
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“Testimony on the State operation of the Newark Public Schools”

LOCATION: Technology High School
Newark, New Jersey

DATE: March 5, 1997
4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman
Senator Ronald L. Rice

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley
District 28

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



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SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Chairman): Good afternoon,

everybody. My name is Senator John Ewing, and I would like to welcome you to the second public meeting held by the Joint Committee.

Will the ladies please keep quiet. (referring to audience) We're trying to make an announcement, and I would appreciate you not talking amongst yourselves. You can go outside. Let's pretend you're children in school. I'm sure the teachers don't let you talk while the class is going on.

We're interested in getting your input. Let's start the meeting.

The first person is Lorry Ann Ramirez. (phonetic spelling) I would appreciate you not talking when the witness is talking. Lorry Ann Ramierz? All right. Vanessa Ramirez? (no response) Is Richard White here?

MS. SCHULZ (Committee Executive Director): Is this Richard White?

Are you Richard? (affirmative response)

SENATOR EWING: Followed by Edna Murphy.

Go ahead, Richard.

RICHARD WHITE: Hello, everyone. My name is Richard White, and I'm from West Side High School on South Orange Avenue in Newark.

I am here today, you know, to talk about my position in this community, you know, educationalwise and societywise. I am supposed to look to the adults, you know, instead of my peers for influence, you know, in what I'm supposed to do, but every time we turn around, you know-- Like the last meeting we had here, the adults are not helping out, you know, as much as they should and my peers aren't either, you know.

Growing up in the school system, you know, as far as the State takeover and all, it's supposed to have been, you know, to help us, to enrich

our education and everything, but really they just cleaned up the schools once and that was it, you know. About learning and getting our education and getting everything straight when our schools are, like, underfunded, and if we are getting the proper funding, we're not seeing it. We need books, computers, and, you know, things like that. Really, we just need something to be done about that, otherwise we're not getting anywhere.

That's all I have to say.

SENATOR EWING: Richard, just a second. I'd like to let you know one thing, Richard: Newark is spending near the top of the line on all the school districts in the State. So the money is around, there is no question of that. There are many, many schools throughout this whole State that don't have computers either. This is a thing that is gradually being worked on by the State, and they certainly are very necessary.

There are none in this school whatsoever?

MR. WHITE: We have a few, but-- For example, my graphic arts class has 19 people, 12 desks, and one computer and we're supposed to be using computers. You know, we don't do anything in that class. Everybody passes with A's. We just sit there all day, reading the newspaper, you know, things like that. Where we're supposed to have computers or we're supposed to be using computers, we don't have one. We've got one printer. It's in the library, and you're not even allowed to use it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. Very good. That's right.

SENATOR EWING: What year are you in here?

MR. WHITE: I'm a junior.

SENATOR EWING: You're a junior. You're right here, aren't you, at this school?

MR. WHITE: No, West Side.

SENATOR EWING: West Side, I'm sorry.

Thank you very much.

MR. WHITE: You're welcome.

SENATOR EWING: Edna Murphy, is she here? (affirmative response) She will be followed by Rameen Bryant.

EDNA MURPHY: Excuse me, good evening. My name is Edna Murphy. I'm from George Washington Carver School. I've brought two students, Rameen Bryant and Ijioma Ukenta, with me. If you don't mind, they will speak first, and then I will close behind them.

SENATOR EWING: Fine. Thank you very much.

RAMEEN BRYANT: Good evening. My name is Rameen Bryant, and I'm a member of the George Washington Carver "Do Something" Team.

Actions speak louder than words. The George Washington Carver "Do Something" Team is a group of young people who believe that we are not a part of the problem, but that the problem can -- that we can be a part of the solution. We can do this by learning how to be positive and good leaders. A good leader identifies the problems and comes up with varieties of solutions.

We must set true goals for ourselves -- goals that are attainable. Once we set these goals, then we must decide on our mission. Within our mission statement are clear-cut directives for reaching our goals. There are many steps for reaching a goal. Once these steps are clarified, then the goals

will become real to us. It is a goal of the George Washington Carver “Do Something” Team to make our school a highly liveable school.

It is our mission to become positive and forceful leaders so that we can effect a positive change in our school and our community.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Rameen.

IJIOMA UKENTA: Good afternoon. My name is Ijioma Ukenta, and I’m a member of the George Washington Carver “Do Something” Team.

As young people, we look to adults to be positive role models in our struggle to make it to adulthood. Our parents, our teachers, and people in our community must become the stepping stones to our future. We learn what we know from you, our leaders. The messages we receive as we observe must be the kind that would encourage us to be assertive but not overbearing.

We do have a place in our schools, as well as in our communities. We must be recognized for all that we have to offer. We need to learn, but the things we should learn should help us to grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, and academically.

I realize the importance of a good education, and even though sometimes you may not know it, most of my peers realize this also. There are some of us who have the initiative and the drive to get a good education. Yes, even from a school in Newark -- in the City of Newark.

If I were to take all the good things that are happening and put them in a bag with the things that are spoken of as negative, probability would allow me to draw either one. I don’t feel that one really outweighs the other. It’s on what you decide to focus that would determine what you put the most

emphasis on. We can see the glass as half empty or as half full. It's up to each one of us.

SENATOR EWING: Ijioma, just a minute, please. In your class and everything, do you have enough books and things? Do you have enough books for your courses?

MS. MURPHY: No.

SENATOR EWING: I asked Ijioma, I don't want somebody else answering for her.

MS. UKENTA: No.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Murphy, let the student answer, please.

MS. MURPHY: I just asked her to answer for herself.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Do you have books for all of your courses?

MS. UKENTA: No.

SENATOR EWING: Well, how do you study then, if you don't have a book?

MS. UKENTA: We have certain books -- enough of -- but certain, we don't.

SENATOR EWING: Well, how many are in your class then?

MS. UKENTA: Twenty-four.

SENATOR EWING: And there aren't 24 history books or math books?

MS. UKENTA: No, not in every book.

SENATOR EWING: Not in every book. What grade are you in?

MS. UKENTA: Eighth.

SENATOR EWING: Eighth. Are there many parent committees in your school? Do parents come in and help at all?

MS. UKENTA: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Parent involvement?

MS. UKENTA: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Good. All right.

Thank you very much, Ijioma.

MS. MURPHY: Again, my name is Edna Murphy, and I am a teacher at George Washington Carver School. I'm also the Coach for the George Washington Carver "Do Something" Team.

Education has always focused on the three *R*'s: reading, writing, and arithmetic. We, as educators, must extend this idea to include two more *R*'s: respect and responsibility. These two words must become a part of our children's daily vocabulary, whether it be concretely or abstractly.

Children learn by precept and example. We must realize that our children learn from us all the necessities for life. As babies, we taught them how to walk and how to talk. If we walked with a limp, the child would imitate that limp. If we talk with a twisted mouth, the child would imitate that twisted speech.

It is important that our children first learn to respect themselves and then learn to respect each other. Once this respect is constantly reinforced at home, at school, in the community, then a lot of problems will be alleviated. We all have a responsibility to ourselves to be the best possible people we can be. Each of us has a job to do to see that we provide the best opportunities for

our children. The bottom line, the top of the line, the middle of the road, all roads -- everything should lead to the success of our children.

There is a saying that it takes an entire village to raise a child. I say that it takes an entire school system, it takes an entire neighborhood, it takes an entire city, it takes an entire county, it takes an entire state, it takes an entire nation, it takes an entire country, it takes an entire world working together to raise one child. The key is that we must all work together to get the job done. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. I certainly appreciate what you say, and I think I certainly agree with practically all of it.

Madeline Gordon? Is Madeline Gordon here? (no response)
John Abeigon?

MS. SCHULZ: There he is. There's John.

JOHN ABEIGON: Good afternoon, Senator.

My last name is spelled A-B-E-I-G-O-N. I'm a resident of Newark. My daughter attends Lafayette Street School in Newark. I also work as an English teacher in Newark.

This afternoon, at around 2:00, a Guidance Counselor came to my room, Senator. He wanted to know where a particular student was. I told him that I didn't know where that student was because that student is no longer on my roll, because at the end of last week, the administration decided to eliminate three positions at my school: two of them were a vacancy and the other one was a transfer of an English teacher. So I went from a classroom that had 20 students in it to a classroom that now has 34, but it did not include the people who were on his list.

He went back to the Attendance Counselor's office. They could not provide him with the list of the new classroom. That's the state of things at Weequahic High School.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me, what school?

MR. ABEIGON: Weequahic.

SENATOR EWING: Weequahic.

MR. ABEIGON: When the State Takeover District came into office, the Newark Teachers Union provided them with a code of conduct which was fair and forceful. The old Board had a discipline code which we believe was fair and forceful but was not being enforced. It continues to not be enforced.

We have given them standards of achievement based on a core knowledge curriculum that has been tested in other states to work with the same urban-district-type students and personnel. They have disrespected it by not answering our attempts at meeting with them to discuss that core knowledge curriculum.

SENATOR EWING: Meeting with who, now?

MR. ABEIGON: With the Newark Teachers Union.

SENATOR EWING: What?

MR. ABEIGON: The Newark Teachers Union. We gave them a standards of achievement and a code of conduct, and they have had it, Senators in Trenton have had it, other educators have had it, and yet, we've heard no response.

We would also like--

SENATOR EWING: Well, excuse me, who's responsible for enforcing the code? Is the Teachers Union responsible, or you as an individual?

MR. ABEIGON: Right now, the administration would be responsible, but they're not enforcing the old Board of Ed's code of conduct, and they haven't come up with one of their own, and they haven't respected the one that we've given them. Basically, my hands are tied in terms of disciplining a student in my classroom.

I was glad to see Dr. Hall the other day on television talking with one of the founders of the new charter schools in which the Director of that charter school touted the fact that come September his classrooms would have an 18-to-1 student-to-teacher ratio, with Dr. Hall agreeing with him wholeheartedly that any educator knows that an 18-to-1 ratio is better than a 30-student-to-1 ratio. Yet that is exactly the opposite of what happened to me last week when those transfers occurred. As I stated earlier, I went from a class size of 20 to a class size of 34.

Also -- and my last point -- Senator Ewing, I would like to see a concerted effort made by an agency other than the State Board of Education into the finances of this district. As yet, no financial report has been released to this population.

Although the fact that my daughter attends a public school in Newark, I am not privy to how the finances are being spent. I'm at a loss to explain to my wife how a district could need \$26 million four months before the end of the term. I'm at a loss to explain to myself how I can read in the newspaper the words of a Senator from a Republican district -- Senator Collins

-- asking in *The Star-Ledger*, "What the hell is going on in the Newark School District?"

This \$26 million that was taken away last year, basically under the guise that there was a decrease in the size of the enrollment for the district--

Well, Senator, if the enrollment hasn't dramatically increased in the last few weeks -- which it has not -- where did the \$30 million go? Why was it returned to the district? How does a district run out of \$30 million four months before the end of the school year?

SENATOR EWING: Well, because in the takeover legislation there were arrangements made for -- now it's Newark, Paterson, and Jersey City -- the State to put additional funds in to do the so-called municipal overburden to give some relief, and that's where the \$26 million came from.

MR. ABEIGON: Okay, but what--

SENATOR EWING: As I understand it -- and I'm not the expert and a lot of things I say actually come out the way I say it-- But I believe that money will be put into the budget and carried over into next year, so there will not be a \$60 million gap. There will be about a \$34 million gap at the present time.

MR. ABEIGON: Well, the question still remains, why are certain students without textbooks? Why are certain--

SENATOR EWING: Well, I couldn't agree more. That's very upsetting.

MR. ABEIGON: That's why I'm asking that a separate agency-- (timer rings) It's in the best interest of the State Board of Education when it reviews the finances of the takeover district that everything look rosy. We

need someone who is not wearing rose-colored glasses to come in here to find out who's getting the money and where is it going. It's not going to textbook companies.

We didn't need to pay Urbane Associates \$300,000 to tell us that the schools were old. The schools were old when I attended them. Lafayette Street School was built in 1848. It's old.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I know, but--

MR. ABEIGON: I would have done the job for \$100,000, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Well, wait just a minute. Do you have an engineering degree and everything? Can you go and say what the condition--

MR. ABEIGON: No, but my understanding is that I can buy one.
(laughter)

SENATOR EWING: Oh, but that's not saying much for your profession. (laughter)

MR. ABEIGON: Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very, very much.

Joe Thomasberger.

JOSEPH THOMASBERGER: Good afternoon, Senator.

My name is Joseph Thomasberger, and I work as the Executive Director of Tri-City Peoples Corporation, located at 675 South 19th Street, Newark, New Jersey. Tri-City Peoples Corporation is a private, not-for-profit agency that has been serving the community near the West Side Park and the South 17th Street School for some 30 years.

Most recently, the agency initiated programs in collaboration with the International Youth Organization, the Family Service Bureau of Newark, Turning Point, Somerset Clinical and Management Associates, and the State-operated school district to assist students and their families overcome obstacles that may be hindering their success in school and community life. Our collaborative efforts work in the South 17th Street, the Madison Avenue, and the Avon Avenue Schools.

I want to thank the Committee for coming to Newark to hear how the people who live and work in this community perceive the intervention of the State into the control mechanism of this school system. Most people wish that it was not necessary for the State government to be present.

Indeed, many people became so accustomed to your relative absence for so long a time that they began to feel that you did not really care what happened here. After all, it was in 1987 that the Newark School System was at Level III of failing to be certified as valid. It was in obvious need of help and the State family was too long in coming to its assistance.

To be sure the takeover process may not be the most effective means of helping a troubled system, but it is the one that is functioning at this point. I, for one, appreciate the fact that Newark is not isolated from the State of New Jersey. Newark is part of the State family, and this city has played and is playing an important role in the development of prosperity for the State as a whole.

Furthermore, I am glad that in 1865 the State Constitution was amended to recognize that the provision of a thorough and efficient system of free schools for all the young people who are part of the State family is the

responsibility of the whole State family. I appreciate that, currently, approximately 80 percent of the funds required to operate this school system here in Newark come through the State Treasury. Therefore, I recognize that the citizens of the State have a vested interest in the successful operation of this, the largest school system in the family.

Now, it is only reasonable that if the whole State family is providing a significant part of the resources to operate the school system, it will need to be assured that the resources are being used effectively. Unfortunately, the Newark School System has long been a troubled system. Many of its buildings are old and were poorly maintained. The system was not managed efficiently at either the central or the school level and was plagued by shortages of books and supplies. Safety was a major concern. There was a suspicion of corruption throughout the system. Most tragically, the test scores demonstrated that too high a percentage of the students were not receiving sufficient assistance required to meet the basic educational standards.

Consequently, many people have simply lost confidence in the ability of the leaders at the local level and at the State level to solve the problems. Others have lost confidence in the will of the leaders at the local and the State levels to solve their problems. People in this community have known for decades that there was something basically wrong with what was happening in the schools.

Before the State takeover of the system, the citizens criticized the incumbent leadership. Since the takeover, a sense of frustration has developed because all of the problems have not been solved completely. Also, there have

been some major changes in the operation of the system that have impacted on the community and created understandable distress.

In addition, there is an apprehension (timer rings) that the changes in the operation of the system are not going to result in an improvement in the performance of the students. The people of Newark want their students to succeed. It never ceases to amaze me what people will do and sacrifice in order to prepare their children for life.

Many of the people with whom I work have lost confidence in the public school system and have chosen to spend their meager incomes in an effort to find a school system that will work for their children. It is important that a way be found to reassure these parents that a sound and safe, thorough and efficient education is available in the Newark School System.

The State family needs to understand that education takes place within community. Sometimes, the community places extra obstacles in the path of individuals and systems. Poverty and unemployment, crime, drugs, malnutrition, despondency, fear, racism, and hatred are some of the obstacles that this school system must overcome in order to succeed. (timer rings; PA system shut off) Therefore--

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Let him go on. (PA system restored)

MR. THOMASBERGER: The funding formula that recently has been devised seems to me to continue an inadequate level of assistance to the school system if it is to surmount the obstacles that are now in its path. The State family must provide an adequate level of support in order to enable the administration, teachers, and staff of the system to do their jobs well. If this

sounds as though it will cost the State family more money, face up to the fact -- if you believe education is costly, try ignorance.

Moreover, the State family must help the parents and citizens of the city to prepare for the return of the system to local control. At the end of the five years of State family control, I believe, given adequate resources, that the current administration will correct and remedy most of the deficiencies under which the system has labored for these many years.

If the parents, however, are not prepared for the responsibility of holding local leaders accountable, it could very easily return to the state of disrepair. Therefore, it is important that some attention be given to build the capacity of the current Advisory Board and a host of others concerned with the education of their children to operate a thorough and efficient school system for the sake of our children.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Mr. Thomasberger.

I'd just like to tell the audience that I've been in the Legislature for 30 years now -- this is my 30th year -- and evidently there is no question whatsoever that Newark was one of the finest education systems 35 or 40 years ago. Young teachers wanted to come into this district to teach because it was so great. It's taken all these years -- a great number of years -- to go on down, as I've said publicly before, to get into the cesspool of the corruption and political interference, etc., in ruining the system for all the children in Newark. It's not going to be done overnight. It's going to be a long, slow process. There is nothing in the legislation that says after five years that it will

automatically return to local control. Jersey City is now in its seventh year, and there are improvements there and there are improvements in--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: I don't think so.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me, if you would not interrupt, I will not interrupt you when you talk.

There are improvements in Paterson and in Jersey City -- greater improvements in Jersey City. What I feel -- and I can certainly be wrong -- is that we have to watch how our kindergarten, first, and second grades, where the new format, the new way, etc., the new hope that teachers have and families have will gradually influence those children. I think that's where we're going to gradually see that difference coming up, because Newark certainly deserves to have one of the finest systems we can have anyplace.

So thank you very much for your comments.

MR. THOMASBERGER: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Senator Rice has now joined us here, to my right.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, let me apologize to everybody for being late -- and to the Chair. I just left the City Council meeting.

Senator Ewing, you can let my colleagues know we do work. When I leave here, I have a 7:00 community meeting. So we do work up here.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I know that.

SENATOR RICE: Full-time.

