaluating and they were involved with all of these people at the Board and their

committees and all of that, they had some idea of what the problems were and where to go; now, maybe not so much with who was going to do what, but at least a plan on where they were going to go with it when they started. We wound up going through six months with upsetment and turmoil, and no one knowing, really, what was going to happen, even though the State team might have known where they were going, okay? That kind of thing should be in place.

You're talking about adding another year onto State takeover, just for them to get the feel of the District, when they have been in the District for Level I, Level II, and Level III. So they must have some kind of idea of-- I mean, you don't take it over unless you know what the problems are. They were in court for almost a year, presenting their case, so they obviously had enough of a case to know -- and facts -- to know what the problems were and where the corrections had to be made.

SENATOR EWING: Depending if the State won the case.

MS. DUNHAM: Yes, but they had all those facts they wanted, and when they came in, it was, "Well, now we have to spend six months putting it all together again." I felt at that point, "Well, they should have known what--" They knew what it was, and they should have had some kind of basic plan, in place, when they first came in, all right? Because we're now talking about not five years, but six years, because we need a year of getting used to everybody, and now, five years to correct it.

I don't know whether that's reasonable. I don't know if it's workable. But that's how I feel, looking back on it.

SENATOR EWING: Did you say you were a teacher or a parent?

MS. DUNHAM: Yes, I'm both.

SENATOR EWING: Good, okay.

MS. DUNHAM: I have two hats.

SENATOR EWING: No. That's all right. I'm glad to know the background.

MS. DUNHAM: As far as transition back into local control, I feel that you have to have a step-by-step plan. Everyone has to know what's going to happen, "This is the first step, this is the second, and you're going back into local control." I feel this way because if you just pull out, it's going to be chaos.

SENATOR EWING: No, there is a weakness right now, that that has not been really well-thought-out, and this is something that we've picked up from the other hearings that will be worked on. So when transition starts, it should go along in a regular programmatic order.

MS. DUNHAM: Now, as far as State takeover goes, we've had improvements. But we have a lot of work to do. We still have classes of 32 to 35 children in the second and third grade -- one teacher, no aides. We need to look at that.

We have buildings that maybe -- some are cleaner, some aren't, but most-- Some are cleaner, but they need major renovation. We need new schools. We need more high schools for smaller numbers of children to be in them, rather than having 2500 children in a building. We shouldn't have a school over 700 students, and some of our elementary schools have over 1500.

SENATOR EWING: Facilities are a serious problem.

MS. DUNHAM: Yes. I mean, they say we have no space because of the way that Jersey City is set up. I realize that, but these are things that we have to work on.

Elementary schools now have closed lunch, but in most of the schools, we have inadequate facilities to serve lunch. We have kids sitting in little rooms, some of them don't ever get a hot lunch. They don't have the wiring in some of these buildings to even have microwave ovens to even heat things. So that kind of stuff has to be brought on.

And, too, the types of food have to be adjusted because we have some children who are vegetarians and others who have dietary restrictions. Sometimes that's not addressed.

Alternate education programs have to be expanded, especially for disruptive students who do not fit into the regular classroom, and are not special ed classifiable. In other words, they don't need special ed. Some of our students are, but they have a problem existing in the regular classroom routine, and they need some other different kind of educational alternative. We don't have enough of those programs for the children.

The supplies: We have books, uniform across the District. Teachers don't have to buy books anymore, okay? But we do still buy supplies. We buy crayons. We buy scissors, sometimes, if we can't get them. There are papers -- not paper to write on, but if you're doing artwork and painting and things like that, sometimes those things aren't available. We need to look at that kind of creative side of the supply list and make sure that that's put into the schools, too.

Political interference--

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me. Do you mean at the moment they're not available, or they're coming in, or they're just not there, the crayons or the--

MS. DUNHAM: Well, they don't-- Well, in the building that I have, we don't have them available, so the teachers supplement it themselves.

SENATOR EWING: Well, what does the principal say to you?

MS. DUNHAM: That's another thing about the budget process, you know? I mean--

SENATOR EWING: No, no. I asked you about the principal? What does the principal--

MS. DUNHAM: When we send in quotes and budgets and things like that, and make up what we have, a lot of times it gets kicked back. If you order crayons or scissors, it will get kicked back and said to us, "Well, you have to write why you need these things. You need to validate that."

Well, if you're in first grade, you need crayons.

SENATOR EWING: Sure.

MS. DUNHAM: So that kind of process has to be fine-tuned, because it's a little too chaotic at this point as far as that goes.

Business practices: As far as from what I have seen, they have improved as far as contracts and bids. I have monitored Board meetings, and have asked for audits and things like that. I have gone over them. We're worried about whether the money is there to spend, but we worry that it's being spent at least where they say it's supposed to be. Sometimes we have problems with that, but if I call, I usually get the information that I want.

Political interference has diminished, as I have been a personal-- I have felt it personally in that I don't have that kind of pressure in my classroom anymore, where before it was there. Now, I'm not saying that politics isn't alive and well anywhere, whether it be in our families or anywhere else. It's alive and it is well, and people are learning how to work a different system. That's what this is about.

Business alliances have been expanded, and we need more of them. You know, someone did say, a lot of things, like the curriculum and business alliances, those kinds of things were here in State monitoring, in Level III. They were started there, okay, and I think what has happened since State takeover is that people have felt that they were there and that the State took credit for them, even though they were there before they came in. That has caused some real hard feelings and real hurt, because a lot of people worked very hard for those programs, even to get started, when most of the time in this City we couldn't get those kinds of programs. It was very hard to get that through the political machinery and everything else.

Then, when they were expanded, it was like, "Oh, look, this is what we have," And those of us who have been around a long time said, "Well, we had those before, but now you've made

it a little better and you're actually promoting what we have in the City." Because we've had a very negative-- People have looked at us in a very negative way. We don't want to be looked at like that. We're working in my school on a project with Point Pleasant, and someone came up and said, "Oh, we don't want any negative press from down there." And we said, "Well, we're so used to it, anything good that they say about us, we're happy with. So, you know, just take it easy, and everything will work out." So we're used to that kind of stuff.

Curriculum was in place. They have revised it, and they have put it together a little differently. Rose Viciconti worked on that, and it was there, and they've just made it better. Some people do need to get credit where credit is due, but, you know, the State has done revisions and I have seen them, and I know that it's going, so we are going in the right direction.

But we need magnet schools expanded. We need more computer technology. Some schools don't have computers. Some of our kids don't see computers, unless they're in basic skills. Some schools have computer labs, where the children are going; some don't. We have some high schools that have great computer labs, and we have other ones where certain kids-- You know, it's like, we really have to look at these things and make it work for our kids.

And that's what it's about. We're hearing all of these things tonight, and I keep saying to myself, "My kids are now out of public school, because I'm getting old and white haired. But my kids were in public school, and I worked very--" People will tell you, she was a pain, because I wanted what I wanted for my kids, because they were good kids and they were average students, and they worked hard. I don't want my kids on basic skills when they go to high school, and no other parent does either.

But we do have a lot of paperwork, and the attitude among the people who work in the District is, "Well, as long as it looks good on paper, all we do is write this stuff up." You know, the teachers get bogged down because they're trying to teach. So these kinds of things have to be worked out. We still have snags. We have a long way to go. I'm not saying that State takeover should stay here, but I think there should be a plan -- a transitional plan -- that is set up so that the process can start now, step-by-step, so that the people in the community can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and then it's our responsibility to carry on the good things that have been going on, and to correct the things that haven't been addressed, or to make things better that haven't been made better.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Let me just ask you a question, seeing as you've been in the system: Prior to the takeover, were there teams from the Department of Education, or from other schools as a team, coming in, working with the people who head up the curriculum section, working with the people who head up transportation, working with the people--

MS. DUNHAM: Do you mean monitoring teams?

SENATOR EWING: Well, actually working with them, saying, "Look, you ought to do it this way, or that way," or, "Consider this," or, "Consider that."

MS. DUNHAM: The only perception that we received in the schools, okay, and those of us who are active in the community that when the monitoring teams came in, they came in to evaluate, and tell them what was wrong. Fix it -- but not help me to fix it. And like, "We're going to come in here anyway, so we don't care whether you fix it or you don't fix it." This is what the feeling was.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, the feeling, but they didn't say they were going to come in anyway?

MS. DUNHAM: Well, no, they didn't say that. All I'm saying is, that when we're in the District, we're being told, they come in, they tell us what's wrong, and they go back home and tell us to fix it. But we're not getting any help or any direction on where they want us to go to make it right.

SENATOR EWING: Well, did anybody ask them, "Can you send some people in--"

MS. DUNHAM: I don't know what the Superintendent or the Assistant Superintendent did. I wasn't privy to that information, or how that ran, because being in the schools, we are separated from the Central Board, and that is still true. That is still true, okay? I mean, the schools, as far as we're concerned, we are separated from the Central Board of Education.

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MS. DUNHAM: And they pass down whatever they have to pass down, and we do whatever we have to do.

