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# *Commission Meeting*

of

## ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ASSEMBLY BILL No. 2643

*(Establishes New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum [NJQSAC],  
a new State monitoring system for public school districts.)*

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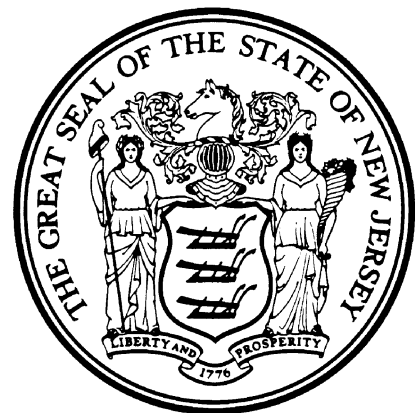
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**LOCATION:** John F. Kennedy High School  
Paterson, New Jersey

**DATE:** September 21, 2004  
4:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley, Chair  
Assemblywoman Nellie Pou  
Assemblyman Alfred E. Steele  
Assemblywoman Joan M. Voss



**ALSO PRESENT:**

Kathleen Fazzari  
*Office of Legislative Services*  
*Committee Aide*

Andrew Hendry  
*Assembly Majority*  
*Committee Aide*

Tasha M. Kersey  
*Assembly Republican*  
*Committee Aide*

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

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**ASSEMBLYMAN CRAIG A. STANLEY (Chair):** I'd like to open up the meeting. I think this is the first committee meeting I've had this year where I've had the pleasure of having our Assemblyman Steele here -- who is Reverend Steele also. And we have so many members of the clergy here, I'd feel kind of funny if I didn't open up the meeting without -- if I didn't open up the meeting with a word of prayer. So we're going to ask if Reverend Steele can do the invocation, and then we'll get started with the meeting.

Reverend Steele.

ASSEMBLYMAN STEELE: (offers prayer)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you Assemblyman-Reverend Steele.

Let me, first of all, welcome all of you and thank all of you for coming. I certainly, number one, lead the welcoming to the Assemblywoman Pou and Assemblyman Steele -- this is certainly their district -- but let me just thank Assemblywoman Pou, a member of the Assembly Education Committee, and Assemblyman Steele for facilitating this hearing here in the city of Paterson. It's very important that as part of the legislative process, when we have legislation that's significant as this legislation before you, that we have as much input from community members, from stakeholders, parents, and the like. Because this particular piece of legislation, when it becomes law, will become basically the way that we assess, that we monitor school districts, that we intervene in school districts.

Paterson is the longest running State takeover district in the State of New Jersey. It preceded both Newark and Jersey City. So we felt it very important to have a hearing up here. And again, I thank my colleagues --

Assemblywoman Pou, Assemblyman Steele -- for making that possible. I also want to commend both of them for working diligently in assuring that this legislation addresses the needs of the Paterson school district.

I also want to say, at the outset, that this bill before you is not a finished product. If it were a finished product, there would be no reason to take testimony here today. The very fact that we're allowing people, we're asking people for their input, should certainly speak to the fact that it's not a finished product. But I also want to mention to you that this is the bill as introduced. We have already had a number of public hearings, and there have already been a number of proposed amendments to the legislation. So even from the vantage point of before we arrived here today, the bill will be changed somewhat to reflect some of the information that we've gotten.

I also want to recognize Assemblywoman Voss, who has come here and is a member of the Education Committee and has tremendous credentials. Dr. Voss has spent a long time in the school system and is certainly an asset to the Assembly Education Committee.

We've been fortunate to receive testimony from -- at the Joint Committee on the Public Schools' hearing. We've gotten testimony at the Newark school district's hearing, and actually the Department has gone to the Newark school district's advisory committee meeting to also answer questions. So we've been fortunate to have a number of persons and organizations willing to testify and offer suggestions as how we can make this bill a better piece of legislation.

Finally, I want to thank Commissioner Librera, because this could have been one of those issues where people would have tried to rush and get

things done as soon as possible. And with the help of Commissioner Librera and Senator Rice and others, and input from persons, we've been able to get good information, and we've been able to work openly and willingly to come up with legislation that will provide for a superior monitoring, support and assistance program for the State of New Jersey, and hopefully the best model in the nation for not just monitoring, but for support and assistance to school districts throughout this state.

Again, we thank you for coming.

At this point, we would like to ask-- Well, I'd like to invite my members -- the other members of the Committee and, certainly, our host members to, certainly, not necessarily introduce themselves, but to certainly offer some welcoming remarks. Perhaps Assemblywoman Pou, who is a member of the Education Committee--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Thank you so very much, Mr. Chairman.

First, let me just say I'd like to welcome you to the city of Paterson, to John F. Kennedy High School -- the school where I was a student at and graduated from. So I'm always very proud and happy to say that this is a fabulous facility. It's a great school, and there's some incredible work that's being done here. I also would like to personally thank you for being so gracious and understanding, and willing to put together an Assembly Education Committee hearing here in the city of Paterson. I know that you know, all too well, the importance of this bill, what this bill would call for, the legislation in terms of trying to ensure that there is public input and public awareness in terms of what we need to do in order to return State control back to local control.

So I just want to personally thank you for your commitment, your eagerness to want to be -- to work very closely with all of us. At the same time, I want to personally thank all the members of the public that are here today. I know that this was a hearing that we-- And through the Chairman, just so that everyone knows -- the Chairman was trying very, very eagerly and was working very hard to try to get this hearing done within a very tight time frame that he is working with. For that, I say that the amount of time that it took for us to be able to send out information to everybody -- it was-- Letters were sent out to everyone in the community, those community organizations and the representatives who lead in the community. Letters were sent to every single elected official. An ad was placed in the paper, as well as the local public access channel in our local cable TV, and I know the radio station. So I am very pleased and happy to see members from our community here present, especially the parents and the community residents that have come here today to listen and also offer testimony.

So I'd like to welcome you. I'd like to say that your voice is the most important voice here today. We want to sit back and listen to what you have to say so that we can take that back and try to do the best job that we can, and ensure that this legislation is providing us with the best possible legislation.

I'd like to welcome the other members of our Committee. Assemblywoman Joan Voss, from Bergen County. Thank you so very much, Assemblywoman, for being here with us. As you all know, my partner, Assemblyman Steele, I'm not going to introduce him -- everybody knows him. And he'll have an opportunity to speak on behalf of the 35th Legislative District.

Thank you again. Thank you to the Commissioner for being here, and for all of the representatives on the State Government, and all of the clergy men and the clergy people who are here, especially -- a very special thanks to all of you. God bless you. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Assemblywoman Pou. Assemblyman Steele.

ASSEMBLYMAN STEELE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your commitment for allowing us to have this hearing. I want to salute my colleague, Assemblywoman Pou, for -- who serves on the Committee, who worked diligently to arrange this setting -- and certainly welcome to Passaic County and the city of Paterson.

My opening remarks will be brief. I want to make sure that the process will receive adequate input. Because, as the Chairman has said, this is a bill that will be changed. I want to just assure you that what you say will be taken seriously, and certainly we will make sure that we do everything within our power to make sure that when this product is finished, before it becomes law, that it will be good for children; that it will give power to parents, education to children, and it will change our community, because that's what education should do.

So I'm delighted to be a substitute on this Committee and be a representative of this district -- looking forward to a productive hearing. Please feel free to give your input, because when the people speak, changes take place.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Assemblyman Steele.

Dr. Voss is a member of the Assembly Education Committee. And Dr. Voss, I think you've been to every hearing that we've had so far--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: Oh, yes I have.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: --on this legislation that we've had. I guess either three or four so far, and we certainly will have at least one more hearing, committee meeting. However, Assemblywoman Voss, we thank you so much for coming.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: It's a pleasure to be here. I've been to Paterson many times, but I've never been in the high school. And I have to tell you, as an educator of over 40 years experience, this is an absolutely magnificent school. And it's a tribute to the teachers and the students and to the Board of Education that you have this magnificent building, and how well taken care of it is.

The Education Committee in Trenton and in the Assembly has some very dedicated members. Education has been my life, my passion, and there is no more important thing, I think, in our society than a good education system. A famous philosopher once said that a nation is only as good as its education system, and our job to make sure that ours is the very best.

As the Chairman has said, we have some very wonderful people on the Education Committee. We want to hear what you have to say. You are the most important people, and it's your children that are going to be the beneficiaries of what we do.

And again, I want to thank you for allowing me to come here today, and again to tell you what a beautiful school you have.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Assemblywoman Voss.

We have the Commissioner of Education -- Commissioner Librera has come -- and actually has brought a number of his assistant commissioners. And I also see a member of the State Board of Education, a long-time member, Ms. Maude -- Dahme. I know I see -- that's how friendly we are. We don't go by last names.

But I also want to introduce a couple of our staff people who you see before you: Andrew Hendry, who works with the Assembly Democratic Majority staff; and Kathy Fazzari, to my right, who works with the Office of Legislative Services, Education Section -- as a matter of fact, is the Education Section Chief. And both are very familiar with education, have been working in the education field a long time. So we have a number of people very dedicated to the process, dedicated to education.

And I look forward to a good hearing, and we'll certainly be taking your input into consideration.

Right now, I'd like to ask Commissioner Librera to come forward. He will, basically, lay some information down with respect to QSAC, what it will do, what the legislation does. And he may even, if you will, Commissioner, may even speak to some of the proposed alterations in the legislation that you've endorsed.