SENATOR EWING: Charles Gottlick, to be followed by Donna Jackson. Is Mr. Gottlick here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Mr. Gottlick is not here.

SENATOR EWING: Donna Jackson, is she here? Kim Williams? Cheryl Wood? (no response) Cathy McFarland?

CATHERINE M. McFARLAND: Good evening.

SENATOR RICE: Good evening.

MS. McFARLAND: Senator Ewing, Senator Rice, thank you for coming to Newark -- although, Senator Rice does not come to Newark, he's part of Newark -- to hear our thoughts on the legislation regarding State takeover.

I am the Director of the Victoria Foundation, which gives about \$8.5 million a year to projects within the City of Newark. Victoria Foundation has, over the last 30 years, been funding programs within the city. Our first ventures in the city, in the early 1960s, were in conjunction with the public schools, and we tried for 15 years to help improve the quality of education within the public schools. We stopped funding public education when we accepted the fact that Foundation dollars were not being effectively used.

The takeover of the Newark Public Schools by the State of New Jersey and the appointment of Dr. Hall marked a radical change. Both her stated objectives and her prior record gave us optimism that significant change and improvement would result. At this critical juncture, we have committed \$1 million a year for the next five years to support Dr. Hall and her efforts, contingent upon progress being made.

We understand that this will take time to show results and these results will not come easily and that the whole venture could very possibly fail.

We understand that it will mean changing the way schools do business, school by school. Despite the risk, the future of Newark's children is of the very first importance to Victoria's trustees, and we believe we must be among the leaders in finding extra resources to help Dr. Hall in her most difficult task.

I am encouraged that despite the new per-pupil funding allocation, the State has recognized and has allocated an additional \$26 million toward next year's budget. I am concerned, though, that while that \$26 million has been replaced for next year, the following four years after that we will also need unique resources to bring about the needed reform. This needs to be addressed by the State Committee.

The legislation is also weak in that it did not sufficiently provide the resources to bring about reform. Tightening the way Newark Public Schools do business will require sufficient resources to radically change the way they do business. This is an investment in the future. A reformed school district will be able to better allocate resources and save money in the long run. The improved quality of education of children will result in less State expenditures for remedial education and, I am sorry to say, in many instances, future costs within the human service and criminal justice systems.

It will also redound to benefit the surrounding school districts. I know that children transferring to other districts -- and many parents in Newark scrimp and save so that they can move out of Newark so that their kids can go to a better school -- arrive in those school districts significantly below grade level, and they are undermining the progress that the State has made towards quality education throughout New Jersey.

I also believe that the legislation should have included more resources for parental involvement within the schools. When the State withdraws from takeover -- and I think that will happen -- we will need a strong, knowledgeable community that will hold the public schools accountable. Inner-city parents need to experience what suburban parents have experienced for years, a public school system that listens to them and is accountable to the public.

Victoria, along with a number of local and national foundations, will help provide the extra resources; however, we must be assured that our funding is not just replacing the loss of State funds.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Ms. McFarland, have you got any suggestions or have you come up with any outline of how you feel parental involvement could be increased, because that is so vital--

MS. McFARLAND: Certainly.

SENATOR EWING: --with no question, in the education system.

MS. McFARLAND: Yes, I do. I can tell you what Victoria is doing, and I can tell you what we're assisting with, in the public schools now.

There is a volunteer academy being set up in every school. It is following the model that was used in the Baltimore Public Schools very, very successfully, whereby parents-- Usually, when a volunteer comes to a school or to any nonprofit organization nobody knows what to do with them. Therefore, you quickly lose the volunteer or it's not productive. This is a very structured program that provides jobs within the school, within the classroom,

helping teachers, helping the central office. It also provides job experience for some of the parents who are working.

What Victoria is also doing is--

SENATOR EWING: How are you getting the word out to the parents in each school district that this is available to them in the school?

MS. McFARLAND: This is happening through the local principals and through the local schools. There just aren't the resources to reach out.

What Victoria is doing is we have about 130 nonprofit organizations that we support in the various neighborhoods in Newark. We are asking those neighborhood organizations to work very closely with the public schools and with the parents in their neighborhoods to encourage the parents, to provide resources for the parents -- if it's babysitting, if it's transportation, whatever it's going to take -- to get the community and parents working within the schools.

SENATOR EWING: Have you worked with any of the local radio stations doing public announcements?

MS. McFARLAND: No. No, I haven't. The school system might be, I'm just not aware of it.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but you're providing the money to set these up -- which I think is great, because it's so necessary -- but to get the word out -- because generally the parents in these more dense areas don't really know what's going on. They're apt to listen to some radio and maybe the word of mouth would spread.

MS. McFARLAND: That's a good idea. That's a good idea.

SENATOR EWING: As a suggestion, as a suggestion.

MS. McFARLAND: They may be doing it, I don't know.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Cathy.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, before Ms. McFarland leaves--

MS. McFARLAND: Hi, Ron.

SENATOR EWING: I'm sorry.

SENATOR RICE: I was going to raise some of the same issues, but I would rather do it in a broader base. If anyone, the workers, the teachers, the parents, the residents who pay taxes, the organization people-- My strong interest has been, in the takeover legislation, going back a few years, is to amend it. We've had a lot of hearings at the State level with recommendations coming from principals' associations, teachers, boards throughout the State, parents, etc., but we have yet to do any real amendments.

I would like to see my office and Senator Ewing's office receive -- so the staff can review recommendations. I think the time has come to do some very serious amendments. I think we know enough and I think, at least if we have recommendations, such as the one that you just indicated you were doing, our minds should click to say maybe we should be doing PSAs and other types of things. I really want the community and the workers to have the real input, because takeover becomes reality.

I also want to say, so I don't have to repeat it, that I need to publicly commend Senator Ewing -- and I tried to do that through a press release -- the Governor, Senator Codey, Senator Lipman, Superintendent Hall, because a lot of the meetings we have had, when they took away the \$34 million, were very serious meetings with a lot of debate. Some were public

meetings-- I also want to commend Pro-Child because they were always there with us.

The \$26 million is back, but I concur with you and with the public, I'm looking long term. The commitment I gave at the last meeting was that I'll be submitting legislation to repeal the takeover. I want you to know I submitted that legislation.

My argument is that takeover-- To me, it's not the issue whether a district should be taken over or not, the issue is, if it's going to happen, it becomes fruitless when you take the resources out that are needed to move it forward. So, hopefully, the legislation, if it does not get support from my colleagues in the Legislature in its totality, will be a wake-up call to say, "If you're going to have takeover, pay real good attention to the resources and the need for those resources." By the same token, take a real good look at the many good people who are being hurt, who can move the system. That's why I want these recommendations to come to us. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Also, Assemblyman Stanley is here with us now.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Senator Ewing.

I just want to echo the same concerns that Senator Rice has. As you know, I represent the Assembly in the same district as Senator Rice, and I sit on the Education Committee. So this is actually my primary interest, as well.

I apologize for being a little late today. We've had several meetings going on at the same time. It's been a tough day.

Again, Senator, I'd be more than happy to work on legislation with you over on the Assembly side.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Eric Borders, to be followed by Lisa Greene. Is Eric Borders here? Lisa Green, is she here? Kim Sharpe, is she here? Flora Morris? Elizabeth McGrady? Ben Amos? Eleanor Walker? (no response)

These are not names I made up. These people called into Trenton.

SENATOR RICE: We know them. We know them. (laughter)

SENATOR EWING: Mary Jerman? Rahaman Muhammad? (indicating pronunciation) (no response)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Rahaman. (indicating pronunciation)

SENATOR RICE: Rahaman. (indicating pronunciation)

SENATOR EWING: Rahaman, I'm sorry. James Peter Kokkalis? Mr. Kokkalis?

JAMES PETER KOKKALIS: (speaking from audience) Present.

SENATOR EWING: He'll be followed by Freda Holmes and Howard Scott.

MR. KOKKALIS: My name is James Peter Kokkalis. I'm a licensed architect and planner. I was born and raised in Newark and have been employed here in public service for a total of 23 years.

I was the Director of Design and Construction for the Newark Board of Education from May 1986 until August 1995 when, one month after the State takeover, I was suspended for unspecified reasons. After six months

of investigation conducted full-time by two retired State Troopers and two auditors, a myriad of disciplinary charges were filed against me.

A five-month disciplinary hearing was held by an independent hearing officer appointed by the district. The district presented its witnesses and evidence obtained during its six-month investigation. The State-appointed, independent hearing officer found all the charges to be unsubstantiated and recommended I be reinstated immediately as the Director of Design and Construction.

Dr. Hall, who obviously prejudged my case and unhappy with the independent hearing officer's findings, overturned his decision and I was terminated. I have appealed this decision to the Merit System Board. With the need of a \$26 million bailout for the current year in mind, I must point out that the cost of the investigation and legal fees, it is estimated that the district has spent over \$300,000 on my case.

While I enjoyed being the Director of Design and Construction, my case is a matter of dollars and cents and could have been, and can be, settled for far less than the district will spend in legal fees. My case is but one of dozens that I know of. If one were to check, I believe a review will show that millions of dollars are being spent in legal fees that could have been saved through the settlement of these cases.

I appear before you not to discuss my case, but to call your attention -- as I have just done -- to the waste and mismanagement of taxpayers' money by the State-appointed administration of the Newark School District.

The current administration, with the express blessing of the State, consistently violates the law by engaging in acts that would have resulted in arrests of the prior administration. Mismanagement is the hallmark of the State-run Newark School District. The previous administration-- (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Come on. Each speaker has five minutes, so if you want to interrupt with applause, that's fine. They'll have that much less time.

MR. KOKKALIS: The previous administration was in litigation with the general contractor of the new Raphael Hernandez Elementary School for the total replacement of the new building's roof due to poor workmanship and the use of inferior materials that resulted in leaks. The professional staff -- licensed architects -- of Design and Construction with its expert consultants determined that the roof could not be repaired and had to be replaced. The litigation was dropped after the State took over, and the facility's roof was accepted and continues to leak. In addition, the general contractor was paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in change orders and extras over one year after the completion of the school -- change orders and extras that had been rejected by the previous administration.

At Arts High School with 90 percent of the construction completed, the State-run school district unexplainably hired a second construction manager who had no knowledge of the project to oversee the completion of the project at an increased cost of approximately \$200,000.

For the Sussex Avenue addition, the prior administration had contracts in place for the construction management at an estimated cost of

\$50,000. The State-run school district issued a new contract for the same service at a cost that reportedly broached \$200,000.

Contrary to the previous administration's centralization of contracts within the Purchasing Department, contracts are now written and awarded by anyone in the district. At times, work is ordered with no contracts. Often, when there are contracts, work starts and, in most cases, is completed before the contract has been signed, an illegal practice never utilized by the previous administration.

I question the failure of the State-operated district to advertise for professional and legal services. The appointment of firms, previously mentioned, without the public process raises the specter of political favoritism. I urge the Committee and media to investigate this process and make public all contracts and payments made by the State-operated district for all consultants since the takeover. (applause)

The district press release to explain the \$26 million bailout failed to mention the expenditure of the district's entire surplus of \$60 million that was judiciously saved by the previous administration, making a total cost for the district's mismanagement, with the \$26 million bailout added, of \$92 million. (timer rings) In the 10 years of the previous administration a State bailout was never required.

Much has been reported, as it was tonight by the main speaker on the dais, of alleged corruption and mismanagement of the previous administration. To date, I have seen no substantiation of alleged corruption -- none. For those who would refer to the *Roberto Clemente Annex* case, I remind

them that this case was begun under the previous administration and has been resolved by settlement.

While I served at the Board, the State closely monitored all financial expenditures so closely that no moneys could be spent without the approval of the State-assigned monitors. Today, the monitoring that is in place is self-serving. The State has created a public entity, funded by the taxpayers, which is overseen by the State, creating in Newark the situation that the fox is watching the hen house, and once again, the politicians have guaranteed that the children and taxpayers continue to be the losers.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Do we have a copy of your presentation?

MR. KOKKALIS: Yes, you do. I can give you more if you like.

SENATOR EWING: Fine.

Thank you very much.

Freda Holmes? Howard Scott? (no response) Elaugh Butler, (affirmative response) to be followed by Antoinette Baskerville, if she is here.

ELAUGH BUTLER: Good evening. I'm Elaugh Butler. I am one of the individuals who was suspended from the Newark Public Schools. Thank you for allowing me to speak and for opening up the means for dialogue to hear the other side of the story concerning the suspensions of Newark Public Schools' employees.

In my quest to remedy the image that *The Star-Ledger* has depicted in the newspaper, I have contacted various organizations such as, The Center for Constitutional Rights; the NAACP; the AFL-CIO, in Washington, D.C.;

clergymen; and others. Unanimously, they are appalled that the administration suspended Newark Public Schools' employees without due process. No one has been indicted, yet we are suspended on allegations.

We feel that this is unfair. No other school district has reacted in this manner. Further, what is unfair is what has been done to the quality of education for our children. Our children are missing out on quality education because the suspensions took place in the middle of the school year. Many of us are veteran teachers or employees, many have taught for 20 and some for 30 years. In our places, there have been placed less-experienced teachers, and in some cases, no teachers have been replaced. Therefore, our children have gone lacking.

As a result, there is chaos in some of the schools. Why? Because in some schools there have been four different substitutes our children have seen within a week. As a result, education for our children has been disrupted. On the other hand, education for the child in Bergenfield, Fair Lawn, East Orange is still continuing and those teachers are still working.

No other school district that has had employees involved in a scam have subjected their employees to any punitive actions such as, suspensions or forced resignations. Furthermore, the Newark Public Schools have been inconsistent with their actions concerning employees who were suspended.

There are three groups. The first group of suspensions was held in October, strangely, a few days before election. This group received two-weeks pay, names were printed in *The Star-Ledger*. The second group of suspensions took place in November. They, too, experienced the same; however, there is a third group, and this group is still working. We are told

that they consist mostly of administrators and a few Newark Public Schools' employees. Yet, they have not been suspended. They are allowed to continue to have their livelihood. Is there a reason for these discrepancies, and where is fairness?

Hence, the myth in the news media that the fair treatment of all is executed is false. There is nepotism and unfair hearings. In the Newark teachers' newsletter it states that "stacking perk with Leo Klagholz's brother creates a conflict of interest because those in public education cannot receive unbiased judgement." Which means, when you go for tenure hearings, John Klagholz's attorneys are present, which means, according to our union attorney, Eugene Liss (phonetic spelling), 98 percent you lose and 2 percent you win.

There is excessive punishment. Plea bargaining entails the following for the first-time offenders, many who have been outstanding citizens in the community and who have been commendable in the Newark Public Schools system. First, you must plead guilty. *A*: forfeiture of job; *B*: exorbitant fines; *C*: loss of pension, license, and loss of certification; *D*: community service. Although some were duped into the scam, they are encouraged to take this plea bargain and settle for PTL. This is for some to settle, as well as others to take an early retirement.

Add to this already excessive punishment loss of benefits, some not able to collect unemployment compensation because the Newark Public Schools, under Dr. Hall's administration, have judged us as employees with gross misconduct. We're not able to withdraw moneys nor borrow from the

credit union or from the pension. Moreover, many of us cannot teach in other states or other districts.

Because of this excessive punishment and no paycheck coming in, many are facing homelessness, some families are breaking up due to the loss of a paycheck. Is this the reward for Newark Public Schools' employees who have dedicated their lives to children and who have made sacrifices, many times not getting paid, but only wanting the desire to make a difference in the lives of children?

We instruct children on democracy in education, where a person has a right to dialogue, and where a person is innocent until proven guilty. We, the Newark Public Schools' employees, have not been afforded either. An attempt was made to dialogue with Dr. Hall and this attempt was denied. We have been tried through the papers so that we appear guilty. (timer rings) Individuals whom we have reached out to, such as the clergy, community, some Council members, and others, have the preconceived idea that we are guilty according to what *The Star-Ledger* printed.

I have made attempts to get (PA system shut off; outburst from audience) *The Star-Ledger* to print the other side of the story; however, the story still holds that there were teachers -- Newark Public Schools' teachers -- (PA system restored) who teamed up with psychologist Carl H. Lichtman (phonetic spelling) and defrauded more than three dozen insurance carriers out of \$3.5 million. The truth is, many of us were duped. The insult to injury is that the Newark Public Schools would take the word of a known dishonest doctor and penalize us in the manner in which they have.

There is another story to be told. We, the suspended teachers, want the truth to be told just as I have laid it down. We are looking to you for your assistance to redress this injustice with a fair and equitable solution. We no longer want to feel oppressed by the oppressors and would like to have some dialogue with Dr. Beverly Hall, so that we no longer appear to be dehumanized. Quoting from Paulo Frere (phonetic spelling), "If there is no dialogue with the oppressor, the oppressed will continue to be dehumanized." Any assistance from you would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Do we have a copy of your testimony?

MS. BUTLER: I'll get copies for you.

SENATOR EWING: Can you give them a copy? (referring to staff)

MS. BUTLER: Yes, I can. Who should I give them to?

SENATOR EWING: Right here at the desk, please. (indicating)

MS. BUTLER: All right.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Antoinette Baskerville? She will be followed by Halin Suliman.

ANTOINETTE BASKERVILLE: Good evening. My name is Antoinette Baskerville. I am a teacher in Newark, a resident of Newark, a graduate of Weequahic High School. I have children who have graduated from the Newark schools. In other words, I am a stakeholder in this system.

Tonight I will be speaking representing the Unity Caucus of the Newark Teachers Union. I have asked that the following statement be entered into the record of this meeting.

Statements made by Senator Ewing to the press following the February 5 meeting, as well as his behavior at that meeting, made it perfectly clear that these meetings are a farce, a formality that the State Education Department is submitting to only because it is mandated to do so. The State, in general, and Senator Ewing--

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me just a minute.

MS. BASKERVILLE: Excuse me, and Senator Ewing, in particular--

SENATOR EWING: There is no mandate to have these meetings whatsoever.

MS. BASKERVILLE: Thank you. Thank you. Please don't interrupt me, I need all of my time.

SENATOR EWING: I will, when there is a lie told.

