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PUBLIC HEARING

before

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SCHOOL INTERVENTION
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"On the State-operated school district established in
Jersey City and the implementation of the
Corrective Action Plan for the district"

June 11, 1991
Hepburn Hall
Jersey City State College
Jersey City, New Jersey

MEMBERS OF SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Anthony J. "Skip" Cimino, Chairman
Senator John H. Ewing, Vice-Chairman

ALSO PRESENT:

Kathleen Fazzari
Office of Legislative Services
Aide, Subcommittee on School Intervention

New Jersey State Library

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Subcommittee on School Intervention of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools will hold a public hearing on the following topic:

The State-operated school district established in Jersey City and the implementation of the corrective action plan for the district.

The hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 11, 1991 at 6:00 p.m. in the Gothic Room, Hepburn Hall at Jersey City State College, 2039 Kennedy Blvd., Jersey City, New Jersey.

The public may address comments and questions to Kathleen Fazzari, Secretary to the Committee, at (609) 984-4811 and persons wishing to testify should contact Patricia B. Scott, at (609) 984-6843. Those persons presenting written testimony should provide 10 copies to the subcommittee on the day of the hearing. Testimony will be limited to 5 minutes.

Issued 5/14/91

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ASSEMBLYMAN ANTHONY J. "SKIP" CIMINO (Chairman):
Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. We are here for the purpose of talking, once again, from the perspective of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools' Subcommittee on School Intervention with regard to the impact on the Jersey City school system.

We have a list of speakers who have been kind enough to call. Let me announce to the public that if, in fact, you have had the opportunity to give testimony, or to verbally speak before this Subcommittee when we were here in the last instance, and you have additional testimony, if you would like to submit that in writing this evening, you may. It will then become a matter of public record.

Inasmuch as we have several individuals who wish to speak this evening, the time frame allotment for each individual will be five minutes. Thereafter, we will move on to the next person.

I will also apprise those who are in the room that the Subcommittee is in the process of developing a Request for Proposal for an independent analysis to be done with regard to the takeover proposition, as it currently stands in Jersey City. That particular request will go before the Subcommittee. Upon its approval, there will then be a release of the Request for Proposal from the Office of Legislative Services. The Office of Legislative Services will do an initial assessment and will bring it back to the Subcommittee for further review.

So that I can start this evening, my name is Skip Cimino. I am the Assemblyman from District 14, and I Chair this Subcommittee. To my right is Mrs. Fazzari, who comes from the Office of Legislative Services, and to my left is Mr. Muller, who staffs the Committee for the Speaker, Joseph Doria, as well as for the Assembly. Over to my extreme right are other members of the Office of Legislative Services.

With that, I would like to call forward the first individual to testify, P. Terrell Flood, the Affirmative Action Officer for the Jersey City School District. Mr. Flood?

P. T E R R E L L F L O O D: Chairperson Cimino, members of this Subcommittee: My name is P. Terrell Flood, and I serve as the District's Affirmative Action Officer. In my capacity as Affirmative Action Officer, my duties range from the administration and monitoring of board policies on equal education and employment opportunities, to hearing officer, with special concentration on recruitment, hiring, training, transfers, promotions, etc.

At the outset of my tenure, Dr. Scambio expressed the District's and her absolute commitment to affirmative action. Coupled with this commitment was the total support of her office and of the District. Today, June 11, 1991, I say, without reservation, that this commitment has, and is, being kept.

As the saying goes, "The proof is in the pudding." One excellent illustration of this commitment is the percentages of the ethnic and gender breakdown of administrators/supervisors hired to date, since the April 4 reorganization. Of the 39 persons hired, 15 are black, six are Hispanic, and 18 are white, with 28 being female and 11 male. Thus, the total percentage of minorities hired since the above-referenced date is 54.

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

Under the direction of the Executive Director of Human Resources, many initiatives have been implemented; e.g., employee record computerization, SOPs -- Standard Operation

Procedures -- for hiring and promotional positions, staff training, etc.

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

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

Kudos, Dr. Scambio.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you. You say 39 people have been hired and that the total percentage of minorities hired since the above-referenced date is 54%?

MR. FLOOD: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Okay. Where did the District stand prior to Dr. Scambio coming on board?

MR. FLOOD: In that I was not the Affirmative Action Officer at that particular time, the percentage was much, much lower than that. I can say that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: When did you become the Affirmative Action Officer?

MR. FLOOD: April 4, 1990.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: So you have been a member, effectively-- Would you suggest that you are a member of the relatively new team that Dr. Scambio has put into place?

MR. FLOOD: Yes, but I have been a member of the Jersey City school system for 26 years, so basically I know how it has been structured.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: What kind of advantages have you seen during this tenure that you did not see in the past?

MR. FLOOD: Well, basically, in order for persons to be hired, they have to be included in the process, initial screening being a part of the actual interview process. I have

been given the charts to prescreen all applications to make sure that an equal representation is included in the lists for inclusion. This has not been done in the past, and it is quite a step forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: What kind of a screening process do you use now, besides a paper screening?

MR. FLOOD: Okay. As a paper screen, we check all applications that come in to make sure that the appropriate qualifications are there; that the language on the announcements is appropriate and does not exclude any person or persons. We make sure they have the appropriate administrative certification, and that type of thing.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Very good. Thank you very much for your testimony.

MR. FLOOD: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Next we will go to -- I hope I pronounce this properly -- Dr. Natali Graziano. Dr. Graziano? (no response) Next, Mr. Tom Fava -- Favia. I'm sorry, I missed the "i" in there.

T H O M A S J. F A V I A: Good evening. I am Thomas J. Favia, President of the Jersey City Education Association. I represent over 3000 employees. I am here tonight to comment -- to give you my interpretations and reflections on intervention.

As you may know, or may not know, the JCEA was not in favor of intervention. But, when intervention took place, from that day on, the then President, Mr. Scialli, offered the cooperation of our Association. We proceeded to run a campaign the following year throughout the city and county advertising and promoting our cooperation with intervention. We said, "We are part of the solution -- the smart solution." If change was going to take place -- and we welcome change; we welcome change-- If it was going to take place, it had to take place with the teachers of Jersey City. No way can change

effectively take place from the top down. It has to be from the bottom up.

Yes, the final decisions have to be made from the top, but the input and recommendations-- The people who know, the people who are on the front lines, the people who experience the problems our children have every day, those concerns and how they can be addressed have to come from our teachers in the classrooms.

I think if you want to really know what intervention is doing, you have to go into the classrooms. We can sit here and you can have people talk, but I think the real bottom line is knowing what is happening in those classrooms every day.

There have been some positive things. Administrators, I think for the first time in 50 years, have been evaluated. We have borne the brunt of that, to some degree, because we have had probably more grievances filed this year than we have had in the last five. I think the principals overreacted to this evaluation process. I am not going to comment on how efficient that was, or how fair it was. That is their problem. But I think it was new to them. Whatever the State did coming in was new to principals. They were not familiar with that type of pressure.

There are a lot of programs, many of which we had no say in. I hate to predetermine that the cluster system, or this in-house system that we have in the high schools, is ineffective. I guess it is a little too early. All I can say is, our teachers, at this time, are not happy with it. I see inefficiency in it, much more inefficiency than we had in the old centralization. We had teachers -- tenured teachers -- who did not have an assignment, and it took a while to make that adjustment. We never saw that happen prior to this.

If there is an opening for a principalship in one cluster, they interview candidates for that one principalship. At one time, they weren't interviewing many of our people. One

of the things that has caused low morale in our system, is that it seemed, or the perception was -- and I use the word "perception," because perception becomes reality-- The perception was, if you are from Jersey City, you cannot be competent enough to be an administrator. I find that very difficult, because I think we have some of the finest teachers in the State. In order to teach in communities such as this, you have to be a good teacher to survive and to be effective. Those people can make outstanding administrators.

So, what happened in the early years, was that our people weren't even getting interviews. Assistant principals weren't getting interviews for principalships. One principalship was held until January; one was held until October, when we had right in our midst, in our own system, people fully qualified, and they were not given interviews. Not everybody was brought into it. I must say, since that time, and our grievance procedure, the board, as we know it today, or the State, now interviews all of these candidates, where they hadn't before. So we are seeing some progress there. And with more communication, I think we can iron out a lot of these problems.

But, getting back to the inefficiency, if they interviewed 80 candidates for a principalship in Cluster I, and an opening arises three months later for Cluster II, 80 people -- or 79; hopefully one of them got the job-- Seventy-nine would have to apply again and be reinterviewed. I say that is inefficient. I say the interview process should be so that they have a list promulgated for the year, and as the needs arise for the year, fill from that list, so you don't go three months, six months, seven months with acting principalships. So, I find that to be inefficient in the cluster system.

I think there is some duplication. I question some of the administrative positions in the cluster system, as to whether they are absolutely needed.

The concept-- I am not going to predetermine totally if it is ineffective. I think we still need a little bit more time. But I do see that as a glaring error right now. I'm from Missouri. You are still going to have to show me that this is going to work. Time might prove that to be, but we are not happy with that. Our teachers are very unhappy with that, and they have low morale.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Is morale getting better now that people are interviewing for jobs?

MR. FAVIA: Yes, yes. From the reports I get back now, they at least feel that they have been listened to. You know, when you don't get the job, you are never happy. I don't care what system you use.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: You talk about "teacher input." Is this just teacher input with regard to jobs, or are you talking about teacher input with regard to curriculum and programs?

MR. FAVIA: Everything; everything. See, we were not part of the QEA--

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Teachers are not part of the establishment of curriculum in the Jersey City schools?

MR. FAVIA: Well, yes, they do have some committees, and they are working on those now. Yes. We are very hopeful now. We are in a program on site-based decision making, where the teacher now, and everybody involved, theoretically should sit down and make decisions -- shared decisions.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Has that worked to increase morale?

MR. FAVIA: I think it can, if it works.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: If you had to character morale today, Tom, as opposed to what it was prior to the takeover, how would you characterize it?

MR. FAVIA: I would say it's lower.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: It's lower today than prior to the takeover?

MR. FAVIA: Yes. I say that because-- Well, I guess with change you are going to have people who are going to be, you know-- They are not used to change, and that might upset them. But I think it will get better as there is more communication.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Are you negotiating a contract this year?

MR. FAVIA: Right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Right now?

MR. FAVIA: In fact, tomorrow morning we are going to be at the table.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Is morale down because of the numbers for the contract, or is this because of the--

MR. FAVIA: They don't even know what the numbers are. They don't know what that is, so--

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: I guess what I am saying--

MR. FAVIA: If we had a contract now, morale might be a lot better, yes, knowing that coming into September you are in place and your job is secure. You know, we just laid off 65 people, so morale can't be at its peak. There were 65 people in my office yesterday with a lot of anxieties, and that is not a pleasant thing. We are hoping that as the smoke clears and the summer-- If you people in the State pass the retirement bill, that might help us.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: The bill will pass.