**COMMISSIONER WILLIAM L. LIBRERA:** Thank you, Chairman Stanley.

Legislators, people from Paterson, and honored guests, it is a pleasure to be here speaking to you tonight about legislation that we think is

long overdue. And what I would like to do is provide a brief overview of this legislation, why we feel it's important. And then I will be followed by two members of the Department who have worked more closely on the specifics of this legislation than I -- Deputy Commissioner Dwight Pfennig; and the Director of the Office of Grants Appeals, Diane Schonyers, will follow. And we will be here for the duration of this hearing and be able to respond to any matters that you may feel is necessary for us.

In 1987, New Jersey was the first state in the country to have a state takeover law. That's important to understand, because any time you're the first to do anything, you don't have the opportunity to draw on the experiences of others. In 1989, we were the first state in the country to take over a school district, and that was in Jersey City. The same issue again -- didn't have an opportunity to see what had happened in other places to make the kind of modifications that we all would do, learning from experience.

There has been almost no change in the State takeover law since 1987. There are very few things that I think any of us have done some 17 years that we wouldn't have made some modifications in. The modifications in the State takeover plan are really long overdue. They begin with the idea that State takeover was supposed to be a temporary measure. As a temporary measure, we are still in Jersey City some 15 years later; we're in Paterson some 12 years later; we're in Newark eight years later -- and no end in sight, as the present legislation is written.

And so what you hear today in terms of this legislation is the Department's work after two-and-a-half years, after reading the report done by Paul Tractenberg and others -- which is an extensive and comprehensive

examination of state takeovers of schools and municipalities -- after our considered work with a whole host of people dealing with state takeover matters dealing with intervention matters, dealing with monitoring, dealing with all of the things that the Federal Government requires. And so this legislation puts all of that together.

But I'd like to speak to a couple of things that drive this change. First of all, this legislation, rightfully, was always supposed to be temporary. Because no department in the country, as far as I'm concerned, and certainly this Department, can't be in a position to run a school district over a period of time; because no department of education can ever take the place of the responsible role and necessary role of the community running their schools. That's the basic problem in this -- that takeover or, as we're changing the legislation, intervention, has to be targeted, has to be something that happens quickly, when you see that there are measures that need to be taken, so changes can be made so you can work with the community to solve their problems and then leave. That's what should happen. That's what has happened every place where this has been successful.

And so at the heart of this legislation is to have five areas identified which define what a successful school district does. And that's in the area of student achievement, that's in the area of personnel, that's in the area of facilities, that's in the area of finance, and that's in the area of operations. I know from firsthand experience that each of our three State takeover districts would have at least one, maybe two, maybe as many as three of those areas, if we were to do the evaluation right now -- that they would be returned to local control.

So the question is, why would we continue to stay and control an entire school district -- something for which no department can ever do well -- when a district's already demonstrated that they can do that well? And in the areas where there are still some problems -- and there are still some problems, primarily in facility and student achievement -- then the State stays in the area and tries to find ways where they work together with the school district so that the school district solves their problems, not that the State continues to do the work. That's the essence of this.

The other side of this is the intervention that-- I maintain, and certainly I don't want to be classified as somebody who is a Monday morning quarterback-- Because if you don't learn from the experiences that you've seen, if you don't learn after what you've seen happen in 17 years, well, then you're not in much of a position to make any suggestions. But had the State takeover law originally said, "Let's target the intervention in the areas where it is necessary, so that if there are problems in the business office, the State works in the business office, not in the entire school district." That's the way to proceed.

So as we look at this and as we think about -- this is going to be five areas, same standards for every school district in the state -- we are looking to return to local control those aspects that the three State takeover districts have demonstrated that they can handle and handle well, have that returned to them as soon as possible. And stay in the areas where there are problems. Conversely, when we have some districts-- And some of you may have heard me say this already: There are school districts in the State of New Jersey performing far worse than any of the three State takeover districts, in certain areas. They require our attention in the areas where the assistance is necessary.

Not to write reports, but to, in fact, say, “These are the outcomes that have to be,” and then to go in and correct those problems before they get worse.

So the structure here is that this is put as simply as possible, and it’s always difficult to take complex legislation and reduce it to simple ideas, but there are some simple ones in this. That what we must have is a more reasonable approach to State intervention. And that needs to be targeted in the areas where it’s necessary, and it needs to be propelled by a position that we’re there for a short period of time to work with the school district to help them solve their problems, and then to remove our presence while we continue to monitor the success.

The second part, we need to intervene quicker in those areas where there are problems. And I need to say, also, that those who think that problems are only the province of urban areas in this state are wrong. That there are districts throughout this state -- some suburban, some rural, some big, some small, some wealthy, some largely limited income -- who have problems. Urban areas have no monopoly on problems. And so what we need to do is be able to intervene quickly so that those problems are addressed so they don’t get bigger. The second part of this is the entire regulatory process. And that is: When legislation is adopted, the rules and the specifics of this legislation, as they affect districts, need to go through a state board process, which is a very comprehensive process, which gives the public -- and all the associations, and everyone who wishes to have interaction and to make suggestions -- approximately a nine- or 10-month period in which they can look at the documents and make comments and ask questions. That will be the second part of this, that follows the legislation.

We are fortunate that we have 15 school districts which have said they would like to be pilot school districts in this first year. And as a pilot school district, what they will do is work with us, tell us where these problems are. We will tell them where problems are, as far as we can see that. Paterson is one of those school districts that wants to do this. We're anxious to work with them, because what we think is -- especially in the last six months, we've had some pretty positive examples of collaboration leading to better results for all of us. And so we're pleased that they want to do this. We're pleased to work with them. Because the way the pilot status would work is, as you're working along in the pilot status, by the time the legislation and regulations are finished, if you have been in that pilot status at the moment the regulations are adopted, then the results of what happened in that pilot will be immediately applied.

So, if a district were a pilot district, as Paterson has intended to be and as that they've informed us, they will go through the same process as the other 14 school districts. And I'm pleased to say the other two State takeover districts, in different ways, are going to be a part of this, too. When we've completed that, the results of that evaluation will be immediately applied. So it is entirely possible that if it was a favorable evaluation in one, two, three, four, and it was likely not to be five, but in any number leading to five, it would be immediately applied. And that's one of the advantages of being a pilot district. In addition to, there is great benefit to us, in terms of learning from districts exactly how this is working and the way it's working. Our intent is to not spend a minute more than is absolutely necessary in school districts, but on

the other hand to see that the basic conditions under which all school districts operate are fulfilled.

Thank you for that opportunity to provide an overview. I'd like to now introduce Dwight Pfenning, and he will introduce Diane Schonyers.

I can tell you briefly about some changes in the legislation. Senator Rice, the sponsor in the Senate -- as you know, Chairman Stanley is sponsoring this in the Assembly -- has very strong feelings about us abandoning the word -- completely -- *State control*, in favor of *intervention*, partial intervention. We are pleased to do that. We agree with that. The State Board has told us, and we have relayed this to our legislative colleagues, that what they want to see in this is a clear emphasis that this is designed to correct problems by helping the Department to work collaboratively with school districts to build capacity in school districts, to solve problems, and to continue to move forward. Because only members of the community can do that -- elected members working with the community are the only ones that can do that over a long period of time.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Dwight, would you please now continue the specifics of the presentation.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Commissioner.

Assistant Commissioner, if you could state your name and so forth.

**DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DWIGHT R. PFENNIG:** Surely. Dwight Pfennig, Deputy Commissioner. I'd like to thank you again for the opportunity to speak with the Committee today, and also with the public.

We look forward, I might add, to the comments that will be provided for us today. We have found many of the comments that have been made to us over the past several months to be extremely helpful. And in sharing them, we've come to consensus on many, we've debated many, and I think we're going to end up with a very good bill.

I'm not going to repeat much of the information that Commissioner Librera said, except to say that when we constructed this bill -- in addition to the improvement of teaching and learning, and adjusting the monitoring process for the State of New Jersey, and dealing with the difficult issue of State takeover -- we were also very cognizant of the fact of all the work that school districts are asked to do on an annual basis to collect data, share data at about 12 different times, or perhaps more. There are over 110 data collections that go into State monitoring in different ways, and we also looked at this process as a way of reducing that load for school districts as we move forward.

One of the primary instruments for collecting that data is the annual quality assurance review in current statute. And the new QSAC will replace a good piece of that. I'm sure if you speak to local superintendents and principals, they will not miss that.

My focus for the next two minutes, and Diane Schonyers', will be to talk briefly about the key components of New Jersey QSAC. We have five of them. The first being instruction and program; and second, personnel; third, fiscal management; and the fourth, operations; and the fifth, governance.

Instruction and program is our most important emphasis in everything that we do. We have not changed that theme since we came to Trenton some two-plus years ago. And the indicators that are located there were

focused upon student achievement, assessments, student behavior, program, and curriculum. And as we look at the indicators that support that, we would do everything we can to ensure that schools and students throughout the State of New Jersey are provided with excellent programs.

We also have a number of Federal requirements through NCLB and other Federal monitoring processes -- IDEA -- where we have to keep an eye on those kinds of indicators, and they will be a part of QSAC. So, again, we're not doing two or three different operations to monitor school districts.

