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FOCUS GROUP

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Salem-Lafayette Community Center
Jersey City, New Jersey

"Urban Problems in Jersey City"

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SENATOR DICK LaROSSA (Chairman): Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to convene this part of the meeting -- the Focus Group. If I may, as I've done at other meetings as well, maintain the format, what I'd like to do is read an opening statement. I'll call on my colleague, Senator O'Connor, who is our host, for his comments. I'd like to then go around the room and have each of you identify yourselves for the transcribers from OLS.

The purpose of the transcribers is to not lose a lot of the comments that are made, because we've just gotten some tremendously positive and great commentary from the other Focus Groups. Again, we want to record this information. It will be transcribed, and put into documents so that as we move forward on, hopefully, proactive legislation, we will incorporate a lot of the input and ideas that we get in these Focus Group meetings.

So with that having been said, I welcome each of you who are here today for, again, this very important Focus Group in Jersey City. As part of the New Jersey Senate Urban Policy and Planning Committee, of which I am the Chairman -- the Senate President having designated me in that role-- However, before we begin discussion, I would like to spend a minute on an overview of the goals of this Committee and a few words on the process today.

The Senate President, in establishing the Committee, stated that over the past two years the Senate as a whole has taken its responsibility as a partner in the urban revitalization effort seriously. But I believe that in the years ahead of us, a more aggressive and more targeted urban agenda will be needed. Among them, the development and support of key initiatives that will help our cities to balance their budgets, clean up once abandoned properties, repair aging and damaged schools, encourage tenant input into public housing decisions, and leverage economic development opportunities.

We believe that the Senate now has in place the mechanism to ensure that such an agenda is developed with the formation of this new standing Committee. The Committee has a very distinct responsibility; namely, to seek out solutions that are as unique in nature as the problems facing our urban communities. This Committee has traveled to Trenton, Passaic, Irvington, Camden, and New Brunswick thus far to meet with those individuals and leaders who have ideas that make sense for their communities. So we are here today to hear your ideas in that same context.

We've requested the Senator of each district -- in this case, Senator O'Connor -- that we visit to work with local officials in government to invite a cross section of elected officials, civic, religious, and community leaders, as well as other individuals whom we know, in total, will make a substantial contribution to the identification and solution of the problems which are with us.

As I stated before, we are not looking for solutions that have been tried and failed, but creative and unique approaches. Therefore, we want each of you to know that your ideas and thoughts are most welcome. However, with the limited amount of time in the Focus Group, I would ask that we please make our comments as direct and succinct as possible within the constraints of the time allocated.

Also, I want to emphasize that today's session is one in which we desire to bring light rather than heat to the problems. Our goal is not to point fingers or assign blame; there is more than enough blame to go around for everyone. Therefore, I ask each of you to refrain from confrontational commentary or attacks. Remember, this is not a forum for grandstanding, and as Chairman, I will not allow personal or political agendas to overtake the goal of today's Focus Group, which is to focus on urban problems and, hopefully, solutions.

Incidentally, as I said before, you will note our transcribers and, again, we want them to be able to have information so that we don't lose the ideas which are presented.

In conclusion, I would just like to add that as I see the urban situation not only in my district, which includes the City of Trenton, but studying the urban situation in New Jersey and elsewhere, I know that urban problems affect suburban areas. Although Webster's defines urban as, "Belonging to a city," I see in a State like New Jersey that we are almost one big city. As an aside to my prepared remarks, the U.S. Census Bureau, within the last 30 days, has made the determination that Washington, D.C. and the entire State of New Jersey have been designated as metropolitan; not part of New Jersey, all of New Jersey. So maybe that statement has more credence than a lot of people would like to think. It's a comment that we've heard before, but now the U.S. Census Bureau has codified that, I guess.

The ripple effect of both the good and the bad in our urban areas touches each of us and, therefore, we must jointly solve the problems regardless of where we live in New Jersey. Some will say that it will cost more money and we would be better off doing nothing; however, I always ask the same simple question: What is more expensive, the cost of doing something or the cost of doing nothing? As the saying goes, you can either pay me now, or you can pay me later.

It's an action oriented Committee, and we intend to give urban areas the support needed and facilitate your job and your city in a positive way. So, once again, before I begin, I want to introduce the other members of our Committee who are here. I will go around the room, if I may, and introduce everyone.

So, first off, Senator O'Connor, our host.

SENATOR O'CONNOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very brief inasmuch as you--

SENATOR LaROSSA: That's the amplification, I'm sorry. That's amp, that's OLS. (indicating microphones)

SENATOR O'CONNOR: All right.

I'm going to be very brief. The purpose of our Focus Group is to hear the thoughts of our various leaders that are here, and I thank all the civic, community, and political leaders who are here for today's meeting. I'm very happy that the meeting has finally come about here in Jersey City. I thank everybody that helped bring it about today. We had some planning sessions to put this together -- both staff and others. I think we're in for a very good meeting and I am very proud of this community, Mr. Chairman. I think at the end of the day you'll see why. I also want to offer a special welcome to Commissioner Harriet Derman, who is a Jersey City native, I just found out today.

Commissioner, welcome to Jersey City.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Terrific. It's amazing what you find out as you're sitting around talking.

If I may, before we go around the room, our host, Mayor Schundler, has just joined us.

Would you like to make any opening comments? We just did our opening statements and we're going to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Should I make comments just introducing myself, or actually make comments to the Committee?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Just introduce yourself and, as I said, you are our host, Mayor-- But, again, we've got a little over an hour and a half, so we want to keep it as focused as possible.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Right. Mayor Schundler, I think everybody knows me, and I think I know everybody here.

We welcome you being here. I think the cities do have some significant problems which, by and large, I would suggest aren't different in type so much as they are in order of

magnitude from the rest of the State. One of the things I would argue are the top priorities are safe and clean streets, good schools and recreational opportunities for our children, and then, affordable taxes and jobs for our people -- which to some degree go together, because, obviously, when taxes are too high, it drives out both residents and businesses.

I think people in the suburbs who pay very high taxes and know that a fair amount of money goes to the city are not quite appreciative of how high property taxes are in the city, and how great our need is for that kind of financial assistance. I honestly believe that Jersey City's property taxes and other property taxes in Newark and Camden are probably amongst the very highest in the State. It's not, I would argue, for lack of State assistance, because we do get a fair amount of money from the State. But I would say the bigger part of the problem is State interference where the State should not be involved.

An example that is most significant, for instance, is in things like binding arbitration. We have a much greater need for a significant police force than exists in some suburban communities, where every resident is potentially very wealthy and may not be-- They may be involved in crime of another sort, but, certainly, street crime is not as frequent a problem. To have a significant police force, obviously, requires that policemen be affordable, and it's very difficult with the binding arbitration for cities to get an affordable contract.

Ultimately, it just makes bad sense to have responsibility divorced from authority. When the city doesn't have the authority to negotiate, but where the people are actually held accountable by the citizens for providing police protection, the result is that the community suffers. It doesn't make any sense in a democratic society to have the

people who actually write the rules governing contract negotiations not be directly liable to the people who will be affected.

No one in Jersey City can vote for anyone here, except for Ed O'Connor. Yet, the laws that are passed -- the binding arbitration laws that are passed by the entire State Legislature -- will have an enormous impact on whether we can hire the kind of police -- the numbers of police -- to make our streets safe. So that is a critical--

SENATOR LaROSSA: If I may, that's part of what we want to get into when we get into the commentary of the Focus Group. That's one of the reasons that we're here today, so that policy decisions and programmatic decisions don't take place in a vacuum. Because, invariably, what has happened in terms of driving the urban agenda and urban policy is that it's some people who think they know what's going on, but it's a far cry different from having to deal with problems every single day, which is still a far cry different from having to live the problems every single day. So that is part of what we're here to do, but, if I may, I'd like to just go around the room and then we'll get into the specific details that we're looking to discuss.

If I could, from my left, if you would just very quickly give us your name, who you represent, and we'll get moving.

MR. KILLEEN: Jerry Killeen, Executive Director, Jersey City Redevelopment Agency.

MR. DeFAZIO: My name is Ed DeFazio. I'm the First Assistant Prosecutor for Hudson County.

COMMISSIONER DERMAN: My name is Harriet Derman. I'm the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. As the Senator indicated, and, as I said this morning, Thomas Wolfe is wrong, you can go home again. I'm happy to be back in Jersey City.

MR. RIGBY: Bob Rigby, I'm Executive Director of the Jersey City Housing Authority.

MR. PERKINS: William Perkins, I'm the President of the local branch of the NAACP.

MS. WATSON: Elnora Watson, President of the Urban League of Hudson County.

MS. SEBRON: Patricia Sebron, private citizen, taxpayer, and local businesswoman.

MR. COPELAND: Louis Copeland, I'm here on behalf of Congressman Donald Payne.

MR. CODD: Richard Codd, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, our government Community Affairs Office.

MS. MAYNARD: Patricia Maynard, also with the Port Authority. I work with the New Jersey Legislature and various State's departments.

MR. SHERIDAN: Neil Sheridan, I'm from the city's Division of Economic Development, and I work on several different economic and empowerment initiatives in the city.

MS. UEBBING: Annemarie Uebbing, Director of the City Division of Affordable Housing.

MR. AHERN: I'm Tom Ahern, Executive Director of Jersey City's Economic Development Corporation, and President of the New Jersey Chapter of CUED, which is a group of professionals that deal in economic development nationwide.

COUNCILWOMAN HOLLOWAY: I am Councilwoman Melissa Holloway.

MR. DELANEY: Karl Delaney, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Site Remediation Program.

MR. ROBINS: Martin Robins, New Jersey Transit, Waterfront Transportation Division.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Mayor, I know that you are also pressed. What I would like to do is, when you see-- If we are getting toward the end of when you need to leave-- I want to try to keep this as open a forum as possible, and at that

point, if we are getting close to that and we haven't had the opportunity to develop some points here, let us know, because we would like to keep this in context. Is that all right with you?

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Yes, I will have to leave shortly, but I can always easily give you my ideas in a letter.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes. We want to try and have a dialogue here as well, but bear with us, because I think what you're going to hear is pretty much what you just said. (laughter)

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Yes, I mean-- But I will have to leave shortly.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

Why don't we go around very quickly, and this does go pretty rapidly -- conceptually, in anybody's individual mind -- and if you want to pass on it, that's fine as well--

Yes, sir?

