



# Public Hearing

before

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL No. 1796

(The "Charter School Program Act of 1995")

**LOCATION:** Student Center  
Rowan College  
Glassboro, New Jersey

**DATE:** April 6, 1995  
10:00 a.m.

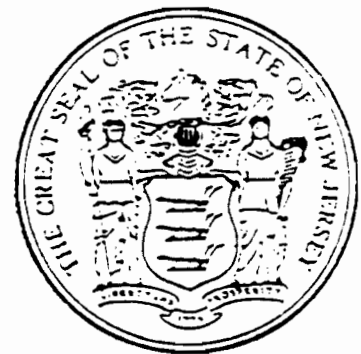
**MEMBER OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Senator John J. Matheussen  
District 4

Darby Cannon III  
Office of Legislative Services  
Aide, Senate Education Committee



*Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by*  
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
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## New Jersey State Legislature

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
STATE HOUSE ANEX, CN-1003  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0068  
(609) 984-6843

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Senate Education Committee will hold two public hearings on the following legislation:

**S-1796 The "Charter School Program Act of 1995."**

The hearings will be held at the following places at the dates and times listed:

**Thursday, April 6, 1995  
10:00 A.M.**

**Room 221  
Student Center  
Rowan College  
Glassboro, New Jersey**

**Friday, April 28, 1995  
10:00 A.M.**

**Seminar Room  
A.J.J.A. Wilson Alumni Center  
New Jersey Institute of Technology  
Newark, New Jersey**

*The public may address comments and questions to Darby Cannon, III, Committee Aide, and persons wishing to testify should contact Mary C. Lutz, secretary, at 609-984-6843. Those persons presenting written testimony should provide 10 copies to the committee on the day of the hearing.*

Issued 03/27/95

Assistive listening devices available upon 24 hours prior notice  
to the committee aide(s) listed above

SENATE, No. 1796

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 9, 1995

By Senators EWING and LaROSSA

1 AN ACT establishing a charter school program and supplementing  
2 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3  
4 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the  
5 State of New Jersey:

6 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Charter  
7 School Program Act of 1995."

8 2. The Legislature finds and declares that the establishment of  
9 charter schools as part of this State's program of public  
10 education can assist in promoting comprehensive educational  
11 reform by providing a mechanism for the implementation of a  
12 variety of educational approaches which may not be available in  
13 the traditional public school classroom. Specifically, charter  
14 schools offer the potential to improve pupil learning; increase for  
15 students and parents the educational choices available when  
16 selecting the learning environment which they feel may be the  
17 most appropriate; encourage the use of different and innovative  
18 learning methods; establish a new form of accountability for  
19 schools; require the measurement of learning outcomes; make the  
20 school the unit for educational improvement; and establish new  
21 professional opportunities for teachers.

22 The Legislature further finds that the establishment of a  
23 charter school program is in the best interests of the students of  
24 this State and it is therefore the public policy of the State to  
25 encourage and facilitate the development of charter schools.

26 3. There is established within the Department of Education a  
27 charter school program which shall provide for the approval and  
28 granting of charters to charter schools pursuant to the provisions  
29 of this act. A charter school shall be a public school operated  
30 under a charter granted by the Commissioner of Education which  
31 is operated independently of a local board of education and is  
32 managed by a board of trustees. The board of trustees, upon  
33 receiving a charter from the commissioner, shall be deemed to be  
34 public agents authorized by the State Board of Education to  
35 supervise and control the charter school.

36 4. An application to establish a charter school may be  
37 submitted by two or more certified teachers, ten or more  
38 parents, an institution of higher education, a business or  
39 corporate entity, or other appropriate organization as determined  
40 by the commissioner. A charter school may also be established  
41 by a currently existing public school pursuant to a proposal  
42 established by teaching staff members and parents or guardians  
43 of pupils enrolled in the school. A private or parochial school  
44 shall not be eligible for charter school status.

45 5. An applicant who wishes to establish a charter school shall

1 submit an application to the commissioner which shall include the  
2 following information:

- 3 a. The identification of the charter applicant;
- 4 b. The name of the proposed charter school;
- 5 c. The proposed governance structure of the charter school  
6 including a list of the proposed members of the board of trustees  
7 of the charter school or a description of the qualifications and  
8 method for the appointment or election of members of the board  
9 of trustees;
- 10 d. The educational goals of the charter school, the  
11 curriculum to be offered, and the methods of assessing whether  
12 students are meeting educational goals. Charter school students  
13 shall be required to meet the same testing and academic  
14 performance standards as established by law and regulation for  
15 public school students including the High School Proficiency Test  
16 and the Early Warning Test. Charter school students shall also  
17 meet any additional assessment indicators which are included  
18 within the charter approved by the commissioner;
- 19 e. The admission policy and criteria for evaluating the  
20 admission of students which shall comply with the requirements  
21 of section 8 of this act;
- 22 f. The age or grade range of students to be enrolled;
- 23 g. The school calendar and school day schedule;
- 24 h. A description of the charter school staff responsibilities  
25 and the proposed qualifications of teaching staff;
- 26 i. A description of the procedures to be implemented to  
27 ensure significant parental involvement in the operation of the  
28 school;
- 29 j. A description of and address for the physical facility in  
30 which the charter school will be located; and
- 31 k. Such other information as the commissioner may require.

32 6. An applicant to establish a charter school shall submit the  
33 application by February 15th of the year preceding the school  
34 year in which the charter school will begin operation. The  
35 commissioner shall review the application and make a final  
36 decision on whether or not to approve the application and grant  
37 the charter by March 15th. The commissioner may condition the  
38 granting of a charter on the school taking certain actions or  
39 maintaining certain conditions. The decision of the commissioner  
40 shall constitute final agency action.

41 7. A charter school established pursuant to the provisions of  
42 this act shall be a body corporate and politic with all powers  
43 necessary or desirable for carrying out its charter program,  
44 including but not limited to:

- 45 a. adopt a name and corporate seal; however, any name  
46 selected shall include the words "charter school";
- 47 b. sue and be sued, but only to the same extent and upon the  
48 same conditions that a public entity can be sued;
- 49 c. acquire real property from public or private sources, by  
50 purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, or by gift, for  
51 use as a school facility;
- 52 d. receive and disburse funds for school purposes;
- 53 e. make contracts and leases for the procurement of  
54 services, equipment and supplies; however, if the board intends to

- 1 procure substantially all educational services under contract with  
2 other persons, the terms of such a contract shall be approved by  
3 the commissioner, either as part of the original charter or as an  
4 amendment thereto;
- 5 f. incur temporary debts in anticipation of the receipt of  
6 funds;
- 7 g. solicit and accept any gifts or grants for school purposes;  
8 and,
- 9 h. have such other powers as are not inconsistent with the  
10 purposes of this act and any regulation promulgated pursuant to  
11 this act.
- 12 8. Charter schools shall be open to all students on a space  
13 available basis and shall not discriminate in their admission  
14 policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic  
15 ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a  
16 handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any  
17 other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district;  
18 however, a charter school may limit admission to a particular  
19 grade level or to areas of concentration of the school such as  
20 mathematics, science, or the arts. A charter school may  
21 establish reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students  
22 which shall be outlined in the school's charter.
- 23 9. a. Preference for enrollment in a charter school shall be  
24 given to students who reside in the school district in which the  
25 charter school is located. If there are more applications to enroll  
26 in the charter school than there are spaces available, the charter  
27 school shall select students to attend using a random selection  
28 process. A charter school shall not charge tuition to students  
29 who reside in the district.
- 30 b. A charter school shall allow any student who was enrolled  
31 in the school in the immediately preceding school year to enroll  
32 in the charter school in the appropriate grade unless the  
33 appropriate grade is not offered at the charter school.
- 34 c. A charter school may give enrollment priority to a sibling  
35 of a student enrolled in the charter school.
- 36 d. If available space permits, a charter school may enroll  
37 non-resident students. The terms and condition of the enrollment  
38 shall be outlined in the school's charter and approved by the  
39 commissioner.
- 40 10. A student may withdraw from a charter school at any  
41 time. A student may be expelled from a charter school based on  
42 criteria determined by the board of trustees and approved by the  
43 commissioner as part of the school's charter. Any expulsion shall  
44 be made upon the recommendation of the charter school  
45 principal, in consultation with the student's teachers.
- 46 11. A charter school may be located in part of an existing  
47 public school building, in space provided on a public work site, in  
48 a public building, or any other suitable location.
- 49 12. a. A charter school shall operate in accordance with its  
50 charter and the provisions of law and regulation which govern  
51 other public schools; except that, upon the request of the board  
52 of trustees of a charter school, the Commissioner of Education  
53 may exempt the school from State regulations concerning public  
54 schools, except those pertaining to civil rights and student health

1 and safety, if the board of trustees satisfactorily demonstrates to  
2 the commissioner that the exemption will advance the  
3 educational goals and objective of the school.

4 b. A charter school shall comply with the provisions of  
5 chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes concerning  
6 the provision of services to handicapped students; except that the  
7 fiscal responsibility for any student currently enrolled in or  
8 determined to require a private day or residential school shall  
9 remain with the district of residence.

10 13. The school district of residence shall pay directly to the  
11 charter school for each student enrolled in the charter school who  
12 resides in the district an amount equal to the local levy budget  
13 per pupil in the district for the specific grade level. The district  
14 shall also pay directly to the charter school any categorical aid  
15 attributable to the student, provided the student is receiving  
16 appropriate categorical services, and any federal funds  
17 attributable to the student.

18 14. The students who reside in the school district in which the  
19 charter school is located shall be provided transportation to the  
20 charter school on the same terms and conditions as transportation  
21 is provided to students attending the schools of the district.  
22 Non-resident students shall receive transportation services  
23 pursuant to regulations established by the State board.

24 15. For purposes of tort liability, employees of charter schools  
25 shall be considered public employees and the board of trustees  
26 shall be considered the public employer.

27 16. A public school teacher or administrator may request a  
28 two year leave of absence from the local board of education in  
29 order to work in a charter school and the board shall grant the  
30 request for the two year period. At the end of the two year  
31 period the teacher or administrator may return to the former  
32 position or may request that the leave be extended for an  
33 additional two years. Approval for the request shall not be  
34 unreasonably withheld. At the end of the fourth year, the  
35 teacher or administrator may either return to his former position  
36 or, if he chooses to continue at the charter school, resign from  
37 his district position.

38 17. Teachers on a leave of absence pursuant to section 16 of  
39 this act shall be permitted to continue in, and to make  
40 contributions to, their retirement plan during the leave of  
41 absence and to continue to be enrolled in the district's health  
42 benefits plan unless they elect other means of coverage provided  
43 by the district or the charter school. The charter school shall  
44 make any required employer's contribution to the district's  
45 health benefits plan during the teacher's leave of absence.

46 18. Teachers on a leave of absence pursuant to section 16 of  
47 this act shall not accrue tenure but shall retain tenure and shall  
48 continue to accrue seniority in the public school system if they  
49 return to their public school when the leave of absence ends.

50 19. a. The board of trustees of a charter school shall have the  
51 authority to decide matters related to the operations of the  
52 school including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures,  
53 subject to the school's charter.

54 b. The board of trustees of a charter school shall have the

1 authority to employ, discharge and contract with necessary  
2 teachers and nonlicensed employees subject to the school's  
3 charter. The board of trustees shall bargain collectively on  
4 salary and other issues and may choose whether or not to adopt  
5 the terms of any collective bargaining agreement already  
6 established by the school district for its employees. The board of  
7 trustees may retain or waive tenure for its employees. If tenure  
8 is granted to an employee, the tenure rights shall only be  
9 applicable to employment by the charter school. The charter  
10 school's tenure policy shall be outlined in its charter.

11 20. Each charter school shall submit an annual report to the  
12 commissioner by August 1 of each year. The report shall be in  
13 such form as the commissioner may prescribe and shall include,  
14 but not be limited to, the following information:

15 a. a discussion of progress made toward the achievement of  
16 the goals outlined in the school's charter; and

17 b. a financial statement setting forth by appropriate  
18 categories the revenue and expenditures for the previous school  
19 year.

20 The annual report shall also be provided to the parent or  
21 guardian of a student enrolled in the charter school, and to each  
22 parent or guardian of a student who has applied for admission to  
23 the charter school.

24 21. Any individual or group may bring a complaint to the board  
25 of trustees of a charter school alleging a violation of the  
26 provisions of this act. If, after presenting the complaint to the  
27 board of trustees, the individual or group feels that the board of  
28 trustees has not adequately addressed the complaint, they may  
29 present that complaint to the commissioner who shall investigate  
30 and respond to the complaint.

31 22. A charter granted by the commissioner pursuant to the  
32 provision of this act shall be granted for a five year period. The  
33 commissioner may revoke a school's charter if the school has not  
34 fulfilled any condition imposed by the commissioner in connection  
35 with the granting of the charter or if the school has violated any  
36 provision of its charter. The commissioner may place the charter  
37 school on probationary status to allow the implementation of a  
38 remedial plan after which, if the plan is unsuccessful, the charter  
39 may be summarily revoked. The commissioner shall develop  
40 procedures and guidelines for the revocation and renewal of a  
41 school's charter.

42 23. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and  
43 regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedures Act,"  
44 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the  
45 provisions of this act.

46 24. This act shall take effect immediately.

47

48

49

#### STATEMENT

50

51 This bill establishes a charter school program within the  
52 Department of Education to provide for the approval and granting  
53 of charters to charter schools. Under the bill's provisions, a  
54 charter school could be established by two or more certified

1 teachers, ten or more parents, institution of higher education, a  
2 business or corporate entity, or other appropriate organization as  
3 determined by the commissioner. A charter school could also be  
4 established by a currently existing public school pursuant to a  
5 proposal developed by teaching staff members and parents or  
6 guardians of pupils enrolled in the school.

7 An applicant wishing to establish a charter school would submit  
8 an application to the Commissioner of Education outlining among  
9 other things the proposed governance structure of the charter  
10 school including the method of appointment or selection of the  
11 charter school board of trustee members, the educational goals of  
12 the school and the proposed curriculum, the school's admission  
13 policies and criteria, and the age and grade range of students to  
14 be enrolled in the school. If the application is approved by the  
15 commissioner, the charter school board of trustees shall be  
16 considered public agents authorized by the State Board of  
17 Education to supervise and control the charter school.

18 The bill specifies that a charter school is to be open to all  
19 students and that a school may not discriminate in its admissions  
20 policies on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, status as a  
21 handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any  
22 other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district. A  
23 charter school may, however, limit admission to a particular  
24 grade level or to areas of subject concentration and may establish  
25 reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students in this  
26 regard. The bill also stipulates that preference for enrollment in  
27 the charter school shall be given to students who reside in the  
28 school district. If available space permits, a charter school may  
29 enroll non-resident students, the terms and conditions of which  
30 shall be outlined in the school's charter. If there are more  
31 applications to attend the charter school than there are spaces  
32 available, the charter school shall use a random selection process.

33 The bill provides that students who attend charter schools must  
34 meet the same testing and academic performance standards as  
35 established by law and regulation for public school students  
36 including the HSPT and the Early Warning Test. Charter school  
37 students shall also meet any additional assessment indicators  
38 which are included within the charter approved by the  
39 commissioner

40 In regard to the funding of charter schools, the bill provides  
41 that the school district of residence shall pay directly to the  
42 charter school for each student enrolled who resides in the  
43 district an amount equal to the local levy budget per pupil in the  
44 district for the specific grade level. Also, the charter school is  
45 to receive any categorical aid or federal funds attributable to  
46 that student.

47 Finally, the bill contains provisions covering a variety of areas  
48 including the waiver of State regulations for charter schools, the  
49 submission of annual reports by charter schools, and the  
50 investigation of complaints and revocations of charters by the  
51 Commissioner of Education when necessary.

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**SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Chairman):** Good morning, everybody. I appreciate Dr. James allowing us to use Rowan College for a hearing. This will be one of two hearings we are going to have. The next one will be at NJIT, up in Newark.

Dr. James?

**HERMAN JAMES, Ph.D.:** Thanks very much.

Good morning, Senator, and good morning to all the rest of you who are here. I just want to take the opportunity to welcome you to Rowan College. We are honored that you have chosen our campus as a site for your hearing on the charter school issue.

Like all of you, we realize that education is constantly changing. If we are to continue to improve the quality of life in New Jersey, we must invest our time and our resources exploring new and innovative ways of educating our young people.

At Rowan, we are adapting to the ever-changing landscape of higher education. We are in the process of transforming this College into a regional institution with a dynamic new outlook on the future. We are erecting new buildings, creating new schools, and developing new programs.

As you arrived on campus this morning, I am sure you saw the most obvious new addition to our campus, the \$16.8 million library, which we just opened at the beginning of this semester. It is more than twice the size of our old library, and I think you will agree it is far more impressive. Already it has become the focal point of our campus and the centerpiece of our vision for the future.

While I have the opportunity this morning, I would like to take this moment to thank you, particularly Senator Ewing, for supporting our efforts to build this remarkable new building. As you know, it was financed through the JAC bond. We could not have done it without the help of the elected leaders in the State of New Jersey.

The changes we are making have engendered a new enthusiasm among our faculty, our staff, and our students. More than ever before, our people are proud to be part of this place and confident that the future of this institution will be filled with excitement and opportunity.

I want you to know that we are eager to share that excitement and that opportunity with you as we work together to prepare the students and the leaders of New Jersey for the challenges of the 21st century.

I am sure you are ready to get your deliberations underway. I hope that when you finish here today, however, you will take a few moments to explore our campus and talk to some of our people. I think you will find that our enthusiasm is contagious. We look forward to working with you in the coming years as we try to make education in New Jersey better.

Thank you very much for coming to Rowan. Again, have a very productive day. Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Dr. James, and thank you for your hospitality, your great institution, and the job you are doing down here.

DR. JAMES: Thank you very much, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: The first individuals will be Edie Fulton and Dolores Corona, from NJEA.

**E D I T H A. F U L T O N:** Thank you, Senator.

I am here today on behalf of Dennis Testa, our President, who, unfortunately, is suffering one of those springtime viruses. Also, I am pleased to speak to you on behalf of the 145,000 members of the NJEA and the school children they serve in public schools across the State.

Like many others, I feel the concept before us today -- charter schools -- offers an exceptional opportunity to explore a new idea. Through charter schools, teachers might gain the opportunity to be more innovative in the classroom. Parents might gain more influence in public education.

Taxpayers might gain an even greater return on their investment in education. Our State might achieve national leadership in school reform. And, above all, children might reach beyond the program presented in a traditionally organized school.

Teachers and school employees would believe all this is possible, if we allow the children's best interest to be our guide. Improving the quality of education for all public school students must be our central concern.

The question is: How can the State craft charter school legislation to achieve that goal? To answer that question, we can look at how charter schools have fared in other states. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, as of January 1995, eleven states have authorized charter schools. Eight of those eleven have strictly limited the number of charters that can be authorized -- on average only about 35 per state.

Because states have not required charter schools to assess and report their students' performance, their effectiveness is not known at this time. Press reports seem to judge a charter's success or failure on its enrollment figures and its turnover rates, rather than on student performance.

On these and other measurements, however, charters are too new to have a statistical track record. We have only anecdotal information to guide us. Those anecdotes caution us to proceed with care, to take our time and do it right.

The National Education Association in Washington shares news articles with NJEA about charter schools that have appeared in papers across the country. I've attached several for your consideration. This morning, I would like to highlight just two of those examples. A Los Angeles charter school had to be closed because of serious financial mismanagement. The school was almost \$1 million in debt.

More common are reports of board members intruding on school professionals; in other words, micromanagement. A

charter school in Colorado, for example, fired its head administrator for "not ordering red construction paper in a timely manner and for diluting the soap in the bathroom."

Another problem is the impact charter schools are having on state funding to existing public schools. Take Massachusetts, for instance. When 18 authorized charter schools open there in September, many will disrupt their local school districts by pulling large numbers of students and their state funding. Marblehead, for instance, will lose more than \$400,000. Nauset Regional on Cape Cod will lose over \$630,000, and Hull will lose \$700,000. Worse yet, private school students are transferring into the new charter schools taking state funding away from their local districts.

