
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“The Committee will be receiving a comprehensive overview from invited guests of the state of the Paterson School District with testimony to include fiscal and budget information; the fulfillment of contractual obligations to administration, faculty, and professional staff; facilities and teacher sufficiency for current and anticipated students; and the teacher sufficiency to meet curriculum mandates. The Committee will also be receiving an update of Paterson’s compliance with QSAC with the intention of returning to local control”

LOCATION: Eastside High School
Paterson, New Jersey

DATE: April 19, 2016
11:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Sheila Y. Oliver
Assemblyman Gary S. Schaer
Assemblywoman Shavonda E. Sumter
Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly

ALSO PRESENT:

Rebecca Sapp
Chief of Staff



Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

SENATE

Hon. Ronald L. Rice
Co-Chair

Hon. Diane B. Allen
Hon. James Beach
Hon. Nilsa Cruz-Perez
Hon. Samuel D. Thompson

ASSEMBLY

Hon. Mila M. Jasey
Co-Chair

Hon. Ralph R. Caputo
Hon. Betty Lou DeCroce
Hon. Sheila Y. Oliver
Hon. David P. Rible
Hon. Benjie E. Wimberly
Hon. David W. Wolfe



JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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MEETING NOTICE

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools

**FROM: Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Co-Chair**

The Joint Committee on the Public Schools will hold a meeting on Tuesday, April 19, 2016, at 11:00 a., in Paterson, New Jersey, at Eastside High School.

The Committee will be receiving a comprehensive overview from invited guests of the state of the Paterson School District with testimony to include fiscal and budget information; the fulfillment of contractual obligations to administration, faculty, and professional staff; facilities and teacher sufficiency for current and anticipated students; and the teacher sufficiency to meet curriculum mandates. The Committee will also be receiving an update of Paterson's compliance with QSAC with the intention of returning to local control.

Members of the public are free to address the Committee with their concerns of the Paterson School District.

The public may address comments and questions to Rebecca Sapp, Chief of Staff, at 609-847-3365, or by email at Rsapp@njleg.org

Issued March 19, 2016

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY (Co-Chair): Good morning.

I apologize for being a little late, but I wanted to make sure that my colleagues were able to be here. There were some traffic issues.

It's a pleasure to be here in Paterson. We have wanted to have this hearing of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools for some time to shine a light on what's happening here and to find ways to support the Paterson School District -- the students, the parents, the staff.

My name is Assemblywoman Mila Jasey; I am Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools with Senator Ron Rice, who regretfully cannot be here this morning.

I'd like to start by asking Principal Moody to come up and greet you. We had a wonderful tour with him earlier. Eastside has a very proud heritage. We saw the Hall of Fame; very impressive. And we would like to support him and his colleagues in their efforts to continue those traditions.

Principal Moody.

PRINCIPAL ZATITI K. MOODY: Good morning, and thank you, Assemblywoman Jasey. Good morning to all.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

PRINCIPAL MOODY: On behalf of the administrative team here at Eastside High School, under the direction of Dr. Karen Johnson, Principal of the School of Government and Public Administration -- please stand (applause); Ms. Vivian Gaines, Principal of the School of Information Technology -- please stand (applause); Mr. Edgard Nieves, Principal of the School of Culinary Arts, Hospitality, and Tourism (applause); along with

myself, Zatiti Moody, Principal of Operations here at Eastside High School (applause), we welcome you all to Eastside High School, the home of the Mighty Ghosts.

This morning we are pleased that the Joint Committee has chosen our school and our community to discuss this extremely important issue of public education. Under the direction of our Superintendent and leader, Dr. Donnie Evans, we have made some significant strides in the right direction. That deserves a round of applause. (applause)

It is our hopes that the dedicated legislators like yourself will continue to work to ensure that we, as dedicated educators, committed educators, continue to secure the much-needed resources to continue our climb to academic excellence.

On that note, we welcome you all again to our hallowed grounds of Eastside High School.

But before I turn the program over, we would like to thank a few significant people for today's exceptional setup. Mr. Alan Knight, Paterson Public School's Technician Coordinator (applause); Ms. Cheryl Williams, Paterson Public Schools Secretary to the Board of Education (applause); and last, but not least, our Chief Custodian, Chief Anthony Vasquez, who helped us this morning with our setup. (applause)

At this point, I'll turn the program back over to Assemblywoman Mila Jasey.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you very much, Principal Moody.

I would like for my colleagues to introduce themselves briefly; and then we are going to hear from the Superintendent, followed by the Paterson Board of Education, the Paterson Education Association, and then several others who have signed up to speak.

I would like to ask everyone, after the Superintendent gives his presentation, to keep your remarks as brief as possible so that we can respect everyone's time. I know that some of my colleagues may have to leave before 1:00, so we would like to get in as much testimony as possible.

All testimony is recorded, and we will have written copies of that testimony at a later date.

So I'd like to begin to my left, with Assemblyman Schaer.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

My name is Gary Schaer. I don't have the pleasure to serve on the Joint Committee under your leadership, but I do have the privilege to represent the 36th Legislative District, which includes the City of Passaic, where I live. And it's a great pleasure and honor to be with you here this morning.

Thank you, Madam.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, and I think we should note that Assemblyman Schaer is the Chair of the Budget Committee. And I am especially grateful that he accepted my invitation to be here this morning.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Good morning; my name is Sheila Oliver. I represent the 34th Legislative District, which includes East Orange, Montclair, Clifton, and Orange.

I often describe that the best education I got was the seven or eight years I spent as a member of the East Orange Board of Education. I served as its President and I served as the Chair of its Personnel Committee. And I think anyone who has served on a school board really understands the challenges that public school districts are confronted with.

It's always a pleasure to be at Eastside. I tell you, the ghost of Joe Clark is always here for me. (laughter) So I'm glad to be with you this morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Speaker Emeritus Oliver.

Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Good morning, Paterson.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: It is great to take a 10-minute ride instead of an hour-and-a-half ride to come to a hearing. (laughter) I sit on the Budget Committee with Assemblyman Schaer, my Chairman; and we're doing a lot of highway work lately.

But I'm glad that we could be here today to really put a face on the issue of public education and the things that we're facing here in the City Of Paterson. It's a little bigger than dollars and cents; it's a little bigger than buildings. It's about kids, it's about families, and it's about our futures. And I think until you're able to understand where we come from -- and this 8.4 square miles and over 150,000 people -- that you will not understand, in particular, the dire need for full funding for education. In particular, I'm fighting here in the City of Paterson for what is not -- we're asking for that which is duly what we deserve.

So the issue -- I sit here on this Committee with Assemblywoman Jasey and Senator Rice -- is that we not only give a fair and efficient education, but we give our children, regardless of their zip code, a chance in life.

Thank you, and I'm looking forward to the hearing. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman Wimberly.

And right on cue, Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter. I'll give her a moment to catch her breath. (applause). She is Assemblyman Wimberly's partner, and they represent the City of Paterson.

I'd like to start with a few opening remarks regarding a number of topics that impact the children and schools of Paterson. The central issue that we're here to discuss, once again, is the State's failure to fund the SFRA, or the School Funding Reform Act. And just as critical, to talk about the fact that the State has -- we have not fulfilled our responsibility to "do no harm" in distributing State aid. It still mystifies me that the State takeover districts, where the State has been in charge -- not just here in Paterson, but in Newark, in Camden, in Jersey City -- are hurting so badly. We need to run the formula and create a rational way to allocate aid to districts when the full funding is not available due to revenue losses.

It can no longer be a decision just by the Department of Education or the Governor. The Legislature has created a fair funding approach, and it has yet to be run and evaluated.

Nowhere in the initial legislation did it say you can't fund the formula, and you say that if you can't fund the formula you can ignore it

completely -- which is pretty much what has been happening in the last several years.

I also want to reiterate my comments from the last Joint Committee meeting in December regarding charter schools. I have never been anti-charter or anti-choice; but rather, I am deeply concerned about what is happening in the competition for funds between our regular public schools and our public charter schools. We see it in the Paterson budget and in the Newark budget. There is a negative impact on the children in the community of these districts from the transfer of funds from the school district to the charters in such large numbers. The Department has failed to give the Legislature a comprehensive evaluation of the charter school experiment here in New Jersey, which is over 20 years old. So I would like to see that evaluation, especially in light of the stress -- the fiscal stress that we find our districts in.

Yesterday there was another court hearing on graduation requirements for this year. It has been reported that the administrative law judge said there is no disputing that New Jersey violated the statute in deciding to use PARCC as a graduation requirement. However, we don't have an answer for that. And with graduation only a few months away, we need to deal with what we have.

I am pleased that the Commissioner has committed himself and his staff to supporting districts to make sure that all students who have completed the required courses will have a way to graduation so that they can walk on time. But my understanding is that there may be as many as 600 seniors not on track to graduate here in Paterson, and I hope that this will be clarified by our presenters today.

In ending -- summing up, the Joint Committee on the Public Schools is a Committee that is charged with oversight of all of the public schools in New Jersey. And it has been difficult to know what is happening when we cannot get all the answers we need to make sure that all of our children are receiving a thorough and efficient education, no matter their zip code.

So it's our intent today to get more information to find out how we can support the District, how we can support the staff, and, most importantly, the students in the City of Paterson.

And with that, I would like for Dr. Evans to come up. Did you want to bring anyone with you, Dr. Evans?

D O N N I E W. E V A N S, Ed. D.: Yes, my Deputy Superintendent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

And when you hit the light, the little green-- When you hit the button, the green light goes on and we can hear you. The other mikes that you see in front of you are recording for the transcript.

DR. EVANS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Members of--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Is your light on, the green light?

DR. EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

DR. EVANS: Is that better?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: That's much better, thanks.

DR. EVANS: Madam Chair, members of the Joint Committee, it is a pleasure to host this meeting of the Joint Committee. This is at least the second time, perhaps the third time, we have hosted you in the past

seven years. I've been here almost seven years; in fact, one month short of seven years. And I know you were here in 2013, and we met at International High School. It is a pleasure to host the Committee again and to share with you not only some of the challenges that we have, but some of the successes we are also experiencing as a school district.

Let me formally introduce my Deputy Superintendent, Ms. Eileen Shafter. And she obviously works closely with me in leading all that occurs, and happens, and is planned in the school district. And I have in the audience additional members of my staff, including my Chief of Staff, Jacqueline Jones. Where did she go to?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Right here.
(applause)

DR. EVANS: Ah, there she is.

And then Daisy Ayala, our Business Administrator (applause); and then Terry Corallo, who is our Executive Director for communications, if you will, and also my Special Assistant. (applause) And I know there are other staff members; and the problem of introducing people, you always leave someone out. And there are other distinguished folks in the audience, including members of our Board, who will be addressing you; representatives from the PEF. I think they're going to be addressing you as well, and one or two other organizations.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes.

DR. EVANS: And I appreciate their being here, not only to share their thoughts, and their issues, and their concerns, but to support the District and the work that is occurring here.

It's good that you are doing this, in my opinion, at Eastside, because Eastside really is the symbol of school reform in Paterson. We started the work that is taking place -- or has taken place, actually, and continues to take place -- as it relates to restructuring our schools; in some cases, restaffing our schools, implementing reforms to bring about significant improvements in academic and other outcomes for our students. And Eastside is symbolic of that. As Mr. Moody indicated, there are three schools that reside in this building. That was one of the first steps that we made. We took a large comprehensive school and divided it into three smaller schools; and he identified the themes represented with those schools. And as a result, academics have improved significantly; test scores have gone up significantly. The culture has changed -- a number of changes that are too numerous for me to mention in the short time that I have.

So I'm extremely pleased that you are here in the symbol of reform -- school reform in Paterson.

What I would like to do now is to take you through a brief PowerPoint that will provide an overview of some of the kinds of things that are happening here, and then some of the outcomes that we're realizing, and some of the challenges that we have -- including the fiscal challenges that we have and I know you're interested in as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Dr. Evans, I apologize.

DR. EVANS: Yes?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: When you mentioned the fact that you might miss people, I just realized I did not give Assemblywoman Sumter a chance to say hello. So if you don't mind--

DR. EVANS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: --I would like to remedy that and then we'll get right back to your presentation.

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Madam Chair, thank you very much.

And to the Committee, it's always great to have you in the great City of Paterson. Speaker Emeritus Oliver -- always good to be on this dais with you; Budget Chair Gary Schaer; to my teammate, Assemblyman Wimberly -- thank you for being the champion on education for us here.

To my community, thank you for coming out this morning. I think it's important that they hear from you. Assemblyman Wimberly and I have been at the table for the three terms that you've sent us back to Trenton. This is an issue that crosses cultures, that impacts our economics, that impacts our public safety. So I just extend my appreciation to you for coming out today; and please make sure you share all the sentiment that I've heard from you throughout the years, and all your concerns with this Committee, because we do have the ability to make policy change.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

Dr. Evans, thank you.

DR. EVANS: Thank you.

I know each of you have a copy -- a hard copy of the PowerPoint; but the screen also will display it. So you can follow me in the hard copy, or I hate to inconvenience you by asking you to turn, but it's your pleasure in terms of how you would like to view it.

(Dr. Evans refers to his PowerPoint presentation)

Going into the PowerPoint, from the beginning -- I'd like to call attention to the kinds of things that we put on the covers of products that we develop. And I want them to be symbolic of what we are about, as a school district. And those youngsters graduating, as illustrated in that picture, is symbolic of what we are about -- getting our students to the finish line. But not only that, getting them ready for college and careers, which is our vision which you'll hear me talk about. So a lot of thought goes into all that we do, including how we are represented.

