
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

LOCATION: George Washington Carver School
Newark, New Jersey

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

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman
Senator Gordon A. MacInnes
Senator Ronald L. Rice
Assemblyman Jeffrey W. Moran

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley
District 28

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



Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
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ses: 1-96 (Internet edition 1997)

SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Chairman): Give me your attention, please. Good evening, parents, students, community members, and Newark School officials.

The Joint Committee is pleased to host this meeting, the first of two, in order to get your input on the state of operation of the Newark schools. For the past 18 months, State intervention has brought about many changes. It now seems an appropriate time for the Joint Committee, which has statutory, legislative oversight in State-operated school districts, to hear from the people of Newark.

We will begin this meeting with a statement from Dr. Beverly Hall, followed by Dr. Fernando Linhares, Chair of the Advisory Board. We will then proceed with the sign-up list.

I would like to note that we will be adhering to the five-minute rule with regard to testimony. Since we have had so many requests to speak, I feel it is only fair that we try to accommodate as many people as possible. In addition, we may not get to finish this list before this evening ends. In that event, I would invite those on the list to be the first speakers at the March 5 meeting.

I ask that the audience be respectful of every speaker, whether you agree with them or not. Please speak into the microphones; one is for volume and the other is for recording this meeting by the Office of Legislative Services, our staff right here. (indicating) Some time after the second meeting in March, transcripts of both these meetings will be available to the public through the Joint Committee office.

We will call the names off, so we will have your name, but I would appreciate it if you would advise us when you first get up as to whether you are a school employee with students in the school, just a school employee, or whether you are a parent and not working with the school, but a parent with students in the school.

I would like to now introduce the members. Senator MacInnes from Morris County, a member of the Senate Education Committee; Assemblyman Moran; Assemblyman Stanley, on the Assembly Education Committee; and Senator Ron Rice, who you all know. This is Melanie Schulz, to my right, who is the Executive Director of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, which is a body that was set up in the law which set up the takeover of the various school districts.

We have had these meetings in Jersey City, and we have had them in Paterson. The idea is to try to find out from you suggestions of where you think we can improve the system in Newark. It is not a berating session. I do not want it, nor hope that it will turn out as some of the Advisory Board meetings do. This is an information gathering group. After we have had the meetings, we will see if there are different areas that we can work on to try to improve the situation.

As some of you know, or may not know, I am willing to come up to Newark any time to talk to groups or individuals or inspect the school or whatever it might be.

With that, I would like to have Dr. Hall talk.

Oh, excuse me, I should ask if any of the members of the Committee would like to say a word first.

Senator Rice, would you like to say anything?

SENATOR RICE: Not really, Senator. I'm at home. I just hope--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Louder.

SENATOR RICE: Can you hear me out there now? (affirmative response) Okay.

Let me just welcome everybody. Let me also say to our residents that--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Who are you?

SENATOR RICE: I am Senator Ron Rice, a resident of the City of Newark, also the State Senator, and a Councilperson.

I just wanted to indicate that the frustrations that all of us share and bear are very real, but I really think that it's important that the concerns we have in terms of the problems within the school district itself -- in the buildings, whether it's teachers, students, what have you -- we need to get them on record.

We have met in the past with Paterson on reviews like this and public hearings in Jersey City. It is our time now to be on the record. I am very committed to change legislation where I have to or to repeal if we can't move forward with something positive. So the issues that are affecting us need to be on this record.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Senator MacInnes?

SENATOR MacINNES: I have nothing to say.

SENATOR EWING: Do you want to?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yes. I just want to say good evening to everyone. I am Assemblyman Craig Stanley. I represent the 28th District, which is a big part of Newark and Irvington, South Orange, and Maplewood, as well. We have all been fighting a battle for equity in education funding, and also just the situation with the Newark schools, I think, it's important that we get as much information as possible. I hope we can get to a proactive stage where we can begin to implement some of your suggestions here tonight.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Dr. Hall.

BEVERLY L. HALL, Ed.D.: Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to welcome the Joint Committee on the Public Schools and members of the community to this meeting this afternoon.

It is my hope that the meeting will be as productive as the four community outreach meetings which we have held -- one in each ward of the city -- since last September. We heard during those meetings the genuine concerns of our parents and attempted to respond appropriately.

I thought it fitting to invite students from our host school, George Washington Carver School, to join me in welcoming all of you here today and to serve, also, as a reminder to all of us of what this is really all about.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you Precious Jones, a second-grader, and Jaliyl Lynn, a third-grader, from George Washington Carver School. Please join me in welcoming them. (applause)

P R E C I O U S J O N E S: On behalf of the students of Newark, I welcome the Joint Committee, members, and parents to help here at the George Washington Carver School.

My name is Precious Jones. I am a second-grader here.

We are working with our teachers and principal, Ms. Lockett, to make our school a model. I think it can be done, and I want to help. We also need your help.

Thank you. (applause)

J A L I Y L L Y N N: Good afternoon. My name is Jaliyl Lynn. I am a third-grader at George Washington Carver.

I would like to welcome the members of the Joint Committee and the public to our school.

This year, we have all-day kindergarten. I would like to see more new classrooms at our school. The children in Newark are learning a lot, and I want to learn more. Please help us.

Thank you. (applause)

DR. HALL: Thank you, Precious and Jaliyl, and thank you again for coming.

I will now ask Mr. Linhares, the Chair of the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board, to make some remarks.

F E R N A N D O E . L I N H A R E S: Thank you, Dr. Hall.

I extend my appreciation as a resident of Newark and Chair of the Advisory Board to the State Subcommittee on Education (*sic*) for holding these most important meetings and to Dr. Hall for allowing me to make a brief statement.

The Advisory Board has held over 100 hours of public meetings, and several comments have been made by Advisory Board members during these meetings regarding the funding formula. Advisory Board members are here today to listen and learn from community residents -- and some Advisory Board members will be speaking -- in their capacity as concerned Newark residents.

It is my hope that the Advisory Board collectively will make a public statement regarding the funding formula after the March 5, 1997 public meeting.

Thank you.

DR. HALL: Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Are you going to say anything, Dr. Hall?

DR. HALL: No, that's it. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

The first speaker will be Kathleen Witcher, to be followed by Mr. Del Grosso, to be followed by Patricia Bradford.

KATHLEEN WITCHER: To the esteemed panel, thank you for this opportunity. I am Kathleen Witcher.

I have two descriptions of myself. I am a graduate of South Side High School, and I have served as a teacher for a number of years in that school, now called Shabazz High School. I am also a relative of students who presently attend Eighteenth Avenue School, Miller Street, Camden Street, Camden Middle, Science High, and Shabazz High School.

I want to preface my speech by saying that it is ironic that walking here today I passed by the closed school, Newark School of Fine Arts,

successful for more than 100 years, when we know that downtown, off of Broad Street, we're going to open the Performing Arts Center. How much the students could benefit getting prepared to go there. (applause)

I have two parts: One is a narrative, the other is specific. First, the narrative. One basic principle that is learned in formal education is that a false premise results in false results, misnomers, and mishaps. It appears that the Department of Education based the takeover of the Newark Public School System on false premises.

In Trenton, on July 5, 1995, it was announced that one of the reasons for takeover was due to mismanagement of fiscal operations. A short time later in November, an independent audit reported no mismanagement of school funds. This then begins to show why there is little that the Department of Education can now stand on as it seeks to run a school district the size of Newark's.

There are old and crumbling buildings, and the newest of the school buildings is 25 years or more and in need of repairs, excluding those just opened. The coat of paint that cost the taxpayers \$8 million could have best been used to buy supplies, equipment, and even a few books.

Because of an unpaid contract, teachers now have to pay to have copies made to use in the classrooms. (applause) Student desks are in short supply. Last year, I had students who sat on the floor in my classroom. Gaping holes widen in the classrooms and the hallways; they have not been repaired. Broken windows and doors need to be replaced, and the staff must depend on less to supply the cafeterias and to keep the buildings clean.

Perhaps it is an interest-bearing measure, but this school year teachers received postdated checks in November. (applause) Late payments have been made to the--

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me just a minute. I want to remind the audience your clapping and everything is just interrupting the speaker. We're going to stick to the five minutes, so if you want to interrupt the speakers each time so they take longer, we'll have to cut her off--

MS. WITCHER: How much time do I have?

SENATOR EWING: --that's up to you people. I ask you to abide by the rules. (outbursts from audience)

MS. WITCHER: Okay. Let me rush.

Late payments have been made to the Teachers' Credit Union and to the annuity fund.

Why were leaders maligned by-- Why were teachers maligned by announcements in the newspaper that they were criminals? There have been no indictments, but teachers were suspended in what is called the insurance scam. Professional ethics should have kept their names out of the paper if, in fact, a democracy calls for innocent until proven guilty.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. WITCHER: There was a Newark Education Council that networked agencies and corporations for a number of years, helping to write and implement the Strategic Plan for schools. The efforts of this Council should not be lost. There is a growing need to maintain jobs, job training, arts, and culture for the students, their parents, and the general community. There is a need to expand social services as the population remains unskilled and

unemployed by larger percentages than in other towns and townships in the State.

A \$30 million cut in State aid is due in Newark. How can a colossal cut such as this one translate to equity in educational opportunities for the schoolchildren? What is the plan to offer educational and social services programs in the disadvantaged community as pronounced by *Abbott v. Burke*?

The opportunity for holding a public hearing is welcome; however, the law guaranteeing a hearing was stated for Level III districts to take place prior to the takeover of July 5.

In conclusion, the statements made about people coming to criticize the school administration in Newark being legitimate connotes that there are some who are illegitimate. We do not need this banter. There are many people, including parents and lifelong residents, who have children they care for. (timer rings) (applause)

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, could we find out what school this teacher is from?

Ms. Witcher, Kathleen, what--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Shabazz High.

SENATOR RICE: Oh, Shabazz.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Where is Dr. Hall?

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Del Grosso.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's all right. Dr. Hall doesn't have to be here, she knows the problems.

JOSEPH DEL GROSSO: Let me wish the Joint Committee a good afternoon. I am Joseph Del Grosso, President of the Newark Teachers Union. I have been a teacher in Newark for 25 years.

Recently, Dr. Hall had the audacity to take Governor Whitman to Ridge Street School. She took her there for show-and-tell, but she only told half the story. She didn't tell her that Ridge Street School is a school without a library. She didn't tell her that the children at Ridge Street School do not have home economics, industrial arts, a room for music or a room for art, nor did she tell her that the kindergarten children at Ridge Street are bused to Arlington Avenue School.

Dr. Hall's duplicity doesn't help Governor Whitman in her bid for reelection. On January 7, Governor Whitman told Newark of her new funding formula, and she said that the children would receive a world-class education. Obviously, she meant a Third World education. Where else are children so obviously deprived of the tools necessary for education?

I issue a challenge to the Joint Committee to visit just three schools with me. Look at the overcrowding that I've seen. Look at the children who are deprived of home economics, industrial arts, and music to make room for Hall's kindergarten initiative.

However, I must warn you to be prepared for Hall to say that she did not know that such conditions existed. I must warn you to be prepared to be called a liar. I must warn you that you'll probably be put in a room and escorted everywhere you go by a security guard until you see the error of your ways. This is what happened to Mr. Embrey, former principal of West Side

High School, now under house arrest, when he was brave enough to speak out for children.

If you accept my challenge, I promise that you will not see the Newark schools that Hall displays for the benefit of the press and to mislead Commissioner Klagholz and Governor Whitman. I will show you classes with as many as 37 children. I will show you a room with four book stacks that is called a library. I will show you a new school with a roof that leaks on our children.

The first step in making changes is to acknowledge that something is wrong and Hall is in a state of denial and refuses to listen to parents. As a matter of fact, Hall claims that parents who speak against her are not legitimate parents. That term raises some interesting questions that I won't elaborate on here, but I would like to know what Hall considers legitimate.

There are some issues that we raised with Hall early in her tenure that she refused to acknowledge and now have been settled by other authorities, namely, the school district's discrimination against handicapped children. In September of 1995, I personally delivered a copy of our concerns related to law 504 to Dr. Hall, Dr. Contini, and even to Senator Ewing. After almost a year of fruitless meetings and communication, we were forced to file a complaint with the Department of Education, Division of Civil Rights.

Every complaint that we alleged was sustained on January 23. Beverly Hall had to enter into an agreement with the Division of Civil Rights to end discrimination against handicapped students in the Newark Public Schools. This could have been done with all the stakeholders present working

together; however, Hall refuses to accept any answers other than her own, so we have to file complaints to get action.

Another problem that was a major concern this year is the District's total inability to produce a correct payroll. I have a stack of incomprehensible memos from Mr. Leonard Hildebrand (phonetic spelling) trying to explain why people are not getting paid properly. We were very patient and attempted to give them sufficient time to correct the problem. We're no longer sure that they're capable of correcting the problem.

Meanwhile, our members have suffered financially and emotionally because of not receiving the correct amount of money. They were forced to pay for the District's mistake by having extra money deducted from their checks immediately prior to the holiday. They have lost interest income from credit unions and their annuities. They were denied the ability to borrow money from the credit union and from the pension. From payday to payday, my members don't know how much money they will receive or even if they will receive a check.

The State takeover in Newark resulted in denying the right to vote as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. Allegedly, Hall has since attempted to deny parents their First Amendment rights by sending investigators to the homes of parents who speak out at the Advisory Board meetings. This cannot be allowed to continue, and the people of Newark will not allow it.