To help New Jersey's charter schools avoid a host of potential problems, NJEA offers the following guidelines for an experiment with charter schools:

Guideline #1: Let's ensure success by setting realistic limits. Like the vast majority of other states authorizing charter schools, we should limit the number of schools in our experiment. This commonsense approach would allow us to refine the product before mass producing it. Starting with a limited number of charter schools also means the State Department of Education, already burdened with the oversight of 600 public school districts and two takeover districts, can better monitor their operation.

Next, to avoid disrupting existing public schools, we should initially limit the number of students who can transfer. Education is plagued by fads -- open classrooms one year, back-to-basics the next. If a new charter school emerges organized around a "hot" concept, it could attract hundreds of students almost instantly. Suddenly losing a large number of students -- as some Massachusetts districts are experiencing now -- would damage public schools with fixed overhead expenses.

Also, we should limit those who can create a charter school to parents, teachers, and school districts. Empowering parents and unleashing teachers' creativity is the whole idea behind the charter school movement. Religious and for-profit companies have other motives. Their motives -- profits and religious indoctrination -- are private concerns that would spoil the experiment. Charter schools should be public schools responsive only to the public and not to private agendas.

Guideline #2: Let's protect students' educational and environmental needs. Any wholesale waiving of regulations is sure to shortchange students. All regulations deserve careful review, not just those that impact health, safety, and civil rights.

Guideline #3: Students in charter schools should receive the funding and educational services taxpayers provide. We'll only know that this is occurring if charter schools are publicly accountable, both fiscally and educationally. They must be required to hold open public meetings, must be subject to independent financial audits, and must carry out mandatory State testing, such as the HSPT.

Guideline #4: If charter schools are to be new educational ventures, they'll need their share of financially less-secure teachers and teachers new to the profession. Teachers who want to be more creative should not be penalized in their employment contracts. They should not be discouraged from starting a charter because they can't afford to lose money or due process rights. Agreements bargained with the regular school system should carry over into the charter school. And just as veteran teachers would retain tenure, so should newer teachers be free to pursue tenure. In short, there should be no disincentive for teachers who transfer from the regular school system to the charter regarding their rights or benefits.

Guideline #5: Students in charter schools deserve State-certified teachers. Permitting noncertified teachers in

the classroom opens the door to widespread abuse. Experience shows that properly trained and educated teachers make a big difference in educational outcomes.

Our students' best interest is the principle that stands behind each of these five guidelines. Each aims to improve the quality of education for all public school students. For your consideration, I have attached a detailed list of criteria NJEA has developed for charter schools.

In offering these guidelines, however, I do not mean to imply that we have settled the matter. The charter school concept is still fluid and NJEA intends to keep exploring it with an open mind. We only ask you to do the same and that you proceed at a deliberate pace. This will ensure that New Jersey's charter school program, while not the first in the nation, is the best in the nation.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Edie, some of the things in here-- Have you looked at the bill we are discussing today?

MS. FULTON: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Aren't some of these areas already covered in the bill, the way you have recommended them?

MS. FULTON: Yes, they are, Senator. Testing is in there.

SENATOR EWING: I think it would be interesting if you could redo this for me -- for the Committee -- and give the things that are not included in the bill, so we do not have to root through a whole lot of stuff and say, "We have already included that."

MS. FULTON: All right.

SENATOR EWING: Give us the points you disagree with.

MS. FULTON: Or that are not present in the bill.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, because what you are summarizing out here sounds as though there are a lot of things that we haven't even taken care of in the bill we are discussing today.

MS. FULTON: Dolores probably could comment on--

D O L O R E S T. C O R O N A: I think, Senator, that one of the things we may have mentioned that is in the bill is the HSPT. The other is the tenure issue that you provide already for tenured teachers. You allow them to retain their tenure, and then accumulate seniority.

I think other than those two, there may not be some of the other guidelines.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but then why would they be included in your statement?

MS. CORONA: It is a guideline. Certainly, we are simply saying that in addition to HSPT, some of those other things that might be included would be named in that guideline. If that is confusing, we--

SENATOR EWING: You give this out publicly, so you are going to give the impression to people that it is not already included in the legislation.

MS. CORONA: Well, for the record, I will repeat the HSPT and certainly the tenure for tenured people are included.

SENATOR EWING: Fine. I would also like it for the Committee -- we will use it when we get it -- with the changes made in it.

MS. CORONA: Yes, indeed.

SENATOR EWING: Omitting the things that are already included in the bill. I just think it gives a wrong impression. That's all.

MS. CORONA: How do you want us to rectify that, Senator? Would you like us to revise that?

SENATOR EWING: Well, we have HSPT in the bill, so why do you say it should be put in? "They must be required to hold open public meetings, must be subject to the independent financial audits, and must carry out mandatory State testing, such as the HSPT."

MS. CORONA: I didn't think it read that way, but if you feel that that is the way it reads, we will certainly correct it, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Well, that is the guideline you are giving us.

MS. CORONA: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: So if you give us a guideline, I imagine that is what you would like to see us do. Correct?

MS. CORONA: Either do or keep. Yes, either do or keep.

SENATOR EWING: If we are already doing it, then why would we do it again? I am saying that this is a public document you are putting out.

MS. CORONA: Yes, I understand that.

SENATOR EWING: You are giving the impression to the public that we don't know much about the bill, maybe. "Oh, I guess they don't include HSPT in that Senate bill." Right?

MS. CORONA: I understand. I certainly understand where you are coming from.

SENATOR EWING: And they don't include tenure. "Oh, we better fight this thing."

MS. CORONA: I testified before you at a Committee hearing--

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MS. CORONA: --and I thought that was very clear. But, you're right, we should have made that more clear in this testimony.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I think so.

MS. CORONA: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: I think you give a very false impression for your organization.

MS. CORONA: We apologize for that, Senator. That was not our intention.

SENATOR EWING: An apology doesn't do any good. It is out publicly now. You have an agenda in your mind, and you are going to try to enforce it. I just don't want to accept this without the proper language in it. If there are other things that are wrong with it--

MS. CORONA: I am looking for a way to rectify that. If you advise us, we will certainly take your advice. Would you like us to send in revised testimony?

SENATOR EWING: Yes, I would.

MS. CORONA: Okay, we will do that, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: That way we can have it, and we will distribute it to the Committee.

MS. CORONA: We will certainly do that.

MS. FULTON: Senator, would you have any objection if we include those by saying that we applaud the measures in the bill that cover HSPT testing and tenure, because I think, also, that is a very positive statement on behalf of the bill? Rather than just eliminate it, because, frankly, then we give the impression to our members that we don't care about tenure or testing, which has been the mainstay--

SENATOR EWING: I know. That's fine.

MS. FULTON: --of the Department's regulations, you know, for the last 10 years. We certainly know that testing is something that we have always promoted, with certain guidelines.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, right. There are some good suggestions in there that we will be discussing.

MS. FULTON: On your tenure concept, Senator, what would you do with new people who maybe teach in a charter school -- you know, certified people who may get their first job in a charter school? How would tenure work for them?

SENATOR EWING: Well, that is something we are going to have to discuss further. Maybe it should be open to them to get tenure.

MS. FULTON: I mean, I think we do say that new people should be able to pursue tenure. I don't know that that is in the bill.

MS. CORONA: No, it isn't.

MS. FULTON: You know, it is only protecting those who already have tenure.

SENATOR EWING: It is up to each charter school to decide what they propose to the Commissioner, whether they propose to let them move into tenure or not. They can close it out or leave it open. But this is something we should--

MS. FULTON: Wouldn't that create kind of disparate treatment for experienced people who go into the charter and then new people come in under new, different rules?

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but, Edie, maybe there are some people in life who don't care about tenure. Maybe they are more interested in teaching, they want to do it for a few years and then stop, or something.

MS. FULTON: Believe me, I never thought about tenure until I opened my mouth one day and found out that if I didn't have tenure, I would be gone. So, I mean, tenure to me was not whether I was a competent teacher. I felt I could teach anywhere, because I was good. It was when I raised questions that tenure became important to my career. I think in charter schools, especially where you have oversight boards where the members are not necessarily educators, but are members of the public, you know, that could really be a political problem for new people.

SENATOR EWING: It could be.

MS. FULTON: I think they deserve some protection.

SENATOR EWING: We don't know whether the new generation coming along will be interested or not interested in-- You know, I don't think we can speak-- I certainly can't, and I don't think you are in a position to say, about new people coming in-- Certainly, they are in your membership

and you want to see them tenured. That's true, and I understand that.

MS. FULTON: Well, it takes a long time, you know, three years and a day. Most other people don't have that length of time to have to prove themselves.

We could have this discussion another time.

SENATOR EWING: That is why we changed the college people to five years. That's even better. Maybe we ought to do that with teachers.

MS. FULTON: Well, we could really have a discussion on that.

SENATOR EWING: Well, when that bill gets ready, I will let you look at it. (laughter)

MS. FULTON: I think you have been too busy already, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, no, we have a big staff in Trenton.

MS. FULTON: Are there any other questions?

SENATOR EWING: No. Thank you very much.

MS. FULTON: Thank you.

MS. CORONA: Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: We will probably see you at NJIT -- or somebody, right?

Thank you, Edie and Dolores.

Professor Margaret Tannenbaum, from Rowan College.

**P R O F E S S O R M A R G A R E T D. T A N N E N B A U M:**  
Good morning, Senator. I am new at this, and I am not sure that the written testimony I have prepared is appropriate. Let me ask you before I take up your time reading it.

I am in support of the bill. The testimony I prepared is primarily giving reasons why I am in support of the bill, and then expresses my concern that the bill doesn't go far enough in the area of school choice. That summarizes my testimony. I don't know if you want me to go ahead and read it or not.

SENATOR EWING: That would be fine. Then if we have it recorded--

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Okay. I heard what a grilling you just gave to the people before me, and I am nowhere near as experienced as they in doing this sort of thing. I wanted to be sure--

SENATOR EWING: Not very many people are as experienced as the NJEA.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Is that it? I understand that.

MS. FULTON: (speaking from audience) Since 1853.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: As I said, I appear before you in support of the Charter School Program Act of 1995. I wear many hats. First, I am a parent of two children in New Jersey public schools and, thus, I have a true vested interest in seeing those schools be the best they can possibly be.

Second, I have been a Board member of the Glassboro public school system for seven years, which means that I have been actively and intensely involved, without monetary compensation, to make a contribution to the end of making New Jersey schools the best they can be.

I have been an educator for 32 years, teaching at every level from preschool to graduate school, in both public and private schools. For 25 years, I have been in higher education preparing young people to become teachers. Thus, I know what schools are like, especially in New Jersey, as I have done consultation in them and supervised student teachers in those schools. For the last four years, I have been Chairperson of the Department of Secondary Education/Foundations of Education at Glassboro State/Rowan College. Therefore, I am particularly familiar with secondary education. Let me make clear, however, that I do not represent any of those institutions in this testimony, but myself as a private individual.

In addition to my many years of experience as an educator, for over two decades I have been intensely involved in the study of school choice, vouchers, magnet schools, alternative schools, and charter schools. I have conducted extensive research on the views of teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, and secondary students in the public and private schools in the seven southern New Jersey counties in the last five years regarding their views and attitudes toward school choice, and have published numerous articles and given many presentations on the results, as well as other topics in school choice. Finally, I have a book forthcoming from the Edwin Mellen Press entitled "Concepts and Issues in School Choice."

The first reason I support this bill is moral: School choice is simply the right thing to do. It is extremely difficult for me to understand how, in the democratic society in which we live, we feel it is any more appropriate to assign children to a specific school than it would be to assign them to attend a specific church. My colleagues' former testimony notwithstanding, there is ample evidence in our society that education is every bit as much a value-laden activity as is religion. As long as a school does not violate the laws and norms of our society and meets the educational needs we set, there is no reason why parents should not be able to use public tax money to send their children to that school. Freedom of choice is one of the foundation stones on which our democratic way of life has been built -- in every area but education. The time has come to make our most pervasive social institution reflect our democratic values. This is especially true in light of the fact that we mandate that all children must attend school for a minimum of 10 years of their lives. Certainly, we should give them a choice of which schools they will attend.

The second reason is that it is educationally sound to provide choices of where children attend school. There can be

no doubt in anyone's mind that children have different learning styles and interests, different ways in which they are motivated, and different learning goals. It is also true that schools have different organizational structures and ways of operating, and teachers have different styles of teaching. We also know that students will learn best when they are in learning environments which they choose and enjoy. It is impossible to bring this about and match organizational structures and teaching and learning styles when the basis on which we assign children to schools is proximity.

The third reason for providing school choice is political. Currently, the public schools are a monopoly, a monopoly which is far more pervasive than Bell Telephone ever was, because we mandate that all children attend school and no one ever mandated that every household have a telephone. This is a mandate which has increasingly been controlled by ever more centralized levels of government. I suggest that the appropriate form of governmental structure to achieve the maximum in educational outcomes would be for the central government to establish educational standards to be met and provide the financial means, but let each individual school -- not district, school -- determine exactly how they will do it, and hold each individual school accountable for its outcomes. One concern often voiced about charter schools is the possibility of schools not making it and closing down. Again, to wit previous testimony. I personally see this as a strength, not a weakness. Far too many public schools, especially in inner-city areas, are not making it, but there is little hope they will ever close down.

The fourth reason is that providing school choice is a good idea for financial reasons. The Catholic schools have certainly taught us that a high quality of education can be provided at a per-pupil cost much below what we currently spend in New Jersey public schools. When teachers, parents, and

students participate in schools they have chosen, much more gets done for much less. Certainly, charter schools will provide the opportunity to demonstrate this reality. It is crucial, however, if these schools are to be successful, that they be relieved from the myriad of State regulations without State financial support, that do little or nothing to directly improve the quality of education for children.

However, my fear is that the bill does not go far enough. I believe all families should have a choice of where to send their children to school. As we know, affluent families have long had such a choice. This bill will give the opportunity for those without the financial resources to buy homes in a better school district or to send their children to expensive private schools to get together with other parents who believe the local school system is not meeting their children's needs and establish a charter school. However, I am sure you realize that only the most highly motivated parents are going to do this, and only the most highly motivated teachers will be willing to put in all the extra time and effort required to develop these schools. As a result, much like magnet schools, charter schools will, inevitably, "skim off" those teachers, parents, and students from the local public schools that are most likely to make those very schools successful.

This would not happen if we were to turn all schools into schools of choice. If all teachers were required to work together in groups to provide schools with distinct, identifiable themes and operating procedures, all families could be provided with several schools of choice within their immediate geographic areas. A voucher of predetermined value could be provided for each child and placed in the school selected for that child. All schools would have to compete for all students and would be highly motivated to provide the best quality education at the least possible costs. For those

schools willing to work with those students we have identified as the hardest to educate, supplementary funds could be made available as we currently do through categorical programs.

In addition to providing choice for all, such a plan would address the ongoing problem in New Jersey, and other states, of equalizing per-pupil expenditure between poorer and wealthier districts. We in New Jersey have spent over 20 years addressing this problem of inequity and are worse off than when we started. I believe that it is crucial that we provide true equality of opportunity in education. We can do this only through equalizing expenditure as well as equalizing the opportunity to choose the schools that one's children attend.

I believe charter schools are clearly a step in that direction, but I would urge you to go even further in the future.

SENATOR EWING: I have a question I want to ask you: You are saying that the parochial schools can do it for less money, but the private schools do not do it for less money necessarily -- private, nonparochial.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Well, private, nonparochial schools do not do it for less money. What is interesting about private, nonparochial schools, however -- and I am sure you are fully aware of the statistics of all the nonpublic schools in this country-- By and large, about 80 percent of them are religious schools, and upwards of 60 percent to 70 percent of them are Roman Catholic. So when we are talking about nonpublic schools, we are talking about a small percentage of all private schools in this country in the first place, and in the second place, most of them are upper-middle-class or upper-class exclusive, high tuition charging schools.

When I talk about nonpublic schools, I like to make clear these statistics, because I think everybody realizes that no matter what kind of a school system we provide through public funds, there is going to be this small percentage of

people who are going to be able to buy, as they can cars, homes, and vacations, much better than all the rest of us can afford.

My primary concentration has been on those people who are, I believe, disenfranchised as regards choice of schooling, and have no alternative except the local public school, no matter-- I don't even want to cast it in the light of how bad a job they are doing. It isn't a question of good and bad. It is a question of the school structure and organization and group of individuals whose way of delivering schooling does not meet my child's needs, or my child's interests, or my child's way of learning. If I don't have the money, I'm stuck. I believe the majority of our discipline problems are the result of large numbers of working-class and lower-class parents whose kids are in those situations and schools that are not responsive to their particular needs and learning styles, who become disaffected, bored, uninterested, and troublemakers. They have no choice except to be so bad that they get themselves suspended consistently and eventually expelled.

If, in fact, there were no negativeness to the idea that this kid just doesn't fit in this school, but there are three or four other schools within a reasonable geographic distance where I might take my child and he would fit in, I believe the discipline problems we face would be a long way toward being addressed and solved.

SENATOR EWING: Well, one of the problems the public schools have is that they are not allowed to discipline the students, but they have to keep them, whereas--

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Keep them or expel them. Those are basically our two choices.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I don't think there are too many who are expelled. Some of them go-- They try to start the alternative schools now, but, no, the teachers have a rough job

because of, also, the lack of parental interest. How you are ever going to change that, I don't know.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Well, let me say that the way to change that-- I believe parents have become disaffected to a large extent because they do not believe that their involvement in the school will make a difference. But if you give parents--

SENATOR EWING: But with their child at home it certainly should.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Oh, yes. I am in full support of the charter school. My only concern is what it is going to do to the system overall. It is not going to give those parents that I am most concerned about the opportunity to have the education that meets their child's needs as it does to the more highly motivated. Not to make biased sorts of statements, but I think sociological statistics will bear out that there is a correlation between social class and educational motivation and success.

Bills like charter schools and magnet schools are going to intensify the division between those who can and those who can't and, I think, providing everybody the opportunity to choose the school they send their children to.

SENATOR EWING: I would like to see discipline put into the public schools. I don't know if we can ever do it. I mean, if a teacher raises a hand to a child, the child goes home, and the family goes and gets a damned lawyer, and they sue the school, the teacher, and everybody else.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: I agree with you. I can identify with what you are saying as a board member of many years. On the other hand, if the school district had the opportunity of saying to the parent, "Look, it doesn't look as though your child's placement in this school is an appropriate placement. If the following doesn't happen-- This isn't a matter of suspending or expelling the child. If the following

doesn't happen, we are going to have to tell you that you are going to have to find another placement for your child." If that parent has three or four other schools within a reasonable geographic distance, the parent is going to have to do one of two things: Either the kid is going to have to straighten up and fly right, or that parent is going to have to hustle around and find another school to put his kid in. If the problem repeats itself there-- If this goes through three or four schools, then we have reason to address, in a very direct way, these problems with the parent, and force the parent to find some way to deal with them.

SENATOR EWING: But you feel that eventually the charters will skim off all the better students?

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: That is a concern that I have, yes. I don't see how it can avoid doing that.

SENATOR EWING: Also, you were talking about equalized spending. I can't agree with that. I think some places do have to spend a bit more money because of the needs they have in the way of teachers' aides, classrooms, and things like that, because of the socioeconomic background. I don't think we can have equalization. That is why I disagree with Marilyn Morehauser on her great bend in life, having everybody spend the same. It is just so wrong.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Well, I believe that is a starting point. I believe that if we equalized expenditure through some sort of a voucher, that when we identify those districts that have additional needs, like inner-city areas, and we make money available to the districts through categorical funding, as I suggested, that-- As we now stand, we do not start out equal. We start out with a very wide-- The starting place is a very wide variation, depending on whether you live, for example, in Cherry Hill or Paulsboro -- those divisions -- and are attempting to do this. Of course, what keeps happening to us is that it keeps resisting us and it

keeps going like that (demonstrating with hands). As you well know, this has happened since the original Robinson v. Cahill case. Morehauser's facts are right on that.

But, I mean, if we started out equal, and then after we started out equal we said-- One of the reasons why we ought to give additional money from public moneys to school districts-- A good reason is not because they live in Cherry Hill, or Princeton, or wherever. That is not a good reason to spend more money on a kid. If anything, in my view, it is a good reason to spend less, because those kids already have -- as Morehauser would agree -- the kind of home environment that makes up for even more than what 12 years of schooling can provide them.

I could get carried away, as you can see.