MR. FAVIA: It might relieve some of these people, and I will be rehired. So, you can help us with morale, too.

One of the bright lights is this site-based management program, if it is done properly and everyone is willing to cooperate. That is the bright light on the scene. Dr. Scampio has given me her word, and up until now everything she has said

to me, personally, she has not reneged on. I hope it stays that way. And I have not reneged with my word to her.

So, if we continue on on that basis-- Again, we want to be part of the solution. If they bring us in -- we're here. We want a good system. We take pride. We have always said that we have one of the best systems, contrary to the intervention. I think there were other external reasons why intervention took place here. No one ever-- I have never seen anything written yet that criticized the teachers and what they were doing. I have not seen that, and I have not seen that coming from anybody who has been hired here.

I think what has happened, from talking to some of the people in my day-by-day, is that they realize now that this is a big, big, big problem. Solutions are not easy. We deal in telephone numbers. It is not one and two, like it is in other districts.

I think that if intervention was to take place-- I think it would have been better thought out if they took over, maybe, a smaller district, and worked out a lot of the kinks there.

Before I get off -- and I know I am pressing the time -- my recommendations are:

- 1) Regarding intervention, they should never come in at any time during the school year. They should enter no later than July 1.

- 2) As far as a reorganization plan, I don't think that should be implemented within that school year. I think they should be given time to really evaluate what is happening in that system.

- 3) I don't think intervention should specify to the State superintendent who she has to automatically fire. I think she should be left to evaluate the people and make that determination herself. You can't paint everybody with the same brush.

Those are three, I feel, vital recommendations, in addition to the idea that whoever comes in should never come in with the perception that everything is wrong, and they are going to throw the baby out with the bath water.

We are hopeful. If we cooperate and we utilize the best minds of both sides, I think we will make progress.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, Senator John Ewing, a member of the Subcommittee, has just joined us. Welcome aboard, Jack.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Next we are going to go to Mr. Robert Perry, Chairman of the Jersey City Board of Education. Mr. Perry?

R O B E R T P E R R Y: Good evening.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Good evening.

MR. PERRY: Mr. Chairman and members of the State Senate and Assembly, thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts and observations and conclusions regarding the State takeover and its relationship to Jersey City public schools.

My name is Robert Perry. I am the Director of the Office of Minority Affairs at St. Peter's College here in Jersey City. In the words of Charles Dickens, "These have been the best of times, and the worst of times."

Since October 1989, particularly since December of that year when the 15-member Board of Education was appointed as advisor to the State District Superintendent, it has been an uphill battle. I have served as Chair of this Board since May of 1990 and, as expected, the change in the local school District was not welcomed with open arms by many in the community. Thus the task of reorganizing the central office, assessing the local school leadership, particularly the principals and the local school structure, the tightening of administrative and financial operations in troubled areas,

while encouraging trust and confidence in a new team-- All of this within the first year of the takeover was a monumental task. The new leadership was being asked to plug the dike, while simultaneously building a new one, all with the same two hands, so how are we doing?

Now, less than two years into the process and the redirections, some would say that the jury is still out, but I contend that we are doing pretty good. But, more importantly, we have the great potential to do much, much better. I recently spoke to a teacher who said nothing had changed; that there had been no impact on the classroom. I reminded her that the leader of the classroom was herself and her colleagues, and if she found factors which inhibited her accomplishing academic excellence, then this less-than-two-year-old central office team, which has assessed, and continues to assess her educational leader, the principal, offers the support and guidance she may need.

Additionally, I reminded her that there are four people, with their staffs -- the associate superintendents -- charged with managing the District's four clusters, and they stand ready and quite able to redirect any impediment to academic excellence, or even the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, or even the District Superintendent herself, are all ready to be partners in assuring that a world-class education is provided for the 29,000 students in our District.

But I stated to the teacher that she must be a partner. In that rests the future hope for the takeover; the continuation of the uniting of the old with the new, the locals with the nonlocals, tradition with innovation, all for the common good.

I challenge anyone to dispute that the new District has failed to seek input, particularly from parents and community members. I challenge anyone to dispute the integrity of the education associates' development plans, implemented or

to be implemented. I challenge anyone to dispute that the District is on target for fiscal accountability, administrative productivity, and educational achievement. I challenge anyone to give reasons not to have any hope for a better future.

The school takeover was an opportunity for the residents of Jersey City to assist in a unique task -- redesigning our schools. In our District there are some great teachers and administrators, people who have dreamed of this opportunity. Unfortunately, the tone of an action such as the takeover, legal and contractual restrictions, the fact that District employees see themselves as family -- literally and figuratively -- suspicion and resistance to change, budgetary, and severity of needed corrective actions within the District, have impeded the progress made thus far in our District.

However, I can sit here today and give unequivocal support to our State District team on behalf of the Board. Though the team will complete only its first four years of school operations next week, if you read the Superintendent's first-year report, the corrective action plan, or the Board's formal assessment, it is clear that the District is on the right track; that the takeover process has opened doors for improvement, new direction, new opportunities, and greater accountability.

But it is like surgery. The District is still on the operating table. The teachers, the administrators, and business, religious, political, and community members are the surgeons. Our operating tools are knowledge, higher expectations, key and competent staff members, community inclusion, proper funding, and trust. But it is a serious surgical procedure requiring, besides time, delicate, diligent, and dedicated practitioners, and they do exist here. I dispute anyone who states to the contrary.

I also call your attention, Mr. Chairman, to the response -- the June 6 response -- the Superintendent gave you,

or mailed to you. In it, she responded to concerns raised at the last hearing. I call your attention particularly to her responses to the questions on salaries, on Board and community involvement, including the number of task forces in the communities, and just brain trusts that have been created, and also the process for job selection. My good friend, who worked many years with the students -- well, since I have been here in Jersey City -- at Ferris High School, Mr. Favia--

One of the things I think also contributes to the morale, is the attempt recently to settle a Chapter I employment case which dealt with the payment of a number of employees. It is a case that existed prior to the takeover, and there were a number of people, because I have gotten a number of calls from employees regarding it. It appears to be moving to the final stage of a \$2 million settlement, where they will be compensated with what the Supreme Court said they should so duly receive. I think that has contributed to the--

I thank you for your time, and for your concern for our children.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: I have a question?

MR. PERRY: Yes?

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: If you would, Mr. Perry.

SENATOR EWING: Have you any recommendations to make that we should be looking at more carefully, or are you working with Superintendent Scambio to just see--

MR. PERRY: I think there are a number of them. You will hear from the Vice-Chair of the Board later. There are a couple of particular concerns about the law, and the operation of the law that we think should be looked at and examined; the timetable for sure, which requires -- as Mr. Favia said -- that you come in, move towards reorganization, move to shifting staff, and so forth, so quickly, and the principal assessment, which is supposed to happen so quickly. Those things are of

grave concern to the District, as is the timing of when such a takeover occurs. Even if you don't physically move into a district until sometime after the school year, if the notion is that you have taken over the school district but you are just waiting, then that also sends a certain message, and causes certain uncomfortable feelings.

I have spoken, not only to a number of teachers throughout our District, but teachers in a number of cities throughout this county and Essex County. One of the things they want to be assured of, is that we are operating as a District; that somehow teachers have not all disappeared, and administrators have not all disappeared because of the takeover. The schools are still going on.

SENATOR EWING: Have you looked at the law? Have you got some suggestions in the language of the law itself on the takeover as to what we could change, or where you could make recommendations to put different wording in?

MR. PERRY: No, I have not examined the most important part. There are several aspects that are not clear; for instance, the particular section that gives reference to those two particular points about it, where you sort of direct the Superintendent to come in and reorganize, not saying, you know, particularly why, or particularly in what direction, but do it by this date, "X" number of days after takeover. There is a particular point in the law where it calls for the principal assessment at "XYZ" point. Those two things, I think, have become particularly disruptive on the timetable. I think you should leave the freedom to whomever is operating the District to decide what timetable they will operate under for the assessment of principals.

SENATOR EWING: Do you find much resistance from the old hacks who were around here before?

MR. PERRY: One of the things I mentioned before was that it is a takeover situation. You know, what happens is,

you have people who are used to things occurring a certain way. Because of that, they resist any change. We have a good number of people who do see this as an opportunity, though, you know. The question is, in the battle-- As I said, next week school ends and it will be the first full year that this team has been here. At that point, we will stop, as a Board, and assess where we are, what we have done that we need to change, what we have done correctly which we will keep, and so forth.

SENATOR EWING: Do you sincerely feel that the money is really going for the children now?

MR. PERRY: I think it is getting there. It is only a year.

SENATOR EWING: Right, but can you see a lot of progress toward that?

MR. PERRY: Yes. I can see more people who are eyeball to eyeball with the children talking about where that money can go; you know, be it the parents or be it the teachers. We need to get there; we need to get there. There are so many requirements under the law for the first year. It does not slow down the process to sort of allow you to do the public relations, the community relations, the interaction that would make it easier, because there are a lot of deadlines that you have to meet.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: What would you do-- I have heard what you said ought to be the time lines. What about from your perspective as Chairman of this Board of Education? What would you do differently as a Board of Education member, having now gone through -- how long a period of time? How long have you been Chairman of the Board of Education?

MR. PERRY: Since May of 1990.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Since May of 1990, so you have had a year within which to-- What would you do differently, or what would you advise with regard to the power within the takeover law for a sitting Board of Education under these

circumstances? Are you satisfied with what you have, for your ability to dictate policy?

MR. PERRY: Let me start off by saying, "Yes" -- at this stage. I think what you are talking about is a situation where, be it right, be it wrong, it has been judged that a school district needed to be intervened. As such, the buck has to stop in one absolute, not with someone who can make excuses that the Board blocked "A," or the Board blocked "B." Then I think it is something that goes into the character of the superintendent you appoint.

The question of power is an interesting thing. I have had to go around in a circle with newspapers, not only here, but with newspapers up around Paterson, about power. I said, "Power is one of those strange things that you don't particularly legislate or dictate," and so forth. I give the example of Nelson Mandella. He has power. He is not elected to any office, he is not seen, but he has influence. Someone will listen to him. We have been blessed in the situation here to have a Superintendent who wants input from the Board, and solicits input from the Board. I think that is key.

I have looked around the nation for other similar models, because this is so hard. I would hate to give power that would block the progress of a district. But I do think that what you need with the Board members would be some particular -- maybe with reference to this Committee, or some committee -- avenue where you could either hear from the Board or hear that the Board believes that, you know, progress is being made, and so forth and so on. The provision now is to do the reports -- two reports a year. They go to the Commissioner; not necessarily to the Board of Education for the State, not necessarily to the Legislature, not necessarily to any of those bodies, the Governor, or whatever. That might be a way to sort of do the early process: Get an advisement as to

how the Board members, community members, and parents feel the takeover is going.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much.

MR. PERRY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: We appreciate your testimony, sir.