And this represents actually the areas that I'm going to cover, which are some of the challenges and obstacles. And I'll begin with some challenges, and I'll end with a big challenge -- the fiscal challenge. Our strategic plan -- talk about some of the transformation objectives and initiatives that are underway, and then some of the outcomes that we are experiencing. And then as I mentioned, review some physical challenges that we currently have as a school district.

There you have a listing of our School Board members; I think you are acquainted with most, if not all. And they serve tirelessly to both ensure that we are accountable for what we are doing; that they are advising what we are doing; and making sure, obviously, that our students are getting what they need.

This is a slide that represents our District -- it's one of two slides that represent the demographics of our District. Our total student population, how we break out with some of our special programs, how we

represent ourselves economically in the free and reduced lunch is typically an indicator of economics in school districts. And then staff in schools.

There you see the distribution of our kids by ethnicity, and I think everyone is familiar with the ethnic distribution of our district.

Some of the challenges that we've faced historically -- and that list typically is a longer list. But we've overcome a significant number of those challenges, so it gets shorter and shorter. However, we still are confronted with issues associated with academic outcomes. Even though we've experienced tremendous success as it relates to NJASK and HSPA over the years, we now are faced with similar challenges, as we did seven years ago, as it relates to PARCC -- and that's improving significantly the performance of our students -- and other outcomes, including communications, attendance rates, facilities, and so on.

A reminder that we have several schools that are represented either as *Priority* or *Focus* schools, which is consistent with the waiver that the New Jersey Department of Education continues to enjoy from the U.S. Department of Education. And there is one school I want to call attention to there, and that's School 28. While it continues to reside on that list, we feel very strongly that once the hold that's been placed on any movement is released, School 28 will come off that list and perhaps even become a Reward School. Academics have improved there such that we think it's eligible for Reward School status.

But for the time being, we see the schools that are identified as such, as *Priority* and *Focus* schools.

This caption from the *Star-Ledger* we think is illustrative of some of what's happening here. And this particular one speaks to the

breakfast after the bell -- 93 percent. I think we're still the district with the largest number of students across the state that benefits from his program. And I don't need to tell you the impact of ensuring that our kids are fed; that they get healthy meals. Too often we've had youngsters come into school hungry, and that impacts on their performance in the classroom. And so this was a big step for us, and we see tremendous changes in our students in terms of their health, but also in terms of their performance in the classroom because they're not sitting there hungry because they didn't have breakfast in the morning. And they also benefit from free and reduced lunch as well.

Our vision, as I think most of you know, is to be the leader in educating New Jersey's urban youth; and we're serious about that. Our mission, obviously, is to prepare them for success in college and careers. These are our four priorities that you heard me talk about before. It's not by accident that effective academic programs are number one; that's what we're about -- ensuring that our kids have access to effective academic programs that address their needs, regardless of what those needs are. And you see the others that get at school culture -- ensuring that we have, as researchers will tell you, a healthy school culture. And then family and community engagement; and an efficient and responsive set of district operational departments and functions that take place across the district. And there are goals aligned with each one of those four priorities.

Drilling down even further, though -- the work that has been taking place in the past four years has focused heavily on what I refer to as the *seven major drivers* of the work in the Paterson Public School District -- starting with building healthy school cultures and climates. We want

cultures and climates that are inviting to parents to come in and participate with the professionals -- the teachers and administrators -- in the education of their children. Efficient and responsive district operations -- it's critical that we have a strong support system in the form of district office staff and operational functions to support the work that's taking place in our buildings.

And I'm quick to tell my staff that we don't teach math in our Central Office building; we don't do those things that directly touch kids. That occurs in the school. Our job is to make sure those people in the schools have what they need. And that's what we mean by *responsive in district operations*.

Implement teacher and administrator evaluation systems: AchieveNJ, as you know, has unfolded in recent years. That has impacted on our work, and I'll share with you some outcomes as it relates to that. And we're still refining the outcome as it relates to new teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Implementing the Common Core, or what will become the new New Jersey Core: I'm not sure if the name will change, or the reference will change. But I know you're familiar with the work that's taking place in the Department of Education as it relates to the standards.

Implement high impact academic interventions for low performing students: We have ensured that we have in place programs -- high impactful programs that are research-based and outcome-driven for our lowest performing students, to accelerate their achievement. And that's what that refers to.

Strengthening the district's assessment system: Everything that we do academically is driven by the data -- an area that we continue to refine in terms of how effective our entire staff is commanding the skill sets necessary to both interpret -- understand and interpret the data, but then translate that into strategies in the classroom; which may mean a different academic strategy, which may mean different approaches, different methodologies that teachers use in the classroom. The data is very, very important to us. And then we obviously use that data also to make management decisions.

Building capacity: If you ask me what the most important item on that list is, it is number seven: building capacity among staff. Research continues to be very, very clear that the number one factor impacting student achievement is the quality of instruction in the classroom. And that's why teachers are a major target of our capacity building. And I will say to you that our teachers have stepped up to the plate and are responding in some very, very positive ways to ensure that they have command of all the methodologies and approaches necessary to help our students to succeed.

That same research will tell you that the leadership in the school is the second-most impactful factor on student achievement. And as a result, principals and vice principals are a major focus of our capacity building.

And then obviously at the-- As I've already mentioned, to support the work in the schools, we must have a strong support system at the District Office for professional development, for whatever the function

is to ensure that, again, the teachers and principals in our building have what they need to get the job done.

And displayed a different way, you see those seven major objectives across the top, and you see some of the major activities underway in the district that are aligned with each one. You have -- or you should have a copy of our Annual Report -- a hard copy. Each one of those is described in detail in this document, so I won't take the time to go through each one of them. But you have that and a lot more in that report.

Some of the outcomes that we've realized -- and again, Eastside is at the top of the list in terms of the restructuring that has taken place. There are three schools here. A couple of years later we followed that with restructuring John F. Kennedy into four small learning communities. And then you see other attributes of our high school program that occurred. All our high schools are Choice schools. When students are in the 8th grade, they identify their top three choices of high schools they would like to attend. And when ultimately decisions are made as it relates to where they go, we seek to give them their first choice. But unfortunately, we aren't able to give all of them their first choice; most of them are relegated to their second choice. Rarely do we have to ultimately give them their third choice, because either their first or second typically takes care of that.

We extended alternative high schools because we have a number of youngsters, for whatever reason, who the typical environment in our high school isn't necessarily equipped to meet their needs. So we created environments where those needs could be met. We call them *alternative high schools* and, in some cases, they're not your traditional alternative high school. They all focus on academics, and obviously

whatever the needs of the youngsters who are there, drive the programs for those schools.

At one of our high schools -- actually, at JFK -- we had the first curriculum-based student-operated credit union that is very functional and very successful. Effective schools were taking place. Similarly, we restructured some of our elementary schools and use a different approach. And restructuring includes restaffing, by the way; I didn't mention that. When we restructure a school, we actually restaff it. We give the staff that's there an opportunity to apply to stay. And when they demonstrate that they really want to stay, then they're rehired back into that school. I need to clarify that.

And you see elementary schools that we've similarly restructured. One of the best moves that we made was to institute the full-service school model across the district. And it not only treats the child, but the family -- family services that are required to help our parents better interface with the school, to better help their children prepare for school is what that's about.

We ended social promotion. Our youngsters who don't meet the mark by the end of an academic year -- meet the mark in terms of performance on an interim assessment that we use -- are required to come in for a summer program if they expect to be promoted to the next grade. They have to demonstrate proficiency at the end of that summer program in the areas that they are required to come for. It could be math, it could be English Language Arts, depending on their grades.

We've done some restructuring of processes and procedures; and then building-wise -- it's been a struggle, it's been a huge struggle -- but

finally the SDA is helping us with our facilities needs in ways that they had not. We had gotten help, but we wanted new schools because we do not have enough facilities in our district to house all our students. And so their response to that, at least in recent years, has been the construction of two new elementary schools and one new middle school. The two new elementary schools will open this fall; the new middle school will open in approximately two years. And then a building was acquired by the SDA for a swing space that will ultimately become an additional site for high schools, because our high schools are also crowded.

Now, I don't want to suggest to anybody that that's enough. Again, we still have youngsters who reside at that school, at least, in facilities that don't meet 21st century learning standards; that are well over a hundred years ago, and have been suffering from decades of deferred maintenance and need work -- either renovation or new construction. And so we continue to lobby and petition both the Department of Education and the SDA to continue to help us with those needs.

This, among other things, we're very, very proud of. One of the challenges that ultimately led to the district being under State control had to do with fiscal management. We have made tremendous, tremendous progress in that area; so much so that one of the auditors commented a couple of years ago that we've had the best audit ever since the District has been under State control in 1991, and we continue to improve in that area.

And as a result, one of the outcomes has been that the District was awarded Fiscal; Fiscal was returned back to the District, along with Personnel. A year-and-a-half ago, Operations was returned; and we're

working very hard now to earn back the other two that remain -- Instruction and Program, and Governance.

And then similarly, I mentioned AchieveNJ. One of the outcomes of the work of AchieveNJ is the development of a pay-for-performance system that's in place for our teachers, and that briefly provides an overview or snapshot of what that's about. And all of our teachers are impacted by the new contract that was approved a year-and-a-half ago that includes these provisions. And it also enables us to do some different kinds of things with Turnaround Schools and hard-to-fill positions.

We also just signed a pay-for-performance agreement with the principals as well. And many of my staff was already -- including Superintendents; I've been under a pay-for-performance agreement for seven years now. I came in under a pay-for-performance. So ultimately I'm getting everyone aligned in terms of the kinds of things that need to happen, ultimately, to improve student achievement -- is what that's about; that's the focus. How are we impacting on student achievement?

And then these are some of the headlines -- some of these I've already mentioned -- that, again, continue to represent the good work that's taking place in our district. And, in fact, the second bullet there -- this coming Monday I will be presenting to the U.S. Department of Education the product of work that was funded by them to develop a computer simulation of life as a principal. It's a training tool that will be used first locally, but then nationally, to train principals of Turnaround Schools. And we were identified nationally as the district here, in this region, to do that work. Similarly-- And that work actually involves Dr. Dale Mann, who is

Professor Emeritus from Columbia; it involves Seton Hall University, with Dr. Osnato. But just after we benefited from that, a second grant -- that also is helping us in different ways as it relates to training our principals through the Turnaround model -- was just awarded to William Paterson University. So we're benefitting from it in two ways.

And you see the other kinds of things that are artifacts of the work that we're doing here.

I mentioned that, under HSPA and NJASK, we've demonstrated significant improvements; and some of you have seen this before because some of this data goes back in time, so I won't go through that. I won't go through it in as much detail as I did previously when I talked with you. But we did continue to experience improvements in HSPA and NJASK.

And then here you see the NJASK outcome as well, including the most recent science data. And you know, obviously, that we're no longer using HSPA and NJASK. And this is, again, a continuation of that.

PARCC was just administered for the first time a year ago; and our youngsters are taking PARCC today for the second time. We were one of the districts among the test group two years ago when PARCC was field tested. So for us, it's the third time. But nonetheless, as this information would suggest and you already know, the PARCC data did not necessarily represent the same kinds of outcomes as the previous tests -- the NJASK and the HSPA. It is considered a baseline. But I noted a couple of things to take into account, particularly when you look at our test data for high school students. We lose approximately 1,000 -- maybe more -- of our high school students to Passaic Tech. It's an opportunity for them to apply, and

the students apply. And if they are accepted, they go there. And those are typically our highest performing students. So I always have to explain that to folks when we talk about our elementary performance versus our high school performance. Then we have to take into consideration that we lose the cream of the crop, so to speak, as it relates to our high school students. Nonetheless, our high school students have done exceptionally well, and I'm very proud of them.

And these are the actual data by grade on PARCC. And this is PARCC English for the grades that were tested -- grades 3 through 11. Similarly, you have the math performance as well for grades 3 through 11. And you have those tables in the PowerPoint that you have.

There are, as I call it, rays of sunshine. One of them is that a Paterson Public School was the highest performing school in Passaic County in the areas that are noted there -- in math, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th. And then in Language Arts -- English Language Arts, if you will, 3rd, 6th, 7th, and 8th. And we're extremely proud of that. When you look at all the schools, regardless of the district that they're in in Passaic County, our School 28 was the highest performer on PARCC in those grade levels.

And then, similarly, our graduation rate continues to improve, and you see the improvements from 45, using the same methodology in 2009, to 78.2, most recently. Or, seen another way, you get a sense of the growth that we've experienced.

There was a comment made earlier with regards to the impact on the new graduation requirements, particularly under PARCC. Right now, there are still options for graduation rates. PARCC isn't the primary tool that's being used. We're only required to use PARCC -- I think it's

2019 now, the date-- I think it was 2018, and now it's moved to 2019. And so there are other measures, including SAT, ACCUPLACER, and a number of other tests that are being used. And so we are still very hopeful that we'll see the kinds of growth in graduation rates that we've seen over the past few years.

In addition to that, two of our high schools had 100 percent graduation rates. The Academy of Health Science, with is HARP -- I think many of you know that reference -- had a 100 percent graduation rate this past year for the Class of 2015. And Rosa Parks, for the second consecutive year, experienced a 100 percent graduation rate.

And we have experienced improvements in the college-going rate as well -- particularly the four year colleges, which has been the primary emphasis. And each one -- the two-year and the four-year -- has gone up. And we're extremely proud that we have the first Rewards School in Paterson, which is HARP. That recognition was shared with us earlier this year, during the winter, and it demonstrates the kind of growth that occurred there academically among students and staff.