SENATOR EWING: I am just glad Assemblyman Rocco is not here when you say that Cherry Hill could get less.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Assemblyman Rocco and I, as you might guess, have discussed this at great length.

SENATOR EWING: Right.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: We have yet to come close to agreement, which I am sure does not surprise you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Professor.

Kathleen Kurylo-Dicks. Are there three ladies here from the Sprout House? Two or three?

L I S A B R I C K: Three.

SENATOR EWING: Come on up. We will get another chair up here.

MS. BRICK: Hi, Senator Ewing.

SENATOR EWING: Where is the Sprout House again? I can't remember.

K A T H L E E N M. K U R Y L O - D I C K S: Chatham, New Jersey.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but someone lives in Bernardsville.

MS. KURYLO-DICKS: I do.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, you do. Okay.

Please proceed. Thank you.

MR. CANNON: (Committee Aide) Could you please give your name as you speak?

SENATOR EWING: When you speak, please give your name and your location.

MR. CANNON: For the recording.

SENATOR EWING: Because it is being recorded, and we like to have that information for the transcript.

MS. BRICK: My name is Lisa Brick. I reside in Morristown, New Jersey.

Hello, Senator. I have never met, or I do not know who else is up there, but "Hello." I can't call you by name. I apologize.

SENATOR EWING: Melanie Schulz is Executive Director of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, which has legislative oversight on the takeover districts. We have only two, but we hope that tomorrow morning we will have three. We know it.

Darby Cannon is from the OLS staff -- Office of Legislative Services -- Aide to the Senate Education Committee. Wendy Lang is the staff person for the Senate Majority, Education Committee.

MS. BRICK: Thank you.

I come before you as a citizen of our State and a parent of two primary school students. I am very excited about the Charter School Program Act of 1995, and honor your courage and commitment in writing and introducing Senate Bill No. 1796.

My children attend Sprout House, a small, innovative, private school in Chatham, New Jersey. Sprout House provides the most accommodating learning environment for intellectual, physical, emotional, and nonsectarian spiritual well-being I have ever encountered. I want to see this school go public.

I have two considerations regarding S-1796. The bill:

- 1) Excludes private schools for eligibility as charter schools; and
- 2) Limits charter school access according to school districting.

The following is an expansion on these considerations:

Senate Bill No. 1796 excludes experienced schools from charter status. Sprout House exists as a private school not out of any joy or pride in exclusivity. On the contrary, we are a private institution because there has been no possibility for our existence in the public education sector. We are parents, educators, and children standing for the possibility that all children can continue learning while retaining their inquisitive, positive, and eager attitudes toward life. We have nine years of experience providing such an educational setting.

Is it your intention to consciously exclude that sector of society which has recognized the necessity to provide a system that "improves pupil learning, increases educational choices for parents and children, encourages the use of different and innovative learning methods, and establishes new professional opportunities for educators" precisely because they are experienced in doing it? We at Sprout House have had an ongoing accomplishment of the above for nine years now. Do you want to limit the creation of new and innovative educational settings only to theorists who have yet to accomplish them? I see a parallel of a society needing a new suspension bridge, yet will only hire a contractor with drawbridge experience.

Please alter S-1796 so that our society can benefit from the experience of those of us who saw the possibilities of a new system of education and created it before we had public support, with their own dollars, sweat, and tears.

Senate Bill No. 1796 limits charter school accessibility by linking admission to school districts. Sprout House draws families from four counties, let alone numerous school districts. Since this bill would allow for innovations in education, yet since there are so few parents/educators with the time, dedication, and expertise to establish such institutions, there will be many families residing in districts that will not offer charters or will not offer just that "learning environment" that family feels best for their child/children. If admission is preferentially for children within a given district, as the bill states, and furthermore, if it is "free" only for those residing within that given district, then once again, the availability of a innovative education will be limited.

It will be limited to those in our society in two ways:

First, only those districts which happen to have individuals with the vision, drive, and skills needed to establish a charter school would have one; and

Second, only those able to afford private tuition if they are in another district or want a specific type of school outside their district would be able to take advantage of charter choice. I suggest since charter schools are such an innovative idea, that the schools come under a branch of a State district so these schools can offer intradistrict open enrollment, free of charge to all. Without this, the bill actually maintains exclusivity in education without intending to. Funding could follow something like the busing rebates we get now, somehow. These seem to be intradistrict. I am not saying it has to be a rebate, but there is a way that money gets back to people.

Thank you for this opportunity to come before you and address my concerns. I am excited about the changes in education already happening and this opportunity to participate in this process. I shall await your responses to my concerns.

Further, if I may have another moment, I would like to address a consideration that you brought up, actually, with Professor Tannenbaum. You mentioned your concern about discipline. At Sprout House what we have found is, when an environment is created within a school which actually encourages the children's participation and the children's agenda is met, discipline is no longer an issue.

SENATOR EWING: I think that is very true. Melanie and I were down in Swedesboro yesterday reviewing a TQM -- Total Quality Management -- course being given in social studies.

MS. SCHULZ: U.S. history.

SENATOR EWING: U.S. history. It was quite fascinating. To me, this sounds like a great potential for someday -- long after I'm gone. Many, many schools and courses will be using this Total Quality Management process. This particular class, as I understand it -- at Swedesboro -- is made up of a large percentage of individuals who have had some difficulty. Some are very slow learners, and things of that nature. In other words, they are certainly not the cream of the crop. What it has done to them to build them up is that they are operating, actually, the class themselves with supervision from the teacher. Excellent.

MS. BRICK: We have a school that has been in progress, as I said -- that has quite a track record now. Our experience is that in every class, in every aspect of their education, it is a miraculous school. What I would like to see, and what we speak about within the school -- and I have spoken to your office, I have spoken to the Commissioner of Education, and I have even spoken to Albert Shanker in D.C.-- I see Sprout House representing -- actually being a place where teachers from all over the country can come and study what it looks like when education is occurring in this manner. They could actually do internships there and then, in turn, go back

to their own institutions and institute whatever it was that they found could be of value of what we are doing, within their own environment.

SENATOR EWING: How big is the Sprout School and how many--

MS. BRICK: It's tiny. It has 40 children.

SENATOR EWING: How many teachers?

MS. BRICK: The student ratio is-- The number 40 is not exact. We get new students, we lose students, people move. It is approximately 40. The student ratio in our preschool program is, at most, one to six. In our primary school program, it is, at most, ten to one. I have to mention that we have been educating our children-- My full tuition there is \$3500 a year. We are not an exclusive school. Well, we are, because it is \$3500 a year, but our intention is not, as I said, exclusivity.

SENATOR EWING: What grades do they have?

MS. BRICK: We take children as young as 3. Our eldest just left us to go into the public school sector, and he was 13.

SENATOR EWING: When they leave you, they go--

MS. BRICK: They go.

SENATOR EWING: No, but I mean, they go on to the grade for their age, and everything?

MS. BRICK: The experience has been that they go-- I have to stop here, because we are a school-- We are an educational system that meets the children at their level of capability. What we might see is, from year to year, all of our seven year olds are not doing the same thing. During the primary school years, there is great variation. Some child might be masterful in math, and yet barely reading. Another child might be consuming literature at a rate beyond belief, and yet in terms of math, has not mastered the kind of critical thinking that is needed to really explore mathematics.

What we have experienced is that by the time they are at 50 or primary, they have all caught up with each other. The body of knowledge that they take into the world is a body of knowledge that can be adapted to any educational system that they come in contact with. So the basic foundation of education by that time is what I would call "fully acceptable" to the public sector.

SENATOR EWING: Is it in someone's house, or what? Do you have a building, or--

MS. BRICK: We rent space from St. Paul's Episcopal. We are totally nonaffiliated. It is on Main Street, in Chatham.

One other thing that came up-- It left. I'll see if I can get it back.

SENATOR EWING: You can't have any sports programs, or anything, I mean, if you have one 13 year old, or only a couple.

MS. BRICK: Let me tell you something: Last year when it snowed, our kids were out there with cross-country skis every morning. We have this remarkable system. You know how--

SENATOR EWING: What do you do in the baseball season?

MS. BRICK: --when you went to school as a kid, or when I went to school as a kid, I would wake up in the morning. I just got up, went down and sat down to have breakfast. I was lucky enough to be able to walk to school, but sometimes kids are driven. Then they get in school, and they are expected to sit for the next six hours.

At Sprout House, it's revolutionary. The kids get there. They sit in groups, and they sort of explore what their day will be. They go over their day-to-be, and then they are all turned outside and they play. They get all of their socialization handled. When there is snow on the ground, they ski, they sled. If there is rain on the ground they are out there building rivulets and trying to determine how water passes. You know, they are playing with the earth. They are playing with balls. They are climbing. They are out there for

a period of, like, 40 minutes, 45 minutes. Then they come in and they are ready to learn.

SENATOR EWING: The students who have progressed out of Sprout-- Are all of them able to keep up with the work they do in the public system at their grade level? I mean, are they well-prepared?

MS. KURYLO-DICKS: Sprout House has just graduated its first students. They have gone through nine years of education. Those students have moved into the next sequential class that they would have been in had they been in public schools.

CAROLINE STONE - SAN FILLIPPO: They are on grade level. However, there is a transition, because Sprout House is a noncompetitive school. We do not--

MS. BRICK: A social transition.

MS. STONE-SAN FILLIPPO: Yes, a social transition. We do not test. They are not under a time constriction to complete, you know, certain activities, in that sort of a sense. There is a social transition where we need to prepare the students for: "Okay, this is a quiz. This is a test. You will have such and such an amount of time to complete this activity." There is that kind of a transition.

MS. BRICK: My experience in knowing children who have gone through Sprout House into the public sector, both in this State and out-of-state -- people who have moved -- is that academically the children have no problem. It is the social smash that gets them, where it is not enough that they know what they know, they have to know what they know within someone else's expectation of time-frame work.

In our school -- you mentioned a baseball team -- it is remarkable that our children interact at all ages. So when they are turned out on a playground, it gives me incredible joy to see my six-and-a-half-year-old son playing with the ten-year-old girls. My son came up to me the other day-- It

is not a dirty word, but it is a word that upsets people. So if it upsets anyone, I apologize. He said to me, "Mom, I figured it out. Girls are just boys without penes."

My first reaction was, "No, we're not. We have everything we need." By the next day, I realized what he was trying to tell me was that he realized that there is no difference; that he can play with the girls, he can play with the boys. It has no significance to him that one is in this body and one is in that body.

The kids at Sprout House all grow up as human beings. They do not separate out, like, "I can't play with her because she is nine and I'm eight. I can't play with him because he has a penis and I don't." You know, they just don't do that. It is remarkable seeing a group of human beings who interact in a totally new and harmonious manner. It's a miracle. I'm enthralled.

MS. SCHULZ: You're not signing up. (comment directed to Senator Ewing) He'll be there tomorrow. (laughter)

MS. BRICK: That's how I feel. That is exactly how I feel. I love being there. I go in and cook for them for free, just because I love being with the kids and I love being with the teachers. Each one of us parents there is getting a whole new education. It is like we are going through school a whole new time and going, "Wow! It can really be like this? This is fun." My daughter has gotten up in the morning and said to me, "Mom, do I really have to go to school this morning?" I look at her and say, "No, it's your choice." Then she gets up, gets dressed, and she goes, because she realizes that I am dull compared to what happens there. It's a miracle.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. BRICK: You're welcome. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: The next one we will have is, I guess, Kathleen Kurylo-Dicks. Do you want to take both microphones,

because one is for a recording and one is the sound. That's it. Thank you. Please proceed.

MS. KURYLO-DICKS: Senator, my name is Kathleen Kurylo-Dicks. I live in Bernardsville. I am a parent of two children, one of whom attends Sprout House. I strongly support the Charter School Program Act of 1995, because it legislates a real opportunity for diversity and choice in our educational system.

From the beginning, those of us with babies and preschoolers are urged to interview and evaluate many day-care and preschool settings before choosing the one we feel best fits our needs and those of our children. An amazing selection of centers and schools has emerged.

When these children of ours are nearly grown, 12 to 17 years later, we once again consider their interests and participate with them in choosing a college or training program which meets their interests, needs, and our affordability.

But what about all those growing years in between? Where are the choices? What can parents do who feel that their child is not being well-served -- however well-intentioned -- by their school system? A child spends many more waking hours at school than at home. Cumulatively, educational experience has a life-defining impact and influence on a child -- academically, socially, and emotionally.

Three years ago, as my son was to enter kindergarten, I was introduced to Sprout House by Pat Kane, then Director of Educational Programs at the New Jersey Audubon Society. Pat was very familiar with the school and their incorporation of nature and environmental studies and awareness into their curricula. When teachers from Sprout House attended her workshops for educators, she found them to be particularly enthusiastic. Since then, her excellent comprehensive book documenting New Jersey's habitats has become part of the science curriculum at the school.

My husband and I chose Sprout House for our son because it fit the kind of child he was then and is now. He is a hands-on explorer, with a passionate love of nature. He was very shy at five, and the half-day program and small class size enabled him to transition into school and learning without being overwhelmed or pushed beyond his ability to cope. He has flourished at this school. His sense of self-confidence and self-identity grew strong through his experiences in mixed-age class settings. He loves school. He is an excellent student -- eager to learn.

As a parent, it is a genuine thrill and a relief to know your child feels this way. Yet, as our daughter will be entering kindergarten in the fall, the financial strain of their combined tuition is really, right now, beyond our means. And it would be so very hard to let go of something like Sprout House once you have seen the results of the joyful learning that goes on there.

Today, most parents must acquiesce to what is available to them and their children within the structure of their school district. Aside from programs for the gifted and talented, and for those requiring remedial help, it's really a standard template of teaching. Because the system is too big to bend flexibly and accommodate different learning styles and innovative educational approaches, it is the students who must do all the bending to fit into the existing structure. "They will adapt," I have heard teachers say about kids who are not quite making it. But I wonder, at what cost? At Sprout House, all children are gifted, whereas in the traditional school setting they might be labeled otherwise.

This school is not an experiment. It has an established and distinguished nine-year record. Sprout House is one example of how to enter diversity and choice into our educational system. Not all parents will want it for their

child, but for those who do, it will make all the difference in their children's lives.

Those of us here today from Sprout House submit with our testimony documents which describe the school -- its mission, philosophy, and curricula. We invite the members of the Committee who have not yet seen the school to come and decide for yourselves what you think.

If this legislation is enacted, we would like to change our status to charter school provided the following issues in your bill can be addressed:

1) Allow eligibility for charter school status to existing private nonprofit schools such as ours.

2) Remove the requirement of standardized testing at the primary school level and allow charter schools to develop their own comprehensive methods of assessing whether students are meeting educational goals. This may be necessary to accommodate developmental differences in achievement for individual students. Standardized testing may be an inappropriate and inaccurate means of measuring progress and school learning.

3) Remove the stipulation which states that preference for enrollment in the charter school goes to students who reside in the district in which the school is located. In the suburbs, the reality may actually be that a few children may come from each of many nearby districts. Sprout House, for example, has children from 11 communities across four counties.

I thank you for the opportunity to express my views and support for this legislation.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Kurylo-Dicks, on the teachers, where do they come from -- the teaching staff? Are they certified?

MS. KURYLO-DICKS: The teachers are all highly certified and credentialed. They have been there, many of

them, since the incorporation of the school, and they work for the embarrassing salary of, I think, \$17,500 a year. They work there for the commitment. They work there for the pleasure of being able to create their own curriculums, to be in charge of their own school, to be innovative and adaptable, and for the joy of being able to be a teacher the way they want to be a teacher.

However, we all have to pay our bills, and these teachers have no benefits. We are in a quandary constantly of fund-raising and trying not to sacrifice our teachers and their salaries for the contributions they make.

SENATOR EWING: They are a very dedicated group.

MS. KURYLO-DICKS: Very, very dedicated.

SENATOR EWING: Who is the third speaker now?

MS. STONE-SAN FILLIPPO: I am.

SENATOR EWING: Do we have your-- Are you Joanne?

MS. STONE-SAN FILLIPPO: No, but I am going to speak on behalf of Joanne.

SENATOR EWING: Please speak into both microphones. Pull the black one toward you.

MS. STONE-SAN FILLIPPO: My name is Caroline Stone-San Fillippo. I live in New Providence, New Jersey. I am the parent of a six-year-old child at Sprout House, and I am also on the Board of Directors. I will be reading Joanne Lockwood-White's -- the Director -- statement, and offering a few of my own eclectic comments on my experience as a Board member and also as a parent.

Let me begin with a few of my -- I think more of a follow-up commenting on your statements, as a parent. My six-year-old son was diagnosed almost two years ago as ADHD. We had him fully evaluated and were given various suggestions by the local school administrators. One of them was that he would function best in a small environment with a class size, preferably, of six to ten children.

We had found from research of the public schools in the area that the kindergarten does not qualify for an aide until there are 25 children in that class. We felt our son would be at a great loss and would probably be a failure in that sort of a system. At the present moment, having a child with an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, even though it is a disability in the State of New Jersey, as in most states, is not considered a learning disability. Therefore, no special provisions are made -- would be made for my son. So we have really been forced to look outside the public school environment for an environment we feel he would function best in.

Having read information about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and the high rate of failure that these children have, it is imperative at a young age that a child be in an environment such as Sprout House can offer in order to flourish and thrive.

I first wanted to offer that perspective of having a child that has a special need, where they fit into the public school system, and how I feel they would fit into the Sprout House environment. Okay?

To follow that up, I will read the statement by Joanne Lockwood-White, the Director, who cannot be here today.

"Dear Senator Ewing: Nine years ago we founded Sprout House. Initially a nursery school, we expanded each year to eventually offer our current primary and elementary programs -- kindergarten through sixth grade. Accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, we are also licensed by the State as a child care center. The school operates as a parent/teacher cooperative," which is somewhat essential to keeping our operating costs down. "Our teachers are all certified, highly talented, and committed.

"The children in our primary and elementary programs are a diverse group and come from 11 different communities

across four counties. Although we accept all the children who wish to attend, parents of many more have expressed their interest in our school, but are unable to afford our \$3500 annual tuition.

"We have read your Charter School Program Act of 1995 and enthusiastically support this legislation. In fact, we have been following charter school legislation over the past two years. Several of our parents have been in contact with Steve Weston requesting to meet with you to discuss our school and our desire to offer it to the children of every parent attracted to our educational philosophy and approach -- without regard to its cost.

"Sprout House is an outstanding example of what a charter school could be here in New Jersey. We believe that within our educational framework many different kinds of children thrive -- academically, emotionally, and socially. Your bill creates the window of opportunity through which educational reform can meaningfully evolve. It offers parents choices in matching their children's needs, learning styles, and interests with the most suitable educational approach, and it challenges parents, teachers, and administrators to be responsive, accountable, and innovative.

"The enclosed documents describe Sprout House -- its mission, vision, and everyday reality -- and we warmly extend our invitation to you to come to our school and see it for yourselves. In addition, we would like to give you the opportunity to speak with our parents, teachers, administrators, and children in a meeting we can arrange convenient with your schedule. These are the people who have made Sprout House what it is and who represent what it can continue to become.

"Please call us so we can plan with you the times most suitable for introducing our school to you and arranging a subsequent meeting."

SENATOR EWING: I'll come up.

MS. STONE-SAN FILLIPPO: Good.

MS. SCHULZ: A little trip--

SENATOR EWING: It's closer than Swedesboro.

If that's all, thank you very much for coming way down here.

MS. STONE-SAN FILLIPPO: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: But, I will come by.

Norma Rosa, Project LEAP, Camden.

**N O R M A R O S A:** Good morning.

SENATOR EWING: When you speak, will you please speak into the two microphones? They come in pairs. One is for amplification in the room and the other is for recording purposes, because we will have a transcript of the testimony here today. I appreciate it.

MS. ROSA: Thank you.

My name is Norma Rosa. I am from Camden, New Jersey. With me, to my left, is Jeannette Rosado, who is a parent from Camden. To my right is Shantay Clark, also a parent from Camden City. I will be providing testimony on behalf of Project LEAP Parents Academy and on behalf of Project LEAP.