MR. PERKINS: There are people who haven't been introduced who are not seated at the table.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Oh, I'm sorry. It's going to be difficult to get the commentary. (referring to lack of microphones)

MR. BECHT: Daniel Becht, Legislative Liaison for the City of Jersey City.

MR. PINKNEY: Steve Pinkney, community activist.

MR. CALDWELL: Kevin Caldwell, President of IMPACT.

MS. PINDER: Myrita Pinder.

MS. WIERZBICKI: Kathy Wierzbicki, I'm Senator LaRossa's Legislative Aide.

MR. WEBB: Phil Webb, I'm a police officer on assignment to the Mayor's Office.

MR. EX: I'm Jah-Main EX, community activist.

MR. GOLDSBERG: Nathaniel Goldsberg, progressive (indiscernible).

MS. BIEBER: I'm Barbara Bieber. I'm the Director of the Division of Redevelopment here in Jersey City.

MR. DRYZGA: Reginald Dryzga, Executive Director of the James M. Pindar Affordable Housing Development Corporation.

MS. MAIO: Maria Maio, Jersey City Housing Authority.

MS. BORROWS: Melissa Borrows, Department of Housing and Urban Development.

MR. GRAZIOSO: Anthony Grazioso, New Jersey Transit, Waterfront Transportation Division.

SENATOR LaROSSA: All right, very good. I'm sorry, I didn't realize that-- I'm sorry we didn't have enough microphones. If there are going to be comments that you would like to make in terms of contributing, we would appreciate it if you would come up to the table. These microphones here are not for amplification. They are for, as I said before, transcription. (indicating microphones) We do have some microphones that are for-- Oh, I'm sorry we have one. (additional PA microphone installed) These are the amplification microphones; these are the transcription microphones. So with that--

Mayor, as a courtesy to your city, let me open with you, and what your comments are.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Yes. Again, my sense is the-- If you look at our budget, 75 percent of our budget for the city itself is police and fire, so we have to be able to get control of the cost of providing those essential services. You cannot go without having police and firemen, and if you don't have enough police and firemen, your city is still going to be very, very troubled. If you can't afford to have enough police and firemen without destroying the taxpayer, you're still in trouble. So, one way or another, we have to be able to get control of the cost of these essential services.

Right now, as you know, in the last 15 years we've had police and fire salaries escalating at twice the rate of inflation, and they continue. In fact, in the most recent

Supreme Court decision, two Bergen County towns were validated in their complaint that the arbitrator did not consider all factors. This highlighted the problem, because the judge actually affirmed the awards -- while not affirming the reasoning, he did affirm the awards, which were in the 9 percent range.

After a full eight years, our officers in Jersey City get to their maximum step, and already at that point they're earning -- when you add in overtime, longevity, and benefits -- along the order of \$80,000 to \$90,000. I shouldn't say earning, but that is what they're costing the city -- this, I might add, in a city where \$10,000 is the per capita income. When you have these critical services growing in cost at twice the rate of inflation, that right there is an impossible situation.

Secondly, education is very important and recreation is very important. Right now, in Jersey City, we spend approximately \$270 million in our public school budget for 30,000 students, which comes out to \$9000 a head. If you have five children in a family, that's \$45,000 being spent in taxpayers' money on one family. It's obvious that it is going to be hard to provide libraries; it's going to be hard to provide recreational opportunities; it's going to be hard to provide everything else when education is costing that much.

My legislation, which you know -- which we have proposed, but has not formally been introduced; we're anticipating introducing it this fall -- will try to get control of that cost through reexamining how we go about teaching children. Instead of saying that the focus will be to spend more money, the focus will be, instead, to liberate teachers and allow them to create different kinds of programs and be held accountable for results -- instead of just doing it all the same way, if the same way is not proven to be effective.

The third thing, I think, which is extremely important here is taxes. But if we work in these first two areas, taxes become a lot easier. If we don't work in these first two areas, there is no amount of relief that you can give us which could ever bail us out. If we don't control costs, in short, simply cost-shifting to the State is not a solution. We will bankrupt you eventually. Now, of course, with our new crime bill on the Federal level, what we're thinking is that the solution to our problem is just to cost-shift all the way up to the Federal government. That's not a solution, either.

We've got to get control of the costs. If we do that then we can, with sufficient State aid, keep taxes down here. I think it's important to make the point that just because we're talking about trying to control the growth in costs, that doesn't mean the cities still don't need significant revenue from the State.

Today, in Jersey City, we cut ribbons on two affordable housing projects. We believe that these are important projects, because we do have low-income people in this city, so it is important to be building low-income housing. But, as you know, to build low-income housing does require tax abatements, which cuts the revenue from those houses. On the other hand, the family there may still have children. So if you have a family in a low-income house where there is an abatement that removes most of your revenue, you still may have four children at \$9000 each in the public schools. That's another \$36,000 in taxpayer costs.

So if we want to have cities where people can live decently, we have to continue to have a State commitment to provide revenue support. If the State wants to make sure that it's getting real quality in terms of services for citizens for the money that's being spent, then what we really need is-- We have to have the State give the money, but on the other hand, to step back from the tremendous overregulation which results in actually decreasing the productivity of that spending.

If you allow parents to choose the best schools for their children for the money that's being spent, you'll get better education for the dollars. If you'll allow cities to control contracts without having to worry about binding arbitration laws interfering with our ability to negotiate, we will get better policing for the dollars.

The point I'm making here is twofold: On the one hand, we don't want you just to increase State taxes all the time in a way that doesn't help us out, because all the money is immediately sucked up by escalating costs. On the other hand, while you give us the liberty to control costs, we don't want you to think that means you can now cut back on your State commitment to the urban areas. We still need money, but we need more freedom so we can spend it in a way that really benefits the citizens.

Now, if we do that, we're convinced that we'll be able to bring jobs back here, and that will help us a lot on the employment front. In addition to bringing jobs, poor people oftentimes lack the networks to get the new jobs. Jersey City has actually done a fairly good job in bringing new employment to the city, but we have a great problem in that many of our jobless citizens don't know where those jobs are and don't have the networks to help them get those new positions.

One of the proposals we've made here to your Commissioner of Human Resources is to allow welfare moneys to be spent differently. Right now, the way Federal job training and State job training moneys are spent-- Essentially, what we say is that we're going to spend the State money on a State program, and if anybody gets placed or not, it really doesn't make any difference; every employee will still get their paycheck.

If on the other hand, we said, for instance, we would allow a welfare recipient to go to any employment agency, and if any employment agency managed to find them a job, we would

pay that employment agency a fee. Now, what we would have is, first of all, a lot more people working to help our welfare population get placed, because you would have, instead of just 30 bureaucrats working for the city, you could have hundreds of individuals working in employment agencies throughout the State looking for jobs for our people.

Secondly, our welfare people would have to be treated like human beings, because if they weren't treated as a human being, they could go to another agency where they were treated decently, as a human being. They would not be forced to only have one place to turn -- the bureaucracy -- which can treat them as callously as they choose without having to worry about suffering any financial consequence.

Thirdly, there would only be payment for the actual placement of an individual. You would go to an employment agency, and if they found you a job, they would get a fee. Whereas today, the city gets its State and Federal dollars whether or not they find anybody a job. In this instance, they would only get paid if they found somebody a job -- after that person was actually sent to work. That would create a real incentive to successfully place our welfare people.

The best part is it won't cost you a cent, because, right now, when you add in the cost of housing support, when you add in the cost of food support, when you add in Medicaid, and when you add in welfare cash payments, it costs \$20,000 for your average welfare family with two children in Jersey City. So you can simply take moneys out of the money you're saving by helping to find someone a job and get them off of welfare. You can pay a fee to employment agencies to find the jobs that our people need, and it won't cost you a cent. It just requires that the State government be willing now to empower people, instead of running everything through their own bureaucratic, overregulated, command control approach.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Mayor.

What I would like to do is, I've got a couple of fundamental questions that, I think, will give us a context. If I may, you'll see where this is going after I ask the question. We'll go around the room once on this.

In my opening comments, I talked about how Webster's defines urban. In as brief a statement -- you know, 25 words or less -- how do you define urban?

MR. KILLEEN: I would say that urban is a center of a State where the core of the city is located. It's the central location within which the city can be found. That's it. That's an urban area.

MR. DeFAZIO: I would say it's a densely populated, business, and, hopefully, cultural center for a surrounding area.

COMMISSIONER DERMAN: I would almost say what it is not: it's not rural, it's not suburban. It has more infrastructure, some of it we associate now, automatically, as being older and in need of work. It has transportation systems. It has neighborhoods -- separate neighborhoods -- that are discrete, but come together, that make the mass that is the city. It has a commercial area, has neighborhood schools.

MR. RIGBY: It's a center of people, cars, and finance -- in New Jersey: older, highly populated, and aging infrastructure.

MR. PERKINS: Do you want the classical definition, or the popular definition?

SENATOR LaROSSA: I want your definition.

MR. PERKINS: Okay. The popular definition of urban is, a multiracial, multiethnic, urban center of people collecting themselves for engaging in commerce and social intercourse on a daily basis.

MS. WATSON: I would say that an urban center is a commercial and business district with people there to essentially do business, and neighborhoods developed around business and retail.

MS. SEBRON: I would define it as the area where you find great numbers of disenfranchised people, children receiving inferior educations, poor city services, a lack of hope, and a lack of clear goals and futures for our kids.

MR. COPELAND: I would say it's a hardworking community that needs assistance not only from the State, but the Federal government, in which people can work together collectively to bring about development.

MR. CODD: I would say it's a densely populated area that is part of a larger economic region.

MS. MAYNARD: I grew up in a Midwestern state in a cornfield, literally, so to me an urban area is a very exciting thing. Basically, it's a place where all of the functions of life are in close proximity -- one to the other -- whether it's schools, recreation, jobs. Everything is just a block away instead of 50 miles away. To me it's a very exciting, very vital, very alive place.

MR. SHERIDAN: Probably in four years of studying Latin, one of the more interesting things was the description of city life in Rome. I think if you compare ancient Rome to Jersey City today -- and look at Jersey City, hopefully, as a city that's ascending, rather than Rome in decline -- we face the same sort of reasons that people banded together: for collective defense, economic opportunities, or cultural opportunities.