Next we will hear from Mr. Robert Martin, of the Jersey City School District. Mr. Martin? (no response) Not here, okay. Next we will hear from Erma Foster. Ms. Foster, could you please tell us your position, or your relationship to the Jersey City School District, whether you are a teacher or a parent?

E R M A W. F O S T E R: I am a member of the Parents' Council; I am a trustee. What I want to say is, when the State came in, a lot of people fought it; a lot of people were for it; and it went back and forth. So, they came in. What they did not understand was the political climate of Jersey City. It is very political. They have fought it all the way. The Board has to go to court almost every time they need the City to give them money.

Something should be written into the takeover law where the takeover superintendent is independent of the district that he or she is taking over. They should have independent funds. The State promised funds, but the funds never came. It's terrible when every time you have to go to court to make the City give you money that has been collected through taxes and bonded for. I mean, something could be written into the law that would take care of that itself.

As far as seeing changes, there have been some changes, but not enough, as far as I can see. The reason why there haven't been enough changes is because of the political climate of Jersey City. When you have to fight the Mayor on every little thing, or fight this one on every little thing-- I mean, the "old boys" in the back room are still operating. It is rough for a person coming from out of the City not

knowing the game, not able to play it. You don't know who your friends are, or are not; who is going to give you good information, and who is not.

Even with the Assistant Superintendents-- There are two new ones, and there are two "old boys" in the back room. They know the game, but the two new ones don't. That is what I have to say. If you go into another district, at least look at the political climate. But I don't think anyplace could be as bad as Jersey City.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: While I don't look down on Jersey City perhaps with as much disfavor--

MS. FOSTER: I am not looking down on Jersey City -- not Jersey City itself. I am talking about the political climate.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Well, I can understand what you mean by that.

Let me ask you a question: You say, "Come up with independent funds." Now, education, unfortunately, in this State, is supported, in large measure -- even though we have done some revisions with regard to educational funding, and we have put some more money into educational funding-- By and large, still most of it is done by the property taxpayer of each and every local municipality. Are you suggesting that the municipalities should not have any kind of say in what happens within the school system?

MS. FOSTER: I don't say they shouldn't have some say, but I don't think they should dominate it, or withhold funds when something doesn't go their way, like spoiled children.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you.

MS. FOSTER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Jack, do you have any questions?

SENATOR EWING: No, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much, na'am.
Patricia Dunham? Good evening, Patricia.

P A T R I C I A G. D U N H A M: Good evening. My name is Patricia Dunham. I am First Vice President of the Parents' Council of Jersey City. First I would like to address the law itself. I found the following problems with the New Jersey State takeover law:

1) The law lacked the provision for bonding moneys for capital improvement. It took over a year--

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Excuse me for one second, ma'am. Do you have a copy of your testimony?

MS. DUNHAM: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Would you be kind enough to share those copies?

MS. DUNHAM: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

MS. DUNHAM: You're welcome.

1) The law lacked the provision for bonding moneys for capital improvement. It took over a year to get an amendment passed to address that issue. We are still waiting for the appointments to the Capital Improvement Board, which we desperately need for the renovation and building of schools. That is not in the statement; it is added.

2) The law lacks a provision for parent inclusion.

3) After Levels I, II, and III monitoring of the District, the Corrective Action Plan should have been developed before coming into the District. Running the District and developing the Corrective Action Plan was too time-consuming. The monitoring should have led to the development of the Plan, before the State took over. They knew what the problems were when they came. That is why they took over the District.

If they knew what the problems were, the Plan should have been in writing for the State Superintendent to implement, so that she did not have to do both things at the same time.

4) The takeover in October of the school year was untimely. A July takeover would have better suited the September to June school year. A July takeover would have kept the District from being disrupted during the school year. The evaluation of personnel should have been longer. April was an inappropriate time to hand down decisions for terminations. Even though the Superintendent tried to minimize the impact of these terminations upon the schools, a June 30 reorganization should have been provided in the law.

5) The law has no academic mandate. There is no clear definition of State educational expectations or a timetable for implementation.

6) The law does not specify the amount of financial control the local city administration has over the budget. If the municipality does not have the funds, there is an appeals process, but there is nothing in the law that defines the State's responsibility in the financing of the programs needed to improve education.

An observation we have made: The politics of State takeover have, and are causing an undue burden upon the children of this District. Republicans and Democrats supported the State takeover law, but many Democrats who supported it are now saying they didn't. We also know that the political climate in New Jersey is causing Democrats to forget their obligations to our children. We are finding that the Democratic party is taking a position against a Republican-appointed State Superintendent.

We've had proof of this through the budget process that took place last year. I am hoping that this hearing is not part of that posturing. We only want what is best for our children, not what is the best for political careers. Whatever you can do to ensure the excellence of education of our children, who are the future of this State, should be your utmost priority. The parents of this District will keep their

vigil. That vigil not only includes the State Superintendent and the Department of Education, but also the Legislature -- those legislators who represent us -- and the Governor of this State.

We feel there have been positives that have occurred since the takeover, and we also feel there are negatives. I would just like to list some of those. The positives have been: Parents have become more involved through committees. Everyone comes to work now, even City Council members are made to come to work. No special moneys that were siphoned off to parochial schools-- That has been stopped. Increments have been denied to unsatisfactory staff, and poor performers have been terminated. An audit of departments has given to the savings of moneys. The GT program, and other programs, are being reevaluated. Some alternate ed classes have been opened. Principals have been made more accountable for the management of the schools, and there has been some improvement in our math scores, which are Metropolitan Achievement Test scores.

Our negatives, we feel, are: There is no financial support of the takeover by the State. That is an example of the problem we had with the budget last year, when the City appealed it and we wound up-- They went to the Department of Community Affairs, which then told Dr. Ellis what to do with the money and where it should go and what should happen. We wound up losing money in the process.

We had asked for a uniform curriculum, and that will not take place for five years. They are developing that at this point. Our HSPT scores are still poor. Our Special Education Program is a shambles. Principal evaluation criteria needs to be more specific, and has to take into account student performance. The Chapter I structure was eliminated and is being slowly reorganized. There is too much managerial bureaucracy -- that is, layers of administrators -- and a massive amount of paperwork.

Affirmative action: Most promotions were external, and not internal. That is starting to change now to a certain degree, but when it first came in -- when the State first came in -- most promotions in affirmative action -- most, I am not saying all -- were from external, not internal sources.

We need a mechanism for teacher involvement, and Board members on the Advisory Board need more training -- more in-service training -- especially in the role of themselves as members of a Board of Education and in school matters and policy.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you. Any questions, Senator Ewing?

SENATOR EWING: Yes. Do you have any children in the school system?

MS. DUNHAM: I did.

SENATOR EWING: But not anymore?

MS. DUNHAM: Not right now, no.

SENATOR EWING: But, you know, talking about-- You said, in Item No. 3: "After Levels I, II, and III monitoring of the District, the Corrective Action Plan should have been developed before coming into the District.

MS. DUNHAM: Yes?

SENATOR EWING: Am I right in saying the parents play a part in forming that Plan?

MS. DUNHAM: The Corrective Action Plan?

SENATOR EWING: Yes.

MS. DUNHAM: No.

SENATOR EWING: Once you are in the District, they don't help out on that? Any input maybe?

MS. DUNHAM: We are involved in committees for certain areas, but we are not involved in the Corrective Action Plan.

SENATOR EWING: No input on that?

MS. DUNHAM: No. If the State has monitored the district for years in Level I, Level II, and Level III, and then they come in and -- they have the compliance unit come in and they investigate, they have a pretty good idea-- If they are proving a case to the State -- to the Commissioner -- that there are problems in Jersey City, or anywhere, that need to be addressed, then they have an idea of where those problems are and how they should be fixed.

To put the Superintendent in a position where she has to do many things at the same time -- not only monitor the District and evaluate staff, but then develop a Corrective Action Plan at the time-- I mean, you might as well just bring in a whole team of -- bring in a lot more people than you had, because it was very time-consuming. We didn't get our Corrective Action Plan on time. In the State takeover law, it says within six months, and they couldn't possibly do it. The time line had to go back.

In saying that, we are saying that if you know what the problems are, then you should have developed a plan when you came in here, and then the plan could have been adjusted as you went along, as the Superintendent found that maybe, you know, that this doesn't work or that doesn't work. But there should have been some idea of where the Superintendent could have gone with that.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Ms. Dunham, before you leave, if I may, ma'am-- I appreciate your coming in this evening. Let me say to you, I think this is some of the best testimony we have heard in terms of recommendations or suggestions that ought to be considered with regard to the takeover law.

However, I also want to say to you, you don't know me, and I don't know you. Okay? I will simply say to you that while I appreciate your observations, this Subcommittee is not here for any specific purpose other than to assess what is

happening with the takeover law. It is not here to undermine or undercut anything that Dr. Scambio has done. It is here for that assessment purpose because, unfortunately, we may have to utilize this law in other areas of this State, with regard to problems in education.

Let me also express to you that I have been very clear with Ms. Granick that, in and of itself-- We were supposed to be here in May. I postponed that meeting at the request of Dr. Scambio. So, we are not up here to play partisan politics. We are not here for that purpose. I am a Democrat, but I have served 15 years in educational government. I am here to make sure that the children of this City get each and every opportunity, just like the children in other cities get.

But we are also going to make sure that when we assess this, that in point of fact, we do it. I do not know Dr. Scambio, nor have I expressed five words to her. Indeed, she has not called, not picked up the phone to talk to me. This is an independent analysis. It is to be done that way. We are not even utilizing the Department of Education or anyone from that area. We are utilizing the Office of Legislative Services to create this.

I hope that if that is, in fact, a concern of yours-- I think you expressed that particularly well; I think you have. If that is your concern, or the concern of any number of other people out here, I want to put it to rest this evening.

MS. DUNHAM: All right. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Do we have a copy of the second-- You had some other recommendations.

MS. DUNHAM: No, but I will write it and I will give it to you.

SENATOR EWING: You have our address.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Next will be Mr. Raymond O'Brien, of the Jersey City Board of Education. Mr. O'Brien?

R A Y M O N D J. O ' B R I E N: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening. The topic at hand is twofold, since it addresses, and I quote: "The State-operated school district established in Jersey City AND" -- my emphasis -- "the implementation of the Corrective Action Plan for the District."

As I am sure you are aware, in late 1990 the State administration in Jersey City compiled a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan to address deficiencies noted by several State compliance and monitoring reviews. The five major sections of the Corrective Action Plan were: 1) Leadership and Management; 2) Educational Programs and Services; 3) Community Relations and Public Information; 4) Finance; and 5) Facilities.

Similarly, as I am sure you are aware, the resident Board of Education submitted its first assessment of this Corrective Action Plan geared towards its progress and status of implementation. The Board also considered the reasonableness of the overall Plan within the assessment process. I had the opportunity to serve on the Board's Assessment Subcommittee responsible for the Finance area, since I Chair the Finance and Budget Committee, in addition to serving as the current Vice-Chairperson of the Board for the last three weeks.