Testimony presented to the New Jersey Senate Education Committee in support of the Charter School Program Act of 1995 -- Senate Bill No. 1796 -- submitted by Norma Rosa, Coordinator of Project LEAP Parents Academy, Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 327 Cooper Street, Camden, New Jersey, April 6, 1995:

Honorable Senator Ewing and distinguished members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to present testimony on the proposed Charter School Program Act of 1995. My name is Norma Rosa, and I am testifying on behalf of Project LEAP Parents Support Group at Rutgers University. I am currently the Coordinator of the Parents Academy and a mother of three teenage boys.

Today, America's urban centers are faced with unprecedented challenges, including chronic unemployment, low performing neighborhood schools, exceptionally high dropout rates, teen pregnancies, high levels of substance abuse, and widespread crime and violence. These challenges seriously tax urban communities and leave millions of children and adults living at or below the level of poverty. Physical and social turmoil of this magnitude are unmatched in any other western industrialized nation in the world. Left unattended, this turmoil tosses our urban centers into an abyss of hopelessness and despair resulting in a deteriorating economic base, poor race relations, and social instability. Education and school reform is key to the future of urban communities and communities of color. The education of our children and young people is the only real hope for our urban communities.

For the last three years, the Center has been working on an initiative in partnership with the Camden Public Schools District called Project LEAP -- leadership, education, and partnership -- based at Rutgers University. We have been leading a three-year planning process that focuses on developing a holistic model for providing educational, human, health, and legal/business services for the children of Camden City. Project LEAP was born out of the realization that the educational and social service needs of families in the City of Camden require multifaceted, collaborative, and long-term solutions.

The focus of Project LEAP is the development of a community-based Math, Science, and Technology PreK-8th School that will reflect several kinds of pedagogical and organizational innovations based on proven reform initiatives in urban education and the generation of supportive environments for parental and community participation. The Project LEAP Academy will be an inclusive prekindergarten

through eighth grade school centered on the belief that all children can achieve at the highest levels.

Project LEAP is already having a positive impact on ongoing efforts to enhance the opportunities available to the children of Camden City. One of the key components of Project LEAP is its Civic Service Placement Program for College Students. The main objectives of the Program are to augment and support after-school programs available at Camden City schools and to encourage college students to engage in meaningful volunteer activities in the public schools. Through this initiative, more than 75 students have been placed in specialized enrichment programs throughout seven Camden City schools since the fall of 1994. The volunteers work in preexisting programs and in programs that Project LEAP has developed for individual schools.

A fundamental belief of Project LEAP is that Camden City parents care about what happens to their children. Parental involvement is an essential component of any school reform effort. Current research conducted by the Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership points to the close connection between parental involvement and self-sufficiency and a child's academic achievement. As educational experts grapple with alternatives for school reform, they all agree that attention must be given to training opportunities designed to improve parental involvement in schools. Parents are the unutilized labor force of schooling; thus, schools and reform efforts must connect with families to reinforce their children's education. As part of our efforts to involve and empower parents, a series of seminars is offered to parents through the LEAP Parent Academy. The seminars are designed to provide parents with new knowledge, new approaches, techniques, and competencies about children's ways of learning, their development, and the educational system. In addition, Project LEAP has instituted a self-help Parent Support Group to provide

a forum for parents to discuss common concerns and provide support to each other.

I believe that in order to develop the kind of schools needed to transform educational outcomes in communities like Camden City, we must transform the traditional organizational culture, structure, and authority of schools. The proposed Charter School Program Act of 1995 provides for the mechanism for designing these new structures and approaches.

As parents, we support this bill because:

1) It increases educational choices for students and parents.

2) It ensures that a procedure be implemented for significant parental involvement, including more meaningful opportunities for parents to work with the teachers.

3) It gives preference for enrollment to students attending the school district where the charter school is located.

4) It provides for flexibility in grades and time configuration.

5) It provides for transportation services, if necessary.

6) It enforces policies of nondiscrimination for important issues to parents such as language proficiency, race, ethnicity, and physically handicapped.

7) It gives priority to siblings for enrollment, thus preserving the family.

Another significant element of this legislation is that it allows for a variety of entities and partnerships, including institutions of higher education, to establish charter schools. Further, the proposed charter legislation provides the level of autonomy necessary to enable a higher degree of flexibility in such areas as staffing, curriculum, scheduling, and procurement, which can expedite the types of

proposed educational reforms that lie at the core of the Project LEAP philosophy.

I strongly believe that our State needs new and innovative approaches to educating our children and continuing to improve the quality of education. Creating schools in which all the nation's children receive high quality education is not an easy task. We must have a vision and the will to act to transform the ways in which learning occurs in our schools today. Forging that vision and that will is perhaps our greatest challenge. The Charter School Program Act of 1995 is a bold and necessary step towards meeting this challenge. I urge you to support it.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

We were down at Project LEAP. What school is it?

MS. SCHULZ: Lanning.

SENATOR EWING: What?

MS. SCHULZ: The Lanning Square School.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, the Lanning Square School. We were there the other day. It is very fascinating and interesting to see the LEAP program. Also, it was so wonderful to see the volunteer parents involved in the program itself, helping other children -- not only theirs, but other children as well, which is just so vital and so necessary. I think what Camden has done, as a whole, has been quite remarkable over the last few years -- pulling themselves up by the bootstraps.

I would like to welcome Senator Matheussen, to my right over here. Where do you live, what town?

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: Washington Township. It is sometimes referred to as Turnersville, but Washington Township has a number of addresses.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I would like to welcome you. This is part of the 4th District. I applaud you in your efforts here today in certainly bringing Trenton down South, so to

speaking, because I think this is an important issue that all of us throughout the entire State face. Sometimes, when we convene only in Trenton, we don't give folks access to the public discussion that must be applied, particularly in a subject like this.

So I welcome you. Thank you for coming down, and for allowing me to join your Committee here today. Thank you for having us.

SENATOR EWING: Good, John.

Now, who's next? Would the parents like to talk? If you would like to say something, just pull the two microphones over toward you, please.

J E A N N E T T E R O S A D O: Hello. I just want to say that I am very happy to be involved in Project LEAP as a parent. I strongly urge the -- this thing here--

SENATOR EWING: The legislation.

MS. ROSADO: Yes, the legislation.

I am pleased with Project LEAP. I have been with the program since it started. I have been in the parental program. I was there with the group when it started planning strategy and everything. I have been there for about a year now. I am very pleased with it. I am overwhelmed with the outcomes of the program.

SENATOR EWING: Do you have a child, or children?

MS. ROSADO: I have two boys. They go to the Powell School.

SENATOR EWING: Were they at school before the LEAP program started?

MS. ROSADO: Yes, they were.

SENATOR EWING: Have you noticed a difference since the program started?

MS. ROSADO: Yes, very much so.

SENATOR EWING: But also, I mean, you have a lot of parental involvement with them when they come home, and everything, which is so important.

MS. ROSADO: Yes. I am also the PTA President of their school.

SENATOR EWING: But there are probably other children in the school who do not have the benefit of the parental involvement that you provide.

MS. ROSADO: Right.

SENATOR EWING: That is one of the big things. But you have noticed a difference?

MS. ROSADO: Yes, I have.

SENATOR EWING: Are you more involved with the school now since the LEAP program became effective, or were you always involved with the school?

MS. ROSADO: I am more involved now than I was then. I had one child in school then, but now I have both in school. So I am more involved in it, as well. I am involved with Project LEAP, and also with my kids.

SENATOR EWING: Good.

Will you give your name, please?

**S H A N T A Y C L A R K:** Good morning. My name is Shantay Clark and I am a Project LEAP parent in Camden.

I just want to say that I am very much in support of this Act. I hope it really does come forth.

My children are just starting their educational experience, so I am happy that I am a part of Project LEAP. Around the time they get into the fourth or fifth grade, I know they will benefit. Also, it will focus on their dreams. My daughter wants to be a doctor, and my son wants to be a businessman. I know that Project LEAP will give emphasis, you know, so their dreams can be realized.

Again, I am very happy with the program. I have benefited from the seminars they have on Saturdays. They have given me a better understanding of how to deal with my children's school work, allowing me to help them much more. They have been very effective in teaching me new ways. I am in

the human services field, and this has given me more insight into what I need to achieve for myself.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of Project LEAP, and in support of this bill.

SENATOR EWING: Are they in school now?

MS. CLARK: Yes, they are just starting. My daughter is in kindergarten, and my son is still in Head Start.

SENATOR EWING: Wonderful. Okay.

Do you find many parents you know going to the Saturday reviews, and things like that, since you said how much you learned from going on Saturdays? Do they have classes or something?

MS. CLARK: Seminars.

SENATOR EWING: Seminars. Do you find that a lot of the parents go to those?

MS. CLARK: Well, yes. I think the more it becomes known as far as what is being done and, you know, how it can benefit their children, I think there will be a much better turnout. But there has been a lot of participation.

SENATOR EWING: Are you telling your friends to be sure to go, if they have young children?

MS. CLARK: Oh, sure.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much for coming way over to Glassboro.

MS. CLARK: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Nick Mitcho, from the Glassboro Schools.

**N I C H O L A S A. M I T C H O:** Mike DiPaola from Pitman is going to come up and sit with me.

SENATOR EWING: Fine.

MR. MITCHO: We are kind of the local Superintendents in the area. I thought we would comment on--

SENATOR EWING: Is that your mentor in the back standing with a whip? (laughter)

MR. MITCHO: Joe Hancock? No, just to clarify that.

SENATOR EWING: Good.

MR. MITCHO: It is good to be here this morning. I don't have any prepared remarks, but I have some thoughts--

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MR. MITCHO: --on the matter of charter schools. I don't think there is any question that the paradigm in education is changing. Educational reform has been taking place in public schools.

To give you an idea, in Glassboro we have developed a number of alternatives during the last 20 years that we believe have made an impact. I am not here this morning to say that I am for or against charter schools. I think charter schools are just another alternative. I am interested in the process of charter schools that you may not have inherent in your legislation. I will speak to that issue also.

But I want to give you some information about some of the alternatives that exist in Glassboro, that exist outside the paradigm of public schools. One is a project, a preschool project, called Genesis. It is a project which received the New Jersey School Boards Leader Award last year for outstanding preschool projects, not funded under the local budget, but funded under a Federal block grant in the Elsemere Housing Projects. We believe that the real impact, if it is going to take place in education, has to start at the preschool level.

I would like -- if you can maybe accept this -- to consider charter schools at preschool levels and fund them for those levels, because they would have a great impact -- a greater impact, I believe, especially with those youngsters who need it the most, who do not have the support and enrichment type activities at home that some of the other youngsters who come to school have.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me. Do you mean prekindergarten?

MR. MITCHO: Prekindergarten. I am talking about infant and toddler programs, getting youngsters in, with their parents, from the age of six months on -- actually bringing them in. Part of our Genesis program is education for youngsters, but the greater part of it is education for parents. The parents come in with their youngsters and also learn skills -- parenting skills -- along with our teachers and aides. We have a teacher and four aides who live in the area and are working and developing a very strong parent component to the Genesis project.

I mention that because that is an alternative that is out of the general K-12 curriculum and paradigm that we are used to, and it is happening here in Glassboro. I would love to take you over there and show you how this program operates. Again, it is operating out of Federal block grant funding -- HUD funding. We sustain that on an annual basis. Every year, we hope to get the dollars to sustain this program. But it is a very effective program. In Glassboro, even though we have Rowan College here, we have the highest concentration of low-income housing in Gloucester County. So a program like that, although it is specific to one particular housing area, is a very powerful program.

I mention that because you are looking-- Obviously, charter schools are schools of choice. They are alternative schools. You mentioned initially -- earlier in the hearing that alternative schools had popped up in New Jersey, and there is funding for them. Well, Glassboro High School has had an alternative school since 1972, an evening alternative program. Most alternative schools, you know, operate at county colleges and vocational schools. In Gloucester County, that did not happen. Because we had an outstanding alternative high school program at Glassboro High School, we are now running the Gloucester County Alternative High School Program, so the youngsters who are coming, are coming from other high schools

in the county to Glassboro High School. There is a consortium made up of superintendents, principals, and teachers from the county who help to expand the curriculum and develop the Program for our alternative youngsters within the county. I wanted to mention that as well.

The reason I am mentioning these things is not to brag about our programs, but to say that within the structure of public schools there exists the opportunity to create alternatives. One of the reasons I think we have been able to do it is because of the support we received from the community and the involvement we had within the community.

My point here regarding charter schools is this: You create a school and you have a board of directors. If the school is not dynamic and does not change according to need, then it is going to be the same old thing. My suggestion here would be that, hopefully you will have a process that will empower parents to make change as it is necessary -- to make the curricular changes and to be involved at the building level.

You have probably already thought that through and recognize that that is important. Within the regular structure of our K-12 program, we have site-based management programs within the Glassboro schools. Our experience with it has been in the last six years. It is a very difficult process to change within the structure, because it changes completely the school culture. As the Camden Project LEAP people indicated, it must involve the parents. It must empower the parents to make changes at any level -- with discipline, curriculum, the way the staff operates.

The reason change is difficult is because we are deeply entrenched in a culture of schooling that is tough to change. People have power, and they do not want to relinquish it -- superintendents, administrators, board members, etc. We, in Glassboro, think we have made a major change -- or an impact on that over the last five years within the structure. I think

that kind of impact is important within your charter school structure. You have to have site teams that make decisions about curriculum, who make decisions about hiring. But, more importantly, as mentioned by Project LEAP individuals, you have to have a training component that brings parents in, and staff, and administrators and trains them on, for example, how to facilitate meetings, how to reach a consensus, how to make decisions at the school level.

I guess that is the point I wanted to make regarding the charter schools. Obviously, I would be for it as an alternative. It is not the end all, obviously. It is another alternative. But I would hope that the process you develop within the school is not limited to a board of directors that makes decisions and does not really involve parents and staff in the development and operation of the school so it can be dynamic and successful.

Generally, those are my comments. I think Mike has some comments to make as well.

SENATOR EWING: We appreciate it very much. I feel strongly, also, that parental involvement is very important in the operation of the school as well. That is part of the problem up in Newark. They won't let the people in the buildings hardly up there -- the parents. It's incredible. Melanie and I have been up there at three different meetings. Granted, we did not see hundreds of parents. I guess we only saw 50 at the three different meetings. But they just pleaded with us that when we redo the takeover legislation -- which we are doing now -- that somehow or other we mandate in there -- without paying for it, of course -- that parental involvement be included.

MR. MITCHO: The other comment I wanted to make, Senator Ewing, is about the thought of losing dollars. You know, right now, we are constantly looking for resources to operate our programs. One of the things we really need is

money for technology. If we did that, think of this: If you provided public schools with the opportunity to make changes, the kind of changes I am talking about -- systemic changes, like, say, teams that really work and training for those site teams -- which takes a long period of time, but is--

I think we are missing the boat, too. We have all of these public schools in New Jersey, and we are not tied together technologically. If we had the dollars to tie ourselves together-- Now, we have a committee at the county level -- Gloucester County -- that has been working trying to figure out how I can use some of the teachers in Pitman High School and Williamstown and provide those same courses and alternatives, and stretch what we are offering.

I don't know if this is the forum for it, but there is no question about it that you can expand the alternatives available for public schools by providing the technology to the public schools. Money for the technology-- We are really in need of that if we are going to move into the 21 century and we are going to take advantage of the existing programs within the State. The technology can link us to that, television, interactive television, etc. I'm sure I am not telling you anything new.

The point is, if you want to give more choice to public schools, you need to give us some dollars for technology.

SENATOR EWING: Were you in Trenton the day before yesterday?

MR. MITCHO: No, I was not.

SENATOR EWING: The administrators had a press conference. They want \$50 million to get computers in all the schools -- all the classrooms. But, no, we have to push for it. We have to get fiber optics in everyplace so that you can get some professor here teaching the guys up North, or someone from Stevens Institute or NJIT teaching advanced chemistry to those pupils who can accept that, you know, maybe one or two

students sitting in a room with some very renown professor teaching them. It has to come. There is no question about it. It is the question of the dollars, and everything like that. We are not all as lucky as Bergen County Vocational School, which got industry to give about \$6 million. They have a fantastic setup there. It's really great.

MR. MITCHO: Well, I guess my concern is diminishing resources, and creating new programs to take away from existing programs. I think that more emphasis has to be placed on giving support and training, to changing within the existing schools the culture to be more inclusive of parents, so that change can take place.

Incidentally, I offer you the opportunity to come to the Glassboro schools and see some of the things we are doing. You would marvel at the Genesis project, the Gloucester County alternative program that I mentioned to you. We have had an alternative program for 20 years here in Glassboro and some of the site-based management process.

Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this morning.

SENATOR EWING: I will come down sometime.

MR. MITCHO: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I just want to ask another question: Maybe you ought to work with Rowan College to see if you can get some of that money to put in fiber optics within your county. I mean, not do the State, but, I mean, they are interested in engineering and everything like that. It ties right in to what they are giving the money for.

MR. MITCHO: There is no question.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: Where did Bob Harris go? I think he walked out of the room just now.

MR. MITCHO: Yes.

Dr. Tannenbaum, incidentally, is on our Board. She is one of my Board members. She is also the Chair of our Budget

Committee. We started an Educational Foundation. We are trying to get Phil Timminia (phonetic spelling) to make contact with Mr. Rowan so he can donate some of that money to the Glassboro schools. It would be a nice marriage, you know.

SENATOR EWING: Or give some the money they got, to you.

MR. MITCHO: A good idea. Why don't you--

SENATOR EWING: What about that? Any comments from the back?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM THE AUDIENCE: I'm listening.

MR. MITCHO: Bob Harris is taking notes.

SENATOR EWING: John, go ahead.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: I would just like to add two things. Both Superintendents-- We have interacted on a number of occasions before, and I am glad to see both of you here today.

First, I would just like to touch on the project you mentioned in Glassboro, the prekindergarten project. That is a very interesting project. If it is the one I am thinking of, you cut the ribbon, I guess, about two years ago.

MR. MITCHO: That is correct, Senator Matheussen.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: It really was an important project, Mr. Chairman, because it helped to revitalize a housing community and, at the same time, used human resource dollars and really tied the community back together again. There was an awful lot of concern in that area for awhile, and now it has really changed the community a great deal. It is starting to interact with parents and very young students.

So I think it is a great project. It just shows you that the educational dollars just don't have to be segregated in order to produce an excellent product. Human services -- the block grant that was utilized over there -- are all intricate sources of improving not only the educational resources in the area, but the community at large. That is an

excellent example. It was really a very nice opening. I have not seen it since then, but I know it is moving along very nicely.

The other point I would like to make is, two days ago, I had the opportunity to meet with Superintendent Greene from Clayton, Superintendent -- oh boy, I'm sorry -- but the Superintendent from Gateway, and a representative from the Gloucester County Institute of Technology.

SENATOR EWING: Those are all towns down here?

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: Yes, they are.

SENATOR EWING: Okay, thank you.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: Gateway is a Regional High School, Mr. Chairman, which, I think, has five schools. It is 8-12 program. Five communities interact with Gateway. We were talking about the very subject that you brought up; that is, technology and fiber optics. I am going to be taking a trip with some of them -- and I invite you, perhaps, to get involved -- up to Bell Labs. Bell Labs is working, right now, with Gateway and Clayton. Clayton is undergoing a renovation project of their existing high school and their middle school. One of the things they are putting into this school is fiber optics.

What we are trying to do is really set up a communication between Bell, the various school systems through the County Superintendent, and the various cable companies that service Gloucester County. We feel as though with those cable companies involvement in there -- at least two or three of them are involved in Gloucester County-- With their involvement, we can do a lot of the things you are talking about with limited resources of dollars. The whole idea of sharing services becomes an important factor. Sharing services through technology, particularly interactive classrooms utilizing televisions, could be a very important role in helping you, perhaps, to teach a class in Latin where perhaps Clayton

doesn't have enough students to participate, but yet can work with you on it.

I am very excited about this. I think it is something that the community at large in Gloucester County could be working on. I am not in the education community, but that does not mean that I don't get involved and care about it. Two out of my three children are in public schools in Washington Township, and the next one will start in September. So all three will be in. I think it is just a great opportunity for all of us that we explore these things. I would be happy to work with you as well. I think all the superintendents need to work together on this project.