Funding -- and I'm going to say more about funding, which is a huge challenge for us right now. But we've not sat by idly and waited, if you will, for some of the responses that we would have desired, as it relates to our request for additional funding. We've sought funding, mostly from the Federal government; but from private providers as well, or foundations and others from which we've benefited for additional funding. So over the previous five years we've generated \$38 million in grant funding. And this is competitive; these are not entitlement grants. We've competed with other school districts and, in some cases, states to earn these funds. And

one example is the Turnaround grant that I alluded to earlier, as well as grants for full-service community schools. So we've been trying to close the gaps in any way that we can, including going out and pursuing funding through this vehicle.

And there's another group that's not represented here that I want to recognize as well. They're known as the Paterson Funding Group -- I think that's the appropriate reference -- and they are private providers or funders who have provided additional funds, beyond what you see on that list, to support the work in many of our schools and in many of our programs.

Fiscal challenges: Last year, actually, was especially problematic and challenging for us. This year was even greater, in terms of the challenges that we were presented. Unfortunately, while the cost of goods and services and salaries -- much deserved salary increases for our staff -- and declining fund balances were occurring, the costs of goods and services continued to go up. And we have needs that are problematic. And so we've had some serious, serious challenges in trying to close the gap as it relates to the funding -- that we need to operate the programs, that we need to operate to help our students to improve -- and what we get.

And you see the impact that it's had on staff. Last year we reduced more than 500 staff at the District and school level. And this year, it was fewer because we cut more programs than staff this year; that was the reason for that. And you see the major cuts in staff were more at the District Office level than schools. I made the commitment that we would preserve, to the extent that we could, the positions that were in place at our schools and, in large measure, we were successful at accomplishing that.

This slide -- again, you have that in the material that you have. It provides the actual numbers for the past two years, including this year, and then what's anticipated for next year. In fact, that is -- those represent the actual figures for the coming year by category. And you can see the various categories that funding is awarded to us.

And seen another way, this provides, actually, again, a pictorial distribution of funds coming into our District from State aid; from SEMI, which is a Federal program that reimburses a lot of the work that takes place with some of our special programs; for related services; fund balance; local taxes; and so on.

And this slide is even more enlightening. This slide represents a number of programs that have been impacted because of the funding reductions that we just most recently had to make, to have a balanced budget to submit to the Executive County Superintendent and to the New Jersey Department of Education. And I've categorized them there; they were categorized for a different reason. As we were asking for money, we were being asked, "What's most important?" Well, those are the emergencies. However, we need all of it, so everything is challenging. And those are programs that we had to cut out or reduce significantly going into next year.

And I mentioned -- I alluded to earlier that we have a number of high-impact interventions for our lowest-performing students to help accelerate their growth -- their academic growth. And many of those programs represent those. So that intervention, if you will, is being seriously compromised for our students. And there are other goods and services and special groups, like libraries-- Last year, unfortunately, we had

to cut librarians. And we avoided that this year; in fact, we've been working hard to put them back. It's hard to tell kids, "You need to learn to read," but yet we don't have someone in the library to help them select books and ultimately do what's necessary to support reading instruction in the classroom.

I always conclude with this reference from Ron Edmonds. I had the pleasure of meeting him; some of you, I think, knew him when he was in this area. But I had the pleasure of meeting him in the early 1980s before he died. And I actually heard him deliver that quote in an AASA conference where he was a major presenter. And I learned a lot from him in just that one setting.

"We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that," and I think that's clear. The researchers will tell you: We know how to teach kids and teach them in a way that they will learn, that they will acquire the skills that they need to succeed -- whether it's in careers or whether it's in college. "Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

And that concludes my presentation, Madam Chair. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Dr. Evans.

At this point, I'd like to invite my colleagues -- if you have questions or comments that you'd like to make, that you would like for Dr. Evans to respond to, now is the opportunity.

And we'll start to my right this time.

Assemblywoman Sumter.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Sure; thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.

If you don't mind -- because I know we've had some challenges with the cuts to the classroom -- how many of our schools have classroom sizes that are over the average amount -- over the 22, 25 students?

EILEEN F. SHAFER: I would say at least 25 percent have over the average class size. And that's not in every single class in those 25 percent, but it is there in those schools.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Right. So I just want the Committee to recognize that, while we move to responsive district operations, with the cuts that had to be made because of budget shortfalls, it impacted the classrooms. And we still have schools that do not have certified teachers assigned to them but are using substitute teachers. Is that correct?

DR. EVANS: Yes, in that particular case. And in fact, in all the cases where we use the substitute, there is a position approved for that position, but they are in critical shortage areas for the most part -- like English Language Learners and special ed. Those are the two big areas, and they are in very, very short supply. But those we actually have dedicated funding for those purposes, but were unable to find staff -- certificated staff to come in.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Sure. Because the concern with that is, it's now April and the school year's over in June. So we've gone an entire school year without them having a stable teacher in those classrooms. You've had permanent substitutes or a combination of--

DR. EVANS: Well, what we did was to take supervisors who are certified in the area and put them in the classroom to teach the class.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Okay; thank you.

And then, to the other point of-- And I'm sure my colleagues will have questions as well -- the concern for the school buildings and leasing them out to charter schools while we do not have enough space for our current student population is also a concern. I'm not sure of the logic behind that; it may be a budgetary stopgap for that purpose of leasing the space out to charter schools or independent entities.

DR. EVANS: The District has not committed any of its facilities to a charter school. There are two facilities that we are leasing that we're getting out of the lease. And those will be sublet -- the owner is key to that step. I know that there is a charter school entertaining one of those buildings that we are leaving and moving our youngsters into a District-owned facility. Because of the new acquisitions that I alluded to, we're able to move students around and we're able to move some students out of a leased facility into a District-owned facility. So it's the facilities that are owned by somebody else that that conversation is taking place. But the District has not committed any of its facilities to a charter school.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Okay, thank you.

And for School 28, is that the Gifted and Talented School?

DR. EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Right. So hence, our test scores are exceptional; and they have been for years, if I'm not mistaken.

DR. EVANS: Yes, that's correct. Well, they've gone up. They didn't start where they are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Okay.

DR. EVANS: Now there is a mixed population at School 28; but the largest population is Gifted.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Okay, great.

And then, lastly for me -- while our students graduating from the elementary schools are looking to go into the high schools, it is concerning the rate of students who want to go to the Passaic County Vocational Technical Institute School. That's a County-based school. Our offices get calls continuously around this time for students who were not accepted, so that means that Paterson Public Schools is a second choice versus the first choice for them. However, we always encourage them that where you are, you can excel. So really, making our academies become comparable to whatever is happening at PCTI-- That our talent wants to leave the public school systems and go there, versus stay here, is a concern.

And then if you could, at some point, probably, send back to this Committee-- You mentioned the -- or your slide has the funds that have come through that are outside of State budget, but they pretty much end in 2017.

DR. EVANS: Correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: So if there are any other dollars that you have that you all have applied for -- if you can provide that information to us as well--

DR. EVANS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: --that would be great.

DR. EVANS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.
Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Chairwoman
Jasey.

Thank you for the presentation, Dr. Evans, Deputy
Superintendent Shafer.

Just to get right to the meat of it -- I mean, we are well aware of
this \$186 million fiscal cliff, which was over a five-year period. And last
year's numbers -- it just seems like they hit us after our hearings, after
budget, everything else. And the main reason appeared to be that we did
not adopt the 10 percent tax levy. Would you say that is the reason why
we faced the cuts we faced last year?

DR. EVANS: Last year? You're right; we did not implement a
tax levy, and that did impact on the budget.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So the impact of us not
accepting a 10 percent tax levy -- where a city has been taxed, and
overtaxed, and taxation without representation -- resulted in 175 teachers
being laid off, 116 aides, 154 positions unfilled for teachers, and 14 aides
unfilled. And I know some people came back.

Now, this year I find it very hard to believe that this
Administration and the City Council will accept any tax levy increase. And
just for the record -- and for my colleagues, just so they know -- our tax
increase -- our property tax increase, since 2011, during the Christie
Administration, has been: 2011, 29 percent property tax increase; 2012, 3.5
percent tax increase; 2013, 9.9 percent tax increase; 2014, 5.2 percent tax

increase; 2015, for the first time we met the cap at 2 percent; and this year, we're looking at approximately a 7 percent tax increase which, of course-- You're looking at County, I believe, is 1.4 percent.

I mean, the argument from the people of Paterson, is that we've paid our fair share of taxes. So now for you to say that you're reducing something-- You know, I saw that in the paper the other day. That is so insulting to the residents of the City of Paterson. You're not doing us a favor. You've already underfunded us by \$281 million, you know? And now you're saying that, "Well, if you don't accept this tax levy" -- whatever -- "that the number that you've come up with--" What is the number, just for the record?

DR. EVANS: What? It's \$2.5 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: It's \$2.5 million. And then they break it down to, "Oh, well, it's only \$75 per taxpayer." Well, *only* is-- When you have 2,800 abandoned houses, houses in foreclosure that's a lot of money. When you have senior citizens living on fixed income, and people who are on fixed incomes with a median income, I think, under \$34,000, that's a lot of money.

So our argument -- which we will hear Commissioner Hesse tomorrow in Trenton -- is that we have paid our fair share of taxes. So I don't know how anybody can say that Paterson is not paying their fair share of taxes. And like I said, I will be disappointed if the City Council agreed to a \$2.5 million tax levy. We shouldn't pay any more at all.

Now, with these cuts that we face this year, you're talking about a population that -- I don't know why people don't acknowledge -- is

growing. We're 8.4 square miles; we have well over 150,000 people here. I think your number is 28,000 kids over on the school district.

DR. EVANS: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And you think about 54 buildings. You compare that to the funding of other cities that, I guess, are comparable. We have more students in our school district than Jersey City.

DR. EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You know, we have obviously more than Camden. The only other city that has more kids than us is Newark. So you look at the funding, and you look at what other people are getting, and you look at the amount of people, and you look at the amount of staff. It doesn't add up.

Assemblywoman Sumter hit something also with PCTI. Now, PCTI -- and I hear the argument all the time; obviously, it's a great institution. I have no problems with it at all. But what kind of funding are we losing when we send our kids to PCTI and then, October 30, they send them back to us? What is the number there?

DR. EVANS: Is it \$42 million?

DAISY AYALA: (off mike) (Indiscernible)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Can you come to the mike?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Can you come to the mike, please?

MS. AYALA: We currently have 1,622 students going there, at a total cost of \$19 million for the next school budget. So if students come back to the District, what they do is they give us an adjustment in the subsequent year.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: When you say *adjustment*, can you explain to us what that adjustment is? The loss -- I mean, my concern is, how much money are we losing?

MS. AYALA: We get money back, but we don't get it for this year; we'll get it next year. So if 500 students come back, we'll get that money back next year.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay. And we get the full funding back the next year?

MS. AYALA: No. If they attended the school 25 percent, we'll only get 75 percent of that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay, thank you.

And the main reason they come back -- is it discipline, would you say, or attendance?

DR. EVANS: Or failure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Or failure; okay.

A couple more questions. When you look at the overall funding, and you look at the PARCC -- the technology piece, when you're talking about Wi-Fi, computers, laptops. You have buildings like School 14, which is over a hundred-and-something years old, I'm sure; I don't even know how that works out with the PARCC exams. How much money is it costing us, with this budget shortfall, for PARCC testing -- additional funds?

DR. EVANS: Well, this year the number is relatively small. Last year, we made a tremendous investment; between \$5 million and \$6 million in terms of computers alone, and then an additional investment in infrastructure. And we actually saved some money by partnering with

Passaic County Community College to join -- I think it's NJEDge, is the reference. And we are a part of that network which provides us bandwidth. But between the technology -- the computers themselves, and then the changes to the infrastructure -- probably upwards of \$7 million, \$8 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: For this fiscal year?

DR. EVANS: No, for last year.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And what is this--

DR. EVANS: This year, we're not-- I would say between \$1 million and \$1.5 million this year, additional, because of peripherals and additional computers that needed to be replaced. But we staffed up. We purchased significantly more computers last year, and so we didn't have to buy as many this year

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay. And just quick, because I'm going to pass this on to somebody else. But quickly -- what is year three, four, and five looking like in the fiscal cliff, when you're talking about additional cuts? So we're talking about 300, 115; do we go up, do we go down in year three, four and five?

DR. EVANS: We go up, in terms of need.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Meaning that if we're not fully funded-- I mean, we're going to be in a position that our classrooms will be overcrowded.

DR. EVANS: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We're not going to have enough staff.

DR. EVANS: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And in turn, it will impede our children's ability to have a fair and efficient education. Is that fair to say?

DR. EVANS: Yes, that's fair.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So things can get worse.

DR. EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: All right; thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.
Assemblyman Schaer.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: Thank you, Chairwoman.

And let me thank you again for your kind invitation to join with our colleagues here today.

As Chairwoman Jasey had mentioned, I have the privilege to work closely -- very closely with Assemblyman Wimberly on the Assembly Budget Committee. The Committee, in fact, will be meeting tomorrow morning with Commissioner Hespe. And one of the reasons why this gathering is so very, very important to me to join, at least for a few moments -- and I apologize for having to leave early -- was to get a better understanding of why we're in the condition that we are and, more importantly, how do we get out of the condition that we are. Because I think that all of us universally would agree that the children of Paterson, the children of Passaic, the children of every municipality in this county and this state deserve the same thing -- and that is an opportunity to succeed. But that opportunity to succeed does not become realizable when there are too many kids in the classroom; when there are not enough

qualified instructional personnel; when our teachers are not given the ability to do what they do best -- to teach.