I think we have the potential here in Jersey City to reach that kind of pinnacle of success, but as an urban area now, we are faced with life and difficulties in achieving some of those goals. Hopefully, today will give us some direction.

MS. UEBBING: I would consider an urban area to be a highly dense area with commercial activity, transportation, and services.

MR. COTTER: I like what Neil said. Can I go with that? (laughter)

MS. UEBBING: He said enough for a couple.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We can do that. (laughter)

MR. COTTER: I would define urban as a place of maximum opportunity for maximum choice -- simply that.

MR. AHERN: My definition of urban is essentially the birthplace of civilization, where commerce and people interact.

COUNCILWOMAN HOLLOWAY: My definition of urban would be a highly dense population of multicultural groups merging together with a lot of commercial retailing aspects, but also with a slant of a lot of problems and not enough people coming up with the solutions to fix the problems that are created.

MR. DELANEY: I'm not very poetic, but-- I'm more visual. I'm not sure that I can add anything other than graphically, when I say a lot of buildings, a lot of roadways, businesses, finance, a lot of people -- infrastructure was mentioned -- and many challenges.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: The city is just a place where you have a densely populated area, which could mean all the wonderful things that come from human creativity, including culture, commerce, and everything. It could also mean all the terrible things that come from human despair, such as joblessness, violence, chaos. It's not just an accident whether you end up with one or the other.

MR. SHAH: I see it as being a place where people come together mostly to gain, I guess, some kind of economies of scale in terms of living and sharing a lot of resources like roads, jobs, things like that -- infrastructure. Therefore, they become interdependent whether they like it or not, and something new comes out of all of that.

MR. ROBINS: I'll take a little bit more positive side than the Mayor's flip side. I think it's a densely settled area, oftentimes divided into defined neighborhoods. It's a center of business, institutions, shopping, and entertainment. The pitch for my profession: The people are usually reliant for their mobility on walking and public transit.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Outstanding.

We'll go to-- You know what the question is.

MR. BARBOUR: Manalapan; Boston; Roxbury; Hartford, Connecticut; New Haven, Connecticut; the South Bronx; South Harlem; Central Harlem; Bed-Stuy; Brooklyn; Jersey City south side; Newark, New Jersey; Camden; North Philly; South Philly, and Des Moines, Iowa.

SENATOR LaROSSA: That's not bad.

I'm going to do something a little different as I go down the wall here. Just as briefly, and as quickly as possible: If you had to isolate two urban problems, what would be the first two that you would pick? Starting with--

MR. PINKNEY: I'd say control of the resources by nonresidents. I'd say the lack of earnesty, in terms of our directions, in terms of systematic -- divide and conquer almost.

MR. CALDWELL: I would say one of the major problems is the gross disparity between those who have and those who don't have. Being in an urban area, those two groups are faced with each other on a daily basis, so if you don't have, it's magnified. If you have no hope of having, it's magnified even more. I think the other problem is people who really don't understand what it is not to have; coming up with solutions for those who don't have, without checking with them first.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm glad you said that. It sounds like a little commercial for what we said in the beginning as to why we're here -- is to not have solutions take place in an antiseptic and detached environment. Because no matter what we think we know, there is a difference between living it and what you think you know.

Myrita?

MS. PINDER: Housing, of course; every one of us needs a home. And education, I think, is most important, especially in my book.

SENATOR LaROSSA: You know, this is my-- Ninety-eight percent of my good reputation is the next lady you're going to hear. She is my legislative aide, but she lives in Trenton.

So we'll let you participate in this one.

MS. WIERZBICKI: I think one of the biggest problems in the urban areas is the deteriorating infrastructure. We have a lot of old, old places that need a lot of repair, and a lot of money has to go into that. I think another thing is our youth, who have no place to go. There are not a lot of activities for them, not a lot for them to do. Education is sketchy, at best and there are not a lot of people to encourage them to go on to school, get an education, and further themselves. A lot of them are very aimless.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Good.

Phil.

MR. WEBB: I would have to say that I believe that hopelessness and disenfranchisement are major difficulties. Because of hopelessness and disenfranchisement, a large portion of our community rejects traditional values. Therefore, they become involved in negative social/pathological behaviors such as crime and drugs. Beyond that, I think we have to offer alternatives to those who have been disenfranchised. Therefore, we need to incorporate those people who are involved in negative lifestyles and being socially destructive, and influence them to the point where they become socially enfranchised and socially productive.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay, the young fellow sitting next to you, I didn't get his name.

MR. EX: Jah-Main EX, community activist. Lack of equal opportunity, which is the root cause of crime and violence. Miseducation and the unwritten law of local white supremacy and white world domination, which victimize African, Hispanic, and Asian children, rob them of (indiscernible), and cause them to go into self-destruction miles deep. It's how public education influences them.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

Yes?

MR. PERKINS: Public education.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Public education?

MR. DRYZGA: Losing the sense of traditional values.

MR. KILLEEN: Urban migration and then, in turn, facing the urban problems.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. You see what all of these--

MR. GOLDSBERG: School integration.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Do you see where this is going? Do you see what everybody just said? This is part of the reality that has to happen in terms of what we said in the opening statement about, it's one large city. I think, Councilwoman, you said it as well, that it's happening in suburban New Jersey.

It's not a matter of solving the problems, the difficulty in order to solve-- The first thing is, it's like a drug addict. What's the first step to recovery? You have to acknowledge that the problem exists. If, in fact, it's going to be a constant butting of heads -- us against them, we against they -- until people realize that it's the same set of problems-- If you solve the problems in one environment, you solve the problems in the other environment, because they are the same problems.

What somebody said before-- I'm going to use a phrase that was used in one of the other groups, They phrased it, I thought, very eloquently, as a density of the lack of opportunity. The problems are more magnified in the urban centers simply because of proximity. It's got strictly to do with volume, but it becomes more amplified, more magnified because of the proximity and just the sheer, pure volume of what's going on.

But the laundry list of problems is the same. Twenty years ago, thirty years ago, crime was a problem in the urban centers, and everybody said that crime was a problem. Well, is

crime a problem in the suburban centers? Yes. But why is it a bigger problem today than it was 30 years ago? Because it's happening in suburban backyards.

So the point is-- Somebody used the word before, "systemic" -- I think one of the ladies along the wall. The changes cannot be superficial changes; they cannot be antiseptic changes; they cannot be isolated changes. Whatever the solutions are, they have to recognize that everybody is impacted by all of this. This is not suburbia's problem to solve; it is not an urban problem to solve. It's everybody's problem to be a part of. Because if we do not start to break down this "us versus them, we versus they" mentality and realize that whatever the problems are that exist, they impact everyone--

What I've been trying to get through when we go into some of the suburban areas is, if the cities totally go down the tubes, who is going to pick up the tab? It's not going to be the cities, because the money isn't there. So suburban New Jersey is going to have to recognize, begin to wake up, and say, "Wait a minute. We have a vested interest in what happens here, because everything is migrating outward: infrastructure starts to deteriorate; roads start to deteriorate; schools start to deteriorate." All the problems become the same set of problems. Part of the acknowledgement of solving the problem is that the problems impact everybody. It's not something which happens in isolation.

What you have is, because you have a poor population -- a population that has been poorer longer -- that the infrastructure has been there longer, it's deteriorated longer, there is more of it. Now, all of a sudden, the cognition is-- Let's face it, it becomes a problem when you have-- What's the difference between a recession and a depression?

MR. CALDWELL: A recession is somebody else's problem, a depression is mine.

MR. GOLDSBERG: Nathaniel Goldsberg. I think that updating income would be one of the biggest things. We don't have enough money to pay our bills, so we become victims of the pressures, and in trying to do that-- To cut taxes will also cut the cost of living, which we can afford.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Barbara.

MS. BIEBER: Barbara Bieber. Again, I think the two biggest issues, at least in my mind, if I have to limit it to two, would be:

1) Education: I think it's most important. If we could educate the youth of the city, as well as the adults, we could overcome a lot of the problems within the urban areas.

2) Crime, clean and safe streets: If people had safety in the streets, it would help eliminate a lot of the problems.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

Reginald.

MR. DRYZGA: I believe we need more leaders, such as the people at this table, and leaders who are involved in operating on a day-to-day basis to find the creative and unique solutions that we're searching for. Secondly, I believe that the resources -- financially and otherwise -- must be available to these leaders in a manner that is much less cumbersome than the resources are available today.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Maria.

MS. MAIO: Trying to find solutions that are not superficial solutions, but more systemic solutions to our problems. Also, in some way, looking for what I think we've really lost, and that's the respect that we've kind of missed from our youth.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Melissa.

MS. BORROWS: A lack of resources and opportunities, and the multitude of problems that have plagued the city as a

result of that. I think we need more people involved in quantifying some of the initiatives that have been taken in the past.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Anthony.

MR. GRAZIOSO: Providing the economic, educational, empowerment opportunities, while eliminating the bureaucracy that hinders those things from coming about, so the diverse ethnic groups in the area can achieve the things that most other people already take for granted.

MR. BROWN: As the cities generate the greater proportion of the revenue that the states operate by, they put less back into the cities, as compared with the suburban areas where people live at present, who formerly lived in the city.

MR. AGYEMAN: I believe that the urban area is just a reflection of what is happening within the United States government itself. (indiscernible)

SENATOR LaROSSA: All right. Now, this may sound like a-- Just to follow that up, does anybody want to take a crack at this? I just asked about what the urban problems are. Now, if you had to go through a laundry list and be limited to two -- and we'll start going down this end of the table -- what would you list as suburban problems?

MS. SEBRON: Traveling from the urban area back home, from your job.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Anyone else? Just raise your hand, or feel free to--

Yes?

COUNCILWOMAN HOLLOWAY: Out in the suburban areas they are starting to realize that they are having serious problems with juvenile crime, themselves.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Anyone else?
Go ahead.

MS. MAYNARD: Transportation -- public transportation.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Right. It's a recession when your neighbor is out of work; it's a depression when you're out of work. It's the same basic thing. That's the first thing we've got to recognize and realize. Let's talk about some of those-- Somebody said -- I'm paraphrasing -- something about, "Access to resources." Who used that? (Mr. Dryzga raises hand)

Yes, sir. Could you amplify that a little bit? I think that's a very interesting--

MR. DRYZGA: Yes, Senator. As I mentioned previously, I'm Executive Director of a nonprofit, affordable housing development corporation.