In terms of personnel, we've also had a large focus on staff training and professional development over the last two-and-a-half years. I think some five years ago, as we close in on the five-year mark, the passage of professional development bills in New Jersey that require teachers to have 100 hours of professional development were often viewed as unfocused. I think now we're trying to make sure that that focus gets narrowed. We're dealing with specific issues and specific schools and districts, and we're moving forward with making sure that there are quality professional development programs in school districts. We've worked with all of our colleagues, and all of the professional associations throughout New Jersey, and with many members of the Legislature to ensure that our forward movement in that area benefits students, and continues to improve student achievement, through professional development of staff members.

Fiscal management is often the area that gets the most play in the newspapers. Because when things go awry in school districts, it always seems to focus back on some point of fiscal management. We're talking -- in fiscal management, with QSAC -- looking at cost indicators, budget planning

indicators, and some annual external audit indicators. As we do that, we remain cognizant of the relationship between improved program and all of the educational attributes of the fiscal contribution to a complete program being efficient. We've done a lot of work in that area already. Some of you, with efficiencies and economies work being done by our Abbott division, are well aware of that. But that is also for every school district in the State of New Jersey, and I'm quite sure we've heard of the focus in that area.

At this time, I will let Diane Schonyers discuss the last two areas of the key components. And again, I thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you today and, of course, to listen to the many people who have come to give input.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

**D I A N E S C H O N Y E R S:** Good afternoon. My name is Diane Schonyers, and I am the Director for the office of Grants Appeals in the Department of Education.

I'm going to talk to you this afternoon about-- Well, first of all, thank you for inviting us to participate, and we welcome the host of comments that we, hopefully, will receive from the public; because it is an open process, and we wanted to engage the public just as much as you do. I'm going to talk to you about the last two indicators -- operations and governance.

Under those two indicators, in operations, we're looking at those things that are day-to-day operations that support the academic day. Those things such as facilities -- is it safe and clean -- health, safety, delivery of services, transportation and all those contracts that are associated in school

districts. We're also looking at the completion of the required reports, such as the application for student aid and the fall reports -- those things that are done on an annual basis. And we're looking to see whether or not the districts are doing those things in an efficient and effective way.

And in the last component, under governance, which is just a little bit more complicated than some of the other ones -- it's not very cut and dry. Governance is more the philosophy -- what is the culture of the organization? What is the interaction between the board and the superintendent? How are you working together to ensure that student achievement is the main focus and the goal of the district? So we look at things, like I said, the relationship between the local board of education and the superintendent. We're also looking at things such as collaboration with the community. How is the district, how is the board, communicating and informing and involving the community in the district implementation and effectiveness?

When you look at all five components together, the five components are separated into two areas -- those that are required and those that support what's required. And we have incorporated a weighting factor into the design, so that those that are required are weighted more heavily than those-- And once a district has determined where they fall, then they're placed on what's considered a continuum. And based on where they are in the continuum, different intervention activities will be afforded to the district. The Commissioner mentioned, it will go from little or no intervention to maximum intervention.

So those are the five key components, as well as the indicators. And each of those indicators do have standards, some of which are very cut and

dry. They're either required or some of them are more supporting, as I've indicated, and there are rubrics that are assigned to assist the districts in evaluating compliance. So with that, that's kind of the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum in a nutshell, so we can turn it back over to you.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Well, thank you very much. I certainly appreciate your testimony, Ms. Schonyers.

I just want to recognize Mayor Joey Torres. I understand the Mayor is here. Maybe he can just stand up. Identify yourself, Mayor. Good to see you, and thank you so much for coming.

I want to also make sure that people know that if you'd like to testify, there are some Education Committee testimony sheets right in front here. Please make sure you fill one out if you're interested in testifying, so that staff can get you -- make sure you have an opportunity to testify.

I think the first person we have here to testify-- I'd like to invite the Mayor to come forward, if the Mayor would like to give some welcoming remarks or would like to address the Committee at all. Mayor Torres, your legislative members here, representatives here, said I should recognize you for welcoming remarks; and certainly come forward.

**MAYOR JOSE TORRES:** Well, I definitely want to thank you. I got up to get the sheet to write up to give my -- to say a few words. Good afternoon everyone.

It's indeed a great pleasure to be here. And I welcome members of the Legislature and the Commissioner and his staff, and that -- most importantly to the parents and the teachers of the Paterson school system.

As you know, for quite some time, the city of Paterson has been under State control. And I think we welcome in this forum, as we look forward toward some positive legislation that will reflect positive change and hopefully reflect the return of local control, to Paterson, of its educational system.

Time and time again, as I go throughout the city, I continue to recite that no one knows better the problems than those who live in the neighborhood. And one of the reasons why Paterson is really on the move today is that we have engaged the community participation to act as agents of change, but more importantly to act as shareholders, stockholders to this half-a-billion dollar corporation.

And so, when I read the bill, it was very welcoming to see that it doesn't necessarily reflect the all-or-nothing concept which the previous Legislature had determined. And I think that even though there is room for improvement within the Paterson school system, because there's always room for improvement everywhere -- I think that at this stage of the game we will see that we will meet many of those criteria that were indicated in the legislation, as far as those five steps. Granted that we would need some additional technical assistance, possibly in the area of operation, and even in the area of fiscal management. But I assure you that we have a compassionate board, a working board, that for years the community has worked towards bringing people who are both responsible and responsive to act as agents of change, to provide better education for our children.

And in the midst of Paterson being under a new five-year plan and under a \$800 million construction program to provide 13 additional schools, obviously what's in our minds is -- it's beyond the brick and mortar, but actually us having our local control so that, that way, parents, instructors, administrators could continue to interact in a positive forum to improve the educational system here in the city of Paterson.

So I think that when you look at the checks and balances that has been indicated in this Legislature, I am pleased to say that, at this time, I commend the Committee for looking at -- actually, for looking out of the box, so to speak, to how are we going to bring about some changes that would quickly help Paterson return to local control.

So I thank you for choosing Paterson. I thank my legislative team of Assemblyman Steele and Assemblywoman Pou to assure that this hearing would be conducted in Paterson because of, for lack of a better word, because of the transition that Paterson has been going through. And in most cases, surely we had some faults, but we are moving in a proactive and constructive manner. And I think that when you hear further testimony from the administrators and the parents that you're going to see that we are willing to roll up our sleeves. And even though -- if it takes constructive criticism, we're willing to put our personal decisions to the side and really look forward to addressing the policy decisions that will create positive change for the education of our children.

So I thank you very much for hosting this hearing here in Paterson, and I'm looking forward to being attentive and listening very carefully to the recommendations and the comments from those who are in attendance, because

it's only by us listening could we come up with positive change to improve the educational system of this great city and the State of New Jersey.

So I thank you very much, and I welcome you on behalf of all the parents, administrators, and residents of the great city of Paterson. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Well, thank you very much, Mayor Torres. We certainly appreciate your comments and appreciate your great city here.

Dr. Jonathan Hodges, the President of the Paterson Board of Education -- I think I -- is here. Yes. It's very good to see you. I'm sorry, I didn't know you were out of the room there, but we would like you to offer your testimony. I've got your sheet here.

**JONATHAN HODGES, M.D.:** Good afternoon. Welcome to our city. We've been very anxious to have this gathering, this hearing, because we have a lot of concerns here in Paterson.

After 13 years of State takeover, we have felt the brunt of questionable legislation, and we are hoping that you take great pains in crafting an exit plan that will get us back to the place where we deserve to be, which is in local control.

Now, having read this legislation, I would say that there is both good and bad. I'm going to discuss some of the good points. Number one, there's the watering down of the onerous and wholly ineffective stranglehold on local control and input. (Tape malfunction) allows more flexibility and speaks for the need for intervention that is timely and functional in running the school district. Also, what's good is the provision that seeks to provide technical

assistance, which is a tacit admission that the State of New Jersey's DOE can't run a school district or impose its hegemony in a manner that accrues to the educational benefit of Paterson's children.

Good also is the staged and temporary -- and I emphasize temporary -- nature of future interventions. As I stated, 13 years of State control has demonstrated it's not necessarily to the benefit that you have attempted in the law. Also good is the absence of the Type 3 school district provision where entities from outside this community would place people on the school board in perpetuity and impose their wills on this community from afar. Of concern, however, is the notion that we need to have three people placed on the Board of Education by the Commissioner's office. It's unclear as to how the placing of these people would enhance the local district to better manage its affairs independently, when they bring little other than their opinions to bear. It's unclear, if there's no attempt to educate the district, educate the community as to what they still see as a problem, why you would need to put -- add their officials on that board. It's also unclear how those people would be appointed and whence they would come.

Of greater concern is the capital project board, wherein the mayor and the Commissioner and others would appoint people to assist the district in running or managing its capital projects. And to give you an indication of why this is a concern -- as recently as last week, we had the Mayor of this city and the Assemblywoman meet down in the Governor's office with the Schools Construction Corporation, wherein they managed to convince the Schools Construction Corporation to give the Mayor's office a veto on any school sites if they didn't approve of the location, with the Board of Education. Now, the

concern is, perhaps not this Mayor, but that could lead to an abuse of power. It could lead to a conflict when a district is planning to have an educational plan put forward, or they decide what's educationally of benefit in terms of placing new schools, but it runs in conflict with a mayor's desire to appease developers -- which the mayor may need to help further his redevelopment plan or, as the case may be, his reelection.