SENATOR EWING: Well, also, the other thing is, on the Board, they, instead of the election taking place -- as I said earlier -- it was postponed for a year, but at that time they will then start voting on the curriculum at the Board meeting. And if the Superintendent wishes to bring up other items, they can bring that up at the Superintendent's discretion to vote on.

This is just a fleck toward the transition, but--

MS. DUNHAM: Right. The Board of Education election should be in the budget, also, for the amount of money they have to spend on it, because that was an argument that we had as Parents' Council before the Board meeting -- not two Board meetings ago, when the election came up -- was the fact that it had never been budgeted in this year's budget, and where were they going to get the money from in order to pay for the election to take place?

So, that definitely has to be put in this year's budget if we're going to have an election next year. It's

important that these people start voting on things, because we want them accountable for what happens to our children.

SENATOR EWING: That's right. And when they run for election, they can show what they've done.

MS. DUNHAM: That's right, or not done.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, it goes two ways.

MS. DUNHAM: We're very cynical in Jersey City.

SENATOR EWING: You don't have as much gray hair as I do.

MS. DUNHAM: I'm getting it.

SENATOR EWING: Doris Massey, and then Ray O'Brien.

D O R I S M A S S E Y: Good evening. My name is Doris Massey. I'm President of the Parents' Council at Snyder.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me, what?

MS. MASSEY: I said, good evening. My name is Doris Massey. I'm the President of the Parents' Council at Snyder High School.

SENATOR EWING: Could you speak a little bit louder, Doris, please, so they can hear you back there.

MS. MASSEY: I'm just a little tired, that's all. I have a lot of concerns as far as the decentralization of the District. It seems from one cluster to another, we never know what's actually taking place. There is no uniformity across the City as far as the educational practices. Possibly in curriculum, but in other areas such as sports, extracurricular activities, teachers, administrators, there appears to be a difference. There is no uniformity across the City, and in some areas there should be, even though we are decentralized. It seems like some areas are favored and are able to receive more than other areas.

We've had great difficulty in some sections of our cluster. There have been a lot of administrative changes, which have been detrimental to the functioning of our children. It's not about you, Senator Ewing, or your

Committee, or Dr. Scambio or her people. It should be about addressing the children, and as long as the children are always given consideration and addressed with the changes, then we would solve a lot of problems.

The problem is, the children aren't considered enough, and the parents have very little to say. At certain times we're let in, we are only let in when they want to let us in, and when we start to formulate our own ideas and would like to see them implemented, we are excluded. We are excluded, sometimes; a very unpleasant situation. It appears as if sometimes if you speak out, and speak out too loud, and speak the wrong things, a committee is formed to get that parent: to keep her quiet, or make her appear as if the individual is wrong -- or he's wrong -- or we'll close them out in any shape, form, or fashion. I get that feeling. I don't exaggerate on it; I actually feel it.

We have a lot of concerns at Snyder High School. I know we're going through Middle States in about two weeks. There is a rush now, because I complained publicly about the deficiencies and inadequacies that were taking place at Snyder for us to be getting ready to undergo Middle States Evaluation. It should not be taking place two weeks before the evaluators come in here. Let me read some of the things we have going on there:

- * paint fumes
- * toxic dust in the air, and
- * last minute repairs.

It shouldn't happen two weeks before Middle States Evaluation.

Let me say that we also asked last year for an extension. So it appears that through the year's extension, some of these things would have taken place, especially where there is toxic paints and dust flying around. That could have definitely been addressed on the weekend or in the evening hours when our children are out of school.

We've had teachers getting allergic reactions and being sent home, children regurgitating in the halls, and it's unfair. Now we're between the devil and the deep blue sea. Do we stop it and fail the Middle States Evaluation, or do we suffer this and continue on, so that we can pass it?

We really didn't have a choice in this matter. I say this because I hope in the next 10 years, when we do do Middle States again, we won't have to suffer that. I say for the next school that has to go through it, that they don't suffer through it.

We even have blow torches being used in the classroom to pick up tiles off the floor while children were in classes at the time, okay?

So when you had your supervisor, whoever you had speak earlier, saying all is okay; all is not okay, okay? I'm not here to undermine anybody or say remove them. I'm saying there is a time and a place, and a proper way to do it, and everyone should be given consideration in the process.

Promotions has a lot to be desired here, as far as our personnel practices. I find that some of the same things are taking place. I feel, especially in our cluster, that we've been dumped on. We've been forced to take people that we don't want to. We've been asked to become involved. Once we become involved and we feel we're going on the right track, decisions are made with us only to a point. Then we are abruptly eliminated, and whoever they want to put in place is then put in place, and they make you feel that you flip-flopped on them. Not so.

There is a time and a place for everything, even as far as promotions and removal. And we have suffered a lot of incorrect timing as far as removal of administration in the middle of the year. We're in the process now, in the third marking period, of the removal of administrators. It should

not be taking place. Irregardless of how we feel about the individual, their evaluations, and their performances, there is a time to eliminate and promote.

I feel, because of all the changes that have taken place at Snyder High School-- I'm going to read you some.

We've had two Associate Superintendents. We've had four Cluster Directors in three years. We've had four Principals in the last two years. We've had 12 Vice Principals -- and I have the names here. We've had, in our administrative attendance, in their performance of coming to school, very poor attendance rates in administrative as well as faculty staff. If they don't come to school, how can we expect our children to come to school? We've had guidance counselors replaced, but the replacements of the guidance counselors have not addressed the needs of our population and nationality-wise.

Snyder High School is a 90 percent black school. I may be a little off, maybe 15 percent Hispanic. We have no Hispanic representation for those Hispanic students, and there should be. There should be. I've asked for it in administrative and guidance counselors. These children have no one they can turn to when they feel they need to talk and relate to their nationality. I would feel the same way. I would feel alienated.

The lunchroom: It was written that it was completed. It was not completed. It is very rarely cleaned. The food -- the menu -- has a lot to be desired. When I attended Snyder High School as a student, there was a minor breakfast you could get, and a decent hot meal. There is no reason, with the money that comes into this District on the State level, city level, and Federal government level, that our children can't be given a decent meal. Unfortunately, a lot of children in our school, if that was a hot meal, it would probably be the only decent meal they get during the day. The parents have asked, numerous times, for numerous years, and this has still not taken place.

And possibly, if we upgraded the lunch program, maybe our children would move and use the cafeterias a little more. They frown upon the lunch, and that leaves a lot to be desired.

We have two vacancies in the chairpersons in special needs area, and in social studies. We have a language department that consists of three teachers. Two of the teachers should be in a bilingual setting. You cannot teach a language unless the children have a good command, an understanding of English. We definitely have two teachers there who need-- I'm not questioning their capabilities. I'm saying that they need to be in a bilingual setting, and not in our school. That's been addressed over a number of years, to the point where one of our teachers is getting ready to retire.

We lack a Vice Principal in charge of discipline. Most high schools, and I think in every high school here in Jersey City, we have a Vice Principal over curriculum. The administrator is over curriculum. A very important role, very important part in our children's scheduling through the school year, as well as checking the guidance counselors to make sure they are correct. We have no one in charge of scheduling on the administrative end. We have a teacher who is removed out of the classroom, and put in there to help assist. But that is usually and always the duty of a school administrator.

Because of the transferals, and the acting positions which we have at Snyder, I feel that everyone is given an acting position now, to keep the parents from taking an active role in the permanent positions. When the SOPs for the State District is, if it's a permanent position, one or two parents are allowed to sit in on the interviewing. In an acting capacity we are not. So therefore, we are forced to take, and remain with this person for as long as they -- or when they decide to post the position. We have to remain with that individual whether the parents like it or not.

I feel that we wouldn't suffer a lot of our problems in the schools if the parents took a very active role, not only in just walking the school, or having Parents' Council meetings, but sitting in on the curriculum writing committee. We're willing to give up the time and learn the process and identify the deficiencies, or identify when it's not being implemented. If we're willing to give that time up, we should be permitted to do that. We have parents going back six or seven years that used to sit at Board meetings until 4:00, 5:00, or 6:00 in the morning. We now sit at the Board meetings until 11:00 or 12:00 in the night, and it's really a disgrace that our Board members, who are supposed to be selected to represent the citizens of Jersey City, do not have more say. So, therefore, sometimes, we feel it's not worth approaching them with some of the deficiencies that we would like for them to address.

If they are going to represent us, we should have had more of a choice in the selection of who went on that Board, being that that was a concern of ours in the past -- who was on that Board. We do not have the right to say who goes on that Board. The Board members were not chosen by the citizens.

Okay, now we're forced to vote, if I'm not mistaken, on nine of these members in an election that's going to come up, that's going to cost us. If we have to pay for it, and still it's not our choice, it's who you sat there and who will remain there until-- And still they will not have the authority to represent the citizens or the parents or the students of Jersey City. So what purpose do they serve?

I feel that before the election comes about, the whole situation should be looked at, and if we're going to have to take nine of the committee -- which people are dropping out everyday -- when it comes to the nine, let the remainers save us the money of having to vote.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but they'll want to see who got the most.

MS. MASSEY: Excuse me?

SENATOR EWING: They'll want-- If there are just nine out of the fifteen who want to run, when they do come up for election, you're saying--

MS. MASSEY: There would be no reason--

SENATOR EWING: But the ego in each one of those individuals, they will want to see which one got the most votes.