In performing our due diligence with regard to any given proposed affordable housing development in the State of New Jersey, we must go through a series of very cumbersome procedures in order to bring together all of the financial resources. In some cases, they might require four or five different resources including, financial capital grants and operating subsidies from all levels of government: Federal, State, county, municipal, as well as conventional financing. Until you get them all in place and ready to go, you cannot proceed. Many of these funding sources are on different cycles, different fiscal commitment periods, and things of this nature. So when I said two things--

Give me a leader, if you will, but give that leader the opportunity to make his or her presentation to a consortium of lenders. If that consortium of lenders accepts the presentation and accepts the particular proposal, then let that person run with the ball and bring together the human resources that are needed to get any given project underway, including an affordable housing development or an economic development such as Omar Barbour is undertaking with regard to the Martin Luther King Redevelopment Plan.

SENATOR LaROSSA: You're talking primarily, if you will, tangible resources as opposed to -- social resources as opposed to human resources.

MR. DRYZGA: I'm talking both, Senator, but from a practical standpoint, without the financial resources to at least provide the seed capital, the human resources may continue to face the difficulty. How do we motivate persons, especially those who may be experiencing despair? How do we get them to become part of the team and to put their hearts into any given venture that we are undertaking, when we can't even get to first base from the standpoint of convincing them that this is for real?

SENATOR LaROSSA: All right. Somebody -- again, over on the wall -- made a comment about respect and the lack of equal opportunity. Does that play into what you were saying?

MR. CALDWELL: Part of the problem is the long-- Everybody wants to come in and come up with long-term solutions to the problems that already exist. What they fail to do is to take into consideration the injustices that have been done in the past, and until those injustices have been dealt with, you can't get people to buy into this new idea. There are always long-term solutions. Yet, when you have a long-term solution and it fails, people are doubly in despair because they've waited for it over that long term. But the problems of the past need to be addressed. There needs to be an equal playing field. Then you can motivate people, because now they can take part in that process of planning and not be planned for.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Which, hopefully, is part of what we're trying to do as we sit here. Anybody else want to address-- I think that's a great observation. We've done six of these, and you learn something every time. No one had ever used the term before about acknowledging that everyone has long-term solutions, but what do you do in the short term? Anybody want to respond to that, you know, the idea of short-term versus long-term solutions?

Yes, in the corner.

MR. PINKNEY: Yes. I think that, basically, one of the things that's the problem is that Federal money is used in a subsidized sort of way, and this housing program that we have

-- we want to see it rise and be built. It has to do two things: It has to create jobs, and it has to be cost-effective so that it can be adjudicated without cost. I think that in the base extended period by which banks loan money for mortgages to individuals -- and they use a simple formula of sweat equity -- people could actually be put to work building their own houses, and the banks could, therefore, turn around and give mortgages that are going to be affordable to these new welfare recipients or other people who are looking for housing.

So I think the solution is to create and expand the economic base, but only if you're going to do it sincerely, because what has happened in the past is that the same old country club keeps getting the benefit from that. You have to be for real; you have to expand the base; and you have to allow people some economic gain.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Before I follow up on that, I'm going to introduce the gentleman that just sat down. This is Senator John Bennett, who is the Senate Majority Leader. He is joining us today, as well. One of the reasons is, again, transcribing and hearing it-- If a picture is worth a thousand words, what is hearing and seeing it firsthand worth? So that is what we're also trying to do.

Thanks, Senator Bennett, for also coming up and spending some time with us today, as well. Is there anything you would like to -- or do you want to just sit and listen?

SENATOR BENNETT: I'm here to listen. I'm glad to have the opportunity to be here.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

MR. GRAZIOSO: Senator, I think one of the things that you ought to recognize is that there are many agencies in the private sector and semiprivate sector that are tackling these problems. If the government -- all of the government -- can work with these agencies, you might be able to overcome some of

the things. You can't expect someone to put their heart and mind into something when they have an empty stomach, they don't have a place to live -- shelter -- they need clothes, and things like that.

I think if government recognizes-- Don't reinvent the wheel all the time. There are agencies that are doing things in the urban areas and other areas that you can call upon and utilize the skills, talents, and the dedication of these people. Fund it properly and work with them. That may be a way to address the short term while you look for more long term and more lasting solutions to the problems.

Years ago, I was in public housing where (indiscernible), Maria Maio, and others are, and some of the problems we faced then exist today, but can still be overcome because of the dedication -- the things these people do. We have so many private organizations, semiprivate organizations, church groups, and others, that all this goes lacking and goes to naught unless the government recognizes and funds it in some way -- works with them who are tackling the problems not only of the urban area, but it's going out to the suburban areas.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Is part of what you're saying -- I've heard it a couple of times today -- that there are a lot of programs and maybe part of the problem is less government intervention and more local empowerment?

MR. GRAZIOSO: That's correct, local empowerment. I think the Mayor is a champion of that, as are many people in this Focus Group.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But if the opportunities are there-- Look, if government is a control mechanism -- for lack of a better choice of words -- obviously, there has to be something which helps create a level playing field. The question is: At what point do you go past the level playing field, and now what's happening is you're exercising control?

Elnora, you were going to say something?

MS. WATSON: Well, I would like to address that in terms of the Martin Luther King Redevelopment Plan. The essence of the plan is to revitalize and stabilize the economic, social, and physical characteristics of M.L.K. Drive in a manner that is consistent with the existing character of the neighborhood, and the goals and aspirations of the citizens -- both residential and commercial.

Many of the people who sit along the wall and this table are here in that context, and they have developed a plan which can begin to address some of the short-term social and economic issues, but also address the long-term issues. It's addressed by the number of residents who are here in this room, who have lived here for 50 years, have invested commercially, and are looking for the kind of assistance that will come from the public will to address the problems on an equitable basis.

By an equitable basis-- There are some that may get more attention than others while they are struggling toward the same goal, so there needs to be a mechanism to address the problems -- both long-term and short-term -- in an equitable manner. If you have heard about the M.L.K. Plan or have heard it referenced here today, it is certainly the result of a lot of the work that many people in this room have put in. Some en masse, some not so mass, some day-long, some night-long.

But, I think, if people come together to put that kind of effort into any kind of plan, to not give it the equitable attention that it needs for implementation will mean that the problems don't get addressed -- either long term or short term -- because people lose faith.

MS. SEBRON: I'd just like to add to Elnora's statement in that regard. Because those kinds of plans are the kinds of plans that help the middle class remain in the urban area, so there is not the continual flight out of our city. If we do not maintain-- Affordable housing is fine, but we have to make livable, affordable housing for the middle-class, urban

dweller so that they want to stay. They do have a positive affect on those people who are underemployed and unemployed, and on our children. If we continue to have all of our middle-class role models flee the city, because they feel like nothing will ever come, the area will never be revitalized, the educational system will never be improved. We're just going to continue to go on this downward spiral.

SENATOR LaROSSA: If you had the opportunity tomorrow to wake up and wave a magic wand, and had your choice between economic revitalization and creating jobs -- and this is a real difficult question to answer -- which would you put first -- job development or housing?

MS. SEBRON: I don't think I can answer that in that kind of context. I really do think it's much too narrow. I think there are a number of things that have to happen in our urban area.

One, we must absolutely, positively, address education. I mean education so that every child-- It is impossible for a 1st, 3rd, or 4th grade child to sit and learn in an environment of 40 or 50 students. If there are legislative responses, there needs to be a response that mandates that there is some reasonable maximum size for a classroom. We need to start that with our very youngest children, so that they can go to school and learn in an environment that is conducive to learning.

A child also has to be able to come to school in an area that is clean, where the normal course of events is not watching someone sell drugs. Then they must be able to go home to a house that is not just filthy, dirty, and nasty, with slum landlords, who are getting Section 8, do not live in the city, take all the money, and will not spend one dime on a repair. To me those things go hand in hand, and I don't know how we could possibly separate them.

MS. WATSON: Those absentee landlords are generally the ones who get the attention. So when you're talking about equitable solutions, the equitable solution has to be toward those indigenous residents who have plans, who have programs, and can do the same thing if they were given the support that some of the absent developers and people who own the affordable housing get.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Let me ask you a question. You used an absentee landlord. When you say absentee -- absentee in terms of showing up and maintaining what they're doing, or absentee in terms-- Help me with--

MS. SEBRON: Both.

MS. WATSON: We can take it in--

SENATOR LaROSSA: Do absentee landlords-- In general, are they paying their taxes and just don't show up?

MS. SEBRON: They don't pay their taxes, and they don't show up.

MS. WATSON: Or maintain properties.

MS. SEBRON: There are any number of properties around the city. There is one that has four, five, or ten dwellings, all within our ward, receiving Section 8. I can go block, by block, by block, multidwellings, where it is just abominable for people to live in those kinds of conditions. This guy-- I bet you if you look at the records and look at the Section 8 checks that are mailed to him month, after month, after month, after month, and the conditions that the people are living in -- it's abhorrent.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Do you want to say--

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: Just to say you have-- Again, there is an issue of having responsibility. Those who have power being those who can actually be held accountable by the people. When you have people who have power, who aren't held accountable by the people, that's when you have problems.

We have in the city-- We have, systemwide, the underassessment of vacant land and abandoned properties. If you actually look at the market value of vacant land in this city, it is significantly higher than the assessment of vacant land in this city. If you have a building, and next to it is a lot, the actual market price of that lot will frequently be up 30 percent of the improved lot next to it, but its assessment will only be about 8 percent or 9 percent.

That's something we have tried to correct, but the assessor of the city has not been willing to correct. We've tried to replace the assessor, but we've not been allowed to, because of State laws which provide tenure for assessors and, in all honesty, break their accountability to the elected government of the people. The result is that we have not been able to correct that.

That produces a direct subsidy from homeowners who live in the city, to absentee land speculators who, as a rule, don't pay their taxes. They sit on vacant land where they are undertaxed in the first place, and then, they don't even pay that, because they figure, "Well, maybe in five or six years real estate values will go up. I'll be able to sell, and out of my gain I'll be able to pay all my accrued taxes off then." So the city gets no cash flow.