The children can't have their school choices determined by politics. It should be determined by educational needs. And when you create agencies or portions -- or practices which call that into question, then you jeopardize and you violate the integrity of the board of education and you interfere with their educational prerogative, which is to decide where and how children are educated.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: I just wanted to mention something regarding that. This particular bill actually backtracks on the initial statute. The current statute calls for managing capital on a capital project board. This bill allows for it. It doesn't say you have to have it -- doesn't make it mandatory.

DR. HODGES: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: It makes it permissive. So that's actually something that will not be a requirement under the new legislation as proposed now.

DR. HODGES: Good.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Mr. Chairman, if I just may also interject.

Certainly, Commissioner (*sic*), I was present at this meeting that you were talking about. I just want to make sure -- before you jump to another area here for discussion, as part of your testimony -- I just want to make sure that everybody understands the statement that you made, which is a bit unclear and also almost, somewhat incorrect. The information -- and I'm sure this is what you may have intended to say -- is, clearly, that at the meeting was both the superintendent of the schools, yourself, myself, the Mayor of the city of Paterson. And quite honestly, what we talked about was not that there was absolutely any veto power. In fact, there was no such word ever used. It was that it would be a collaborative partnership between the Paterson Board of Education; the Office of City Council and all of its elected officials; the CEO of the city of Paterson, being that of the Mayor; and the community to ensure that there were and there are eight different community redevelopment plans that are currently in place, and that is where -- how those facilities would be redeveloped, based upon that. I am certain that you are-- I mean, to refer to-- That had absolutely nothing to do with political benefits, and it had everything to do with making sure that school facilities are built in areas that will help to enhance our entire community, to ensure that our schools are built around a community.

Please continue.

DR. HODGES: And point of fact--

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Excuse me, let me just--

Dr. Hodges, we certainly welcome your testimony, and we've got a good relationship going. I want to keep it that way. (laughter) I would really like if we could stick to the bill, to the QSAC. And I'd like to ask if all of us

can do that. This bill is certainly broad enough that we can deal with a huge degree of issues without having to stray away from that. So I just ask you.

DR. HODGES: Certainly. But just to -- and I will continue -- but just to clear up a point, the word *veto* was used, and I was not, as a board president, invited to the meeting. I was brought along. And that concern still is on the table, irrespective of what your understanding was. The State's understanding was something substantially different. They came to me afterwards and raised that issue.

Now, as to the rest of the legislation, we are deeply concerned because a good portion of the community -- because of how the timing -- didn't get a chance to review it extensively. We did not see the legislation in advance and may not know all of the various details. But that's the few concerns I put on the table, and then I'm going to reserve the time, since there are other people here.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

DR. HODGES: Certainly.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Next, I have Irene Sterling, from PEF.

**I R E N E S T E R L I N G:** Thank you, Assemblyman Stanley, other members of the Committee, and the public. I'm the Executive Director of the Paterson Education Fund, and I am proud to be a 35-year resident of the city of Paterson. I educated my daughter here. I've been the president of three home school councils, amongst other things. My daughter currently is a teacher here in the school district, and so I'm intimately involved with the concern about the public schools. I stand here as the Executive Director of the Paterson

Education Fund, which is a 501-C3 organization whose mission it is to engage the public so that the Paterson Public Schools hold the highest standards for our children. I've also had the pleasure of serving on the Abbott working group on state operation, and spent six months with the Commissioner's staff, over time, talking about this in its early -- this legislation -- in its early stages.

I continue to have concerns about a number of areas with regard to the legislation. The first one is the question of accountability. There is no question that we got into the situation of State operation in the three State takeover districts because the accountability systems in our community did not work. Our school systems were eaten by outside interests. Decisions were not made on behalf of children. They were made on behalf of all different kinds of other things that had to do with money, jobs, political patronage. You name it, we had it in all three districts, and it operated here. And the job that we have to do, as we come back to local control, is to assure that this situation does not occur again.

It is therefore, I believe, critically important that the governance system have clear lines of accountability. And so I'm very pleased that the question of a third or fourth type of governance system is out of this bill. We should either, like the rest of the State of New Jersey, elect our school board or have them appointed by our mayor, exercising our clear choice in that way so that we can continue to hold people accountable.

Furthermore, the other piece of-- That's the local accountability piece. The other accountability that I am concerned about, and I think is pretty vague in this bill, is how the Legislature is going to hold the Department accountable for what it does. And we have to say, over the 13 years of State

operation, the Legislature has been much less active than we would have wished in holding the Department accountable for what it did here. Now, we understand-- I've been through three governors and six commissioners in the course of the State operation of the Paterson Public Schools. And each governor and each commissioner treated State operation differently. They had different sets of rules. There was one set of rules, but they had different emphases in that time. It was very difficult. It continues to be very difficult for the local community to understand how we are to get things done correctly.

We, in fact, had a program here, sponsored by the Paterson Board of Education this weekend, in which an assistant commissioner of Education told us that the Paterson public runs our schools. We do not. If you look at the guide to school board election, which I passed out to you -- on the back, every year since we've put this publication out, we have put down, for the public to understand, what the powers of the board are. And when the board does not hire the superintendent and sign his check, when the board does not hire personnel and have any say over that, when the board does not have responsibility for outside legal council, when the board does not have responsibility for labor contracts, we are not in control. And for a member of the Department to stand here and tell us that we are in control, that is outrageous. That is absolutely outrageous. And this cannot go forward as we move forward. We need to be clear what the Department's going to do, what we locally have to do, and you have to hold us accountable, with a transparent process, to make sure that happens so that the children of Paterson get what they deserve.

I also have a concern about the highly skilled professional and the role of that person in moving our districts forward. It is not clear in the legislation whether the highly skilled professional is a coach and a friendly support -- albeit perhaps strict -- or if this person is a monitor and an oversight person with the ability to overrule the decisions of the persons that they are working with. That, again, is absolutely necessary to be cleared up so that there are clear lines of authority. At any point that I, as a parent, or member of the taxpaying public asks a question -- who's responsible -- and the answer goes like this (indicating), the legislation is wrong and failed.

It's critically important that this legislation be clear and even-handed, and provide a guidepost that we can stand behind, because we understand that this is simply the first step in addressing the complex and messy situation of school finance in New Jersey. We understand that NJQSAC will be followed by legislation to amend the school finances. And it becomes critically important that what NJQSAC does is even-handed and appropriate for all school districts, so that we can begin to address the financial requirements of all children. Not just parity, but educational adequacy for every child in the State of New Jersey. We've got to be able to have a transparent mechanism by which we can tackle these thorny subjects, of what do we do about special education funding, and so forth -- all of which impacts our ability to manage and operate and govern ourselves as responsible citizens.

I want to tell you about the bus. We talked a lot about the bus in the city of Paterson, but right now I want to talk about what it takes to get on the bus. If it takes 2.50 to get on the bus, and some communities have the 2.50, they shouldn't expect to get more. But if my community and if my child

has only 50 cents and you give me a dollar, I still am a dollar short of getting on the bus. And so the notion behind NJQSAC, which looks at all of us in the same manner -- takeover, urban, rural, charter schools -- along the same continuum, must be the preparation to look at the issues of finance in that same way. We need to be sure that every child has the 2.50 to get on the bus.

Finally, I want to remind you, as we take this legislation forward, about the variety of capacities, financially, of our districts. The city of Paterson taxes itself at a very high rate, and we raise \$36 million a year for our school system. That's out of a budget of a half a billion dollars. That \$36 million, I want to remind all of you, is not enough money to run our two comprehensive high schools. If we had to rely on the ability of the citizens of Paterson to raise tax money for their school, we would have to close Rosa Parks High School, every academy, every elementary school, and every pre-K program in this community.

So once again, the notion behind QSAC, that it's even-handed and it represents all of us in the same way, holds us to the same standards, holds us to transparent accountability, must do that knowing that what we are headed towards is that thorny question about school finance, which will be linked to what you do here.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

And there's probably no one who's more concerned about that thorny question than the people right in front of you right now. Actually, QSAC, of course, will be handled independently of that question of how we finance our schools, certainly, under the *Abbott* decision. And we need to make

sure that we continue to have an *Abbott* decision. But under *Abbott* decision, there are some clear guidelines to what -- how much you can -- how much the State has to come up with, with respect to parity funding and making sure that the Abbotts have what they need. And I think it's a tremendous decision, and we certainly don't want to see it eroded. But we certainly want to make sure that QSAC is even-handed. And I think that's one of the main reasons for bringing this new -- to bringing QSAC on. And so that there is a universal way of treating all districts equally.

Next I have Anna Taliaferro, another person who I'm friendly with and want to remain friendly with. (laughter) It's very good to see you here, Anna. Welcome.

**ANNA N. TALIAFERRO:** No stranger to you at all, Mr. Stanley. And to you, my compadre and honorable Assemblyman Craig Stanley, members of the Education Committee -- and I want to go on record as saying, since the chairmanship, or chairwomanship, of Mildred Barry Garvin, it has been none that I can respect as much as I respect you. And I want to say that publicly, to the members of the State Department of Education, to the community and, most of all, to our parents who I'm going to advocate for today. Because I bring four hats to this forum -- one of a community leader; one of a taxpayer; and certainly last but not least, one of a parent; and most of all, a recycled parent, because I'm a grandparent who is responsible for educating one of my grandsons, who's in his junior status at the high school level. But I would be remiss if I forgot the many parents, who because this forum information got to late, that are not here.