So I thank you for allowing those questions to be asked. Assemblywoman Sumter and Assemblyman Wimberly have been, in the past few years in Trenton, carrying the flag of Paterson like nobody else in any other community -- like no other community. They've done a yeoman's job.

But we find ourselves now in a particularly difficult situation. And the important thing is to make sure that we don't have a race to the bottom. We have Atlantic City, we have Newark, we have other communities in distress, as well as Paterson. And we need to make sure that focus is on every one of those municipalities, and not just one of them, or two of them, or three of them. And I will tell you I have the privilege to live five miles away from where we're sitting today. Forgive me, I'm bad with geography. But I live in Passaic City, and Paterson is just up the road. And what affects you here, affects me in my town as well.

This is an item which Speaker Oliver, for as many years as she has been in the Assembly, has been fighting for and has tried to bring attention to, and doing an amazing job. And Chairwoman Jasey, in her position as Chairwoman of this Committee and her other work in the Assembly, has been phenomenal.

So we have some great minds here -- on Paterson's part, on the government in Trenton's part. But we need to figure out a way to make things work. Obviously, the ultimate focus is on the ultimate beneficiaries -- and that is the children of this community, and ensuring that they have the same opportunity that every other child has. Right now, I don't think

that we can say that. And more importantly, right now I don't think that we can say that the Governor's Office seems to have any answers to the questions that we have, and that's especially disconcerting. I don't mind being told that it's going to take me a year, or two years, or three years to realize the goals. What I mind is that there is no plan to get there.

I think you've made some admirable steps in Paterson. I think that more needs to be done. One concern and interest that I do have, Chairwoman, is perhaps trying to create some sort of a small summit of many of our urban areas to figure out why some of them seem to be prospering relatively, and others not as much, and what lessons can we learn and what things can we do together.

And just a final note, and then I apologize for taking so long. One thing is painfully clear to me as well, and that is that we get things done when we stand together. Paterson needs to stand together; Paterson needs to reach out; Paterson needs to make sure that it joins with Newark, and East Orange, and Passaic, and every urban community in the state. Because only by standing together can we achieve what we need -- not for ourselves; this is not about us. But this is about our children, and this is about the future of our communities and the future of New Jersey, I would suggest.

So thank you so much for allowing me to join with you today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Yes.

Thank you, Co-Chair Jasey.

I just have several quick questions. We know that the Department of Education and the Governor have committed to expansion in charter. What is the current enrollment in charter in Paterson? How many students are currently enrolled in charter schools in Paterson?

DR. EVANS: Approximately 1,500. Ms. Ayala?

MS. AYALA: (off mike) More like 2,000.

DR. EVANS: More like 2,000, she says.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: All right. So you have not become a poster child for charter like the City of Newark has.

DR. EVANS: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Okay. So you're in good stead so far.

And I, like other members of the Committee have voiced, have no opposition to charter education; I have no opposition to alternative forms of education. I believe that there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all in education. However, what I am vehemently opposed to is utilizing the funding that goes to our public school systems to support charter education. (applause)

And interestingly, I was contacted by a colleague from the other side of the aisle the other day. And we share certain sentiments. And hopefully what we can see in the next several years in Trenton is some creative and innovative ways of supporting these alternative forms of traditional public education, but not to the detriment of our public schools.

The whole building issue -- and Assemblyman Schaer was absolutely correct when he said that Assemblypersons Sumter and Wimberly have kept us very informed in terms of what is happening here in

Paterson. And when you look at a District that has been controlled by the State of New Jersey for 25 years, I'm very happy to see some of the outcome data you have provided us with. But there's a lot of discussion going on at the DOE and in the Governor's Office in terms of restoring local control to Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson. And one of the things that I have expressed to leaders in those communities -- we certainly don't want you to get it back with a \$186 million deficit. (applause). And, you know, I find it intriguing that Newark faces these types of fiscal challenges; Jersey City-- And now the State, after a quarter of a century says, "We're going to hand control back." I think it is very important for Paterson to stand in unity with Newark, and with Jersey City, and with other educational advocates in this state, because we should assume local control when a check comes with it -- not giving it back to you when you've got these horrific challenges. Because just as you have experienced 600, 700, 800 staff reductions in the past two to three years, you're going to be challenged with that going forward. And I feel that it occurred on the State's watch, and it needs to be repaired on the State's watch. So that is something I'm watching very, very closely.

This issue of the capital improvements in the District. You have been shortchanged, in my opinion, in terms of school facilities. And who knows what's going on with the SDA. We don't hear a lot from them; we don't get straight answers in terms of funding going forward. And for Paterson, that is going to be an issue going forward. We do need to provide these children with 21st century school environments. It makes a difference. And for a child to be excited to get up and go to school every day, he or she needs to be in a bright, shiny, conducive environment. And I

have visited schools in some of these urban districts with mushrooms growing out of the windowsills. So these are issues that we have to stand strong and vigilant in; we have to.

One of the things you're doing very well -- I want to commend you on some of the educational outcomes. I'm interested in knowing if you have examined awarding college credit to students for courses that they would take during high school. Because the challenge -- and I'm looking at your graduation rate, I'm looking how many are going to two- and four-year institutions -- but when you also look at the socioeconomic conditions in our community, our kids are going to be hard-pressed to be able to afford a college education. That's why I believe we should look at ways of awarding them college credit while they're in high school and looking at creative ways of financing their education. And I don't know how many young people in Paterson find that their choices are limited, post-secondary, because of the affordability issue. And I'm very proud that Assemblyman Wimberly has gone on his campaign of promoting historically black colleges and universities to students in Paterson. Because the earlier our young people know about entry into college, the earlier they maybe have a pathway.

But I'm interested in hearing about this whole issue of post-secondary. No doubt the vocational school systems all across the state -- I'm from Essex -- knocking the doors down to get into voc schools. But I don't know if that is a matter of facility -- or is it curriculum? And if it is curriculum, I think we have to reexamine what we can competitively offer in our traditional high school programs to compete with those vocational schools and the kinds of curriculums they offer young people.

DR. EVANS: If I may?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes.

DR. EVANS: We do have dual enrollment; it's very limited at this point -- where the college professors actually come to our schools and teach the courses. And in fact one of the conversations we're having now is how can we expand that in the area colleges and universities. But it is very limited and needs to expand.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: And I'm going to finish up with this. Everyone knows the explosion in cultural diversity in Paterson. And you're going to be pretty much like Jersey City -- a hundred different dialects spoken in Jersey City these days. What has been the challenge for you in terms of young people entering the system with limited English proficiency? And has the State kept pace with giving you the financing that you need for that type of instruction in the classroom?

DR. EVANS: It is a big challenge. In fact, we opened a Newcomers school several years ago because of the large number of completely non-English speakers coming into our district. And the purpose of that program is to give them a command of English and then, ultimately, as quickly as we can, transfer them to their home school; because the school that is being used as the Newcomers program is in the central part of the city and may not be in the child's neighborhood. But our goal is to get them out of there -- teach them English, get them out of there, and into their home schools as quickly as possible.

In addition, we have a very, very large bilingual program. The total enrollment is roughly 3,700, 3,800 youngsters who are in either of the two programs -- bilingual or the Newcomer's program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Thank you, Dr. Evans.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I think you have summed up a lot of the issues that I was sitting here thinking about, making notes about. And I appreciate that.

I share your concern -- and I've expressed this before -- that the State is happy to give back control with huge financial deficits and all the issues that are caused by that. And I think it's important for you to know that we stand with you on making sure that the District is healthy -- financially and in every other way -- as it transitions back to local control. Which, as a former Board of Ed member myself, I support.

I want now to move on to some of the other folks who have signed up because, as we stated earlier, our time is somewhat limited.

But before we do, before you leave, Assemblyman Wimberly wants to ask a couple more questions.

DR. EVANS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And then following that, I'd like for the Paterson Board of Ed representatives to come forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And a number that just stood out, and that we didn't get an answer for -- the 600 students who may not be graduating this year because they haven't met PARCC requirements or the other requirements -- be it through SATs, ACTS -- is that an accurate number?

DR. EVANS: At this point, it is. As of today, it's probably smaller, because we've been intervening in a very significant way.

One of the things that's happening is that transcripts are being rereviewed by high school counselors and others in the school to determine if indeed a youngster who was initially identified earlier in the year still is in

that position. The initial information I'm getting is that the number is going down. And then whatever opportunities-- And it's usually a function of either the high stakes tests that they're taking or something else beyond. In a few cases, it may be course work that they need to complete.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: What will be the new process for a child to graduate? I mean, that's an alarming number; we all would have to agree that if we have-- Even if it's 300 -- half of that -- that's a problem.

DR. EVANS: Yes. And when you say what will be the process--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: What will be the process for them to meet the graduation requirements?

DR. EVANS: Well--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I know in the past you had different requirements. But under this--

DR. EVANS: Yes. The new requirements are, in addition to meeting academic requirements -- passing the appropriate number of courses -- then there are a variety of tests that youngsters can take. Before it was HSPA, and then there were alternatives to HSPA if, indeed, there were some unique and special circumstances.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Now, if they don't meet these requirements, will they have to repeat their senior year again? And would that be one of the requirements for them to complete the year?

DR. EVANS: It depends on whether it's course work or the tests that they don't pass. If they don't -- if they didn't meet the requirements in terms of passing the appropriate number of courses, then

they would have to continue and take those courses. And there's an option to that. We have summer programs; we have an expansive Twilight program where youngsters can come to school at night as well. If it's the test, they have to continue to take the test until they pass. They don't have to come back and attend classes, unless it's a test remediation class.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Now, one of the options is the portfolio process. Is that still in place?

DR. EVANS: Portfolio is still an option.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay. I mean, it's an alarming number, and I think that should be a concern of everybody.

So through the Chair, if you could keep us updated on the Class of 2016. I mean, that's something that we need to know, moving forward.

DR. EVANS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That if we have the number of 600, or 500, or 400 not graduating because of PARCC-- I mean, it's more of a reason for us to continue to fight that PARCC is not a good test. As you know, I think we're only one or two states left still using PARCC as a requirement for graduation -- which originally was 30-plus; now we're down to two. So obviously there is a concern with PARCC.

And I know in your cuts -- courtesy busing. If you cut courtesy busing, what would be the impact in the school district?

DR. EVANS: The impact really is on more our Choice programs than anything else. We have a rather extensive Choice program. I mentioned the high school programs, and the problem really isn't for the high schools, because what we typically do is give them bus passes -- the city

bus, and they take the city bus. But for elementary students, if they are assigned to, let's say, Alexander Hamilton, for example, or some of the other schools that they can choose into, then transportation has traditionally been provided, depending on where they live.

And we have been, in our case -- beyond those unique circumstances, have reduced the--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Doctor, not to cut you off. On the grammar school level, what is the number that the impact will be? I mean, high school, as you said, you could give bus passes; but I don't know if anybody wants to give a 7, 8, even a 12-year-old a bus pass. What's the impact on the number of--

DR. EVANS: You mean, the number--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: In grammar school, yes -- if you cut courtesy busing.

DR. EVANS: I don't have the exact number with me. It's a large number, because we have a big Choice program.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And that's a concern. I think the community should be aware of this because the fact is, is that if we don't agree to this tax levy, our kids, are going to lose the busing -- they'll learn as the school year is out -- to the Alexander Hamiltons and these schools. So that is a major, major safety issue, you know? And you know we have latchkey kids still. But we don't want our kids walking from 10th Avenue all the way down to Van Houten Street to go to school. So I hope the State keeps that in mind, and that's one of your arguments, as a State District Superintendent -- that this becomes a safety issue by cutting the courtesy busing.

DR. EVANS: It is; it is a safety issue. And I have communicated that. In fact, in our staff meetings we talk about the safety issue and have made some adjustments -- not to the extent that we want to, because that will require additional funding. But we have made some adjustments with regards to the miles from school to where the youngster lives, which takes care of some--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Which is pretty universal in every district.

And the last thing is -- and I see the success of the Gifted and Talented program. I recently read an article in the *New York Times* about black boys and Latino boys being left behind in this process because how are they evaluated to get in the Gifted and Talented program.

DR. EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I will forward you that article; I believe I shared it with our School Board President. It's something that you have to look at. We have to do something. You know, I'm very excited about the success of the Gifted and Talented school, School 28; but when it comes to black and Latino boys, at an early age we need to identify them. It may not be through the testing process; I think that's what the article is about. It may be through verbally testing them, and maybe through different things. But we have to do something when it comes to retention, and identifying our Latino and black boys to make sure that they're successful academically.

I know, as an administration, you have addressed this in the past; I've heard much about it. But this is where we're going to have success when you talk about public education. Because when you look at

the dropout rates, when you look at the crime rates, when you look at all the things that we're doing about delinquency, it's going to come back to our boys of color. So please, please -- I really urge you to address this, and I will look at -- I will get this article to you. I believe it's the state of New York, I think, that addressed this issue; and that there are gifted and talented young kids who just -- we don't know if they're gifted and talented. They just have a different way of learning, and we need to look at them.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And one more -- or a couple more questions from Assemblywoman Sumter.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: I'll only make it a couple more, because I do want us to hear from the other folks who signed up. I do think they have a lot to offer.

But if I can request that you submit, Dr. Evans, to this Committee the General Fund revenues from 2010 to the present -- the slide that's on our sheet, page 18 -- to show what the State aid was, SEMI aid, fund balance, and so on -- miscellaneous local taxes -- so we can see the trend and where it falls.