To demonstrate how deceitful Dr. Hall and her New York gang are, I have to go to court to file an action against the State-operated district under the Freedom of Information Act and the Right To Know Act.

Senators and Assemblymen, they don't want you and the taxpayers to know how much money is being spent in Newark, but our union will get this information so that everyone will know the truth.

Governor Whitman should also reconsider her support of Hall's actions. As a shrewd politician, she should realize that supporting Hall will cause her to lose votes, despite her many visits for photo opportunities here in Newark. Is she really willing to stake her political future on an unknown woman from New York?

There have been many fads tried in education, more than any other profession. Those of you who are educators remember some of those fads. Some of them were foolish, others were downright destructive. The newest fad to improve education is the takeover fad. If you are truly here tonight to evaluate its success in Newark, I can tell you, it doesn't work. (timer rings)

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Patricia Bradford, to be followed by James Souder.

PATRICIA J. BRADFORD: Good evening members of the Joint Committee. Thank you, again, for holding another meeting here. Ten years ago, we heard about this mess, but now we really live it.

I will begin my comments on the area of which the administration places emphasis as the conduit for school reform: School Core Teams and parental involvement. For the first time in history, school employees and parents have to be paid to volunteer. We used to have School Improvement

Team meetings and they were free; everybody worked towards a plan to make the schools improve.

At the surprise of the Community Development Specialist, brought the Chapter 1/Title 1 parents together to advise them that: one, they can no longer have but two meetings a year; two, no area meetings; three, no parents were involved in the election process. They told them that day, "You have to elect among yourselves," parents. That sounds like a gestapo to me, instead of parents having free ability to be in the planning.

When rallying support of the community based organizations, these people spent enormous sums through public relations. I heard them say, "Where are we going to get the money from," and others saying, "I don't care where you get it from." So that is how all of those ads -- \$500 -- came out in the newspapers. Yet, we stopped talking about children and their education.

In fact, public relations' focus was on writing speeches for Dr. Hall to present at New York facilities, fraternities, community groups. She hires her chauffeur to pick her up on Saturday and Sunday to take her. I think that's not exactly right. She should pay for some of these things that she does to benefit people in New York out of her own pocket; we pay her \$150,000 a year. (applause)

We had to work without equipment for years in public information. But yet the moment they had some money, they turned around and started spending it on outside consultants -- Electra York -- to develop those ads at enormous sums of money. We paid \$20,000 a year to go out here and be community development; then you brought Doggett in and gave her \$95,000 to be community development; however, letters to parents for the

Chapter 1 didn't go out, and they complained they only had 30 parents attending their meetings. They also complain, "Now we have, instead of three, we have five Parent Coordinators." But they work under special development.

Parents can no longer use the Parent Resource Centers. They were told that the staff will be using them from now on. They have options to have one meeting in there a month. So, now, I mean, we fought for Parent Resource Centers so that parents and children, collectively, can work to achieve levels of functioning mandated by the State, not just about the child, but adult education for parents. See, I'm a parent who got the education from coming out and being a part of parent involvement.

I know I seem to be a threat to many of you; however, as long as you decide not to educate children, I will be in your face. (applause) We're saying, too, that money had been spent and the schools are in total disaster. Children don't have papers, pencils, and books. In fact, the administration hired a book company and then told all the teachers, "You won't even get books until January of next year," half of school is over.

They don't talk about how many children failed that HSPT in our comprehensive high schools -- yes, they did -- but, anyway, we want to bring that to your attention. Sixty-nine out of one hundred and eighty-nine students passed the HSPT at Shabazz. Parents are complaining. They don't have anything better than they had from the outset, and no more measurable increment has been made than in the other districts that they're talking about targeting to takeover.

The NAACP is concerned because you had five Human Resource Directors in a one-year span. What kind of mess is that? Your budget person

left and the other Auditor General Assistant was placed into isolation because he didn't agree with Hall's regime about what they were doing with resources. (applause)

How can they hire anybody and they don't even know what to do? Everybody coming in practicing and then one of those people had the nerve to be brought back as a consultant. He wasn't making enough money in his director position. Then they hired another person to take his job, too. So we are paying consultants and more consultants, public relations-- You've got Joe Plesee. (phonetic spelling) He was now moved and another person is in public relations. They have no continuity in staffing. There is one thing they complain about, us, but we did have some continuity. You knew who to hold accountable.

We are tired of the -- (timer rings; PA system shut off) -- African-Americans not receiving their vote. Tonight we ask you that you write a law and repeal it (*sic*) to give us back our right to vote. This is Black History Month and in the middle of Ramadan, and I have to stand here and have them insult--

SENATOR EWING: James Souder, please.

MS. BRADFORD: (speaking from audience) Insult. (applause) It's an insult. You can put me out of here, because I'm going to-- (indiscernible) --for nothing.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Souder? (no response) Well, then Alice Jones. Is Alice Jones here? Alice Jones? (no response) Patricia Lovelace. Alyce West.

MS. BRADFORD: (distributing material; speaking off microphone) I'm definitely giving comments. I'm unemployed, but I paid for a record of this-- (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Alyce West.

SENATOR RICE: I think this is Ms. Lovelace.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, okay. Fine. Patricia Lovelace.

MS. BRADFORD: (speaking from audience) And you're a grandmother and an aunt, that stops you from the rights in this district, right? We don't even have a right to vote, 1997--

SENATOR EWING: Will you let the speaker talk, please?

MS. BRADFORD: You need to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Ewing.

SENATOR EWING: Go ahead, Ms. Lovelace. Thank you very much.

MS. BRADFORD: You keep on conducting this for bogus-- (indiscernible)

SENATOR EWING: You can talk over her.

MS. BRADFORD: We're asking you to change it. Give us our right to vote back. (applause) We want our right to vote. It's 1997, and you've taken away black people's right to vote. You should be ashamed of yourself. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Patricia Lovelace, your time is going. You want to start, please.

PATRICIA LOVELACE: Excuse me, I do not speak over people who are speaking, because that is rude. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Well, they're not on the platform.

MS. LOVELACE: Well, however, I gave you a copy of what I have.

I am Patricia Lovelace, PTA President at Lincoln School. Please excuse me, I am a little nervous about speaking.

“The School Budget Cutback: Equity, Excellence, and Relevance -- Where Do Newark Go From Here?” After the late 60s, the educational needs of Newark children and children of color became less of a priority. School budget cutbacks in Newark precluded major reforms for Dr. Hall. It would take major economic and social changes to bring educational equity to our district.

It may be that Newark students who leave schools with poor behaviors and academic skills are not the only students at risk. The productive suburban students who understand 21st century technology but fail to grasp the significance of social and ethnic issues may also place themselves, their communities, and the nation at risk.

It is said that Newark students have a high percentage of low-skill performing students than students in other industrialized nations. Newark parents are concerned about the high percentage of the future workforce-- Policy makers have increasingly vocalized the need to improve the education of disadvantaged Newark students; however, Newark parents warn that the proposed school budget cuts reforms, aimed at achieving educational excellence, do not provide a coherent and consistent plan for effectively educating Newark students. Raising standards without providing the same

equity of per-pupil spending that the suburban students are getting to Newark students will increase academic failure and dropout rates.

The personal, economic, and social costs of academic underachievement are the high costs of Newark's failure. Newark students who leave school with inadequate skills will be at a disadvantage in the job market. Over the next 10 years, the country is likely to generate large numbers of new low-skill jobs, but the wages for low-skill labor are declining. Furthermore, high school graduates are more likely to be employed than high school dropouts, and those with higher levels of education are more likely than those with less education to receive promotions.

Parents in Newark know that parity in education can result in educational and positive social outcome. For example, the young people from upper-white-collar homes are more likely to achieve the career goals they aspire to in high school. Therefore, school budget cut policies, practices, and curricula does not prepare Newark students to live in a culturally diverse society.

We will not and can not afford a \$54 million budget cutback or extended layoffs in Dr. Hall's school budget. That will not give Dr. Hall support from parents or encouragement, advice, or be a positive image to bring our students up to educational achievement.

Thank you very much. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Alyce West, is she here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Yes, she's here.

A L Y C E W E S T: (speaking from audience) I'm right here.

SENATOR EWING: Please.

MS. WEST: Well, see, my concern is basically in the school itself and our children. I understand that you helped with the new education, to bring this new reading series. The new reading series sucks. Plain and simple, it sucks. Because you have it here, where it's: Why did our test scores from last year, with 75 percent as a C -- a passing C -- lower to 65 percent, which barely, for this year, measures out to the State saying that our kids correlation between expectation and public performance has dropped -- has dropped tremendously.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Wait till this year.

MS. WEST: This new reading series and math series-- I'm sorry. You waited too late to bring our kids up to suburban ways. You waited too late. Now it's here, you're trying to cram our children into this education, and you're expanding their minds so vast that they don't have time to grasp hold of what they're reading, at all.

But you come here, you bring this big display for all of us to come here and talk. You sit there and look through me. You don't look at me. You don't talk to me. You look through me as though I don't exist. (applause) My thing is, there are many objectives for our children to master, but yet they cannot master them.

You wanted us -- for the Core Team to gain a certain percentage for these kids with this reading series? How can you when it's failing them all along in front of their eyeballs? You wanted to give them the Early Warning Test to see where they stand. If they can't grasp hold of what they're reading,

their Early Warning is going to drop to a worse percentage than they have now.

You come around, you say you want to visit the schools and see what it's really like. I'm quite sure when you stepped off out of your car, you took a good look around and saw what you were really at. You could not have said you did not see it, but no, only certain people are going to take you to the elite schools where everything is okay and everything is hunky-dory and everything is reading just fine, and that's what you're going to base your opinion on.

But when you go down to north Newark and you come up there in Vailsburg section, actually really visit, and seeing what you really think is going on, not by what Ms. Hall tells you, not by what we tell you-- Come and actually sit for two hours. I don't give you twenty-four, because you may not survive. I give you two hours and sit-- (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Come visit us.

MS. WEST: Okay, Mr. Rice, you are here today. Mr. Rice, you're here today. I have a problem, and I've been calling your office about my problem for two weeks.

SENATOR RICE: You're from Lincoln?

MS. WEST: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: You're Lincoln, right?

MS. WEST: No, Alexander.

SENATOR RICE: I mean Alexander.

MS. WEST: Right. I've been calling you for--

SENATOR RICE: You spoke to Rufus yesterday.

MS. WEST: Yes, for two weeks.

SENATOR RICE: I told Rufus to tell you that I would be at your school, all right? But go ahead. Let me know what the problems are, because--

MS. WEST: Okay. The problem is Boylan Street recreation has a rec center that is supposed to cater to the five schools in the district. I'm quite sure-- I doubt if anybody else has a rec center that caters to their schools. I doubt if they know the free trips are for the schools.

Okay. There are trips donated from the Newark School System to these rec centers for your children at your five district schools to go to: Alexander, Speedway and Boylan and Vailsburg and Lincoln.

They had a trip to the Poconos -- not the Poconos, to see Pocahontas. Rufus told me at Christmastime to get up parents and children to go, and I did so. We got rejected on that day. (outburst from audience) Why? Because you have a rec center that caters to -- whether you know it or not -- the drug dealers and the street dwellers.

SENATOR RICE: Let me just help you out right quickly. I'm meeting with you. The rec center itself is-- The problem you have is the Newark problem that we're dealing with. If you know the President of-- (indiscernible) We've been trying to get in there and take that center over ourselves.

The communication that I gave Rufus-- I told Rufus yesterday to tell you I would meet with you, because they sent me a list-- My understanding is that they were only taking people who "participated" in the rec center. I said, "That's not right."

MS. WEST: But you don't know. That's the whole thing, you don't know to participate.

SENATOR RICE: I won't debate it, because it would take time. But my point is, is that the reason I said I wanted to meet with you, from what I was told from Rufus -- what you told him -- and what the people at the center told him that angered us -- I don't control the Mayor -- was that they allege they were only taking people who actually participated at the rec center. We raised the same question you did: Why would you not take people from the community and from the schools when there is a list out there? But that is something that we have to deal with. This Committee can't deal with it, because the rec center is our problem on the city's side. That why I told Rufus--

MS. WEST: But isn't he here to see what goes on in Newark?

SENATOR RICE: Yes, but the point is he is here to see what goes on in the education system.

MS. WEST: He don't.

SENATOR RICE: No, no, no. But my point-- Ms. West, believe me, if Rufus-- I'll terminate Rufus if you didn't get the message. You called yesterday when I was in a meeting. I said, "Rufus, tell Ms. West I received her message. I'm going to personally call her and meet with her, because I understand what is going on. You can keep me up to date because she's been talking to you." If you want to wait until after the meeting, I'll talk to you. We'll set a date.

But this Committee-- Stay with the school thing, because we have some problems at Alexander School, too.

MS. WEST: Oh, yes.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. So that is what they're here to hear. I'll deal with the rec differently.

MS. WEST: Well, thank you, Mr. Rice, at least you responded to me. Instead, Mr. Ewing is standing here talking to the lady next to him and has not heard a word.

This is what I mean by how you look at me and through me. But it's okay, it's okay. The things you sow now, you're going to have to sow later, plain and simple. (applause)

SENATOR MacINNES: Jack, may I just say something?

SENATOR EWING: Yes.

SENATOR MacINNES: Ms. West, I had the impression from what you said that you thought that this Committee has something to do with the adoption, for example, of the reading series or the math series?

MS. WEST: (speaking from audience) He has-- You have-- The whole Committee has the adoption of the whole education system, period.

SENATOR MacINNES: We have--

MS. WEST: Whether it's reading, whether it's books, whether it's the building, it's the whole kit and caboodle, plain and simple.