**M I C H A E L F. D I P A O L A, Ed.D.:** Senator, I think it is important to note that all of the superintendents in the county are talking and communicating and are meeting as a technology design team, because we really are concerned about providing services to all of our youngsters -- shared services. Certainly, the trend has been to broaden our offerings so that we can meet the needs of diverse students and, at the same time, do it efficiently and economically, given the--

**SENATOR MATHEUSSEN:** There was a public announcement, which was brought up at the meeting I had which I just referred to. It may have been in The Star-Ledger, which we, unfortunately, do not get regularly down here. You have to wait a day or two to see it. See, in South Jersey, we have our--

**SENATOR EWING:** You have the Camden Courier.

**SENATOR MATHEUSSEN:** Absolutely. But the article only appeared, unfortunately, in that newspaper. Apparently, it was either Senator Schluter or Senator Littell who, dealing with Hunterdon County, may be looking at a similar course of action. My office is in contact with them in Hunterdon County to see if we can get more information.

I know you have a roundtable group. Hopefully, that will be one of the subjects you discuss in the near future. I would be happy to participate, as soon as I get more information, in that roundtable with you. I really want to be involved and I will do everything I can do to be involved in that project here for this area.

SENATOR EWING: Are you working with the County College and Rowan, as well, in your group?

DR. DiPAOLA: Yes. We have the County College directly involved.

SENATOR EWING: This is what we are doing in Somerset.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: Plus the Gloucester County Institute of Technology, which has just built a new addition. They actually have a studio there for the purposes of teaching. They can also do some broadcasting -- well, not broadcasting, but over the wire, and can interact with the schools. Fortunately, or unfortunately, that was one of the targeted schools that may have had a little bit of excess overhead by definition.

Quite frankly, though, they really do serve as a hub to supply a lot of resources to the other schools in the community. That is just another example of what they do there.

MR. MITCHO: As Dr. DiPaola mentioned, we are part of a design team -- all the superintendents in the county -- and we meet periodically at the vocational school. We have contributed some of our Perkins money, which is vocational money, to the vocational school to bring in consultants. For example, we brought in a consultant to investigate what it would take to put infrastructure within the school -- the fiber optics. So we brought in some outside people to do that. We are in the process of figuring out -- actually figuring out for each of the schools in the county what it would cost to do that.

That is what the problem is. We know we do not have enough dollars at the local level. In Glassboro, for the last

three years, because of the flat funding, we have not had any capital improvement money, nor have we had any equipment money to speak of. What we are doing is-- The way we purchase our technology is through Chapter II dollars. Wherever we can figure in Federal moneys, we can purchase these computers, because we do not have dollars within the local budget.

This is the first year in Glassboro that we realized about \$360,000 in State aid. In previous years, we have been flat. Actually, last year, we lost State aid. Consequently -- and you know what is happening -- the local property taxes are shooting up tremendously. We are looking, in Glassboro here, as a result of an appeal and tax rate, a 22-cent increase for next year, where the budget itself is only going up 1.9 percent. It is the impact of our budget appeal, plus the second part, the difference between -- making up the difference between the calendar year funding in the borough and the fiscal year funding.

It is a real problem we are addressing here: Where do we find the dollars to provide this technology, which we know will, in fact, create a variety of choices.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: By involving some of the cable companies and some of the other industries in the area, hopefully we can attract some of those dollars by getting private dollars involved.

MR. MITCHO: We appreciate that.

SENATOR EWING: I just want to remind you that this is not an Appropriations Committee. (laughter)

DR. DiPAOLA: Nick will make a pitch wherever he has an audience.

SENATOR EWING: I do sit on that, too, so I will remember what you said.

I would like to ask you about the alternative schools: The alternative school you run in the evening-- Is it for children -- students you are having problems with?

MR. MITCHO: Right, exactly. We like to say they are disaffected students. They are students who cannot function in a traditional high school setting.

SENATOR EWING: What do they do during the day?

MR. MITCHO: Basically, some of the youngsters have jobs. Again, since they are coming in from other districts, you know, some do not have jobs. The point is, they are not able to function within a traditional high school setting. We have the alternative program available five nights a week, from 5:30 until 10:00 at night. Basically, with all of the components, we are trying to develop a more comprehensive program with the dollars.

For example, this year, we received \$200,000 in funding -- this is the \$200,000 per county -- for the alternative. Next year, it is decreased to \$100,000, which means that we have had to put together a rate -- a tuition rate for those. In subsequent years, obviously, that tuition will be paid by the local districts.

SENATOR EWING: Would it be better to be able to find, you know, if we can ever get out of some of the rules and regs -- for you to find a church building, or some building that could be used to run a school all day long, during the daylight hours, for these alternative students.

MR. MITCHO: Yes, that would--

SENATOR EWING: Rather than the evening.

MR. MITCHO: --probably be more appropriate. The other extension is, they are looking at trying to look for jobs -- to help these youngsters find jobs during the day, so that they can keep busy. But you're right, if we had some facilities, we could run these programs during the day.

SENATOR EWING: Do you feel the facilities in the area that you could make use of, although, you know, the ceiling might be two inches too low, or the windows four inches too high, or something--

MR. MITCHO: I think that is a possibility. The only problem with that is, when you do that, you are obviously going to have to increase the tuition. The initial funding was not adequate to provide housing. That is why the housing for alternative programs is mostly in existing structures. Most of the alternatives in the State of New Jersey are in community colleges, some in vocational schools. Gloucester County just didn't work that way. We had the experience that they piggybacked on our program and we have expanded.

But you're right, if we had additional funding, we could rent a building--

SENATOR EWING: I think it would do a better job with the student if he were there during the daytime for a full day.

MR. MITCHO: I think you're right. No question about it.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Now we will go on with the rest of you. I apologize to everybody.

DR. DiPAOLA: Senator, if I may take a minute--

SENATOR EWING: Please do.

DR. DiPAOLA: Thank you.

I want to thank you, certainly, for coming to South Jersey. I really did not become aware of this hearing until yesterday, when I had an opportunity to read the bill and had some thoughts.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me for interrupting. Did you hear it on the radio, or not?

DR. DiPAOLA: I didn't.

SENATOR EWING: We had our communications group in the Senate Majority put it on the radio. Whether any stations would pick it up down here, I don't know. I was just interested.

Thank you.

DR. DiPAOLA: I am really pleased that you made the trip. I am certainly happy to see Senator Matheussen here with us.

We, in the public schools, recognize, as Nick said, that there is a paradigm shift. Unfortunately, I think to meet the needs of the diverse students we find ourselves confronting every day, we have to look at alternatives. Certainly, I am not here to speak against this bill or for the bill, but just to ask some questions and make some observations.

One of them that struck me immediately was the implication for the far-reaching systemic changes in public schools as we know them in New Jersey, that a piece of legislation, if enacted like this, has the potential to do. In that, I share Dr. Tannenbaum's concern about elitism and having only youngsters whose parents are very interested in promoting their well-being, being those that come forward and select and take the initiative to be involved in charter schools. Whereas, in the public schools today, I believe we do have alternatives.

Nick spoke of site-based management and school-based management teams in which we try to focus more decision-making ability on people in the community as they get involved with their schools -- their neighborhood schools. The State's move to have, rather than district-wide objectives, which we are meeting every year, having school-wide objectives, school-based objectives, I think, was a move to get more local involvement.

Now, if that is not happening everywhere -- and obviously there is a feeling that there are constituencies, parents, etc., who aren't really being heard by the local public schools in their districts -- so be it. Maybe there are appropriate places for charter schools to be an experimental vehicle. However, I am concerned about this notion of a small group of people getting a charter and then being autonomous, yet not, in the sense that-- As a Superintendent of a school

district, I believe we are charged to try to serve every one of our youngsters to the best of our abilities, given our financial means. I worry about the economy of scale. If you are going to take some resources away for a particular venture of a special nature, then automatically the available resources to share decreases. Whether you can as economically run a school district absent those funds is an issue, whether or not the charter school does, in fact, reflect the will of the elected members who are running that school district.

Local school boards, I like to believe, are reflective of the community. They get elected to represent the parents and the people of that community. I get concerned that boards and charter schools may have a little too much autonomy, in that they have the ability to take resources, and yet may not have the big picture of what the district is trying to do in mind.

Nick spoke to his wonderful Genesis program. We all recognize that the youngsters coming to our schools today are coming with lots of different kinds of needs. We are trying to address every single one of them. That is our charge. And at the same time, 25 percent of the children born in the United States are born to mothers who do not graduate from high school, when the education level of the mother is one of the most significant indicators of the academic success of the youngsters.

I think we cannot help but recognize that preschool intervention, preschool handicap programs are going to do a lot more in the long run to enable us to serve those youngsters as they come through, whether they are traditional educational systems or charter schools. We would like to see that focus somewhere in the education agenda.

As I said, I did not come here to speak against or for the bill, except to raise some questions and to think of its implications on a district like mine in which we try to serve

our students to the best of our abilities in neighborhood schools, where I believe parents are heard and participate very well.

I worry about charter schools, in that I am afraid that if they were formed by people with particular interests and particular focus, and only those parents who would take the initiative to elect their youngster to be involved there and be involved themselves, then again, we would have the people who are most concerned about their child's well-being and education getting greater services, and they may not be the folks who need them the most.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I mean, the final say on a charter school would be with the Commissioner. It is a very detailed outline that we would hope would be made up as to, you know--

DR. DiPAOLA: I guess my basic concern is what happens to the elected board of education of the district, and how do they play a role here.

SENATOR EWING: They wouldn't.

DR. DiPAOLA: Exactly, and yet they are supposed to be representatives of the community funding this. So how much say does an experimental venture have and how does it impact the local school district's ability to serve the youngsters?

SENATOR EWING: Very interesting points. There is going to be a lot of discussion on this bill, I'm sure, before we get finished.

Also, as you may or may not know, Assemblyman Rocco has a bill in on charter schools, as well, over on the Assembly side, which differs from this particular bill. So what is finally going to come out, or whether anything ever comes out, remains to be seen still. But we certainly want to get the input on what we need as a negative part, as well as a positive. There is no question of that. We don't want everybody to say, "This is the greatest thing since sliced

bread." Undoubtedly, there are holes in it, and we want to try to fill them up.

DR. DiPAOLA: And there is great potential in it.

SENATOR EWING: The main thing is the child, not jobs or anything like that, or somebody being a big board member, or a BOM on the campus there, or in the town where he is on the board, but the child and what we do for the child. We are not doing enough for the children now, for various reasons.

DR. DiPAOLA: We certainly appreciate your being here so that we had the opportunity to speak with you.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, yes, it's great. It is fascinating getting around and seeing different programs. Fortunately, I have some time.

On the Genesis program-- I want to hear more about that, actually. Is it in a housing project?

MR. MITCHO: It is right in the center of the housing project.

SENATOR EWING: Are there special facilities for it?

MR. MITCHO: Actually, through the funding, we developed an absolutely state-of-the-art Early Childhood Program and facility. The facility is a marvelous one. Actually, it is too small for us now, because we are getting more youngsters in. We have another grant in to, again, Government Services, which is administering this.

SENATOR EWING: Through HUD.

MR. MITCHO: Through HUD, that is correct, to stand that facility.

SENATOR EWING: How many children are in it today?

MR. MITCHO: We are serving about 30 youngsters in a housing community that has 60 families.

SENATOR EWING: How many prekindergarten children?

MR. MITCHO: They are all prekindergarten children.

SENATOR EWING: No, no, how many are--

MR. MITCHO: Are in that facility?

SENATOR EWING: Yes. If you took everybody, how many would--

MR. MITCHO: We are probably serving about half of the kids who are in the facility. Again, it is a voluntary program. One of the things we like to have is, we like to have the parents involved with the youngsters in the program. That is a very important aspect of the program, getting the parents to come in and work with the teachers and aides in the developmental program.

We have been very successful. The Parent Advisory Committee started out with five members, and it now has 25 members. They are running their own show. They are running their own fund-raisers and so forth, and have really developed a neat community. We kind of supported them to begin with. Now they are out on their own doing -- independently operating their fund-raisers and their extracurricular programs.

SENATOR EWING: What does it cost to run the program as it is today?

MR. MITCHO: The total program is funded, right now, to the tune of \$128,000, serving the needs of 30 youngsters. We are trying to get separate funding for this addition to the building, but it is right in the middle of the housing program.

SENATOR EWING: Up in Jersey City, one of the housing projects I went and looked at has something similar to this. I guess they might have 30 children in it, but what it does for those children is tremendous. I am not sure they, in Jersey City, were doing as much with the parents as they are in this particular project.

MR. MITCHO: This is the important aspect.

The other thing that is happening is that we have a displaced homemaker's grant.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me. They work with the parents there?

MS. SCHULZ: Yes.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: I think that is an interesting aspect of this program, too, the displaced homemakers.

MR. MITCHO: That is exactly right. An ADEGED program, as well, which is available to the parents. The displaced homemaker program is another very positive program for parents. So it is a combination of things we are talking about here: A program for preschool youngsters, with a strong parent component; the displaced homemakers; and also the educational component for parents.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: It would be interesting to note, Mr. Chairman, too, if the Chief of Police were here from the Borough of Glassboro, I think she would advise you that--

MS. SCHULZ: She?

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: Yes, she.

MS. SCHULZ: Good.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: She would advise you that the element of crime that was involved in that area has remarkably dropped off since the innovation of this program. It really has rejuvenated a community, provided an excellent education resource, and given a lot of pride back to a community that was sorely lacking in it.

SENATOR EWING: And hope.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: And hope, exactly.

SENATOR EWING: That is the big thing there.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: It was nice, because it could be done on a small scale. I mean, Glassboro does not have the same impact as some of those communities like, say, for instance -- and I do not mean to pick on any one -- Jersey City or Camden, where the projects are much larger. This was an opportunity to do it, and I think it is a great service.

SENATOR EWING: Is HUD doing this elsewhere?

MR. MITCHO: Actually, they are using this program as a model nationally at most of their major conferences. Bob Braunton (phonetic spelling), who actually is a resident of

Glassboro, was the Director of a community affairs office -- I am trying to think of it -- Community Services Division. Bob has gone all over the country to talk about this program. We see so much. I think the key word there is, it has created a sense within that community, and the ability to control a program for their youngsters.

Actually, last year, we had our first graduation. We had five youngsters in the preschool program go into our kindergarten program. I have talked to kindergarten teachers this year. They recognize that even for the short period of time those youngsters are in that program, the impact on those youngsters.

We think it is powerful, and we think it should be replicated even here in Glassboro. It is just that the funding is specific to HUD at this point, and it is so categorical that you can't expand it. We have other low-income housing areas in Glassboro. As I mentioned to you, we have the highest concentration of low-income housing in the county, where people are saying, "Hey, how can I get my youngster in this program?" That is what limits it, the funding.

SENATOR EWING: Are they also picking up children with disabilities?

MR. MITCHO: We are not limiting it to youngsters without disabilities.

SENATOR EWING: No, no, but I mean, are they finding children in there that no one else had realized up until that particular point had a problem?

MR. MITCHO: Well, yes, that is true, too.

SENATOR EWING: Is that reported then on to--

MR. MITCHO: It is sort of like a "child find" program for our preschool handicap program. Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Right. That is so important, too, to find the children who have disabilities, or whatever it might be, at a very, very early age. I serve on a group that does

some birth to three years of age -- the State Interagency Coordinating Council -- to try to find these children to get the parent to get them into the programs they should be putting them into even right after birth.

In Jersey City, was that run by HUD? No.

MS. SCHULZ: No. It is run by the school district. There are two prekindergartens and two full-day kindergartens in two housing projects.

SENATOR EWING: They tried to put it into more of those buildings.

MS. SCHULZ: Right.

SENATOR EWING: There are about five buildings there, and they have it in one of them. It is low-income, high-rises.

MS. SCHULZ: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

MR. MITCHO: Thank you.

DR. DiPAOLA: Thank you for the opportunity.

SENATOR EWING: Calvin Fergeson, West End Elementary School in Woodbury.

**C A L V I N F E R G E S O N:** Senators, good morning.

SENATOR EWING: Good morning.

MR. FERGESON: I would like to thank you for the opportunity.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me. Take both mikes together.

SENATOR MATHEUSSEN: That one, yes. Just pull it up.

MR. FERGESON: Okay.

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you for coming to South Jersey to hear our comments on behalf of the charter bill, S-1796.

I would like to tell you a little something about myself. I am the Principal of the West End School in Woodbury, New Jersey, a small school in Gloucester County. We have a population -- a school population of about 1800. It has a composition that would resemble somewhat of an urban center. I

am also the President of the Gloucester County Principals and Supervisors Association. But that is not why I am here. I am here just to talk about the bill a little bit.

Just like my predecessors talking about education in New Jersey, I would just like to say that as a career educator, being in the business for 30 years from a preschool teacher and supervisor, grade school teacher, middle school teacher, high school teacher, assistant principal, guidance counselor, running the gamut of all, I have seen a lot of different kinds of education. I welcome the idea that there will be reform in education. We do need that.

As I read over the bill, I was wondering: How does that fit into the reform aspect, and is it good or bad? I am not here to speak about whether it is good or bad. There are some areas of concern. I think that any time there is an opportunity to reform education -- and that is good -- or bring about change, there are a lot of good things that are happening in education, as you just heard with the Genesis project here in Gloucester County, and a different number of things.

We do need alternative education for some children. There is a need to meet some learning styles that we are not currently meeting. So we do welcome that change. However, there are some concerns about the bill, as it stands now. The concerns, I think, range in the areas of equal access, academic and professional standards, due process, relief from mandates, funding safeguards, and duplicity of programs.

If we look just at equal access, I think that is very important. It is very important that we do not try to establish a school which is going to drain the best and the brightest minds away from the public schools. As I look at public schools, I feel they are doing a fairly good job. I would give them a B+ for the type of work they are doing, especially with the handicaps that are placed on educators today.

When we look at just the number of mandates, as you alluded to, Senator-- You were talking about the height of the room or the space between the chairs, all these kinds of things that handicap. When we get down to the real business of educating children-- Sometimes that is lost. I think all of these mandates helped to change our focus. Our focus can never be changed; our mission is to educate the child. That cannot be lost.

Therefore, there are some things that we have to be concerned about: If we establish these schools, will they have an unfair advantage? Will it still be a level playing field? Will they not be subject to the same kinds of restrictions that are placed on the public school today? Will the professional standards still be the same? Will the requirements for all the professionals running these schools meet the same kinds of high professional standards we have today? Will the academic standards still be the same for children? I know in the bill it says we are asking for the same kinds of academic standards they must meet, the high school proficiency test, and other standards. But will they be lessened? I think it has to be a concern that they are not lessened.

The other part is funding, the major part. You heard a lot about funding today. In public schools, we are constantly looking for funding. I know one of the small things we do in our community -- I'll say "base team" -- in the area of technology, just for example-- We would love to be able to really move into the 21st century by getting into the technology stream. What we have done is try to seek out partners in education. We wrote the businesses. As they upgrade their technology, will they share their old technology with us? We are looking for diverse--

As I said, our base team has been wonderful in that area in trying to get technology. We have gotten some limited funds in. But, as you know, the fiber optics, and that kind of

technology, is going to take funds. Public schools are in need of those kinds of funds. If we are establishing charter schools, just the start-up costs, the seed money-- Where is that going to come from? If it does come out of that large coffee pot, is it going to take away from the local existing school?

Right now, we are all competing for those funds. The caps on the funds are handicapping our school districts; the level of property tax relief, and all kinds of things are placing handicaps on the public schools. It comes to mind, as I said, as a concern: How will the funding affect the current public schools? We know that some of the funds will go with the children who are leaving the public schools. If it does, would there be a cap on that funding, such as no more than 5 percent per year for those students who are leaving the current public school? After all, the current public schools still have existing fixed costs that they have to deal with. So if we are limiting those costs, what is going to happen?

I alluded to due process, due process provisions for the teachers as is currently provided under law. Is that still going to be provided for the charter school? Due process for children. Will charter schools be able to siphon off the brightest and weed out the worst, thus leaving schools like those in the urban centers with the worst children? No examples for the children who need examples and role models.

Alternative schools are good, but I think the current public schools -- just as you have heard today -- have in place already alternative schools, such as that Glassboro evening school. You mentioned Gateway. The town I live in supports the Gateway district. They have an alternative -- not an alternative high school, but they have a high school for youngsters and adults in the evening. They could stand funding, and there are other schools like that. The Clayton School District has some of the same problems that urban school

districts do, and they are using creative ideas. Again, it comes down to dollars and funding. Not all things are dollars and funding. We try to go out and recruit moneys, but largely a lot of schools have a need, and we have to be cognizant of that need; that when we establish such a good program as a charter school, that there will be equal funding for the charter school, as well as for the public school.