MS. BASKERVILLE: --in particular, have absolutely no respect (applause) for the taxpayers, educators, or children of Newark. The State takeover of the Newark school system was designed for failure.

The State didn't leave Jersey City after five years, despite dismal failure. The State didn't leave Paterson after five years, despite dismal failure, and the State has no intention of leaving Newark. Why? Because the more the State fails to improve the schools, the longer they get to stay, and the longer they stay, the longer they control the money. The longer the State controls the money, the more certain it is that public education in any recognizable form will cease to exist.

Given all of this, why do I and others speak at this and other forums? Because the disasters that have been heaped upon the students and

workers of Newark must be exposed whenever and wherever possible. I have narrowed those disasters down to 10 points.

Point one: The cosmetic improvements initially made by Dr. Hall's administration have worn thin. The flowers died, the paint peeled, and the graffiti has returned. Decreases in custodial staff have left workers overburdened and many schools filthy. Insects and vermin are commonplace in Newark schools.

Number two: Decreases in security staff have created unsafe working and learning environments. Security guards in large buildings are forced to literally run from one end of the school to another to deal with fights and other security situations. X-ray machines brought in by Dr. Hall's security consultants have been removed from Barringer High School -- possibly because the bill was not paid -- but the security staff has not been increased.

Number three: Core Teams, the big hype, that had community and teachers at odds -- by design -- have been rendered powerless by the very entity that mandated that they exist. No money has been released to fund any aspect of the Core Teams' plans, not to mention compensation to parents and teachers.

Number four: Access to school social workers has been eliminated for the general population of students. Social workers, who in the past, provided immediate intervention into crisis situations such as incest, contemplated suicide, and abuse, are now allowed to service on special education students. School social workers have been the lifelines to students who live daily with drug, alcohol, and other ongoing family problems. They have served as a daily assurance to other students forced by circumstances to

live independently. No financial savings is worth the loss of school social workers in the lives of needy students.

Number five: Home economics and industrial arts classes have been taken from Newark's elementary school students. These fundamental components of elementary education offer a place where even the low academic achiever may experience success and develop self-confidence.

Number six: The promise of high-tech equipment for every student was used by Dr. Hall to justify elimination of home economics and industrial arts. This promise was also used as an economic justification for the layoff of hundreds of school workers. On television last year, Governor Whitman told Newark student leaders that they could expect computers in every classroom. With the exception of a few special programs, that high-tech equipment is invisible.

Number seven: Highly paid administrators have taken precious classroom space from children and created elaborately furnished office suites in chosen schools. The previous administration was criticized for their office space at 2 Cedar, but under Dr. Hall the office suites of some administrators remind one of the office of the CEO of some major corporations, and these suites are set up right in the schools using money and space that belong to Newark's children.

Number eight: Payroll errors are so frequent that employees never know how much their checks will be or if they will even be able to cash them at the bank. Examples of payroll errors this school year are: In November, paychecks issued the day before Thanksgiving were postdated with no previous notice to employees. In January, per diem substitute (timer rings) teachers

were paid only one hour's pay for each day worked, so a person who worked 10 days was paid for 10 hours. In December, teachers were notified that pension, credit union, and annuity deductions, which should have been taken out in September, would be taken out of both December checks. In February, employees were notified that the incorrect amount of pension had been deducted from July through December 1996 and that this would come out of the next four paychecks -- approximately \$200 per person -- and in February, employees were also notified that social security had been overpaid in 1996, but this won't be reimbursed until the middle of March.

It seems to me that someone should be held accountable for at least doing the payroll correctly. I have two more points.

Number nine: Dr. Hall's administration is characterized by the following. Blatant violations of contractual agreements: Teachers are given unsatisfactory ratings and threatened with withholding of increments for absences exceeding nine -- doctor's notes don't matter and even funeral days are used to rate teachers unsatisfactory.

Flagrant abuse of due process: Unprecedented suspensions of employees for mere implication of involvement in a crime. Suspensions without indictments are happening only to employees of the Newark School System. Employees in suburban districts implicated in the same incidents are still working.

Blatant disrespect of Newark's residents has been demonstrated by Dr. Hall's constant verbal dismissals of "legitimate parents," educators and concerned citizens. Her disrespect was further evidenced by her leaving the

February joint hearing and her absence today and her contention to the press that the speakers at Advisory Board meetings are not “legitimate parents.”

My last point: The most recent attack on students is the elimination of summer school for ninth- and tenth-graders for the summer of 1997. The impact of this policy may cause the length of the average high school career to increase to five years. The absence of summer school for ninth- and tenth-graders will adversely affect the magnet schools, Science, Arts, and University High Schools. At these schools the standards are such that students must make up any failed class immediately in summer school if they are stay enrolled.

The crisis in education is being heightened, not alleviated, by the State occupation of the Newark Public Schools. Almost two years have passed. (timer rings; PA system shut off) It is time for the State of New Jersey, the media, the City of Newark--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Let her finish. You let what's-her-name finish.

MS. BASKERVILLE: --the City of Newark to hold Dr. Hall accountable. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Will you leave a copy-- Do we have a copy of your testimony? (no response)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Shame on you.

SENATOR EWING: Halin Suliman.

I will remind the speakers, you have five minutes after which the timer there (indicating) will cut it off (outburst from audience) and copies of

your testimony will be distributed to all the Committee members. We have 80 people to hear tonight.

HALIN SULIMAN: Excuse me. Good evening. My name is Halin Suliman. I'm a product of the Newark School System. I'm a resident of Newark. I was born here, and so, as the previous speaker stated, I definitely have a stake here.

Let me preface my remarks, Senator Ewing, by telling you that I believe that you must have a little more respect for the people who live in this town. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Right on.

MR. SULIMAN: Your demeanor at these meetings can only be categorized as patronizing.

Let me begin my remarks by saying that we understand -- and I would like your attention, Senator--

We need to understand the history of this town in terms of-- First, let me just level one charge at all of you -- well, not all of you, but I believe that the Legislature's inability to address the real question, and that is, in terms of source of funding for education-- We can only characterize you as political punks, because you cannot, you will not go to the source.

To say that taxes -- that property taxes -- should fund education when you come to a city like Newark where two highways go through both sides that destroyed the ratables, a State hospital was planted in the center destroying more ratables, three-quarters of the land is tax exempt and half of what's left is nondeveloped, so to say that we should do that through taxes, I don't think that you have the courage to really address the real issue, and that

is, changing the source of funding for education in the City of Newark and the State of New Jersey.

Having said that, to realize the state of education in Newark, you've made many comments to how the district failed after 30 years, but you have to take into account all of the things that I just said, and the fact is, we had a knife stuck in our back.

Now that you've come here with some gatekeepers and carpetbaggers to oversee this district, it doesn't work. Unless the people of Newark-- First of all, let me also go back to taking away the constitutional rights of people to vote; that needs to be spoken. That needs to be talked about, taking the constitutional rights of people away and an elected school board that we had before the State takeover. I don't like the administration in Trenton. Can they be abolished? (applause) It's the same premise. It is the same premise.

Here in Newark, you want parental involvement and you want more citizens involved? Let us vote. Let us back into the schools. The people of this town are not as dumb as you portray us. It is our-- We are the stakeholders. Dr. Hall, for whatever good you can find in it -- and I find it hard to find any-- She has no stake here except a paycheck. When it's all over she'll go, and we will be stuck with the consequences of whatever she did.

In terms of the State-- This Senate over here-- This Committee, it's a farce. It's a farce. You come in here to ask us, "How you doing?" Not well. There is no real oversight on the State in this district. It just doesn't exist. You have the State monitoring the State.

Historically, the relationship of African-Americans in this country to positions of authority-- We have had to maintain a relationship with the Federal government, because our relationship with states has always been messed up. States have voted states' rights and all kinds of things on us. So what I'm saying to you is that in order to involve the citizens of this town, in this town you have to return voting rights, number one (timer rings) and you have to let us-- Well, we have to take -- we have to take -- our rights back. We can't really wait for you.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Monti Dickerson? Is Monti Dickerson here? (no response) Sheik Bell?

Dr. Bell? Are you Dr. Bell?

S H E I K A B D U L A B E L L, Ed.D.: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

DR. BELL: My name is Dr. Sheik Abdula Bell. I'm a tenured, full professor on the staff of William Paterson College, in Wayne, New Jersey, for the past 23 years. Previously, 17 years in the New York City School System.

This is indeed, this afternoon, an honor given to me by my Muslim brothers and sisters to address this Committee meeting on the Newark Public Schools this afternoon. I want to thank you.

Will you kindly stand, believers, please? (addressing audience) (applause) Shil crom, shil crom. (phonetic spelling)

I will proceed on now. Ladies and gentlemen, we have come here to state openly what everyone now admits privately, the State takeover of the

Newark Public Schools is not working for our children. (applause) In light of this clear fact, we're demanding that the State take immediate action to reverse its current course and take immediate steps to amend the State takeover legislation to be reinvented -- involve the community in the governance of the school.

The poor education that we have here in Newark is an abominable crime.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, it is.

DR. BELL: It's criminal what's going on here. When the State took over the schools, there was no question that something needed to be done, but the State has gone too far. Dr. Hall isolated herself from the legitimate community to avoid criticism. A disproportionate number of New Yorkers have been brought here -- outsiders -- and given critical jobs, suggesting there are no qualified Newark residents. The State's tenure so far has been marked by fear, intimidation, cover-up, disregard, and disrespect.

What I have to say in reference to Dr. Hall-- She has not demonstrated school-based leadership.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

DR. BELL: I think she needs to examine her literature on school-based leadership. It's out there.

The School Board should ensure that the ablest and best qualified people are employed to lead and teach in the Newark School System. We don't need to go over to New York. They've got their problems over there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.
(applause)

DR. BELL: I taught for over 17 years in New York City, and most of those kids over there, if they can count up to three, put them in graduate school. It's ridiculous. It's just a joke, but it's ridiculous.

Parents-- On the one hand, the State suggests that all Newark residents are suspect, incompetent, and dishonest and, on the other hand, argue that the schools must have community involvement to be successful. The State has leveled the greatest insult at the parents of the very children it is supposed to help. Without the children here, as I tell people--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

DR. BELL: --on the staff of William Paterson, we've got no job, including me first.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. That's right. (applause)

DR. BELL: I'm a tenured, senior professor. Without these students, without parents, we've got no schools, and it's up to you to exercise that authority. Come together.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. That's right. Thank you.

DR. BELL: It has said to these children, "Your parents are ignorant, dishonest, incompetent, and corrupt." Look at what you're doing to these parents now. These parents here are filled with apprehension about their future. They don't know where they're going. They don't know what's going to happen. (timer rings)

I'll be through in a minute.

By the way, we want you all to be motivated and feel good about yourselves. The State has set up an overwhelming contradiction. It has drawn a battle line with the community and it can never find peace until it makes some fundamental change in how it does business in Newark.

We don't have to wait for the total failure of the takeover. The signs are already clear and unmistakable. No rocket scientist would ever have approached the Newark situation as the State did -- already engaged in two takeover experiments in Paterson and Jersey City, and I'm very familiar about Paterson. It's sad. It's sad.

With no clear positive results, the State takeover has even greater experiments in Newark. Make no mistake about it, this is an experiment. You have no idea of what you're doing because you have no foundation of prior success to-- (timer rings; PA system shut off)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Let him finish.
Let him speak.

DR. BELL: I only have two paragraphs, please. (PA system restored)

--have no foundation to rest on. The Newark School System, under Dr. Hall, has ignored two basic -- two basic -- requirements here for renewal. They have ignored student's high expectations and good governance.

It is for the State to admit that it has made a mistake and call for a midcourse correction. We have outlined what we think that correction should be in our attached handout, the handout that was given out by one of my Muslim brothers here. (indicating)

This problem requires all of our best efforts, but you have locked the community out--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

DR. BELL: --and arrogantly assumed power under the law. It won't be enough. This is not about the law, it is about the lives and future of our children. A dialogue between us and you should be in order -- this forum will not substitute for the dialogue that we are having here today -- Governor Whitman and Commissioner Klagholz to discuss what is best for Newark.

This evening's meeting amounts to just one more insult to the community. For you, it serves as a public relations goal. For us, it is little more than an opportunity to vent. It has nothing to do with real communication.

If the Newark Public Schools, after a reasonable period of time, is not able to provide evidence of quality education for its students, if the accountability reports -- I don't know about those reports here--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: There not in here, not yet.

DR. BELL: Oh, they're not? --do not reveal satisfactory progress, there must be an outside intervention, and you know what that outside intervention is?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Us.

DR. BELL: The citizens of Newark.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.
That's right. (applause)

DR. BELL: You make up this whole town. You own this place. It is you. The power rests in people, not with a few people sitting up here. (indicating)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. That's right.

DR. BELL: Last, but not least, we are here because the situation is critical. We are prepared to play a major role in bringing about the change, and we are prepared to take responsibility. If you reject our sincere offer, we can only treat you accordingly.

In closing, the Unified Muslim Alliance -- regardless of whether you're following Minister Farrakhan or Wallace D. Muhammad or any other sect -- we are all unified.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

DR. BELL: This is what's important. This is why I'm here today. I fear nothing but Allah. I don't fear people. I just fear Allah. I want to do His work.

Listen to this very carefully. The Muslims in the Greater Newark area will be a formidable foe. Now, you rest assured of that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

DR. BELL: You rest assured of that. We will be a foe and a formidable foe and not some Tootsie Roll, marshmallow-eating individual.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes.

DR. BELL: Thank you. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Go ahead.

SENATOR EWING: Dr. Bell, do we have a copy of your presentation?

DR. BELL: (indiscernible)

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me?

DR. BELL: (speaking from audience) (indiscernible) I'm just giving the speech. Here it is. Here it is. (indicating)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.
Cheryl Wood?

C H E R Y L W O O D: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Cheryl, wait a couple of minutes until they sort of clear out, please? (referring to audience)

Cheryl, can you read there in the dark? (camera lights shut off; room's lights dim)

MS. WOOD: No.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Meeting's over.
Dr. Hall brings light. Ask Dr. Hall for the light.

SENATOR EWING: I suggest that you come on up here -- the speakers come up here -- and sit at the end of the table here and speak into the two microphones at this end. (indicating) Then you'll have some light -- or in the middle over here.

Cheryl, do you want to come up here, please?

MS. WOOD: I'll stay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Don't be intimidated by him. Get on up there.

MS. WOOD: Oh, I'm not.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Where are the lights? Where's Dr. Hall to put the lights on? This wouldn't happen down in Somerset County. Newark doesn't have lights. You're unprepared, Senators.

MS. WOOD: Senator Ewing.

SENATOR EWING: Quiet, please. (referring to audience)

Yes, Cheryl.

MS. WOOD: I'm prepared to give my statement. I'll read it to the best of my ability--

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. WOOD: --even though we do not have light here, and we should have light here. (applause)

I have chosen not to come up on that stage, because I don't choose to share that stage with you gentlemen tonight. (cheers and applause)

SENATOR EWING: That's your prerogative.

MS. WOOD: Okay.

My name is Cheryl Wood, and I represent the Essex County PTA.

When the former Newark Board of Education was in place, I was outraged and appalled by the lack of inclusiveness, parental respect given by most administrators, and most importantly, the overwhelming preponderance of mismanagement and financial waste.

I welcomed and aided the intervention of the State Department of Education. I encouraged mutual respect, time allowances towards the new District Superintendent, Beverly Hall, and her administration. I continued to support the efforts toward change when many employees were discharged in an attempt to remove nonfunctioning and highly paid individuals.

I reserved comment even though I couldn't see how class sizes would decrease in volume. I did, however, observe the many cuts, closing down, and/or nonexistence of valuable speciality classes such as art, library, home economics, shop, and most importantly, aides within the classrooms. (applause)

I do agree and believe that in a district which has been uncertified for as long as ours, that emphasis should, most definitely, be placed on reading, writing, math, and science; however, to date, I have not been made aware of test scores reflecting an increase in minimal levels of proficiencies, standardized averages, nor level performances.

I will continue to aid in the education of parents as to their rights, responsibilities, and alternatives. I will continue to foster and encourage mutual respect across the board between parents, students, teachers, principals, and even district administrators.

I will not, however, continue to expect or encourage the parents of this district to support the overall decisions made from the Department of Education. I will continue to remind the parents, their families, and friends of the total lack of concern for children of the Special Needs Districts from the offices of Leo Klagholz and, more importantly, Christine Todd Whitman. (applause)

In closing, may I caution you to address the following: Budgets, along with times, dates, and locations of committee meetings are still not being disseminated on a timely basis nor shared with parents. The new policy of not allowing a student who comes in five to ten minutes late to enter the building

until the next class period -- this enables the safe harbor theory to take place. You are jeopardizing children.

I will caution you to address the scheduled times, safety, and general handling of food served to our children. I have been doing statistics (timer rings) on how many children have been taken to the emergency room out of Newark's public schools. I'm doing my homework, so I surely hope that you're doing yours.

I am emphasizing the power of the vote and that this city, being the largest in the State of New Jersey, can and will persuade the new, upcoming Governor to plan -- while remembering that we exist -- for we do intend and will remove the current, outgoing Governor. (applause)

SENATOR RICE: Excuse me, Cheryl. We had discussion at one of our community meetings with Tree. If you call my office this week, or whenever you get a chance-- I introduced a bill on Monday. It was prepared to say that no child in the school system can be left outside when they are late. Our kids -- it's difficult enough to get them to school. When they're outside the school, many of them go back home because they are frustrated. So that bill was introduced, and if you give me a call, I'll make sure you get a copy of it. Okay?

MS. WOOD: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I would just like to ask that we do not hear the fact that parents aren't represented here tonight, because they have children, and they should be home preparing their children's dinner and family time. I am here representing the parents of 82 schools in the City of Newark, 125 units from Essex County, and if I'm here, the parents are here.

That copy should not only go to me, it should go to the parents whose children are standing outside of that door waiting to come in, in the morning. Every day Renee Michelle Wood goes inside her school at 8:30 and stays there until I or my husband picks her up at 2:45. However, I still see other children standing out in the cold every single morning, including the rain and snow days.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WOOD: I have encouraged parents to take that school back. I am showing and teaching the way to do whatever they need to do. I don't sleep. I do eat, but I don't sleep, and I will not until these parents take back their schools, their classes.