SENATOR MacINNES: Okay.

MS. WEST: I'm not going to take out one thing without revising the other.

SENATOR MacINNES: Okay, I--

MS. WEST: It's the whole thing.

SENATOR MacINNES: All right. The day--

MS. WEST: And you waited till now, after everything I called up -- the West Side with the food situation-- You waited until everybody came down on Ms. Hall and everybody else to decide to hold this forum now. You knew about it just as well as she knew about it.

SENATOR MacINNES: No. I just wanted to correct something, because--

MS. WEST: What you want is to see our faces and ask to know who we are and-- (indiscernible)

SENATOR EWING: Ms. West, would you step up to the microphone, because it's not being recorded, and we would like to have it.

MS. WEST: You're going to shut me off there regardless, so why should I-- (indiscernible) (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Sabriyyah Muslima-Boyd? Cheryl Wood? (no response) Dadisi Sanyika?

DADISI SANYIKA: (speaking from audience) Coming.

SENATOR EWING: To be followed by Pamela Mathews, to be followed by Mary McDaniel.

MR. SANYIKA: Good afternoon. My name is Dadisi -- D-A-D-I-S-I -- Sanyika. I live and work in Newark. I am a member of the citywide Steering Committee for School-based Planning.

The issue of State takeover of the public schools is not one of pro or con, but rather it is one of problems and solutions. The problem with the takeover in Newark was that it was-- When they first came in it was a media event, and it decimated the reputation of the schools and the people who work for them.

Secondly, expectations were raised and no one tempered them with reality. The takeover teams were granted unprecedented powers, and the local community was led to believe that the State could make change swiftly. The law makes no guarantees. Time lines for goals were unrealistic, i.e., principal evaluations and the setting up of the school-based planning, putting the district at a distinct disadvantage.

The scope of change is immense as it would be for any district of comparable size. So when you have the added fact of takeover, it made it even more difficult. Failure to educate the community about the CCI report and the implications of its contents for academic achievement-- We didn't know where we were at, but we kept on getting information about where we were going to be.

Massive layoffs of community residents and the hiring of expensive experts from South Jersey and New York put local residents, who are black, Latino, and poor, to carry the brunt of these cuts and these changes. The abolishment of the local School Board and its replacement with an Advisory Board with no power-- Although they make recommendations, not one of the recommendations that I know of have been followed through yet.

We want to talk about solutions. Repeal or amend the present law, because as it exists, it's draconian and arbitrary. Takeover law without due process causes whole boards of education to be eliminated when some individual consideration needs to be given to the members who sat on the previous board.

A takeover should only take three years. Intensive technical assistance should be able to return a district to local control at that time.

Incremental changes in public policy will result in no more than incremental changes in performance. A significant overhaul of how the priorities are set, how decisions are made, preparation and support of school staff, the inclusion of parents -- particularly at the initial stages of plans -- distribution and use of resources to connect schools with communities -- because schools are parts of communities -- design accountability structures that require success, and established inequalities will persist unless resources are made part of the State takeover law.

What is wrong with education in Newark is the same thing that is wrong throughout the State, the same thing that is wrong in Detroit, D.C., Philadelphia, and Oakland, California. The persistence of the problem demands a new level of commitment and a political will to correct the wrongs, along with the intensive technical assistance that I talked about.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Pamela Mathews, to be followed by Mary McDaniels.

LESLIE JACKSON: I'm not Pamela Mathews. I'm on the PTA with her. She is our President, but she didn't get here yet.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me just a minute. What is your name?

MS. JACKSON: Leslie Jackson. Leslie Jackson.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, you're not on the list, are you?

MS. JACKSON: No. She didn't get here, so I am going to say something for her.

SENATOR EWING: In place of her?

MS. JACKSON: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Leslie Jackson.

MS. JACKSON: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. JACKSON: Okay. First of all, I go to the School Leadership meetings. They go well. They're okay and everything. I really don't have a lot of complaints except for the lunches are late sometimes. They are horrible. Some of our children have roaches coming out of their lunch, yes. Our water fountain is horrible. We have roaches coming out of our water fountain.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: What school?

MS. JACKSON: Maple Avenue Annex.

The inspectors came out, I think maybe about -- I'll say, maybe four weeks ago -- four weeks or three weeks. They came and looked around. They said they were going to start working. We haven't seen anybody yet.

SENATOR EWING: What school?

SENATOR MacINNES: Mason.

MS. JACKSON: Excuse me. Excuse me. I'm talking and you're trying to still hold a conversation.

It's getting out of hand, because, first of all, they took some of our staff away. We have a full kitchen, and we're getting our lunch bused in. It shouldn't make any kind of sense. We need a head cook there. One week the children had cold lunches every day. They didn't get a Thanksgiving dinner. They used to get Thanksgiving dinner. Some of these children it's the only meal that they get.

Our floor-- We have a couple of rooms where our floor is coming up. They came out, still nothing is done. I need to know when-- I need to know when somebody is going to come out and do something.

Mr. Copeland (phonetic spelling) set up a kindergarten room for -- another room for us, which I'm glad about, but the furniture is taking too long. We're in February. June will be here-- These children don't have any cots to sleep on. They recently received their books, and the teachers sometimes have to share, like make copies, because if they don't have another book, they have to go down to the copy room and make copies.

We also need more aides, as far as, like, for the staffing with the aides, because in the morning time we don't have anyone for breakfast. So it's like we only have maybe two people down there. I'm there every day to help them. I volunteer. I don't mind, but we do need help.

Back to the water fountains-- We need a water fountain, because the children are bringing bottle water in. We need books. We need a music room there above-- We need a music room, because the music room is up above another class and it's, like, disturbing her. I mean, it's a lot that we need--

We need windows. Now, big Maple got the windows. We haven't received our windows yet, and they've been on hold for a while. So we need windows.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: What school are you with? Mason?

MS. JACKSON: No, Maple Avenue Annex.

SENATOR EWING: Maple. That's what I was asking him when you said I was talking. I was asking what school, because we're trying to make notes.

Do you have children in the school, too?

MS. JACKSON: Yes, I do.

SENATOR EWING: Good. Thank you. I think it's great that you volunteer.

Mary McDaniel? Karen Connover? Helen Washington? (no response)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: You've got a man up here. He's coming down.

SENATOR MacINNES: He's coming down.

SENATOR EWING: Who is that?

SENATOR MacINNES: I don't know.

SENATOR EWING: Is that Karen Connover?

B A R R Y H I L L: She couldn't be here today.

SENATOR EWING: It didn't look like Karen.

MR. HILL: Oh, yes.

SENATOR EWING: What is your name, please, sir?

MR. HILL: My name is Barry Hill. I don't have any complaints, but I do have something good on her behalf.

Good evening to Dr. Hall and the other special guests.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Dr. Hall isn't here.

MR. HILL: She's not even here, but, you know--

My name is Barry Hill, and I'm a parent from Chancellor Avenue School. I have three children who attend school at Chancellor. I am a new parent at the school this year and my children just started there, so I am very pleased with what I've seen thus far at the school.

I have become involved with the Cub Scouts, and I am the Cub Scout Master. We meet every Tuesday at 4:30. We have about 20 boys who are involved in it each week. Some of the activities have been very positive.

Some of the other positive things going on at the school that I have seen are good parent involvement; conscientious teachers who are involved with the kids -- in particular, Mr. Williams, who is my daughter's teacher. Last year, she attended Maple Annex. I was told at Maple Annex that my daughter had a learning problem and that she couldn't learn, and they kept her back.

This year, Mr. Williams, he worked with her and she did just about the same thing, and this year, she's on the honor roll and she is doing very, very well. So there was not a learning problem with her. It had to have been the teacher who had the learning problem. The staff has been very helpful and involved, also. They have a very good principal in Ms. Brown.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Helen Washington? Cynthia Frazier? (no response) Donald Mann?

DONALD MANN: Good evening. My name is Don Mann, and I'm Chairman of the Prudential Foundation.

Quality public education in Newark has been and continues to be a very high priority for me and for the Prudential. Prudential has called Newark home since we were founded here in 1875. As an employer and corporate resident, Prudential knows firsthand the value of a strong education system that serves all of Newark's children.

In the 32 years that I've been working with Prudential, I witnessed the decline of the Newark Public Schools with great trepidation. Clearly, this city cannot survive without a solid, first-class school district.

In the last years before the State takeover of the Newark Public Schools, Prudential felt frustration with the district's management. While we continued to support community programs serving Newark's children and families, Prudential curtailed direct partnerships with the district. When the new management team was appointed in July 1995, we experienced renewed hope that the Newark Public Schools could turn the corner and transform into a system where all children could achieve at high levels.

Early in her tenure as State District Superintendent, Beverly Hall responsibly reached out to the corporate and funding communities to rally additional resources to help the schools better serve Newark's children. Dr. Hall's integrity, vision, and commitment, coupled with an ambitious yet measurable platform of reform, proved to us that this was a critical opportunity to partner with the Newark schools. I am proud to say that many of Newark's businesses and foundations stepped up to the plate to provide additional resources to support the district's improvement plan.

Last year, the Prudential Foundation issued a \$1 million challenge grant to create the Newark Fund for Excellence in Public Education, which

provided seed money for innovative programs that promote high student achievement and community involvement. In addition to Prudential's funds, more than \$700,000 has been committed to this Fund for Excellence from the Victoria and Grable Foundations. Interestingly, the Grable Foundation is based in Pittsburgh, and this is the first time they are funding a program in Newark, largely based on their confidence in Dr. Hall.

In 1996, Prudential also granted \$500,000 for the model, full-day kindergarten training classes and to help restructure the central ward elementary schools. Prudential has formed a special partnership with the Quitman Street School by providing special arts and reading programs, as well as sponsoring teens and Prudential volunteers who mentor and tutor Quitman's children.

Prudential's renewed partnership with the Newark Public Schools recognizes our belief that there is a limited window of opportunity to affect real change. However, the added resources from the business and foundation communities can never make up for the anticipated State funding cuts. Reforming the Newark Public Schools is a tall order under the very best of circumstances. Improving a system when significant financial cuts are made is impossible. Since many stakeholders have come to the table working toward better schools for our kids, let's not cripple Newark's chances for success.

While we understand the State's need for a uniform way to improve a thorough and efficient education for all of Newark's students, clearly, Newark has extenuating circumstances that cannot be overlooked. A \$30 million to \$50 million cut at one time will be very detrimental. This view is strongly held by the Advocates for Newark's Children, a committee of more

than 30 officers from the community-based organizations, higher education institutions, religious leaders, and business and foundation executives who have joined to leverage support to improve Newark's education system.

As Chairman of the Advocates for Newark's Children, I invite the Joint Committee to meet with the Advocates, listen to what the long-term community partners are doing, and strategize on how all stakeholders can work together to better serve Newark's young people. I will reach out to the Joint Committee to follow up on scheduling such a meeting. I hope we can have a dialogue. For us, the fate of the Newark Public Schools is not just a Newark issue, it has tremendous State implications.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Helen Washington, did she show up yet? (no response) Cynthia Frazier?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Helen Washington.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, Helen Washington. To be followed by Cynthia Frazier, Stephanie Williams, and Timothy Sanders, in that order.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, while the speaker is coming up I just want to acknowledge for the Committee the presence of the Council President from the City of Newark, who just finished a Council Meeting. Don Bradley is here.

HELEN WASHINGTON: My name is Helen Washington.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Louder.

MS. WASHINGTON: My name is Helen Washington. I am a grandparent. I am also a parent of students who attend the public school system. I was asked to speak concerning one thing, but since I've been here, the whole thing has changed. Okay?

As far as Belmont-Runyon: Two or maybe four years ago, we had been promised a new school. Belmont-Runyon has been in existence for quite some time. The State has appropriated money for a new school to be built. They even sent an engineer to come in because 78 goes right through where our school is, so it is very dangerous for our children. When 78-- There was a fire some years ago, and so the traffic had to be rerouted. Those children were in danger of their lives. Apparently, the State realized this, so they agreed to build a brand-new school. As of yet, dirt hasn't even been dug.

Our school is small. Yes, our population has gone down, but still, we are in need of room to do different things. Also, our staff has been cut from custodial staff down to cafeteria and various other things.

I have attended different-- Before the State even came in, I attended different meetings. I feel, as a parent, that enough time was not given to other parents. Just like you have positive, you have negative. As a parent, and as many parents are here, we could have stopped the State takeover. A lot of times when meetings were called by the State, parents did not show up. This auditorium is filled. There should have been more people here, but when they would call meetings a lot of people didn't show up. That looks bad on our side. No, we don't like what's going on now, but we could have prevented it. (applause) So just like it's positive, it's negative.

So if we have a chance now to turn it around, do so. I mean, tomorrow is not promised to us. Our children are our future. So it's up to us to do something about it. We have all nationalities that attend Newark schools, so it's not a black problem; it's not a white problem; it's not a Hispanic problem; it's all of our problems. So we have to work together to have some change.

Have a good evening. (applause)

SENATOR RICE: Ms. Washington.

Through the Chair, I'd like quickly-- On the school situation--

March the 4th, I believe it is, the City Council-- We have asked the Superintendent and her staff to come in and bring in every capital project, and we have asked the State to come in to the Commissioner's office. We arranged for that meeting for March 4, because there were things before the takeover that we wanted to do that were never approved by the Board even though the money was there. Since the State has been in, most of that stuff has not been looked at.