Duplicity of programs would be a concern. Would a charter school provide the same kinds of programs that the current public schools provide, thus the parents, those elite parents would say, "Well, I am going to send my children to the charter school and not the current public school." We must realize that we do have parents like that. There are already in existence schools for those parents, their private schools. Those parents are paying for those schools, and will continue to pay for those schools now.

Relief from mandates, as I mentioned. We are strapped with many kinds of mandates. If we could get relief from some of them, that would free up some dollars for schools. So that is another way of getting some dollars that already exist back into the public schools.

All in all, Senators, I would say we need to make sure that when we go to this concept -- and it is a good concept -- that reform is necessary, yes, but whatever form we bring about, we should make sure that there is a level playing field for the current existing schools; that there is support for current existing schools; and that we look at those schools that are already doing a commendable job. I am not blowing a horn for our district, but I know in our district -- a little, small school -- we have 82 percent of our children going on to higher education. We have a high teacher attendance rate, a high student attendance rate; low pupil discipline and dropout rates.

We are doing the job, and there are many schools just like Woodbury throughout the State that are doing the job. We need to look at these schools, and we need to say, "How can we help them to do a better job? How can we give them funding?" not punish them, not have their moneys cut, but look at them and see what we can do in order to help them.

I thank you for allowing me to make this statement.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much for coming. How close are you to here?

MR. FERGESON: I am not far, not far. When I had an opportunity to come down, I thought, "Boy, what a great chance to let you know that the public schools are doing a good job." There are a tremendous amount of public schools-- For all the ones you hear aren't doing a good job, I'll bet there are three or four to the one, which are doing a good job.

SENATOR EWING: No, I think there are a lot of them that are doing a great job. There is no question about that whatsoever. No question about it, they are doing a great job.

I certainly appreciate your coming and giving us your thoughts and ideas. This is what we need.

MR. FERGESON: Okay. Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Is there anyone else who would like to be heard? You can't have a second chance. (speaking to Ms. Fulton in the audience) Come on, Edie, you can talk.

MS. FULTON: Well, what inspired me today, Senator, was the talk about the preschool programs, because I think that is really a key to preparing our youngsters for their regular school career. There is an Early Intervention Program run by the State which was in the Department of Education. It has been transferred to the Department of Human Services. The reason I know so much about it is because my granddaughter was born with an incomplete soft palate, which qualified her for the Early Intervention Program from birth to age three. I think you mentioned that age category.

Now, you have to have two areas of handicap. She had vision and, of course, the soft palate to quality. But it is a marvelous, marvelous Program. It is free. It is funded now by the Department of Health. It takes babies to age three with handicaps and prepares them for their school career.

I think -- which just dawned on me today --if a charter school program could include some preschool programs for every child-- I mean, this Genesis program sounds wonderful.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, yes.

MS. FULTON: I would like to go and see that myself firsthand. But I think maybe it sheds a new light on a focus here that you might want to consider allowing; that is, programs for preschoolers, you know, maybe only the kids who qualify now or are duly handicapped, or come from socioeconomic conditions that preclude them, perhaps, from having the best start in life. Yet, I think there are kids in the middle class and even in the upper class economic strata that could benefit by preschool programs.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, I think everybody could benefit. There is no question about that. To me, it is more a limitation of money. I think, you know, tragically, in your lower income housing, it is certainly a greater priority there than it is for other people who could make use of it.

MS. FULTON: Surely, surely, but, I mean, my granddaughter is not what you would call low socioeconomic--

SENATOR EWING: Oh, no, but yours is a different type.

MS. FULTON: --although her parents are struggling to make ends meet.

SENATOR EWING: It is a different type of problem your daughter has compared to someone brought up in a different type of an environment.

MS. FULTON: Yes. Well, she will enter a nursery school program in September that she had to apply for and be,

not screened so much, but they had to have available space. That will have a minimal cost. Three afternoons will run about \$100 a month. That is not a lot of money.

SENATOR EWING: Did they operate on her cleft palate?

MS. FULTON: Yes, she had major surgery when she was 11 months old, 1000 stitches in her little mouth to repair it. She is doing wonderfully, but she needs speech therapy because of the displacement of the tongue. She is going to give her teachers a run for their money when she gets there.

SENATOR EWING: Like her grandmother?

MS. FULTON: Well-- I'll take the Fifth.

Thank you very much, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Yes, Professor?

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: The issue of parental involvement--

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me, the issue of what?

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: The issue of parental involvement I would like to address in two ways, just briefly, in response to some of the things that were said by our Superintendents here.

I would urge you, in this bill, to keep the charter schools independent of the local school boards. I speak as a local school board member. There are a couple of reasons: In the first place, Dr. DiPaola talked in terms of the elected officials. If we can get 15 percent of the local population out to vote at school board elections--

SENATOR EWING: That's huge.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: --we consider ourselves extremely successful, although I personally consider myself the voice of the elected people. I am constantly urging my own board, when we have a question about what to do, to find ways to go back to the people and ask them what they want us to do. I have to convey to you that that is not a popular way of

boards operating, in my experience. It may have something to do with the fact that boards have historically been male dominated, and men always know what to do. They never need to consult anybody else.

SENATOR EWING: Well, isn't that true? Isn't that true?

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Not to be charged with making any sexist remarks, but school boards, as they are elected in this country, do not, in my view, represent the electorate. So I think the question of giving charter schools the autonomy from the local board is an important question.

Secondly, they will be responsive to their constituents, because if the people who put their kids in a charter school do not like what is going on, they will take their kids out of those charter schools.

Finally, to move to the area I was in when I gave my original testimony, the fact is, if you give the parents, 95 percent, I would argue, in all socioeconomic groups, in their hands the choice of where to send a kid to school, that parent is going to be much more involved in that kid's success and that school's success and that school. This is single parents; this is poor parents; this is parents on drugs; this is parents involved in crime. No matter what kind of parent you see, with very few exceptions, they are concerned about their offspring. Giving them that empowerment is going to make a difference in terms of their involvement.

Now, if you are interested, I will make available to you the results of the survey we conducted in seven southern counties. We received over 4000 responses from, as I indicated, teachers, principals, board members, parents, and a very unsurveyed population, secondary school students. We presented them to national organizations all over this country in the last three or four years, and of those 4000 responses, over 2000 were secondary students expressing their views and

attitudes toward school choice and their perceptions of what differences school choice would make in their involvement with schools. A large percentage of parents indicated that they would be more involved in a school that they chose for their children than they were currently. We hypothesized it was because they feel as though their involvement would make a difference. They would know that if they were not satisfied ultimately with what was going on in that school, they could take their kid out of that school and put that kid in some other school.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, we would like a copy of that.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: I will make that available to you.

SENATOR EWING: Do you have our address?

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: I can get it from Melanie, I assume.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, that would be fine.

PROFESSOR TANNENBAUM: Okay. Thank you.

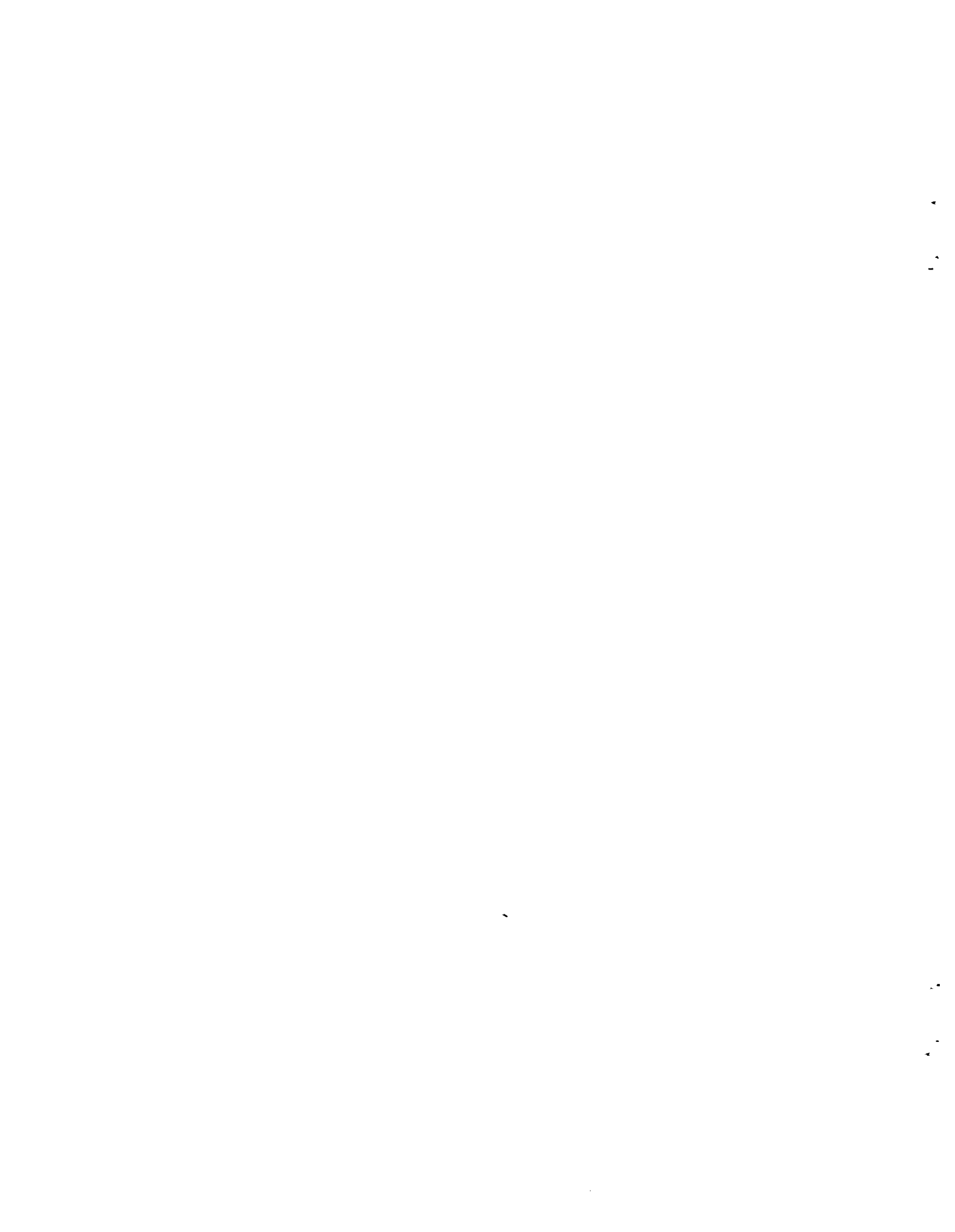
SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Anyone else? (no response) Then we will close the hearing.

Thank you.

**(HEARING CONCLUDED)**

APPENDIX



## CHARTER SCHOOLS

All of New Jersey's students are entitled to quality education. We need to provide the time, talent, and resources to support the efforts of communities and educators statewide to restructure our schools to meet the needs of our students and the future of our state.

Certainly proposals that foster greater flexibility and creativity in the public school system are desirable, and many such innovations are already occurring. Some New Jersey public school districts now offer magnet schools and alternative schools that target specific populations. These schools feature creative teaching which results in successful student experiences.

Charter schools are a more recent suggestion offered as an option to redesign the school structure. While it is difficult to render a simple definition because of the variety of proposals, charter schools are public schools operating as autonomous mini-districts. They operate under a charter that is separate from the local district and are managed by an independent board of trustees. The board of trustees oversees a budget that is independent of the local school district's budget and oversees the entire operation of the charter school. Since experience with charter schools to date is very limited, NJEA believes that any legislative action to authorize the creation of charter schools should be fashioned in accordance with the following criteria.

### Criteria for Charter Schools

1. Charter schools shall be public schools that have open admissions, are tuition free, and are without special fees.
2. Charter schools shall abide by all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal education opportunity and labor laws..
3. A charter school shall be nonsectarian and not home based.
4. Charter schools shall have a defined mission, goals, and educational objectives. They should be held accountable by the State Department of Education for accomplishing the mission, achieving the goals, and reaching the objectives defined in the charter.
5. Charter schools shall be designed to promote educational innovation.

CHARTER SCHOOLS - 2.

6. Charter school programs shall be research-based and replicable in other public schools.

7. The charter school and its board's authority and responsibility shall be clearly defined. The law shall require an application to include:

(a) a mission statement for the charter school;

(b) goals and objectives to be achieved by the charter school that would not be achievable in the traditional or alternative public school;

(c) evidence of support from all stakeholders in the district, including majority representative organizations where appropriate, the superintendent and local board of education;

(d) a description of the educational program;

(e) a description of the curriculum;

(f) a description of pupil assessment;

(g) a description of governance and operation;

(h) a description of employer-employee relationships, including collective bargaining where appropriate;

(i) a plan to deal with displaced employees or students;

(j) a plan to deal with transportation needs, including those of low-income students or those displaced by a charter, as well as the costs of such a plan;

(k) a description of a fiscal and academic accountability plan; and

(l) a description of the physical plant.

8. Charter schools shall be created by, and have a teaching force composed of state certified teaching staff members.

CHARTER SCHOOLS - 3

9. The Commissioner of Education with approval of the State Board of Education shall have authority to approve and revoke charters under rules developed and approved by the State Board of Education.

10. The charter school law shall limit the number of charter schools that may be created within the state so that this experiment may be assessed to determine its feasibility. Charter schools shall be authorized for no more than five years.

11. Charter schools shall be adequately funded by the State.

12. Charter schools shall meet safety and health standards applicable to those of existing public schools.

13. There shall be voluntary staff and student participation in charter schools.

14. Charter school employees shall be directly involved in the design, implementation, and governance of the school. The school's governing body should also include representation from parents of children in the school and community members.

15. Charter school employees shall be covered by the collective bargaining agreement in the district where the charter school is located.

16. Charter school employment conditions shall be equal to those of teaching staff members and other employees under New Jersey law governing public schools, and should include tenure, due process, seniority, health insurance coverage, and coverage in the TPA&F or PERS retirement plans as appropriate.

17. The charter school shall be accountable for the use of all its resources and shall be subject to annual fiscal audits and program evaluation.

Colorado

Alamosa Valley Courier 11-2-94

# All is not well in charter school paradise

Some parents 188 unhappy with Jeffco's first charter school

by Robert Mook Reporter

Overworked teachers. Unruly students. Limited finances. Disgruntled parents. If these sound like problems experienced by public schools, they're also problems experienced by charter schools.

Sci-Tech Academy, south Jeffco's new charter school, recently witnessed a minor insurgency that demonstrated not all is well in "educational paradise." During a recent Sci-Tech meeting, a small group of parents expressed qualms about the school's discipline policies. Questions about Sci-Tech's organizational structure, curriculum and finances also surfaced.

The school was the first charter approved by the Jefferson County Board of Education last spring. After operating in a temporary facility for its first two weeks, the school recently moved to a permanent facility in a former K-mart building on Coal Mine Avenue.

The brainchild of John and Barb Ziegler, Sci-Tech Academy was envisioned as an "optimum learning environment" in which all students could acquire a first-class education. The charter stressed a rigorous college prep curriculum and state-of-the-art technology. Other selling points of the school included: flexible scheduling, a closed campus, longer school days, and family involvement.

Although the charter has been in



Courier photo by Robert Mook

Barb Ziegler, founder of Sci-Tech, talks with parents at a recent meeting.

operation for only two months, some parents are concerned the academy isn't living up to its promise. Among their charges:

- The school's code of discipline is too lenient.
- Classes are too simple or too advanced for individual students.
- While parental involvement is encouraged, the school's creators maintain too much control.
- Class sizes are larger than parents were led to believe.

Even though the school has students with learning disabilities, the school doesn't have a learning disabilities teacher.

Expenses for building materials haven't been paid. One disgruntled parent, Pam Ladd, unsuccessfully sought election to the school's steering committee. Ladd garnered 30 votes in a school of 129 students. Ladd says

while her own child is performing well in academy, she believes other students' needs aren't being met.

"I don't think I'm alone," Ladd said. "I feel the school is pretty much split."

However, the results of a recent steering committee election suggested the disgruntled parents are in the minority.

## PROBLEMS AREN'T UNCOMMON

Barbara Ziegler, co-director of the school, downplays the discontent, saying only a "handful" of parents are unhappy with the school's policies. Ziegler maintains Sci-Tech's success stories far outweigh its problems.

"It's incredibly frustrating," Ziegler said of the critics' attacks.

"It drains the positive energy from the kids. Which is where we want to spend our time and effort."

"Lots of parents have come in with objections and suggestions, and that's great. We don't have all the answers, but (Ladd) has never been in my office to talk about this. I can't see any constructive purpose to this campaign to undermine."

Ziegler claims all charter schools in the state of Colorado are experiencing similar problems.

"The traditional schools have parents complaining because they want their schools to be more open, and the open schools have parents complaining because they want their schools to be more strict," she said. "Come on parents, it's about choice!"

Kathy McGill, a parent elected to Sci-Tech's steering committee, said parents are naturally more apprehensive about charter schools. McGill believes a vast majority of parents support the academy's principles.

"I think people who pull their children out of the norm and put them into alternative schools are much more involved parents," McGill said. "Because of that, parents are more apt to be louder and more critical."

Indeed, the emotional Oct. 17 meeting involved more parents than most Jeffco School Board meetings. While the meeting was tightly structured (questions were submitted beforehand and answered by a moderator), some angry parents still managed to voice serious concerns about the charter.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY RAISES QUESTIONS

Most of the controversy centered around Sci-Tech's discipline policies. Ladd said the school allows students "too much freedom of speech." She said some classes allow "foul language," and the school's code of conduct is too lenient and vague.

"There's too much freedom for the students right now," Ladd said. To handle disciplinary problems, the school established a "board of discipline", consisting of two students, two staff members and Barb Ziegler. Students that violate the school's code of conduct take their case to the board, who then determine what "punishment" the students receive. The code of conduct was written by students as part of a political science exercise.

"Every type of behavior that is objectionable is covered (in the code)," Ziegler said. "I think it's an excellent document that's going to work well." She said students can add other "amendments" to the code in the future.

While admitting the school has experienced problems with unruly students, Ziegler says the charter inherited the behavioral problems from traditional public schools.

"It's going to take time to change the behavior of 130 kids," she said. "You can only do it one kid at a time. So, we're definitely not where we want to be, but it's a far cry - we're told - from the schools they came from. If (parents) expected a military academy, this will never be one."

See Charter on Page 3A

# Sci-Tech Academy receives praise, criticism from parents

Charter from Page 17A

Jim Green, another parent with children enrolled in Sci-Tech, questions the concept of "students judging other students" on the board of discipline. Green ran for a position on the steering committee, but withdrew prior to the election. He prefers the concept of "strong authority figures" enforcing the policies.

"I just have a different philosophy about conditions children learn best under," Green said.

"There appears to be a lot of chaos," he said. "There's generally a lot of disrespect and kids swearing in the hallways."

## CURRICULUM GETS "MIXED REVIEWS"

Green said the charter appealed to him because of its smaller classes, individualized attention, and its emphasis on math and reading. Green isn't sure if the school has had time to fulfill its promises.

"From what I hear, it doesn't sound like much has been going on in terms of learning, and that's a little distressing," he said.

"I feel (the Ziegler) are genuinely interested in the children, and they deserve a chance to try this experiment and have it done so it isn't torn apart internally. They're going to have enough trouble from external pres-

ures. I didn't feel I was an appropriate person to be on the board because I would be at odds with them constantly," he said.

Green said he sent one of his kids back to Columbine High School because he didn't feel Sci-Tech was right for him.

"I had a 7th-grade daughter and a 10th-grade son in the same class, doing the same things," he said. "I felt one of them was getting a raw deal. Either the daughter was way above her head or my son wasn't being challenged."

Green said he's also concerned the school does not use textbooks in many classes.

"If (students) are preparing to go to college level and they're hit with the traditional type of learning situations, and they don't have experience with it, I can see they're going to have a terribly hard adjustment period," he said. "Although I can concede that some of the things they're doing can be effective with certain types of students in certain situations."

Ziegler agrees the school's educational approaches simply aren't for everyone.