DR. EVANS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Thank you.

DR. EVANS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you very much.

Christopher Irving, President of the Paterson Board of Education; Chrystal Cleaves, Vice President of the Paterson Board of Education. I don't know if there are others with you, or just the two of you.

Thank you very much, Dr. Evans and your colleague,
Assistant---

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Shafer.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Shafer; thank you.

Okay, green is on. (referring to PA microphone)

C H R I S T O P H E R C. I R V I N G: Thank you, Assembly Chair; and to the Assemblymen and women who are before us today, I want to welcome you to Paterson. I want to thank our great Assemblymen and women for pushing to have this hearing here in our great city.

I do want to recognize, before Vice President Cleaves and I continue, two of our colleagues who are here. We have Commissioner Errol Kerr, who is with us; one of our long-standing Board members. Commissioner Kerr. (no response) Commissioner Kerr. (no response) I'm showing you some props, some love. (laughter)

(Commissioner Kerr stands)

There you go; all right.

And we also have Commissioner Oshin Costillo, who is with us as well.

My name is Christopher Irving; I am the President of the Paterson Board of Education. I will speak first, and then you will hear from my more articulate and my better half on the Board of Ed, my Vice President, Chrystal Cleaves.

And what I want to do -- and I will be very brief, because again, as an elected servant, the parents who signed up here I think are the real people you need to hear from. Because it's their testimony; it's the life that

they're living, the children they're educating, that I think many of us are here to listen to.

But what I do want to be frank and say, is the Board has enjoyed a very great working relationship with Dr. Evans; but he is still the State District Superintendent. And I think Dr. Evans' report was a much more PG version for the status of really where we are in this District. I want to offer a much more PG-13 version for where we are and where we're headed.

And where we're headed is down the fiscal cliff and a fiscal shortfall of no return. And I want to be very frank with that. You know, we face a fiscal reduction this year, a hole of \$30 million. We're projected next year to have a shortfall of roughly \$80 million to \$90 million. Over the last two years we've cut back staff by 400; we've made significant reductions to fill that \$30 million gap this year. And while we did not cut schools -- and I commend the Superintendent for that -- we had to cut services. And so I'm looking at you all, dead in your faces today, and I'm telling you, if you find yourselves in the same position where we are now, next year -- where we are flat-funded; where the cost drivers for having to operate our District continue to rise; where charter schools-- There are several charter applications, Assemblywoman Oliver, in the works. If charter schools are approved, if our facilities continue to be dilapidated as they are now, this District will be bankrupt next year. And I want to be very clear regarding that bankruptcy. There will be no place to cut, there will be no teachers to reduce, and there will be no schools to close. I, unfortunately, will still have to service 32,000 young people.

It is a serious nature that we sit before you here, before you today, to request that this Committee, through the Assembly and the Senate, through this local Board and our community, petition the Governor and the Commissioner of Education to take a very hard look at Paterson's fiscal crisis. And it is, indeed, a crisis.

To be flat-funded and to not receive the appropriate aid under this SFRA has had an adverse impact. We have exhausted our fund balance, we are -- do to higher increases every single year. We are unfortunately in a position where we are not able to hire the staff we need because many folks-- And Dr. Evans is right. Many educators don't trust that they can be hired here and keep their job in the next year. And if you're 19, 20, 21 and you just graduated college, are starting your career in education, and you know Paterson, for two years, has laid off or RIF'd staff members -- that's of great concern to me.

And so I see why we're not finding the right staff and the right people to stick around and to be here to support our children.

Our challenges are steep. They are a joke. Assemblyman Wimberly and I have conversations almost every morning regarding some of these issues. Assemblywoman Sumter and I have had dozens of conversations regarding our problems. But I'm sitting before you today, with my community behind me, and my elected officials and colleagues here, and I'm telling you things are in horrible shape and we are in peril in our Board of Education. We've made some great strides -- great strides over the five, six years I've been on this Board. But those strides are at risk; they are at detrimental risk with the lack of funding. The more we cut, the less we can give our kids. And our children deserve the most possible.

Let me just say one thing before I pass it on to Commissioner Cleaves. I am the product of a hybrid education. I went to private school for eight years, and then I went to public school for high school. And so while I am an advocate for choice, I am a believer that all parents should have the opportunity to educate their children the way they see fit -- not the way I determine, not the way that you determine -- but the way they see fit. But the funding formula for how charter schools are funded is a concern, and it is a problem, and it needs to be addressed. It needs to be addressed because it's actually pitting communities against each other. Remember, charter school kids are still our kids; charter school parents are still our parents. And so what we have now is a system where we are putting communities against each other, and that is the worst position to put community members, to put elected officials in. And unfortunately, I don't think that the Commissioner or the Governor can understand that because they are unwilling to sit here and really spend the time necessary to listen to parents.

So I'm going to step back now, and I am simply going to say I hope that this conversation is a longer conversation that we have together. Because if not, we will be sitting before you at the Budget hearing next year telling you that it is just impossible for us to run a District operation in the current fiscal condition we have.

I thank you for being here; I thank you for your time, I thank you for taking time out of your schedules.

I also want to thank the parents and the community members who are here who took time out of their busy schedules to be here. Our community has rallied behind this Board, over the last seven months or so,

in an effort that I hope will garner and boast a new level of support for what education in Paterson should look like.

And so I say humbly, thank you to our community for being here, and I will pass it over to the Vice President.

Thank you very much for addressing us.

CRYSTAL CLEAVES: Good afternoon.

I will be brief. And what I am about to say is nothing new to any of you. You've heard it, you've heard it this morning, you've heard it previously, and you will continue to hear it after today.

I'm addressing you on behalf of the 29,000-plus children in this District and their parents. Our biggest concern is the underfunding provided to us from the State who has run this District for -- now entering the 25th year. The law states we have to provide a thorough and efficient education, but that's not possible because of the lack of financial resources we receive from the State. We're not asking for additional funds; we're not asking for someone else's budget. What we have asked for and what we have requested is what's responsibly due to us.

So I'm asking this Committee that you work with us as we take back our schools. As an elected School Board Commissioner, it is very disheartening to advise parents that my hands are tied due to State takeover. But what's more disheartening is when a parent then says to me -- their next question is, "Then why did we elect School Board Commissioners if you can't do anything?"

I thank you for allowing me to speak. I look forward to collaborating with all of you for the betterment of the Paterson Public School District; but most of all, for the betterment of all of our children.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

And I hear -- I think we all hear both of you loudly and clearly. And this is not the end of our involvement with finding ways to support Paterson.

Would any of my colleagues like to ask questions or make comments before we go to the next? (no response)

Thank you very much, and thank you for serving.

MR. IRVING: Thank you.

MS. CLEAVES: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Next up, John McEntee and Charles Ferrer from the Paterson Education Association; who will be followed by Pastor Kenneth Clayton of the NAACP. Is he here? (no response)

If you would introduce yourselves, and then your comments.

J O H N M c E N T E E Jr.: Hi, good afternoon. My name is John McEntee, and I'm the President of the Paterson Education Association.

My colleague--

C H A R L E S A. F E R R E R Sr.: Good afternoon; Charles Ferrer, First Vice President, Paterson Education Association.

MR. McENTEE: I represent over 3,000 of Paterson's finest public school employees. It is a pleasure to welcome you to Paterson this afternoon. We truly appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with you.

Part of my job as President is to visit with the staff at their worksites. Respectfully, I would like to share with you my largest concerns affecting the members that I represent. Please keep in mind that my

members' working conditions are Paterson Public Schools' students learning conditions.

First, one of the union's largest complaints has been the abundance of staff vacancies throughout our School District. Last year, over 300 employees were laid off due to budgetary constraints. The ripple effects of those layoffs are still being felt today. For example, at one point this school year, School 21 reported anywhere from 10 to 12 vacancies. These vacancies placed a tremendous strain on all of the School 21 community. If Paterson had been provided the money that it was entitled to under the law, those vacancies could have been filled in September.

Make no mistake, as we travel to different worksites throughout the District, vacancies have been a common thread each and every time we visited. Think about it: How many students were robbed of the opportunity to have a regular, consistent teacher in their classroom, when all they were given was a per diem or long-term substitute?

Next, the union is extremely concerned about the lack of funds available to properly update our schools. As we tour through each school, we observe schools that lack 21st century technology, dilapidated facilities, and inadequate teaching supplies. Many of these problems were not solely caused by the current Administration in Trenton. However, it is the union's position that these problems have never been so poorly addressed. Our students deserve the same state-of-the-art facilities that our other suburb neighbors currently enjoy.

During my visit to the Boris Kroll School, I was enamored with the student artwork that decorated the halls. Any visitor who took the time to admire these student projects knows that surely each project has its own

story to tell. As you are well aware, the arts are a chance for our students to show expression, release anxiety from State testing, and for some, a path towards a career. Unfortunately, the arts in Paterson are usually the first areas which are subject to budget cuts. Instead of investing in a well-rounded education to ensure that students grow up into strong, publicly minded responsible adults, we waste millions of dollars on test-drill-repeat -- over and over. When we invest in testing instead of our children, who are we enriching?

The State-occupied District of Paterson Public Schools is looking down the barrel of financial ruin. Please ensure that our students are not the collateral damage for millions of dollars that the State of New Jersey has misspent in Paterson.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you. And if it's possible, could you give us a copy of your remarks so that we get them into the record?

MR. McENTEE: Absolutely; I brought some. I brought them for you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: All right, thank you.

MR. FERRER: Good afternoon, everyone. I will be brief.

My questions are very simple. I look at the funding formula with all that was put in place. I remember how it was negotiated down in Trenton to replace what was in place under Governor Corzine. And I look at the law that says that, "This is what we're supposed to follow; this is what we're supposed to enforce." So my question is real simple: If it's the law, why are we not enforcing it? Our legislators created the law, and I am

requesting that you hold the Executive Branch's feet to the fire to make sure that the law is followed to the letter of the law. If that's done, then we wouldn't have the issue of sitting here talking about the money that we're not getting.

I agree with the Assemblyman from Passaic when he talks about. "We should all stand together." And I have a list -- a partial list that shows how people in the last school year were funded. It shows -- nothing against Jersey City -- that they only were underfunded by a little over \$600,000. But then when you flip on the opposite side and you look at Newark -- \$131 million; Paterson, \$68 million; Union City, \$67 million -- and it goes on, and on, and on. All of these districts are entitled to the funding to provide that education -- a thorough and efficient education to the children of their community. And we missed the boat because we're not following the law.

It's simple. One of my simplest recommendations -- and I filed support behind it; some people don't want to hear about it -- but my position is, since our obligation is to take care of our children first, then we have to take care of charter schools second. So I found in Pennsylvania, in Upland County (*sic*), they're not sending their money to the charter schools because of the strangle that it would have on their own school children. So they're taking care of their first responsibility, which is what I encourage Paterson to do: Take care of their children, and then we'll say to the State, "The money that we need to send to the charter school, that's the money that you're holding up from us. So we want to be in compliance with the law -- unlike you -- and we want them to get their money. So could you

send it to them?” Because our first obligation is to our children. Every district should think about that.

Commissioner Irving talked about that we’ll soon be bankrupt. There was an article from a board member from Plainfield who talked about, if Plainfield continues to give money to the charter school that they need for their school district, they also will be bankrupt. And all this is coming down because we’re not following the law. It’s that simple.

Why are we being asked to follow the law if others are being able to look away and do whatever they want? So I’m at the point now, if we just break the law for this one year the Governor is still up on us by six years of breaking the law. We finally have to take a stand.

Someone has to begin to do the same thing that they did in Pennsylvania -- take a stand, do what’s right for the children, and then maybe the State will wake up and do what they’re supposed to do.

They took oaths to do this. If they can’t uphold the oaths that they swore on a Bible to uphold, then maybe they need to step down and someone else needs to take their place. The law is the law.

We’re asking you to enforce what you created, on the Governor and the Commissioner of Education, so that not just the children of Paterson, but the children throughout the State of New Jersey get the money and the education that they’re entitled to.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, John.

Now we’d really like to hear from parents, beginning--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Excuse me, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Oh, I’m sorry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: I'd like to make one comment to Mr. Ferrer.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Something that I think is very important for parents, educators, and everyone in the state to know is how the State Constitution works. There have been successive years of members of the Legislature making appropriations in the budget once the Governor has presented his budget to us in February. But under the State Constitution, this Governor has the ability to line-item veto any budget that the Legislature places back on their desk.

You need to know that the Legislature gave full support to Senator Pou, Assemblywoman Sumter, and Assemblyman Wimberly in restoring, through a bill and in the budget, an appropriation for Paterson. It was placed on the Governor's desk, he line-item vetoed that appropriation, and he vetoed the bill that Wimberly and Sumter authored.

I think it is important to understand the power we give when we make a Governor of the State of New Jersey. The Legislature does its part; but at the end of the day, the Constitution vests the power with the Governor.

I wanted that to be on the record, because the legislators who represent Paterson certainly, certainly did what they needed to do, as Legislators, to try to restore that funding to Paterson.

MR. FERRER: I agree with you 100 percent, and we appreciate that. And that's why I said we need all those districts coming together, because if he sees that all of these people are coming at the same time -- and one thing that most politicians pay attention to is the voting population.

So if it's not just Paterson, it's everybody coming saying, "We want what we're entitled to," he's going to pay more attention.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: I hate to disappoint you -- but he will not. (laughter)

MR. FERRER: Well--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: So what I challenge you to do, as a citizen of this state, is be vigilant when we elect the next Governor of the state.