And one of the things that we continue to complain about, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that we never have enough time in notifying the parents of the children of this school district. Something we seem to continue to forget. We represent over 26,000 children here in the city of Paterson. And I'm one who believes that when I take my shoes to the shoemaker, I expect him to fix them. When I go to the hairdresser, I intend for the hairdresser to do my hair. When I go to church, I want to make sure that I've been fortified in religion. When I come to the education system and ask for assistance for my children, I expect for the educators to educate my children. (applause) I didn't come here to preach. But for those who know, they should teach. And there's some things that we know.

I am happy to hear the Commissioner say that this is not in granite. And you as well, Mr. Chairman. Because there are some things I agree with and there are some things I definitely don't agree with. I have great reservation about the fact that the Commissioner would propose people to serve on the board who haven't been elected by the people. There can be no mistake in the fact that for 13, going on 14, years, the State has failed us. There can be no mistake in that. The State failed us prior to that. So my problem is, do we continue with legislation that will continue to fail our children? So you have to be very judicious in allowing us, as a community, to engage in exposing this document so that we can understand what it is your Committee will put together in the best interest of children. That's what we're asking for, and today is not enough time. Okay?

Gordon MacInnes was here on Saturday, and I'm sorry I didn't make it. I'm not so sure I might be standing before you all today. Because

when I hear things like: we did not submit a curriculum in 10 years, that the State did not have any control, that it was our responsibility to bring about T&E -- I have to wonder what is the State really doing.

Irene, I give you kudos for bringing in Gordon MacInnes. But while he was here, there was also another person he brought in, who I have known for several years, more than a decade now. Her name is Katie Haycock (phonetic spelling). Somehow the State had missed people like this. She's from the Education Trust in Washington. She's talking about how schools in two years can be turned around if we do the right thing. This is someone you need to bring before your House Education Committee and you need to talk to her to find out. Because she's all over the country and she has a history of success.

We bring members of her Education Trust to our daily conference, which you have attended for a number of years, Chairman. And we expect, if the State is really serious about educating our children -- why are they not reaching out to these kind of people? Because as I witness the State control for the last 13 years, I believe that Paterson has become a cash cow. (applause) Okay? That we continue to hide people who don't have our best interest at heart -- be it black, white, pink, purple, or polka-dot. I don't care what color you are if you're not competent enough to deal with what this Commissioner is proposing in the law in front of you. Okay?

What does the State plan to do in addressing these issues? And what happens if, indeed, you tell me that a State-operated superintendent is sitting here and the Board of Education doesn't agree with him and he uses, he or she -- now I'm tired of these he's -- I'm going to tell you now. That ain't

equal opportunity. (applause) Okay? All right. If, indeed, the board doesn't agree with it, then the superintendent overrides this and he vetoes it, and you don't hear the concerns of the people, because the board members have been elected to represent us.

Now, we said we're going keep it -- personalities out of this. Ain't no way in hell you going to keep personalities out of this legislation. Let's be clear about this. Okay? I have to teach you young people something, because, see, I'm a senior citizen right now, and you all ain't doing what you're supposed to do. All right?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: You have about another two minutes, Anna. (laughter)

MS. TALIAFERRO: That's all right, Craig. I'm coming into your district, too. (laughter)

What does the State plan on doing about -- this is a sore spot with parents, and you all need to know this -- these school leadership councils that don't involve parents, that will hold meetings during the day, Mr. Commissioner, by not allowing parents who work come at night to find out what the real menu of every school needs to be? Because under that Abbott legislation, we recognize that schools must present their budget by needs. And if I tell you I need something and you didn't put it in your budget, somehow we don't get it. And if you tell the parents, "Well, that's too bad. You didn't make it during the day when we had the meetings, and teachers can't come at night." And also, we're paying the teachers a stipend to come. We ain't paying the parent, no. These are our children.

Because right now, Mr. Chairman, Paterson, New Jersey, is breaking the law. Mr. Commissioner recommended in his State-operated districts that there will be -- and it was approved by the Supreme Court by the way -- that there will be a full-time school community liaison in every building. Paterson hasn't done it yet. How long have we been in Abbott? Somebody is breaking the law here, and I didn't know we were above the law. Okay? I heard enough of that with Joe Clark (phonetic spelling). I don't want to hear that. Okay? Yeah, I know some of you don't like it. I didn't like him either. So what?

I want to know what is the State going to do about that, because, you see, I listen to the QSAC key component. You have here personnel. You have fiscal management. You have operations and government. You have governance. You have capital projects. Where is parental involvement? (applause) Okay? I want to know that the curriculum that you're proposing in this legislation will rescue my children. That's what we want to know. Because we want to be part and parcel to that. We do not want to be part and parcel to failure. I tell parents all the time, under No Child Left Behind, if your school is in a failing school for at least two years and have not made adequate yearly progress, you have the right to ask for the staff to be removed. That I'm not after. What I'm after is that we go in these schools and we take over these schools to make sure that whatever is supposed to happen, on behalf of our children, happen. And I'm going to conclude, because I know you have a whole litany of people. All right. I know you know me well enough to know I can go on for another two hours, but--

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yeah, yeah. I know you well enough to know that. (laughter)

MS. TALIAFERRO: You've been most gracious and most respectful. Because as I go before the board meetings, they give us time limits. They don't understand that our children are extremely important to us and that every one of them needs to be given the opportunity, the same as any other children. And at some point and some time, Mr. Commissioner, to you, we want to be a part of that Constitution Convention that is now being proposed by the Governor and that's going to back-door the T&E and the Abbott remedy. We ain't stupid now. We're sitting here watching you, and we're going to do something about it.

But lastly, let me say this. No laws should ever be in place on behalf of our children and our community without engaging us. Sometimes the issues are unpopular -- we still have to talk about it. Iraq ain't popular to me right now, and I'm just thankful to God that one of my children are not coming home in a body bag. I don't think I can handle that. But we have-- You know, Secretary Paige (phonetic spelling) was right, he thought he'd made a Freudian slip. Some of our schools are weapons of mass instruction, and we need to understand that.

So I want you, in your infinite wisdom -- the way I know that your two uncles have groomed you, Mr. Chairman -- to lead the way in terms of your Committee. That's why I'm so proud that you're there. All right. But that don't mean I ain't going to keep you honest, because I'll be on you, too. But I'm saying to you, please understand the plea that we bring before you so that we can work it out. I, too, sat on the subcommittees and all of a sudden we stopped meeting. Why? Because it was getting too hot? So we need to really revisit this and talk about what is best for us.

Thank you so much. I appreciate your attention.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Anna.

And let me just, certainly, welcome anyone -- and Dr. Hodges, Ms. Taliaferro -- anyone who would like to send us written testimony on the bill. I know it was fairly short notice, but to be honest, we were talking about having this hearing back in June, but we didn't want to do it before the end of the school year. It got late in the year. So we felt it would be better to wait until September so that the parents, everybody would be around, and so forth. I can tell you, this is one of the best turnouts we've had in the state. You got a short notice, but you got a great turnout compared to a lot of other places. But please feel free, and I certainly encourage you, to submit testimony and any information that you have, any recommendations that you have. Because we want to get this bill -- make this the best possible bill we can have. And we can't do that without your input.

Next, we have Joseph Atallo, from the Paterson Board of Education. (no response) Okay, not here.

All right. How about Albert Rowe, from Calvary Baptist Church. Reverend Rowe.

**REVEREND ALBERT P. ROWE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to be here.

I want to say, first of all, that if providence -- that had me come down here-- I have to leave. I have a 4:30 meeting that's very, very important, but I thought I had to be here. I'm a former member of the Paterson Board of Education, former member of the City Council and the President of the City Council. I'm the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church. For 30 years, we have

operated a preschool program. We also operate an Abbott program. So I'm happy that you're here.

I was extremely happy to hear what the Commissioner had to say. Every time I hear him speak I'm more inspired, because he talks about those five points, and he talks about the involvement of the community. And what he says sounds very reasonable and I think very workable, very doable. But the thing is, I hope that they're done.

I want to say thanks to Assemblywoman Pou and this Commission (*sic*) for having this meeting now, rather than in June. I don't think many of us would be here if it was in June. I have not read the report, and I appreciate the fact that you have said that we may send a testimony, and I will send a testimony. But there are two or three things that I'd like to mention to you. I echo what Irene Sterling said. That if the board cannot hire a superintendent, cannot approve a budget, cannot give guidelines for salaries, cannot make contracts, it isn't a board, and it shouldn't be there at all. If it's going to be that type of State takeover, maybe what should happen is that the State takes it over and appoint a committee and let them run it. But do not make us think that we can elect the board.

I think it's all right for the Commissioner to have a person to serve on a board. I don't think there should be three persons on the board. I don't think the Commissioner-- I think that it should be an elected board for Paterson, since we have an elected board, I think it should be an elected board.

And we talk about accountability. I was present when the school takeover was done. They said that we didn't have accountability. But in all those days and all those years, \$50 million was never misappropriated. And I

don't think that we had as many negative comments about the achievement level of our students as we have today. Now there's something drastically wrong. I don't know what it is. I do not think that the State superintendent should have full control. It's ridiculous for a State superintendent to be able to override a decision of a board. It creates tension, hostility, and uncooperative spirit -- for the commissioners just to know that.