A recent article in the *Rocky Mountain News* criticized the charter's more innovative techniques. One group of kids learned math, engineering, business, finance and sales skills by designing a practice studio for their heavy-metal rock band. The article also highlighted Sci-Tech's use of computer technology in the classroom.

In the article, students praised Sci-Tech's openness and creativity.

"It's much more open," said Drew Taber, who was interviewed in the *News* article. Before Sci-Tech, Taber attended a traditional Jefferson school.

"It was like the teachers really didn't care if you passed or failed... This is basically a free-thinking school. They don't down-talk ideas. They always give everything careful consideration."

Although the school does not have a "learning disabilities" teacher yet, Ziegler said the school will hire one within the week. She said the school did not obtain the funding formula from the school district until Sept. 30. Learning disabilities challenge 18 of the school's 129 students, Ziegler said.

"I've had two parents tell me their kids have had more special attention to their disabilities than they've ever had from a special education teacher," she added.

## PARENTS WANT MORE CONTROL

When state legislators approved the charter school law in 1993, many parents saw charters as an opportunity to exercise more control on their children's schools. However, even parents believe Sci-Tech's constant command too much power.

The Ziegler preside on a nonprofit corporation board, formed at the school district's request. The board acted as the start-up steering committee until a real steering committee

was appointed. The Ziegler were also appointed co-directors of the school for the first three years. John Ziegler is the principal of the secondary.

One of Sci-Tech's teachers and co-founders, Connie Kersten, also sits on the nonprofit corporation board with her husband, Jerry Kersten. Critics, including Ladd, question whether the arrangement constitutes a "conflict of interest."

Ladd is also concerned the nonprofit board passed the mantle to the steering committee too slowly.

The steering committee is elected by parents, students and staff members to set the direction for the school within its contractual guidelines, including: budget, staff hiring and evaluations. The committee consists of two parents, two teachers, two (non-voting) students, and Barb Ziegler, who co-chairs the committee and casts the deciding vote in the event of a stalemate.

"We thought the majority would rule, and that's not going to happen," Ladd said. "A bunch of us aren't sure it will happen when we get it in pieces." Ladd wants to expand the steering committee to four members, to ensure parents have a charter voice on the committee.

Ziegler argues the chain of command was written into the charter's covenant before the Jefferson School Board approved Sci-Tech Academy last March. As for the charge the nonprofit board has acted too slowly with the power transition, Ziegler said the transition was originally scheduled for January, 1995.

"To be honest, the board, staff and administration have been working 25 hours a day since the school started," she said. "It takes time to get a steering committee in place."

Ziegler said the committee can revise the school's bylaws to add additional members, if necessary.

"Every charter in the state is allowed to provide for input from staff," Ziegler said regarding the "conflict of interest" charges. "The law says the schools can be started and run by teachers, parents, committee members, or a commission."

## STAFF OVERWORKED?

Ladd was also concerned the school has been too slow in paying its bills for construction materials.

"This is a little embarrassing, especially when you have friends who are owed money," Ladd said.

Ziegler said she's not aware of any unpaid bills.

"If there are unpaid bills, it's because our staff is so desperately overworked," Ziegler said. "There's no shortage of funds. The district releases funding whenever we requisition them."

Green said he doesn't question Sci-Tech's accountability in regard to finances.

"Looking at their (profit and loss) statement, I think they're probably using their money appropriately, and from everything I understand, the Ziegler are very honest and dedicated people," he said. "I have absolutely no feelings they've misused the money or done anything inappropriate."

Some parents claim they were led to believe Sci-Tech's class sizes would be smaller. During the Oct. 10 meeting, some parents said they were told student-teacher ratios would be one teacher for every 15 students.

"I don't know where they get those figures," Ziegler said, explaining the ratios are still lower than most public schools in Jefferson County. Class sizes range from 14 students to 22 students.

While Ladd concedes the charter's evolution will take time, she believes the process is "taking more time than we thought it would take."

"We told people last year, it takes three years to get a brand new school model where you want it to be," Ziegler said.

All things considered, Ziegler claims the school's creative approaches are working well.

"I've had at least a dozen parents tell me



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# Parent group lodges complaint against Academy

by Lois Brownlee  
and Kelly K. Serrano

A formal complaint that new Academy of Charter Schools in Adams County School District 12 is violating regulations has been submitted by a small group of parents, who also asked that the school's charter be revoked.

However, specifics of the problems outlined in the complaint have not been established.

Nikki Bigham-Gullette, a parent of an Academy student, submitted the complaint on behalf of the group to the District 12 School Board at its meeting last week. The 250 alleged violations centered on high school students being able to meet requirements for graduation, special students' needs being met, and inadequate curriculum and books for staff and teachers.

Also, according to the complaint, the governing board of the school has met without notifying its District 12 board liaison, Larry Karsten.

"Three hundred kids are being put at risk," Bigham-Gullette contended, urging the board to "act now."

"If this is allowed to go on,

"This is a process and we're working through the process. Everyone should learn from this."

— Susan Carlson  
D-12 spokesperson

the problems will never be recalled," she said.

However, another charter school parent, Gary Rolanda, asked Bigham-Gullette to address her concerns to the charter school board and parents instead of bringing them to the District 12 board. He also asked the district board to exercise caution in separating personal issues and undocumented opinions from fact.

Rolanda stressed that Bigham-Gullette was speaking for herself and her own children and not for other parents or students at the school.

Karsten asked that the complaining parents substantiate the violations they allege. The school charter board would then submit a 30-day plan to deal with the deficiencies, which the district board could monitor toward rectifying any violations.

Superintendent Judy Margrath-Huge said the district's

staff would prepare a document listing each violation listed, whether the violations exist, and what each problem is in violation of, whether it be state law, the charter contract, board policy or charter policy.

"This is a process and we're working through the process," said Susan Carlson, district spokesperson. "Everyone should learn from this."

John Kircher, chairman of the Academy of Charter Schools Board, said in a later interview that the school has struggled to correct any problems that have come up since its opening as soon as possible and it has met the criteria set for it. He said he does not understand the basis for the complaints, but the school's board is eager and willing to make any corrections necessary to ensure success.

# 'Fired' school director tells her story

By Virginia Grantier  
Staff Writer

The head of a Douglas County school recently was forced out, and two of the reasons given in writing were that she hadn't ordered red construction paper in a timely manner and had allegedly diluted the antibacterial soap in the children's bathrooms.

The list was shown to the Douglas County News-Press Tuesday by Laurel Iakovakis, who resigned in December from her post as director of the Core Knowledge Charter School.

Ron Burgie, board president, said those items were two of several concerns compiled from various sources, but there was usually another reason, possibly two reasons, for her situation, which he wouldn't disclose.

Iakovakis, who had previous experience in founding Douglas County's first charter school, was called last year by a group of parents to help them create a charter for

their proposed Core Knowledge Charter School, which opened in September 1994, said to be the director.

Iakovakis said that a test of how successful the school has been is that none of the 164 children have been taken out of the school — parents are happy with the school.

But although the school is doing well under an "incredible" teaching staff, there has been turmoil in the boardroom from the beginning, said Iakovakis. She said Tuesday she is ready to move on with her life, but thinks a lesson should be learned from this situation, which is similar to that being faced by many other charter schools: the boards, made up of parents, aren't adequately trained and are trying to micro-manage instead of letting the paid administrators do their jobs, she contends.

She said she thinks a major cause of the

problems is due to the number of board members, 10, overseeing 164 students. To contrast, the Douglas County School District Board of Education has only seven members for almost 20,000 students. Iakovakis thinks 10 is too many, and the result was a lot of turmoil on the board — personality conflicts between members that many times she was asked to help resolve.

She said people who are now in the process of writing charters for new charter schools have called to tell her that in light of what happened to her, they are considering limiting the number of school board members.

She said that in hindsight, the school should have had clearer job descriptions for the director and board members, and the board of directors should have been elected instead of being made up of the original

organizers, the application committee members.

Iakovakis also speculated whether gender bias was involved, basing this on the personalities involved and how she was treated. She said she wonders if the school's director had been a man whether board members would have done the things they did to her, such as calling the school to ask the principal if the bathrooms were being adequately cleaned, or if the sick mat had been adequately sanitized.

A parent told the News-Press that her children are getting a "fabulous education" at Core Knowledge and that on the surface, anyway, Iakovakis seemed to be doing an adequate job.

With regard to the board's action, she

See DIRECTOR, page 3A



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## Director: Performance issues cited

Continued from page 1A  
said, she thinks the parents "felt something underhanded was taking place."

The reasons for the firing, such as the soap problem, which were heard second-hand at the board couldn't comment on a personnel issue, didn't seem adequate.

But she said the board is a "hard-

working board" that has been responsible for much of the school's success and parents will just have to trust that the board made a good decision.

Burgie said a variety of performance issues led to Iakovakis' resignation.

"In the end, one or two issues were uncorrectable," he said, adding years of experience, Burgie said.

they were actions "outside of acceptable behavior."

Iakovakis, who has a bachelor of arts degree, and most recently, prior to her directorship, was a fine arts and physical education teacher, was replaced by an interim director, Cecil Matthews. Matthews holds a doctorate in education and has 35

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11-16-74

# Schools a step toward charter district?

BY PETER ROPER  
*The Pueblo Critic*

If charter schools are a good idea, and indeed to be a way to make public education more innovative, why not charter entire school districts?

That was the question that District 60 school board attorney Tom Farley posed Sunday at the banquet for the National Advisory Board for the Educational Alliance of Pueblo.

It was a startling question, given the difficult struggle — both in and out of court — that the district experienced in

chartering the Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences this year.

Farley said the question just occurred to him at the banquet because the discussions had focused on the advantages of charter schools.

"I didn't even know if such a thing existed," he said Tuesday.

Yet, charter districts are likely in the



Beverly Ausfahl, CEA president

future, according to Frank Newman, president of the Education Commission of the States, and a member of the 15-member advisory board.

"It's a concept (ECS) is studying for the state of California, and one that I believe will become increasingly attractive in the future," Newman said Tuesday.

"The problem with charter schools is they can end up being isolated, with some of their innovations and creativity spreading around a district," he said. "A districtwide charter would solve that."

What makes charter schools different is they have been given local and state permission to operate differently than other public schools. For example, charter schools can set longer calendars, require teachers to spend more time in the classroom, and establish unique entry requirements.

It's that ability to work outside employee contracts and state regulations that has made the Colorado Education Association, which represents 28,000 teachers, challenge the establishment of some charter schools.

CEA President Beverly Ausfahl, a District 60 teacher, attended the Alliance meetings this week, and said she was completely surprised by the discussion of a districtwide charter.

"It's the first time I'd ever heard of such a thing," Mrs. Ausfahl said, acknowledging that "alarm bells went off" when she heard the idea because many charter requests are aimed at changing employment conditions for teachers.

Please see Charter, 3B

## Charter

Continued from Page 1B  
Teachers work longer hours for less money, then you're not facing the real issues of education reform."

Newman said the goal of a charter district would be the former, not the latter.

"We have a penchant in this country of saying that all kids must be treated the same of a school system isn't fair," he said.

"We are having to learn that students don't learn the same way, and that differences in schools can be a good thing."

A charter district would be able to let its schools be different, from other school districts and from each other.

"That's an idea that both educators and parents are slow to accept," Newman said.

Newman said that it probably will be easier to get widespread support for a charter district than fight the battle to win special considerations for a single school within a district.

"I think the unions want to be part of school reform, if they are given the chance to participate," he said. "They don't want to be

the victims of it. If you give all the teachers the opportunity to participate in the same kind of innovations available at a charter school, you will get support."

A major complaint from teachers about the Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences is that the school accepted only motivated students whose parents were committed to the program — automatically weeding out the discipline problems that other public school teachers face.

Newman said that ECS research shows that schools that have active, site-based management by teachers and parents, dramatically eliminate discipline problems.

He said ECS helped establish site-based management at a crime-ridden middle school in Pompano Beach, Fla., several years ago.

"We asked the teachers a radical question: How often did they meet with their principal to discuss how the school was being run? Guess what? They said never," Newman said.

Shifting to site-based management brought parents into the school and gave teachers more authority over individual programs, he said.

"District 60 and the Alliance are already moving in that direction, towards systemwide reform," Newman said. "But for districts that aren't, a districtwide charter may be the best way to accomplish that."

Mrs. Ausfahl was in charge of training site-based committees in District 60 before being elected CEA president.

She said the district has made considerable progress in that area, but said it was always considered to be a three- to five-year project.

"Teachers would need to be involved in any change if it is expected to be successful," she said.

Mrs. Ausfahl said that her training to become the District 60 site-based coordinator indicated that unless people are told how the process will occur, they will resist change.

"Some regulations are burdensome and some are necessary," she said. "If the purpose of a district charter would be to evade the security (guarantees) that are there for teachers and staff, then it won't work."

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30,000 classified employees.

But in the long run, officials said, the week's events could disrupt school finances, credit, and operations. The biggest question is whether schools will get back the \$1 billion they have in the fund. According to county estimates, districts with big stakes in the fund include Irvine (\$105 million), Newport-Mesa (\$82 million), and Saddleback Valley (\$62 million).

### Disaster Relief

The day after the bankruptcy filing, state and local officials

forming 80 well-averaging a nearly 10 percent rate of return, some said—that a few districts took out loans to add to their ante. The 17,500-student Newport-Mesa school district must pay off a loan worth \$47 million—more than half of its \$90 million budget for the year—in June, said Superintendent Mac Bernd. The county guaranteed the principal from Newport-Mesa's investment at the time it was made and again last month, Mr. Bernd said. But he said he is worried that if the county's losses are severe, it may have to break its word.

district oversight and control. The decision illustrated that "the charter idea is very much about accountability," Ted Kollerie, who has followed the charter-schools movement as a senior associate at the Center for Policy Studies in Minneapolis, said last week.

Educators and business leaders had organized the Edutrain school so that dropouts could return to school and take part-time classes where they would receive individualized instruction. The school was chartered in May 1993 and, in its first year, enrolled more than 500 students and graduated nearly 70 of them. But in May, a state education department official visited the school and found it was receiving state funds for more students than it served. District officials said they then looked into the school and found its record-keeping to be "woefully inadequate," Richard K. Mason, a lawyer for the L.A.U.S.D., said last week.

Edutrain's board of governors has refused to release or publicly discuss a separate management review they commissioned. But the *Los Angeles Times* reported, and school district officials last week confirmed, that the review found the school's money had been spent to lease its principal an expensive sports car, to help pay the principal's rent and hire a bodyguard, and to pay for a \$7,000 staff retreat in Carmel. Teachers, meanwhile, had complained they lacked basic textbooks and supplies.

Mr. Doby maintained the district board acted on such findings without giving the school a chance to defend itself. The school's board has removed the former principal and has been taking steps to remedy the other problems, he said.

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### Risky Business?

Although state officials said analysts will comb records to determine what led to the crisis, an aggressive investment strategy got the early blame.

Using funds from public agencies as collateral, the county reportedly borrowed extensively to triple its investments and buy "derivatives"—complicated investment vehicles whose value is tied to changes in market rates and prices.

The county's derivatives were tied to interest rates, and when

Regardless of the outcome, Orange County schools can expect last week's events to taint their reputations in the bond market, according to James A. Connelly, the superintendent of schools in Bridgeport, Conn.

The city of Bridgeport's petition for bankruptcy in 1991 was denied, but the school district there has not been able to issue a bond since then because of poor credit ratings, Mr. Connelly said.

"The bond markets do not want to deal with counties that even talk about bankruptcy," he said. "It makes you a pariah."

# Citing Debts, L.A. Board Revokes School's Charter

By Peter Schmidt

The Los Angeles Unified School District board agreed last week to pull the plug on a charter school that had lost much of its enrollment and gone heavily into debt.

The 5-to-2 vote came after auditors found that mismanagement had plunged Edutrain, a special school for dropouts, nearly \$1 million into debt and district officials determined the school was not meeting its academic goals.

"When you violate our trust, the consequences are not one more chance," Mark Slavkin, the board's president, said. The board rebuffed the school's pleas for an additional three months to turn itself around.

Winston C. Doby, the chairman of Edutrain's board of governors, last week called the board's decision "totally unfair" and vowed to fight it in court.

"There are some board members who are basically against charters," said Mr. Doby, who also is a vice chancellor of the Univer-

An independent audit found the school was nearly \$1 million in debt and owed the district at least \$240,000 for students it had wrongly anticipated serving this fall, when only about 100 students enrolled.

Edutrain's board of governors has refused to release or publicly discuss a separate management review they commissioned.

But the *Los Angeles Times* reported, and school district officials last week confirmed, that the review found the school's money had been spent to lease its principal an expensive sports car, to help pay the principal's rent and hire a bodyguard, and to pay for a \$7,000 staff retreat in Carmel. Teachers, meanwhile, had complained they lacked basic textbooks and supplies.

Mr. Doby maintained the district board acted on such findings without giving the school a chance to defend itself. The school's board has removed the former principal and has been taking steps to remedy the other problems, he said.

Washington decided that the Florida trip sounded better.

Students chose to argue the issue on educational grounds—Washington had history and government, while Florida offered lessons in culture, commerce, and technology.

The school board was not persuaded. For now, previous policies will stand, sending 45 seniors to Florida and 105 to Washington. Roger Luekens, the superintendent of the new district, says the board will adopt a policy on school trips a little further down the road.

They did not vote in the November elections, and they certainly are not part of the "angry electorate," but two 5th graders may have lighted a fire under Indiana state officials.

As part of a class project at Lafayette Elementary School in Hammond, Ind., Sean Medrano, 11, and Robert White, 10, fired off letters to Gov. Evan Bayh and the state transportation department asking that signs welcoming motorists to Indiana be erected on Interstate 94 at the state's border with Illinois.

"We said that if there wasn't a sign, they probably wouldn't know they were in Indiana," Robert White said.

When the boys expanded their letter-writing campaign, they found an ally in Speros

Batistatos, the executive director of the visitors' bureau in Lake County, which borders Illinois. The bureau has been battling to get signs for about 10 years, he said, and the boys' letters may be the nudge it needed.

State officials are even talking about putting "Welcome to Indiana" signs on all major border highways.

—LONNIE HARP & DREW LINDSAY



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**188**  
**GREELEY / EVANS SCHOOL DISTRICT 6**

# Charter-school survey returns few; more talks scheduled Wednesday

By **MIKE TAUGHER**  
 Tribune Staff Writer

Support for a proposed charter school appeared scant this week as only a handful of parents voiced support for the idea while a survey of families with students who would be eligible to attend the school next year has so far generated just 81 names of interested students.

Those surveys, however, will be accepted by Greeley-Evans School District 6 through the end of the month. More than 3,000 surveys were sent out.

"It's actually a small return," said schools Superintendent John Pacheco.

On Wednesday, the school board set aside two hours to listen to parent comments, but only a smattering of parents spoke and school board members filled awkward moments by talking about conversations and inquiries they've had about the proposed school.

Supporters of the school voiced frustration outside the hearing with the school board, saying the purpose of the hearing — which was to accept public comments — was unclear.

"How many times did you hear people in there say didn't know they were supposed to speak?" asked teacher Pat Gilliam, a spokesman for the project. "They were hear for support. ... There was confusion about the process and how this meeting was to function."

About 40 people attended the meeting.

Those who voiced support most often cited their desire for smaller classes and teacher attention as reasons.

The school board will discuss the project in more depth at a work session scheduled next Wednesday.

The Union Colony School would educate about 300 students in grades 8-12. Teachers organizing the proposal say they would bring an interdisciplinary approach to the school.

*10x*

# Funding charter schools proves bitter topic

By Jordana Hart  
GLOBE STAFF

Headmaster Timothy Anderson's new South Shore Charter School in Hull will offer rigorous math and science instruction to 150 students in September, and he expects intense involvement from parents.

But Leonard Peters, chairman of the Hull School Committee, envisions disastrous consequences for the town's existing schools if Hull is forced to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars from its own budget for the new school.

"Parents ask me if we will lose programs because the town is being asked to support two school systems," Peters said. "That is what it boils down to."

The issue of who should pay for public school innovation is tearing at the fabric of Hull, Marblehead, Fall River and other school systems, where local officials are scrambling for ways to fund charter schools, as required by the state.