MS. MASSEY: The only possibility there might be is as far as who is chairing it.

SENATOR EWING: But also it determines the term of office. The highest vote getter will be on for three years -- the top three for three years, the next three for two years, and the next three for one year.

MS. MASSEY: I'm not really concerned about the years they will spend, because we had that process before. I'm concerned about how actively they could be involved in the voting and implementing deficiencies that the general public or the community bring to them.

SENATOR EWING: Well, you can get some input by talking to the Board, because they are going to be voting on the curriculum from now on.

MS. MASSEY: Okay, that's one facet of their duties they will be able to.

SENATOR EWING: That's one little step.

MS. MASSEY: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: But it's a start.

MS. MASSEY: Okay. Right now, presently, we have an Acting Principal, we have three Acting Vice Principals. I would like to see that changed. I would like to see, as in the past, either in April or May that the parents -- besides one parent -- and the students take an active role in the

application of the people who apply for the principalship and the vice principalship. In an acting position we've been closed out to that capacity.

I think we really need to look at all the changes that have taken place. Let's get some solid ground going there and stop these moves in the third marking period in the middle of the year. It is too destructive. It is too emotional for the children who have grown attached to these people, and it shouldn't be taking place. We should not have had acting in the permanent positions, four people in the two years. As I said before, 12 vice principals.

SENATOR EWING: Are you almost finished? I think you've been on for about 15--

MS. MASSEY: Yes. I don't want to repeat myself here. I have several, so I'm trying to skip over what I've already mentioned.

I'm going to end it. There's a lot more I could say, but I'm going to end it with one more thing.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

MS. MASSEY: I feel, when the State came in, we lost a lot of good people who were working hard, and we only lost them because of the titles and the positions that they held. I think that was unfair. We've had a lot of people who have come into this District who have lacked the time and the experience and the expertise of the people who we lost due to State takeover. If this should happen again-- In my opinion, if another city has to go through it again, I wouldn't eliminate so fast. I would see who was capable, who was working, and I would, more or less, like you say, bring a team in to work and improve, and possibly to eliminate where you found the deficiencies.

But just to walk in, with people with the expertise which we lost in music, in the areas of curriculum, in the areas of guidance counseling, and in the areas of

administration was very sad. It was a sad state, and we're still sad over that, because we have not been able, as of yet, to replace the expertise which we've lost.

SENATOR EWING: I'm going to have to cut you off, because we have two more people to talk, and we've all got to get home. These ladies have to get down to Trenton. (referring to OLS staff personnel)

MS. MASSEY: Okay, Senator Ewing. I would like to say that I would like to see the applications opened up to the residents of Jersey City, who have their certificates. They'd be able to apply. They have been shut out. I would like to see that open up again, that everyone could apply.

SENATOR EWING: Fine, thank you very much.

MS. MASSEY: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Ray O'Brien, followed by Bob Perry and Bill Perkins.

R A Y M O N D J. O ' B R I E N, CPA: How are you, Senator?

SENATOR EWING: Ray.

MR. O'BRIEN: I'm Ray O'Brien, Vice Chairman of the Board in Jersey City. I gave Melanie a full copy of my testimony. I know you're tired, I'm tired. I promise not to read the whole thing, but just hit the highlights. How's that?

SENATOR EWING: Fine.

MR. O'BRIEN: All right.

The takeover law in general: I know that in January of this year, Senate Bill No. 1470 was proposed, I believe, by you, Senator. It had a laundry list of recommendations which I just briefly want to touch upon.

The first recommendation was to start the State-operated school districts in July of each year. It speaks for itself. It should be done.

Another aspect of that proposal which I support was to reorganize the Central Office function in districts over a

12-month period. That makes sense, and I think it also has a side benefit, listening to some of the concerns expressed tonight; namely, that these outsiders, who we call the State team, will have a little more time to get to know and evaluate the employees of the district. I think equity could be served, in a better sense, were that to happen.

I understand that under this proposal that the minimum period of intervention would be extended by law, if enacted, to seven years. I personally don't agree with that. If we're going to look at the takeover statute in its broadest sense, I think it should remain at five -- not here in Jersey City -- but in the broad sense of the law since some districts might be able to be returned to the community sooner. I don't think that's the case here, and I just don't buy the fact that our nonbinding November referendum was such a landslide victory for kicking the State out when one considers that the "yes" votes were 19,000, while the "no" votes were 15,000. That's not a landslide to me.

I understand, also, that under the January proposal, that there was thought of reducing the appointed Board to 11 from 15. I also disagree with that, simply because we've had numerous vacancies in the last three-plus years that I have been here, on and off, and at the State level, they simply haven't been filled timely. We're not up to snuff now. We've been missing two Board members for a while, one of the two probably since November. And it hurts not to be up to full speed, especially when you consider that maybe only a handful, or six or seven, might be active Board participants.

SENATOR EWING: Ray, whose appointments are those two? I can't remember. Are they the Governor's or the Mayor's?

MR. O'BRIEN: No, these are the Commissioner's. The locality is up to snuff.

SENATOR EWING: It's the State's appointments?

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, yes.

Moving to other considerations in the intervention statute, the transition issues are certainly important, but a couple of other matters I would like to bring to your attention. One should go in line with what I just said. If a vacancy occurs on our Board, for whatever reason, statutorily, the Commissioner or local governing body should be required to appoint in 30 to 45 days. I think that's doable.

And I also think that appointees should not serve -- not serve -- at the pleasure of the appointing authority. I've seen what politics has done here, when we had a change in Mayors, and our Board was flip-flopped. I think if an appointee is made for the duration of takeover, subject to their own right to remove themselves or other objective reasons, it gives a sense of stability and a clearer message of what's trying to be accomplished.

From a transition issue, I think that year four of intervention, the individual who was occupying the chairperson's slot should start setting the agenda for the Board meeting, rather than the State District Superintendent.

Also, in year three of intervention -- and I thank you for letting us being able to vote on curriculum -- but I think in year three of intervention, after a Board has been together for two years, the Superintendent should bring matters to a vote -- must on the curriculum, budget, and labor contracts. From a more logistical perspective, right now, our law requires a broad assessment report twice a year. It's not really doable. I mean, you can take us and lock us up. We have not lived up to that promise, and it's really a tough thing to do.

Training: It's only briefly mentioned in the takeover law. I think it should be firmed up as to types of training required, whether it's general boardmanship, facilities, finance, capital projects, whatever.

A couple of other thoughts: I don't think -- which members of the public would disagree with me on -- that when it's time for local control to return, that other than those

who are appointed to the Board should be allowed to run in that initial go through. You've trained us for "X" amount of years. We have the expertise. If you want the transition to go smoothly, I can't think of any other logical candidates, except ourselves or any other appointed Board.

How is takeover working here? Several reports have been issued on what's going on in Jersey City, not to mention Elena's June 1992 report to your Committee, our second assessment report as a Board, the Superintendent's report to the State Board in December of '92, as well as Arthur Andersen's report. I think a common thread says that takeover is working in Jersey City, if you look through the fine lines of each report. In the broadest sense of the term, you should ask yourself this question, and I'll steal it: Basically it says, "Are you, children and school system, in the overall sense, better off now than you were four years ago?" The answer is, "Yes."

A few examples of what's going better, and not necessarily perfect, but better: politics removed from the system, as you've heard already this evening. We have a Code of Conduct in place for our children to follow. It also rewards good behavior. It has a positive aspect.

We're doing our best -- or the State team, I should say -- to let the schools go back to the community via site-based management; small starts, but hopefully it will grow. We have a real budgeting process in place, improved food services, and the beginnings of tying in education and careers. We have to develop the entire person. You can have the world's greatest education, but if you can't find a job, I don't know what purpose it serves.

Does this mean that everything is working perfectly? Of course not. You've heard it tonight. Keep in mind, we're huge here. We have 30,000-plus students, 4000-plus employees, and a City that has well over 200,000 people.

Regarding the District, because of its size, not everything is going to work perfectly all the time, and those involved in the system, or even in the City, can't be pleased all the time. It's just common sense to me. It's reality. It happens in the corporate world, where I earn my income.

I think the four reports I mentioned, as well as what you've heard this evening, let you know that things aren't perfect. We know we need improvements in some areas: special ed; perhaps, community relations; our facilities; as well as helping disaffected and disruptive students. These are things that are not unknown.

Some of the localized issues, the tax levy: I find it interesting that in the last three years when the State team has put budgets together, the local fair share requested has averaged \$77.3 million, compared to about \$91 million the year before the State team took over. Not once has the District went to cap, and it has only requested the minimum amount they had to request to keep QEA funding. I think that's very responsible, and I'm a taxpayer. I pay almost \$5000 a year in property taxes, and I'm not complaining. I well understand that the tax rate is not struck by the central office. It is struck in City Hall, by some type of magic, which I can't even comprehend, and I'm a CPA.