I work with boards all the time. All pastors work with boards. We don't have authority to override a board. We may ask God to do it, but we don't do it. (laughter)

I am going to get a testimony into you. But I felt that I should come and say that I am happy that we have made some strides. We haven't gotten there yet, but I recognize the fact -- whenever there's growth there must be change. There is never growth or progress unless there are changes. I have a lady who asked me, some years ago, to help her do a day care center. I said, "Okay, figuratively, symbolically, go to the door, turn a knob to the right, and push." And she said, "I want to go to the door, turn a knob to the left, and pull." And she went away. About two years later she came back and she said, "I want you to help me do a day care program." I said, "Symbolically, go to the door, turn a knob to the right, and push." She said, "I want to turn the door to the left, and pull." About a year-and-a-half ago she called me and took me in Essex County and showed me a building. She said, "Listen, I want to establish this day care center. I want you to help me." I said, "All right. I'll be glad to do it. Figuratively, symbolically, turn a knob to the right, and push." She says, "But I want to turn the knob to the left and pull."

We've got to change if there's going to be progress. If there's no change, there is no progress. There's no growth. They're locked together -- change and progress. Let's make some changes. The Mayor is leading us. Paterson's best days are ahead of her, not behind her. And the people of Paterson want to move from good to great. The Paterson Board of Education -- I've been privileged to work with the Paterson Board of Education, with the Stupski Foundation, and I'm amazed and inspired by the number of dedicated, conscientious, resourceful people we have in this district. And what we have to do is get together and make the change that needs to be made. And we know you're going to do your part.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Reverend Rowe. We certainly appreciate your testimony. And certainly, as I said, you're invited to submit testimony to the Committee.

Next, we have Councilman Davis, a member of the Paterson City Council. Thank you so much for joining us.

**COUNCILMAN ANTHONY E. DAVIS:** Good evening.

I, too, was present on Saturday when the Assistant Commissioner made that statement or, should I say, those statements. I am a product of Paterson Public Schools, which I believe in. I returned to Paterson to give back. I served on the school board, and currently now I'm on the City of Paterson Council. I say I have a vested interest as well.

I appreciate the Assembly Education Committee for meeting here in Paterson at John F. Kennedy High School. However, you asked for our help, input from the community. You scheduled a 4:00 meeting. You asked us to

support a bill which I have not seen or read. We in Paterson need to be inclusive on all levels. We need to be included in this Paterson Board of Education process of returning it back to local control. We, the stakeholders, have one goal, and that goal is to have all our children educated and have them all to learn.

I just wanted to go on record and state in all of this -- we have and want to change the negativity here in Paterson's behavior. And we're working on that. We realize that Paterson has some issues. But nevertheless, we, the stakeholders, need to be included on everything. So I look for an exit plan so we can get out of this situation. But I also want you to remember, children do not question the wrongdoing of adults. They suffer from it. And I leave with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Councilman. I certainly appreciate your coming before us.

One of the reasons that we've scheduled meetings like this from 4:00 to 7:00 was so that we could get people who don't necessarily work in the school system an opportunity to come -- parents and so forth -- an opportunity to come and give us their input. And we certainly welcome any information that anyone wants to give us within the next two or three weeks. I don't expect the bill to move prior to that. We certainly appreciate your input.

But one of the things that we have mentioned to the Commissioner was that we did want to get public input before we passed legislation. And the Commissioner has been patient. Maybe not that he had a choice, because you can't push the Legislature to do things sometimes as fast as we want to; but he certainly has accommodated us in terms of coming to the various forums, and

giving information on QSAC, and making the Department's position known. And we certainly appreciate it. And we expect to be working with him and working with the communities in the future.

Next, I understand Councilman Kenneth Morris is here, and we wanted to give him an opportunity. I understand he has to leave. So we wanted to certainly give him an opportunity to come and speak before the Committee

Thank you very much, Councilman Morris. I appreciate your being here.

**COUNCILMAN KENNETH M. MORRIS JR.:** Thank you, also, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the beautiful city of Paterson -- both yourself and the esteemed members of the Assembly Education Committee.

I'll make my comments brief. As my colleague had pointed out, I was a little concerned about the time that this meeting was being held, and particularly on the day, because this is a day of a regularly scheduled council meeting. So I did want to come here this evening, because one of the things that I want to make clear: that in the city of Paterson there are not two constituencies -- a constituency that is represented by the elected members of the municipal government and a constituency that is elected by the people for those folks who serve on the Board of Education. There is one constituency in the city. And as elected officials, we have to be concerned about that constituency. We have to be concerned that the children of this city are prepared not only to enter college, but to succeed in college, which is part of the reason why I stand before you here today.

As you begin to talk about this process, of being a collaborative process, involving not only the community but the elected officials, we have to be passionate about that collaboration. As I wanted to look at the legislation, I realized that there wasn't enough copies of the legislation present here this evening. That gave me some concern. I will recommend that, in the future, as you begin to hold public meetings, that there are enough copies of the legislation available. And in addition, that there's an executive summary about what that legislation -- to give us an opportunity to read over the executive summary so we can familiarize ourselves with the legislation. (applause)

If your intent, your goal, if your premise is to have a collaborative working relationship with the community, it is incumbent upon you to do what is ever in your power to make sure that that is communicated thoroughly to the community. And I believe an executive summary would have served that purpose.

I also agree with my colleagues in that the State has to have a proper exit plan. But as they begin to exit this district, they have to be sure that they do not take the pocketbook with them. They need to leave the purse behind. (applause) If the war in Iraq has not taught us anything, it should have taught us that we cannot go into one person's backyard, disrupt that backyard and just leave it behind, without leaving chaos behind. (applause) So I encourage you, as you begin to move forward, as you begin to think about and put a process in place to return this district back to local control.

As a member of -- Dr. Hodges told a very interesting story at Saturday's meeting. He had asked the parents that -- would they leave the purse behind in a room, and not worry what happens to that purse and go off some

place? And I was intrigued by that story, because, as he asked the question, there was not a parent in the room who would be willing to leave their purse or their wallet behind and not be concerned what would happen to that purse or that wallet.

But I want to flip the script a little and say, as the State begins to exit the city of Paterson, leave the purse behind.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Councilman.

I just want to make a request to staff in the future, when we do have public hearings, that we bring perhaps a minimum of 50 copies available to the public, at a minimum. And then, as we get more response in terms of people coming, we would even up that to more than 50 copies. But I do agree with you, we should have copies here. I thought we had indicated that we would have some copies of the legislation here.

Let me also mention to you that the bill, A-2643, is also available on the Web. You go to the State Legislature's Homepage, you can pull that bill up on the Web, so you don't have to necessarily have it here. You can certainly access it via the Web.

Next I have Linda G. Smith, from the Paterson Branch of the NAACP.

**L I N D A G. S M I T H:** Good evening.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Good evening.

MS. SMITH: Good evening to all of you, my Assembly people from my district and to you, Mr. Chairman.

Last night I received a copy of the legislation. And as you know, we're all working people. I did not get a chance to read all of it this morning or this afternoon. And in fact, you saw me coming in, I was just coming from work. So it's been difficult.

And I guess I have to speak to the points that others have spoken to. I have two very capable Assembly people in this district, and I didn't hear from Assemblywoman Nellie Pou until Friday that this hearing was taking place. And I haven't heard from you at all, Assemblyman Steele.

ASSEMBLYMAN STEELE: Excuse me, I don't serve on the Committee. So not that I didn't have a voice, but I just wanted to echo that.

MS. SMITH: I hear you.

Needless to say, it is very disconcerting to this community when we do not know that this is taking place.

I want to speak to what I have in front of me, but I don't feel that I have all of the resources I need in order to speak to it. So you will be receiving a presentation from me in writing. I would like to ask your permission, because I know she didn't fill out a slip, to have Dr. Elaine Harrington, who is our Education Chair, to come forward.

But I need to say--

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: I did have Dr. Harrington.

MS. SMITH: Oh, okay. Thank you.

I need to say that this community cares about what happens to our children. And when State control is no longer in place, one, we need a reasonable exit plan. We need an exit plan with dollars attached to it. And we need to be able to have the community have full control of who sits there, who

sits on 33 Church Street, and who sits up on our school board. And we need it, and we need it immediately. It has been too long, too long, and there's nothing in place. I'm praying and hoping that the Assembly bill and a comparable Senate bill will address these issues. But as I said, you will get my written comments.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Ms. Smith.

And another person we've dealt with a number of years, former State President of the NAACP, Dr. Elaine Harrington. Welcome. Glad to have you. She bumped you up to the front of the list by asking you to come up, so there you go. You deserve it.

**ELAINE C. HARRINGTON, Ed.D:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam President, and thank you very much Assemblyman. It's so good to have you in Paterson, Mr. Chairman of Education. I am a little relieved knowing that you are there in the seat.

I want to say, first of all, thank you for coming to Paterson -- a thriving, striving, and driving State-operated district -- to educate our students and our learners. However, there is a fabric of crisis and distress in this State-operated district -- crisis and distress in this State-operated district. I'll not even go into the time that you called the meeting. I think we've heard enough about that. But some of us still work for a living.

I sat on this Board of Education the very night this district was taken over by the State of New Jersey. And I remember I cried so. I cried so. I made such an ugly face, the *Herald News* put the ugly face on the front page of the *Herald News*. And I asked certain questions that very night -- what is the

State going to do by taking us over that it cannot do now? Well, my question has been answered. What did the State do by taking us over? The State has put -- has contributed, I should say, has made a grave contribution in putting this district in -- and I'm just going to be honest -- a mess. That's as clear as I can make it. I'm not going to even talk about the misappropriation of big bucks. We're not going there tonight.