MR. FERRER: Oh, trust me, we will. (applause)

MR. McENTEE: Trust me, we will.

MR. FERRER: She might be sitting right up there. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Before you leave, Assemblyman Wimberly has--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes, Mr. McEntee and Mr. Ferrer, I just want to commend the Paterson Education Association. Because what's been also lost in translation of the financial difficulties is the commitment of our educators. I mean, we worked, I believe, four years without a contract, and some feel that the contract that was -- came to agreement, really was not to the best benefit of many of our educators. And as Commissioner Irving said, many of our best and brightest have left us because of the status of our financial situation in the City of Paterson.

So you have great educators from the City of Paterson all over New Jersey and not here in Paterson because of their concerns of keeping a job or being here.

So I just want to commend the PEA for the job that you're doing, and to continue to fight.

And for the record, we did put a bill in for \$19 million, and it was vetoed. So please know that we will continue to fight for whatever additional funding. And as I stated, even with the charter funding that Newark received -- that was one of my questions that I already sent in. If we received an additional \$35 million, that would get -- a major budget shortfall for us, you know? So, I mean, that is a major issue. And just stay on top of us, and let's work together.

Thank you.

MR. McENTEE: Thank you very much.

MR. FERRER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

And we will also continue to support you, through your representatives.

All right; we would like to hear from parents. I understand, unfortunately, one had to leave already. But if Margarita Gutierrez is here; Daina Richardson; Val Freeman-Queen; Rainbow Williams; LaVonne Jones -- if you're here, please come up and take a seat. We'd like to hear from you, very briefly, because I also have a stack of people who would like to speak to us.

And thank you to everyone in the audience for making the effort to come this morning.

Okay; give us your name and your remarks.

MARGARITA GUTIERREZ: Hi, can you hear me?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: You need to stand in front of that one, or sit in front of them; I apologize.

MS. GUTIERREZ: That's okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And then hit the button; when it's green, it's on.

MS. GUTIERREZ: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Margarita Gutierrez. I have two children who attend Paterson Public Schools in Paterson.

Paterson is in danger. That means our children are in danger. If our students are not given the tools to be successful, they will be more vulnerable to the social woes that have affected many already. Education is a tool that could help them see the future from the better perspective -- to give them something to which to aspire.

We would implore you to compel your constituency to legally fund our school budget, as indicated in the SFRA, and return the balance of the funds that were cut.

(Ms. Gutierrez pauses)

I am so sorry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: That's okay.

MS. GUTIERREZ: And thank you for hearing me today, and I look forward to your favorable response to this request.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

If you want to pass your mike to the right -- to the young lady sitting to my right. If you would like to begin? Just introduce yourself.

V A L E R I E F R E E M A N - Q U E E N: Hi; good afternoon. My name is Valerie Freeman.

Thank you all for coming and listening to us. It's very important to me that you take the time out to come and listen.

My first point I want to touch on is something that Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly stated, and it's about the transportation. The parents in Paterson were given the choice for schools that you can send your child to. We didn't come up with that; we didn't make that up. The State gave us that choice. And it's important that the transportation remains for those school choices.

My daughter attends Alexander Hamilton, and we live on the total other side of the city from where she would have to -- from where I would have to get her to school. And I think it's unfair, and it's a safety issue, like he said -- I would never allow her to walk. But I have a driver's license; but my concern is not only for me, but also for other parents who may not have a driver's license, or may not have a car to get their children there. Then what happens to them? Do they go to their home school, where it's totally overcrowded -- and that they wouldn't get the quality education that they are already are not receiving? So that's important to me that the transportation is not cut from this budget.

Another point that I wanted to make is we need to understand that our children come from an economically depressed environment. The State should have a moral obligation to limit the suffering of students by being proactive in the establishment of the preventative academic services. I say this: We must be fully funded. I hear everybody saying, "They should, they should, they should." It is a right; and as a parent, I have to demand that for mine and others. I'm not coming asking, and begging, and pleading, because the State is breaking its own law. We didn't make the law up; the State made the law up. And right now, they're breaking their own law, and it's unfortunate that our children are suffering because of it.

But the parent that I am, I'm going to fight tooth and nail. And I'm demanding-- I can't even ask for it anymore, because asking -- we're not getting answers. So when we say that we *demand* -- and I'm demanding that we get the full funding that's due to us. It's only right that my child should have the same quality education that the surrounding areas, Clifton, Elmwood Park, Fair Lawn, Hawthorne -- she should be able to have the same education that they have. And she shouldn't have to worry about having a teacher's aide as her ELA teacher -- that's absolutely ridiculous -- for almost a half-of-a-year. It's not fair to her; it's not fair to her. She needs a certified teacher in that class, and I'm demanding it.

And the State is breaking its own law. And hopefully, the pastors who are bringing the lawsuit up against the State -- I hope they stay firm to it, and I want them to understand that there are families that will fight with them and will stand together.

And then also, I agree -- we need to join forces with the surrounding areas that are under State control so we can come as one unit and get what we deserve for our children.

And I thank you for hearing me, and I thank you for having me.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

L a V O N N E J O N E S M c E A C H E R N: Good afternoon. My name is LaVonne Jones McEachern, and we thank you for coming to Paterson today.

All the things that I had thought about saying, or I had written down to say -- my eyes have been opened in hearing the comments coming from the Assembly panel. And I now better understand what's happening.

My first thought was, since our Governor is -- he's very key on the Choice and the charter schools. My thing is, maybe we should get buses and send our kids up to Livingston, and then maybe we'll get some response -- because that's his home turf, so then maybe he'll take a second look.

But realistically, we keep doing this over and over again. And we understand the power of the vote is going to be key. But we also have to look at what we need to do in the meantime to get a new Governor. We have to look at that we have to take emergency efforts as was suggested -- we have to band with the group because it is a sin that we have to think about bringing a lawsuit. But that's what it says in our Constitution. A right, and it's sad to say, but that's what we're going to have to look at.

Thank you for supporting us; I ask you to keep supporting us. We have to get more people involved on the local level. I'm not trying to throw anybody under the bus, but I do have transportation experience and I've sort of offered that, I guess, informally because the transportation budget is key. I have unknowingly -- as a ghost author, I guess, would be a good term -- helped on some occasion with the bus routing. Of course, that was for my school; but I did do that because I do have the experience. And I also willingly offered that experience because this year it was a fiasco to farm out our transportation. So I'm putting that on record. I'm not throwing anybody under the bus, but I'm putting it out there. Because I have the experience; I've offered my services, and I guess I've sort of gone unheard. But it was a fiasco.

And the money that was sent to another county was a travesty. I called that county, because -- I was calling because when I saw the bus schedules, and when I was standing on the corner and my kid didn't get

picked up, I was on the phone. I even told the woman in Fairfield, “The only reason I’m not sitting at your desk right now is because I got rollers in my hair and a scarf on.” But the bus never came. And I called her on several occasions when the bus didn’t even come back to the school to pick up the kids. So I’m just putting that out there.

But we need to also make our budget transparent; and we need to cut where we have to cut to save money. But it has to be for the kids, and we have to look at that. I know that-- And this is another thing that was not said -- I am a taxpayer, and I pay some of the highest taxes in Paterson. And we know statistically 20 percent of the people cover 80 percent of the cost. That’s just a rule in the business world, and I came out of the business world. We have to look at people who are moving out of town. We are already talking about we’re on a fiscal suicide mission, and that’s where we’re headed. And every time a new sign goes up that a house is for sale -- that means there’s less money. So we need to do what we need to do, but make it count for the kids.

So hopefully we’re going to put all this together. Somebody’s going to be spearheading, I hope -- whether it’s the Board of Education, or whoever -- but we need to join with the other communities and show that we are not going to take this anymore, because it’s awful.

And we cannot stand by and keep meeting, and meeting, and meeting, and talking about it and never taking steps to get things done. We have to get it done.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

Are there any other parents who I called earlier who haven’t come up yet? (no response) Okay; so maybe they’re not here.

At this point, I have to apologize that I have to leave. However, Assemblyman Wimberly has the list of parents who have signed up, or community members who have signed up. And if the two pastors who signed up are here, make yourselves known; we do want to hear from you. Although I will not be physically present, it's all being recorded and we will get the transcripts from this.

My promise is that we will not -- this is not the end of this effort. It's taken us several months to get this hearing, and it's just the beginning. Because we hear you, and I think you really are at-- Unfortunately, you're the poster child for what's not working in terms of the State takeover districts. And that's not acceptable to any of us.

I also have an announcement. Did anyone lose this? (shows device) I'm not sure what it is, but it's up here. It might be an E-ZPass, I'm not sure, or an access card. So check your belongings; it will be up here.

Again, I sincerely apologize for having to leave, but I know that Assemblyman Wimberly and Assemblywomen Sumter and Oliver will more than meet your needs.

Thank you, and thank you to everyone who came here today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Assemblywoman Jasey, I would like to make a comment to the parents who are here.

I want you to know there is absolutely nothing wrong with litigating; nothing. You know, if you look historically, for our communities, 1954 is when we got the decision of *Brown v. Education*. If parents, and advocates, and public interest lawyers had not banded together, we'd still have segregated schools in the United States. We would not have the 31 special needs districts that receive extra financial aid from the State

Department of Ed if the late Marilyn Morheuser -- based on the court case that started right here in Paterson with the case that granted us extraordinary aid for communities that lacked ratables and did not have the resources.

So God bless the pastors who have banded together and want to collectively litigate this issue. There's nothing wrong with it; and most of the great social justice achievements that we've had, in this country and in New Jersey, are the result of litigation. So we will never, ever apologize for going to court and litigating.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes, Ms. Freeman, before we move to our speakers.

MS. FREEMAN-QUEEN: Okay. I just want to make a point that we try to hold these types of meetings at a time when more parents are available. Because of the time of the meeting, a lot of parents who wanted to be here -- they couldn't be here. And so if you would just take that into consideration -- that we should try to hold them at a time where most of the parents can be here so they can advocate for their children. Because there were quite a few who couldn't be here because they had to work and couldn't take off.

So in the future, if we want to just think about that when we hold the meetings like this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Ms. Freeman, I totally understand. But you have to also realize that we have a staff that works a regular 9 to 5 job--

MS. FREEMAN-QUEEN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --in the Legislative Office.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So if we have to do it as a community meeting with myself and the legislators from our District, we can do it that way.

MS. FREEMAN-QUEEN: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: But we would have to collaborate with the School District to have the sound system and things like that.

MS. FREEMAN-QUEEN: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So we're more than aware. And as you know, we're at your community meetings as it is.

MS. FREEMAN-QUEEN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We're going to move on to our next speakers. I'm going to ask each speaker to be mindful of your time. If you can stay within three minutes with your comments, and we will respond.

At this time we have Reverend John Givens. After Reverend Givens, we will have the rest of the people who signed up. And like I said, if everybody could stay within the three minutes, we'll be fine and we'll get everybody in.

R E V E R E N D J O H N D. G I V E N S: Thank you, Assemblyman, Assemblypersons. Thank you all very much, and good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Good afternoon.

REVEREND GIVENS: Truly we're very, very appreciative for your time and your effort with the concerns we have in Paterson within our School District.

First of all, my name is Reverend John Givens; I'm the President of the Paterson United Pastors Council. And I'm here today on my behalf, personally, and on the entire Pastors Council's behalf.

I don't think there is anything in my notes or in my head to say that you haven't heard already. So with that being said, I can be very, very brief. But I just want to highlight a couple of issues of concern from the United Pastors Council.

It has concerned us very much -- and Assemblywoman Oliver, you just touched on it -- come this June will be 21 years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, with regards to quality education. And it's painful that, in 2016, we're still fighting and debating quality education. We have serious concerns there.

We are concerned where they're ruling, from the State of New Jersey, of the *X* amount of dollars that is due us -- this School District. And our understanding is that from the court hearing and the formula which is used, *X* amount of dollars is due us. And now, this upcoming year, we have between a \$42 million to \$46 million shortfall, and the State owes us money. How can we have them pay us our money that's due us? Not only that -- to pay us our money -- the taxpayers of a tax have a direct reflection on the shortfall in the school budget, and the State owes us money and our taxes are being raised. If the State pays us what is due us, then we would not have to have that tax increases.

The other issue -- there is a couple of school districts that are overfunded based on the formula. So now you owe Paterson School District *X* amount of dollars, and other districts are overfunded. That's not right; that's not right.

So we're asking for an even playing field. Pay us the money that is due us. We have 21 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*; our schools are being opened up late; half of the year, substitute teachers; our qualified teachers are leaving the District because of economics. And we're being cut. We are-- Yes, we are in pursuit of legal action. We understand history, because we don't believe that the legislators of those other districts who schools are overfunded are going to vote with you guys, Assemblyman, to help us out to take money away. Now, they are overfunded, okay? So we are asking for consideration for our concerns.

And now we are also addressing a lead issue. We all know that everything that was built in America in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s has lead in it. So there's another issue that adds on to our pastoral council's desk with regard to education -- we also have the lead issue. And we are raising a community of uneducated kids. We ask for our consideration with regard to paying us the money that's due us; and we will be in the pursuit of our legal action.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Reverend Givens. And I thank the United Pastors Council for the initiative they are taking when it comes to our public education here in the City of Paterson.

And whatever has to be done, you know, you have our full support, as you have supported us in the past.

REVEREND GIVENS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

REVEREND GIVENS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: At this time, I'm going to call forward three more speakers, and each of you can take a seat. And as I said, if you could be mindful of a three-minute time period that we have for you.