Now, the other day I was told that this new Capital Committee, which the City Council today just approved the Business Administrator from the City of Newark and the Finance Director from the City of Newark to be on -- under the law that is what they do-- They're supposed to be looking and putting together a whole capital piece, which tells me that on March 4 they're not going to have it ready. But we're going to still meet, because Council President Bradley has raised the question not only about Belmont-Runyon, also about the old Ripley Field across from Shabazz, also about the piece downtown. I've been raising questions about some things at Alexander, West

Side, and Dr. Martin Luther King. So we're going to see what those dollars look like, and the idea of that meeting is to remind the State that whatever the capital budget decisions are, there are some things that take priority as relate to Newark residents' interests and the City of Newark's interest.

So we do understand that issue, and there will be a meeting that we have called on March 4 in the City of Newark, etc. So, hopefully, the Councilman can give you more information after that.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Cynthia Frazier, is she here? Stephanie Williams, is she here? Timothy Sanders, is he here? Sandra Foster? (no response) James Mack?

Mr. Mack?

JAMES MACK: (speaking from audience) Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MR. MACK: Good evening, everyone. I would like to thank you guys for this opportunity and allowing me this time to speak.

I was asked to speak today. But like all the other meetings that I'm always asked to speak at, I always have the opportunity and the privilege of running into the same individuals who are able to inform me, as a young parent and also as a young volunteer and someone who is trying to get into the school system-- Mr. Dykes (phonetic spelling), Mr. Del Grosso -- a lot of these good individuals who eat, drink, and sleep the school policy-- I think-- I give no glory or honor to an individual. I thank God for allowing me to be in places where I need to be.

I have nothing negative to say about my school. Are there problems? Yes. Are there good times? Yes. Are there bad times? Yes. Each

individual school has their own situation, their own problems. I'm fortunate enough to have a good school this year.

SENATOR EWING: What's--

MR. MACK: Last year-- Sussex Avenue School -- Sussex Avenue Elementary--

Last year, we weren't on the map. Fortunately, this year, we're on the map. We just-- The things that we're involved with-- We're getting more parent involvement, and that is the focus of any educational system. Parent involvement should always be the key.

Like one of the young ladies who was speaking just a minute ago -- she mentioned parents. You know, it's no fault of the individuals who are sitting in front of us, it's the parents' fault. If we're not getting the information that is given to us, like through men like Mr. Dykes or Mr. Del Grosso, and we're not coming out to meetings like this to be informed, we'll never know. I didn't know of this meeting until Monday.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: 'Cause they didn't tell us. No media coverage.

MR. MACK: If I wasn't called and notified-- I didn't even sign up to speak at this meeting. I was asked to speak. Someone signed me up. Now, I didn't know of this meeting until Monday. When I finally got the meeting, it was through a fax. I pinned it on the board and a lot of the parents who came in said, "I didn't know of this meeting either."

Even if it did come through *The Star-Ledger*, I'm one-- I don't read the newspaper because of how active I am in my school, because of what I'm doing in my personal life. I have children. I don't have enough time to read

the newspaper, so I depend on certain individuals who will give me the information.

I'm just fortunate enough to be here right now. I'm supposed to be in school, but because I was asked to be here, I'm here. Things that I've heard today-- I support some of the things that the people were saying today, things that I didn't know. I support that. I support stuff like Ms. Jackson. Hopefully, she'll have a chance to talk, too. I support things that Mr. Del Grosso and Mr. Dykes speak on. (noise from audience)

Okay, hopefully, everyone will have a chance to talk, but right now I have a chance to talk. I have nothing negative to say, but I also believe that if it's not broken, don't try to fix it.

The school system-- I don't know how the school system was before I got here. I was in the military for seven years. When I came out of the military, I came to Newark to try to make a difference. I volunteer my time.

The last meeting I came to I mentioned to Dr. Hall, "How about a stipend for parents who volunteer?" There are volunteers in our school system who are just as qualified as the secretary who is there now, who are just as qualified as a teacher's aide, who are just as qualified as a community aide, who are not being seen, who are not being heard from. There are people out there now, like myself -- and there are probably a few other people who are just as qualified as the next individual-- I went to apply for a position with the Newark Public Schools, and because I didn't have the paperwork or a relative in the system, I couldn't get in. So now people who are active in the school system are not being heard from. (noise from audience)

There are a lot of people being rude, but, again, I have nothing negative to say.

I thank you guys for this time. (timer rings) (cheers and applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Mr. Mack. Thank you for the volunteering you do.

Clara Suriel, to be followed by Providencia Ortega, to be followed by Henrietta Harris. (noise from audience)

Please, as a courtesy, I wish you would keep the conversation down while the individuals are talking.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: How about you listening?

SENATOR EWING: What?

CLARA SURIEL: Good evening. My name is Clara Suriel. I am the Parent Liaison for the volunteer program Parent Academy at E. Alma Flagg. I also have two small children attending there in first grade and kindergarten.

I would like to start by saying that I was not around-- My children were not in school with the old administration. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of the new administration now. I can't speak about what was going on wrong or right at that time and argue against it with the new administration here, but I would like to say that they have welcomed me into their offices. I know a lot of people at the Board of Education by name. I can always freely call individuals there if I have questions. I'm allowed to disagree with some of their views, just like everyone here is allowed to have different views on what is going on.

But what I would like for you to help me understand is-- I think the most important issue here is our children. We look at TV, we look at the media, and we see a lot of negative news about our children dropping out; our children are not learning; our children are not fitting up to the bill of what the requirements are. But I cannot understand, if that is our main concern, how does a budget cut come into view with this? If this is our most important asset in our communities -- our schools and our children -- I don't understand where you would come in and even consider a budget cut. I cannot understand that.

I am fortunate enough to say that I have not many complaints about our schools or my school in particular. I can only speak about my experiences. We have a great school, a lot of good programs, but we are shorthanded. We need school advisors in there. We need social workers in there. We have classes with teachers who have about 30 kids or so, who need aides in there and don't have them in there all day because of the cuts, and they need to send the few ones that we have and share them with two or three other classes.

I remember when I was growing up and I was in grade school, I remember that we had a full-time music teacher. We had a full-time art teacher. We had certain programs there. This is the first time, now, I'm coming into a school again with my children to realize that the home ec room is just shut down. There is no home ec offered to these children. There is no shop. There is no art. I can't understand that. I grew up with that, and I would like my children to share in those things.

Then, you come to us and tell us that there are going to be more budget cuts. I don't understand that. My main concern here-- I may not

agree with everyone in this room about the new administration or the old administration, but I'm here to tell you that my main concern is my children and my neighbor's children. If we continue to just come in and say, "Okay, we can't afford to allow these-- We can't afford money here. We can't money there. We have to cut here and there"-- I think that the main concern is that we cannot afford to cut more money or take more money out of our budgets. We cannot afford that right now.

I would like to extend an invitation to you all to come into my school. I believe my school is one of the best schools around in Newark, but yet you can walk through the hallways and see-- (noise from audience)

Excuse me, allow me the courtesy that I extended to everyone in here when they spoke.

You can walk through the hallways and see tiles coming up from the floors. You can see leaks in certain areas -- I don't think that is a healthy environment for my child -- in the roofs. You can go into the children's bathroom, and sometimes there may not be running water for my children to wash their hands. That is a concern of mine. You take money away from the schools. I mean, what kind of environment are you trying to set up for our children? We need to just think about this, and okay, agree to disagree, but let's agree that the main concern here is our children. If we take more money out, where are we going to be left?

I believe that maybe I may not agree with some of things that Ruby Green, Ms. Doggett, Sylva, Ms. Hall have in mind, but they share the same concerns that I do. It's about the children. It's about the conditions of our schools. They have brought me in, and they have allowed me to express

my opinion, and they let me know that my opinion counts. If you have complaints because you have been excluded -- like another lady came up in here and said -- if you're not happy with something, get in their faces. They're not mind readers. They can't read our minds what our concerns are.

I would like to see one of you walk through these schools. This is the first time that I've seen any of your faces. Like I said, someone wrote me down on the list to come in and speak. (timer rings) (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, right quickly.

Ma'am, you don't have to come back, but let me just say on the budget issue there are people out here who are very active with this whole school takeover and wanted to enforce -- who came down before this Committee not too long ago to raise the issue of the \$30 million cut. Since that time, we've looked at the budget. Some of my colleagues here have been arguing that that cut may be, first of all, too substantial or maybe it shouldn't happen at all. It's more now. But the point I'm making is that -- a couple of speakers mentioned it--

I live in this city, and I get criticized, I also get patted on the back. So we understand the problem. What the speakers have said earlier is we don't mobilize or do things till it's too late. The reason I'm raising that is because on March 4, the unions -- NTU and others -- are trying to get as many people to go down to be supportive of the arguments before the Supreme Court as relates to equitable funding. The Court is going to have to participate.

Depending upon our participation on those buses and other things as citizens -- not just elected officials who are held accountable -- determines

whether we win or lose battles that are not political battles, but are real substantive battles for our people and our children.

So I just want to remind you, if you don't have one of these flyers up here (indicating), I'm sure someone is out there with them, so we can get people on those buses, to take empty buses-- We're doing the budget process now, so we can't tell you until probably July 1 what it is going to be like. But let's get with that Supreme Court piece.

MS. SURIEL: I just wanted to say-- I just want to make one short comment. I'm glad you brought that to my attention, but I'm one of the fortunate people who have these people--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Turn on the microphone. She's trying to talk.

MS. SURIEL: I'm one of the fortunate parents who has the Board of -- who's working with the administration. They let me know that these things are coming up so I can participate, but there are other people who are not aware of this.

SENATOR RICE: That is why I raised it.

SENATOR EWING: Providencia Ortega, is she here?

P R O V I D E N C I A O R T E G A: Providencia Ortega. (indicating pronunciation)

SENATOR EWING: Oh, excuse me. Please start.

MS. ORTEGA: Good evening. My name is Providencia Ortega, and I'm also a volunteer parent at E. Alma Flagg School.

I had a statement prepared, but I've decided that I'm not going to read what I wrote. I agree with a lot of people who have spoken here, both for

and against the State takeover. Our school has been fortunate enough not to have that many programs cut, but I do know, since I've been involved with the Parent Academy, of other schools that have had programs cut that are in need of funds to fix the schools, to help with staffing, to even help the administrators.

There are needs that are not being met in all of our schools. At first when I started, I thought I would only be concerned with my school. As I've gotten more involved and have spoken to other parents in other schools, I'm just starting to realize how big a problem there is in Newark. We can't just be concerned with our one particular school. (applause)

Parents have to be involved. Now, I'm not saying that the State is all at fault. Parents are at fault, too. It has to be a partnership. We have to work with each other if we're going to make it good for our children, because they're the most important thing. If we're not working together to help our children, then who's going to help them? It has to be a partnership between the State and the parents.

I have four children of my own. They used to be in a private school. They have been to two different public schools: First Avenue and now they're at E. Alma Flagg. I have seen overcrowding. First Avenue School, two years back, could not fit-- The teachers could not walk through a classroom, that's how many children were shoved into one classroom. That is not a learning atmosphere. My daughter was retained that first year in that school. Since I have transferred her out of that school to E. Alma Flagg, which, thank the Lord, has more room, my daughter had not had any problems. This is just

one problem that our children are facing: overcrowding in classrooms, not enough aides to help the teachers, not enough materials.

But we as parents have to get involved. We have to bring it to people's attention, and yes, as I have heard a lot of people here say, we have to stay in certain people's faces to get results. But it has to be a partnership between both of us. Like I said before, we cannot be concerned with just our school. We are a city. We are a community. We have to help each other. One voice is sometimes not heard. Many voices will be heard.

I have been in contact with a lot of different parents in a lot of different schools, and we do need help. We need funding. We don't need any budget cuts. On the contrary, we need funding for these schools that really need it. There are some schools that I cannot believe actually allow children in them, that's how bad they are.

We all have to be concerned with the children, because they are our future. This is what we're giving them. We want our children to grow up healthy, well-educated. We don't want to see our children in the streets either selling drugs or stealing or coming to harm due to other children who are doing this. We want our kids to grow up healthy, happy, well-educated, well-adjusted, but we need to give them a place where they can learn and be happy.

If the school is in good condition and they have proper teaching materials, good teachers, and good administrators, our children will be more than happy to go to school. I have personally seen children turned around because the school has changed. They went from cutting school, being very disruptive, to being A students. This can happen, but it has to work between

the parents and the State. Both have to put an effort into working together. It can't just be one-sided only. It has to be a partnership between both. We all have to be heard; whether you're a parent, a teacher, an administrator, or even the State, everyone has to listen. We have to work together to find a solution to our problems, because our children are the main important thing here. Our kids, they're our future. If we don't work for them, who will?

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Henrietta Harris -- is she here? (affirmative response) -- to be followed by Elizabeth Hernandez, to be followed by Maria Pinto.

HENRIETTA HARRIS: Hi. My name is Henrietta Harris. My kids go to Dr. William Horton School. I'm a volunteer parent at Dr. William Horton School.

My concern is, since the State took over-- First the parents wanted the State takeover. Since the State took over, now they don't want the State to take over. So what it is-- But since the State is here, we're supposed to work together and volunteer.

We have the Parent Academy for parents who come in and volunteer every week. It's like-- We've got new programs. Parents should take advantage of this, but they don't take advantage of the programs we have. We have computer classes at Dr. William Horton School on Monday and Tuesday for parents. We are trying to get a computer class during the evenings for working parents, but we need no budget cuts.