Our assessment was based upon approximately one year of State intervention. Most certainly, miracles were not expected in terms of implementation, since the statutorily required reorganization took six months to refine and implement. The overall consensus of Board members, however, was that the Plan was reasonable, and that those procedures and changes that were able to be implemented in some way, shape, or form were proper.

I do believe the Board understands that the Corrective Action Plan is an evolutionary document. It must change as

situations in the real world of Jersey City change. It must change to always ensure that State-cited deficiencies are corrected. Above all, it must change to make sure that kids are truly first. In my mind's eye, the Plan has the potential to do all of this, since it is a comprehensive and well-thought-out document drafted and supported by sincere and well-intended State administrators. This fine document, however, needs the additional impetus and life, if you like, of State support, which I find lacking and will now further comment upon.

When a community is no longer deemed responsible for the administration of its school district, it can only be considered a very sad day. When this happens in one of the State's largest school districts, it can only be considered truly dismal, since it implies no one in a position of responsible municipal administration really cared enough about so many kids, the future of these kids, nor the future of this City at what might currently be a critical juncture.

Nonetheless, intervention was necessary for the sake of our children, since nothing else is more important. I prefer the word "intervention" versus "takeover." Takeover, to me, is a negative word, while intervention should be positive. However, welcome to the real world, since intervention in our community has not been an overall positive experience.

I believe this District has been fortunate to now have State-appointed administrators who want to, and will, do a good job to keep our kids first. When the State statutorily indicates, however, that, "We have given you administrators," it is not enough. The words, "State intervention" or "State-operated school district" imply more than providing the right people. Administrators are a people resource and not a dollars-and-cents financial resource. For a few moments I will comment upon funding, and not from the perspective that more money will solve everything, since that simply is not so.

But, let the record speak for itself: The State intervention law did not originally provide for bonding. It fell through the cracks. Similarly, the intervention law does not provide additional financial assistance to help State administrators implement a Corrective Action Plan. QEA is not providing any help, and I do not wish to discuss it, since it is not tied to the intervention statute. Simply put, the State intervention law itself must provide for some type of additional State funding to correct State-cited deficiencies. Please don't give us only some help -- the people resources -- when we need more. Since the State's total support is needed to rectify the deficiencies in our school district -- and I believe it is -- then give us more. Give us the total resources we really need to provide our children a thorough and efficient education.

To do less detracts from the intervention statute. To do less means our elected State officials, unfortunately, really don't care about kids in need. To do less means there is a dark future ahead for this State. Change the law to include funding for the State-mandated Corrective Action Plan.

Before I close, I want to briefly comment upon another aspect of the intervention statute which I believe requires reconsideration. An initial State intervention period of five years may not be sufficient, especially in the larger school districts. Programs, procedures, and the like which are needed to correct State-cited deficiencies must become firmly institutionalized in all of those administering, educating, and supporting the student population. Institutionalization of sound and student-oriented practices is necessary to help in preventing a slide into those lax and unacceptable situations which require State intervention in the first place.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I will now answer any questions you may have.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Jack, do you have any questions?

SENATOR EWING: Yes. How much more money do you feel, from your position, you wanted this year?

MR. O'BRIEN: We applied for an additional \$9 million from the Governor's Discretionary Fund, which is a fairly large hunk when you consider--

SENATOR EWING: That is out of the QEA, too?

MR. O'BRIEN: Right. That will be used to bring certain programs into place, such as expanding pre-K and additional staff development issues, and up to what is a level to provide some positive effects. Could more be done? Sure. I realize you cannot pump money in overnight. You can't raise property taxes to inordinate extents. But we were strapped. We gave up part of our surplus through the decision of the Department of Community Affairs. We are down and ill now. We are very tight, and under QEA we are not receiving adequate funding.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: What is your surplus?

MR. O'BRIEN: Zip.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: You have no surplus?

MR. O'BRIEN: No surplus.

SENATOR EWING: Not with that rinky-dink deal.

MR. O'BRIEN: The cash flow is poor, especially when the City doesn't satisfy its obligations on time consistently. We're strapped. We have no resources to fall back upon, and it makes it difficult to correct problems which were cited, I would say, independently, by State officials.

SENATOR EWING: Are they behind on making payments now?

MR. O'BRIEN: They are current now.

SENATOR EWING: Today?

MR. O'BRIEN: But there is no guarantee that will last, based upon their prior payment record.

SENATOR EWING: When is the next payment due?

MR. O'BRIEN: Probably around the 16th of this month.

SENATOR CIMINO: The 16th of June. That is to meet what, the July 1 payroll?

MR. O'BRIEN: That is enough funding for 30 days.

SENATOR EWING: Well, how much have they been dragging all the time, would you say, roughly -- a week, two weeks?

MR. O'BRIEN: Oh, it could be-- We might have applied for our fair share -- pick a number, \$7 million or \$8 million -- and we were only given \$5 million, with the statement basically being, "You don't need \$7 million or \$8 million. You can survive on \$5 million," to a point where I believe they were up to \$16 million in funds they owed us.

SENATOR EWING: Has that been paid up now?

MR. O'BRIEN: The bulk of it has, yes -- slowly.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Is that occurring because they have a cash flow problem?

MR. O'BRIEN: I believe that was part of it, yes. The collection rate on taxes was less than they expected, certainly, but we felt the effect. When you come close to the potential of not meeting a payroll, which became very real on at least two occasions, that's trouble.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: I was advised of one of those problems. Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony, sir.

Next will be Christine Golden, President of P.S. No. 33 PTA.

C H R I S T I N E G O L D E N: Good evening. I am Christine Golden, Vice President, Region II of the Hudson County Council of PTA, and immediate past President of P.S. No. 33 PTA. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak this evening regarding the State-operated school district.

Dr. Scambio and many of her staff have impressed me as dedicated professionals committed to improving the education of our children.

Many services have become available. For example, for the first time, P.S. No. 33 has the services of a guidance counselor, a full-time physical education teacher, and improved services for art and music. In the District, there are occupational and physical therapists for special education, as well as plans for extensive supportive services.

There has been a concerted effort to involve parents, and a comprehensive plan for staff development.

Most recently, there has been an improvement in receiving necessary supplies in a timely manner. However, there are some problems that have evolved from the reorganization of the District. Districtwide, there is less than adequate communication and coordination between clusters, which has contributed to added confusion regarding standard operating procedures.

It occurs to me, long-standing problems involving the delivery of services to our children could have been addressed in a more systematic and less global manner. Hopefully, this would have enabled the District to better identify those programs which had been beneficial and build from them, rather than discard all previous policies as being bad.

All organizations are composed of professionals with varying levels of talent, dedication, and resolve to succeed. Ideally, you keep the best employees, eliminate the worst, and improve the skills of the remaining staff. This leads me to a recent termination of a highly competent and dedicated educator due to budgetary concerns -- Dr. Gerri Goldberg.

In the absence of a special education supervisor, and a director of pupil personnel for Cluster IV, Dr. Goldberg assumed these duties, as well as her duties as Administrative Assistant, and has done an excellent job. She was never too busy to offer assistance, correct a problem, or address any issue brought before her. Her abilities are commonly recognized by her peers and the community.

Are we to believe the adage: "No good deed goes unpunished"? Do we want to send out a message that devotion to duty and hard work are rewarded with a kiss good-bye? It boggles the mind.

There were, or will be, other issues discussed this evening, and in an effort to avoid replication, I have just one other comment. In keeping with a PTA objective of securing for all children the best educational advantages, I must address an issue concerning students at P.S. No. 33, a primary school.

Presently, there are 16 fourth graders above the 80th percentile -- seven of whom are above the 90th percentile -- who are eligible for a gifted program. Some of them are here this evening. I'm sure you can see them in the back. With one fifth grade gifted class in our cluster, there is no place for them. Supposedly, they will be placed in other clusters, but how? When those classes are at capacity and each cluster takes their own first, where will our kids fit in? While there are contrasting expert opinions on education, everyone can agree that a child should be challenged according to his ability. This inequity must be addressed.

I realize there are financial constraints, as well as a lack of space, but P.S. No. 33 has a very large and underutilized courtyard that could easily accommodate adjunct classrooms at minimal cost, and therefore provide a gifted program that would serve the whole cluster.

May I add something that is not in my written statement?

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: You certainly may; absolutely.

MS. GOLDEN: In anticipation of some comments, may I say that I presently have two children in the Jersey City school system; one with a learning disability in a resource room, and one in regular education. While they are gifted in my eyes, they are where they belong.

In closing, I would ask you to intercede on behalf of the children of Jersey City to Commissioner Ellis regarding the \$9-million-plus of discretionary funds sought by Dr. Scambio. The funds are essential to address the multitude of problems that plague our children and, in a meaningful way, right the wrong done by the amended QEA.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you. Questions, Senator Ewing?

SENATOR EWING: No questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much.

Judi (addressed to Judi Granick in audience), let me ask: Has the system prioritized its needs under that \$9 million?

J U D I G R A N I C K: Yes, it has.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: You have ranked them?

MS. GRANICK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Next we will hear from Mr. Arthur Williams. (no response) Okay. Next will be Irene Carson, Lafayette Gardens Apartments. Ms. Carson, good evening.

I R E N E C A R S O N: I'm sorry I don't have a copy of my statement, but it will be made available.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: That's okay. It can be put into the record anyhow, because we are taping the hearing. That is no problem.

MS. CARSON: Fine, thank you. I would like to say, good evening, ladies and gentlemen, the panel on State Intervention, and my colleagues from the various housing--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: We cannot hear you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Use the other microphone, as well.

MS. CARSON: I would like to say, good evening, ladies and gentlemen, the panel, and my colleagues from the various public housing sites who have come here in support tonight.

My name is Irene Carson. I am a resident, and also President of the Lafayette Gardens Public Housing Development in Jersey City, New Jersey. I also serve as Chairperson of the Tenants' Affairs Board at the eight housing sites in Jersey City. I am an unpaid volunteer director at the Lafayette Gardens Teen Post Center, where we service 67 children, ages five through high school.

The Lafayette Gardens Center is where I spend the majority of my time, since I am disabled because of my heart and pressure problems. I spend my time with the children there. We focus on helpful ways for our students to develop their self pride and their education. We offer a large variety of educational study skills and activities at the Center. We have music classes and two computers.

But the most important part of my program, and at the other housing sites -- at the Booker T. Washington Apartments and the Montgomery Apartments -- is our relationship with the State-run Jersey City Board of Education. We have someone from the other sites who will also speak.

We can proudly say that the number of our students who attend Public Schools Nos. 9 and 22, Lincoln High School, and Ferris High School have worked extra hard to improve the academic standards in the schools. For the school year 1990, we gave four scholarships to children going into college from our housing sites. These children excelled very well. I could see the improvements that were made during their four years of high school, but especially the last two years.