We have Ernest Rucker from Save the Village; Victoria Oquendo, from the PTO School 6; and Waheeda Muhammad from the Grandparents Resource Center. I believe she left?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: She already left.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Is Ms. Oquendo here? Yes? Okay.

Mr. Rucker.

ERNEST RUCKER: Thank you.

At the beginning of this, I heard Assemblywoman Sumter state that she's been telling people about this meeting. Actually, I saw her -- I think it was Saturday, and it was almost imperative that we be here. So she wasn't *telling* us; she was making sure we got here. (laughter)

You know, during the 1960's Civil Rights movement-- I'm going to go a little further back -- *Brown v. Board of Education*. And then during the 1960s, we fought for civil rights. And many of us thought that the Civil Rights movement was over. We began to get some opportunities, advance ourselves. But this Governor -- and I am going to throw him under the bus -- this Governor is reflective of the fight we had in the 1960s. He has shown us his prejudice against urban cities and those school districts

that were taken over. I happen to be a Ghost; and being in this building, and at this table, is very important to me. We've had several issues that have been commented on, and I want to begin with our minimum standards of the promotion of our children. I believe we're still down at 60. A lot of our children are placed at this stage for various reasons. It's not just the buildings; it's the no books, no materials, the teachers. And this is getting worse and worse every year. And we're asked to advocate for full funding. That should be on the table, first and foremost, before anything. You cannot expect to give opportunity to children who are receiving the worst buildings, no materials, no teachers, and expect to have a good product that comes out.

Our prisons are better funded than our School District. And what ends up happening is, we are bringing out products from the School District who will end up in a penitentiary. No one is looking at that.

We heard earlier about the lead situation. We're talking about fixing the pipes; when are we going to evaluate those children who have been drinking this water for such a long time?

And this is another dead result of what we have coming out of our school system. We're promoting children going to the same county college who are now taking remedial classes at the college. This is unheard of; they're not prepared. Now, we don't have to throw anyone under the bus. All we have to do is walk down Rosa Parks, down Hamilton Avenue, down Broadway and you will see our school-age children on the street during school time.

So this District has a lot of work to do. We have to bring back those truant officers, or something of that nature, to find out where our

children are. I'm glad for the ones who come to school, but we have to get those who are not in school back into the schools.

Governor Christie -- I'm ashamed of him; I'm ashamed to be in the state that he's in charge of. And you're right; we have to look at this next election, because if we put anyone of that mindset back in that office, we'll be back at this table for the next 10 years talking about the same thing.

I want to thank you, Assemblyman Wimberly. Both you and-- There's no disrespect when we call Shavonda, *Shavonda* or Benjie, *Benjie* when we talk to them so much--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: It actually is, according to Assemblywoman Elease Evans. I don't know if that's vital. (laughter)

MR. RUCKER: But I want to thank you, truly thank you. We speak quite often. And I want to thank you for the dedication and commitment you've shown to this District. We can always disagree, but it's so beautiful when we can agree that you guys fight very hard for the 35th. And I might even vote for you one day; I'm not even sure, all right? (laughter)

Guys, thank you so much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you. I want to thank my Republican friend, Ernie Rucker, for being here today. (laughter)

MR. RUCKER: Oh, let's not start that. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Fine. And we know of the lead testing -- Dr. Evans, you can correct me -- I believe we have something in place with the City, as far as free lead testing for our students.

DR. EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So that's something that you could, offline, talk to Dr. Evans about.

MR. RUCKER: I will.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I believe they're providing free testing. It's something that we cannot take lightly, and that's a whole other meeting within itself.

So thank you, today, Mr. Rucker.

MR. RUCKER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Ms. Oquendo; please.

VICTORIA OQUENDO: Good afternoon.

I'm here today to piggyback off of my constituents and parents, with respect to demanding.

I am not here today asking for privileges. We have what has been given to us by God, called *unalienable rights*. And according to the New Jersey Constitution, the children do have a right to a quality education. According to the Constitution, they have a right -- and I have the statutes in front of me -- to adequate facilities and equipment. They also have a right to be treated fairly. Students cannot be discriminated against on the basis of color, race, creed, sex, or national origin.

I need to remind you, the United States is a corporation. The Board of Education is a corporation. I know that corporations can only contract with other corporations. Our children are not corporations. They are live, breathing, flesh and blood beings who are sent daily into antiquated and dilapidated schools.

We have a shortage of teachers, security guards. Children are being assaulted in the bathroom at School 6. We have 52 schools and 7

nurses. The nurse who is in the Public School 6 -- she does not fill out incident reports; our children are being injured with no document record.

With that being said, our children -- because of the demographics and where they reside -- they constantly are in flight or fight mode. Eventually, that breaks down the body. Our children live in what resembles war-torn areas. We have two confirmed lead contamination cases. And I made an open public document request and I have tangible proof, and I'm reading memos that show they knew since 2003; and I'm sure it goes way back before that. I have the documents of dialogues. And you failed to disclose -- which violates the School Ethics Act. You have the ethics, you told us; we found out by way of Facebook. The children are still drinking from the fountains; our children's spirits are being broken; their inner child is being damaged, and we know it's the inner child that shows up in adults at a later date.

I'm pleading with you to please -- we have wonderful children in the City of Paterson. We have wonderful parents. I've been knocking on doors; our parents are suffering from clinical depression. Not only our parents, our teachers. Our teachers are sick, our staff is sick. And the ones who aren't sick physically, they're sick spiritually -- because I don't like the way they treat our children.

I had a baby at School 6 tell me yesterday, "They don't care about us." And when a child makes that determination, that they're not cared for, we need to question what is transpiring in this building that this child has made the decision that, "They don't care about us."

Parents are not welcomed in the school; we're treated like outsiders. We have a right. There is a lack of transparency, and it needs to

be addressed. But what I'm asking you today is give our children a fair chance to be able to compete with the other children. Who plays God and decides who's worthy and who is not?

We send our children into these schools. I don't hear charter school parents complaining. Public school parents are complaining.

I'm asking that if we set up a meeting date, we're asking you, Ms. Sumter, you, Mr. Wimberly -- will you come and address the parents? Because they really are concerned at this point, with one thing only: Why didn't you tell us about the lead? Where was the due process, so we can respond diligently and get our children tested?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Ms. Oquendo, we will -- we could have our staff talk to you, to my left. And they will set up something for us to meet with you and the PTO, with the approval of Dr. Evans. I would love the opportunity to tour School 6. My mother and father attended School 6; and I have kids who are still in Paterson Public Schools. So I do have a vested interest here.

So I appreciate your testimony.

Do we have any questions for our parents?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Sure. I would just like to share that the concern has not gone unnoticed; that's why we fought to have this Committee meeting here. We're separate from the School Board, so I hope you're bringing the same concerns and passion to the School Board meetings as well.

Thank you.

MS. OQUENDO: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

MS. OQUENDO: What Dr. Evans did bypasses gross negligence; and it's willful misconduct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Ms. Oquendo, we will--

MS. OQUENDO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you very much.

At this time, I'm going to ask the following people to come forward, and you can sit in the three chairs that are here. We're going to ask you -- no disrespect to you, but we're going to ask you to stay within the three minutes. And I will give you kind of a head's up when you have, like, 15 seconds to go.

So please try to stay within three minutes. And if you have prepared statements or written statements, you can forward them through the staff here and we will have it, as stated earlier -- everything will be on record.

We have a PTO parent, Jacana Brown Oure; we have Bilal Hakeem, from the Elombe Brath Power Coalition; and we have Kevin Womble, Raiding the Roof Radio.

You guys can come forward now; and as stated, with all due respect to you, we're going to ask you to stay within three minutes.

Mr. Womble, you can move over one; Mr. Hakeem is going to--

JACANA BROWN OURE: Can you hear me?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; you're first.

MS. BROWN OURE: All right, my name is Jacana Brown Oure--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Is that on?

MS. SAPP: Press the button.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: In front of you; right in front of you. (referring to PA microphone)

MS. BROWN OURE: The green button's on.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Push it; is it green?

MS. BROWN OURE: It's on.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Pull it closer.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Pull it closer.

MS. BROWN OURE: Can you hear me?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay.

MS. BROWN OURE: Louder? Can you hear me now?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes, just speak up a little louder.

MS. BROWN OURE: Okay. My name is Jacana Brown Oure. I had three kids in Paterson Public Schools; now I only have one kid in Paterson Public Schools. I have one kid who is now attending PCTI who wants to return to District, but I told her "only if we can straighten out a little bit of where are you going to go" -- because she wants to go to International PADT (*sic*), because she did attend PADT at School 28. So I said if I could get that done, then she could return to District.

I have a son who is attending Eastside; he's in special ed. And he has -- he doesn't have a lot of resources here in that special ed program to help him get to where he needs to be, education-wise. He doesn't have aides in the class; he switches classrooms a lot. And he's very disorganized as a young man. I've been trying to keep him on track, putting him on daily report. I put a point system in place so he could -- because he was

going on with his teachers every day -- to know what he is doing. But if he doesn't have the resources here to help him advance, he's not really getting anywhere.

So that's why I want my daughter to return to District, but I'm hesitant about allowing her to return unless she can get into that program that she really wants to be in. And then, with my son, I would love to see them, like, put initiatives in place to help him want to learn.

Then I had a third child who was in District; but when it came down to testing him by Child Study Team, there wasn't even a Child Study Team in that school. I had to go to another school; and I went to that school. And then when I got them over, even though they knew what the problem was, they wouldn't test my child. I had to go to St. Joe's Paterson to get the testing done. So now that kid lives with his father in East Rutherford; and now I want all three of them, really, to live in the same district and attend the same school system. But I need, like, initiatives in place to help these kids to stay on track while they're over here.

So I just wanted to give an insight.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you; we appreciate that.

Any questions for Ms. Oure? (no response)

Mr. Womble.

KEVIN WOMBLE: Yes, good afternoon.

I don't want to take up too much time; just a couple of things I want to hit on.

I learned a long time ago that the State, as a whole, is supposed to be productive and positive. Twenty-five -- 24, 25 years ago, the State took over the school system, and you would think that the purpose for the State taking over is because the school system was bad and their intent was to make it better. It's worse, much worse. And, I mean, that plagues me every day. I just don't understand the purpose of doing that.

Now there is an opportunity to have control of the school given back to us in a position that's a hundred times worse than we were in the very beginning. Now we're talking about a huge debt, a huge shortfall. How can you give us back control when we're still in dire need; when we still cannot meet the qualifying factors that make us a qualified educational system? It just doesn't make any sense to me.

I have this thing that, when it comes to education, all those who are put in place to maintain and hold jurisdiction over education should be involved. I don't understand why you have two, maybe three members of the School Board Commissioners here when all of them should be here. I firmly believe that all of the School Board Commissioners should have been here. This is too important to pass off to something else, you know? I can't say this one's not working, and that one's not working. But there are some who are not here who I know should be here -- who are doing other things. You have people from the School Board running for City Council. What they're doing, that's their purpose; I don't care--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Womble, I'm going to ask you to wrap it up. You're coming up on three minutes.

MR. WOMBLE: Yes, okay.

We're talking about a tax increase. There's nothing left to tax; there's nothing to tax. You're talking about cuts; there's nothing left to cut. I don't understand where all this is -- where this makes any sense. And I just cannot see taking charter schools over public schools.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Mr. Womble.

MR. WOMBLE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Before he leaves, I would just like to acknowledge Mr. Alonzo Moody, former School Board Commissioner and Deputy Mayor. Thank you, Mr. Moody, for coming out today. (applause)

Mr. Hakeem.

BILAL HAKEEM: Yes, this is speaking to the record.

My name is Bilal Hakeem -- Hakeem -- and I represent the Elombe Brath Power Coalition. Elombe Brath was an international figure, known throughout the world. And we honor his name by renaming our organization after him. You can look into the documents of the New York legislature, and you'll find where they honored him in New York state.

Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver mentioned the name of Marilyn Morheuser, and rightfully so. She was a giant. And it's really a tragedy that her name has been removed from the Parent Resource Center and given another name. It would be a dignified thing to restore her name back. And as I spoke to the State-appointed Superintendent, Dr. Donnie Evans, once before -- about our children in terms of educating, or being educated, or the academic molestation that is taking place -- is that our children don't even know the local history. Her name should be there; they should know what that struggle was about.

I'm going to be brief. I have nothing new to really say -- nothing really new to say. This is straight from my notes. But I'll just say this here, from the beginning. I do not pretend to be a divine man, but I do believe in divine guidance. I believe in divine power and the fulfillment of divine prophecy. I am not educated, nor am I an expert in any particular field. But I am sincere, and my sincerity is my credential that I bring here today.

I welcome everyone who comes through the front to advocate on our behalf. And particularly, I'm talking -- I'm speaking in reference to the new group of pastors who have come together. We welcome them and we appreciate them stepping forward. But we hope and we caution them to come and align themselves up with the people, and not to come to try to take over. Because the opportunity has been sitting there for a very, very long time.

So that's the only point, Assemblyman Wimberly. You know, I stayed here through my lunch break, you know. This is my lunch break, and I've got to spend the time.

You know, we came up to Trenton on March 22. And on that same day, a mother buried her son in the City of Paterson. A good friend of mine, you know; I watched her children, and watched them grow up, and they watched my children. She buried her son that day, due to random and senseless violence that is still often occurring. May almighty God have mercy on his family and his soul.

Missed education and economic castration is the mother and father of violence. These proposed cuts will add to this problem. When we look at 25 years that the State of New Jersey has been here, calling all the

shots -- we've said this before -- and all you have to do is look at the mess they have amassed. This is their mess, not ours.