But, Mr. Education Chairman, you need to know that this district is in crisis. Our students, for the most part -- and God bless the boys and girls -- for the most part still are having difficulty in meeting academic standards of excellence. I know, I teach them every day. I was teaching a young lady, who graduated in May, today how to find a common denominator to add two fractions. I know what I'm talking about. This is not something I read from anybody, I know what I'm talking about.

The State takeover, based upon what has happened now, maybe it wasn't intended to go this way. But I want you to know what has happened. I've looked over the-- I don't have your bill. I do have the Senate bill. I did request an abstract or whatever -- executive summary -- and we need that. If you're going to ask us to come and participate as intelligent members of this community, to discuss the issues, we need to be intelligent with the intelligence. Double talk, but you know what I mean.

What you have proposed in terms of New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum for evaluating the performance of each school is what some of us proposed in 1991. We begged you, don't take the whole district. Work with us on those areas that need specific improvement. And the district wasn't totally bad. But ladies and gentlemen, right now we're in distress.

We're in crisis. My question: Do we really want Paterson to move out of State-operated control, or do we need a State-operated control that is more humanized, that is more humane, that's solidifies, that qualifies, and dignifies the operation and the relationship between the State and the district?

Because as it stands now, the relationship is just unbearable -- where our elected board members sit at that table where you are now and vote upon X, Y, Z, knowing that the State-appointed superintendent, at 9:00 the next morning, can veto every action that has been made. That's not the way to take over anything. That's not the way to take it over with the mission of assisting us. So my question is, what do we really want? And to be very honest with you, Paterson -- before we return this district, before we return this chaos, before we return this wrecked ship to local control, we need to sit at the table -- I heard someone say it -- we need to sit at the table of transfer, the table of transmittal, the table of how we make the transfer. Don't give us this mess. Don't give it to us, right not, anyway -- it's a mess, as somebody said -- and then take the funds back and then expect us to educate children. We feel that we are capable, especially at this time in the juncture of education, we feel that we are capable of doing those things that are appropriate and will best benefit our children. However, if you came in tomorrow and gave it to us, took the funds -- Lord, Lord, Lord -- you're talking about a prayer meeting, Reverend Steele. I don't even know whether a prayer meeting would get us through it. What I am saying to you -- whatever the relationship is between the State and the local district -- it must be one that compliments; it must be one that solidifies. It must be one that, indeed, reaches and meets the needs of this district, whether it's State control, local control, Harrington control, Clancy (phonetic spelling) control,

whomever control. And I ask you, as you move forward, please consider what it takes to get us out of this mess. But more importantly, what it takes to educate children in the 21st Century.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Dr. Harrington.

I'm going to ask if -- and I'm willing to be here all night -- but I don't know if my colleagues would appreciate it if we went on all night. But we do have a number of people to get through. And what I'm going to ask is if persons can make their statement as briefly as possible, and then we can get their testimony on record.

I have Pastor James -- oh, Lord-- Okay, he's gone. I was going to say Pastor -- Lord of mercy, I would have made a mistake now, asking him to be brief, but I think he left already. Pastor James E.-- Reverend James Salmon. I'm sorry. He's left already. He's gone.

Assemblywoman Voss is--

**REVEREND JAMES A. KUYKENDALL:** What did you say, Brother Salmon -- Brother Chairman? Praise the Lord that the Pastor is gone? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: No, no. I didn't say that. No, I didn't say that. I said--

Is Pastor Salmon here? Are you Pastor Salmon?

REVEREND KUYKENDALL: No, I'm Reverend Kuykendall, Pastor Kuykendall. I'm with the Paterson Pastors' Workshop.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Okay, very good.

Just let me accommodate my Committee person, and then I will certainly hear from you.

REVEREND KUYKENDALL: Let me just ask, is there going to be a follow-up on this?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yes. There will be a follow-up in Trenton. And also, as I had mentioned before, there will be an opportunity for everyone here, or even people who aren't here, to send the information to our Committee so that we get their testimony.

REVEREND KUYKENDALL: What is your time frame for this whole complete process, for this legislation to get passed, both by the Senate and by the Assembly?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: We started in April, and we want to have it done by October. We want to have it done by the end of October, at least through my Committee. So -- and the Senate has had some hearings, but I don't believe the Senate is going to move it before the Assembly moves it.

REVEREND KUYKENDALL: What I would like to ask, for the future, when you come back and if you're really going to involve the community, please consider the time. You have working folks here who got off late, we didn't get the announcement until Friday. Most people who don't understand the legislation the way it's written need to have time to process that and then to come before this Committee.

But, again, we want to welcome you to Paterson, thank you that you came, and we look forward to working-- You will have more individuals who are not here tonight who will get the word, and they will submit a written testimony. So you will hear our concern, you will feel it, and take it into

consideration. There are others that know you, as Anna, and we are going to make sure Anna gets in contact with you. We're going to give her full reign, whatever she needs to do. So along with her, President Hodges, we need to have a say-so in this process. And we don't need to just go through the formality tonight, we need input on this, and you need to feel this.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yes.

REVEREND KUYKENDALL: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Well, thank you very much, Pastor. I appreciate that.

Assemblywoman Voss, Dr. Voss, I'm certainly glad you were able to join us. I understand that you have another meeting that you have to attend.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VOSS: I just wanted to say that I'm sorry. I would stay here all night as well, because I'm very interested in what you have to say. I've listened to you very carefully. Many of you have very eloquently voiced many of the concerns that I have about this piece of legislation. And I do my homework, and I have definitely taken copious notes, and your thoughts and your concerns will certainly be mine, as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Dr. Voss.

I have Maria Magda, from the Hispanic Multi-Purpose Service Center, who has asked to testify. Thank you very much. Welcome to the Committee. A former councilwoman as well.

**M A R I A M A G D A:** That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Well, thank you.

MS. MAGDA: For 18 years, I served this community, and I served the community really proud of being a resident of the city of Paterson. Before

that, I wanted to thank Assemblywoman Nellie Pou, Mr. President, yourself, Reverend Steele, for inviting me to this forum tonight.

Commissioner, I want to welcome you on behalf of my community in Paterson. That's everybody in Paterson; and congratulations for being here, your guests, the assistant commissioners, and many friends that I have here.

Again, my name is Maria Magda. I am a resident of the city of Paterson for at least some decades -- maybe 45 years or so. I have two children educated in the city of Paterson. And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for being part of my community tonight. However, I believe the issue is not clear enough. We don't have the opportunity to know what the legislation is all about. And I would like to be more involved in what's taking place. However, I believe that the State has all the right to come and help us in the city of Paterson or any district that is in need of help. And again, I want to thank the Commissioner. I want to thank you for this great, great opportunity.

Another thing that I do understand, just now, before when I heard the community talking about an appointment. The Latino students are 57 percent in our city, and I'd like to request the State to appoint the members in order for us to serve the most needy community in the city of Paterson. And on behalf of that community, I want to thank you again, and I hope that this moment and this forum will be repeated, for the community to be involved in our issues. I'd like to thank you so much for this great opportunity, and welcome to the Hispanic Multi-Service Center, where I represent for many, many years, where I was a founder in 1976. You're all welcome to come and visit our day care. We have a day care -- have a program. We are extremely happy to serve our community.

I also worked for the Board of Education, Early Childhood, and I was the educator of our first graduation of 80-some family workers -- that I'm very, very happy and proud to feel a part of that community and the Board of Education. I thank you and God bless you.

And again, Commissioner, welcome to our city of Paterson on behalf of our community at large.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Councilwoman Magda. We certainly appreciate your welcome. (applause)

Next, we have Jose Rivera, Home School Community Liaison. Okay, he had to leave. He gave us written testimony. We'll certainly take that into consideration.

Next, we have Bill Kline, from the Paterson Board of Education, I presume.

**WILLIAM KLINE:** Good evening, Education Committee members. My name is Bill Kline.

I've seen this district prior to takeover, and I've seen and been in this district during every day of every year of the public takeover. I have a vested interest in education. This town gave me the opportunity, in 1957, to become a teacher. This town gave me an opportunity to advance through the ranks and, in 1983, I became an Assistant Superintendent and served in that capacity until the takeover.

I want to make it very clear that the Paterson district and the Paterson residents aren't interested in control as it presently stands, and changing the nomenclature from controlled intervention is really not enough. We don't need outside control. I believe in the election process. I'm opposed

to inside appointments or outside appointments. There's enough capability in this town and there's enough knowledge and concern on the part of the residents to be able to elect their persons who are going to run this school system.

As far as State responsibility is concerned, we need to have all the necessary resources in order for our professional personnel, with parental and community involvement, to help run this district. We invite monitoring, but we invite serious monitoring -- the kind of monitoring that after situations develop like the \$50 million is missing, that those who are responsible for monitoring do a serious enough job so that it will never happen again. We need the kind of monitoring that, when persons or persons like the State Construction Corporation (*sic*) are empowered to oversee construction in this district, that there is somebody monitoring the SCC, because the results of the work that have been taking place in the last two years is far from satisfactory. And I'm sure some of our elected representatives, as well as the Governor, as well as the Commissioner of Education, are aware of our concerns about that -- even the pictures we've sent them that clearly illustrate the kind of work that is being left behind. So that when we talk about monitoring, we're talking about serious monitoring.