I am highly disappointed with the performances of all of you legislators, advisors, and administrators who are supposed to make the decisions for these children. You must remember why you got into this in the first place. It wasn't because of the paycheck, the status quo; it was because of a little baby, a little baby that came into this world and all they asked for was to be taught, fed, and loved. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Marcia Brown? Is Marcia Brown here?

SENATOR RICE: Yes, I saw her earlier.

MARCIA WILSON BROWN: My name is Marcia Brown. I am a resident of the City of Newark. My daughter graduated from the public schools in Newark, and I'm an advocate for quality public education and for local self-control just like there is in other school districts in this State.

I speak here today representing the Center for Urban Law and Community Development Advocacy. The Center was founded by black

attorneys who were committed to developing solutions for the problem facing deindustrialized cities and urban communities such as Newark.

The Center opposed takeover and will support the repeal legislation of Senator Rice. But today represents an opportunity for the Center to express its concerns with the takeover process and to make recommendations that we believe the Committee should consider seriously with respect to the subjugation of the Newark School District and its children.

It's important to point out that these meetings are being held at a time when, once again, the New Jersey Supreme Court is asked to enforce the State's obligation to provide a thorough and efficient education for children in so-called special needs districts, an education that is comparable to that produced in the richest districts of this State. This case is called *Abbott v. Burke*.

It is important to point out that since the first of these cases was taken to the Supreme Court 27 years ago in *Robinson v. Cahill*, over a half a million children, black and Latino and poor, have been denied a quality education by the State Legislature -- a half a million plaintiffs, black and Latino and poor, who did not and will not have their day in court, in the Legislature, nor in the schools which pledged to put their interests first. Now, in the latest series of cases, the lives of another 285,000 schoolchildren, black, Latino, and poor--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: And white.

MS. BROWN: --and white, are at stake.

The Center does not accept the reality that the constitutional right to a thorough and efficient education in the State of New Jersey ought to

depend on where you live and what color you are. Therefore, in the backdrop of the *Abbott* odyssey, it is fairly necessary to say that whether a State-operated school district is the most effective and desirable method of producing a thorough and efficient education remains inconclusive.

Given that the State has always claimed the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that that constitutional mandate is met and given that at least 27 years has taken place and they have not been able to do so, it would hardly be beyond reason to articulate the question, the State cannot do it. Certainly, the concerns and the complaints brought out in these meetings demonstrate the lack of confidence.

Moreover, while this Committee could command -- or recommend, rather -- the amendment of the law, given your own political and ideological constructs that would have to be challenged around a debate of that position, we're not politically naive to think that you will do so. But the consignment of second-class citizenship in the context of public schools should be unacceptable.

The Committee should not posture itself merely as a representative of the "best interests of the children," benignly and benevolently listening to all of the faceless masses that come up here, but must go further to adopt specific recommendations for work that it claims it will undertake to ensure that its constitutional responsibility to ensure a thorough and efficient education is undertaken.

Thus, at a minimum, the Center is recommending that this Committee undertake an investigation of the serious concerns which have been alleged here regarding widespread lack of books and supplies, failure to provide

due process to administrators and employees who are removed -- which is required under the takeover statute -- the unhealthy conditions in the lunch programs in our schools, and other complaints that have been made here, because these issues go to the basic civil liberties of students and others, and therefore, demand an immediate response.

The Center also recommends that this Committee evaluate and identify the areas in the takeover statute which have got to be amended to reflect the process for how the State will be held accountable. First of all, there is no criteria in the statute for determining when local control should be reestablished. The Director of the Victoria Foundation said earlier, when she came up here, that she was sure that local control would be reestablished. How? There is no criteria and no guidelines in the statute to determine what level of evaluation triggers a return to a locally controlled Board. (timer rings)

Also, what monitoring process is the State subject to? Is it going to be subject to a Level I, II, or III monitoring process? Would the viability of prior State takeovers in Paterson and Jersey City be important to that monitoring or assessment process? The statute is silent on that.

Also, in view of the Legislature's supposed or alleged commitment to curriculum standards that have now been articulated under the new Comprehensive Educational Finance Act, or CEFA as it is called, how are those core curriculum standards incorporated in a takeover statute, and what is the State's accountability to apply those factors to its State control?

The guidelines at a minimum should be quantifiable. They should deal with learning skills, improvement in the so-called local governments, measures of what management, financial, and program inefficiencies that the

State has eliminated that they claim were the reason for they're coming in here in the first place.

The statute also lacks guidelines for assessing or evaluating the quality and nature of parental input into the district. I don't need to say any more about that because the parents who have come up here and talked about the total disregard and the disrespect that they have experienced subjects the State-operated, controlled district into serious question.

The statute also lacks any guidelines or standards for conducting -- and this is critical -- an evaluation of the effectiveness of the appointed Community Advisory Board. The statute contemplates that these people are the only ones who can be elected in staggered terms in the fourth year after takeover.

It would seem that it would be important -- since the Committee has given lip service to the idea of reestablishing local control and making sure that the local district has the proper access to its own determination about what happens to the students here -- that we not be subjugated to people that the State and that other interests have selected to be on our Board. If this will be an elected school board, then how can the statute dictate who is to be elected in the process? (applause) (timer rings) The Legislature imposes a set of people on the district who may or may not be qualified. We further recommend that the Committee publicize its investigative findings and provide the public with documentation that addresses those issues.

In closing, the Center believes that it takes no great leap of logic to argue that the inferior and apartheid education of children of color and white children creates second-class citizenship and are a vestiges of an old slave

regime. We challenge the Committee to go back and discharge its obligation to secure the right to a thorough and efficient education for black, brown, and white children as it would for any other children in this State.

But whether that does or does not happen, we also challenge the sincere and important citizens, parents, teachers, and others who are in this room tonight to come together in a coalition, to stop begging other people, to take back our schools, and to create a manifesto for children's rights so that together the thinking, the organization, and the development of a force for social change and social justice for our children is no longer a deferred dream but a compelling reality. (applause)

SENATOR RICE: Marcia. Ms. Brown, do you have a copy of your statement for--

MS. BROWN: I will make sure that they get it.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. Also -- well, I'll see you anyway, but give me a call when you get a chance.

The next speaker is Mr. Lawrence Hamm. Is Lawrence here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He left for a minute. He'll be back.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. The next speaker is Ruthann Dublin. Is she here? Is Ms. Carolyn Wallace here? (no response) Mr. Isaac Jenkins. Is Ike here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: After Ike will be Ethel Blake-Sykes.

ISAAC JENKINS: Good afternoon. My name is Isaac Jenkins. I am the Executive Director of the United Community Organization.

I come here this afternoon with a very serious concern about an investigation that we've been doing within the school district. First, I would like to read to you a memorandum that was sent out by Dr. Beverly Hall. Then, I will elaborate little details for you.

"From Dr. Beverly Hall to all school principals" -- this memo was dated March 27, 1996 -- "The Helen Keller International CHILDSIGHT Program has offered to provide vision screening for Newark's student population, grades six through eight. This program will begin in September of 1996 and provide free eye glasses for up to 7000 students. I support this program and rely on your cooperation to make it successful."

Committee, today I had the privilege of visiting one of the schools where this program was in operation. They were screening students for eye glasses. It just so happened that one of the students who was screened happened to be my godson. My godson came to me and told me that he went to have an eye test, the doctor said to him that he didn't need glasses. Now, my concern is that we know that this is not to be true, because my godson already has a prescription for eye glasses -- already has a prescription.

Okay. I had the privilege to go up to visit the particular company who was providing -- the Helen Keller Program Director-- Her name is Claire Peterson. She said to me and she wrote it -- she put here on the back of the paper in black and white (indicating) -- where she said that any student who has a 20/40 minus 1 eye test does not need glasses. I checked with an optician and that is untrue. That is untrue. She also said to me that this program was given to her by Dr. Beverly Hall -- given to her. This contract was given to her by Dr. Beverly Hall. I asked her for her business card. She gave me a business

card. She is located at 90 Washington Street, New York, New York. (outburst from audience)

This is something that I believe that we need to investigate. She also indicated that her company makes sizeable donations to the GOP party. (outburst from audience) A sizeable donation-- Now, this is all in black and white. She gave me this information today. My concern to you is simply this, I knew and I know and she knows and the doctor knows that my godson needed eye glasses; however, there are only 7000 students that they said they were going to give eye glasses to, which makes me think that cronyism is very much alive here in this particular contract. (applause)

So I'm asking you all to investigate this, because this is serious.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Jenkins?

MR. JENKINS: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Who was the doctor, again?

MR. JENKINS: Now, she said that the doctor's name is Dr. Meridith Tilp -- T-I-L-P. That's the doctor's name, but the company-- The contract was given to Helen Keller -- that's from out of New York -- and then they hire the doctor to come in and do the examination for the students.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Helen Keller. (indicating pronunciation)

MR. JENKINS: Keller -- K-E-L-L-E-R -- International.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me. Does this doctor come out here, or do you have to go to see him?

MR. JENKINS: They come into the school.

SENATOR EWING: They come to the school.

MR. JENKINS: They come from New York into the school to screen our students. Seventy percent of our students who need glasses, do not get glasses. But this is only a contract because of the PAC committee that Helen Keller has. This is a contract.

So I'm asking this Committee to give us a very serious investigation, because I'm sure -- I'm sure -- that if such a contract as this can exist, that there are numerous other contracts that exist through Dr. Beverly Hall and the State-appointed school district here in Newark, New Jersey, and we will not tolerate it any longer. It's time for a change.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, could we ask Ike--

Through you, Mr. Chairman, Isaac, that card you have -- I know it's your only card -- could you let someone write down all that information from the card and also maybe get a copy of your testimony to the State. She'll tell you what to do, okay? (indicating)

MR. JENKINS: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Next is Ethel Blake-Sykes.

Ms. Blake-Sykes, would you like to come and sit up here where there is some light, please?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: No, no. Don't.

E T H E L B L A K E - S Y K E S: It doesn't matter. It's not written anyway.

SENATOR EWING: Well, would the people rather that we all left and not have the meeting?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: No, we would rather that we have lights. You're unprepared, Senator. You're unprepared. That's what we want. We want some heat and some light. Tell that guy to turn off the air conditioner.

MS. BLAKE-SYKES: My name is Ethel Blake-Sykes. I am a community activist, also, a longtime and term teacher in the City of Newark.

I have many things to talk about this afternoon. First of all, I'm one of the persons who first thought that this was going to be a meeting saying, "Hail to Dr. Hall." I'm glad to find out there were some of us who had the temerity to get up and tell it just like it is. (applause)

I would be remiss if I did not, Senator Ewing -- having known you on other occasions -- did not say to you that I also think that you're patronizing our parents, our employees, and our students here. I was at the February the 5th meeting when you admonished the audience not to behave in a certain manner. We are human beings. All of us have all levels of intelligence, and then today you started the same way. I hope in the future that you will just come, open up the meeting, and begin.

I'm going to tell mostly about the school in which I teach. We've heard a lot of broad-based things going on. I teach at McKinley School in Newark. I want to tell you, in spite of what is going on in the City of Newark, in spite of the poor working conditions that are there, we attempt to educate our children.

In the beginning of the school year, we had a boycott. We had a boycott because we knew we were being sent a caretaker principal, and it did happen. On January -- February the 1st, the principal was gone. We are now

acting on with an acting principal, a regular principal, an acting vice principal, and a vacancy. One of our vice principals died, so that was unavoidable.

You talked about all-day kindergartens. McKinley School has always had all-day kindergartens. At the beginning of the school year, the teachers' main complaint "Where are all these supplies that were coming in with this \$24 million?" McKinley School received none of it, but education continued. We have won all kinds of awards.

I teach in the seventh grade. I've been there for about seven years, five years, now, in the seventh grade. I have a room that is the pits. There are no shades. I've asked for seven years, including this year, to get those shades. What's outside of my school? A faded banner that the rain and wind, you know-- This thing that Dr. Hall brought in the first year that she came, that's what is outside of my school. My chairs: If I wear certain types of clothes, all of my skirts will be raggedy. The boys and girls sit in (indiscernible) garden chairs. See, I'm bringing it down to the level in which I work every single day.

SENATOR EWING: What school is this?

MS. BLAKE-SYKES: This is McKinley School. I've got something else to tell you.

SENATOR EWING: I know. That's all right, but what school is it?

MS. BLAKE-SYKES: McKinley School, 1 Colonnade Place in Newark.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: The State takeover-- (indiscernible)

MS. BLAKE-SYKES: When the weather-- (outburst from audience)

Hold on now.

When the weather got cold -- and I'm in this room aside from everyone else -- my hands begin to get numb. The first day, I stayed there. The second day, I called up the then vice principal and said, "Do we have heat in the school?" He told me, "No." I took my body right to Raphael Hernandez, went up to those plush-- (timer rings)

I'm going to get my time.

That plush suite where our SLT Assistant Superintendent has heat, everything she wanted. So I sat there, and they couldn't find out what to do with me. I said, "I'm not going back to that school. There is no heat." Strangely enough, Christie Whitman bypassed McKinley School, went over there to, I believe, that school that has all-day kindergarten -- one of those with paramount schools or something -- never even knew that I was on a one-day strike, one-woman strike.

When I got back -- where's the fellow from Design and Planning? -- engineers are at the school. Now, I say to you, why does one person -- and it can be done by one -- have to take that action to get something done? (timer rings)

One more thing, yesterday I attended the rally. (applause) I had three personal days. When I came in the first thing I was told, "Oh, you've used up your three personal days. We gave you a sick day." Now, do you know anything about taking a sick day to be in the public's eye, being on

television, speaking through a bullhorn? Now, do I look dumb, stupid, and ignorant?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: No. No.

MS. BLAKE-SYKES: So I don't know who it was. I don't know if it was a stoolie that was there or someone said to the SLT Assistant Superintendent or Dr. Hall, "Let's try to give her the shaft." This is only a micronism of what is going on in the City of Newark. I argued all day long until I got that red *S* turned into a blue *P*.

So what I'm saying to you is the State takeover is a farce. It has not worked in Newark. It intimidates every teacher. If it intimidates-- If it tries to intimidate me, who's been here a long time, you can imagine what it's doing to the other teachers.

Another thing -- my last salvo -- you asked what the progress is in Newark? Widespread firing and wholesale lying. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Senator Rice, are the meetings being taped?

SENATOR RICE: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Very good.

SENATOR EWING: Angela McBride, is she here? Houston Stevens? Rosalyn Rainey? Angelo Washington? The Honorable Mildred Crump? Kim Gaddy? Reverend Douglas Bendel? (no response) Joanne Miller?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All right, Joanne. Take your time, sister.

JOANNE MILLER: Good evening. Joanne Miller here.

Senator Ewing, Senator Rice, you know, years ago-- You remember when you were in school and you were disrespectful or you were rude to your classmates or your teacher? You were corrected by that teacher and then a note went home or a phone call and that parent was notified on your rudeness or your disrespect, and then your parent whacked your backside.

I'm asking you to talk to Dr. Hall. I will not stand for her rudeness, her disrespect toward parents when they come out and want to know answers -- want answers to their questions, their concerns. It has to stop. I'm requesting that you speak to her, as you should. Because if she don't, there's going to be a revolution in this damn town. (applause)

We are going to take control of our children's education, Senator Ewing, and if you're in the city at the time of the civil riot, you'll just be a part of it. Okay? Enough is enough. I've had enough. Parents in this city have had enough, Senator Ewing. Please, please, I implore you to talk to this woman, because if Beverly Hall does not correct her action toward parents, we're going to have big problems, and it will eventually affect the entire State of New Jersey. Okay?

My other concern is: The Core Teams are a joke and the Parent Academy is the biggest that has come into this district. I attended those training workshops. Rebecca Doggett tries to pull the wool over parents' eyes. We're not standing for it any longer. We are to replace the jobs-- The employees were laid off. We know what's happening. You think we're ignorant and dumb, like Ms. Sykes said? No.

I am an educated parent. I have a degree in education. I know when someone is trying to make me out a fool. In that Parent Academy

Program, there's no advancement there. There's no way parents can earn a pay, as most people want to do in order to survive in this world today. We're tired of being on welfare. We want to come off of welfare, but if we're a part of Parent Academy, there's no way you can advance yourself. Who do they think they're fooling? We know what the real deal is. It's to keep parents down -- to keep them down -- uneducated, unable to advance and move on with their lives with this Parent Academy Program. Rebecca Doggett can take it and throw it out of a window, because she's not going to get too many parents -- and Dr. Hall -- to accept that and come in there and volunteer.

My other concern is: Parents in Newark want their voting rights restored. (applause) We want to elect a Board and that Board will eventually interview candidates for a Superintendent. I'm asking you, please go back and tell your colleagues, "Let's get the hell out of Newark, because they're going to give us a civil war in a minute," and we're going to bring it down to Trenton.

We're not going to play with this, Senator Ewing.

Senator Rice, you better tell him. You better tell them to open up their eyes, because we're not about games with our children's lives. We want our children to be just as productive as your children in Somerset--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. MILLER: --West Caldwell, and the rest of the affluent, suburban towns. (timer rings)

Thank you. (applause)

And that was clearly from my heart. I forgot about my notes.

I forgot my testimony at home, because I'm truly disturbed about my daughter coming home last night, Senator Ewing, telling me her vice

principal has been transferred, her math teacher -- in the middle of the year -- has been removed. I am totally upset. I am ready to go rip Dr. Hall's heart out of her body. Yes, I am. (applause) Because you do not take a teacher -- a math teacher-- You do not take a math teacher from a child -- from students -- in the middle of the year. These students are preparing -- supposed to be preparing -- getting prepared for the SATs, the EW.

You know, come on, Senator Ewing. Come on, now. I know you're retiring, so when you retire--

SENATOR EWING: Not yet.

MS. MILLER: Not yet. I know, but it's coming. It's coming. When you do retire, please (timer rings) remember that within your heart you did something to help the children in the urban cities.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes.