I've also heard a lot about Dickinson High School. I will grant you, there are probably problems there, but caused by very few students. In my own mind's eye, that building has outlived its usefulness, its purpose. It's old. We're probably going to pour in the better part of \$30 million to bring it up to snuff, a historical landmark that structurally, we really can't improve. In my mind's eye, we should be building a new Dickinson somewhere. But unfortunately, whether you want to talk about Dickinson, whether you want to talk about a new academic--

SENATOR EWING: Would you excuse me a minute?

Would you ladies mind? Please, it's difficult. I'm an older person, I have trouble hearing. If you want to talk, go outside, please. You are teachers, and when you tell the children to keep quiet, do they or don't they? (addressing members of audience)

MR. O'BRIEN: --or whether you want to talk about--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (indiscernible)

SENATOR EWING: Well, you're going to do it tonight, or we'll close it off.

MR. O'BRIEN: --a new School No. 3. We do face real life spacing constraints. But at the same time, because I have been involved in a few committees to look at sites for schools, I will tell you that in this town, unfortunately, I see people who say, "We want to take care of our kids," but when you mention a new school, it's a "not in my backyard" attitude. I'm sure it's just not isolated here.

Capital projects: Obviously, a misperception in my mind's eye, that the central office will dictate where buildings will go, and how much it will cost. We have a Capital Projects Control Board, as you well know. It was created by statute to make up for a weakness in the bonding which was ignored in the original takeover law. I can't argue with you that capital projects cost money. They're definitely not cheap endeavors, but we have real life facilities needs. And though I'm not an economist, it's just common sense that today's dollars are going to be cheaper than tomorrow's dollars. If we have real world needs, let's all work together to overcome them in some way, shape, or form. Capital projecting types of concerns are not uncomplicated issues.

The State team has occasionally been characterized as czarist, most notably by my colleague, Father Santora. He does have a habit of leaving early, as you can see this evening, or I would have talked to him about it. I assure you that's more of a perception than a reality.

Our administrators most certainly do their best to practice in an inclusionary environment rather than an exclusionary environment. A few examples where the Board has been -- where the community has been involved in: In that, I mean board members, parents, teachers, administrators, John Q. Public, site-based management development, student uniforms, a Code of Conduct, revamping of the gifted and talented programs, selection of principals. Again, you are not going to please everybody all the time, so the czarist type of attitude will probably prevail.

At the same time, name for me any organization that's 100 percent open all the time? Organizations don't work that way, and at times it's merely a matter of survival. Our State team does bend over backwards to please people. Personally, I don't want these folks to be buddy buddy with every group in town, putting out fires as they pop up and holding hands. This preoccupies their time to the detriment of a visionary educational progress. It's ludicrous.

That was even noted in our last board assessment report, where under the leadership management section we basically said, "They're getting out there and doing so much in the name of responsiveness to board member and community concerns. They do it even when it's tedious, erroneous, and redundant." The board came to that conclusion, and what a waste of time.

Takeover is working in Jersey City. It's not perfect, nothing is. I can't say that the why is because the law provides for that type of success. In my mind's eye if intervention is going to work in any district taken over -- and we only have two, right now-- I'll let you be the judge when you do your comparison.

In my mind's eye the biggest key to success is who's appointed as the State Superintendent, as well as who that individual picks as his or her top assistants. They have to

show true commitment. I'll tell you right now, they have to be workaholics. At the same time, and I think it's very important that those who are the insiders -- who are here most, certainly should not be ignored in any type of takeover situation.

SENATOR EWING: I know there are a lot of good people in Jersey City that were here before, and they are still here.

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, and you know, as Holly said, someone probably did get burnt, unfortunately, but again, I think it has a lot to do with the current requirement of trying to reorganize in six months. You just don't have a chance on a personal level to get to know people and what they can do; to develop a rapport and trust. It was a shame.

SENATOR EWING: I think there definitely should be a push to extend that six months to a year before they make the decision. One question I want to ask you: I thought at some of the times I have been up here, originally, before the takeover, did the City Council or the Mayor's office take care of the checkbook for the school or something?

MR. O'BRIEN: Basically, yes. They paid the bills.

SENATOR EWING: So that's changed.

MR. O'BRIEN: Oh it has, sure. I don't know if you followed the headlines years ago. We were on the verge of suing City Hall. I should say the school district was. They weren't coming up with their monthly funding, and at one point, Elena was going to close the schools in April.

SENATOR EWING: That's right, that's right. The other thing is that the capital needs in this State, as many of you might know -- I'll repeat it anyway though: They figured just to bring the schools throughout the State of New Jersey up to a sort of par or to snuff, it will be between \$4 billion and \$6 billion; not million, billion dollars. We've got a long way to go. There's \$50 million that is going to be allocated from the present school formula to the 30 special needs districts. So you will get a small part of that.

MR. O'BRIEN: I think we're getting \$4.7 million.

SENATOR EWING: Then there is also the -- I think it's approximately \$250 million -- part that's coming out of the refinancing of the State bonds and everything. A lot of-- Most of it's going to be on a very low interest rate loan, 1.5 percent.

MR. O'BRIEN: There were three different pools.

SENATOR EWING: These are very small steps we're taking, but we've got to keep it up. The conditions of some of your buildings are frightful, as they are in Paterson and places. There are many many other areas including some of the very rural areas.

I remember several years ago -- I don't think it's still there. We went to a school and as you went down into the basement, behind the furnace there was a little room that they used for a classroom. There was no way out of that place other than to come by the furnace, so if that had blown up or anything-- You can't believe some of the conditions. They're frightful here, but they're frightful in other places.

So thank you very much, and I appreciate this very comprehensive report.

MR. O'BRIEN: You're welcome.

SENATOR EWING: We are working on parts of it, Ray, that we've talked about, and eventually will be coming out.

MR. O'BRIEN: Okay, sounds good.

SENATOR EWING: Maybe what we'll do is-- The thing is, I know how to get up here now. When we do get legislation ready, rather than just having it before the Committee, we will come up here so the public can see the copies of the bill and tear it apart or add to it or whatever. So at least they feel they're getting the input.

MR. O'BRIEN: Dr. Perry said, "We're explorers, not guinea pigs."

SENATOR EWING: Good, thank you.

Mr. Perry? Is there anybody else here that we're going to get to after Mr. Perry?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Perkins.

MS. SCHULZ: But you're not?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: I think it's already been covered, but I contribute -- people are yawning and I respect another aspect of our lives, and that's sleep.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MR. PERRY: Let me thank you, Senator Ewing. You asked a question about a parent, and not only as a parent and a member of the Board of Education since it was appointed in December '89, I thank you for the last five hours-plus that you have given to the citizens here. I'm just really going to say good night, and say that what Ray O'Brien said, "We have been explorers or the pioneers of this process and there's a lot to learn from the trail we kind of plotted out, and that can be incorporated."

Our legislative committee will, or is presently reviewing the recommendations to the amendments of the bill and will be coming forth after it runs through the Board's members for some suggestions. We do appreciate it, and I hope that you leave here understanding that we do have a lot of opinions, and the hearts and souls of most of the people here are for the children. As they express the direction that we should go, they have varied directions, but the ultimate thing for most of the people that we deal with which we're overwhelmed by, is to try to figure out what's the best way to do the best for all the children here and the children that will come.

So with that I say good night, and thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

There is no question, this was the first takeover district, and the legislation when we developed it-- We had no way of knowing when we just picked out of the air about the five years whether it should be four or seven, at that time.

There was a lot of experimentation with that bill. From what we learned from up here, we certainly plan to put a lot of it into effect for future districts, and we hope to God we don't take any more over, because the State doesn't want to run the schools whatsoever.

We are in the midst of Paterson. I think there is a different situation in Paterson than there was here. As for the reason of takeover, that's being worked on. There is a report coming out on Newark, I think around the middle of April, from a citizens' group that will make their recommendations whether there should be takeover or not, and then there will be further study after that. That should come out about the middle of April.

Thank you all very much for staying and talking. We appreciate the input. Parts of it will be used and parts won't be. As we said before, we are not going to please everybody, but we're going to do the best we can, with the child as the key person. I could care less about jobs; I could care less about unions, or anything like that. It's the child that counts.

Thank you again, and we'll go get some supper.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX

New Jersey State Library

Takeover has been about patronage, politics, hiring top heavy administrative staff and very little about the "kids."

This district has hired more administrators than ever before.

These administrators have come here (many to learn what they should do to help the city child) and now they have padded their resumes and are trying to move elsewhere. These administrators have had very little to do with the child.

It appears that very, very few people care about the children. They only care about promotions and jobs.

Who has gone into the classrooms to see what the children are learning?

Why is there so much repair being done while the students are in school?

Why must the kids have to smell the horrid paint odors and breathe in the dust fumes? Why will be the long range affects upon their health?

Politics is clearly alive and breathing in this school district. Friends of the politicians and newly hired people are coming into this school district by the droves to get jobs. These people may or may not know anything about the city child only the city money. And what is this all about. Making big bucks off the city child. Wouldn't you want to stay here longer if you could spend the money and hire the people and give the contracts without anyone saying anything? This has been all about power and pocket book padding....not children or their education.

By the way, the success of takeover can never be measured. With 100 million dollars + more and God like powers, anyone could make more progress. Give me a chance.