We need to have parents involved 24 hours a day. We need schools to open on Saturday for parents. We need a lot of things for parents who come out so they can educate the student, too.

Mr. Rice, the program that we have -- the after-school program from 3:00 to 6:00 -- they were saying that there is a freeze on hiring assistant teachers. We have a teacher-- The Board of Education funds one, and City Hall is supposed fund another one. We haven't seen it. They said it was going to be January 15. I called, we haven't seen anybody for January 15. There are over 100 students in the after-school program. These parents and teachers need help, because we cannot tutor these kids unless we have help.

SENATOR RICE: We of the Council met on that. I don't believe it's-- It's not our money that's, I think, denying-- It may be the Board, but we're meeting on that. Council President Bradley, I think, had a call out for a special after-school recreational program -- to tour the programs.

First of all, I think the State should pay for the whole thing, and I have bills in to do that or, at least, bills to allow us to budget-- But what it is, put the money in the budget and dedicate it after the voters vote on it. I'm trying to get that legislation through, and hopefully, the Chairman will bring it up, but until then we'll try to put some dollars out on the city's side.

Also, keep in mind, the Board of Education never started that program under Superintendent Campbell. The city started the program, because the State did not let the Board run after-school programs. So we've been contracted with the match-- I think it's going to be done a little differently, and we're trying to open more schools.

But, once again, if you would reach out for me or leave some information, I'll try to get the Clerk tomorrow, to bring me up to date. We just had a meeting, and I forget what the discussions were.

In the interim, there is a bill at the State that says we as a city-- If the State doesn't want to pay, I should be able to do an ordinance to have the taxpayers go out and vote whether they want to dedicate moneys -- it would have to go out of the general fund to the Board -- to the after-school development programs we have. If we vote it, we should be able to do that. That is permissive, so I hope I don't have a lot of problems getting that passed. I just have to get it out of the Committee.

MS. HARRIS: Now, also we need an alternative school for these kids from age 16 -- in the eighth grade. We need an alternative school, because they are carrying the other kids down. That's why the kids can't learn. And discipline, we need a strong discipline for problems.

Thank you.

SENATOR MacINNES: May I ask a question, Mr. Chairman?

SENATOR EWING: Certainly.

SENATOR MacINNES: Ms. Harris, may I ask just one question, please? Both you and Ms. Ortega mentioned the Parent Academy.

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

SENATOR MacINNES: Can you just briefly describe the purpose of that and what happens when you go to the Parent Academy?

MS. HARRIS: Okay. The Parent Academy is a program to bring parents in. It's like 18 steps that the parents will help the teacher, assist the teacher in different areas. When they assist the teacher, they will get a star.

Their name will go on the bulletin board, and the kids will see their parents coming in--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Volunteer.

MS. HARRIS: Volunteer parents, it's a volunteer thing. There is no money involved for the parents, but we'll give them knowledge and volunteer skills to put on their resume or whatever. (timer rings)

SENATOR EWING: Elizabeth Hernandez, is she here? Is Elizabeth Hernandez here? (no response) Maria Pinto?

M A R I A P I N T O: Right here.

SENATOR EWING: Is that Maria?

MS. PINTO: Yes.

I just want to say that I hear all these parents coming up and talking about there needing to be more parent involvement and they don't have that big of a problem with the schools. When the State came in and took away Newark's right to vote for who is going to run the schools-- I don't understand why we're making conversation and talking about whatever else -- about what's going to go on. We should have the right to vote back, so we can do with our schools what needs to be done.

They say that they took away the right to vote because the Board of Ed was corrupt. Well, first of all, they did it because Newark schools were coming up for parity to get the same kind of funding that rich school districts were going to get, and as soon as the money came in, they were like, "Oh, no, it's corrupt, it's corrupt." No way. It was because it was black. Because they would never do it in Princeton. They would never do it in New Brunswick

where it's all white people. (applause) So you want to talk about this, that's where it goes.

As far as March 4 goes, we're going to be down there March 4. Sharpe James said that there were going to be buses. We're having a rally. We're going to make sure we get our money back, and we're going to make sure we get our Board of Ed back. We're going to run it this time, and we're going to make sure that our kids get an education. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: John Johnson.

JOHN JOHNSON: Good afternoon.

First, I would like to speak on the State takeover. The first thing I would like everybody to consider is the way they picked the Advisory Board. If you look at the Advisory Board, the Advisory Board, we don't think, is representative of the community.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. JOHNSON: So I think, then, when the State came in-- If you notice the people who are making the decisions, the people who are making the decisions are not representative of this community.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: All right.
(applause)

MR. JOHNSON: So the proverb says that it takes a village to educate students. So if it takes a village to educate students, it seems that the people who are going to make the decision to educate the student should come from the village. (applause)

I would like to make some comments, but I think, because I am the Vice President of Local 617, which represents the noninstructional

employees who work in the Board of Education, and most of those employees live in Newark--

Now, if you even listened to the President's address last night, it's impossible to educate students if the mothers and fathers are not working.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. JOHNSON: Education-- When Dr. Hall and the State came in, they said we were putting too much money in jobs. Education is a service, and the service is delivered by people. Delivering that service, that creates job opportunities, so it's very clear that since the State has been in here, the people who are running it are not sympathetic to the community.

There is no corruption in this school system. There hasn't been anybody indicted because of anything that happened in this system. But this system is run by people who are not familiar with what is happening in Newark, so they think everything is the media. You cannot educate students through the media.

The next thing that has happened in Newark since the State takeover-- If you notice, everything that they are doing-- We haven't got a budget as of this date, and our local, according to our contract, we have to ask for a budget. The spending, somebody--

Senator Ewing, you have to do this, too. There are fiscal responsible--

Somebody needs to check on the spending. Where has the money gone? Because in this budget there was not-- In this budget year, of 1996-97, there was not a decrease in funding, but if you look at where the money was spent, if you look at how many administrators were added on, if you look at

how they went into the school system and spent a lot of money to fix up offices -- you understand what I'm talking about? -- that doesn't mean the money is going to the kids. (applause)

The next thing I would like to speak on is the fact that when Dr. Hall came in, I think there was a misunderstanding when she first came in. She said she had never seen the conditions of the schools in any city like it is in Newark. I told her to check back where she came from, New York. (applause) And I told her that publicly. This is not a-- But what I'm trying to say to you--

They came into Newark and they fixed-- They put a thing that fixed up all the schools, they hired all these people to do all the outside -- and paint the school outside -- but they didn't do anything inside. (applause) Let me go back, too, so you can understand--

Right up to today -- I represent the custodial workers-- Today, we have over 30 vacancies as custodial workers in the school system, so actually the school cannot be clean. The school cannot be clean, based on the employees that work in there right now. When they're laid off-- When they're laid off -- all those employees -- in July, you need to check the overtime. Somebody needs to check the overtime that has been given to other employees based on what? (timer rings; PA system shut off) The spending, and they haven't brought back those employees yet. (audience outburst)

I'm going to go by your rules, because I'm not here to break your rules. (walks away from microphone) But I just want this Committee to understand one thing: There needs to be a full investigation.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. JOHNSON: There needs to be a full investigation on what the school system has done with the money in this fiscal year. (applause)

One more thing about the students. But the students-- And the education part-- If you go around to the schools -- and I get a chance to visit all the schools -- what they're doing is trying to do a testing. They're going to try to evaluate these kids based on how much higher the test scores-- It's wrong. The test score cannot, is not-- It was always-- (indiscernible)

I'll bring the test scores, Senator Ewing, and the test score is not-- (indiscernible) The value of the thing to educate the kids--

SENATOR RICE: J. J.?

MR. JOHNSON: --to test them for-- (indiscernible)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: J. J., I'll look at the budget. We haven't gotten a budget, you're right. We need to get a word on the budget. It will be our first budget. I'll look at it.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you very much. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Valerie Conaway, followed by Judi Klotz, to be followed by Beverly Lee. Is Valerie Conaway here? (affirmative response)

Thank you.

Is Judi Klotz here? (affirmative response) Good.

Get ready. Get in the starting gate, please. Get your running pants on.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: I don't like your smart mouth.

VALERIE CONAWAY: Good evening.

SENATOR EWING: Good evening.

MS. CONAWAY: My name is Valerie Conaway. I'm an active parent in the Newark School District. I would like to also say good evening to parents -- dedicated parents -- of this school district, as well as the dedicated educators.

I came prepared this evening with a statement, just as everyone else did, but after being here for about an hour, almost two hours, my mood has changed. First of all, I would just like to read what I do have, but not all of it.

The absence of quality education for disadvantaged children in poorer urban districts has been the subject of numerous court decisions in New Jersey for more than 25 years. I just have a very simple question: What's the difference? What is the difference between a mother in Princeton having a birthday party for her daughter who is turning six and a mother in Newark having a birthday party for her daughter who's turning six? What's the difference between a mother in Princeton taking her child to the library and a mother in Newark taking her child to the library? What is the difference? We both want our children to be educated.

So I ask you-- We can't afford \$1000 to be taken away from this school district, let alone \$30 million, \$40 million, \$50 million, whatever the total is for today. I don't understand. I don't understand how people can walk around and look into the eyes of children, look into the hope of the future and just snatch the hope right away from them, because that's basically what this is all about.

I'm not even going to take the full five minutes, because I don't need it, because my question is a simple one. What is the difference? These are children. Children have hopes and dreams. They want to be educated. Children at a young age are very excited about learning, but once they go through this system, and once they learn there is no money and the classrooms are crowded and the buildings are dilapidated, they lose hope. They lose hope. And what do you want to do? Come and take more money.

See, I don't know, maybe, perhaps, you don't think there is hope here, but there is a lot of hope here.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. CONAWAY: There is a great-- There is so much talent in this city that it's really unbelievable. It's unbelievable. But I ask you again: What's the difference?

I spoke before in East Orange -- a couple of years ago at another hearing -- and I said then that it was my hope for my son, who is now 10 and in the sixth grade, to go on to Morehouse. He wants to be an architect. My daughter, who is now 6, wants to be judge. I can't afford private school, and I'm a taxpayer, I shouldn't have to send her to private school. (applause)

What's the difference? What's the difference? I am about children. I am about parents. Currently, I facilitate a workshop called Megaskills. In this workshop, I teach parents to teach their children the attributes and behaviors and characteristics that will help them to excel for the future: things like, confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, perseverance, caring, teamwork, initiative, and problem solving.

Well, I ask you, solve this problem, solve this problem. But it's very easy, just leave the children alone. Leave their money here, let them have an education.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Judi Klotz, to be followed by Beverly Lee. Is Beverly Lee here?

(no response)

JUDI KLOTZ: Good evening, State Senators and Assembly members.

My name is Judi Klotz, and I am a parent first, at Hawkins Street School. I'm also a community teacher aide, PTO President, and a U.S. vet. My knowledge of efforts to improve Hawkins Street School is we now have two brand-new, all-day kindergarten classes, a new reading program called Language Literacy, algebra for our seventh- and eighth-graders, and two staff developers.

Although these few things have been funded, we may lose them plus more if supplemental programs and services are not targeted to the needs of our disadvantaged students. As President Clinton said at the State of the Union last night: Number six, character education; Number seven, falling-down schools, serious national concern; and Number ten, poorest interschools, same access of knowledge. Open schools after school hours and on the weekends, so our children can have a place to go and say no to drugs.

All these goals, I believe, will take funding. I feel that the State should fulfill its obligation to make certain that any additional funding for poorer urban districts attain the constitutionally prescribed quality of education to which they are entitled.

Many urban districts presently lack the facilities and space to support the operation of one level of prekindergarten for all eligible students. The absence of sufficient and adequate facilities will make difficult implementation of the very programs designed to make it possible for children to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by the supplemental program. It is simply impossible to separate an educational program from the physical space required to operate the program.

The court recognized in *Abbott* that a thorough and efficient education also requires adequate physical facilities. Indeed, the court warned in the *Robinson* case two decades ago that the State's obligation includes capital expenditures, without which the required educational opportunity could be provided. (*sic*) It is essential that in order to satisfy this mandate the Department of Education must assess facility needs in these districts.

Further, the Governor and the Legislature must provide the leadership, direction, and funding to assure adequate facilities as part of the State's obligation to guarantee a thorough and efficient education to all children, particularly those in poorer urban districts where many older schools remain in operation. That's where I'm coming from.

President Clinton called this the information age. He also talked about action and strength in education, and that tomorrow is -- which is, today -- 1000 days until the year 2000. Let's build a bridge together. In several cities when old schools were renovated or new schools built, students' test scores showed marked improvement. We owe it to our country and our future to improve our buildings for the health, safety, and success of our children.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Is Beverly Lee here? Beverly Lee? (no response) James Souder is here now, I believe. Mr. Souder?

OLLIE MARSHALL: Excuse me, may I please have your permission, since she is not here, to ask you a question?

SENATOR EWING: What is your name, please?

MS. MARSHALL: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Ollie Marshall, and I am staff here at George Washington Carver. I teach transitional kindergarten.

SENATOR EWING: Go ahead, please.

MS. MARSHALL: Thank you.

My question is: What can the State possibly do to get a full-time Child Study Team here at George Washington Carver without the elimination of teaching positions and increasing the overcrowding in the classroom?

The current Child Study Team services two other schools without George Washington Carver. They serve the Bruce Street School population. There are 44 students at the Bruce Street School. They serve the Katzenbach School in Trenton.

I don't know whether you are familiar with the transitional kindergarten. Transitional kindergarten is a class that serves children who are not ready to enter the regular kindergarten class, and in place of classifying them at an early age, they have established the transitional kindergarten to give them one extensive year of service.