MS. MILLER: Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Reverend, just a second.

In checking with the district headquarters-- There was a question previously brought up, I think by Cheryl Wood, about a child or some children in some districts having to stand outside the school if they are five or ten minutes late. (outburst from audience)

Just a second, please. That is not a district policy. Now, evidently some principals are doing that, and I would like to know what schools that is occurring in. It certainly is not right to do that to a child. I would like to know what schools they are that are keeping children outside if they happen to be five or ten minutes late. (outburst from audience)

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, let me respond to that. It didn't just happen. It's been happening for years.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes. That's right.

SENATOR RICE: And that's why I put the bill in. In fact, I'm the one who told Ms. Wood at the last meeting that I was putting the bill in, because every time we go to these schools--

A good example is when-- The problem at West Side, when the principal was there-- I went there the next morning it was raining. All the kids outside said, "Mr. Rice, please get me in the school." I asked, "Why are these kids out here? This continues to happen. It happened before takeover. It's happening during takeover, and I thought that would change." They said, "Well, we'll get them in." I said, "Well, the problem is you get them in today, they're out next week sick for the whole week. They want to come to school."

So I put the bill in, and the bill says that no one will be left outside the school. They can put them in the school where they want, but they cannot be left out.

That was recently at West Side, but it's happened at various schools throughout. The problem is that it was the district policy, maybe not in writing, at a lot of these schools. It remains one of those types of indirect policies based on some of the people still working in the schools, I guess, and some who come new.

The only way we're going to resolve it is to pass that legislation which was introduced yesterday. Because when I mentioned it to OLS when

I was doing the legislation, they were saying, "Where in New Jersey do they keep kids out of school?" I said, "In Newark. They've been doing it for years."

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: In Newark, only in Newark.

SENATOR RICE: So I just wanted to mention that I'm speaking firsthand of what I know. It has been a practice in this district for a number of years and I've always spoken out on it. I had one principal recently tell someone -- when my staff made a phone call -- that, "Ron Rice does not run this school." I said, "You're right." I didn't even call the school, but I did call the Commissioner, etc., to get a kid in school.

So that legislation is important. It seems to be something that's not necessary, but, believe it or not, we have to mandate that.

SENATOR EWING: Well, as soon as you get the bill in, Senator Rice--

SENATOR RICE: It's in.

SENATOR EWING: Well, then we'll do it at the next Committee meeting -- the Senate Education Committee meeting.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Senator, I just want to put on the record that I'll support the bill in the Assembly and make sure that I put the bill in, in the Assembly chambers, so that we can get it heard at the Assembly Education Committee, as well.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Reverend.

REVEREND DOUGLAS BENDEL: I'm The Reverend Douglas Bendel. I'm the pastor at St. Andrew's Church in the Clinton Hill area.

I'm passionately concerned with issues of education. I myself come from California where, in addition to having a Ph.D. in systematic theology, I also have a life credential from the State of California in math and science. I've been involved with education at all levels for most of my life now.

My impression when I came to Newark -- or soon after I came to Newark -- two years ago is that the public school system here is a system that's broken. I have tried to inform myself as best that I can. When the State took over the school system, I certainly cheered that, because it was quite clear to me that something had to be done. The scores reflect that in the city, and there is, of course, that taint of corruption that is quite unmistakable, I think, to any fair-minded observer.

I'm still learning. I'm glad that I've come to this meeting today to hear the testimony from so many people. I must say, though, that my own experience of the school administration is that I have found the people in the administration -- Dr. Beverly Hall, Rebecca Doggett, Doris Cover, and other people who I've interacted with -- to be caring and competent.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: No, no.

REVEREND BENDEL: I do not believe that-- I certainly do not believe that they are beyond criticism, but I do not believe that everything they have done is absolutely and totally wrong. I believe that they are committed to the well-being of the children of this city. I believe that they are committed to the objective of educating the children of this city.

One of my perceptions about the school system -- and I've been around education for many years -- is that prior to the State takeover, the primary function, the primary mission of the public schools in Newark was job employment. That was the primary mission.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: And what's wrong with that? We need jobs in Newark.

REVEREND BENDEL: And that needs to change.

I want to make one other point. I do work with the children in my neighborhood in Newark. I have found them to be absolutely delightful children. I have found them to be ready and able to learn. They respond very, very well to a healthy and positive educational atmosphere. I think that it's time for the members of the union, the teachers, the school administrators, the principals to begin working together to solve the deep problems that are present in the educational system in this city. (outburst from audience) I would prefer to see dialogue rather than confrontation and anger.

One final point: Again, I'm glad I have come here. I am a relative newcomer to this city. My concern-- (outburst from audience) My concern is with the children. That is what we need to place first and foremost. I'm going to keep an open ear--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Come visit the schools. Yours is a Catholic school. How much tuition do they pay?

REVEREND BENDEL: It's the attitude of hostility that is part of the problem. (outburst from audience)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You're a stranger here.

REVEREND BENDEL: Let me make one more point. I'm about to sit down.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Good.
(applause)

REVEREND BENDEL: I'm looking forward to hearing more testimony, and I appreciate the testimony that I've heard. But I do know one thing; the children come first and we need to put their needs first.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. We're here. That's what we've been saying, put the children first.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Reverend.
Houston Stevens, please.

H O U S T O N S T E V E N S : Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR EWING: Would you like to come up and get some light or not?

MR. STEVENS: Get some light? No, I'm okay.

SENATOR EWING: All right, fine.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you. Thank you.

You know, I'm really amazed at what I just heard. I'm a parent. I have children in the schools. Fortunately, my child is going to graduate this year from University High School. I am fortunate that she is going to get out this year. The reason that I'm fortunate is because this administration is wrecking the school.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. STEVENS: I was just in the school today. I haven't been able to be there for quite a while to talk to teachers, but I happened to have a

day off and I managed to go to the school to check out a problem that was described at our PTA meeting last night.

I'm telling you that all of these teachers that I ran into were demoralized. There is a lot of demoralization in this district among the teachers. They took a principal out in the middle of the year. They just took a vice principal out. They laid off four teachers, increased our student population by 95 -- and they cut out four teachers -- which meant that they have increased and higher class sizes.

We had just implemented some advanced placement courses and honors courses and all of that, and all of that is now up for grabs and about to be thrown out the window. Because the classes were so overcrowded, it was necessary for them to do some leveling of the classes in the middle of the year, which disrupted the education for our young people.

The long of it and the short of it is that it was clear that what's going on at University High School, which is a flagship for the school system here in Newark-- If what's happening there is any indication of what's going on in the other high schools, then it's clear that things are definitely getting worse. I mean, they are really getting worse -- a lot worse.

Across the system, it seems that people have been laid off and there are changes that are taking place -- I'm talking about among teachers. They especially attacked the high schools. Let me just tell you this stuff is systematic. They especially attacked the high schools. They laid off 104 teachers. They set up these Staff Developers -- so-called Staff Developers -- and put them in the elementary schools. They claimed that they were saving

\$26 million in order to put in the schools -- directed toward the students -- and we don't see it.

I'll tell you, Senator, we don't see it. To give you an example of what it looks like they're doing: They said that we have problems in our schools and they're going to direct money toward the education. This building that you're in right here is attached to what was Coed High School. They had a library in there. I want you to go into the offices, that is, the cluster offices. These are the administrative offices. Now, these administrators all had offices downtown at 2 Cedar Street. They said they were going to decentralize, put them out closer to the people, closer to where the action is. (timer rings)

Go into that office, look at what used to be a library. What used to be a library is now an administrative office. Look at the chairs. Look at the computers. Look at the furniture right here in this building. You don't have to go anywhere -- right here in this building. I want you to go over there before you leave here tonight, look at that office. They spent at least a half a million dollars up in there. They have desks and computers, and the kids in the schools don't have them.

Look, I walked through the central office. They've got new computers -- Gateway 2000 -- all over the place. They say they're for the children. Every administrator at 2 Cedar Street has got a new computer (timer rings) but they don't have them in the schools.

The long and the short of it is that things have not gotten better, they've gotten worse. The State operation of the district has not improved anything, it has worsened things. Frankly, that was part of, in my opinion, part of the plan.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. STEVENS: That was part of the plan. (applause) They've wrecked things here.

I heard you, at the last meeting on December 16, tell Dr. Beverly Hall -- when she said that she planned to turn the district back to the community after five years-- You corrected her very pointedly, Senator Ewing. You corrected her very pointedly and said, "You hope-- Don't say that you intend to turn it back to the citizens of Newark in five years, say that you hope to turn it back in five years." Now, I think that that's an indication of where things are at.

We know who's really dealing with the situation. Yourself, Saul Cooperman, and all of the other muckety-mucks -- Robert Braun (phonetic spelling) and all of the others--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Right on.

MR. STEVENS: --have captured the Newark district. We know you've captured this district, but it's not going to last because we're going to mobilize in this town, parents -- parents who are supposedly illegitimate. All the illegitimate parents in this town are going to be mobilized.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes. That's right. (applause)

MR. STEVENS: The workers in this town are going to be mobilized and the students are going to be mobilized. Some of these students are here, and they're going to be mobilized to deal with the crisis in public education here in Newark.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Do they have a library in the school now?

MR. STEVENS: Yes, it's a much smaller operation. You go in there and you look and see what they did, and then you go to the library in this building that they have. It's a much smaller, downsized operation.

SENATOR EWING: Andaiye Foluke.

A N D A I Y E F O L U K E: (speaking from audience) Andaiye. (indicating pronunciation)

SENATOR EWING: Andaiye, I'm sorry.

MS. FOLUKE: First of all, good evening.

Let me first reintroduce myself. As indicated, my name Andaiye Foluke. I am the mother of a daughter attending school here in Newark.

Prior to the takeover of our educational system, I would have referred to as a very active and involved parent. Now, less than two years after the State wrestled control from the previous Board of Education, I am now referred to as clown-like and have even had my legitimacy as a parent questioned. Admittedly--

I must admit, Senator Ewing, that I find your visit here today to be suspect. You did not have to come into Newark to assess the State's effectiveness in providing a thorough and efficient education for our children. As you will recall, a few of us came to see you during Beverly Hall's presentation of the Strategic Plan for Newark on December 16, 1996. We made you aware that most of Dr. Hall's assertions were not true. Yet, Senator Ewing, you indicated that irregardless of whatever we told you, you still supported Dr. Hall fully. I also know that you voted for a school funding plan

which will prove disastrous to Newark students. So, again, I have to suspect why you are here.

But since I'm here, let me for the record, again, state my concerns with the State-operated management of our schools. Prior to State intervention, the Newark Board of Education fared fairly well in financial operations and school community relations. In fact, contrary to the assertions made by Beverly Hall and her allies, an internal audit indicated a surplus of \$45 million.

Moreover, the \$300 per student that was allotted to each school Core Team was supposed to afford each school an opportunity to initiate student-centered, school-based programs that would supplement the regular education programs provided to our children.

Additionally, approximately 630 school employees were terminated supposedly in an effort to redirect \$26 million into the classroom. A rudimentary calculation of the above figures indicate that a total of \$85 million in discretionary funds were available to the State for the educational enhancement of our children. Mind you, this money wasn't available to the former Board of Education. This figure also does not include the financial assistance that came from community grants, such as Victoria Foundation and Prudential, yet with more resources than the former Board of Education had, our schools are now worse off.

With fewer teachers, as a result of Hall's reorganizations, our classes are overcrowded. The educational initiatives planned by the school Core Teams have been undermined by unscrupulous building administrators -- one that the gentleman just testified to -- and district facilitators who have

included regular education programs' expenses into the EIP. This is indicated by the GAAP-cos that we can find on the EIP plans.

As a result, many of our plan initiatives had to be dropped. Textbooks and instructional manipulatives are still lagging behind our suburban counterparts. The instruction objectives for our children are still unclear as the State-appointed administration continues to slash courses such as library, home economics, shop, music, and art. In fact, there are no physical signs, particularly at the secondary level, that our students will have an opportunity to reach the high performance level dictated by the core curriculum content standards. (timer rings)

I'll wait. I'm waiting.

In the April 16, 1993, Level III external review report -- which you all used as a basis for State intervention -- you found the following: That the secondary schools were geared toward noncollege-bound students; two, that it was also found that the science labs were ill-equipped; three, the school library facilities varied widely; and four, the curriculum guides for courses such as commercial art, photography, ecology, electronics, economics, and sociology could not be located.

By your own directive you instructed the former Newark School Board to develop courses that would challenge all students to do higher level work and to increase each library's budget to provide for additional materials and technology. Yet, at University High, where students were once afforded the opportunity to take two years of Latin, (timer rings) thereby, enhancing their ability to score higher on the vocabulary section of the SATs, the

State-appointed administration's reorganization plan has taken this opportunity from them.

Similarly, advanced placement classes are a hoax. Unlike their suburban counterparts, University students will take three years to complete one text. Undoubtedly, you gentlemen -- and lady -- can see that at this pace our children will not be able to take all of the AP courses that they are capable of taking.

Combine this fact with the fact that as AP courses were being implemented, University's enrollment increased by approximately 95 students, yet we lost four teachers, the Chairpersons of our English and Guidance Departments, one of our two librarians, and our complete library budget. Perhaps this picture will give you gentlemen an idea of the educational dilemma that our children are facing. On one hand, children are being challenged to take college-level courses, and on the other hand, assistance by way of on-site material and the appropriate instructional staff is being denied to them.

If the demise of our educational programs was not enough, your appointed administration has attempted to undermine every attempt by parents to become an intricate part of the decision-making process regarding our children.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. FOLUKE: District Steering Committee meetings and parent workshops are being held during the school hours, making it virtually impossible to get a true cross section of Newark parents. Hall and her

administration have even gone as far as to make attempts to legitimize parent groups.

Since the State takeover, there has been no public disclosure about the budget. Imagine my surprise when I read in the local paper that Newark was granted an additional \$26 million as bailout money. Why? What happened to the \$500-plus million that was in our treasury?

Lastly, during her presentation to you on December 16, 1996, Hall reported that she reduced wasteful spending by eliminating more than 600 excess positions in noninstructional areas. What she did not report to you was the fact that she was recruiting unsuspecting parents to work in these areas now understaffed by her own efforts. You may refer to *The Star-Ledger*, January 26, 1997, Pages 35 and 36 to verify.

Now, gentlemen -- and lady -- you are all busy men. Are you all expected to volunteer as teachers and cafeteria aides in your child's school? What Hall has launched as a parent initiative is really a smoke screen to hide the fact that the layoffs of over 600 employees was a big mistake.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.
(applause)

MS. FOLUKE: If you came-- Gentlemen and lady, if you came to find out how angry we are, we are angry. If you came to offer-- If you came to find out if we can be controlled, the answer is no. (timer rings) If you came to offer yourself as a go-between for the Newark community and the State, we reject you, as we hold you just as responsible for the continued demise of our children's education. But if you came to find out what will help this district make a dramatic turnaround, the answer is repeal the takeover law and get out.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All right.
(applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Lawrence Hamm?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Senator, may I just address--

SENATOR EWING: Oh, yes, excuse me.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Excuse me. I just wanted to mention--

Oh, okay, the mike's on. (referring to PA system)

Sister Foluke, I just wanted to go on the record as just stating here that I voted against CEFA -- I voted against that bill. As you know, I fought against the bill. We proposed amendments that would not have cut the funding to Newark, so it wouldn't have been necessary to do a \$26 million bailout. I proposed them on the floor in the Assembly and I proposed them in Committee, and they were voted down both times because we don't have the majority on either the Committee or the Assembly floor. So I just wanted to state that for the record for you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Very good.
(applause)

SENATOR EWING: Lawrence Hamm?

LAWRENCE HAMM: Good evening. My name is Lawrence Hamm. I'm a resident of the State of New Jersey. I don't live in Newark. I don't have children in the Newark schools, but that does not mean I should not care for the children who are in these schools. They are all our children and we should care about them wherever we live. (applause)

It's very painful for me to be here this evening. It's painful because having had some experience as an educator-- I am myself a licensed teacher. I have been a member of a Board of Education, and I have also been a student in the Newark school system all my life. It's painful because after 30 years, it does not seem we're going forward. It seems that we're going backward. (applause)

Every day in our classrooms we extol the virtues of democracy to our young people. We talk about the principles of equality and diversity. Our own Governor even made a proclamation about we're all one family with many faces. We celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King in our schools, and yet, right now, a representative of the Attorney General's Office is arguing before the State Supreme Court against equality of funding for all of our children in our schools. That is a disgrace and contrary to everything that we are teaching our students.

Right now, we have State takeovers in Newark, in Jersey City, in Paterson, and probably some being planned. I think the takeover of all of these school systems should end right now (applause) and end, primarily, because State takeover is the usurpation of the right of citizens to control the institutions in their communities. (applause) Everybody knows that it is a violation of the voting rights.

In fact, one might even say that there is a racial question here, because there are many school systems that have been found not doing the right thing, but the only school systems that are being taken over are those that have a majority black and brown population, and that is wrong. (applause) State takeover is but another manifestation of apartheid U.S.A. style.

We should not be arguing against *Abbott* in the State Supreme Court. The State should be explaining why, for decades, it underfunded urban schools and should be talking about what it is going to do to correct that situation. (applause) The State should not be arguing against *Abbott*. It should be talking about why the State of New Jersey has the fourth-most-segregated school system in the nation -- more segregated than those in the Deep South -- and what it is going to do to correct that.

Finally, I think that we should look at the bigger picture. There are deeper, more fundamental issues of race, class, and political economy that are involved here. We should be looking beyond Band-Aid solutions like State takeovers, vouchers, and charter schools. Although there may be some merit in some of these, these are Band-Aid solutions. They are not going to solve the problem for the majority of our children. We need some radical reform.

One of the things that we should be looking to do is to abolish a system of school funding that is based on property taxes (applause) because it is inherently unequal and inherently leads to class divisions in our school systems. So these are three points that I want to make: We should be arguing for *Abbott* not against *Abbott*. We need equal funding for all of our schools. We need to close that \$300 million spending gap between rich and poor schools. We should end the State takeover and abolish the system of property taxes for funding our schools.