Snyder High School Parents Council Concerns

1. Paint fumes, toxics and dust in the air due to last minute repairs;
2. Blow torches in classrooms to remove floor tile while students are in class;
3. Promotions and demotions at will;
4. The school system seems to have no leadership and no continuity - this is how we have looked over the past years:

2 associate superintendents - Howard & Frazier
4 Cluster Directors - DiNardo, Martin, McGee, Smith
4 Principals - Ross, Foster, Mintz, Oppel
12 vice principals: Earl Johnson, Franklin Walker, Dee Foster, Jim Burke, Larry Odoms, Henry Perkarsky, Vernel Harris, Carol Akano, William Cure, Richard Schmidt, Donald Howard, Cornelius Barker.
5. Jim Burke's attendance.
6. No guidance counselor replacing Carol Akano
7. Lunch Room is dirty and unorganized.
8. No parent input in the decision making process at Snyder High School.
9. 2 vacant chairpersons: Special Needs and Social Studies.
10. No union representation on committee interviewing chairpersons.
11. Lack of Order - there is no vice principal in charge of discipline.
12. Large degree of teacher frustration and burn out.
13. Student unrest due to transfer of personnel.
14. Special Programs not being given what was promised.
15. There are birds in the Cafeteria and Auditorium.
16. Ms. Oppel is not accountable to community or chain of command.

17. Ms. Oppel's lack of leadership in maintaining discipline and security.
18. Hallways and stairwells are dirty and noisy.
19. There is a total lack of organized security deployment.
20. All budget line items for 92-93 school year have been depleted - all accounts in red.
21. TV Studio underused with the person in charge accepting money from students.
22. New vice principals hired are not from the list or with open interviews (parents/students/union/community participation)
23. Unfavorable evaluations given by acting principal after only 2 months on the job.
24. Unilateral decisions made by acting principal effecting the stability of the school.

MEETING OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HON. JACK EWING, CHAIRMAN

ST. PETER'S COLLEGE
POPE HALL
JERSEY CITY, NJ
MARCH 10, 1993

TESTIMONY OF
RAYMOND J. O'BRIEN, CPA

Vice Chairperson - J.C. Bd. of Ed.

Chairperson - Finance & Budget
Committee, J.C. Bd. of Ed.

Member - Capital Projects
Control Board for the State
Operated School District of
the City of Jersey City

THE TAKEOVER LAW

When intervention occurred, we -- the Board of Education (not "advisory" since the statute does not refer to us as this) -- were called, among other things, "guinea pigs". As Dr. Perry so eloquently said, we're not guinea pigs: We're explorers!!!

Since many of us have been appointed members since late 1989 -- myself included -- I guess we're in a half way decent position to give our thoughts on the takeover law.

Though repetitive, the law is the law -- bottom line. My comments address only a very few aspects of the intervention statute as I think should apply to any district taken over. (We must think broadly in terms of the intent of the statute; it can't be tailored to every school district or community and retain its credibility or meaning.)

Certain amendments were proposed to the intervention statute in January 1993 (S-1470) which I'd like to address:

1. All state operated school districts should start July 1st -- the beginning of the school year. To do otherwise is disruptive from many perspectives and wastes valuable "reform" time.

2. Central office/district reorganization must be over a 12 month period rather than 6. Addressing organizational deficiencies in a 6 month period, besides pushing other issues to the side, does not allow a proper evaluation of where current district employees -- primarily but not only administrators -- fit into the new organization. The "outsiders" must have enough time to know and evaluate the "insiders" who should and must have responsible positions in a state operated school district. Equity in its finest form must be addressed.

3. The minimum period of state intervention should remain at 5 years and not 7 years as some have proposed. Five years should be a long enough time for many taken-over districts; seven could be too long. The current law allows extension of takeover beyond 5 years based upon the informed judgement of the Commissioner and State Board of Education. This is very (very) sufficient.

4. Undue local tax burdens as pertains to required school district funding should be made up by the State as currently provided (after DCA's determination). However, I propose revising N.J.S.A. 18A: 7A-52(c) to read as follows (new language in underlines, deletions in brackets "[]"):

"Based upon his review, the director shall certify the amount of revenues which can be raised locally to support the budget of the State-operated district, however, the

director shall not change or reduce the amount of the school tax levy certified by the State district superintendent to the county board of taxation pursuant to subsection a. of this section. Any difference between the amount which the director certifies and the total amount of local revenues required by the budget approved by the commissioner shall be paid by the State to the municipality or municipalities comprising the district in the fiscal year in which the expenditures are made [subject to the availability of appropriations]."

This change recognizes that the local fair share tax request to support the district in-and-of-itself is not unreasonable but that the municipality, overall, can't afford it. Unreasonable tax burdens -- especially in "special needs" districts -- should be alleviated by the State in order to help ensuring that educational mandates of the state constitution are achieved (thorough and efficient education).

5. The appointed Board should remain at 15 and not 11. Only at a very few points in time has our Board had 15 members since takeover. And, when vacancies have occurred, the empty spots have not been filled by the State in a timely manner. In addition, it's not unreasonable to expect that at most only 8 or 9 of 15 will be active Board participants -- and a Board in a takeover district needs as many active participants as it

can get. Outside of S-1470 proposals our Board Legislative Sub-Committee has been reviewing the takeover law in its entirety under the direction of Mr. Tayari, Sub-Committee Chairperson. Our work is far from done but our Board members and you will be hearing from us in the not too distant future. Based upon our meetings and discussions I offer the following as my suggestions for additional changes to the intervention statute:

- o After appointment, should a Board vacancy occur, the local governing body and/or Commissioner should name a replacement within 45 days of the vacancy.

- o Appointees should not serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority. Members should only be removed (other than resignation) in limited and objective circumstances such as:

- Failure to attend meetings and training sessions
- Upon the specific recommendation of the Superintendent or, ideally, the Board Chairperson to the Commissioner and State Board. Such recommendation must be acted upon within 30 days of notification with such notification containing facts of the situation. The "subject member" should have 30 days to appeal any removal to the Commissioner.

- o The Board Chairperson should be given statutory authority to (among other things):
 - Establish Standing Board Committees as well as sub/ad-hoc committees.
 - Appoint members to standing and ad-hoc/sub-committees with all Board members required to serve on at least one standing committee.
- o In year 4 of intervention, the monthly Board meeting agenda should be determined by the Board Chairperson.
- o In year 3 of intervention, subject to veto, the State Superintendent must bring the following matters to the Board for a vote: curriculum, budget and proposed labor contracts.
- o In line with the above, for the first 2 years of intervention, Board meetings need not be held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.
- o The Board Assessment Report should be an annual requirement due within 90 days of the end of the school year. Two reports a year are not realistic from content and logistical perspectives. The Board Chairperson should determine the assessment compilation process and report format within 30 days after the end of the school year.

- o Formal in-service training should occur not less than 3 times a year and minimally include, but not be limited to: general boardmanship, school finances, facilities and capital projects and collective bargaining by ("formal" training, I mean under the auspices of the NJSBA). Costs for such formal training in the first 3 years of intervention should be borne by the State subject to a \$10,000 annual cap. Thereafter, all training costs should be a component of the local Board's J-1 Account.

From an "imperfect legalize" perspective, N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-47 should be amended to read as follows (new language in underlines; deletions in brackets "[]"):

"Within 60 days, the commissioner shall establish a board of education consisting of not more than 15 persons from among the residents of the district. The membership of the board shall be representative of the community's racial and ethnic balance. Previous members of the board of education shall not be precluded from consideration for membership on this board. Of the 15 members, 13 shall be appointed by the commissioner and two shall be appointed by the local governing body of the municipality in which the school district is located. If the school district includes more than one municipality, then the

governing body of each constituent municipality shall have one appointment to the board and the number of appointments by the commissioner shall be reduced accordingly. If the local governing body fails to agree upon the selection of board members within 60 days of intervention, then the commissioner may make the additional two appointments. All individuals appointed to the board shall meet all of the statutory requirements for membership on a board of education and shall be required to attend all meetings of the board, all meetings of standing board committees to which the member is appointed and all in-service training sessions provided for board members. [Members of the board of education shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority.] Any member of the board who fails to attend, during the course of any school fiscal year, eighty percent of all meetings of the board, eighty percent of all meetings of standing board committees to which the member is appointed and eighty percent of all in-service training sessions provided for board members shall be removed upon recommendation of the board chair to the Commissioner and State Board of Education. The board shall meet as soon as possible after its appointment and shall [select] elect a [chairman] chairperson and [vice-chairman] vice-chairperson from among its members. The authority of the Board Chairperson includes: immediate recommendation for removal of board members for failure to attend 80% of all board

meetings, 80% of all standing board committee meetings to which the member is appointed and 80% of all in-service training sessions; establishment of the monthly public meeting Board agenda in year 4 of intervention; immediate establishment of Standing and Ad-Hoc/Sub Board Committees including appointment of members there-to, and; determining the annual Board assessment report compilation process and report format. Members of the board of education shall not be removed at the pleasure of the appointing authority once duly appointed. Members of the board of education shall serve on at least one standing board committee as appointed to same by the Board Chairperson.