I might add we do, however, have to pay the county taxes, because it doesn't matter what our collection rate is, we have to pay the county one way or another. So if we have a fair number of absentee speculators, we end up having to hit every homeowner in this city a second time, not only to subsidize that speculator, but we have to give the county money we don't have.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I was very surprised--

MS. SEBRON: Adding to that, Mayor, there are not vacant lands, there are buildings, buildings, buildings, buildings -- block, after block, after block --

multidwellings. I can single out one owner, where they're placed all over the wall, that the person does not pay their taxes. I bet you if we checked the tax rolls, their tax liability would be horrendous, on top of the fact that most of the occupants in there are Section 8 tenants -- or welfare tenants -- and they collect the money. Some of the facades-- The buildings are crumbling, just crumbling.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: It used to be a lot easier. You actually had in rem foreclosures, which could take place in six months, where the city -- on a nonpaying landlord -- could take the property and put it into more responsible hands. Now, of course, in recent years, court cases have resulted in cities not being able to foreclose even in the in rem procedure in less than two years on average. All you're doing there is protecting people who are being irresponsible.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Sir, you had--

MR. CALDWELL: I think in our quick fix solutions for problems such as these-- You change the assessor. Maybe we need for the city to have more revenue -- to be able to collect more revenue -- but somewhere in there are people who are already overburdened by taxes. When you change that assessor, and he starts assessing people who are already overburdened, what happens then? They can no longer afford to pay their taxes, and you have more flight out of the city. So you solve one problem, you create another problem. We need to stop having quick fix solutions.

Understand, a lot of the government-- I understand, philosophically, that there is a debate: Less government is better, better than more government. But understand, most of the rules, regulations, and laws that exist -- Federal, State, and local -- there is a history behind them. There was some abuse taking place that necessitated a quick fix solution, and these rules and regulations were put into place. Did they work? No, they were quick fix. Are we living with them?

Yes. If we take them away, will there not be more abuses? Of course there will, there will be many more abuses. I think we need to look at the problems more clearly and be more realistic about our solutions.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

MR. PINKNEY: I think I answered your question in terms of what we can do and what would come first, right from the start. I said that if you stopped subsidizing housing and made it a profitable transaction -- where you took \$30,000 net profit out of each unit -- then you could pay for at least one job and maybe several others. I think that, basically, if you've got a coalition of Federal, State, local, banking industry, and so forth, and if you turn around and stop subsidizing housing, give people 50-year mortgages, and give them a job that goes with it, you've done both things without creating additional expense.

I think that what needs to be thought about is the-- Basically, Jersey City has a \$10,000 per capita income, so anything you do is only going to destroy people. What you have to do is, you have to change the rules of the game, and you have to get those incomes higher. That seems like a physical impossibility, but it's not. If you basically tie it to the infrastructure, which has to be corrected, and you turn around from being a nonprofit sort of relationship to a profit relationship where you're selling things at a profit, then you've just created an economy. So I think you can do both things simultaneously.

COMMISSIONER DERMAN: Senator?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

COMMISSIONER DERMAN: I would like to get some information on the location of that inadequate Section 8 housing.

MS. SEBRON: I would certainly be more than glad to-- In fact, I'll walk you around the corner and show it to you. (laughter)

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: I just want to say that, I think, the notion that you can have abuses whether you have regulation or nonregulation -- of course, you can have abuses. The difference, though, is that if the person who can be held accountable by the people has the authority to respond to a problem, if they don't respond well, the people can throw them out of office. That's the way the system works to check itself.

The problem is when you have the people who have the authority to regulate who can't be thrown out of office. So you now have unaccountable authority. That's what's called dictatorship. Now, the problem we have is a lot of regulations which are passed by people who aren't directly accountable to those who are going to have to live under those regulations.

You're agreed that if you can put authority back into the people's hands themselves, or back close to the people-- Whether it's a parent who is going to look for the best school for their child, or whether it's a mayor who is going to be held accountable by the people to provide them the most affordable taxes, if he has the authority to get them the most affordable taxes -- by making sure that absentee speculators don't get subsidized by city residents -- that's the way to get government working as well as it possibly can work.

I would just point out, I think no one is more directly aware of this than legislators. You are more aware than anybody, I think, that special interest groups rule legislatures, because the general interest, of course, is we're all involved in our lives. But there are people before you, every day, who represent very special interests.

I personally think the NRA is a classic example of that. Most Americans in this country are not very happy with assault weapons being so freely available. Yet, whether you're talking about Congress or state legislatures, we typically are very hesitant to challenge a powerful, organized interest

group. But if you gave the authority to someone who is held accountable by the people, at the local level to say, "We don't want these weapons here," and you could be voted out of office directly by those people if you didn't respond to them, you'd see government much more directly responsive to the people's interest.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I think one of the reasons -- just following that up as to why we're here -- to a certain extent, really reflects the whole question of -- I use it in major league quotation marks -- "special interest." There really should be only one special interest: the people who live in this State, who have a vested interest in where we are and where we have been.

But the difficulty is, if we have these meetings at 10:00 in the morning in Trenton, what that does is, it denies accessibility. I think the way you begin to solve the problems is, whatever word you want to hang on it -- empowerment, whatever -- I think it starts with accessibility. Because then, in fact, that's part of the accountability process as well. Because, again, I doubt if this meeting were being held in Trenton, that we would have this turnout -- I doubt if it was held at 10:00 in the morning.

The idea is not to have things happen to you, but in essence, to be a part of a process where, in fact, you are part of what is happening for you. But, again, if somebody does it in a vacuum, if somebody does not provide the access, does not provide the opportunity-- I think that's where part of the beginning is to turn things around, and part of it is we have to realize--

Somebody, I think, used the term, disenfranchisement. Part of disenfranchisement is, if you look at government -- State government -- that's Trenton-- Everybody has this psychology in their minds that Trenton is some 60 or 70 miles away -- that's Trenton, and you always feel like it's being

imposed. It's kind of disenfranchised when the government that impacts you is 70 miles away. So that's part of-- To begin to open that process up, to bring the government that's 70 miles away into your backyard--

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: But just one thought: If the white apartheid regime of South Africa had granted access and reached out to listen to what the black South Africans' concerns were, but never granted them true political power, in the form of the right to vote, they would never be as responsive as a government which truly gives political power to the people. So you can grant access and you can be more solicitous all day, but you'll never see real justice until people have the opportunity to seek their own best interests without having to beg you for what is in their best interest.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I think, in a phrase, it's called the right of self-determination.

Yes?

MR. WEBB: It's appropriate I make a comment here, because it was I that talked about disenfranchisement. There is a tour scheduled, and chances are you're going to go down M.L.K. Drive. Many of the individuals you'll see are the disenfranchised; many of the individuals you'll see on the corners are those who are in the throes of despair.

When we look at those circumstances, we have to consider that some of the exclusion is imposed because of traditional and entrenched racism, and some of the exclusion is imposed because of a mind-set where individuals do not see the opportunity to achieve through the culture that exists; therefore, they withdraw from the culture.

Once I am disenfranchised, I do not feel that I am bound to adhere to any of the rules that traditional culture has put upon me; therefore, we see social/pathological behavior such as drug addiction, alcoholism, crime, drug dealing. A large portion of our young community is under the employ of a

negative industry -- the narcotics industry -- and that's because of their disenfranchisement. They've lost confidence in their ability to achieve through traditional education, because they perceive the system as racist. If we don't impose circumstances where these young people and others have opportunities to achieve through training, rehabilitation, and recovery, I think, even though we may treat the symptoms of these social diseases, we'll never cure the disease itself. We have to look at the core, and we have to offer some things that will have an immediate impact, coupled with long-term goals.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes, sir.

MR. BARBOUR: Senator, I just want to go back to the initial question when I came in -- about urban and the definition of urban -- and also relate that to your next question about jobs: If you had a choice between jobs and housing, which one would you choose?

Well, I think, if you look at the urban situation in order to reclaim urban America, there is a recycling that has to be done, restoration of physical structure -- infrastructure and the like. If I had a choice between jobs and housing-- I think you can do both simultaneously by virtue of having policies that will allow you to create jobs by building housing. You can't do that if your policy is to provide manufactured, modular, prefab housing, which doesn't allow you to empower the local population or to enrich the local economy, because you're not buying goods and services to go into the building of the houses, and you're not putting the local population to work in that process.

So if you're talking about urban America -- and I gave a litany of different cities across the eastern seaboard -- when I think of America, I see a chronic problem across-the-board. It's instructive to note that in most of those cases, in those cities I named, you'll find that in the

minority populations of those cities, and in the minority neighborhoods of those cities, you have problems across-the-board.

A kid in New Haven may never meet a kid in Jersey City, so why is the behavior that Phil talked about similar? Because the way to make a living in urban America and the minority neighborhood is through drugs -- selling drugs. Now, you can't convince these young men that they're only getting 20 percent out of a dollar, because 20 cents out of a dollar is better than none at all.

The recycling of urban America-- You have a special educational district that is in need of money, and there is a real split along party lines within the State Senate and the Governor's House about how we're going to fund these special urban districts -- for the most part, again, the urban core of our America. That problem has to be resolved.

We've got to look honestly at the question: Is it more efficient -- and I'm going to let the Mayor in on this, this is his pet subject -- to keep throwing money down a hole, spending money on bureaucracies -- bloated bureaucracies -- which don't educate kids, to be able to allow them to be getting an education so they can go and get that job on that work site on which you're building houses -- stick built -- from the ground up?

So if you're recycling your inner cities, it has to be webbed together. I don't think you can follow it disjointly. It is a short-term solution. There should be policy formed by this body and by the State, that we're going to do away with this manufactured housing. If you want to really achieve the ends of Mount Laurel, there are ways to do that also. But you can't do it when you're not honest, and you're not looking at the problem in the way it really exists. We really need to change the educational system so we can get people employed and employ them in places that we build in our cities. It's not a novel idea.

MR. PERKINS: Somebody used the term "recycling," and they used the term with reference to our youth. We can't do that as long as our attitudes toward the problem of drugs is such that there is no room for recycling. The draconian laws that are now on the books with reference to minor involvement in drugs, stigmatize those youth from the very beginning right on up through adulthood, which makes them second-class citizens. We're creating a whole underclass of citizenry through the drug process. By the same token, we've created an underground economy where too many people feed on it. We have police, lawyers, judicial systems, penal institutions, the whole penal system, that don't live in the inner city -- many of them -- who feed off of the carcasses of these youth in the underground economy.