Thank you very much. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Excellent.
Excellent.

SENATOR EWING: Mildred Crump?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE:
Councilwoman.

SENATOR EWING: Councilwoman Crump?

COUNCILWOMAN MILDRED C. CRUMP: Thank you.

I certainly hope the lack of lighting isn't what our students have to go through every day. (applause)

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, for 32 years of my life prior to elected office, I was a teacher. Children were and continue to be one of my great passions. I am a product of a public school system. I received a first-class education that I would match against any private or parochial school in the world, so I know what public education should be and can do. As I begin my official remarks, the watchword of my testimony will be consistency.

The question before us today is whether or not the State-operated Newark Public Schools is providing a quality education for our children. Sadly, my answer is no. I'm a realist and I understand that the task before them or whomever the designated overseer is, is monumental. Our school district did not fall into the state of dysfunction overnight, so I do not expect the problems to be solved overnight. What I did and do expect is an honest evaluation and some serious solutions.

As previously mentioned, I was a teacher. I taught children with special needs. My mission was to make certain that the support systems were in place to ensure an education that would allow them to be productive citizens. The reduction -- and this is disgusting -- and rotation of Child Study Team members is not fair to these students. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

COUNCILWOMAN CRUMP: There can be no consistency in handling the myriad of problems they bring from home to school. There should be a Child Study Team in every school to meet the challenges that our children face on a daily basis. (applause) Not only is this decision unfair to the categorical population, it is unfair to the rest of the students who are now forced to surrender learning time to disciplinary actions that occur in the classroom.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes. Yes. (applause)

COUNCILWOMAN CRUMP: I was most pleased, and said so publicly, about the effort that was made to have our children attend clean, sanitary schools. I am saddened, once again, to report that the initial effort was just that -- initial. I receive calls on a regular basis about the once again deteriorating conditions of our facilities. Where is the consistency?

I have no problem with teachers, administrators, and staff being evaluated and tough decisions being made on behalf of children. However, I am not convinced that their accountability works -- that that took place. Accountability works either for all or for none. It is a two-way investment.

As members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, you share in the accountability process. It is your responsibility to make certain that adequate funding is in place so that we can purchase the supplies, equipment, materials, lightbulbs, and books to facilitate learning. It's a joke.

The article that appeared in *The Ledger* several weeks ago was a joke. It compares what goes on in the Newark district and what goes on in Livingston. It's absolutely ludicrous, and what they're doing is they're setting

our children up to appear as failures when they've never been given the chance to succeed. (applause) A game is being played.

In addition, you -- not us, but you-- When I say us, the community. You should issue a report card on whether you think the State has met their requirements. I'd be most interested in the results. Let's see if you can determine any consistency.

In closing, I dare Governor Whitman to enroll her children in our district. She could because she supports the voucher system. I dare (timer rings) Commissioner Leo Klagholz to enroll his children in our district. I dare Drs. Hall and Collymore to enroll their children in our district. (applause) For if they did, we would witness a miracle. Our children, who represent 100 percent of the future, deserve to be a part of that miracle. If we truly believe -- if you truly believe -- that education is the key to freedom, it is our obligation to provide not only the mechanism, but the opportunity and the consistency.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Maryam Bey?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All right, Maryam.

MARYAM BEY: Oh, I can see? Good. (referring to lighting)

Good evening. I'm Maryam Bey. One of the problems of coming behind such great speakers is usually what you're going to say -- what you're going to hear me say is going to be repetitious, but I have to say it.

I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired of attending meetings such as this one, because we all know that you know what to do. I'm really-- I'm one of those parents who initially supported Dr. Beverly Hall coming into

this system, giving her the opportunity to make the necessary changes that needed to be made.

As you can remember, Senator Rice, and Senator Ewing, myself along with several of the parents who are in this audience, met with you a year prior to you coming in here. At those meetings, we said to you the kinds of things that parents wanted to happen in this district, and this is what we said:

In 1995, meetings were held with parents and those of you who sit on this Committee regarding the need for parents to be inclusive in the educational process of their children if the State were to come into this district. We were assured that you had learned from your mistakes of Jersey City and Paterson, and you stated that you would not make the same mistakes.

At those meetings they were considered-- The concerns that parents had were not considered as an ax to grind or venting out our frustrations, but obtaining information from parents and community so that you could take this district over. We asked and some parents demanded that parents are given the respect due to them, that we want to be part of the decision-making process in our children's education.

What we have received is an administration that characterizes parents' concerns as *The Show of Shows*, as those parents who are illegitimate parents. So since the district cannot get parents to come up and speak for them, they are now renting parents through the Parent Academies, creating another scenario that will pit parents against parents and teachers against parents instead of unifying parents and teachers.

We are spending more money for consultants than we did before. We still pay Beverly Hall's limo services from New York to New Jersey, and I'd

like to know why we are still doing that. If we are going to make changes, we cannot expect the legislation to do it for us. As many parents have said -- and people have said before me -- we have to take it back. We do not have to ask you for anything, and once we get it in our heads that we don't have to ask, we will take it back. (applause)

Now, there are people who are going around saying that Beverly Hall is not the problem. Let me say this, two years ago I would have said that, but we gave her the opportunity to make the changes that she and Rebecca Doggett were supposed to have done when they came into this district and they chose not to do it. So this is what I say to those people who say she is not the problem-- For those who say Beverly Hall is not the problem, remember, she is working with a team, and she cannot be absolved from her participation in crimes against children.

West Side High School is a key example of crimes against children. My son went to West Side High. I gave Beverly Hall all the information about the problems at West Side High. I even came to City Council and talked about the problems at West Side High. Until the principal brought the media in to show the problems in the school, nothing was done.

In the Nuremberg trials -- trials of the Nazi war criminals -- the defense contended that the military personnel, the judges, and the doctors were following orders. However, the prosecution argued successfully that even if the experiments did not violate their laws, they certainly were crimes against humanity. When someone says it's not Beverly Hall, realize that she is a willing participant in this conspiracy against our children.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Right on.

MS. BEY: And I would suggest to those who feel she is not the problem, to send your child to West Side High School--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All right.

MS. BEY: --to send your child to Sussex Avenue, to send your child to Pashine Avenue, and then come back to me and tell me that the crimes are not being perpetrated against our children.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Annie Smith? Is she here? Monique Sanders? (no response) Susan Wanderman?

S U S A N W A N D E R M A N: Thank you. I have attended one other meeting, too, but the meeting I attended was the one in Livingston. So when I came down here I thought I'd get the same respect as the one I attended in Livingston. (outburst from audience)

Thank you very much. (referring to audience)

It was much different. You see those empty microphones? They weren't empty in Livingston. They weren't empty in Livingston.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: All right. (applause)

MS. WANDERMAN: See, I have to tell you something. I live in Livingston.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Go ahead.

MS. WANDERMAN: And I'm not ashamed of that. My kids got an education in Livingston, and I have to tell you it's a shame that my kids in Newark are not getting an education. I have to tell you that-- I'm second-generation American. My parents are first-generation American. I was

brought up with this thing of everyone's got the chance. Then, it slowly dawned on me 30 years ago, very suddenly, that there is a big difference between Livingston and Newark.

See, in Livingston we didn't have empty chairs. In Livingston, we had lights.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, yes.
(applause) Educate them.

MS. WANDERMAN: In Livingston, my kids in eighth grade had science labs. They had heat in their building. They had teachers who respected the parents.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WANDERMAN: I was important in Livingston. Parents in my school are not important.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WANDERMAN: I've got to tell you they're not important. I've got to tell you it's a shame to have to see the difference between what the kids in Livingston have and the kids in Newark have. I've got to tell you that there's just too many empty chairs up there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.
Oh, yes. (applause)

MS. WANDERMAN: There's just too many empty chairs up there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: And you know it.

MS. WANDERMAN: I've got to tell you that my kids in Livingston had art, library, music, health. They had gym. The teachers had a chance every day to have their papers corrected. I've got to tell you, I don't have that. I don't have that. My kids don't--

There are children in Newark who can go from kindergarten to sixth grade and never have library. (cheers and applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Educate them.

MS. WANDERMAN: Am I missing something? There are kids in Newark who will never be able to play an instrument.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WANDERMAN: My kids had drums. They had trumpets. They had anything they wanted to have.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WANDERMAN: There's some difference here.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, it is. That's right. Go ahead. Make it real for them.

MS. WANDERMAN: I'm trying to make it as real as I can.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You are. Go ahead.

MS. WANDERMAN: If you think -- and this was said before, too, and I apologize for saying it again--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Say it again. You're all right.

MS. WANDERMAN: But if you think education is expensive, you wait and try the cost of ignorance.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes. That's right. (applause)

MS. WANDERMAN: Because what we're taking from our kids -- the dignity, the hope -- in 20 years, they're going to take our dignity and they're going to take our hope. We have to think about that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WANDERMAN: These are people who we're robbing. We're stealing from them.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WANDERMAN: There is something that's missing. Maybe it's me. Maybe I have different glasses on.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: No, it isn't you. It's not you. Go ahead, teach. You can't teach what you had.

MS. WANDERMAN: Yes, you know, I think-- I didn't use my notes and I apologize for that--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You've done beautifully.

MS. WANDERMAN: --but it just came up that there is just too much disparity between what the kids in suburbia have and I don't care-- You know, it's culture and it's not culture.

I don't care if there are Asian kids or black children or Jewish children or Italian children, if they live in the suburbs, they're going to get it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes.

MS. WANDERMAN: If they live in Newark, they're not going to get it. It's just not there.

Thank you. (cheers and applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Excellent.
Excellent. They say cut back, we say fight back. They say cut back, we say
fight back.

SENATOR EWING: Wanderman for Mayor.

Bessie White?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Wanderman
for Senator. Wanderman for State Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Governor.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: And Governor.

SENATOR EWING: Bessie White? Diane Autin? (no response)
Nicole Harper?

N I C O L E H A R P E R: (speaking from audience) I'm here.

SENATOR EWING: Nicole?

MS. HARPER: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. HARPER: Diane Autin wasn't able to make it here today, so
I'm going to speak for a couple of minutes in her stead, but she will be able to
submit her testimony to you.

SENATOR EWING: Certainly. What is your name, please?

MS. HARPER: Nicole Harper. Okay?

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. HARPER: Good afternoon. My name is Nicole Harper, and
I represent two perspectives here this afternoon. One is as a parent of a child

receiving special education services here, and two, as a Project Director for Community Education Project of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network.

My comments today will focus on the delivery of special education services to children with disabilities and other special needs. For years, students in the Newark Public Schools have had their rights violated in every respect. Children who should have been evaluated and classified were ignored, while other children were inappropriately classified and placed. Children with emotional and behavioral problems have been illegally sent home without services instead of being provided with positive behavioral supports to address the manifestations of a most-misunderstood or uncared-about disability.

Children have gone for weeks, months, even years, i.e., waiting lists that should not exist, without receiving the education and related supports outlined in their Individualized Education Plans. Parents have been given the runaround and denied their right to participate as equal partners with professionals in the education decision-making process. Some parents of children with disabilities welcomed the State takeover, hoping against hope that it would mean a change in the illegal and unmoral practices of some of the services provided or not provided to their children.

With the selection of Dr. Stone as the new Director of Special Education Services, many parents began to feel optimistic about the delivery of special ed services in Newark. She developed a new and comprehensive IEP. She reached out to the Special Education Advisory Council, advocates, and other agencies promoting good outcomes for students. She also began to organize professional development for some of the Child Study Team members

who came and helped with the development of a new plan to bring Newark into compliance with Federal and State special education laws and regulations.

While problems still existed, she has given parents and advocates a sense that positive change is in the works; however, parents and school personnel have expressed a lack of trust in the new administration. Their concerns are that the delivery of special education services are not based on what is right and appropriate for children, but on cutting costs.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. HARPER: Upon speaking with Dr. Stone and Ms. Christie, the Associate Superintendent of Newark Public Schools, they have pledged that no services will be implemented without appropriate space, personnel, and support services. This was in response to allegations that they were bringing 43 students back into the district -- who are classified emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, and autistic -- to meet budget needs.

We, of course, agree that an IEP meeting must be held for each student to discuss whether or not a change in placement is appropriate for each individual student. While the Community Education Program strongly supports the concept of least-restrictive environment, we cannot support dumping students into settings which are not equipped to meet their individual needs.

On a more personal note, my son, Tony, who has autism-- For two years, I had tried to have my son included in a regular education program in a public school. Only after two years and some safety issues did I have to take my son out of Newark Public Schools.

In addition, we continue to hear from parents that the related services that are on their children's IEPs are not being provided consistently as per their IEP, that budgetary considerations are influencing the recommendations for related and other services on the students IEPs, and that the changes (timer rings) are being made in students' programs and services without holding necessary and mandated meetings or providing mandated notice to families.

Not surprisingly, these violations result in money savings to the district in the short run, but they are extremely detrimental to students, and that's a problem for the district and our community in the long run. We do not expect that all of the problems of decades of noncompliance to be resolved in just a year; however, we are disturbed by the reports that we're hearing from parents who are calling our office.

More attention needs to be paid to these issues, and now, by people who are truly dedicated to maximizing the development of children with disabilities. Hopefully, that will include the State representatives who have taken over the school system. It is a massive job, but the district has both a constitutional and a legal obligation to achieve this goal. The Community Education Project is eager to strengthen our relationship with the Newark Public Schools and parents to make that goal a reality.

On another personal note, it is my belief (timer rings) that if parents are not included on every level of the decision-making process of the school system that there will be no harmony, and there will continue to be students who fall through cracks, drop out of schools, and most unfortunately, leave or graduate high school uneducated.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Do we have a copy of your testimony, please? (affirmative response)

Thank you.

Nancy Byrne? Is she here?

NANCY BYRNE: (speaking from audience) Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Good. Thank you.

MS. BYRNE: Good evening, Senators, friends, neighbors. My name is Nancy Byrne. I hold a master's in early childhood education from New York University, and I work in the enemy's territory. I'm a teacher-administrator in the New York City system.

I am, however, a home owner in Newark. I also am the new parent of a special needs child who is in the Newark school system. I have a very simple request tonight. We have a child who just turned five, who we adopted in April, who has a communications handicap. I want to know from all of you sitting here (referring to audience) -- stand up -- if you would put your three- or four-year-old child on a bus with 50 children going to five different schools?

Stand up. I want to see if you'd do that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: No way. It's a disgrace. It's a disgrace.

MS. BYRNE: Why?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: To save five bucks.

MS. BYRNE: Why, in the name of all that's holy, would I be presented with this problem not only once, but twice in a six-month period?

I was told that-- On a Friday afternoon, my housekeeper was told, "Oh, by the way, on Monday your child will be picked up on a large school bus." I called Mayor James at home. I don't want my child lost. My child is in special education because he can't tell you who he is or where he's going. Fifty children with braces and crutches, who don't know who they are or where they're going, to five schools. This is insane.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Not in Newark.

MS. BYRNE: But it happens in Newark.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, it does, all the time.

MS. BYRNE: I don't come with a complaint for the teacher. The teacher has 25 years of experience. She knows what she's doing. She is wonderful. We've seen more growth probably in the last few months with our son than he's had his entire life.

Two weeks ago, again, Friday afternoon, sure as shootin', "Oh, by the way, there will not be another small bus. Your child will be on a large bus starting Monday morning." I try to work for a living. How can any parent be expected to function with this kind of chaos brewing gosh knows when?

I've talked to other parents in the neighborhood who I know. I've been told, "Oh, get used to it."

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right, you're in Newark.

MS. BYRNE: I've been told by a mother who has an MBA, who is a bank officer, with a handicapped child, that she was threatened with arrest

because she was not pleased to put her four-year-old handicapped son on a bus with fourteen-year-olds.

I have been told by the Transportation Coordinator for the Newark system that “We don’t do transportation anymore.” I have been told by Ms. Hall’s office, “Oh, no, that’s not us.” I have been told-- I can give you a list. There must be at least 15 people and agencies I’ve called who are going like this. (gesturing)

Why do we have to fire people in Newark, who know the streets, who care about our children? (applause) Is it so hard to get a four-year-old from point *A* to point *B* without losing him?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: No. At least they’ve been there to pick him up.

MS. BYRNE: Well, that’s the other thing. That happened last week, but that’s minor. They forgot to pick him up. They arrived at school with one child on the bus. They had a substitute driver. So the housekeeper called several times wanting to know-- I was fending phone calls back and forth in my classroom in New York to the housekeeper, but what are we going to do, there’s no school bus? She has money I gave her after the first fiasco -- cab money -- to take my child six blocks to school. So calls back and forth, nobody’s responsible, whatever--

The name you need to know is Joe Somi -- S-O-M-I. (timer rings) He is the Essex County Special Services Coordinator for Busing, and he’s been the culprit for at least five years, from everyone I’ve talked to with special needs children. That’s the person where the bucks stop, but somebody hired him to do this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: It's subcontracted.

MS. BYRNE: Hall subcontracted all of this out to him.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, she did.

MS. BYRNE: She took Newark jobs to subcontract this-- It's life threatening.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Money or kids.

MS. BYRNE: It's money or kids, and it ain't going to be my kid.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: All right.
(applause)

SENATOR EWING: Andrew Washington? Is he here? Andrew Washington? Edith Ruiz? (no response)

C O N S T A N C E W A S H I N G T O N: Excuse me. Andrew is not here, but Constance Washington is. Okay? (affirmative response)

I would like to address the Committee this evening in reference to-- First and foremost, I must tell you that I am a parent, a grandparent, and a great-grandparent, and I have attended the Newark school system myself. My old alma mater is Central High, which is still standing and I am 62 years old, and I'm still raising children.

I want to speak to you tonight because I have a serious problem. First and foremost, I cannot deal with the politics that are being played on our children. It's so obvious that it appalls me, because I call myself a political person. But most of the time, we have learned in the political arena that we have to use a little finesse and put covers on it, but it's not happening. The end result is that it is frustrating me and angering me as a parent, as a

grandparent, and as a great-grandparent. If this is what I have to look forward to in my few hours or years that are left, I think I'm going to spend them doing something constructive.