With the current Child Study Team here at George Washington Carver, the children in my classroom are not receiving all the service that's

possible, because they are only here three days a week. My thoughts, as a teacher -- and I'm speaking for myself -- I think a school of this size, insist they service other schools-- They service Bruce Street School's deaf population, and they also work with the Katzenbach School in Trenton.

I would like for you to ponder on that and, if possible, try to come up with a solution, so we can really get those Child Study Teams back here, and they can really service the children who are really in need.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Are you saying your Child Study Team also does work at Katzenbach? The same team?

MS. MARSHALL: I am told.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, all right. We'll check on that.

MS. MARSHALL: I am told that the Child Study Team here also services children at the Katzenbach School in Trenton. You can understand the situation that, as a teacher in my classroom, I'm up against.

SENATOR EWING: Well, do you think the Child Study Team goes down to Katzenbach or just the children who are going--

MS. MARSHALL: I am not the person that you should propose that question to.

SENATOR EWING: Fine, we'll find out.

MS. MARSHALL: If I knew all the particulars, I would refer them to you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MS. MARSHALL: Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Souder now, James Souder.

JAMES SOUDER: James Souder. I guess I'm a little late, but I don't guess it really matters.

Senator Ewing, you know me. Senator Rice knows me. I don't know if this gentleman here knows me. But it's not important who knows who. I'm here because we've got problems here in Newark worse than we ever had before, much worse than we had before.

I don't know why we have a Senate panel, nobody's paying attention. I've been watching while speakers have come up to speak, and everybody is busy doing everything except paying attention to the people who are complaining about what's going on in the system.

Now, first of all, Senator Ewing, I went to a meeting in Paterson, and they had taken out the art, the music, home economics, and a whole group of other things. I called your office about it when they said they were taking it out here in Newark, because you opposed that in Paterson, and you said, "It could not be, should not be, and would not be."

When you called me back, you told me something totally different. You told me, "Oh, well, they cut the budget." Well, now, if they're going to cut the budget all the time, how are they going to educate our kids?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: They don't intend to.

MR. SOUDER: Well, I know that. That's a known. That's like a fixed thing. They don't intend to educate the children in any of the urban cities, not just here. This is not just something that just happened.

But, Senator Ewing, Senator Rice, I think it's important that you understand that the same reason that the State gave for taking over this district still exists. The only difference is, it's worse now.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: That's right. That's right.

MR. SOUDER: Now, you're talking about taking away more money. I heard the gentleman talk about the custodians. Every school you go to is short four custodians every day. It's impossible to clean up a school. Not only are they short of custodians, they're short of security, they're short of books, they're short of teachers, they're short of space in some places because they came in and took away -- all they had going in the schools, they took it away.

They're talking about the money. It would be a little bit of money to help do some things for the kids, but it's my understanding that they're still paying I don't know how many millions of dollars down at 2 Cedar Street. And they moved these offices into the school building, took away the school space, renovated them, and some places where the buildings were dilapidated, they have the office so modern it will scare you to go in it. You'll think you are in the wrong place. (applause)

Now, why are we paying rent in two places? We pay rent at 2 Cedar Street, and then we have the people housed in our schools, taking up the schools' space. Just in-- (indiscernible) --alone, was a disgrace the way they had torn everything out, took all of the computers, the library, and everything out. To do what? Offices they could have used in the other building that they

spent \$4.5 million or \$4.7 million to renovate, and now, they're going to renovate the new building. That didn't make any sense at all.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. SOUDER: But my point here is, you're saying that we don't have any money and they studied cutting the budget, but they took what little bit of money that they did have to make beautiful offices for people. They said that the old administration was top heavy, but now we have twice as many people or three times or four times as many people in an administrative capacity as we had before.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Souder, what schools don't have books? You said schools -- are all the schools missing books?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: A lot of them. Yes.

MR. SOUDER: The majority of them are missing books.

SENATOR EWING: Well, which particular schools?

MR. SOUDER: I didn't bring the list, because I didn't know you were going to-- But if you want, I can call your office and give it to your secretary.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I'd like to know. The other thing is you say they have three or four times more in administrative help. How many did they have before, and how many do they have now?

MR. SOUDER: They had nine before, and now they have -- what? -- 30-some or 40-something.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: They have 38 now.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: I know McKinley doesn't have books.

MR. SOUDER: Please, please, please. They let the people who were actually doing the work go and brought in people making three and four times that kind of salary -- maybe ten times the salary they were making -- to do what?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Nothing.

MR. SOUDER: But I would like to know-- (timer rings)
Senator Ewing, I would like to know what is going to be done about some of this stuff.

SENATOR EWING: We'll look into it and see what we can do.

MR. SOUDER: What you can do?

SENATOR EWING: No promises.

MR. SOUDER: I can't hear you.

SENATOR EWING: No promises, I said. We have to see if we cannot improve things.

Maria Pimental, is she here? (no response) Susan Racaniello, is she here? (affirmative response) Then, William "Chip" Madsen -- is he here? -- you'll be following -- to be followed by Gwendolyn Conyers. Is Gwendolyn here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Yes, she's here.

SENATOR EWING: Go ahead.

S U S A N R A C A N I E L L O: Thank you.

Hi. My name is Sue Racaniello. I am a parent, as well as a school employee.

In 1995, the State decided to takeover the Newark education system. At the time, this was perceived by parents as a good idea with the best interests of the children hanging in the balance. As an involved parent, who is quite active in most school programs, I have seen progress made. The programs that have been put in place, such as the Parent Academy, the school Core Team--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Bullshit.

MS. RACANIELLO: --all-day kindergarten, and after-school tutorial programs, to name a few, have been successful.

With the implementation and success of these programs, the plan that the State put into motion is evidence that this system, if given the chance, can work. But by taking away funds from this plan, we will be taking three steps backwards.

The children of the Newark community deserve the same opportunities for a quality education as children in rural areas, as well as in facilities that meet the requirements of the State. Budget cuts will deny these goals, such as class sizes of 15 students or less for grades *K* through 3 -- my first-grade son is in a class of 30 -- school-based youth and family services; repairs and maintenance upkeep on existing buildings; new buildings to replace old buildings that are falling apart around our children.

As determined by the Supreme Court in *Abbott v. Burke*, the State constitutional guarantee to a thorough and efficient education must include a supplemental program designed to wipe out the deficit poor children bring with them to school. Is it in the best interest for the Newark school system or for the State of New Jersey to cut educational funding when just last night,

during his State of the Union address, the President placed the conditions of our schools on a national concern priority? He also said that within two years every state must meet high national standards in math and reading. While everyone around us is placing the accent on education, how can our State leave the City of Newark behind?

I can't stress enough that a quality education is needed going into the 21st century, and the children of Newark are relying on the State of New Jersey to provide them with just that. If the proposed budget cuts are passed, there is a distinct possibility that the children of Newark will be at a disadvantage.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Sue Rancaniello?

MS. SCHULZ (Executive Director): No, that was Susan.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, that was Susan. I'm sorry.

Chip Madsen.

WILLIAM "CHIP" MADSEN: Good evening.

SENATOR EWING: Good evening.

MR. MADSEN: Thank you for allowing me to speak with you this evening.

My name is Chip Madsen. I am the Associate Director for Protestant Community Centers, Incorporated and a servant to the children and parents of Newark.

PCCI is a nonprofit, community based organization working with children and parents throughout the greater Newark area for over 30 years. I

would like to tell you about some of our partnerships and collaborations with schools, corporations, churches, and high schools throughout northern New Jersey.

Through these partnerships, over 500 Newark elementary students received intense, one-on-one tutoring from over 500 volunteers every week. This program, Suburban Cultural Educational Enrichment Program, or SCEEP, makes a three-year commitment to our children linking them with congregation members at 20 churches, employee volunteers at seven corporations, and students at two high schools.

SCEEP centers are located from Newark to Sparta and from Maplewood to Mendham. This is the largest and oldest one-to-one tutoring program in the State, which has helped, literally, thousands of children. Using the programs here at George Washington Carver, where, incidently, you have a wonderful principal in June Lockett -- someone with whom I've worked for over 15 years and for whom I have the highest regard--

Using that as a model, each day children are picked up after school, transported to a SCEEP site where volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring, as well as enrichment activities ranging from arts and crafts, science, sports, and educational games. Speakers talk to the children about their own experiences and how important education is. Children are also taken on field trips once a month to museums, conservation centers, zoos, and concerts. The children are then dropped off safely door-to-door at their homes.

Our track record is encouraging. Of the children who remain in our programs for the entire three years, over 79 percent of them move from failing academically to the honor roll. Now, let me repeat that, because this

isn't one fantastic case or two or three: 79 percent of the children who come to us reach the honor roll. Their profiles when they come to us are *D*-minus averages or worse. Now, I challenge any other program you have heard about to match it. This is not due to any magic wands that PCCI possesses. Our tutors and the children's parents love these children and develop a strong bond with them becoming not only tutors and mentors, but advocates for them, as well.

In addition to this program, we also provide over 15,000 free books to children throughout Newark with our Reading is Fundamental Program, which is, incidently, also the oldest and possibly the largest in New Jersey. Along with RIF, we also work with schools in the development of reading incentive projects for each classroom.

Lastly, I would like to tell you about our Service Learning Project at two high schools here in Newark. At Central and Science High students are infusing community service with a curriculum through a variety of collaborations with community-based organizations and trend-setting corporations that are committed to this district, like the Prudential Insurance Company, PSE&G, Mutual Benefit Life, and Bell Atlantic. These kids are not only getting excited about learning, but are also providing much needed services to the residents of Newark at no cost to the system or the government.

For example, one of the French teachers at Science teamed up with a social studies teacher on a project where students are working with Haitian immigrants to help them through the naturalization process and writing a research paper on how welfare reform is impacting the lives of people new to our community.

An English teacher having her students at Central High prepare a play for preschoolers on Homer's *Odyssey*-- Now, here is a school where last year, only 17 percent of their students passed HSPT. This year, they're reading Homer and understanding it at a level where they can teach it. After they condense the book into a play, it's presented to preschoolers. They then talk to the children about how to deal with scary people in their own neighborhoods. The *Odyssey*, as you know, is a series of encounters that Odysseus has with a host of scary people starting with Cyclops. There are people in their neighborhoods much scary for young children than one-eyed monsters who eat people. If you don't believe me, stick around for a while and listen to the stories our children tell us.

Lastly, students at both schools are developing a Literacy Corps where high school students go into elementary schools and work with children to improve their reading skills. By the end of this year, we plan to have over half a dozen Literacy Corps working with children in six elementary schools.

Thurgood Marshall died several years ago, and at his funeral, people were waiting hours in line as his body lay in state in the rotunda in Washington. On this cold and rainy day, a reporter saw an old African-American gentleman standing in line and asked him why he was risking his health to see Justice Marshall. The old man replied, "I'm here to see Justice Marshall and pay him homage because Thurgood Marshall didn't simply witness change, Thurgood Marshall caused change."

Through collaborations with corporations, churches, and with this school system throughout the State, we at PCCI hope to do no less.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: What is the name of your group?

MR. MADSEN: Protestant Community Centers, Incorporated. It's a piece of a larger agency, the Community Agencies Corporation. (timer rings)

SENATOR EWING: Well, do you charge tuition to the--

MR. MADSEN: No. We ask for donation of \$10 for a year of tuition from parents, and if they can't pay, they go free. We waive it.

SENATOR EWING: And they come in after school?

MR. MADSEN: We pick them up with our vans after school. We have three programs here. We take them to a tutoring site, which lasts all year, we bring them back, and out of the 500 parents who are working with us I think maybe 100 or 110 have actually made a donation of \$10, but it's waived. We get our support from grants, churches, individuals.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. It's very interesting.

MR. MADSEN: Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Do we have Gwendolyn Conyers here?

MS. SCHULZ: Yes, she was here. Here she comes.

G W E N D O L Y N C O N Y E R S: Good evening. My name is Gwendolyn Conyers. I am a parent at William H. Brown Academy. I am a PTA President there. I am also a Home Visitor for the Evening Star Program.

As I sat among this meeting, everyone has an agenda -- what they're going to say, whatever -- so I'm just going to say how I feel. I disapprove of the school takeover. We need those teachers back for those kids, because my child needs that extra help. (applause)

I can go in her class and sit, and the teacher is doing her assignment. I might have gotten the message, but two other students didn't get it, and she is going on to do something else. We need that extra help. We got that extra help on Channel 3. We need that extra help in the classroom, too. (applause)

I mean, we have to catch every student from the lowest to the highest. We know the highest one; she has it or he has it. We want those in-between students. We don't want to lose them, because the least little thing would knock them off -- you know, take their interest away. We have to find out what is going to interest them, not-- Because you have to go by your agenda, what rules you have to do with your plan book -- you have to go by this schedule-- We have to break down with that. We have to work with the kids. You're not working with the kids.

We have 10 minutes to do social studies. If that 10 minutes is gone and the kids didn't get the subject, we're on to math. Now, we're coming home with the assignment, "I don't know what the teacher said, Mom, cause she had only 10 minutes, and she couldn't explain it to me, 'cause we had to do math." It's like an ongoing thing there. We just run on, run on. We have to slow down and work with these kids. We need that extra help.

We have those evening programs. We have a lot of different programs in the school, but a lot of different kids won't come out to it. A lot of different parents-- Parents won't come to it. We have, like, the Evening Star Program, it's from 3:00 to 5:00.