They come to the Center where they are provided with a head teacher and a teacher's aide from the Board of Education. These teachers take a personal interest in our children, academically, as well as socially. Children in public housing sites are deemed as low self-esteem children. This is a stigma placed on them until they have almost gotten to believe it. But we at the Center, and these teachers and aides who have

come there from the Board, have built up the children's self-esteem. This has come through the State's intervention. We never had this before.

Our students focus on, "Where there is a will, there's an 'A.'" Much of this could not be done without the assistance of Dr. Scambio and her staff of Associate Superintendents and our school principals.

I heard you say you would like to see the children in Jersey City receive just as good an education as the children throughout the other districts of the State. My children did not attend public schools for this reason. My children are aged 30, 25, and 22. They excelled in the parochial school system, with two of them going to public high schools, but for this same reason. Whis is why I fight so hard for the children in public housing, to see that they excel.

Through public housing -- the Tenants' Affairs Board -- we got to meet the people on the Board of Education, whom we had never met before. We met Mrs. Frazier, Mrs. Foster, and they helped us. They worked with us and with our children at the public housing sites, to make sure we had the programs that were available to them. They brought us many positive changes for the betterment of the children, and for all of the students in the District.

We have a number of districtwide committees, student uniforms, site-based management, and a code of conduct, which is one of the best things I have seen, for the students and the staff; recognition, buildings, principals, interim committees, and parental involvement where they can go into the schools now and talk more to the teachers and the principals, and get answers.

The other schools in the District are cleaner than ever. I know that. Even though my children were in parochial schools, I visited the schools when they were in disarray under stairwells throughout the whole school. I have seen the changes in these schools.

Supplies and materials: Our children have the basic supplies and materials necessary for learning. Without the tools of the trade, the job of education will not be accomplished. I see children who come into the Community Center who have workbooks. They have their science texts, different things I have never seen the kids bring home before. We are seeing positive changes in the District and in our schools.

We sincerely urge Dr. Scambio to continue on the path where she puts kids first. We continue to expect great things in the future.

At our site, I am proud to say, we have two students who have entered the Merrill Lynch Program, one from Lincoln High School and one from Ferris High School. We have a member at one of our sites who sits on a State Advisory Board.

I would like to say, I am known in Jersey City as an anti-drug fighter. One of the things I would really like to see -- and this is really needed -- in the next five years-- We are dealing with children who will be coming to school from drug-addicted parents. These children -- and I see them every day -- are thrown into class with 25 kids, kids who are getting ready for the Merrill Lynch Program. These children are jumping up and down and around, and the teacher is not prepared to work with these children. This is something I would really like to see; some sort of program set up in the schools that would focus on the children of these drug-addicted parents. These children are not ready to sit in a classroom for five hours a day, yet are still intelligent enough to pick up some of the school work.

In my closing remarks, I would like to ask my staff -- who are here with me from the Lafayette Center and from the other public housing sites -- to thank Dr. Scambio and her staff for the services they give to our communities. I want to wish her continued success in providing our Jersey City

students with the best of anything anyone can give -- an education. "If you give a man a fish, he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will eat for the rest of his life."

I thank you very much for hearing me.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much. Questions, Jack?

SENATOR EWING: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: One question from Senator Ewing.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Carson, how do you select the students who come to your particular group?

MS. CARSON: They just come in and sign up. No one is turned down.

SENATOR EWING: They come in after school?

MS. CARSON: They are supposed to be there at 4:00, but they come at 3:30, straight from school. And, they have to have homework. They bring their homework with them. I have four assistants at Lafayette Gardens. Will you please stand up? (two assistants comply) The other two are sitting down. I have my assistants come in every day at 4:00 until-- It was supposed to be from 4:00 to 8:00. We are there from 4:00 to 9:00. We are there on Saturdays and Sundays to help the kids with their homework, tutor them, whatever they need. We have a library set up. We have encyclopedias. We have computers. We just learned the computers ourselves. The City helps us a lot in getting supplies. The Housing Authority helps us with our supplies.

SENATOR EWING: Do you get your money--

MS. CARSON: From the City.

SENATOR EWING: You get the money to run this operation from the City?

MS. CARSON: Yes, from the City.

SENATOR EWING: Not from the school?

MS. CARSON: No, from the City, but the teachers are paid by the school.

SENATOR EWING: Then, the curriculum you use you are getting from the schools, or are you doing it?

MS. CARSON: We have a teacher and a teacher's aide. The children come in with their books. They do their homework. If they need special help, the teacher is there for the special help. Whatever the children need, whatever special help, the teacher is there to help them.

SENATOR EWING: Is there a limit on the number you can take?

MS. CARSON: I have a very large Center, a brand-new Center, that will hold 400-and-something people in my main room, and maybe about 100 in my smaller room. Right now, I have 67 children who come in and out. The homework is from 4:00 until 6:00, and arts and crafts and recreation is from 6:00 until 8:00.

SENATOR EWING: I think that is terrific. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: I hope the children appreciate what you are doing.

MS. CARSON: They do; they do. As a matter of fact, we had two children from Public School No. 22 who live in Lafayette Gardens who were the valedictorian and salutatorian of the grammar school last year. This year we have the valedictorian again coming out of Lafayette Gardens.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Congratulations.

SENATOR EWING: How many centers are there like this?

MS. CARSON: Well, the others will come up. We have eight housing sites, and every site has a center.

SENATOR EWING: Great.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much, Ms. Carson.

Next will be Samantha Moore, Concerned Parents of Public School No. 39. Ms. Moore is not in the room. Next, Kabili Tayari, Jersey City Board of Education.

K A B I L I T A Y A R I: I want, first of all, to say that I appreciate the fact that the members of the Committee decided to have a meeting that parents could attend, not one when we were at work. Number two, I am very glad we finally had this meeting, because it has been canceled so many times.

I am going to be very short and to the point. A lot of it has to do with what we are concerned about: the politics of the State takeover. First, we need to be very, very honest that one of the things that was advocated strongly by both the Democratic and Republican parties in 1986, I think it was, when it was announced as a plan, up until 1988, when it was finally passed, was the erosion and the elimination of negative, destructive politics against our children, which, in the end result, produces miseducation.

We are finding that since the State takeover, Trenton has been collaborating with the Jersey City municipal administration to not put children first, but to put politics first. We find that deals are made, as was done last year with the Department of Community Affairs. I am going to be very specific, because we are not here to attack, but the children must be first. This is something this organization has been saying for years. When the Mayor of this City decided that moneys -- \$14 million, to be exact -- should be taken from the Jersey City Board of Education, deals were made in the Department of Community Affairs, under the guise of a hearing, to remove that \$14 million.

Now, in the law-- Although the law correctly gives municipalities the right to appeal if they think there is an undue tax burden upon their taxpayers, I don't think the law that passed-- I don't think that particular phrase that was put in there was so that deal making could go on.

We understand that a Republican administration appointed Elena Scambio. We personally do not care if the devil in hell appointed Elena Scambio. We also understand that a Democratic administration is now in power, locally and statewide. We really don't care one way or another, because since 1973 to the present, both parties have been responsible for this negligence and this miseducation, and both parties voted affirmatively for State takeover.

Where are the finances from the State? This is a State-controlled District. Then where are the moneys from the State for the State-controlled District? We presently -- this year alone -- need an additional \$8 million to \$9 million. Now, we understand the passage of QEA, but again, we are a State-controlled District; a District that the State has said needs the most assistance; that needs the most development; where the evils can be corrected with State policing and with State financing.

We support the fact that accountability is needed on the local level. We applaud the fact that since the State takeover people actually come to work. If you look at Monitoring I, II, and III, the students were not the only ones who had a low attendance rate; so did the staffs. Since the State takeover, though, people come to work, political people.

People who run for the City Council now understand that they cannot have meetings while they are supposed to be principals and classroom instructors and guidance counselors in the daytime. They attempted to do that under even this present administration, and a fight broke out, because, again, children were placed first.

I am putting these examples out there because there are two kinds of politics -- good politics and bad politics. Politics that create homelessness, politics that create suffering, and politics that create miseducation are bad politics. Politics that create education -- quality education

-- excellence, equity, and accountability are good politics, whether they are Republican politics or Democratic politics; whether Kean politics, Florio politics, McCann politics, or Cucci politics. The only kind of politics we are concerned about are politics that enforce, reenforce, guarantee, and ensure quality education for our children, and moneys are needed to back that up.

In the law, the capital improvement aspect for capital improvements for our facilities-- You need to strengthen that. You need to go back and look at the law. I know a Capital Improvement Board has been established, but I think you need to look at again, why, if State takeover was for the purpose of taking the politics of education out of the hands of the local municipality, why then is the Capital Improvement Board putting it right back into the hands of the local administration?

The other thing we need to look at is academic mandates. We said these things during hearings and during the actual discussions. You need to place some academic mandates in the law that say that within a certain amount of time, basic kinds of things must happen; that is, good monitoring, good regulation, good contracts with the taxpayers, with the educators, with the parents, who are always what people forget -- two things, taxpayers and voters. We need those kinds of contracts.

The other type of contract that we need to look at very seriously is, there needs to be more than six months in relationship to evaluating and changing the structure of the Board of Education when State takeover happens. Six months is not enough time, and it needs to happen in July or August. It does not need to happen while our children are going to school. That disrupts and creates more miseducation.

Also in the law itself what needs to be seriously amended and dealt with in a very serious way, is, again, what

type of system will be in place for affirmative action. We are very concerned about this. There needs to be some affirmative action codes within the State takeover process. Also, the structuring of the Board of Education, vis-a-vis I understand you called it "advisory" only because we do not vote. I think you need to dismiss that term out of the legislation. Just say it is a nonvoting Board, because people run around with all kinds of crazy ideas. They don't even realize that in five years those are the same people who are going to be running for "governance and management."

First, of all, there need to be some mandatory codes in there as to what kind of training each one of those Board members shall get, or shall receive in order to govern and to manage. Since State takeover said that part of the problem was a lack of governance and a lack of management, then there should be something that mandates training in governance and management for those Board members.

Attendance criteria: There are a few people on my Board of Education who have probably been away more than they have been at meetings. Yes, Senator, that is correct. There are a few. They have been away, more than they have been present. We need to look at that. There should be some criteria for accountability, whether that is a voting Board or a nonvoting Board; again, particularly since those are the only people who can run for election in that five-year period.

The organization of that Board, how it will select its leadership, what kinds of committees it will have, and how those committees will function-- I think this is a responsibility that has to be defined in the law.

Presently, how do we see State takeover? Right now, one of the things we raise is academic mandates. Our test scores have dropped -- for whatever reason -- since State takeover. Various explanations have been given. This goes back to the mandates, because there are certain mandates in

place. But now I understand that the entire monitoring system is being watered down on the State level and filtered out.

Let me say one thing before I forget it: We need strong monitoring and regulations in education, just as we do with transportation, housing, civil rights, and anything else. Then we need for those codes to be enforced. The problem we saw with the monitoring system was a lack of enforcement.