The State district superintendent shall meet with the board of education at least once in each month and may meet more frequently as necessary for the effective operation of the school district. The meetings of the board shall be convened and scheduled at the direction of the State district superintendent in years 1 through 3 of intervention and the State district superintendent shall determine the agenda in years 1 through 3 of intervention. At the meetings, the State district superintendent shall report to the board on all actions taken and on pending actions in a timely fashion, and provide an opportunity for a full discussion by the board

and by the public of those actions. After meeting with the board for two consecutive years, the State district superintendent may bring matters before the board for a vote and shall bring matters concerning the adoption of the district's curriculum, the adoption of the annual school budget and collective bargaining negotiations before the board for a vote; however, the State district superintendent shall retain veto power until such time as the State board determines that local control should be reestablished. Meetings which are held following two consecutive years of board meetings shall be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the "Open Public Meetings Act", P.L. 1975, c. 231 (C. 10:4-6 et seq.). On an annual basis within 90 days of the end of the school year [On a regular basis, but no less than twice each year] the board of education shall report in writing directly to the State district superintendent concerning its assessment of the progress of the district. The Board Chairperson will determine procedures for compiling the assessment report as well as the report format within 30 days of the end of the school year. Copies of the report shall be forwarded to the Commissioner, State Board and Joint Committee on the Public Schools. The State district superintendent shall make such clerical and other resources available as are necessary for the effective operation of the board of education.

New Jersey State Library

The Commissioner and State district superintendent [in consultation with the appropriate educational organizations] shall provide the members of the board of education with appropriate formal in-service training in school matters sponsored under the auspices of the NJSBA. The Commissioner and State district superintendent will establish a formal in-service training agenda not less than 90 days after intervention that shall include but not be limited to: General boardmanship, school budget matters and finances, facilities and capital projects and collective bargaining procedures. Formal in-service training will occur not less than 3 times in each fiscal school year of intervention with costs borne by the State in the first 3 years of intervention and not to exceed \$10,000 per each school year. Subsequent to year 3 of intervention the costs of such formal in-service training shall be borne by the local school district. Establishment of formal in-service training requirements by the Commissioner and State district superintendent shall not preclude the State district superintendent from establishing training requirements in addition to those so jointly determined by the Commissioner and State district superintendent. Board members are required to attend all additional training sessions."

The legislative revisions (above) provide for a voting Board in the third year of Board operation, regardless of whether a school election is held. To avoid confusion, a further technical amend-

ment should be made in another section of the statute, deleting references to Board voting after a school election as follows (amendment to N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-48 to read as follows with deletions in brackets "[]"):

"At the April school election in the fourth year following the creation of a State-operated school district, nine board members shall be elected from among the 15 appointed board members, three to serve a one year term, three to serve a two year term, and three to serve a three year term. If there are not nine members from the 15 appointed members who are willing to run for election, the commissioner shall retain the right to appoint the remaining members of the board. [Following the election of the board, the State district superintendent may bring matters before the board for a vote; however, the State district superintendent shall retain veto power until such time as the State board determines that local control should be reestablished.] In each subsequent year, three board members will be elected from the community at large."

In line with the above, a newspaper article suggested that some members of the Assembly (I believe they mentioned Joe Charles but I really don't recall) want to change the law to allow any member of the community to run for the Board once an election is possible rather than just the "anointed" 15. This is not a good idea and

I strongly oppose it even though, on paper, it sounds like democracy at its best. I look at our Board and have concluded that now we're only coming into our own (a turning point if you like). By this I mean it took us a long time to learn our jobs/roles and become effective and informed. At the critical point of return-to-local-control the children and community deserve a fully experienced Board and such a Board can only be composed of those who have been there. There is still democracy in the process from 2 perspective: 1) The people must elect 9 out of 15 (potentially); this is choice, and; 2) After the initial election, any member of the community can run. Electing 9 of the 15 appointees in the first election supports, hopefully, an overall smooth transition process.

Finally, I have another change to the law for you to think about and it's probably "drastic". When districts taken over are returned to local control the Board membership should be determined "forever" by public voting and not governing body appointment. Let the community decide who will be on the Board. This is Democracy at its best.

REPORTS, REPORTS, REPORTS !!!

Numerous reports have been issued since takeover concerning what's been going on in our district. Let me name a recent few reports:

- o Elena Scambio's 6/1/92 "Report of District Progress to the Joint Committee"

- o The local Board of Education's 2nd Assessment Report issued in the 3rd quarter of 1992 (see Exhibit I for excerpts of the Executive Summary and Status of Significant Corrective Action Plan Areas -- excuse my hand writing on it).
- o Report of district progress to the State Board of Education, 12/92 and;
- o Arthur Andersen's report issued 2/93

(I've also enclosed "Fingertip Facts About Your Schools" dated 9/92 referenced as Exhibit II.)

Let's not quibble about the objective "reliability" -- whatever that is -- concerning each report since the debate would be endless. But we must believe that the "outsider's" report (Arthur Andersen) is the most credible. It says that takeover is working -- and it is. To those who don't believe it they can only answer "Yes", in the overall sense, when this question is posed: Are you (children and school district) better off now than you were four years ago? Sure! Of course! How? A very very few examples:

- o Politics in the schools no longer exists. Teachers can come before the Board to "complain", articulate adverse positions concerning administrative decisions in the press and express "localized" unhappiness on whatever issue without fear of reprisal -- welcome to America!!!

- o A Code of Conduct was established and must be followed in all the schools. My God, might this lead to instilling values, a sense of responsibility and ethics in students? I surely hope so.

- o Letting schools belong to the community. Imagine having site Based Management at more schools -- a dream I hope comes true (But do it right: No commitment by a school community then no SBM). Haven't studies unequivocally proven that real community involvement in the schools leads to educational success? Of course, they have.

- o And so on, and so on, and so on --- Improved food services, a real budgeting process, the tie-in of education & careers, expanded early childhood programs; now: etc., etc., etc.,

Does it mean all things work perfectly always? Of course not. We must all keep in mind, as pertains to Jersey City, that we are big! We have over 30,000 students and over 4,000 employees. In an organization of this size not everything will be working perfectly all the time and those involved in our district -- in what ever capacity -- will not be "happy" or satisfied all the time. This is reality. For example, aforementioned reports (either explicitly or impliedly) and comments of the public and local Board members rightfully tell us that various degrees of improvements are needed in:

- o The special education program
- o Community relations
- o Facilities enhancements and constructions, and;
- o Helping disruptive and disaffected kids.

Reports, Reports, Reports! The four I mentioned are really much in-line with one another recognizing achievements as well as areas of improvement. Given this, I once again pose this question overall: Are you (we) better off now than you were four years ago? The answer is yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! So, as Arthur Andersen objectively concluded, takeover in the Jersey City school system is working.

LOCALIZED ISSUES

At some point in your hearing today, you already have probably heard -- or will be -- some concerns about: 1) The local tax levy; 2) "Disruptive" Dickinson students; 3) Costly capital project proposals; 4) The need for a new P.S. #3 and Academic H.S. and; 5) A "cold" state team that is "czaristic" in nature. I'd like to briefly comment upon each of these regardless of whether or not others have raised them.

1. The local tax levy: Requests for local fair share as per public records are as follows in millions (by school year starting with '89/'90 when the state intervened keeping in

mind that for this period the pre-takeover Board/ administration requested the indicated amount):

<u>'89/90</u>	<u>'90/91</u>	<u>'91/92</u>	<u>'92/93</u>
\$90.9	\$75.8	\$79.3	\$76.8

Since takeover, the average amount of local fair share requested ('90/93) is \$77.3 million -- \$13.6 million less (14.96%) than the pre-takeover year of '89/90. Not once has the district went to "CAP" since takeover. And, the '92/'93 request (\$76.8) was the minimum which had to be requested so as to preclude a cut in state aid. (QEA).

2. "Disruptive" Dickinson students: This is our largest school with almost 2,400 students. A small percentage (very small as so stated by the local "Hilltop Association") are not angels. Most community concerns center around lunch time and they have suggested a "closed lunch" to help in alleviating isolated disruptiveness. As is known, the cafeteria at this school can accommodate seating for about 500 students but can only serve 250 of them in a full/normal lunch period. What does this tell you when you consider that the building is a designated historic landmark? You need a new Dickinson somewhere!! (But a "not in my backyard" sentiment, unfortunately, prevails in the "Heights" section of our city where the school really belongs from control-location perspectives).

3. Costly Capital Projects: Consider the age of our schools: a "new" one is about 50 years old and as far as I know only one has been built (P.S. #28) [and only one is planned to be built (P.S. #17] in the last 20 years. Capital projects cost money -- how insightful of me! Simple economics tell you ~~that~~ today's dollar is and will be cheaper than tomorrow's dollar so, all things considered, it's better to build and renovate now than it is or will be later. I'm not sure where our "capital projects path" leads since it's a complicated topic. While we must keep costs in mind, as well as community concerns, I hope to God none of our children are injured due to sub-par and old facilities. This would not be the right reason to jump-start a capital project bandwagon.