We have to find a way of putting more money into rehabilitation and prevention rather than in incarceration and throwaway. Because all those youth do is come back to the same community and wreak havoc, because they can contribute very little. They've been stigmatized to the extent that they cannot contribute economically at all, and then we're in the same problem. That dovetails into the Mayor's comments before, with reference to the amount of money that we have to pay for another ancillary beneficiary, and that is the police services working in that area. It is inconceivable to me that we can sit here and talk about education.

At the same time, I remember when the Judge Botta decision came down -- the thorough and efficient mandate for education -- and we're still struggling with that issue. We're spending \$9000 per student, and other communities are spending \$12,000 and \$13,000 outside of this community. What does that say? Does that mean that the value of that child's education is more important to the infrastructure of that particular community, more important than the minds of our children?

Now, with all due deference to the Mayor, the Mayor has now come up with another gimmick called a voucher system, where he would stigmatize those who are left behind in the sending school system and reward those going to the receiving school system -- creating an aura in those students who are left behind, "Why am I not important enough to go to the receiving district, as opposed to being stuck back here with what I perceive to be the dummies?" That is not the way to deal with the problem.

The problem is both educational and how we look at the value of the life of these kids that go through the educational system and the criminal justice system, here in the inner city. The fact is, a lot of the families where those children come from can see only income from this negative economic product. But they don't know that they reap maybe 5 percent on every dollar that is passed as a result of that industry -- that the majority of the industry's moneys are made by those who are supposed to be respectable and prevent the problem.

We have to create a dialogue on how we are addressing the issue of drugs, because we are doing nothing but creating throwaway products at the cost to the inner cities with greater penalties -- because of this artificial 1000 foot that has been put into the system whereby the penalties are much greater. The access to a 1000-foot school is like right around the corner, so it's automatic that the penalties are enhanced.

The Prosecutor's Office doesn't like to deal with those situations, but they have to by mandate. Those kids are in a throwaway situation. The educational system is deficient. We recognized it as being deficient a long time ago, and we're still struggling with the same problems. The only problem is: Our solution is to throw them away, put them in special classes, deem them to be uneducable or as having special problems, and that's how we're dealing with it.

Now, on top of all that, we're putting in another theory of vouchers to leave those behind who can't afford to move on and move into an elitist system, whereby you have the haves and the have nots educationally. That is not the way to deal with the situation. Education is probably the key toward maintaining any changes that we plan in the inner city. Unless we educate people -- all of the people -- on an equal footing, with equal access to the educational processes, with equal stature, with equality of loss -- if there is to be a loss sustained -- or equality of gain or access, then we're fooling ourselves. This hearing has no meaning unless we're talking about equality and putting the dollars where they will last the longest, and that's in the minds of our people and our youth. Unless we do that, unless we take the monetary gain out of those ancillary beneficiary's pockets, who gain from the drug crisis, we will never deal with any problem.

MAYOR SCHUNDLER: I'd just like to respond, since I think some of the comments were directed this way. Bill's comment, basically, is that we'll have equality if we get equal funding. I'd be more than overjoyed for you to send us another \$4000 per child. You won't hear a peep of complaint out of me if you want to give me \$4000 more per child. But while we're adding that spending, then I think we should start to deal with the children as human beings. When you say to a teacher that you cannot address this teacher's particular need, instead, you have to do it this way -- even if that is not what that child needs -- you're not going to get any results. Children are human beings. You have to start dealing with them as individuals, and you have to start tailoring your program to their needs, instead of saying, "This is the way we run our bureaucratic system. If this doesn't work for you, that's your tough luck."

When we give teachers the ability in their classrooms to establish programs that are tailor-made to different children's needs-- We don't have to have one Dickinson High

School that works one way for 2500 students. You could have 15 schools in the one building, the same way you have 15 different companies in one office building. You could let those teachers set up different programs so that every child could get a program that is tailor-made to them. That is what you need if you're going to help our children.

The fundamental problem with our kids-- If you took our kids and put them in your suburban schools, they would do no better, because the problem isn't that your teachers are good and our teachers are bad. The problem is that our kids have a lot of disadvantages. They have the disadvantage of poverty; they have disadvantages that come from, perhaps, parents who are on drugs themselves, who don't have any ability to teach the children the things that those of us with stronger parents were blessed to receive from our parents. These are problems that are not going to be addressed by just saying, "Well, this is the way our school works. If it's not okay for you, that's your tough luck."

Those are problems that are only going to be addressed when you let human beings specifically tailor a program to another human being. You've got to give a teacher the ability to focus on a child's needs and build a program to their needs. It's not about abandoning the public schools. It's about giving the teachers there the ability to create special programs tailor-made to children.

If you look at why Catholic schools do well-- As an example, a recent book by Harvard University Press called, "Catholic Schools and the Public Good," says the reason they do well is because they are communities, because everybody there is a part of determining how that school will be.

It used to be that way in public education before states usurped authority from local school boards and parents. When you had local school boards and parents in control instead

of politicians, who are distant from the people, you had much more appropriate education. The result was that children did much better, even with less money.

Now, if we're going to take the extra money -- God bless it -- we could do even more wonderful things, but let's also focus on using that money in a way that can help the children. That means that you have to give the teacher the authority to help a child in the way that child needs help, and not tell them that they have to do it the way you tell them to, instead of the way they see -- instead of doing what they know is required for a given child to be assisted.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Melissa, and then I'm going to make a comment.

COUNCILWOMAN HOLLOWAY: I would like to comment on something that Bill said. I think we really need to take a little time and talk about the drug problem. Of course, Ed DeFazio, the First Assistant Prosecutor, could tell you more about it, but he won't say publicly what I will tell you.

I would like to tell you about what's going on in this particular ward. You are sitting in Ward F. This is the largest ward in the city, and you are in the center of the city. You have access points from Routes 1 and 9, and you have the Turnpike. When we go take our tour, between Monticello and M.L.K. is like, well, maybe, 30 to 35 blocks. I have five major drug cartels operating, peacefully, up and down this strip.

I have the Mafia; I have the Asian cartel; I have the Colombian cartel; I have the Jamaican cartel; and I have the Dominican cartel. Now, why in the world do I have five major drug cartels operating on this street here? It doesn't make any sense. They are the major employers of these kids on these streets. A lot of these kids don't want to be on these corners selling these drugs, but it's the only job they can get.

I had Jah-Main EX come to my office and say, "These kids want to come off of the corners, but a lot of people will not listen to them." He basically stressed to me that those kids on the corners know something about international trade, regular trade, marketing, packaging, even though they have not finished high school. It's time for us to start taking those kids off of the corner and trying to legalize the business that they're-- Take them out of the drug business, and put them in some kind of commercial business.

This one ward here supplies the drugs for Bayonne. They just drive in to get their drugs. From the other parts of the city, they come in from the buses. It's the biggest thing to sit out here at Ocean and Kearney, 8:30 or 9:00 in the morning, and watch other members from the different parts of this city come in off the bus, come off one corner, go buy their drugs off of Ocean and Kearney, go on the other side of the street, and take their bus back up to the Heights, Journal Square, and everything else. Coming off the Turnpike, you come right up Bayview Avenue, or the next street over, come up to Ocean and Kearney -- which is the biggest hot spot of our drug activity -- just make your drug buys, and go home.

But when you look at our police force-- We used to have eight narcotics units. We have now been cut down to four. Sometimes you don't have four working each shift, and sometimes you have some districts that don't have narcotics squads working at all. This precinct over here, in the west district, is the second busiest precinct in the State of New Jersey, behind Camden -- the second. But when you look at the resources that they get, they get a more equal amount of resources than the rest of the city. This ward is suffering. We need help. I'm on the edge of calling the DEA to come in here and do something.

We basically started a program between myself and IMPACT, which is Kevin Caldwell. He represents the minority police officers. We got about 30 other organizations -- black

organizations -- together, their leaders, and said, "We have to do something." We implemented a program called, "Take Back the Street," where the minority police officers from Jersey City, the county correctional officers, the sheriff's office -- and we had a couple of State people -- came in and volunteered with time to patrol the street on foot, in cars, with community residents. We gave out educational fliers. It was amazing how much flak we got from Jersey City police and some of the brass. They're like, "How can you be doing this? They don't have jurisdiction to be coming into Jersey City's area." They're thinking that they're going to be taking their jobs and the whole nine yards.

But the thing is, we've gotten so desperate in this area right now, we had to do something. Because we had to realize the only one who is going to save us, is us. It's a crisis. We are so scared to death of what is going to happen June 30, when these kids get out of school. We are going to be terrorized, is what is going to be going on up here. We're not getting the proper resources and allocation of funds going into these areas to solve this problem.

Of course, we can't throw everybody in jail; there has to be some kind of weed and seed process. You're going to have to weed some of the hard-core drug dealers out of our community in order to reach some of the other kids. We're basically going on a mass effort of trying to put enough recreation programs together so when these kids come out, after July 4, they will be able to go out and do the recreation. Because it's been proven on the national level, if you have a lot of recreation programs, you have a lot of kids doing something positive, and they don't get into all these other problems. But we need help here.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm going to make one comment, and then I want to try to get two more things in, because we're down to about the last 20 minutes, at least for this section. So there are two things I want to get to.

MS. WATSON: I just wanted to say, there needs to be some recognition that there has been long-term disinvestment, there has been redlining, there has been a ferreting away of resources that were targeted for this area -- over a long term, certainly not one administration. But I have witnessed the Hill-Burton funds, which are for a local health entity in Ward F, being taken away. CAP money, we don't have a CAP agency that represents-- We have one that represents PACO, but none that represent the greater African-American community or LIGHT. So we have to recognize that there has been long-term disinvestment and taking away of resources from this area. So when we talk about equitable, it's equitable to the extent that there has to be more resources targeted here, because of the long-term taking away.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I just want to make one comment and then I want to ask-- I want to get to two things: one, specifically about the development that we're in, and also some of the economic plans that have been announced up in this part of the State -- the light rail stuff -- because I don't know the impact. Somebody talked about transportation being an issue, and a deterrent as well. But before I say that-- The magnitude of the problems that we're talking about--

I'm going to draw an analogy between that and, perhaps, some environmental cleanup. It's always a matter of trying to clean up the worst site, and part of the problem is that worst site, in terms of having somebody invest in that site -- and use these as analogies to the human condition -- is they don't see a value in the investment in that site because it is the worst possible scenario. Therefore, they aren't willing to come in and make that investment.