State takeover-- When people decide, for whatever reasons, that they are not going to correct their errors, it is like going to jail. The first time, we may put you on probation. The second time, we may put you in the pretrial intervention program. The third time, you go to Rahway. State takeover needs to send some people to Rahway, because the criminality of miseducating these amounts of children needs to be understood for what it is -- criminal. We say, do not take the teeth out of that aspect of it either, because people need to be afraid of abusing children. People talk about physical abuse. We are concerned about mental abuse, because that will cripple them for the rest of their lives.

In relationship to the morale in the system, we think that needs to be worked on very strongly. For whatever reasons, there is a strong lack of morale. We feel there has been a willingness and an involvement on the part of the District to try to continue parental inclusion. We do not use the word, "involvement" here. We say "inclusion," because cake sales are involvement. We believe in the budgeting process, the curriculum process, the planning process, all that entails our children's learning and development.

We say clearly, though, that we need to move forward more rapidly, more progressively, and we need the State backing up the State takeover, not making deals on the local level. All mayors need to understand that whether it happens under a Republican administration or under a Democratic administration, the State takeover is for the children, not for you to be able

to wheel and deal based on what party is down in the State House and in the Department of Education.

I want to thank you. Those are basically the comments I wanted to make.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you. Senator, any questions?

SENATOR EWING: No. Mr. Tayari, I am delighted with the way you spoke. I just hope the whole Board is made up of people like you, and that those who do not attend, we can do something about.

I would also like to say that I am very proud that I was the sponsor of this legislation in the Senate, and I am a Republican. There is no question that without an education for all of our children -- a decent education, a correct education -- where are they going to go?

MR. TAYARI: Senator Ewing, we just want to say very seriously that that is why we think you need to go back to the law. There need to be some serious amendments in the law, because accountability and credibility need to be placed on everyone, including this nonvoting Board, because as we understand it, even while we speak, there are preparations to go into Paterson.

SENATOR CIMINO: That is correct.

SENATOR EWING: Yes.

MR. TAYARI: There are some other districts, and this did not just happen yesterday.

I would just like to say one other thing on a note dealing with a position that was taken by the NAACP. It was taken by some of us. When you take over a district, you need to replace the hue of a person with the hue of the next person, because it helps the people in that district, particularly the parents of those children, to understand that there is sensitivity and also seriousness, you know, in bringing about some collectivity and some quality and some civil sensitivity. I just wanted to say that also.

Again, we do not care which side-- Although it was sponsored by Republicans, let us say right now, for the record, the Democrats, overwhelmingly, jumped on board, supported it, ate it up like it was the best thing since ice cream. Now people are trying to act like they didn't have anything to do with it. We are not going to go for that, because, like I said, there are two kinds of politics, no matter which party is playing -- good politics and bad politics. We are not caught up in Republican politics versus Democratic politics. We are caught up in good politics versus bad politics.

SENATOR EWING: It was bipartisanship.

MR. TAYARI: All right. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much. That was excellent.

Judi, would you ask Dr. Scambio to please submit to this Subcommittee all the attendance records of the District Board of Education members, please--

MS. GRANICK: (speaking from audience) Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: --from the moment it was conceived under the new takeover plan?

MS. GRANICK: There has been communication with Trenton regarding that issue, also.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: With the Department?

MS. GRANICK: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Okay. I would request that you turn that information over to the Subcommittee.

MS. GRANICK: Yes. I will do that also.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much.

MS. GRANICK: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Next, Mr. John Allen. (no response) Mr. John Allen is not with us. All right, let me go back through the list here of those who were not here originally, to see if anyone is here: Dr. Natali Graziano? (no response) Mr. Robert Martin?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He had an emergency in the family and couldn't be here.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Okay. Samantha Moore? (no response) That's basically it, ladies and gentlemen, of all those who signed up to testify.

I want to thank everyone. I think this was a very, very fine public hearing. Sir?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Are you going to schedule any more speakers, Assemblyman?

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: What is your name, ma'am?

M I C H E L E E D W A R D S: Michele Edwards.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: I don't have your name, but you may come forward, sure.

MS. EDWARDS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and members of the Subcommittee on School Intervention. My name is Michele Edwards. I reside at 340 Duncan Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey. I am the Director of the A. Harry Moore Housing Complex Teen Post, and a product of the Jersey City school system, which I am very proud to be. I have attended a number of schools, and I am a graduate of the Henry Snyder High School of Jersey City, New Jersey.

In my current position, as I work at the A. Harry Moore Housing Complex Teen Post, I focus a great deal of my time on the educational program. In our after-school services, many of the children are enrolled in P.S. No. 39. Dr. Scambio and her staff have greatly assisted our students regarding improving educational and academic achievements. Thanks to the assistance of the State Superintendent, Dr. Scambio, and her staff, we have been provided with a head teacher and a teacher's aide for our after-school programs.

Many of our students have improved a great deal and have moved successfully on to the next grade. We also have students who have been moved to gifted and talented classes, as well.

In the past year-and-a-half, under State intervention, under this change and with the leadership of Dr. Scambio and her staff, we have opened many locked doors. There is a "can do" attitude in our school District. Our Principal, our Associate Superintendent, and Dr. Scambio are responsible for our receiving all of our requests and our needs. No longer do we have an, "I'll get back to you" attitude.

We would like to thank you, and we appreciate all the help and all the assistance. In closing, I hope you will help us to continue to bring forward opportunities and the principle that, "Kids Are First," and will continue to provide the necessary funds for our districts so that students can get a thorough and efficient education, which they so rightfully deserve.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much. Any questions, Jack?

SENATOR EWING: No, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Is there anyone else who would like to say something? Yes, ma'am?

H O L L Y W O J C I E C H O W S K I: I requested to speak. I spoke at the first hearing.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: I made a ruling, quite frankly, Holly, that those who had spoken the first time -- that we had given them that opportunity.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Oh, I know that, but you just asked if anyone wanted to speak. You invited me up. If you don't want me to speak--

SENATOR EWING: It's before midnight, so it's all right.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Pardon me. Ladies and gentlemen, I have no intention of not letting her speak. Thank you very much.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Good.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Please continue.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: I just responded to your request.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: I hope you have something additional or new to provide to us from your testimony last time.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well I have. since the last time, as you can see, I have a copy of Title 18, and you will notice that I have done some homework.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: I'm sure you have.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Okay. My name is Holly Wojciechowski. I am a member of the Jersey City Board of Education, a member of the Jersey City Parents' Council, and a member of Parents' Council P.S. No. 30. I have two children in the Jersey City public school system, one in second grade, and one in fourth grade.

In reading under Title 18, I noted that the Commissioner is to submit a report to the Joint Committee on an annual basis on the implementation of the Corrective Action Plan. I just want to find out if those reports are submitted to Dr. Scambio, and if, in fact, you have received them?

Regarding the takeover law itself, I only have a couple of points that I want to bring out. I will be brief. I feel the time lines are unrealistic and counterproductive. I would also like to see a two-phase type of takeover where most of the administrative changes are done prior to the actual intervention, so that implementation can take place immediately.

The principal evaluation criteria needs to be more specific and needs to take into account student performance. There is also no -- I put "exiting criteria" -- for Board members. Responsibility and expectations need to be more clearly defined; monitoring of Board performance and evaluation of same as they relate to the District's progress, or lack thereof. There are really no specific criteria as to what Board members are supposed to do, and no code of conduct.

It states in the takeover law: "The Commissioner, in consultation with the appropriate educational organizations, shall provide the members of the Board of Education with appropriate in-service training in school matters." Not only has that not taken place on the Commissioner's part, but I would also request that the language be changed to, "require members to get appropriate in-service training." As it stands now, as a voting body, we don't necessarily need the skills we would need if we were to vote on a number of things. I, quite frankly, do not feel qualified at this point to do that.

There is no protection of funding, particularly in those areas that directly relate to issues in the Corrective Action Plan. The takeover law was quite careful in protecting the needs of the municipality, as far as offering a second avenue of appeal. However, the District itself is not protected when the municipality does not live up to its obligations.

That second avenue is: "The municipality may apply to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs, for a determination that the local share of revenues needed to support the District's budget results in an unreasonable tax burden. Based upon his review, the Director shall certify the amount of revenues which can be raised locally to support the budget of the State-operated District. Any difference between the amount the Director certifies and the total amount of local revenues required by the budget approved by the Commissioner, shall be paid by the State in the fiscal year in which the expenditures are made, subject to the availability of the appropriations."

Now, I could be incorrect, but the way I read that, and the way I understood that, was that if that avenue of appeal was taken, the Department of Community Affairs could rule that there was an unfair burden on the taxpayer. And if there were funds available, the State would appropriate them.

However, when that avenue of appeal was taken, a decision was made that \$7 million was in excess of what the municipality could pay. However, in that judgment it was never stated where that money would come from, so it was simply deducted from the municipality's payments.

I do not feel, nor do I believe that that was the intent of the second appeals process. That needs to be looked into. I believe when appeals are made to the budgets of State-operated districts, they should be carefully monitored as to the outcome.

Regarding capital improvement, there was the lack of a bonding mechanism which forced the usage of surplus, which could easily, and would have willingly been appropriated for new programs. That money was not available, and is not available now.

There are some items which are directly affected by the budget and are part of the Corrective Action Plan which cannot be implemented. If we are going to judge the success or failure of a State-operated school district by how well it is able to implement its Corrective Action Plan, I don't feel that would be a fair assessment if the funding is not available.

Also, our five-year curriculum review, which was part of the Corrective Action Plan, has had to be put on hold for budgetary reasons.

There are a number of very good things which have happened. We have an interview process at the building level which involves staff, administrators, and parents, which has not happened before. We have a lot of parent involvement in different committees. I would like to see more substantive involvement, but there are good moves in the right direction. However, I feel that if the State takeover law -- or, the object of the State takeover law is only to ensure that we are able to pass monitoring, then you are shortchanging us, and we are shortchanging ourselves, because we are only then working

toward the minimum. Dr. Scambio has stated that her expectations are that a minimum standard is not sufficient for these students, and that whatever she does in and above what is required to pass monitoring, is what she will do for these children. I would appreciate your help in moving toward that goal.

Thank you. I am sorry if I took too much of your time.

SENATOR EWING: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Wasn't that monetary thing finally resolved between the City and the School District?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: No, it was not.

SENATOR EWING: Do you feel the School District is still short \$7 million -- or whatever million it is?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well, I feel that the Department of Community Affairs either had the option to say to the municipality, "You cannot afford the \$7 million. We will give it to you," or, "You cannot afford the \$7 million, but there is nothing we can do about it." However, as I said, the municipality simply deducted that \$7 million from the amount that was owed to us, and no one intervened on our behalf. Therefore, we were out the \$7 million. We were also out other moneys, until finally we have gone to court. I feel it was unfair, particularly in a State-operated School District, that we should continually have to be chasing the carrot that the City holds out to us.

SENATOR EWING: And spend the money on some damned lawyer.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: And spend the money, that's right.

SENATOR EWING: Was that tied into some of the development along the shorefront?