Since the topic of capital projects is at hand, let's not forget about visionary potential for the "Campus at Portside". To say the least this project has potential but is not a behind-the-scenes "done deal" as some members of the public perceive. It's still ⁱⁿ an early stage of conceptualization, evaluation and analysis. It may or may not be the thing to pursue. To help the evaluative process continue in a timely manner, it's my understanding that the superintendent will be forming a Portside Committee to give this proposal a critical and informed look-see. It's also my understanding that committee membership will be broad (no "stacked-deck") and include several members of the community.

4. A new school #3: It's needed and we all know it. It's being worked-on but the process will be slow since the district where the school is located is surrounded by contaminated (chromium) soil with many potential "good" sites in a historical district (and untouchable). A new Academic High School: Similar to a new P.S. #3 we all know it's needed and it's being worked on with several sites and "other options" under consideration. Regarding Academic, the Middle States will remove accreditation (provisional) in 2 years if we don't have a new facility built or at least options for a new facility in a very firm formulation stage.

5. The "Czarist" state team: A perception and not reality since our state team believes in and executes inclusionary and not exclusionary policies, practices and procedures. A few examples of where the community -- Board members, parents, teachers, administrators, etc., -- have been involved: Site-Based Management, Student Uniforms, Student Code of Conduct, Gifted and Talented Program, selection of principals, etc., etc. Again, you can't and won't please everyone all the time so a "Czarist" perception will always exist. Similarly, no organization is 100% open and a school district is no exception. What is needed among all involved parties is mutual trust and a commitment to give up part of your "self" for the sake of the "whole" which is the betterment of our school system for our children.

(This really is the bottom line. Personally, I don't want our state team/administrators to be "Buddy-Buddy" to the point where "putting out fires" and "holding hands" preoccupies their time to the detriment of visionary educational progress. To quote our last assessment report: ("Central office administrators exhibit) reponsiveness to board member and community requests even when tedious, erroneous and redundant.")

A SUMMARY -- OF SORTS (IF ONE IS POSSIBLE)

As a "takeover explorer" I'll say that our intervention law is not perfect but really only needs some fine tuning. My suggestions for intervention statute improvement, I think, address some aspects of transition/ return-to-local-control-issues which are important and must be addressed.

Be assured that takeover in Jersey City is working. The "why" can't be answered by stating that the law "provides for success". The key to success within state intervention is who becomes the state superintendent as well as the commitment and professionalism of his or her chief assistants. Give takeover districts visionary individuals who are committed work-a-holics and intervention will work any where keeping in mind that many "insiders" are valuable assets and should have prominent roles in takeover districts. Bottom Line !!!

2ND ASSESSMENT REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. FINANCE

The District Corrective Action Plan for Finance cited 21 major deficiencies in need of improvement. Significant improvement has been noted in virtually all previously deficient areas bringing this function in-line with generally accepted accounting and financial management practices. However, institutionalization and documentation of improved procedures should be committed to writing in a formal Business Office Financial Policies Manual.

2. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community relations is and always will be a "sensitive" matter in need of constant attention. Many significant strides have been made with effective results. The District must continue its course of "selling" itself by accentuating the positive and addressing and acknowledging any negatives since, in a district this size, there will always be problems with misinformation and conclusions-formed based on opinion rather than fact. Although community relations is a "tough" area, confidence has been expressed that the District will continue to move forward and succeed!

3. FACILITIES

The District has prioritized facilities needs and is addressing them as time and finances allow. Utilization of in-house personnel has saved the District money and drawn attention to the District's multi-talented staff. It is recommended that Central Office personnel should more closely monitor exterior building cleaning and the maintenance/custodial supervisory practices of building principals.

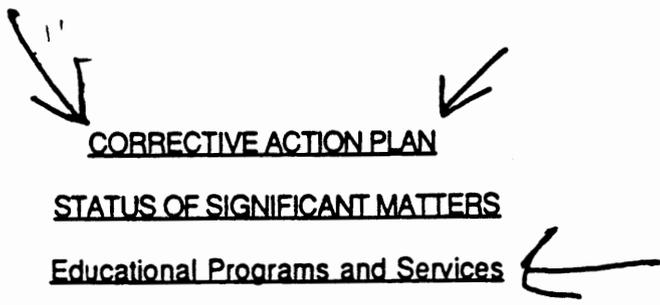
4. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Significant and meaningful progress was made in: Early Childhood Programs; Magnet Schools; computer literacy; standardized curricula, and Bi-Lingual programs. Student supplies and teaching supplies are now abundant and program changes/modifications have been effectively communicated to the community. Concerted effort, however, must be given to further reduce drop-out rates, improve student achievement and expand specialized programs for disruptive students, disaffected and other special needs students.

WE NEED MORE PHYSICAL SPACE TO DO THIS!

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

On a moving continuum, improvement has been noted in a number of Leadership/Management functions and processes. Some of these include: restoration of school district honesty and integrity without political influence; responsiveness to Board member and community requests--even when tedious, erroneous and redundant; regular meetings with community and civic organizations; involvement of parents, teachers, Board members, etc., in various decision making processes, and; the ability to deliver educational services and programs despite less than totally supportive actions at both the local and State levels.



Corrective Action Plan Section 2, Educational Programs and Services , cited 6 major deficiencies in need of improvement. The following improvement areas were examined by the Board:

- . Deficiency - Fragmented and disjointed curriculum.
- . Status - Uniform curriculum developed and subject to periodic review. Curriculum augmented by implementation of District-wide standardized mid-term and final examinations in Reading and Math skills.
- . Deficiency - Lack of comprehensive needs assessment (lack of linkage between program planning, development and implementation).
- . Status - An area of on-going review and evaluation. Significant programs implemented include: Expansion of Pre-K and Early Childhood Programs; Magnet Schools; Alternative Programs ("Bridges") and expansion of High School Advanced Placement courses. Related matters include implementation of the Educational Technologies Program; Inter-Agency Task Force; Student Code of Conduct; School Uniforms and Educational Business Alliance.

- Deficiency - Unstructured textbook selection process and related inventory controls.
- Status - Textbooks and instructional equipment inventory controls implemented through enhanced usage of personal computer routines. Textbook selection criteria is more standardized and supports the curriculum via implementation of an approved textbook listing. ✓

Je BDOFEO

Assess #2

EXHIBIT I

Pg 5 of 10

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

STATUS OF SIGNIFICANT MATTERS

Leadership/Management ←

Corrective Action Plan.

Section 1, cited 6 areas of major deficiencies in need of improvement. The following improvement areas were examined by the Board:

. Deficiency - No coordination existing between Central Office and school-level management.

. Status - Implemented approved table of organization with Cluster approach. Four clusters were created, each headed by an Associate Superintendent with designated support staff. All comprehensive High Schools planned and implemented "house" systems for internal management. In Spring 1991, the house plan was reviewed and adjusted.

. Deficiency - Inconsistent, inadequate, non-existent and duplicate procedures made the delivery of programs and services extremely poor.

. Status - A system for the creation and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) has been devised. Board Committees were established in the areas of Facilities, Finance, Education Programs and Legal. ~~Limited formal Board training~~ occurred, but, Board members began attending New Jersey School Board Association and Urban School Board Meetings for the first time. A more aggressive Board training schedule is anticipated for the upcoming school year.

To Be Improved

- Deficiency - No system of accountability was in place.
- Status - The newly instituted Office of Human Resources has begun to implement Standard Operating Procedures for Personnel matters. Labor contract negotiations were begun and proceeded in a professional manner. The Unified Equity Plan was developed and implemented covering hiring, procurement and educational policies. Re-organization and appointment of General, Assistant Legal Counsel and Special Labor Counsel was completed. New Standard Operating Procedures for legal matters are in progress. A third party medical consultant firm to monitor worker compensation billings report is pending.



CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

STATUS OF SIGNIFICANT MATTERS

Community Relations/Public Information



Corrective Action Plan Section 3, Community Relations/Public Information, cited 7 major deficiencies in need of improvement. The following improvement areas were examined by the Board:

. Deficiency - Lack of formalized systems to involve parents/staff in important district functions.

. Status - Community workshops periodically held for staff, parents, Board members, etc. Community involvement observed in developing Site-Based Management, School Uniforms, redesign of Gifted and Talented Program, etc. Also, Educational Business Alliance was established to enhance relations and program development with the overall business community.

. Deficiency - Lack of a clear organizational design for Public Information/Community Relations.

→ BE MORE AGGRESSIVE

. Status - The office of Public Information was established and acts in the capacity of the official spokesperson for the District in dealing with the press and others.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

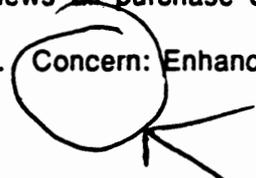
STATUS OF SIGNIFICANT MATTERS

FINANCE



Corrective Action Plan Section 4, Finances, cited 21 major deficiencies in need of improvement. The following improvement areas were determined to be important by the Chairperson of the Budget and Finance Committee and have been continuously reviewed by the Finance and Budget Committee members at their regular monthly meetings.