But maybe the way -- and I'm laying this as an idea -- to create the desire or need to participate in taking care of that worst environment is to do things on the perimeter. What you do by shoring up certain pieces of the perimeter, you

create pockets of successes that begin to-- As you begin to see that there is a value here, it makes the ability or the desire to put some of the resources into the worst scenario perhaps a little bit more applicable, simply because you're beginning to see results here.

The idea -- maybe in terms of part of the human condition -- is that if you can't do everything-- Obviously, if everybody could wave a magic wand and have the amount of money-- There is also a thing that we are always tempered by, which is called reality. So what's the best way to do something productive, proactive, and constructive with what we have? I've heard the Councilwoman before, and I'm hearing a lot of desire mixed with a lot of frustration -- for lack of a better choice of words. Maybe part of the frustration is to build on success, rather than continue to tear down because of failure.

I think that kids in-- I spent 6 years of my life as a teacher, and 10 years doing educational program development internationally in every capital in this country. What I consistently see is -- and I think kids are obviously where it starts -- if you tell a child that they are dumb, stupid, and they can't learn, over a period of time you get a self-fulfilling prophecy. They become dumb; they become stupid; they say they can't learn; and you end up with what you see outside this window. (gestures) It is not because there is a desire to do that, but because it's a long-term time line that that condition continues to exist.

So maybe part of what it is-- I don't know whether it's-- Do you try to do it all? Do you try to have a pocket here, a pocket there, a pocket there, and have the strength of a community -- such as the M.L.K. Drive Development Project -- be, perhaps, one of those pockets of, if you will, positive insurrection, and do some of those things? How has this project survived? Tell me a little bit about the M.L.K.--

MS. WATSON: It has to be indigenous success, success that comes upward from the community. It can't be what we have said, someone planning what they think is good. It has to be based on the indigenous population.

MS. SEBRON: Senator, if I might add, when you talk about building on successes, we have to see something in what I like to call, the core of the inner city. Our children, our adults, and our fleeing, middle-class Afro-American community, have seen what private business and government can do. We look at Harborside; we look at the whole waterfront; we see what can happen. We look at Port Liberty; we look at Society Hill; we look at a bunch of places where things have happened in Jersey City, where people who generally think it's a slop town-- We have wonderful resources, wonderful things, but nothing comes to the inner city -- to the core of this city, where our children can see something. It is absolutely, positively essential that if we are going to turn them around academically, culturally, spiritually, they've got to see some success. It is a shame.

Three, four, five years ago, I sat in meetings with the Planning Board on the M.L.K. Project, and we are no further along except for a very fine well-documented plan in seeing one hint of a change -- one hint of a change. Something visible for children to see will make all the difference for the children, for people like myself, my neighbors, who want to stay and continue holding on to their stake.

SENATOR LaROSSA: What I'm hearing you say is that there is an idea, there is a plan, there is a desire, and what's happening is it's lying fellow.

MS. SEBRON: It's going nowhere.

SENATOR LaROSSA: It just isn't happening. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

MS. SEBRON: Yes, that's what you're hearing. Would anybody say differently?

MR. COTTER: Well, I would. Senator, I would just say I think there is a perception that nothing is happening. As the planning director-- As the editor of that plan, not the author, because I really believe the people did write the plan, we just got it into the word processor-- It will take some time before you see it, but I think there will be some work out here this summer. I always looked at that document as being a plan for five to ten years to make significant change, and another ten -- adding up to a total of 20 -- before we've really turned it around. The proof of that is the Jersey City waterfront. The first light study and redevelopment plan for the waterfront was in '76, so it's almost 20 years later. It's happened, but there is still a long way to go. There is probably another 20 or 30 years on that waterfront.

I don't want to say be patient; I want to say be diligent and stay on your elected officials. But I also want to be reasonable here and let you know that-- You know the old story about Rome -- and Neil can tell you a lot about that -- it takes awhile. There is progress being made, money is being put together, bids have been let, construction drawings have been done. Some of the sidewalk work and intersection work will happen this summer. CDBG has funded infrastructure improvements to the water and the sewers. The Council has approved that, and that work should begin -- if the funding comes down around September -- I would imagine the next construction season. So it will happen.

SENATOR LaROSSA: One thing which I think is critical-- I hear what you're saying, but one of the things that is-- The word has been used before, and you used it again -- "perception." There is a political axiom: perception is reality, and if the perception is that it isn't happening, it isn't happening.

So part of what has to happen -- and I think you made one of probably the most critical comments that needs to be made -- is that instead of dwelling on the negative, negative,

negative, everything is negative, everything is blown, maybe if there are some successes to point to-- Again, you don't build by tearing down; you build by building. You build by reinforcement.

If, in fact, there are those positive waterfront projects, if there is an M.L. King Drive, and there is a community group which has that desire and that interest to be a part of that, then it isn't just your job to do it. I don't think it is your job to be left there waiting to do it. I think it is part of the collective job, if you will, to begin to-- I said to a minister one time, "Keep the faith," when I was walking out of a service. He said, "No, the idea is to spread it." That's really part of it. All we've done is spread bad news -- and it's not a matter of rose-colored glasses -- but maybe part of what we need to begin to do is to look at some of the proactive things that are happening, some of the energy that you have. Is it frustrating? God only knows. Believe me, it's one of the few things I can tell you I know, in terms of frustration. But I think part of what has to occur is the acknowledgement that when people live in conditions every single day, that perception is reality, because they live the condition every single day.

MR. BARBOUR: Let me just comment more on what Pat Sebron was saying, and I'll give an illustration of what happened at City Council last night. As you may or may not know, we have a new tenant who wants to locate in one of our industrial parks here. Two years ago, Clorox, a major employer -- a rather large employer, and a nationally known company -- was here and they left. Now, there is a new tenant that is going to be there. It's the Daily News plant. Now, the city, as well as the State, is aiding that effort.

The Department of Economic Development administration is providing bonding. They are also providing some grant money. The UEZ Authority is also allowing the city to use some

of its UEZ money -- from the 3.5 percent sales tax that is collected -- to provide some grants. Now, the city is also kicking in about \$8 million in 108 loans. So it's borrowing against its future allocations -- CDBG allocation.

Now, it was my contention, last night, that here is an old industrial plant that needed a tenant, and the city put great zeal, a great effort to bring this deal forward. It kind of fell apart, and the city stepped in and made it happen. It's going to happen. There will be some job creations, basically, some permanent jobs that come from people who are moving from across the water, but it's also the prestige of having the Daily News.

But my point to the City Council last night was that I would like to see the same zeal go forward from this administration to help the Martin Luther King Drive Plan be implemented, in the same manner -- that the EDA should be brought in here-- The Mayor had made a comment-- I'm sorry he left, because he had made a promise when we initially had these discussions, that he went in to see the EDA to try to bring them in -- Ed O'Connor can attest to this -- to ensure that we had that kind of involvement, because this is a major undertaking we have to do here.

One thing about turning this area around, we need some major employers, and we need the financial assistance. That's what was provided to the Daily News, the financial assistance. So you can't turn urban areas around if you are not going to provide the financial underpinning. If the underwriting capital is not going to be there, it won't happen.

It was a collective effort for the city and the State to join their forces to bring a new employer -- a new company -- here, and the zeal and determination with which that was done-- I applauded the Project Manager this morning. I called up and said, "Liz, you did a great job." I have to look at that proficiency and say, "That's what we want here. We want

to see the same type of determination and the same type of commitment to underscore this." She said, "Well, Omar, you talk to my bosses and I'll do that." I'm going to talk to her bosses.

So that kind of underscores, I think, what we're saying: If the direction is clear and a commitment is there, then we can cut taxes by reducing the crime and reducing the social services' side of the ledger by empowering people, so you don't have to put so much money out. Now they become productive members, and they are on the plus side of the ledger. That's why we have to do it in this kind of collective effort. The same zeal we did with the industrial park -- which is Urban Enterprise Zone -- we have to do to the inner city, in the same manner, to reclaim it and to restore it.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. We're running out of time so we need to--

MR. DeFAZIO: Senator, Omar makes a very good point about bringing business to the Martin Luther King Drive area -- the Ocean Avenue area. However, unless something is done about the perception of crime and the reality of crime in these areas, private industry, private business, small businesses are not going to come into these areas. Now, I don't have the solution, but people down in Trenton and in City Hall have to come up with some sort of program to eliminate that reality and perception to help get these jobs here in the inner city, because that's key.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We need just a couple of closing comments.

Go ahead.

MR. SHERIDAN: Senator, if I may? Earlier, we were asked to provide two things we thought were problems with the city. If I had had a chance to answer that I would have said, crime, which I think we've addressed several times, and also in Jersey City there has been a loss of our economic vitality. I

think that single issue over the past 50 years has caused many of the other problems or has exacerbated them -- and either in a written letter to follow, or perhaps tonight at the public hearing, I'd like to address it in more detail.

But I'd like to say that I think you had asked earlier, "Why are you" -- this panel -- "here today?" In answer to that, I think it's because you had foresight that this is something that will affect all cities in our State, and also because there is a sense of compassion to understand what is going on here, so there will be a form of legislation to help us. I think that the two keys to helping Jersey City and the other cities in this State to turn around are investment and legislation that will assist us; whether it be fighting crime, or addressing the problems with our criminal justice system; whether it be education; whether it be housing reform, and so on. These issues are all (indiscernible)--

I sit on The Assembly Task Force on Business Retention and Expansion, and we've talked about affordable housing -- we've talked about transportation. These issues are all interlinked, because our society here in the city is so complex that we need solutions and we need support in all these different areas. So when I looked at this room-- I've worked with most of these people, Senator, in this past year, on the issues of economic development or empowerment, and they represent all different aspects of this society. I think that we have a great town, and we have great speakers in this room. I hope that when we turn to you in the next year or so with some of our needs and our requests, that we'll find you as terrifically open-minded as you are today.

MR. BARBOUR: Here, here.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes, sir.

MR. EX: I would not say that-- Drugs and crime have a direct relationship to joblessness and lack of economic development. Simply saying that the city could pass a crime

bill for \$20 billion, put 100,000 more police on the streets, and build new prisons and jails, why not pass a job corps bill for \$20 billion? If they can do that, then why can't they pass a \$20 million plan for an urban renewal policy that could be directed to the urban environment, where urban city dwellers and indigenous people who reside in the urban centers can reconstruct their own community?