What I mean by that is I'm going to fight this situation with all the might that I have and all that I can muster, because it's necessary. It's been done before and it can be done again. I want to see people begin to look at our children as someone who they love and they want to learn. I know you folks up there, if you have children, you don't have to be taught that. It should be something that's ingrained in you. Okay?

But I hope by the time we get finished helping you, educating you to what you're doing wrong, that your blinders will come off, your ears will come open, and you'll understand how important it is to educate my grandchildren who are children who were born from drug addicts. They need that special attention, and believe me when I say that they're going to get it, they're going to get it--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All right.

MS. WASHINGTON: --because I know what it takes to be successful politically.

Some of you know that, don't you, Ron? (laughter) And there are several of them downtown who know that also. I still have a little left, and what I've got left is going to be for my children and those children like my children.

They do all the statistics in the world about how many kids are born of one parent in the home. How many kids are born addicted to drugs who are dying every day in the hospital. They bring out these statistics and

they do something foolish like this. You know? We all aren't ignorant. We all aren't stupid and we don't have blinders on. But I want you to know that this grandmother -- (timer rings) great-grandmother is very tired, and she's ready to hit the streets.

Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: All right.
(applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Edith Ruiz?

EDITH RUIZ: Good evening. My name is Edith Ruiz. I have several children in the school system of Newark. I would like to thank you for being present. It's a shame that the whole Committee is not here, so they can hear our concerns.

Really, I wish I could tell you that the public schools right now are a paradise, but I'm sorry to tell you that it is not a paradise, it's not a dream, this has become a nightmare. I'm not here to provoke confrontation. I am not here to insight an argument or agitate a volatile issue. I am here to make you aware of our concerns and hopefully be the catalyst for change which we desperately need. I'm going to address a few areas that are affecting the educational lives of our children. Some of them will be repeated, some of them, probably, are new for you.

There is a great lack of control on the school grounds and in the classrooms -- fist fights, drugs, and alcohol usage. Individuals assigned high administrative positions were not certified or had the proper credentials to

hold those positions until a year after hire. We want a complete and full investigation of all cluster staff, including the administrators. (applause)

Not only that, we are requesting that we hear from the resource of this investigation-- Some clerks are making over \$48,000 to \$58,000 a year without credentials or proper certifications. It is appalling to see the extravagant expenditures of the cluster's offices, such as new furniture. The cost of one chair in our north ward cluster -- \$599 for one chair.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All right. Tell the truth.

MS. RUIZ: While at the same time, an enormous number of teachers are crying for basic supplies desperately needed in that same school.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. You tell the truth.

MS. RUIZ: These perks do not commensurate with their performance on the job, and we just don't have the money to pay that luxury.

Many mistakes have been made in the selection of principals and vice principals in the north ward schools. For example, in schools that are overwhelming Hispanic, the principals no se habla Español. (laughter) Roberto Clemente and Raphael Hernandez are two examples. I know there are more, but I don't have time to put them all together. You can investigate that, too, please. This, by reason of the language, serves to ostracize and alienate students by their own failure to communicate with them, so my kids are punished and my parents are punished because the principals no se habla Español.

Parents are experiencing a great deal of difficulty in dealing with principals who are arrogant and disrespectful, but nothing has been done to address those concerns. Parents do not feel that they are part of the schools anymore. It was bad before, and we celebrated the takeover because we didn't think anything was going to be worse than what we had before, but I'll tell you something, we were wrong.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Right on. Tell the truth. (applause)

MS. RUIZ: The Hispanic community, together with the African-American community and the Portuguese community, are outraged at what's happening. We brought these concerns to you many times before. We have met on some of these issues before, but we still have not seen any changes. We are tired of writing letters. We're tired of calling. We're tired of calling the media and nothing is being done. I don't really know the meaning of this investigation, (timer rings) but I would like to see action taken. (applause)

You see, being an educator is about finding ways to bridge gaps that may exist. It's about inclusion and finding, if necessary, new and innovative ways to get people to learn. Because when it's my way or the highway, we are finding out how quickly people hop on that highway to low self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse, and pregnancy. There are, of course, no alternative school programs, and that's a shame.

When it comes to the education of our children, even the perception of impropriety is totally unacceptable. We, the parents and students, are paying the price of people quitting or staying off the job by

utilizing the bulk of the sick days allotted to them during the year. We are perpetually being shortchanged, and it isn't fair to our children and our community as a whole. (timer rings)

But the most horrendous situation is in the area of special education. Ladies and gentlemen, I had to hire an attorney to get home instruction for my sick son. You can imagine in a situation where the mainline students are being neglected what is happening to the students with special needs. It seems as though they are just buying time until they graduate, that is, if they don't drop out socially and educationally unprepared for the world. The \$17,000 per child allocated to this district, how is it used? Can somebody tell me? Certainly not in their education and their needs.

We have the problem of unsupervised home instructors making high salaries and not even testing or grading the students. These same students waiting for prescribed special equipment -- for example, a laptop approved by the Director of Special Education, but overruled by the clerical staff of the Purchasing Department-- The equipment was ordered in August 1996 -- and this is March 1997 -- and the student is still waiting for that equipment.

We are known as a country against child abuse, yet this school system is practicing the ultimate kind of child abuse. (applause) It is mutilating the education and the future of hundreds of sick and disabled children. We must do better for our students. We certainly must do better for ourselves.

We thought we got rid of the crooks, but did we really? This is still a failing system.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Kim Gaddy?

KIM THOMPSON - GADDY: Good evening.

I am here today to voice some of my concerns and opinions of the Newark Public Schools' progress since the State has taken over as a parent, as an advocate for children, and lastly, as one of the appointed members of the Advisory Board.

The New Jersey Constitution specifically delegated to the Legislature the responsibility to provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools for the instruction of all children in the State between five and eighteen years of age, and you have failed.

Monitoring of the Newark district began in 1984 and the State had total control of the Newark district by 1993. First, the State concluded that the leadership, both of the district central office and local schools in large urban school districts, such as Newark, requires experienced and proven qualities in the areas of organization, management, interpersonal skills, and communication. My investigative report concludes the staff the State selected, with the assistance of Dr. Hall, do not possess proven qualities or better leadership skills than those individuals they replaced. (applause) And guess what? Our children are still failing because of gross deficiency of leadership.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.
That's right. (applause)

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: Secondly, the CCI report stated the Newark Public Schools, because of the performance deficiencies of the district and school administrators, are being denied their right under New Jersey law to a thorough and efficient system of education. Therefore, I report that the Superintendent and Klagholz have failed to provide effective oversight of the educational process they have been commissioned to lead.

When you talk about Governor Whitman's core curriculum, that's not a substitute for *Abbott v. Burke*. But Governor Whitman believes that's the cure-all and it's not. She has continually denied adequate funding for the Newark Public District.

Senator Ewing, along with the other members on this educational Committee, you have failed us tremendously, because you have turned your back on the children of this district. (applause)

My son is eight, and he's a third-grader in this district. I have 15 nieces and nephews who are also currently in the school district.

Thirdly, the CCI report concluded, children in Newark Public Schools, with rare exceptions, do not have appropriate environments for instruction. Now, Maryam Bey talked a little about that at West Side. The classrooms are dirty and in poor repair, lighting, ventilation, and temperatures are inadequate and/or unstable. If this is the case, why is the Governor and Commissioner Klagholz decreasing funds for the Newark District? Do they really care about the education of urban children?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: No.

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: I don't think so, either.

In order to comply with the deficiencies in the areas of facilities we need \$192 million. Also, to computerize the schools and our libraries (timer rings) we need an additional \$150 million.

I conclude, again, Governor Whitman, the Joint Education Committee, Commissioner Klagholz, you do not care about my son's right to a quality education in a public institution, and it's his birthright.

I also must add, my nephew is a freshman at Arts High, a brand-new facility. The school has no ventilation. My nephew is sick each and every day. We've spent millions of dollars to repair Arts High. The roof is still leaking.

When does it stop, Senator Ewing? Tell us.

The State continues to fail to educate Newark's 47,000 students. The State has failed (timer rings) to implement an independent monitoring system to ensure education is happening in all of the classrooms. The State has failed to support adequate library support for instruction in Newark schools, and you have failed.

When we talk about what the true needs are of the children in Newark, I know you know what they are, Senator Ewing. I know Dr. Hall knows, and I know that all of the members of your Committee know, but why must we continue to play the games at the expense of our children?

This is the time where the youth are a precious jewel. They are the only future that we have. When you begin to play with the lives of our students and my son, it becomes very personal.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: That's right. Very personal.

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: I think that it is very disrespectful that you can sit up here with two other members -- and there is not any other white member who sits on the Committee who dares to come in here and face us-- (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Who are what?

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: White. White. White.

Because the reality is, Senator Ewing -- the reality is -- the State doesn't really give two cents about the education of our children. Because if you did, you wouldn't show the disrespect that you have shown not only at this meeting, but at the last meeting.

I think that for the record, when you look at articles and documentation that was prepared -- the Strategic Plan from Dr. Hall -- you look at The Star-Liar-- (laughter) This was an article back on December 5, which I carry around, "Eighth-Grade Performance: Dismal." Our children are failing and they're crying out for help. They're crying out for help.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, they are.

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: The only way we can begin to help them is to, first of all, give us the money that we need to educate our children. It's not a mistake that Livingston, as the young lady eloquently stated, receives the kind of funding and support that they do; that's a rich district that provides votes. But Governor Whitman is going to be awakened when her election comes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: All right.
(applause)

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: I just want to say education will become a priority again in the City of Newark--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: It still is.

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: --because we will never give up on our children. We will not sell them, and we will not allow Dr. Hall, the administration, or the State to use them in the manner that they are. They're our children. I think that we all have learned a true lesson here. Many of us were definitely not for State takeover, but some of us did give Dr. Hall the opportunity.

And I was one of those, as well, Maryam.

I sat down and I met with Dr. Hall. I really thought in her heart of all hearts, she was going to be the answer that so many of us needed because she had the qualifications.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, she did.

MS. THOMPSON-GADDY: But how can she do what she planned to do if she doesn't have the money or if Klagholz and Governor Whitman will continue to control this district from the State level? How can she do it?

It's not right that you continue to neglect us. It's not right that \$36 million was taken from us. Then you give us \$26 million back like that's the answer. If you heard the statistics just to bring our building up to code, it was in your CCI report about the deficiencies. We don't have enough money. We don't have enough money.

So I would hope that you listen again to the remarks made when you're not eating or when you're not talking. (applause) I would hope that

you listen and you really give our children the opportunity that they need and give them their right to a quality education.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Maritza Torres-Falu?

MARITZA TORRES - FALU: Good evening.

My name is Maritza Torres-Falu. I am a mother. I have a child in Science High. I have another one going to the same school next year, hopefully.

Now, Senator Ewing, the shoe is on the other foot. In 1992, me and two other people who are here with us tonight ran for School Board. I made it; however, it was stolen from me.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Right. Tell them.

MS. TORRES-FALU: I fought the State and the School Board until we put in jail the person who did it and the persons who were responsible for it. When the State was coming, we supported it. We provided them with information because we knew that there was a lot of corruption. We knew that it was not working for our children, and we thought it was the light at the end of the tunnel. Damn, we were wrong. Because all of you what you just did was betrayed us -- betrayed the trust that we put in you to educate our children. It's a crime what you all are doing.

Right now in Science High I cannot understand how a child can be, for five months, going to school every day, studying a book on algebra, and then, when the midterms come, get a test in something different -- of another book that he had never ever seen. Then the child failed -- got an *F*. Me, as a

parent, almost tried to kill him when I saw that. When I went to school, I couldn't even get an answer from the teacher -- tried to explain how a test was not in accordance to what they were teaching the children. That's ridiculous.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: It's a conspiracy. It's a crime.

MS. TORRES-FALU: That's ridiculous.

All the high schools that we have right now-- Over here what they're doing is just pushing the children out of school. Central High is a total disgrace, and we need to do something to save these children. As much effort as we all put to have the corruption out of the district before and see the State come in and do some good, we're going to do double to get you out of here. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Maritza, what school was that where they gave the test and they hadn't--

MS. TORRES-FALU: Science High.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: All of them.

MS. TORRES-FALU: They said all of them. My problem is in Science High.

SENATOR EWING: Maritza, I'm asking you what school you're talking about.

MS. TORRES-FALU: Science High.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Tell him to investigate the algebra test. That's all. Investigate the algebra test.

MS. TORRES-FALU: All the schools are like that, but the problem that I got into is Science High, which is supposed to be one of the best

schools in the city and it's not happening. Another thing was, there was supposed to be a two-hour test, they only gave them an hour to complete it -- an hour.

SENATOR EWING: That was at Science High?

MS. TORRES-FALU: Science High. They don't even have a vice principal, and the principal was terrified of me coming in here today and telling you what's going on in that school. Nevertheless, they have a lot of lead poisoning in that school.

SENATOR EWING: Brenda Figueroa? Maria Pinto? Betzack Jimenez? Maria Rodriguez? (no response) Georgiana Hart? (applause)

G E O R G I A N A H A R T , R.N.: I'm a school nurse at Fourteenth Avenue School, and I also have three children -- had three children -- some are still going to Newark schools.

(witness addresses audience, not Committee) This is just going to be a little lesson. I'm not going to test anybody on it. (laughter) But I'm going to define two words. One of them is hearing, and the other one is parity.

Now, as a school nurse, I was very glad to hear -- to really listen, I should say -- at the last meeting when I heard parents who were concerned, as I was, about the food in the schools, you know, where we've been getting a lot of baloney, and I don't just mean hot air. (laughter)

Something that a lot of you might not know is there has been three outbreaks of hepatitis A in the Newark schools, and that's from food. You know, there are many kinds of hepatitis--

STAFF MEMBER: Would you like to address the Senators?

MS. HART: Pardon me?

STAFF MEMBER: Would you like to address the Senators?

MS. HART: Well, I'm really-- You see, I'm addressing everyone, but this is the majority of people here. (indicating) (applause) And I really need to define this word, hearing, and I guess that's why I'm addressing you all, because hearing means listening to.

There were many hearings. There was one February 5, one yesterday that I went to, and there have been parent advisory hearings every month. This is a hearing. I saw in the papers today, there are going to be 23 hearings before the end of June on the State and Christie Whitman's budget -- 23 hearings. That's a lot of hearings. (laughter) So I'm wondering the purpose of this-- Christie Whitman did find this \$26 million. Now, does that mean she's heard? I don't think so, because she still wants to cut the budget somewhere between \$26 million and, I guess, it's between \$50 million and \$70 million--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: It's \$87 million.

MS. HART: It's \$87 million now. All right.

So the trend is to cut the budget, no matter how many pennies we find, so that hearing here-- I hear what everyone has said, people from Livingston, people who have been brought in to test eyes -- which is supposed to be the job of the nurses, so you kind of suspect what's happening, especially when they're not testing them in the right way-- So to me, hearing really is listening and communicating, and that's why I'm facing the majority of people here, students, people who work in the school, and parents.

You know we could get awfully tired of coming to hearings. But you know what? We're not going to get tired -- we're not. But you know what? We're also not going to get parity. Look it up in the dictionary. I did this afternoon. It means equality of rank, nature, and value.

When the courts (*sic*) were asked yesterday, Attorney General Veniero -- I don't know exactly how to pronounce--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's venereal disease.

MS. HART: --he said -- and this is by their own admission-- When they were asked to redistribute the education money, he said, "The court has no power to redistribute the wealth." (timer rings) So who has the power?

There was a very interesting article in *The Star-Ledger* here--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Star-Liar.

MS. HART: It says that-- Well, Star-Liar-- The one thing they did say that was true was they said -- it's really hard to read with the lighting here -- this word parity somehow has a history. It's an idea with a lot of power. Now, that's very interesting. Some people would say that parity is redistribution of wealth, of education, but under this system-- This is a failing system, someone said that already. This is a failing system. It's going down. Christie Whitman is cutting more money. She's not finding more. Parity is really distribution according to need. We all know that that's what we need here in Newark.

Some people like myself (timer rings) call distribution according to need-- (PA system shut off)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Oh, come on.
Turn it back on. Put it back on.

MS. HART: I can talk loudly enough.

We call it-- Some people like myself call that communism. Well,
we're going to have a march for parity, for communism--

SENATOR EWING: Talk in the microphone, please.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You cut it off.

MS. HART: They cut it off. I can talk loudly enough.

SENATOR EWING: Turn it on. (speaking to staff)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Is he going to turn the microphone
on?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Put it on.

SENATOR EWING: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: It's on.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: Thank you,
Assemblyman. Good man. Thank you, sir. You're a good man.

MS. HART: So those people who would really like parity, who
would really like to put the power into the hands of the majority-- It's not
going to be done by voting. Somebody did, here today, use the word
revolution. Well, it's a powerful word. So is the word communism. So is the
word power for our children. We're not going to get it under this failing
system. Come with us on May Day, May 3. March for parity. March for
communism.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Right on.
(applause)

SENATOR EWING: Councilman Quintana? Ruthann Wublin?
Russel Bowens? (no response) Justino Cecere?

JUSTINO CECERE: (tests microphone) At least one thing works
in this room.

Members of the panel, people behind me, welcome. I have two
things to address to you people. As you know, I have no paper, I'll read to you
nothing.

I have over here, which you people forget, Newark Public Schools
need your help. I don't know how many people, how many parents, how many
teachers have to tell you that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. CECERE: I don't know what you want us to do for you to
understand that all of you help us or you get the hell out of the chair.
(applause) We are the ones who elect you. We are the ones who pay your
salary. We are the ones who give you the bright light on your brains, and even
at that don't make you see true. We are the ones in the dark treated like
ignorance. Well, we want to stop that.

I am one of the parents of Barringer High School. I dedicated
myself because the school give me something, I have to give some back, which
you people are never doing. You only take, never give. This is a two-way
street. If you want to walk on your way, remember that we are still the power.
We can dismiss you without notification. We don't need you. We elect you
for the time being. All of you do what we need, and whatever these people are
addressing, which I'm not going to go back into detail-- I don't need to go
back into detail for that.

The schools are filthy. The supervision is-- (PA system accidentally shut off)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Turn it up, please.