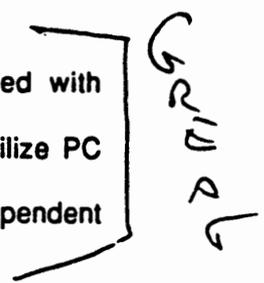
- Deficiency - Lack of proper/sound purchasing procedures.
- Status - State Business Administrator reviews all purchase orders. Objective and documented bidding procedures implemented. **Concern:** Enhanced and increased utilization of local minority businesses.



- Deficiency - Improper administration of health benefit plans.
- Status - In conjunction with the independent internal audit function detailed employee/plan administrative files have been made current and inaccuracies/duplications of coverage identified and corrected. **Cost savings** have resulted as well as District recoupment of overbillings.



- Deficiency - Inadequate record keeping and processing inefficiencies.
- Status - Significant aspects of "bookkeeping" have been computerized with appropriate checks-and-balances put in place. District employees effectively utilize PC based computer applications to compile detailed schedules used in the annual independent audit resulting in lower CPA audit fees.



• Deficiency - Failure to address deficiencies noted in the annual independent school audit.

• Status - In terms of quality and meaningful content, external CPA audit concerns have diminished greatly.

• Deficiency - Lack of disbursement documentation.

• Status - All expenditures are now supportable.

• Deficiency - Lack of a sound food services program.

• Status - Restaffing and reorientation of the overall program have started. Plans and concepts in-place or recently developed are expected to have positive results in the next school year.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANSTATUS OF SIGNIFICANT MATTERSFACILITIES

Corrective Action Plan Section 5, Facilities, cited 9 major deficiencies in need of improvement. The following improvement areas have been examined by the Board:

- Deficiency - Lack of a long-range Master Facility Plan.
- Status - A 5 year (1990-94) Master Facility Plan was developed and presented to the Board. The plan was comprehensive and adequately addressed District Facilities needs. Full implementation is slow, however, due to a less than fully functional Capital Projects Control Board.

↓ Problem

- Deficiency - Graffiti covered buildings.
- Status - Graffiti removal machines have been purchased by the District and are being used by staff for their intended purpose. Graffiti is a City-wide problem and the District is coordinating its efforts with the Mayor's Office and county officials to further address this issue.

- Deficiency - Conflicts between maintenance and custodial functions.
- Status - Conflicts between maintenance and custodial functions have diminished. Building Principals now have line control and management authority over custodial staff. Maintenance staff is being effectively supervised by the Director of Maintenance/Facilities and the State Business Administrator.

Jersey City Public Schools
Jersey City, New Jersey

September 1992

FINGER TIP FACTS ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- For the past *two years*, school taxes have *not* increased although the district had the option under State law to increase school taxes. Your tax dollars are working harder than ever before to provide quality programs for our 30,000 students!
- As a result of our efforts, the district has received millions of dollars in highly competitive Federal and State grants. For example: a **\$1,400,000 Good Start Grant** and a **\$211,000 Even Start Grant** to expand our early childhood education programs; **\$2,284,905** in Commissioner of Education discretionary funds to **further expand early childhood programs** and staff development programs; **\$865,000** in Federal funds to offer for the first time ever, a breakfast program for our children and **\$140,000** for a school transition to employment program (Project STEP).
- Tremendous emphasis has been placed on the expansion of our Early Childhood Education Programs. For example, in 1989-1990 there were 147 students in the Pre-Kindergarten Program, now 267 students are in this program. In 1989-1990, there were only 345 students in the full day kindergarten programs. Now, there are **1,036** children in our full day kindergarten program!
- In all of our 36 schools, our teachers and students have the **books, materials and supplies** that they need.
- Our schools are cleaner than ever before. Maintaining our schools is a top priority! Now, after nearly 30 years, a program to paint all classrooms (over 1,000) is in place. In 3 years, our maintenance staff painted 19 schools and this program is continuing! **Our kids deserve a bright and cheery place to learn and our staff deserves no less!**
- Only the best qualified teachers and principals are hired by the district. This year, **114 new teachers were in our classrooms on the first day of school!**

- Our new **21st Century Careers Initiative** is a visionary effort to prepare our graduates for good jobs in our emerging regional economy. High quality, district-wide magnet education programs at our high schools will ensure that **our graduates are prepared, trained and able to succeed in the world of work!**

These exciting programs are: **the Ferris H.S. Finance Academy and International Studies Program; the Snyder H.S. Media/Mass Communications Program and the Health Professions Program; the Dickinson H.S. Science/Technology Program and the Lincoln H.S. model English/Mathematics Program and the Legal Professions Program.**

- The district will be breaking ground within the next month to build a **state-of-the-art elementary school - P.S. #17!**
- Teachers and principals now have a major role in the development of new programs, new curriculum, mid-term and final exams. **Teachers and principals are the experts in these matters and they are the greatest resources that we have!**
- **A community-based committee has been hard at work to determine a site for a new P.S. #3! A new Academic High School** is also on the drawing board.
- Opportunities abound for **extracurricular and after school programs for all students, elementary and high school!** Three years ago, we instituted an elementary after school program which offers our students loads of programs and activities to include clubs and intramural athletics!
- Positive trends are being seen district-wide in student test scores. For example, in December 1991, our students scored **higher** on the new **11th Grade HSPT** than Newark, Paterson, Trenton, East Orange, Hoboken, and Englewood!
- In 1990-1991 and 1991-1992, the district met the State standard for student attendance - **over 90%!**
- **Student enrollments are increasing, reversing years of enrollment decline!** We have seen this trend over the past three years!
- To address our **increasing enrollment, new portable units** have been added at **P.S. #33, P.S. #30, P.S. #6, P.S. #8, and P.S. #40.** A total of **12 new classrooms** have been put in place to alleviate space problems.

- A fair and firm ***Uniform Code of Student Conduct*** has been developed through the broad input of parents, students, staff and Board members to set the rules for ***good behavior and regular attendance!***
- Many of our graduates continue to distinguish themselves at outstanding local four-year colleges such as ***St. Peter's, Jersey City State and Steven's Institute*** as well as other outstanding colleges and universities such as ***Yale University, MIT, Brown University, and Harvard University.***
- We have increased and will continue to increase the number of ***Advanced Placement courses (for college credit)*** at our five high schools. In 1989-1990, there were only five AP courses in the district. Over the past two years, ***18 new AP courses*** were added!
- ***Academic High School*** has been cited in ***New Jersey Monthly Magazine*** as an urban high school that has met the challenge of educational excellence.
- For the first time ever, students at ***Academic High School*** are ***receiving foreign language*** instruction (Japanese) through ***earth satellite transmission.*** Academic High School is the first school in Hudson County to use this new technology through the New Jersey Public Television Authority.
- Through an ***infusion of multiculturalism into the curriculum,*** Jersey City students celebrate the ethnic, racial and religious diversity that makes up the Jersey City mosaic. For the past three years the district has participated in ***Cultural and Ethnic Harmony seminars*** under the leadership of Rabbi Kenneth Brickman of Temple Beth El.

My name is Carolyn Nelson and I am
Coordinator of Community Affairs/
Administrative Services for the Jersey
City Public Schools.

I have worked solely in the Office of
the Superintendent for ~~over~~ ^{the} 16 years
that I have been employed by the
District.

I am a product of this City and this
schools system and ~~throughout~~ I have
been criticized by some for having
a title which includes the word
"Community" when I no longer ~~live~~
reside in Jersey City. My response to
those individuals would be that no
one can make me feel less
involved or less committed to the
students of this ~~public school system~~
simply because I no longer live
here. My commitment is based
upon my love for this City ~~and my~~
~~commitment to the best of a public school~~
~~and my commitment to the best of a public school~~
~~and my commitment to the best of a public school~~
education for my children and all
~~children~~ and ~~my~~ ^{on} rights of ^{its} young
citizens.

Most of my own responsibilities have remained the same but with a strong emphasis on community involvement. The administration's effort to continue to link the community and the District is ongoing

We are in a mode of progressive change with a focus on upgrading the skills of students and staff. Ideas have been welcomed and encouraged

The whole concept of urban education is changing. ~~I can speak personally~~
~~that after conferring with our~~
~~District's administration, after 16~~
~~years of private school tuition~~
~~payments, I have enrolled my~~
~~daughter in an urban district.~~

Here ~~we~~ in Jersey City we are surrounded by talented, motivated educators and the only way to go is forward.

Thank you.

Since takeover I have seen a tremendous improvement in our school district. In my mind, the most important changes have been in our early childhood educational programs. We all know that we must reach our youngest children if they are to succeed.

Before takeover we had no pre-k classes. Now, over 400 of our children go to our district-wide pre-kindergarten program. Also, we have over 1,100 children now attending full day kindergarten programs in our schools. We have early childhood centers in Montgomery Gardens and the Duncan projects. Parents come there to learn with their children. You have no idea what this means to parents, our children, and the community.

We are moving forward and much more needs to be done and I know will be done for our youngest children. Senator Ewing, to you and the legislature, I ask that you continue to help support our efforts in Jersey City. Help us make a difference for our students.

*Thank you,
Catherine Hill
Laruna Bryant
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201-547-6623*