We have a parent-and-child program where the parent has to come with the child. You cannot send your child to this program and not

participate, because the child-- The parents are in a classroom with other parents. You're learning for your GED or you're getting that extra help. The child is in a classroom with other children, different age groups -- it's ages three to seven--

But then you have this after-school program that's running, and you only have one person running the program, and he has a whole bunch of kids. I mean, how are you helping those kids with their homework? Everybody is running around doing their own thing, you're doing your homework, and he can't check everybody's homework.

We need that extra help. We need it. We need our teachers back. The basic skills teachers, we need them back. We need it. We need those programs back for our kids. Like I said, everybody can't get it as quick as other people. We need that extra help.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: What school is this?

MS. CONYERS: I'm at William H. Brown Academy. That is the old Bergen Street--

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. CONYERS: You're welcome. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Wilbur Haddock. (applause)

WILBUR HADDOCK: For a minute there I thought you all forgot me.

SENATOR EWING: You brought your cheering section with you.

MR. HADDOCK: Thank you. Good evening, now.

Who gets these? (referring to statements) (distributes statements)

Don't hold it against me.

SENATOR EWING: No, no. We'll give you extra time.

MR. HADDOCK: Okay. My name is Wilbur Haddock. I am the Director of the Urban Parents Educational Institute here in Newark and a member of the Coalition for a True Thorough and Efficient Education.

I must admit that I feel somewhat ambivalent addressing this legislative Committee tonight, because the State Legislature is part of the problem that continues to plague the school districts taken over by the State, including Newark.

Although I will speak to the topic of the Newark Public Schools' progress and challenges, I must also state that my concern also includes the school districts of Jersey City and Paterson, New Jersey, both also under State control. If the State Legislature is truly interested in correcting the many problems that still exist, which many of us don't believe, maybe my presence here tonight might not be in vain.

I will speak tonight about my concern in the areas of accountability, information sharing, school funding, true parental involvement, and preparing for the future of regaining our Newark school system at the end of five years, rather than eight or ten years as seems to be the case in Jersey City and Paterson.

Under accountability: Presently, there is no one seriously monitoring the State but the State. Depending on reports or presentations from the State Superintendent or their staff as to what is going on or what is working or not working is a joke. Why should the State Education

Department that did such a poor job before the takeover and never admitted their equal guilt, be trusted to be objective and police themselves now?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right, Wilbur.

MR. HADDOCK: Nowhere else would this be allowed to happen. There needs to be an independent body in place to achieve true and trusted accountability and keep the State on its toes. Give credit when it is due and find fault when they find it.

Information sharing: Even though there have been many newspaper ads in *The Star-Ledger* and tons of information mailed to us concerning the State's plan for Newark today and over the next four years, much confusion still exists and trust is not yet here. Newark citizens and children have been promised a lot over the years and received very little from both the State, county, and local educational leaders. So it is natural we are suspicious, cautious, and mistrustful of the State, who has never been a friend of urban children, while fighting over 25 years against *Robinson v. Cahill* and *Abbott v. Burke*, which they lost and are presently still fighting in the Supreme Court. We are supposed to trust these people?

New school reform initiatives are now law, and yet parents and citizens have not been informed of the impact they will have on the school budget and them as taxpayers. Aren't Newark parents and citizens entitled to know the impact charter schools and school choice will have on them even though the State controls the district?

What about the impact of the Governor's Comprehensive Educational Improvement Act? Will there be enough waste found to build

science labs, buy enough computers, lower class size, hire more language teachers, and where will the space be found for the mandated early childhood programs? When will we get the information, or are we supposed to wait until the State decides to tell us?

School funding: The New Jersey State Constitution says every child in the State of New Jersey is entitled to a thorough and efficient education. Did our children lose that right when the State took over our school system? Why is the State, that we are supposed to believe in and trust our children to, saying it took over our district to improve the education of our children, applying a double standard, (timer rings; PA system shut off) one for rich districts and another for poor ones.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Let the man speak.

MR. HADDOCK: The State must be consistent and provide parity for all of its children, and the State Superintendents, all three of them, should be in the forefront of this struggle not, as reported in the press, working behind the scenes, whatever that means.

True parental involvement: We need more parent education--

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Haddock, we have your testimony here.

MR. HADDOCK: --and training, not just volunteering. Parents need help--

SENATOR EWING: We have your testimony here.

MR. HADDOCK: --when the system breaks down and they have no place to turn.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Haddock, we have your testimony, and your time is up.

MR. HADDOCK: I'm just finishing up. I'm just about finished.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MR. HADDOCK: Parent leaders should be truly representative.
The parents in their schools have been chosen based on--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Turn the mike on.
You better turn that mike back on.

MR. HADDOCK: Thank you.

That was a fast five minutes, Senator Ewing.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: All right, Wilbur.
(applause)

SENATOR EWING: April Owens, is she here? (affirmative
response) Robin Williams. Is Robin Williams here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Yes, she's here.

APRIL OWENS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My topic was
on the Evening Star Program, but being that I have been sitting here for a
while, I have much more to say.

You sit there and you talk about wanting to cut the budget, and
you cut out a lot of activities at different schools -- home ec, shop, music -- and
you say everything is about children. Well, how do you know you don't have
future chefs or future carpenters or future music teachers or anything? You
don't know because you cut this out, and they're not aware of it or getting any
experience.

Then another-- You are representing this State and are supposed
to make the cities for us, but every one of you are very rude up there because

when people talk you don't listen. You're talking to each other, but you expect us to give you courtesy and listen.

All the schools, everybody in here, are for the children: their parents, their grandparents, their teachers, and everything. They are doing their best to teach them, but if they don't have materials, books, more time, and more space, they can't do too much, and you're blaming them for this and that, but it's your fault. You're already in the position that we are trying to get to.

You want the kids to be just-- We want them to be where you are some day, making decisions, the right decisions. But listening to you and doing what you want to do is not going to get them there. They're going to be discouraged. They're going to think "What are we living for?" Then they're going to be on the corner, because that's better -- making more money on the corner -- than sitting in class because there is nothing to learn.

Then you say more parents-- Well, I'm a parent and I care about both of my children. When I was coming up, I had all the opportunities to get a better education, but what you're telling me is I better teach my kids at home because in school they're not going to get everything. (applause)

So you tell us, "Well, we'll cut the budget." If a teacher doesn't have-- If she has 30 kids and she expects to teach a math lesson and maybe 5 don't understand, she can't go back and just go to those 5 by herself. So that is why our kids-- They're just going to miss the whole lesson for the day.

I'm from Dr. William H. Horton School. In the past school year, they had four acting principals. If you don't have a strong administration, how are you going to have the teachers and the student body be strong together?

Because if something happens, they don't have the big chief to answer any question.

So you have to realize and come to the schools and see what the problems are. Don't just look and listen to what you want to hear. Come and see what's really wrong.

The floor? We might get by on the floor for a little while. Maybe if we teach that little kid to paste the wood back on the floor-- But that's teaching them shop and that's wood shop. If you tell them, "Music, we're going to learn a song." They know the songs on the radio, but let them learn how to read music. But they won't do that, because you took all of that away. (applause)

So before you blame people, blame parents and say, "Parents don't come and listen," we do listen-- Because when those kids come home, your children come home and say, "Mommy, we didn't do this today," that means I have to do an extra job. So don't sit there and act like we're not-- (indiscernible) --or we don't care or we're just sending them to school and that's their babysitter. We babysit 24 hours a day.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MS. OWENS: So get it together. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: James Benjamin, is he here? (no response)

JoAnn Jones?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Tell the truth.

JoAnn Jones: JoAnn Jones. I'm a former PTA President of seven schools in Newark and a member of the School-based Planning/Steering Committee.

Just as a way of centering myself, let me just say first and foremost that all praise and glory goes first and foremost to the Creator and then to the ancestors.

It is my understanding that you have come into Newark today to hear from us on the program of the Newark Public Schools under the State-- I'm sorry. It is my understanding that you have come into Newark today to hear from us on the progress of the Newark Public Schools under the State administration.

Well, I believe that Dr. Hall, the State Superintendent, is trying to do her best under the extremely trying and difficult circumstances of a double-cross by the very Governor and State Education Commissioner -- Christine Todd Whitman and Leo Klagholz, respectively -- who brought her here on the one hand and the sabotage of her efforts by the NTU President, Del Grosso, and some of his alliances on the other and, yes, even by some of her own staff members who profess to be working on her behalf.

Before writing this particular testimony for today, I reviewed the testimony I presented to those of you on the Senate Education Committee on July 25, 1996 up in Trenton regarding S-40, the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act of 1996, that would have its implementation and draconian impact on us here in the 1997-1998 school year. I saw that we were up in arms in outrage about the cuts and loss of a proposed \$31 million then, and here we are today, sitting before you, looking at and talking to you now about a proposed \$54 million to \$60 million cut in Dr. Hall's school budget.

You want to know how the Newark schools are progressing? Let me turn that question around and ask you: If someone was proposing a \$34 million to \$60 million cut to you in your school district and community, what would be the progress of your schools and your community? Oh, yes, now I remember, the suburbanite parents and communities and some of your Caucasian Senators and Assemblypeople almost went crazy until you were able to legislate that grandfather clause in, that allowed your suburban constituencies to continue spending at their present per-pupil level--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: That's right. That's right. Telling the truth.

MS. JONES: --violating the original Supreme Court mandate, and then anything over that, you would then have them take it to the voters for a referendum.

I said it before and I will repeat it here: Again, someone is moving on our African-American community or communities, specifically, and other ethnic groups of color, generally, here in Newark and across the nation as a whole. Someone or some peoples are or have reerected or, if you will, resurrected the issues of the 1960s within the 1990s leading into the millennium. Outcome difference -- or stated another way, you want a different outcome of what happened.

Do you think that we think it is coincidental that this Joint Committee of you have ended up here in Newark, sitting up before us, the Newark constituency, in February 1997, in Black History Month? Do you really believe we think this is a coincidence? Do you really still believe you can get over on the spirit of truth, justice, and righteousness? No. (applause)

Let me say this, and I am probably going to offend some of you even more so than I have done, but I am very clear-- I am very clear in terms of what their Passover represented. I am also very clear on the Passover plot that took place later on that hung that black man up on that cross. It's not going to happen to our children. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

SENATOR EWING: Lizzie Shanks, is she here?

MS. SCHULZ: Sanks.

SENATOR EWING: Sanks, I'm sorry, Sanks. Is Lizzie Sanks here? Ivan Garcia, is he here, Ivan Garcia? (no response) Edna Murphy, and I think she might have two students with her? Edna Murphy? (negative response) Anne Dunne?

A N N E D U N N E: (speaking from audience) I'm here.

SENATOR EWING: Is that Anne?

MS. DUNNE: Yes, sir.

SENATOR EWING: Come on down.

Anne Dunne, to be followed by Maria Rodriguez-- Is Maria Rodriguez here? (no response)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Where is Dr. Jackson's name? Dr. Jackson.

SENATOR EWING: John Abeigon? Is John Abeigon here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. DUNNE: Hello. My name is Anne Dunne. I am from the Newark Literacy Campaign.

I came here tonight-- I didn't know what to expect, but I am our official community person, and I'm an advocate for children and an advocate for literacy. I hope I represent a ray of hope.

The Newark Literacy Campaign has been in existence going on 12 years in the City of Newark. We provide one-on-one tutoring for adults, teenagers, and children. We're concerned about the problem of low literacy in the City of Newark, and we're here to fight low literacy.

I just wanted you to know if you have any problems with your child reading or with your teenager or if you have problems reading yourselves, parents, you can come to the Literacy Campaign. Our number is 623-4001.

As the Family Literacy Coordinator, I give parents' workshops. I speak to a lot of parents throughout Newark, and I tell them the benefits of reading to their children. If the school is not doing its job, you can at least help your children read.

You can turn off the TV, you can stop buying videotapes. I work at the public library. A lot of people rent the tapes. Instead of renting the tapes, you can take out books. There is a wealth of beautiful African-American books that are out now. We just have to read to our children. It makes all the difference in the world, and I really believe that. There is even proof, moms, when you're reading to your child when the child is in the womb, the child becomes a better reading.

I also wanted to say, if there are not enough books in the school, you can always get a public library card and come to the library and take advantage of the library.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: There should be enough books in the library in the schools.

MS. DUNNE: Yes, there should be enough books in the school.
(outbursts from audience)

SENATOR RICE: Ms. Dunne?

MS. DUNNE: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Are you concluded?

MS. DUNNE: Oh, not yet. I'm almost finished.

But you can come-- (outbursts from audience) Excuse me, parents, you can come to the library and you come to the Literacy Campaign. If you need books, I'll make sure you get books, because we have books. I also wanted to tell you that everything we do is free and everybody is a volunteer. We're also going to start computer literacy classes, and they're open to everyone.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR RICE: All right. I don't think John Abeigon is here. I've been looking for John, and I don't see him.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: He's here.

SENATOR RICE: Are you going to speak, John? (negative response) Okay. Next, we have Christine "Roz" Samuels. Is Christine here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Yes.

You can't handle the truth. What happened to the Committee? Where is everybody?

SENATOR RICE: The men's room. I'm here. We have the men's room and we have other things to do.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: We all can see you.
(outbursts from audience)

SENATOR RICE: That's one reason-- Let me just say this, I know people can yell and things like that, but, unfortunately, I don't create the Trenton process. When I go to South Jersey to meetings, the same thing happens and that's why we record. They will go in the back, they will make a phone call, etc. It's just our process is a little bit different than Council in terms of seeing us every day. But the Chairman went to the men's room. Also, when members have to travel distances, sometimes their schedule doesn't meet the schedule-- They will stay and they will leave. Assemblyman Craig Stanley is here, also, and Jack is here.