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: Nope.

SENATOR EWING: That was Hoboken, maybe.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: That was Hoboken.

MS. WOJCIECHOWSKI: It was strictly money from our surplus that we were forced to use because the municipality deducted it from its levy.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you.

Ms. Bailey, I gave Ms. Wojciechowski an opportunity, and if you would like to speak again, ma'am, you certainly may. (Assemblyman Cimino consults with Senator Ewing for a few moments here) Yes, ma'am, go ahead. I'm sorry.

E V E L Y N H. B A I L E Y: Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I spoke last time in reaction to some of the things that were said. Tonight I'm prepared with printed information -- in front of you -- and I will read it and give it to you verbatim.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Could I ask you to summarize this for us, ma'am? It's rather long.

MS. BAILEY: I'll be very happy to do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Okay. Thank you.

MS. BAILEY: In fact, I will have to do that, because I left the first page at my seat.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Would you like a copy?
(Committee aide provides witness with copy of statement)

MS. BAILEY: Well, first of all, I think I mentioned this to you before: I was well on my way to retirement when the State came in. I was evaluated, given a good evaluation, and given another position with an increase in salary. Then I heard about many of the things the State planned to do, and I became excited about that. So, I rescinded my retirement and in September of this year, I started my 35th year in the School District. Eighteen of these 35 years were spent in the central office, and during that time I worked under five superintendents. With these five superintendents, I can tell you, I saw a lot of things going on. I saw some good things,

and I saw some bad things, but the thing that is different about this present situation is that the State is here.

When I was working as T&E Coordinator, the State came in to monitor us, but now the State has taken over. The State is here every day to do a review. The State is here every day to monitor itself. When the State came in, Dr. Scambio said her agenda was: "Kids First." That meant different things to a lot of people. Some people were complaining and saying, "Kids; we aren't kids," and different statements like that were made.

But, I want to deal with the reality of the situation which is this: The State is here. That's the reality. And another reality is that quality education is every child's right and it is everyone's responsibility. It's not just the responsibility of the people in the school system; it's also the responsibility of the people in the community. It's the responsibility of legislators to pass laws that will give adequate funds and to pass laws that will support the concept of quality education.

I worked directly with Dr. Judith Wilcox, and in January she gave me an assignment that I was so very, very happy about. It was an assignment to work as a Chairperson of a committee that was to develop a summer school program. And she said, "Forget about money, just dream. We want you to be creative. We want you to develop a program that will turn the system around. We want you to develop a program that will make a difference with our young people. We will use QEA funds for that." And we did develop a good program that would have provided the young people of Jersey City with the ultimate summer school experience. We had input from every segment of the educational community. You know what happened with that? We had to scrap that. Inadequate funds and omission in the legislation had tied the hands of the very people who are here to follow through on the takeover.

I have attached, to the back of this, a copy of an article from The Jersey Journal that was written by Earl Morgan. In this article, he gives many reasons why Dr. Scambio should be given more than five years, and I agree with him. Not only is the time needed to implement the Corrective Action Plan, but there's also time needed to stabilize the process during this period, and as I have here, the State-appointed staff does not need the pressures of time constraints and inadequate funding.

Dr. Scambio sent a message out to us about her agenda -- "Kids First" -- in an memo dated May 2, 1991. It's in front of you. I won't go through all of the things that she listed in this memo, but she clearly defined her agenda of "Kids First." One statement she made was that, "Day care, early childhood programs, more after school programs, more parental involvement, a new definition of the meaning of a high school diploma, and programs that capture the strengths of our students' diversity are the essence of our vision for the 29,000 students of our District."

As I said, you can follow this through on the different goals and the different programs that she intended to implement in the City, and these were related to the national goals that the President gave in his speech. She completed this memo by saying, "Our schools must bridge the gap between the classroom and the world of work and higher education. We must open the avenues to success that have been blocked for our students too often in the past. This is what is meant by: 'Kids First.'"

You might say to me, "All right, then what can we do?" As I said, quality education is every child's right and everyone's responsibility. We need laws that will support the procedure -- the process. We need laws that will not tie the hands of our people in the City who are here to implement the takeover legislation. And, I completed this by saying that

each member of this Committee -- and I'm not saying this to insult anyone, because I noticed how you reacted to something someone said about your political activities-- I ask you to clarify your motivations. Is your agenda, with these hearings, to find out what is politically expedient, or is it to determine what, indeed, will bring quality education to our children? That's something that you can only answer within yourselves.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: That's correct. Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: I've got a question, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Yes, Senator, go ahead.

SENATOR EWING: You said, "Inadequate funds and omissions in the legislation have tied the hands of the very people who are here to follow through with the takeover." What omissions in the legislation? I mean, do you have some specific ideas you could forward to the Chairman?

MS. BAILEY: Yes, and they've been said already -- about the bond -- and that's why I understand now why you've asked me to be brief; because there's no need to say things that have been said already.

SENATOR EWING: Okay. (confers with aide) You've got that all right from her?

MS. BAILEY: Right. And inadequate funds. I've had parents call me today -- everyday -- asking about summer schools. I said, "Call the State." (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much, Ms. Bailey. Yes?

MS. GRANICK: (speaking from audience) Assemblyman Cimino asked the question earlier. I think it's imperative at this point for me to say that the number one priority, as we rank the summer school-- This District has never had a summer school other than one provided by Chapter I. We are

hard-pressed, as we sit here on June 11, to say that even if the funds come through next week, we could run the summer school. But the fact is, we have not heard anything at all. I would hate to have the funds come through at a point specifically slotted for summer school where it's too late for us to do anything about implementation.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: How much is the summer school?

MS. GRANICK: I think it's about \$2 million -- \$2.9 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Two point nine million dollars?

MS. GRANICK: And lastly, we'll take the \$90 million that somebody else-- (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: And so will every other district in the State of New Jersey, as you well know, being in education. Is this to come out of the QEA discretionary pot? Is that the \$25 million pot?

MS. GRANICK: Yes. Actually, we don't care where it goes. Right?

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Unfortunately, the balance of the people of New Jersey may.

MS. GRANICK: But, yes, that's what we've applied for.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Yes. Thank you. We'll check with Dr. Ellis tomorrow.

MS. GRANICK: Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Now, let's see. (confers with aide) This young lady right here was kind enough to come early. Why don't you come on ahead, ma'am?

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Yes?

SENATOR EWING: I'd just like to add something. I serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and although that money has been earmarked for discretionary funds -- with the situation that we have with revenue in the State -- don't bank on it too heavily. Maybe that will have to be reduced and that

money won't be there -- or a lot less will be there. It's certainly a very worthwhile program to have the summer school; there's no question about that. But really, we're in one hell of a jam as far as revenue goes. Just don't get your hopes up too high.

L U Z M A Y I: Okay, my name is Luz Mayi -- M-A-Y-I. I'm the President of the Parents' Council of P.S. No. 3, and I'm working on Cluster I. As you heard, we've been divided by clusters. I made every effort to be here tonight because-- I really don't have much to say; you've heard everybody here. If anybody has anything to say about the District or about the State takeover, they would have been here tonight. The people that you've heard in here are parents, okay?

I have been involved in Jersey City for the past 17 years. This has been the first time that anyone has ever asked me: How's the Principal working in your school? Is everything okay? I was able to interview -- be part of the interview process for the Principal in my building, which makes me feel very proud of that. They've never come to us. And tonight, right now in Ferris High School, which is the high school in my cluster, for the first time in the history of Jersey City as long as I've been here -- for 16 years -- the parents are meeting -- the seventh and eighth grade parents -- to go over what is expected from the kids in the high school, and for them to have input: How can they help the children to improve in the HSPT?

Now we talk about improvement. One of the reasons why maybe the State took over-- The facilities are very poor. In my school building, the children go for shop and home economics on the fourth floor. It's against the law, but that's the only place we have. We've got no gym. They take gym in the backyard. When it's raining, they can't even do this inside. We have no cafeteria; we eat in the basement of the school. There is one toilet facility for the entire building -- three floors and the basement -- three annexes, and we're running a

pre-K program -- three-year and four-year olds. I am very proud of my building, knowing that it's so old and we're lacking a lot of facilities, but our children are working hard.

Now, you expect our children to do good, and we, as parents, want the best for them. We wish you could provide it for them. We don't have the money. We don't have the facilities, so we beg you. My child is one of those that is expecting to go to a summer school program, and it's going to be very tough for me to go back to Grace and Kim and Mariah and Davey and say, "There's no summer school program."

This area has no recreation. Nothing. The children are on the street, in the home. All they see on the street corner are drugs and abuse. We need some type of program in the school during the summer where these children can review those things they weren't able to do during the school year.

We do have good people there, and they want to work. One thing that I could say, again: I am happy that even though I have a hard time expressing myself, every time that I do call the Board of Education -- it could be Dr. Wilcox, it could be Dr. Scambio, it could be Dr. Graber, no matter who it is -- to fight with them, to curse at them, to say good things, they always answer the phone. And if they're not there, they call me that same night at home to make sure that they give me a response. So these are the people that we want to work with because we are getting a response from them, and I feel our children are being treated fairly.

I don't know Dr. Scambio. I just met the lady, okay? I don't know where she comes from or who she is, but, like people said before, I don't care who she is as long as she continues to put my kids first. And that's what I want.
(applause)

Thank you very much for taking this time, and like I say, you are listening to the parents, and if we think she's not doing the right thing, believe me, we're going to come and

tell you. We don't care. We are going to let you know. But so far, she is doing her best, and we want you to please help us try to make Jersey City one of the best school districts. (applause).

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you.

Now, Mr. Arthur Williams. Is Mr. Williams here?

A R T H U R W I L L I A M S: I was here. I was here last year, a couple of months ago.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: You were here back in December?

MR. WILLIAMS: Back in December--

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: In December, last year.

MR. WILLIAMS: --and I had to leave because I'm an elected committeeperson in the district -- and you guys know what I'm talking about -- and I had to represent my constituency. (speaking to audience) And to those residents of Jersey City, Mayor McCann will be the county Democratic Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Continue, sir, please.

MR. WILLIAMS: But, it has nothing to do with politics.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Yes.

MR. WILLIAMS: As I stated before when I first came before you, I wasn't in favor of State takeover or the intervention. However, the practices, procedures, principles, and "Kids First" of Elena Scambio are very important to me because I'm a product of the Jersey City school system -- elementary, high school, graduate of Jersey City State College, employed by the District, and employed by the State-run District as a Student Assistant Coordinator, substance abuse in the elementary level, Cluster III.