Just like last night, at the special City Council meeting that they had, when they resolutioned-- They had a proposal to give Mort Zuckerman \$45 million from the city and State government. That \$45 million that they could give welfare to the rich, they could give to the Martin Luther King Redevelopment, because this is not a new plan. It was brought up in the late '70s and early '80s. It is not a new plan that is going to be taken on the face. It has just now been discussed about practical development for Martin Luther King Drive; it has been talked about years and years before 1994. So just like they could propose a \$45 million plan for Mort Zuckerman and a \$20 billion crime prevention program, why can't they have an urban renewal policy throughout America?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Sometimes, the obvious escapes the people--

One last comment and then I'm going to call on Senator O'Connor and Senator Bennett, because we are going on to this tour. I apologize, but, as is always the case, when you get to the last 10 minutes, all of a sudden we've got--

Yes, sir.

MR. CALDWELL: I just want to say, when Bill was talking about education and drugs-- First of all, you've got to stop treating drugs, drug use and sales, as being a criminal justice problem. If you have business competitors and you want to win that competition, you would look at ways to defeat his business. Drug sales are a business. That is the business

that has replaced legitimate business in Jersey City. If we start looking at ways to destroy the marketplace, we would go a long way in solving the problem.

The other thing is: We need to stop looking at problems in little compartments. You're not going to save a child until you save his mother, his father, or both; his grandmother, or whoever the parenting person is. These children cannot be just looked at as separate entities. They're a part of a larger problem which evolved -- of education, family, of an illicit business that replaced legitimate business. We need to start looking at it as such and stop putting the entire onus on the criminal justice system, which has its place in the solution, but cannot provide the solution itself. Jersey City is the second largest city in the State. We don't have an alcohol or a substance abuse rehabilitation program that's comprehensive for children. That's insanity.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Again, we're going to wrap this up to go on the tour. We'll be back for public testimony later. I really apologize; we tried to provide two hours. If I scheduled it for four hours, people would say I was crazy, but as you can see, four hours would have been about right just to get into it. But I think you have a good feel for what we are, at least, attempting to do. That is, to get some local participation, some dialogue moving and going so that, in fact, whatever is going to happen -- whatever the programs and policies are going to be -- I will absolutely guarantee you, it will not happen in a vacuum.

Senator O'Connor.

SENATOR O'CONNOR: Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you. I just want to thank everybody for their participation in the Focus Group part, and I hope everyone can continue on with us through the tour and whatever. I just want to say that having been at many of these other meetings across the State, a lot of

the problems we heard today are problems that we've heard in some of the other urban areas, as well. I think we have a great city here, which you're going to see. You're going to see some real highs and you'll see some lows, but I think all together we represent a beautiful mosaic, and it's a place where a lot of people have come together.

If I can say that one thing -- when you were talking about urban before -- I think is much different in Jersey City now, than the Jersey City that I grew up in, it is, perhaps, maybe its stability. The example that I was thinking of-- I lived in one neighborhood for 13 years. I don't think anybody that I can think of moved during that period of time. I have lived in my own particular neighborhood -- where I am now -- for the last 30 years, and there is constant coming and going. Just on my own block, my neighbors have turned over numerous times within the last 5 or 10 years. I don't know whether that's necessarily a bad thing, but that's one major thing that I would say. We don't seem to have the stability in our neighborhoods that we always had. But we're a beautiful mosaic, as I think you'll see when we take our tour.

Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you for setting this up and all the work that you and your staff did as well. These are very enlightening, to say the least, because they are never really the same.

Senator Bennett, anything you'd like to say?

SENATOR BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to thank everyone for participating. I'm not a member of the Committee, but having the opportunity from leadership to come up and participate today has been an enlightening one.

As far as some comments: There do seem to be some differences within the community itself on the voucher system. However, there seems to be a universal feeling that education is the key to be able to open the doors for a better tomorrow.

On behalf of the leadership of the Senate, I would like to tell you that today is not just an idle meeting that is being held. We are committed to working with Senator LaRossa and Senator O'Connor to assure that we take the steps necessary to go through and follow through on the proposals in the future. I know that Senator LaRossa has thrown himself very much into this Chairmanship, and that Senator O'Connor, with his knowledge and having spent so much time in representation of an urban area, is going to give us that expertise so that we in the Legislature are going to be able to come up and join with you to be able to deal with these problems. So I am happy to be able to be a participant today, to see firsthand, and to learn, because that's what I'm doing. I'm learning a lot.

Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Just in deference to the fact that we do have the Commissioner of Community Affairs -- Harriet, any closing comments?

COMMISSIONER DERMAN: Yes.

Had I been asked about what I thought the two most critical areas were-- It's hard; I think it's almost like a "Sophie's Choice," you know, which child do you want to give up? I think the two most critical problems are a lack of ratables and a lack of jobs. I think if you get that, almost everything else will follow, because a job brings dignity. The Governor has asked that we commit our precious State and Federal resources in the area of housing to urban areas, and that's what we're going to do. We're trying to get all three agencies in the Department of Community Affairs that deal with housing to work together and to focus on the development of urban areas and redevelopment.

I applaud Senator LaRossa, Senator, O'Connor, and Senator Bennett. I've been working with Senator LaRossa very closely, and I look forward to continuing that relationship. You have some very innovative ideas, and I think that together we can work something out, really.

Most important of all, I'm happy to be here. I'm very happy to have an opportunity, personally, to hear from the citizens of this city. As I said, I grew up in Jersey City. I'm a -- oh, I'm going to give the year away -- 1961 graduate of Snyder High School. (applause) That gains me immediate credibility. (laughter) I'm probably the only person in the room except for native Jersey Cityans who remembers the three theaters at Journal Square -- the State Theater, Lowes Theater, and the Stanley -- and remembers when it was 35 cents. I could take the number 9 or the Montgomery Street bus to get there by myself, and could go by myself as a little girl, and my mother didn't have to worry.

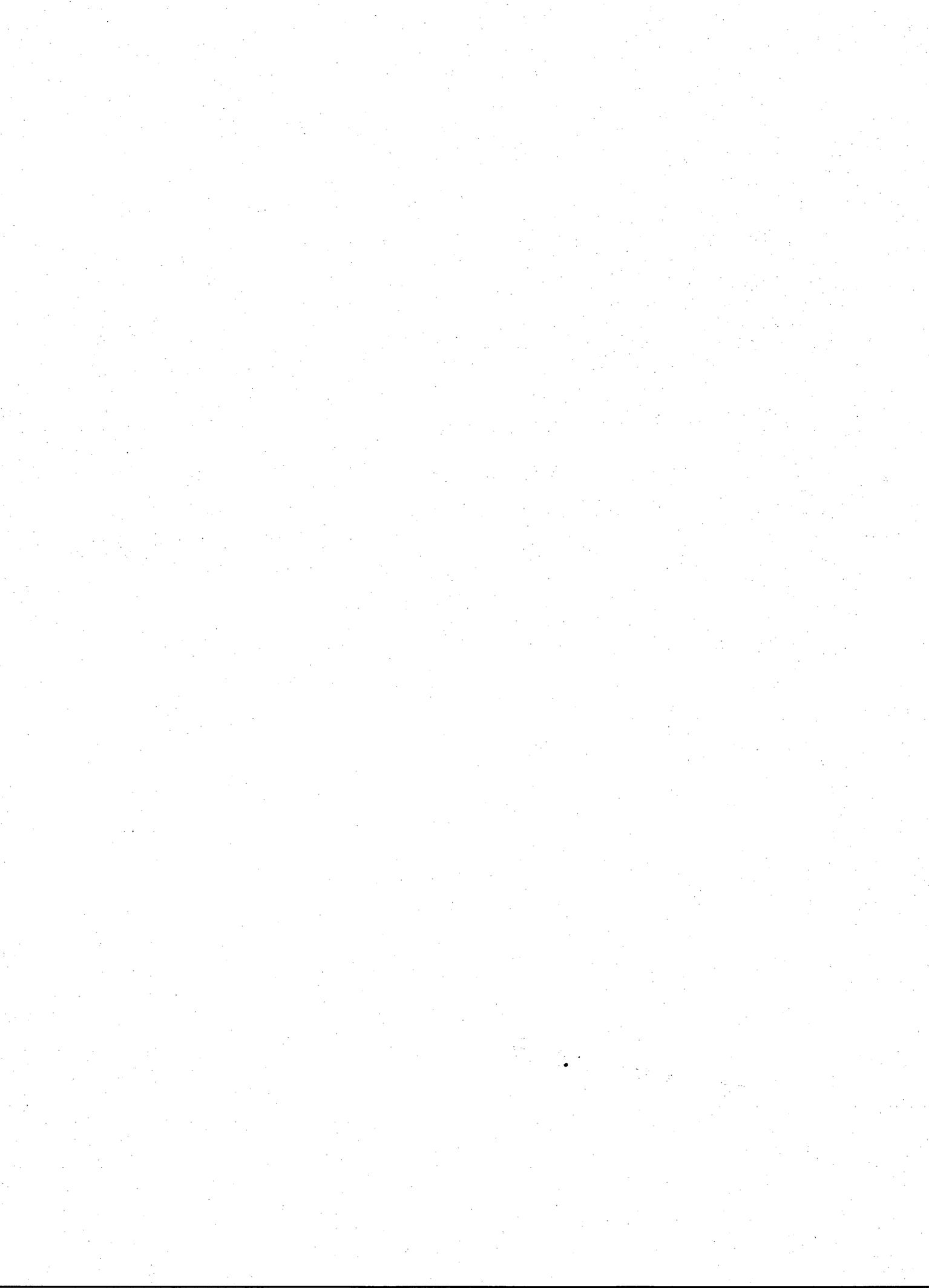
MR. PERKINS: She's dating herself. I remember when it was 12 cents. (laughter)

COMMISSIONER DERMAN: I'm finished, I'm finished. In any event, I have been going around the State like the Senator has done, to hear from people, to get an idea for myself so I can report back to the Governor. She is committed that if there is a sense of polarization, that it is to be dispelled at all costs. I am trying to be her eyes and ears here in the cities for the Governor.

Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Again, I thank you all. We will commence on the tour momentarily. Again, my own personal thanks and gratitude to each of you for giving up this large a portion of your day. We will ask for your participation in the future as well, so that what we started here today is not lost. This is not the end, it is only the beginning.

(FOCUS GROUP CONCLUDED)



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