But we are being recorded, because these recordings are going to be taken back, and we're going to review them as we have done in the past, etc.

Ma'am, would you go ahead and speak?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: What about the--
(indiscernible) --Mr. Rice?

SENATOR RICE: I beg your pardon?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: You heard me.
What about Mrs. Bradley (phonetic spelling), Mr. Rice?

SENATOR RICE: Mrs. who?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Mrs. Bradley.
What about Mrs. Bradley, Mr. Rice?

SENATOR RICE: First of all, let me just say this, okay? Doreetha (phonetic spelling) called me today. I don't know the problems. I'm going to call her. I'm from Newark, so you can badger me. I'm trying to get these

things on the record. If you're here to deal with that, just see me outside, but let these people speak. One thing about us, we can be angry with each other, disagree, but we still should respect each other.

This young lady needs to speak and other speakers need to speak. I'm here every day--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (indiscernible)
--should show her some respect.

SENATOR RICE: Well, I'll come out and talk to you while she is going on the record. Okay? Because you're not showing me respect, and you said you see me every day. You can talk to me. You can throw a brick through my window.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: I didn't say that.

SENATOR RICE: Well, if you live in Newark, you probably do.

Ma'am, go ahead and speak.

CHRISTINE "ROZ" SAMUELS: Good evening. My name is Roz Samuels. I am the Secretary/Treasurer of the Newark Teachers Union, Local 481. I work closely with Mr. Del Grosso.

Unfortunately, I was going to welcome Senator Ewing to Newark, but since he's not on the podium and Craig lives in Irvington, so I don't have to welcome him. Oh, there's the Senator.

I would like to welcome you to Newark. I am a product of the Newark school system. I have also been in the system for over 20 years. Since the State has taken over in Newark, I have never seen conditions that are in Newark now.

Just imagine coming into Newark having cold lunches. Just imagine our children, for the first time in history, not having a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. This meal is the one meal some of these children only get. I was uneasy to hear one of the parents say that there had been an insect in some of the sandwiches at the Maple Annex. I really think that should be looked into. Also, she stated that children are drinking bottled water. The water fountain was not fixed when I visited that school in October, and evidently, the administrators have not seen it necessary to fix that also.

So maybe, Senator Ewing, you can look into that.

Imagine a third-grade teacher having 25 to 30 children, and then she has special ed children in that room. They're disruptive. They need their medication. The teacher is stressed out. Do you know these third-graders even threaten the teachers? We need the Child Study Team to single these children out, so they will be put in their correct classification. (applause) Also-

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SENATOR EWING: What school is this?

MS. SAMUELS: One school, for instance, is Maple Annex, another is South Seventeenth Street, and in schools throughout Newark, where you have third-graders who have not been classified, they're put in with regular students. I think it should be investigated.

I also think since the State has taken over, our teachers have been inundated with so much paperwork -- so much paperwork that they don't have the time to give to the students. They're being harrassed by the administration in their building, "Do your plan book. Do this, do that," and they're walking around scared. You can't teach children if you're frightened.

I think most of the other points were taken up before. One parent said, "Why do we not have notification of these meetings?" Number one, we get no coverage from *The Star-Ledger*. Flyers should have been sent home from every school in the city that you were coming tonight. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: And it did not happen.

MS. SAMUELS: Also -- and then I'm going to close -- I would just like to say we have teachers who do not have copy machines. They have to go-- One teacher was told -- she is on the first floor -- "Go up to the third floor to use a copy machine." I heard someone say earlier that they used their money to have copies made. The Newark school system, since the State has taken over, isn't working.

Our support personnel, they've been laid off. Our cooks are giving cold sandwiches, and I mean the women can cook, but no more hot meals. So our children in Newark deserve just what they get in suburbia, and I hope you will look into it.

I would like to invite everyone to come with us to Trenton on March 4. As Senator Rice said, there will be buses leaving from the Newark Teachers Union, and also, I believe, Mayor Sharpe will have buses, also. So come and go with us, so we can be heard on March 4.

Thank you very much. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: James Harris, is he here?

JAMES HARRIS: Good evening.

SENATOR RICE: Good evening, James.

MR. HARRIS: My name is James Harris. I am here tonight representing the State Conferences of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, and also the New Jersey Black Issues Convention. Both of these organizations are statewide organizations that have long-time represented the interests of folks in the struggle for civil rights.

Let me thank the Committee for coming to Newark and express the disappointment that people have gotten up to leave. I suspect that if we were in another school district, people would be a little bit more respectful and stay to hear the concerns that people have.

But before I get into my presentation, Senator Ewing, Senator Rice, and Assemblyman Craig, let's be clear on who is here tonight. I would like for all of the parents here to stand up -- parents of students in Newark. (members of audience comply)

Thank you very much.

I would like for all of the teachers in the system to please stand up. I would like for all of the ministers in the house, if you're here, to please stand up. (members of audience comply) Any members of the union, please--

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Harris, you're taking up from your five minutes.

MR. HARRIS: I understand that, but I don't want you going away from here thinking that these are all union people who have no interest in the education of the young people in this city.

SENATOR EWING: People have been stating their jobs. We understand that.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: No, you don't. Listen to me.

MR. HARRIS: I understand that.

Senator Ewing, let me say in all due respect, you know what is happening. You know that the people in the cities oppose-- The New Jersey Black Issues Convention, New Jersey NAACP opposed State takeover in the first place. Some of the things that we predicted are now coming true.

We believe, and let me say this for the record-- The NAACP and the New Jersey Black Issues Convention believes that part of what is driving this legislation and the present behavior is racism. (applause)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: You got that right.

MR. HARRIS: But let's be clear. We do believe that Dr. Hall may have good intentions, but what is happening in this city is not a Beverly Hall solo production. It is the production of Dr. Beverly Hall in concert with Leo Klagholz and the Governor of the State of New Jersey. (applause)

These things are not isolated, and I think that when November comes, the urban people of the State of New Jersey will be very together in demonstrating how committed we are to the education of our children.

Now, the State takeover law has a major problem. It gives too much authority to the State-appointed Superintendent. In this town, Dr. Hall has come into town and, by the way, refuses -- absolutely refuses -- to face the public that she is supposed to be representing. (applause) If you recall, the last time you came to town she sent one of her representatives. Tonight she came and left promptly without any explanation. If she is going to get her

paycheck out of the City of Newark, she needs to show up and hear the criticism. (applause)

Another problem with the State takeover legislation is that it ought to mandate that parent participation be legitimate through a democratic process. What has happened in the City of Newark is, Dr. Hall and gang have attempted to disrespect the PTAs and come up with their own system of parent participation.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That's right.

MR. HARRIS: Let me say to you that the research is clear, there cannot be significant education reform and progress in the City of Newark until the parents have faith and trust in the leadership of Newark.

What has happened in the City of Newark under State takeover is there has been political destabilization. But you understand that, this is a Democratic town. You know that. Nobody in this town will affect your reelection or the Governor's reelection, but on that one, we will see what the facts bear out. But, if you look at all of the districts the State has taken over, there seems to be a pattern. They are Democratic strongholds. They seem to be districts where there is African-American leadership.

Now, make no mistake about it, the New Jersey Black Issues Convention, the NAACP are all together for a thorough and efficient education for the young people in our urban districts. If you believe that these parents care any less than the parents who live in your own districts, you're wrong. What we really want for African-American and urban students throughout this State is the same opportunities for a thorough and efficient education that's guaranteed to everybody else. (timer rings; PA system shut off)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Your time ain't up.

MR. HARRIS: I hope that the microphone went off, but the recording is still on. Is the recording off? (negative response)

Then I guess, Senator Rice--

It is on? Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: The time is up. Turn it off.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Put the mike back on. Turn the mike back on. Why are you going to do-- (indiscernible)
(recording paused at direction of the Chairman)

W I L H E L M I N A H O L D E R: Good evening. My name is Wilhelmina Holder. I am the Chair of the PTA at West Side High School, a school that works, a mark of excellence. I heard a lot of testimony tonight and most of it is accurate. We are being shortchanged in many ways by funding, as well as by staffing.

Now, I'm going to put the test to parental involvement at West Side High School. There are immediate things that need to be done. The reason the State came into the City of Newark was, officially, to ensure that every student in this city have access to a thorough and efficient education and equal opportunity to become the capable, competent, and productive students they can be.

Well, how are you doing? Not so well. Much improvement is required. On the secondary school level, we have children who are bright, motivated, and well-deserving students. They are ready to meet the challenge of the next millennia if they are given the resources and opportunity to do. Well, you're not doing so good here.

What do I mean? West Side High School, a school that works, a mark of excellence-- We, the parents, have endured chaos and major disruptions at West Side High. Massive instructional time was lost due to the chaos that previously existed. The captains of this ship have been changed three times since September of 1996.

Mr. Embrey, the former principal, took the unprecedented step of going to the national media to ensure immediate action on behalf of those students. Giant steps were taken at West Side by the Board as a result of this attention. West Side students are now enjoying the fruits of Mr. Embrey's actions, a clean, orderly school. Sure, we have a lot of problems at West Side, a great distance to go.

Our new captain, Mr. Furnot Williams, (phonetic spelling) will need strong, unequivocal support from the State-run Board of Education. He already has the cooperation of the teaching staff, the parents, and the students. This is an absolute necessity. West Side High has world-class educators. Do not be fooled by that. They have world-class educators.

What is the Board's role at West Side High? It's a big one. It's to ensure adequate funding to address small class sizes, an adequate number of science and math teachers, so that a student who took biology last year doesn't get shut out of chemistry this year, as they have been, and placed in earth science because we're minus a chemistry teacher. This is not acceptable. Adequate and updated supplies are needed now at West Side High School.

There is a lack of computer technology at the school. We need more honor classes and advanced placement classes. Ironically, we have teachers, our world-class educators, who have qualified to teach advanced

placement classes but were turned down. We have students who are qualified to go in those advanced placement classes, but, obviously, teaching without a program, this is not possible. They're being shortchanged. Our guidance department needs computerized on-line access to colleges, business schools, and vocational schools.

May I talk about a very real problem? We're running out of time. Students will be graduating from West Side High School in June 1997. The business students have not been exposed to Windows 95 or any kind of technology that will permit them into entry-level jobs at major corporations. What will happen is, they will have to settle for service jobs at McDonald's and Burger King. This is not acceptable.

How are you doing? Not well at all. Every child should be prepared as if they are college bound. Give them that option whether they exercise it or not. (applause) One of the reasons for this failure is when adequate education standards are low, we use the word basic. Basic becomes a key operative. Well, I'm of the opinion if you want excellent results, then the standards must be raised, not lowered, for African-American and Hispanic students. (applause) Classes must be challenging, homework demanding, and teacher expectation high, with an acknowledgment given for sincere effort.

There are some very real misperceptions about inner-city youth. They are told that they are not deserving of a world-class education and that money is being wasted on them. Well, we at West Side High, do not understand that. We do not accept no. Our world-class educators and our well-deserving, highly motivated students, along with their success-oriented,

solution-based parents have come up with the West Side High Initiative: West Side High, a school that works, a mark of excellence.

I have the Initiative in my hand. Most of you were mailed this Initiative, along with Dr. Hall and her staff, and this is about the parents coming in and aggressively supporting our teaching staff there and our students. It is an aggressive collaboration. It is a working plan, and it will require the school to be open on Saturday mornings. We have secured professional volunteers from AT&T and other sources-- (timer rings; PA system shut off)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Don't cut the mike.

MS. HOLDER: --and other corporations to come in and address our children.

I have been teaching SAT preparation for the last five years at the Boys and Girls Club. We have a line of people who are willing to come in. We are facing the April deadline for HSPT. Our students haven't taken the SAT. We have people who will come in and assist with resume writing and the like.

This is what we need. We are going to put the West Side Initiative to the test. We are asking for your help. We seek your advice and cooperation, but we will not understand no.

Thank you very much. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Do you have a copy of that?

MS. HOLDER: As a matter of fact, I do.

SENATOR EWING: Will you give it to the ladies over here, please? (indicating)

Thank you very much.

It is now 7:15. That is the last speaker we are going to have this evening.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: No problem.

SENATOR EWING: The next meeting will be on March 5 at Technology High -- March 5 -- starting at 4:00.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Mr. Chairman, may I just--

SENATOR EWING: Yes. Hold on just a minute.

Assemblyman.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: You didn't start until 4:30.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: I just want to have something read into the record so that it's on record in case we can't be here again a month from now.

I want to thank Senator Ewing for coming, first of all, and for bringing the Committee here. But I hope that we seriously listen to the concerns. I hope that the members who had to leave will read the record so that they will be able to understand what's going on here in Newark. I hope that the members of this Committee don't just take this as a meeting where malcontents were here or people who are just mad because of this or mad because of that who came down, but legitimate complaints of people from the City of Newark.

I hope, also, that when a person like Pat Bradford says that parents can't use the Resource Centers, that we investigate it. That when people say that we have roach infestations at our schools, that people investigate it and

correct it. I hope that when people like Don Mann from Prudential says that “We’re spending a million dollars, we don’t think the State should take \$50 million from the City of Newark,” I hope that has enough credibility that the State won’t come in and take \$50 million from the parents of the schoolchildren of Newark.

Thank you very much for coming out. Thank you all. (applause)

SENATOR EWING: Good night, everybody. Thank you for coming out and for the input you’ve given us.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)