Being a teacher is a very important profession. They help prepare the future leaders. When students are not equipped to learn or, better yet, when teachers do not have the resources to teach; when students are subjected to having a substitute instead of a certified teacher-- And I wanted to just mention this here, because Dr. Evans did mention that in the classrooms, when he was testifying, that he assigns supervisors to the non-certified substitutes. We want to see that in writing, that document. We want -- we don't want him just to say it; we need to see that document in writing, and it needs to be made public that supervisors were there supervising. Because many parents don't realize that--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Mr. Hakeem, we're going to ask you to wrap it up.

And at this point, those concerns that you have -- that's something I'm sure you can bring to the School Board--

MR. HAKEEM: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --and they will comply with.

MR. HAKEEM: Yes, okay. We're wrapping up on this, Assemblyman.

All we're calling for is that which is due us from the State. And we stand with you; we appreciate you for coming. All we're asking for is to receive that which is due to the District. We cannot function, and I thought I would never see this here, but we may have to do something even drastic -- I mean, where parents just pull their children out to create a

national embarrassment to this State and to this Governor. I thought I would never say anything like that, but we are at our ends.

I thank you for giving me the time, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you. I'd like to thank-- Yes, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for your testimony today. The parents' input is paramount in any movement that we have forward. And with our United Pastors Council group, I know that's a new group, and many people are not aware that this is different from the Paterson Pastors Workshop. They've only been in existence for eight months.

And I have a correction that I just want to state, for the record. The lead testing, which the City is doing, is for the water at your home. So that's for the water at your home, and it is not at school. Obviously, the issue with the Paterson Public School lead testing -- it's been documented that we are addressing it now. Initially there wasn't information sent home, but it has been taken care of now. And this goes back to 2003 -- obviously before Dr. Evans was here -- that we had addressed this issue. And it's not just a Paterson issue; it's a statewide -- nationwide issue, as observed in Flint, Michigan; Newark, and other major cities where you have buildings like ours. You have 19 buildings over a hundred years old. So there should be a concern that I know our Superintendent is addressing.

At this time, we're going to bring forward -- and I would ask you again to stay within three minutes -- Captain James Smith from the Paterson Public Schools; and School Board Commissioner, Dr. Jonathan Hodges.

You can come forward.

CAPTAIN JAMES SMITH: Can you hear me?

Good afternoon, Legislative Committee. I want to first thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to come and address our concerns.

As Board President Chris Irving said earlier, we have charter versus public schools. But within the District, we have department versus department for funding. We're so woefully underfunded that it's starting to affect what we're able to do.

We've had flat funding -- and in our case underfunding for each year, because our costs go up -- hospitalization, whatever. And we're asked to do it with the same amount of money.

Now we have two new schools opening up. We have the Hani Awadallah School, and we have also School 16 opening up this year. But yet, we're asked to provide security for safe, caring, and orderly environment at the tune of \$1.6 million less than last year. It's going to have a drastic effect on us.

We really need some additional funding from the State so we can do this. Especially for Speaker Oliver -- last year I was nominated by Assemblyman Wimberly, Assemblywoman Sumter, and Senator Pou to serve as your representative on the State Task Force for crimes in school, as a result of Newtown. And we came through with many recommendations that are, right now, in the Governor's Office that will be sent to you. And I guess they will be discussed, and we'll have to testify at a later date. And we can't provide some of the recommendations that we put in the report here. And that really presents a problem for us.

One thing I would like to ask, if we could get an answer -- because every time I ask to get an answer, I don't get it. The SDA has

purchased Paterson Catholic, and I'm grateful for that. It's an excellent facility; it will provide tremendous resources for our children. Now I'm hearing -- I don't know if it's true or not -- that we were supposed-- We have to vacate Don Bosco Tech, and the reason we're vacating that is they're going to build us a new middle school, is what I'm told. Now I'm being told that they may put a charter school in there, which will delay the construction of that middle school. Now, whether that's true--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: A charter school in Don Bosco, or a charter school in Paterson Catholic?

CAPTAIN SMITH: Paterson Catholic; we're going to Paterson Catholic. We're supposed to vacate the building so they can demolish and do the things necessary. What I'm hearing is that the SDA--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Captain Smith, I'm pretty sure that's not going to happen.

CAPTAIN SMITH: Well, I--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And we will have the SDA Director in front of us tomorrow at our school hearing. It wouldn't make sense--

CAPTAIN SMITH: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --and that is something that we will fight tooth and nail for. This doesn't make sense.

CAPTAIN SMITH: Thank you; I appreciate it.

Now, the last thing that I want to bring to your attention is, I want to touch on a point that Assemblyman Wimberly brought up before. And I thought it was a good point; I mean, I heard the answer from Mr. Ayala, but what I would like to know is-- Let's just say we provide \$19

million for Passaic County Tech students -- which are, in effect, our students. Most of them, not all of them, but most of them. And let's say some of them return to Paterson. She says we get a credit for it next year. Well, next year isn't helping us. We want the money to travel with the student. What happens to the money that was provided to Passaic County Tech? Did they refund it to us, or do we just simply get a credit for next year?

I'm not the Business Administrator, and I'm not the financial expert on that. But I just think that some type of legislation, where the money -- if there's \$18,000 per student, and they keep him -- that's a miracle -- just after the deadline of when they have to return a kid. It's a miracle. I don't know how this occurs every year, just after the deadline where they can keep it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Captain Smith, we're going to ask you to wrap up.

CAPTAIN SMITH: Now, I'm asking--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: We're at the four-minute mark.

CAPTAIN SMITH: That's it; that's all I have to say.

And listen, thank you so much for all your time. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Assemblywoman Sumter.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Captain Smith.

Dr. Hodges.

JONATHAN HODGES, M. D.: Good evening -- or afternoon.

And I want to thank you for coming and sharing some time with this community around this extremely important issue.

I know some of our speakers here -- that you've heard a great deal about the woes in this District -- but perhaps, not enough.

Our average income in Paterson is around \$35,000, \$36,000. We have a tax rate that's higher than Newark, higher than Jersey City. We don't have, of course, the waterfront or the condos or the big business here. We are, essentially, Atlantic City on steroids.

But into that mix you throw a \$242 million deficit over the last seven years; about \$76 million this year. And you ask us to cut our budget \$45 million. The State has been under -- has had control of this District for the last 24 years; it will be 25 in August. And at no time did they ask us to raise -- they raised taxes when they were in control. You turn over the District to the Board, and you ask the Board to turn around and raise taxes on itself, when it's a distressed city receiving transitional aid from the State. You want to raise our taxes \$2.5 million when we've just raised their taxes 5.8 percent -- following the raising of taxes 29 percent in 2011.

The money that comes to Abbott districts -- particularly this one -- 84 percent of our teachers live out of town -- 84 percent; 72 percent of our budget goes to personnel. So that money is not staying in Paterson; it's leaving and going out into the surrounding communities, paying their property taxes, not ours. We're not able to financially sustain these kinds of increases.

And I haven't even gotten to the educational morass that we're suffering. We've lost music, art; we have a brand-new science curriculum that has to be written-- In fact, we have 341 courses that have yet to be written. But those require teachers and administrators to both write the curriculum and implement it. And we can't afford to do that. We've had

to lay off 83 people out of the Central Office staff; over 114 people all told. And we're going to be asked to -- and somehow put in a brand new curriculum that supports the Core Curriculum (indiscernible). We're not going to be able to do that.

We have lost program after program to support our children who still, after 24 years of State control, have failed to reach the levels that could be called even decent, let alone thorough and efficient education in this city. This is an outrage. What you're asking us to do is face the virtual dismantling of our educational system.

Add to that, charter schools, who you, additionally, hold harmless-- We have spent-- There's been \$8 billion lost in educational funding under Christie; \$8 billion. And so then to districts like this -- that can ill afford to lose those kinds of dollars when it's directed toward addressing a wrong that was done back in the 1960s and 1970s -- you're now coming back and every year of underfunding it's around 60 cents we lose in terms of being forced to cut, because flat funding isn't really flat.

So the damage that's being done educationally to these children is unconscionable. We should not be where we are. Our kids cannot sign their names; they can't read their own name. They're unable to do it. We can't provide the services and the time to reach out to this community and give them what they need. Ninety-two percent of our students have free and reduced lunch; 92 percent. So how, in that kind of environment, do you saddle us with this enormous fiscal burden, then add hold harmless charter schools on top of that and ask us to produce students who can educationally perform.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Dr. Hodges, yes--

DR. HODGES: I know; I'm a little revved up.

I came here because I watched kids die in the emergency room. That's why I came in the first place. And if you think it's going to get any better under these circumstances, it's not. But add to that the fact that these kids are now going out and selling drugs to other people whose kids are coming into our towns, and now doing damage throughout the state. Not because of Paterson, but because this does -- we have economic conditions in this city which are atrocious.

So when you ask us to raise taxes, and you ask us to dismantle our schools, and you bring unfair competition in terms of charter schools here -- and I won't even get to the whole vocational school business, which is another embarrassment -- we, in Paterson, have had enough. We need you to do what we can't -- to save us from these budget cuts and help us to stabilize our education system in the future.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Dr. Hodges.

At this time, we're going to ask our Committee to wrap up with closing comments.

Speaker Oliver.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Thank you, Assemblyman Wimberly.

I just want to thank everyone from the Paterson community who spent time here with us this morning. Paterson has been front-and-center on the agenda of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools. I think if Senator Rice, our other Co-Chair, were here, he would tell you that

Newark, and Paterson, and Jersey City remain on the radar screen of those of us in the Legislature who are concerned with public education.

All of the issues that we heard discussed here -- we know of the plight of your municipal government; we know about the threatened shutdown of your government; we know the foreclosure rate; we know all of the zombie properties that exist here in Paterson. And we know that Paterson certainly is standing on the precipice of really, really -- as many speakers have said -- really, really falling off of a cliff.

There are those of us who continue to have a commitment to urban communities in this state. We do have support from other legislative delegations around the state because all of us are affected by the kinds of things that have been described here today in the districts we represent. But I think the most important thing that I heard placed on the record is that wherever we stand, in whatever region of the state, if we believe that social and economic justice are confronting us, we need to attack that issue collectively. Every city, every county, every region, every advocate -- that is the way in which we win.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Speaker Oliver.

Assemblywoman Sumter.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Thank you, Assemblyman Wimberly. And thank you, Speaker Oliver, for taking time to join us today.

Thank you to my community for coming out and putting our issues on record. Like I said, there's no testimony like personal testimony, from you all here. We're greatly concerned, continuously combating the issues. We cannot grow tired at this point; we've made some great strides. We're having impact; our voices are being heard. But we have to use every

tool imaginable. Not only are we going to use legislation, but filing a lawsuit is long overdue. And also joining our sister cities with the same struggles to talk about rebalancing the funding. Security is a priority for us because all of us want our children to be safe when they enter the schools.

I will tell you, I was alarmed a couple of weeks ago when School 28 had someone run into the building and the school had to go on lockdown. And that was terrifying for us, and I'm sure as far as the parents and the teachers who were both inside and outside.

So if we cannot agree on anything else with our Republican colleagues, is that a thorough and efficient education should be provided to all and it should be equitable.

So thank you for your time in coming out, and we'll continue to have dialogue.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I just want to thank everyone for coming out today; the Joint Committee on the Public Schools for coming to the City of Paterson. On behalf of our Co-Chairs, Senator Ron Rice and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, I appreciate their participation here and throughout the year fighting for public education. I thank the State District Superintendent, Dr. Donnie Evans, and his staff, and the Commissioners for coming out today.

More importantly, we have to realize that we have to continue to fight for our 28,172 students and our 5,247 staff people, because the issue is really an issue that we have to address -- it's 25 years of disservice in education here in the City of Paterson and many years in Newark and many other urban areas.

But the impact-- Dr. Hodges, you hit the nail on the head. If we don't properly educate our students, these are the same students who have made us the heroin capital of the Northeast; who will sell drugs to Suffolk County, Bergen County, Hunterdon County -- that people are flying here to get these drugs. So the reality is that the investment in drug courts and all these other things, you know, in our penal system is one thing. But let's be proactive and address the real issues.

A parent talked about depression. Our mental health issues that we face here -- my Assembly mate, that's her full-time professional job, dealing with mental health -- is a major issue. We are a depressed city. When you have the zombie properties that we have; when you have the people losing their homes on a daily basis; when you have the homeless population that we have, you know, these are issues that compound and have a major impact on our students. As a classroom teacher for nine years and a homeroom teacher for many years, health-- You know, when we talk about breakfast after the bell; these issues -- nobody can learn on honeybuns and C and C soda, and be effective and a good student. You know, cutting programs, be it SAT preparation or be it athletic programs -- opportunities for our kids throughout the city -- it's not fair. We say a fair and efficient education; it just can't be in the saying.

So we have to put the ball in the Christie Administration for -- how many more months, how many more days are we working with the Christie Administration to address these issues? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN OLIVER: Eighteen months, 13 days, 48 seconds. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: She has it; the Speaker has it down. (laughter)

But we also have to hold our colleagues. So when we're in a position to select our next Governor, this has to be at the top of our agenda: fully funding our schools in the City of Paterson and throughout the State of New Jersey, and doing a new formula that is fair to everybody across the board.

So we're here to fight for you, as your legislators. And please know that our door is always open. I look forward to visiting School 6 and any other school that invites us out. We're here for you.

Thank you, and this meeting is adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)