The concepts that Dr. Scambio has brought forth for the children of Jersey City haven't begun to touch. She's working day and night to bring a District that has been, as the Senator said, with many hacks, in decay for some time now-- With her efforts and your support, the bottom line is -- and

it's a problem throughout the country -- funding. That will be the only request that I'm going to make to you -- the dollars -- the request for summer school moneys to help her and give her the ability to help the kids of Jersey City. I won't detain you any longer.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN CIMINO: Thank you very much. We appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you very much for coming out this evening. Let me tell you that I think the people of Jersey City have a lot to be proud of in the way that each and every one of you have expressed your opinions this evening. I'm sure that we have found some of this to be very, very helpful in dealing with the existing takeover here, as well as what it can mean for the other cities of the State where this may, in fact, be imminent. Indeed, Paterson is extremely imminent.

I want to thank you. We're going to move forward from this point. We're probably, at some point, going to speak directly with Dr. Scambio, once again, as a Subcommittee, and as I said earlier, we're going to put forward a request for proposals for an independent analysis and independent assessment of where we are. I sincerely thank you for your graciousness this evening, and for coming out. Thank you very much. (applause)

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX

New Jersey State Library

Evelyn H. Bailey
10 Huron Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey

I appear before you as a tax payer, community worker and an employee of the Jersey City Public Schools.

When the state took over the district my position as supervisor was abolished. I received a satisfactory evaluation and was offered another position with an increase in salary. In spite of this in May, 1990, I sent to Trenton the required papers for my retirement to become effective September 1, 1990.

In July, 1990, I rescinded my retirement application because I became excited about some of the things that were planned. To me, this was viewed as an opportunity for many of the problems in our schools to be eliminated or corrected. It was my personal challenge. September 1, 1990 instead of retirement I entered my 35th year in the Jersey City School System. I have not regretted my decision to remain and work in the district.

During my 35 years in the district, (18 of these years were in the central office) I have worked under 5 superintendents. I saw honest and sincere performance on the job, I also saw patronage and nepotism. Within this time I saw a lot of programs and projects come and go. The one thing that is different about this present situation is that the state is now in the district. I worked as T.and E. Coordinator. The state came in for periodic review. Now that the state has taken over everyday there is a review with the state always involved. I also served as Affirmative Action Officer during my tenure. Most of my action was only on paper which resulted in the creation of the district's first Affirmative Action Plans and nothing else. Since the state has taken over we now have two staff members working full time under an Equity Officer, who is an attorney.

With the state in the district the agenda of "Kids First" must be evaluated everyday. Yes this is a challenge and an opportunity to bring about some needed changes.

I am not here to affix blame on anyone for what has happened to our schools. I intend to use this opportunity to share my feelings about what is happening in Jersey City and what could be happening. I want to deal with reality.

Since October, 1989 all the business of the district has been conducted by the district appointed Superintendent Dr. Elena Scambio and her staff. The state is here and will remain here for at least five years. What does it mean to the people in Jersey City? There are some who are waiting for time to run out so that things can return to business as usual. There are some people who wait and watch every move so that they can criticize and oppose whatever is done. Many people are working hard

to bring about the changes needed because they see this as the time for it to happen. There are some people who want to help and don't know how. I want to address this group.

Quality education is every child's right and everyone's responsibility. Everyone should assist and insist until quality education is a reality for every child.

Legislators have the responsibility to allocate adequate funds and pass laws to support the concept of quality education.

In January, I was given an assignment by my boss, Dr. Judith Wilcox, State District Assistant Superintendent, to chair a committee that was to develop a summer school program for 1991. Dr. Scambio and her staff had decided that a portion of the QEA funds was to be used for this program. The committee was told to be creative and innovative as we worked to design a program that would provide the young people of Jersey City with the ultimate summer school experience. Principals, teachers, supervisors, program and department heads were asked for input. Their reports were used to design the summer school plan.

The program was developed for Pre-K--12 graders. The categories for instruction were: Remedial, Advancement, Make-up (H.S. core subjects) and Cultural/Recreation. All students were to have reading, writing and mathematics.

A few other features included:

- Two field trips per student
- Marching band program for 7th and 8th graders
- Science research projects
- Mathematics-parent involvement in making manipulatives
- Photography
- Computer / Word Processing
- Activities to promote proper use of leisure time

The committee worked diligently and with great enthusiasm. A comprehensive summer program was created. It was to run from June 27-August 8. The changes in the QEA funding made it necessary to postpone the implementation of our summer school program. Other plans were also scrapped.

Inadequate funds and omissions in the legislation have tied the hands of the very people who are here to follow through with the takeover.

I have for each of you a copy of Earl Morgan's column from the Thursday, January 31, 1991 issue of The Jersey Journal. In the article Earl gives many reasons why more time should be given to Dr. Scambio. I agree with him. Not only is time needed to implement the improvement plan that has been developed, time is also needed to stabilize the process with a transitional period. The state appointed staff does not need the pressures of time constraints and inadequate funding.

Educators have the responsibility to develop and implement instructional programs that will prepare young people for work and/or college. The administrative and supervisory staff must work effectively and efficiently in their assignments.

Some business leaders in our community have moved forward to assume responsibility. Our students are now engaged in training programs with local businesses. Other business leaders serve as mentors to young people in our schools. Several organizations have conducted job fairs, career days, seminars, field trips, workshops and other educational enrichment activities for our students.

Parents have the responsibility of sending their children to school prepared to benefit from the educational program. Children must be trained and taught the rules of acceptable and desirable behavior.

Children have the responsibility of coming to school with the right attitude toward learning.

The state is here and will be here for at least three more years. We all should come together with a cooperative spirit to ensure that every child does obtain a quality education. We have to live with whatever happens in our district and it is our district. Get involved, come out to serve as volunteers and members of committees. We can't afford to just wait until the time runs out. We must believe that quality education is every child's right and everyone's responsibility.

When Dr. Scamblo came to Jersey City she introduced her agenda "Kids First". This meant different things to different people. There was a need to clarify her agenda. As far as I am concerned, this was done in a memo to staff that is dated May 2, 1991. A portion of this memo is quoted below:

"Our schools need to be, and in a real sense should already be, significantly different from what we know they now are. Day care, early childhood programs, more after school programs, more parental involvement, a new definition of the meaning of a high school diploma and programs that capture the strengths of our students' diversity are the essence of our vision for the 29,000 students of our district.

"As we move towards the 1991-1992 school year, the following represents solid evidence of the district's commitment to its vision and to the national goals:

- "Our expanded pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs (National Goals 1,2)
- Strong emphasis to improve student achievement, particularly in mathematics (National Goal 2,3,4,5)
- Expanded high school advanced placement courses (National Goal 4)
- Our site-based management initiative (National Goals 1,2,3,4,5,6)
- Our alternative programs, such as Bridges (National Goal 2)

Our Business/Education Alliance and the Jersey City Education Foundation (National Goals 2,3,)
Increased community and parent participation in district-wide committees (National Goals 1,2,3,4,5,6)
Increased direct support services for high school students (National Goals 2,5,6)
Piloting a student breakfast program and expanding our school lunch program (National Goals 1,3)
Improving our special education program so that the rights of handicapped students and their parents are ensured and that only those youngsters who are truly handicapped are identified as such. Other students who are identified as needing alternative and educational strategies will be provided with alternate opportunities for success (National Goals 1,2,5)
Instituting parent training programs (National Goals (1,2,3,4,5,6)

"Our schools must bridge the gap between the classroom and the world of work and higher education. We must open the avenues to success that have been blocked for our students too often in the past. This is what is meant by: KIDS FIRST !"

I am not here to affix blame or to fight anyone. I ask that those who speak this evening will ask themselves these questions.

1. Does your agenda speak to increased taxes or quality education?
2. Does your agenda speak to dismissed or demoted staff over quality education?
3. Does your agenda speak to financial gains versus quality education?

Clarify your motivation within yourself. If quality education for all children is not part of your agenda then you have determined what your role is to be in the total process.

I ask each member of the committee to clarify your motivation. Is your agenda, with these hearings, to find out what is politically expedient or is it to determine what will bring quality education to all children?

TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

JUNE 11, 1991

SUBMITTED BY:

MR. JAMES J. RICHARDSON
MPS. FRANCES F. RICHARDSON

DATE:

JUNE 11, 1991

NEW JERSEY STATE OPERATED JERSEY CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Since the state of New Jersey took over the Jersey City School District in October, 1989, there has been a remarkable and visible sign of the clean-up of the schools. Schools have now received new windows and completed painting and renovations have been completed, and some are in the process of being done. There has been massive clean up projects done throughout the entire school district. The visible evidence of this clean up can be seen when you enter into the schools and drive around the school district.

PUT KIDS FIRST (Slogan of the N.J. State operated district) Kids First slogan means that for so long the students were at the bottom of the hierarchy of the local school districts goals, and now they are the main priority and their needs and concerns come first. In actuality the students should have always been first, yet this did not occur until the state took over the local school district. By putting kids first the overall goal of the state operated school district has put a positive awareness into the students and enhanced the overall educational system. Students are now being instructed in cleaner schools with more competent teachers and educational staff. Our students are our future leaders, and by keeping

them first in the overall objectives and goals of the school district; they will be more adequately prepared to meet the challenges as they continue their education.

NO MORE POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

Since the state took over the Jersey City School district, there has been a policy of fair and equal employment practices being adhered to.

Individuals have been and are still being hired because of their individual qualifications and not because of political associations. The hiring policies implemented and utilized by the state operated Jersey City School district are evaluative and reflect the high standards that are set by the N.J. State appointed Superintendent and her staff. The school district has no time for being mediocre or not fulfilling the commitment for excellence that they have espoused to for education. This commitment for excellence has been witnessed by the high caliber of individuals who now operate the Jersey City School district.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Today we seen a strong emphasis on Affirmative Action in employment and all areas connected to the Jersey City State Operated school district. There is a concerted effort to hire qualified minority

employees, who can adequately represent the school district. The N. J. State operated school district has removed inadequate employees and there is a strong emphasis made to improve all areas of the educational school system. The area of affirmative action has also been strongly implemented into the contract and bidding practices. The recruitment of positive role models which was not being addressed in the past has been accomplished. In hiring various minority staff, in a predominantly hispanic and black student population, the district has established a positive affect of role models for the students to look up to. Opportunities have been opened to highly qualified staff now that was stifled prior to the state takeover.

SUPPLIES AND BOOKS

Prior to the N.J. State school district takeover, there were rampant complaints of not enough books, materials and supplies to adequately perform an individual's duties. Today, this situation has been rectified, and the schools have supplies and there is a unified curriculum within the schools in the district. Having the proper supplies and materials has definitely put an impact on the schools, which is positive and result in goals and objectives being met.

ENDING

As a result of all of the aforementioned details on the areas of improvement made since the N.J. State took over the local school district, the major focus of the school district is to improve instruction, which will ultimately improve the overall test scores in the district.

One major factor of what is wrong with education in the state of New Jersey, is the negative school laws, such as the modified funding law, tenure, etc. Until the laws in this state are changed to allow for success, we will continue to face challenges that must be overcome.

I have remarked on some of the improvements that have occurred within the Jersey City School District within the past year and a half, we all know that there will always be opposition to change, yet the changes we see are to increase the benefits the students derive from the school system...let's remember to keep the "Kids First".