But parents, teachers and others who are launching the 14 innovative public schools next fall in 10 cities and towns across Massachusetts say the bitter reactions are nothing more than fear of new ideas and of competition for existing schools.

"People fear change, especially when you are breaking up a monopoly," said Karen Corcoran, a founder of the Marblehead Community Charter Public School, a grade 5-7 school for 182 schoolchildren. "This is an opportunity to build a school free of the constraints we, as parents, have all complained about over the years."

But not on the backs of the rest of the town's schoolchildren, say other Marblehead parents, who plan to file a lawsuit in March against state education officials. The parents claim that using local tax dollars to fund charter schools — which are free of school board and other local controls — violates the constitutional prohibition of public aid to private schools.

"If I want to send my kid to a private school, I'll pay tuition," argued parent Carl Goodman, a lawyer who is drafting the lawsuit. "If the public can't influence the curriculum or in any way address the funding [of the charter school], then the only thing that makes this a public school is the Legislature declaring it so."

**Charter schools: 1995-96 state plan**

Charter school	Town/city	Costs	Enrollment
Boston Renaissance	Boston	\$4 m	630
City on a Hill	Boston	\$421,000	80
Neighborhood House	Boston	\$947,000	135
Youthbuild Boston Academy	Boston	\$421,000	80
Atlantis	Fall River	\$1.56 m	300
Boston University	Fort Devens	\$1.4 m*	60
Francis W. Parker	Fort Devens	\$642,000	100
Benjamin Franklin Classical	Franklin	\$660,000	150
South Shore**	Hull	\$712,000	150
Community Day	Lawrence	\$572,000	110
Lowell Middlesex Academy	Lowell	\$466,000	90
Marblehead Community	Marblehead	\$778,000	132
Cape Cod Lighthouse	Orleans	\$600,000	130
Western Mass. Harkness	Whitcomb	\$193,000	40

\* Boston University has applied for \$1.2 million in state funds to cover the costs of a charter school. \*\* The state will fund the school for the first year, but the town will be responsible for the rest of the costs.

SOURCE: Education Office of Governor William Weld

GLOBE STAFF CHART

Under education reform, charter schools will be funded through local property taxes and state aid based on enrollment, similar to the way existing public schools are funded. The charter schools are expected to be centers of innovation because they are free of school board, teacher union and other bureaucratic constraints that many perceive as blocking real change. The existing schools are expected to replicate charter successes.

As part of a growing nationwide movement to stem burgeoning public school failure, charter schools are free to experiment with the newest ideas and methods. They can have longer school days; pay teachers what they want, free of union rules; and offer new curricula and radical teaching methods. The state will review each school annually and can close any of them after five years.

State officials said that local administrators need to accept that charter schools and the new stream of education money under education reform go hand in hand.

*(free)*

"Charter schools must be seen in the context of education reform, where a lot of new money is going into these communities" said Ann Toda, the spokeswoman for Education Secretary Piedad F. Robertson. To be sure, millions of new dollars have been funneled to school districts, particularly the poor cities, since education reform was signed into law in 1993.

But officials in Fall River and other poor cities and towns noted that the new funding is also meant to equalize the wide education spending gap between rich and poor districts, a goal that is now further afield as districts grapple with their new charter school mandate.

"Education reform is supposed to generate change, but it is also supposed to generate adequate financial resources so that Fall River students are not second class when compared to the Newtons and Wellealeys," said Fall River public schools Superintendent James M. Gibney.

In towns like Franklin, with spiraling student enrollments, the charter school may be a way to alleviate severe classroom shortages, said some parents there.

Ultimately, charter school advocates hope public school systems will be forced to ask why so many of their students are joining the charter movement.

"The charter schools are a way to light a fire and inspire the other schools to take some steps," said Don Krohn, a founder of the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School in Orleans. "If they see students leaving, they will ask, 'Should we be doing better?'"

# **Sprout House**

## **The Past**

Sprout House first enrolled 6 nursery school children in February, 1986. In each of the following school years, it added a new grade: Kindergarten in the fall of 1986, First Grade in 1987, Second Grade in 1988, and Third Grade in 1989. Throughout this period, the school expanded its extended care program to accommodate working parents. Today, Sprout House enrolls almost 30 students in grades Kindergarten through 6th grade.

The School was founded by Joanne Lockwood White, an adjunct instructor in the Early Childhood Department at Kean College of New Jersey. Mrs. White has always held a passionate interest in implementing the results of sound educational research. She has worked tirelessly with a small group of dedicated teachers toward the goal of providing children an exceptional opportunity to flourish under the leadership of their own natural curiosity and motivation. In 1989 Sprout House received accreditation from the National Association for the Education for Young Children. The school receives frequent visits from educators interested in applying the methods and philosophy of Sprout House in other settings.

## **The Present**

Sprout House presently enrolls 28 students (enrollment has been as high as 39). A fragmented approach to curriculum is largely rejected. However for the sake of clarity, some frequently discussed topics are isolated here.

### **Literature**

Literature and music are the art forms of language. Humans crave story. An almost "sacred" time is set aside everyday for at least one genre of literature, with no strings attached. Followed by a refreshing snack and conversation, this is to the school year, as a morning swim in clean water is to summer.

### **Reading**

Children at Sprout House learn reading as a thought-getting or thought-sharing process, not just as a superficial decoding exercise. Children are encouraged to relate the content of their reading selections to previous knowledge, and to react to the author's ideas. A major incentive for learning to read comes from the child's own desire to find out information.

The Sprout House reading program has these key objectives:

- ◆ Help children to develop a permanent interest in reading, and an appreciation and love of literature. This is accomplished by providing daily exposure to fine examples of all genres of children's literature, and by keeping journals of their

experiences and accomplishments. Children begin by dictating their journals, and when ready, they undertake their own written work.

- ◆ Help to develop extensive sight vocabularies, using aids such as labels, charts, signs, journals and favorite stories.
- ◆ Help equip children with the skills necessary for comprehension, by drawing on their experiences, by listening to literary materials, and by frequently exposing them to new literary examples. The act of comprehension is demonstrated by involving children in meaningfully integrated classroom activities, such as reading and interpreting recipes, managing the school "store", and reading maps to find field trip destinations.
- ◆ Support the development of skills needed for the accurate and efficient decoding of the written word, at precisely the right time for each child

## **Math**

Sprout House takes a direct approach toward the teaching of math. Primary emphasis is placed on the process of finding solutions to problems, rather than getting the right answer. Math is seen as a tool to other sciences, such as running a store, charting growth trends, counting lost and new teeth, measuring recipe ingredients drawing maps, clapping a rhythm, and enjoying a game with rules. A thematic approach to school prevails for older children as well. In addition, older children are taught to appreciate sequential and superficial math as a necessary art or game in itself -- a door to delightful surprises.

## **Science**

A strong emphasis is placed on teaching science as a life process. Our challenge is to fit the truth of the world into the child's system of knowing it. This is easy because children *are* scientists. They interact with the world with thoroughness and pure curiosity.

There are many opportunities in and near the school to study living and non-living things in a gentle and respectful atmosphere. The adjacent playground, field, and woods provide an excellent setting for daily discussions and nature walks.

The children participate in the school's vegetable and flower gardens and they are involved in frequent formal and informal experiments. Students have the time to be immersed in woodland, meadow, swamp and stream habitats. They are frequent visitors to farms, museums, etc., as well.

Quiet or noisy contemplation of surroundings prevail. A simple example might be a young child thinking about why her coat keeps her warm; or a group of 11 year olds arguing about how to determine the amount of daylight on a given day and how to subtract the sunset from the sunrise.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips promote our goal of reverence and stewardship of the Earth. The deep engagement with natural simple things will carry over as an approach to life. The resulting spark opens a certain consciousness that moves through everything. The field trips are a natural playground.

Field trips are an integral part of our curriculum, incorporating much of the science, math, and history portions of the children's studies. The trips also are used as subject matter for writing efforts. Starting with the second year primaries, the children go to the field nearly every week or two to collect data, compare and evaluate information collected, improve their skills in observation, detection, direction, and classification, as well as experience historical and environmental settings, which cannot be easily replicated in the classroom. This is one of the important differences between Sprout House and other, more traditional, school settings.

## **Life Skills**

The true basics for actual survival are the functions and elements that will further an understanding of life's chemistry and complexities. The eight year olds can make a simple whole grain bread and tell the difference between that dough and the one for whole grain pasta. Most of the children have the background to answer the following questions: What are the pattern pieces for a vest? What plants make soothing ointments? What weeds make great lunches?

## **The Future**

### **Immediate Goals**

1. Bring attention to the successful model that Sprout House provides for educational reform in America.
2. Increase enrollment in the Primary/Elementary School to 40 students for Fall 1995.
3. Create a scholarship fund and solicit private donations. The interest that this fund generates will allow Sprout House to offer a sliding scale to families who cannot afford full tuition.
4. Create a teacher salary endowment fund from the funds already collected for the Teacher Appreciation Fund and solicit further private donations. The interest that this fund generates will allow Sprout House to pay its dedicated teachers a competitive salary. It would be reasonable to increase all salaries by 50% immediately.
5. Create an Equipment Fund and solicit private donations. One immediate need is for a passenger van.
6. Support bills before the state legislature to create Charter Schools.

### **Long Term Goals**

1. Provide health insurance and other benefits for the staff
2. Solicit private donations toward a capital campaign.
3. Purchase a campus.
4. Add 7th and 8th grade

5. Increase endowment to allow a wider economic range of students.
6. Promote Sprout House as a laboratory school, training teachers and administrators to carry this working model to other communities.
7. Possibly evolve into a intra-district Charter School, providing a free and public education, while adhering to the principles stated in the Mission Statement.

# Sprout House

## Primary and Elementary School Mission Statement

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**Education needs to define a pure vision of the present and future for children.** The mission of Sprout House is to provide a home-like setting in which happy and inquisitive children develop positive and eager attitudes toward school. We foster a planetary consciousness which embraces environmental beauty and preservation and an awareness that all children deserve participation in societies where people can sustain themselves, live healthfully, feel stimulated, fulfilled and happy.

**At Sprout House, learning starts with the "whole" and moves to the "parts" rather than the reverse.** We strive to provide a challenging and developmentally appropriate foundation for later academic, emotional and social success. The curriculum is designed to help children realize the pleasures of learning, and to enjoy working and playing with other children and adults. The staff maintains a fertile environment for creative exploration, so as to stimulate the curiosity that grows into thoughtful investigation.

**Teachers seek to meet each child at his or her own point in development.** Procedures and systems are designed to develop attention spans, and to encourage self-directed activity. As children come to rely on inner rewards (the satisfaction of accomplishment), they enjoy solving problems of their own volition.

**A strong but unpressured emphasis is placed on science.** The school provides extensive experience with objects in the environment. Children come to feel connected with nature, and to have respect for their surroundings. The concepts of scientific research are introduced as pupils develop skills in finding, using and extending information.

**A thematic approach underlies school life.** Children begin to have an appreciation for social studies at about age 8 or 9. History, geography, community living, current events are explored in a variety of ways. Sequential basic skills such as math and spelling are mastered with respect to the child's comfort and challenge level. Integration of various skills is evidenced when and if it is appropriate.

**Literature and music are the art forms of language.** Humans crave story. An almost "sacred" time is set aside everyday for at least one genre of literature to be enjoyed at its most basic level. Children's natural ability to create story is encouraged and preserved.

## ELEMENTS OF CURRICULUM

### 1. Frameworks (conceptual)

- Constant reference to: charts on the wall, time lines, handy reference books, didactic lessons, in some cases memorized functional definitions.

Depending on age groups:

#### a) Conceptual

examples:

Is it alive?

The Five Kingdoms

Rocks and Minerals

Air

Soil

Solid, Liquid, Gas

Electricity

Transformations:

wheat → berry → milling → flour → bread

ETC.

b) Time lines, maps, globes, animal kingdom charts, plant parts, periodic table, etc.

### 2. Current Involvement

### 3. Extension of Current Involvement

### 4. Journals of Current Involvement

### 5. Field Trips

### 6. Literary Experiences

### 7. Music - spirit, dancing, poetry

### 8. Nature Immersion

### 9. P.M. Activities

### 10. "Social Studies Library"

### 11. Sequential Skills:

math - "games"

phonics

readability formula

## PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

### **First Year**

Nature  
Key Experiences  
Play  
Literature  
Music  
Trips  
Letters/Sound Symbols  
Following Directions  
Art Materials  
"Daily Life Experiences"

### **Second Year**

First Year Curriculum  
Integrated Subject  
Readers  
Some Phonics  
Math Concepts  
Beginning Computation  
Science Concepts  
Beginning Writing

### **Third Year**

First and Second Year Curriculums  
Formal Phonics  
Formal Sequential Math  
P.M. Activities

### **Fourth Year**

First, Second, and Third Year Curriculums  
Social Studies

April 5, 1995

Senate Education Committee  
State House Annex, CN-068  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0068

Re: S-1796, the "Charter School Program Act of 1995"

Dear Members of the Committee:

I have personally reviewed S-1796, the "Charter School Program Act of 1995," and I find it to be an extremely timely, relevant and important piece of legislation. I support it wholeheartedly, and frankly I hope you all do as well. I will be watching its progress closely.

I am a single father of a wonderful son. Raising my son up the best way I know how is my highest priority. Since school is a significant factor in a child's upbringing, I spent a great deal of effort studying the options for schooling. I chose a charter school, Sprout House of Chatham, NJ, for my son five years ago, and I have been well pleased with this selection.

I find that, at Sprout House, my son is learning cooperatively and in ways that are genuinely fun. A yearning for learning pervades the school. My son is learning a wide range of things, far beyond the reach of the public school system as it stands today.

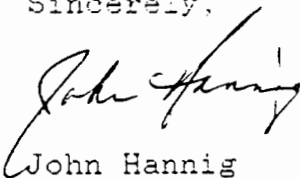
I believe that the public school system has become stagnant. I am convinced there is no real incentive for the system to constantly improve itself or for it to give to children the type and variety of education they really need. As a result, the positive change that is so desperately needed never happens. As in business, the absence of competition breeds stagnancy and dormancy, along with lost opportunity for positive change. Simply stated, if a public school system knows it will receive school funding from the taxpayers, it has no incentive to do anything different. If, however, a taxpayer's school funds could be applied to the school of his/her choice, as S-1796 proposes, the public school and all other candidate schools have a great incentive to be what the children need.

I am blessed to have a job which enables me to afford to pay for my son's Sprout House tuition in addition to my local property taxes, part of which, of course, goes directly to support the public school system. (Of course, for the latter expenditure, I get no benefit, and that's not right.) From talking with friends I find that there are many others who would select a charter school like Sprout House, if they could afford it. Unfortunately, though, after taxes, they do not have the funds, and so, must send their children

to a public school. For those people and for me, it is clear that there must be a choice and there must be a "level playing field" regarding funding (ie, funds going to the chosen school rather than automatically to the public schools). Only then will the school system begin to work for our children.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, feel free to call me at (908) 474-6637. Thank you for your consideration of S-1796.

Sincerely,



John Hannig  
413 River Road  
Chatham, NJ 07928

Senate Education Committee  
State House Annex, CN-068  
Trenton, N.J. 08625-0068

Re: S-1796 - Charter School Program Act

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in support of a private school my son has attended for over three years in Somerset County. The school is Sprout House, a very unique and wonderful place for children's minds and spirits to flourish. I would love to see this kind of atmosphere of learning available to more children. If they could get state support, this would be possible.

Sprout House's emphasis is on developing the unique "natural" love of learning every child is born with. I know this is the desire and goal of any education system but having raised two other children in public schools I must say this goal is sadly never achieved as well as hoped.

Their emphasis on learning from nature, from each other, geography, and the sociology of getting along with each other is of great importance at an early age. It's qualities that they will have the rest of their lives.

I encourage you to look into their charter and program and give them as much support as you can to help turn the education trend to a more positive direction.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Landry

Suzanne Landry  
197 Main Street  
P.O. Box 287  
Peapack, N. J. 07977

Susan Sikorski  
39 East Coleman Avenue  
Chatham, NJ 07928

April 3, 1995

Senate Education Committee  
State House Annex, CN-068  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0068

Re: S-1796 The "Charter School Program Act of 1995"

Dear Senator,

I am writing as a parent and trustee of Sprout House School. I have been involved at some level with Sprout House ever since my son started nine years ago at the age of three. My daughter started when she was three also and has been there four years now. I am, needless to say, an advocate of Sprout House's experiential, hands-on approach to learning. Rather than read about nature from a text book, the students are literally out in the field once a week observing first hand. Instead of reading about different habitats, they go to the various habitats themselves. When they return from the field (or meadow, or woods, etc.), they dictate a story about what they learned (whole language approach to reading). Still later, they construct a habitat of their choice using modeling clay and natural materials. Then, they are proud to recite the various aspects of their (or someone else's) habitat as well as entertain questions from parents. This is all done with enthusiasm and joy, and is but one small example of the learning atmosphere that all children should have available to them-not just the "gifted and talented".

Howard Gardner wrote that there is more than just mathematical and verbal intelligence. Educators need to present information in such a way that the child who learns best by doing, as well as the child who apprehends information visually, are served. Sprout House does not just pay lip service to Piaget's theories but utilizes them so that what and how information is presented is truly developmentally appropriate. At Sprout House there are no failures, only happy, intelligent children full of wonder and a love of learning.

Sincerely,



Susan Sikorski

**SENATE BILL 1796**  
**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A**  
**CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM**  
**APRIL 6, 1995**

My name is Ellyn Lerner. I'm the Executive Director of the High Road Schools, approved private schools for the handicapped, located in East Brunswick and Somerset. The purpose of my statement here today is to synthesize the missions, the goals and philosophies of the High Road School, with those of the current charter school bill being presented. We recognize that within parent and professional groups there are widely divergent opinions and interpretations regarding the issues of public school reform and more specifically the sub-issues of choice.

A school such as High Road was created and sanctioned by federal statute, ensuring a child with educational disabilities an array of options from which to choose an appropriate placement (in the least restrictive environment). This continuum of options evolved as the realization prevailed, that some students could not fit into a "one-size-fits all" system. One must contemplate: if disabled students are provided with options such as a publically funded education in a Department of Education approved private facility (which I emphasize is a charter school by current definition provided by this bill); why then do we hesitate to give these options to our non-disabled students who are falling through the cracks of our monopolistic system? It is my hope that the successes of schools such as High Road, may impact upon this debate and contribute to the field of general education by providing a model of application. The community

of special education "chartered" schools has contributed to the research, program innovation, experimentation and investigation of strategies that promote best practices in the field of education. The reality of the current status of the divergent needs of students in this decade encourages us all to initiate a greater array of options for the population of children who perform less than "successfully" in a unified monopoly system. Despite the continuum of services offered to a student with disabilities, many unclassified students are continuing to fall through the cracks. We can no longer continue the practice of classifying students that may not be disabled, in order to enlarge the options of service delivery available to them.

Educational reform nationally is aimed at increasing system responsiveness to ongoing evolutionary inquiry, social growth, diversity of values, needs, beliefs and equality of resources in education. The attention of current practices toward meaningful innovation can only be affected within a dynamic context encouraging competition.

I highly support this bill which will enable the establishment of charter schools in New Jersey. It is a major step toward the elimination of an "all or none" policy in favor of encouraging numerous experiments, innovations and strategies, which have optimal educational outcomes for each student, as their major focus. No amount of central policy or central planning could replace the stimulus to innovation and improvement that only an environment with competition, an array of options and individual choice can create.

I'd like to conclude with the following quote by Ayn Rand:

"So long as a concept such as "the public interest" is regarded as a valid principle to guide legislation--lobbies and pressure groups will necessarily continue to exist. Since there is no such entity as "the public," since the public is merely a number of individuals, the idea that "the public interest" supersedes private interests and rights, can have but one meaning: that the interests and rights of some individuals take precedence over the interests and rights of others. If so, then all men and all private groups have to fight to the death for the privilege of being regarded as "the public." The government's policy has to swing like an erratic pendulum from group to group, hitting some and favoring others, at the whim of any given moment...

Freedom is the first requirement of "the public interest"--not what men do when they are free, but that they are free. All their achievements rest on that foundation--and cannot exist without it."

This charter legislation supports "freedom" for all of New Jersey's school children. In addition, it assures each individual's right to an appropriate public school education.