SENATOR RICE: Make sure that mike is on.

STAFF MEMBER: It's the switch.

MR. CECERE: Yes, I've got it.

The schools are filthy, as I said. The supervision in the school is very poor. Me, as a parent, I've had four heart attacks. I'm sorry if I speak very trembling. I need a heart transplant. But, see, I understand. (indiscernible) I have to wait for my number. Maybe it never comes, but don't let these people wait for their number, because 10 years from now you won't have anybody in the Senate, nobody with brains, nobody with power because you don't educate our children.

The first weapon in this country is education. I come from European schools, and you know what, you people can't even wash their feet.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR RICE: I wasn't sure about the last part of the comment, but I do want to go to the next speaker.

Ms. Lightner? Gisele Lightner? Barbara Teague-Nesbitt?

Did I pronounced that right, Barbara?

M I L D R E D C E C E R I: I'm not Barbara. Barbara is the PTSO President of Barringer High School.

SENATOR RICE: Are you Mildred?

MS. CECERI: I'm Mildred Ceceri.

SENATOR RICE: Okay, you're next.

MS. CECERI: She is out with the flu, and she wanted me to address concerns for her. Okay?

SENATOR RICE: Sure, go ahead.

MS. CECERI: My name is Mildred Ceceri. I am a special ed teacher at Barringer High School, also Chairman of the Core Committee at Barringer High School, and a lifelong resident of Newark. I am a product of the Newark Public School System, and I must say, I had an excellent education when I went to school.

Ms. Teague's concerns--

SENATOR RICE: I want to concur with you. I went to South Side and I think I did pretty good, too.

MS. CECERI: Yes.

Ms. Teague's concerns are many in the school. We have-- First of all, the school building is filthy. The custodians-- It isn't-- You can't blame them, because when you have three custodians in a building as large as ours, it's very difficult for them to clean the building. Major--

SENATOR RICE: Excuse me. You're talking about Barringer or Barringer Prep?

MS. CECERI: Barringer High School. There is no more Prep.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE: There's no more Prep.

SENATOR RICE: Yes. I want to be sure she wasn't talking about the old building that was--

MS. CECERI: No, no. Barringer itself.

The floors are filthy in the classrooms. The garbage is piling up. The bathrooms are an atrocity. The teachers' bathroom, female teachers' bathroom -- gentlemen, you may not comprehend, but the woman on the panel might -- the toilet seats are missing, and that is an atrocity for a female's bathroom. The toilet paper is being hung on hangers. We don't even have a toilet paper holder for the toilet paper. In the men's bathroom, there are no toilets, there is no sink. These are teachers', imagine the children's bathroom. That is part of the cleanliness. The cafeteria, they're constantly spraying and it's not doing any good whatsoever.

The major concern here, gentlemen, is the illness that it's causing. If you checked the vents in the school, the vents were supposed to push pure air into the school -- not air-conditioning, but to vent the school -- because we have rooms that have no windows and leaking pipes, and this is causing mildew and much germs in the building, in the area. The concern here is that they should have someone come in and clean these vents. Second off, when you get rid of a custodian, could you please replace him? It's very difficult for three or four custodians to do the job of ten or twelve.

Second major concern, which should have been the first, but the cleanliness is getting to me, we have security -- lack of security. I'm sure you have in the past two weeks read about the break-ins at Barringer High School. Within four days, there were four break-ins. A major, major computer lab was taken apart. Every single computer, but four old computers -- and they weren't even 286, I don't know what model they were -- were taken. They might have been the 60s, whatever I know. Laser printers were taken, fax, modems, etc., all taken.

For this to happen we assumed it was an inside job, someone had a truck and was pulling it out. That was not the truth, gentlemen. There were kids staying in the building. They went into the cooking labs, starting cooking. They made baked macaronis for themselves before they confiscated the computers out of the computer room. We do not have enough security. We should have on every floor -- we have three floors-- The least we should have is 12 security guards on each floor. We do not.

We don't even have mag doors. (timer rings) Not the former principal, who was Mr. O'Neil, but the principal prior to that, who was Ms. Sera (phonetic spelling), had asked and requested for mag doors, and we still have not received them. We have asked for more security continually. They are stealing our computers. They are breaking into the music room. They are coming in the back doors. If we chain the doors, the fire department will fine us. We have 88 doors in the building.

You cannot have an educational process implemented in a building where teachers are not safe, where students are being accosted and beaten up in the building. This cannot happen. We have asked for security. They give us three more guards. We had twelve. We were down to four. Then we were up to five, now I believe we have seven. This building you must--

I ask you, incognito, please come visit our building. (timer rings) Be my friend. Come as my relative. I don't care. I'll take you around and show what the building is like.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You might get fired.

MS. CECERI: Who cares? At this point, I don't even feel like coming to this building any longer, and the teachers are not safe.

I do have a major issue that I would like to speak on, if that's all right. I don't know if any of you are aware of this. This little book in front of me, Chapter 18, Title VI, 6:28 (*sic*)-- Do any of you know what this book is on? This is special ed law, ladies and gentlemen -- special education.

Special education, especially in our building-- Well, I won't say how or why or who's doing it, but first of all, this is like *déjà vu*. I was here two years ago in front of Dr. Hall and her administrators and asked repeatedly-- We had a student who wanted to come to our school but was wheelchair bound. There is no accessibility into the building for a wheelchair-bound student. He is not emotionally disturbed. He does not have a mental problem. He just has a problem with his legs; he can't walk. He could not come into our school because we do not have access for wheelchair-bound students. Now, I requested this two years ago when I sat in front of Dr. Hall and her administrators, and I was told this would take care of it. Special ed law states you must have accessibility for handicapped students. We are in violation of the law.

Second off, I explained to her about our elevator constantly breaking down. It has been fixed many, many times. It's broken down again. We have teachers who are handicapped who take the elevator. We have students who take the elevator -- who cannot take the elevator because it keeps breaking down.

There is one point I would like to -- issue that I brought out and wrote about that states that provisions of full educational opportunity to

educationally handicapped pupils-- Well, especially not in our school when the grade levels are not the same. We have students, they are being scheduled -- ninth-graders with twelfth-graders in English classes. This is discrimination.

If you have a general regular ed class that goes from a tenth-grade, eleventh-grade, twelfth-grade English, and then they go from a low level to a high level, but they're all tenth-graders-- They are mixing ninth-graders in with twelfth-graders, and twelfth-graders are losing the ability to function because they feel that they are being taught on the baby level. "Why am I learning this baby English when I should be taught the masters, the poetry--" Our students may be emotionally disturbed and perceptually impaired, they are not dumb. They are bright even though they have a learning disability. They are learning disabled; that means it takes them longer to learn a subject.

Also, there is a stipulation that you do not label a student as special ed. Well, our scheduling -- and on any report card you will notice that Mary Smith is OP, meaning that Mary Smith is a tenth-grader, perceptually impaired student. This should not happen. This is illegal. That child is being labeled. It can be under a section -- 1, 2, 3, 4. Every report card, every report sheet that comes through in the high school has section numbers, and they should be sectioned 1, 2, 3, 4, not Mary Jones OP.

SENATOR EWING: Mildred, do you have a copy of your testimony?

MS. CECERI: I can write one up for you.

SENATOR EWING: We would like it.

MS. CECERI: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: But, if you don't mind, I'd like to stop you now--

MS. CECERI: Okay, that's fine.

SENATOR EWING: --because there are so many other speakers -- to give them a chance.

MS. CECERI: I appreciate--

SENATOR EWING: But we would like a copy of these comments and everything.

MS. CECERI: I will send you a copy.

I'll send it to you, Senator Rice, if that's all right.

Senator Ewing, if you have an address--

SENATOR EWING: We'll give you a card.

MS. CECERI: I thank you for listening to me, because the inequities in special ed are not only in Barringer, they're throughout the city and it's a disgrace. Something should happen and someone should do something for our students.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Francisco Colon? Barbara Colon? (no response) Joseph Chagnon? Silent G? (indicating pronunciation)

J O S E P H C H A G N O N: Senator Ewing, you've pronounced it correctly, but we've anglicized it to Chagnon.

Prefacing my remarks, I want to say that some of the things I'm about to talk about Senator Rice has been out in the forefront on. Also, I would implore that the Committee take serious consideration of the remarks

made by all of the speakers. While I can't devote the time to buttress them except in this way, because I'm here for a specific purpose, but the conditions that they cite in the schools are valid.

Let me identify myself. My name is Joseph Chagnon. I'm the President of CASA, the principal's union of supervisors in the district of Newark.

I do want to say a couple of positive things, because I'm trying to be very objective. It's difficult. I want to take this opportunity to commend the Superintendent for expanding -- not initiating, but expanding -- all-day kindergarten programs in all of our elementary schools. My union is in complete agreement with the concept of early intervention and childhood education.

Dr. Hall, when she first came here, brought a strong commitment for the improvement of instruction through the use of technology. It is our hope that the emphasis on technology will help eliminate the technological lag which our students are currently suffering in the schools and help improve achievement.

I have to say that after about two and a half years that our union has finally been able to develop some kind of rapport -- professional rapport -- with the Superintendent where, at least, we feel our concerns are being received and a dialogue takes place. Whether it's successful or not is another issue.

I do have some concerns that I want to address specifically. I realize that it's late, but I want to ask that if I run over, give me the same courtesy that you gave the speaker way earlier. We have several concerns

regarding the State takeover of the Newark schools. I'm only going to concentrate on a couple.

I would implore -- maybe Senator Rice, who's local-- We've gotten together in the past on some things -- not frequently and not near--

But I hope maybe, Senator Ewing, you would take the opportunity to invite me and the other union presidents down to your office and to talk on a one-to-one basis. Public testimony would just take days and days, but there are some concepts which I'm about to espouse here that I think need your addressing.

SENATOR EWING: I've had a couple of meetings with Mr. DelGrosso.

MR. CHAGNON: Well, you haven't had them with me, and I would appreciate one, because I represent the other section of what's called the team.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Since you're offering, Mr. Chagnon, I'd appreciate a meeting with you, as well. I'm Assemblyman Craig Stanley, my aide is right there. (indicating)

MR. CHAGNON: Great.

One of our primary concerns is the budget. Now, prior to the State takeover the district had a free balance of \$30 million. Since the takeover, the \$30 million has been spent. Now, I've heard different budget figures here tonight, but I'm going to use the ones that I had at the time I prepared my remarks.

I'll wait. I've waited this long.

SENATOR RICE: No, she's trying to get the card to you so you can meet, okay?

MR. CHAGNON: Thank you, Senator. (timer rings)

SENATOR EWING: Just continue, please.

MR. CHAGNON: All right.

Now, current projections -- and I say I've heard other numbers here -- and when I worked up my remarks these are the numbers I came with--

Thank you very much. (business card given to witness)

Current projections call for a \$30 million deficit, plus another \$10 million in reducing administrative services at the central office. In my calculations, the \$30 million spent, the \$34 deficit, and the \$10 million is \$74 million, and I'm not saying that's all.

Most recently, the State, through Governor Whitman, restored to Newark approximately \$26 million to \$29 million. However -- and, again, my figures may be out of date -- this still leaves a \$45 million deficit in funding. Given this fact, the projected budget is inadequate to support the program of intensified instruction and reform for our children. (timer rings) Obviously, our children need more than core standards. They need more money.

The severe cuts of administrators at the central office, the reduction of cafeteria and custodial workers, cutbacks in the social workers, school psychologists and learning consultants, and general teachers can only impair these efforts. Now, mind you, I'm talking about competent personnel. Cutting them if they're competent is not helping us. We need those people in place to improve student achievement.

As the district buys into the State's core standards initiative, additional funding is going to be needed. We can't afford to lose staff. We can't afford to lose staff in terms of custodians, cafeteria workers, social workers, LCSs, general teachers. Parents have spoken about this before me. We have to stop the proliferation of vacancies in the administrative, teaching ranks, as well as the supporting instructional and noninstructional personnel. People have to be in position to do the job, and they have to be in the position constantly to provide continuity of instruction and continuity of services. To me -- and you know I'm not a brain surgeon -- this requires funding for the total program. It has to be provided to the district, and we're talking about money that's been lost. When you mandate new programs you need to fund them.

I want to move on to another serious concern -- it's a major concern of our union -- and that is in the implementation and the negative impact -- and, Senator, this is what I'm calling your attention to -- Senators and Assemblyman -- of the assessment process put in place by the State-operated district of Newark for all principals and vice principals. You passed that legislation.

This union, particularly myself and our leadership, has and continues to maintain that the process is seriously flawed and has inflicted injustices upon dedicated and competent administrators. Notice, I am not talking about those who are incompetent.

For example -- and we're talking about due process -- no assessed person, meaning a principal or vice principal, has ever been afforded their right -- their right -- to face their assessor during the postevaluation conference.

That means the assessor evaluates me and some Assistant Superintendent new to the district calls me in and says, "Your assessor-- This is your evaluation."

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Where's your union rep?

MR. CHAGNON: Even criminals have a right to face the person accusing them of performance or lack of performance. I hate to use that comparison, but I need that for impact because this is definitely an injustice.

Secondly, no assessed person has ever been afforded their right to review or see their portfolio at the postobservation conference -- their portfolio, meaning their record of communication and their actions as administrators, which they give to each assessor. When there is a dispute, as is normal under 18A and Title VI, you're entitled to have a dialogue with the person who's evaluating you. You're entitled to say, "Let me see the evidence. Let me show you where it's correct or it's incorrect." Never happened--

Three, several assessed persons were not given their evaluation results according to the district's -- the district's, which is the State's -- own time lines. Now, very simply, there are three phases to the assessment, and the assessment is spread over 18 months. The district decided the time frames. We didn't object. We said, "Hey, if you have to do it, let's do it." These people were already in the next phase of their assessment by the time they were given their evaluation of the first assessment -- or the second assessment and they were in the third.

I ask you, how can you improve -- how can you improve -- in an area when you don't know the area to be improved, and then they come in and assess you as to what you're doing. It's just impractical. Now, I've had

business experience in management before I came into the public school system. This is nothing new. This is assessment of personnel.

There are certain things that have to happen and, Senators and Assemblyman, they have not happened.

Fourth, some assessed people were unjustly -- and that's my perception based on my facts here, they may have other information -- caused to be terminated or put in a position of having to make a choice of leaving the system -- leaving the district.

Here's an example -- and I'm quoting this-- This will be made available. If we have a dialogue, I'll bring the document, but these are excerpts from an assessor. An assessor writes on the evaluation report -- this is one individual-- I'm using John Doe instead of the person's name.

"Mr. John Doe's many duties are specifically spelled out by his administrator, and he does no work in curriculum, program, assessment of student progress, and so forth..." There is an ellipse there for a purpose. This is a continuation of the assessor's comments, "All of his work except for discipline, which he handles well, is administrative in nature. He has been unable to have his administrator change his duties or responsibilities, so although he does his assigned duties well, he must be rated unsatisfactory according to our instructions." For the record, this administrator took an early retirement. He couldn't take the stress, and he couldn't fight the injustice.

Here, the administrator was doing what he was directed to do, doing it well, and was rated unsatisfactory. Now, I ask you, if you were in that gentleman's position or just on general principles -- because you're all well-educated and ethical people -- is this right? It is just? It is fair? The

impact of this type of situation is generating the kinds of comments you're hearing from the citizens about incompetent administrators, changing of administrators in midstream, vacancies. It's because of the pressure being brought on--

SENATOR EWING: If you have some other--

MR. CHAGNON: --on our administrators.

SENATOR EWING: Do you have some other parts you want to bring out one by one--

MR. CHAGNON: I'll bring it right up.

SENATOR EWING: --rather without the long explanations of them, please.

MR. CHAGNON: Senator--

SENATOR EWING: Because we've got other people--

MR. CHAGNON: I understand that, but you know I've been here since 4:00, and I appreciate the courtesy.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I've been here since 4:00, and I said I'd come and meet with you personally. You've got my card.

MR. CHAGNON: Oh, I didn't know it was from you, Senator. I thought it was from Senator Rice.

SENATOR RICE: No, that's why I was telling you-- I wanted to make sure you had his card before he left and would forget to get it to you here.

MR. CHAGNON: I apologize. I apologize, Senator Ewing.

SENATOR RICE: Me, you can find.

MR. CHAGNON: Okay. I hope this is not what the legislation intended when they passed the takeover law.

In closing, I want to ask you some questions. What would be the yardsticks used to measure the effectiveness of the State's takeover? Can you give me any idea on what you're going to do and how we're going to assess the State's takeover? Who's going to do it?

SENATOR EWING: I imagine they'll be depending mostly on the fourth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade testing.

MR. CHAGNON: No, no. That's the student's performance.

SENATOR EWING: Yes.

MR. CHAGNON: What is the State going to use to assess its performance in this district? (applause)

SENATOR RICE: Through you, Mr. Chair. That question was raised earlier. I've made notes because we need to go back and talk about this. It's a very valid question. It was raised -- I don't know if you heard it -- earlier by some speakers, and it's something we need to look at, because I can't really give you the answer to that. That's why we want to talk and listen, pull these transcripts, and figure out -- at least from my perspective -- what we have to try to do through waivers or do through legislation that wasn't brought up from the process.

MR. CHAGNON: Right.

Lastly, how will the results of any State evaluation of the district's progress be shared with the public?

SENATOR EWING: That is done in the annual reports that the State Superintendent gives to the Joint Committee, which is required in the law.

MR. CHAGNON: All right. Lastly, let me just state -- make it very clear -- I appreciate the opportunity-- I'd rather do it here than in the newspapers or other places, but let me make it very clear that our union, CASA, did not and does not embrace the State takeover of the Newark schools.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

The Very Reverend Petero Sabune?

SENATOR RICE: He's not here.

SENATOR EWING: Ann Shay Holliday? Laura Baker? Dennis Haas? Are any of the following students here, Shrema Sapp, Margaret Stevens, Carla Furr, and Stephanie Ford? (phonetic spelling) (no response) Is there anybody who gave their name to Trenton, whose name is on the list, who has not been heard? (no response)

We'll close the meeting then. Thank you very much.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)