The last thing I'm going to say is, parents have to be clearly involved in this district. Parents have to be made to feel welcome when they enter the schools, and they have to feel that when they bring their concerns to whomever is in charge that those concerns will be met. They need respect and they need cooperation. And I hope that Paterson receives local control, not under the control of the mayor, not under the control of any politicians, but

local control and giving the authority to their elected officials to give us the kind of education that we all want for our children.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

Reverend James Staton. Okay.

**REVEREND JAMES STATON:** Did you say praise the Lord?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Praise the Lord, the Reverend's here.

REVEREND STATION: Okay. Amen. Truly, we just thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, Committee, just to allow us this opportunity. I was beginning to wonder, as you began to shuffle the list around and pulling people to come forward, but I truly thank you for coming. And as an advocate for the community, I just stand before you to say that we're tired of the blowing smoke. We're tired of the blowing smoke. We're tired of the blowing smoke. So many times we hear that this is for your best interest, this is for your best interest. And time and time again, as we look at test scores as they come in, everyone is sitting on pins and needles to find out how their schools have done or fared, and to find out that they are below. And we look at, again, another piece of legislation that's coming forth that I personally haven't had the opportunity to go over and look at, and as many others haven't. The point being is that-- When the community and the parents, that are wondering and trying to find out about accountability, about what is going to get us on the straight road so our children can be educated and be on the playing field with other kids -- just keeps us wondering.

When we talk about accountability, yet the quality of education has not been there. It hasn't been there. But yet, with the takeover, it's supposed to have taken us over, up into another level, but that is continually decreasing. We need quality education, not just in high school, but from grade school up, from preschool up. We need the things that are supposed to be in place, that are supposed to have been in place ever since 13 years ago, to be in place now. Because what do we do with the students now, that have been failing for the last 13 years, and we're still trying to get legislation so that they can get the quality education that they deserve. Our children are our greatest asset. Our children are our future. So it's only fair that as we look at Legislatures and those that are making these laws, that they can-- How can you come to a meeting such as this in this magnitude, and the majority of that time is spent shuffling the papers so that everyone is busy? I'm very busy myself. But when you start shuffling the papers and pulling people out of turn to come to the podium, we want you to know that we are very busy as well.

And I want you to know that our concern, and I'm sure your concern, Mr. Chairman, are our students or our children, which are our future. And as long as we go into the next year or into this year while studies are being done, we still have children who are failing. You can bring in program after program after program, but if our children are still failing in the basics, we have to relook at this whole picture. We have to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We cannot continue to go in the direction that's spiraling down. And we need every tool that's available to come into Paterson, to give us the 360, to give our children the advantage that they need that they can be very successful

as they move from grade school or pre-K, on out of high school and through colleges.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Reverend.

I guess your testimony must have hit a nerve with me. We certainly don't really make light or want to minimize the need for community input. As a matter of fact, the only reason we're here is because this Committee -- and I would venture to say that not every single committee would even come to Paterson to hear public input. I'll just be quite honest with you.

But the fact that Nellie Pou and Assemblyman Steele are -- first of all, they're good friends of mine; but secondly, Nellie is on the Committee, and Assemblyman Steele I've know for a long. As a matter of fact, I make a little joke about pastors, because all my best friends are pastors. So I apologize. I shouldn't have said that. But I do want to say that I personally take very serious the commitment and the responsibility that we have to our kids. And every day -- I live in a town called Irvington, which is an Abbott district, which is not doing what we need to do for kids.

And every single day I wake up, I try to figure out something else that we can be doing to help our kids. So I just say that to say that the will, the concern -- I think that we have -- and there are enough people throughout this country that we can figure some of these things out. And the very reason that we're here is because we take very seriously what you said -- the need to help our kids. (applause)

Thank you. I appreciate your testimony.

Next we have -- gee whiz, I wish I could ask somebody to help me with these names -- Ken, from the city of Paterson. Ken Morris maybe. He spoke. All right. That's good.

Luis Delgado. Is Luis still here?

And I understand that the Commissioner has to leave.

Commissioner, would you like to make some comments before you leave, just briefly? I understand you have to go. You're leaving your assistant commissioners here.

COMMISSIONER LIBRERA: Yes. I need to apologize. I have to go to Englewood and it will take me about 35 minutes to get there, and I have to be there at 7:00. Dwight Pfennig is staying. Jessica is staying. Diane Schonyers is staying, as well, for the duration of however long this takes. And we certainly appreciate the thoughtful and conscientious remarks that have been made. We are committed, as you know, Chairman Stanley, to do the work that's necessary to make the modifications up to the last minute of this legislation, so it's the best that we could possibly do.

Just a few things by way of clarification. There should be no concern about leaving the money or taking the money when the district is returned to local control, because money is not provided because of State takeover. Money is guaranteed by the *Abbott* decision. So whatever happens with respect to the process will have no impact at all in terms of the finances of the district.

Irene carefully and accurately said that there is still other work that needs to follow this, having to do with funding formulas in the State of New Jersey. And that must follow too, though this is independent of.

Board member Kline said that this is a community that needs to be run by its elected officials. I agree completely. And that's why all of what we want to do is to have the local community be directly involved in the responsibility of educating its children. That they can always, whether it's in Paterson, Irvington, Jersey City, or others, do a better job than the State Department can ever do, and I don't care what State department that is.

Our responsibility is to see that children are educated well. Only the people in Paterson, through their elected officials, through their involvement of parents, can see that that happens. We look forward to the day that we can do this together. It cannot happen to the degree any of us want in State takeover. It has to change as fast as we can make it change.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Commissioner. And thank you again for joining us.

Mr. Delgado, thank you so much for your patience.

**L U I S A L F R E D O D E L G A D O:** Thank you.

I was going to, in the interest of time, say that I'd submit my comments in writing. But upon review, I think what I have to say should be heard.

My name is Luis Alfredo Delgado. I'm a lifelong resident of Paterson, a product of its school system -- School No. 3, John F. Kennedy High School. And I'm very proud to be a Patersonian.

Given that, allow me to bring forth a voice that -- a voice made up of many voices that may go unnoticed among the many competing interests,

here, in this process. Frankly, I don't think I have any qualification to comment upon -- but I think I do, on this particular voice.

The voice of students seems to be overlooked -- of what's in the best interest of students. Many times, we speak of them, and I think we should speak to them. Perhaps this legislation can include some type of requirement that districts make it mandatory to have a voice of a student -- student voice or community input, whether that be at meetings such as this or at the board of education meetings.

One, it ensures that no sector of this community feels disenfranchised. And, two, the reasons why I hope we're all here don't go unnoticed, but have a prominent voice in this process -- and that is the children of Paterson.

I think if we do this, we can ensure that -- if we ensure student community input, I hope it will give all of us a renewed motivation and remind us of what's at stake here.

Those are my comments. And I think I will hand my comments in writing, as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Delgado. (applause)

Next, we have Princess Reaves, parent and Vice President of the Home School Council.

**PRINCESS REAVES:** Good evening.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Good evening.

MS. REAVES: I'm going to try to be brief.

I'd just like to ask the question that we've been answering for so many years. And the question reads as follows: Will Congress and the legislative body fulfill the promise of the responsibility of the No Child Left Behind Act, with the adequate funding of American public schools, or shrink the responsibilities for giving the children an equal opportunity to learn? Will the economic policy be driven by selfish desires for more of those that its need is less, or a helping hand to families struggling to make ends meet?

And, also, I'd like to bring to your attention-- If we have decided that we're going to get in partnership with parents, schools, then we need to, kind of like, work as -- bringing this as a closer partnership than what we are doing now. We have sat over, years after years, and watched -- the State has brought in superintendents, which has failed our children.

Now, not having the proper notification for the parents-- I have checked, myself. And the reason why I'm here is because I attended a brief meeting that was at the Passaic Community College on Saturday and was handed notification from Elaine Harrington, and also handed notification from an elementary school -- which happened to be my grandchild's. There was no notification before the high schools, there was no notification-- I have personally checked, myself, before the academies. And I'm pretty sure there's a lot of other concerned parents, as myself. As we sit here, we talk about local -- State to change over to local hands. But we need to mend the problem that we have now, before we decide to make a decision. If we're going to make a decision, we need to distribute that information on such a bill -- that we want to have a tally of the votes here. I know that, me, per se-- I do not make a vote on anything that I don't have such information on.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

Let's see. Next I have Maggie (*sic*) DiAlva-Leon, American Teachers Association.

**M A R G I E D i A L V A - L E O N:** Good evening.

My name is Margie DiAlva-Leon, President of the Peruvian American Teachers Association, resident of Paterson. I do work for a preschool center here in Paterson, run by the Abbott program.

First of all, I would like to thank you for being in the city and giving us the opportunity, to listen to us. And, most of all, I would like to express that -- what you're planning to do -- the legislation that you are proposing -- I think is very appropriate. There are some concerns, though, that are not too clear. But, as an overall, it is positive, because it is a change that we really need in the city.

I did work, for seven years, as a substitute teacher for the public schools. And I noticed that part of our problem is that we do not involve our children in these subjects and these discussions. And we assume the problems -- sometimes over-assume the problems.

I think that, as a suggestion to your legislation, we should include some kind of council -- a student council, and have probably the upper grades being represented by the students. And have them involved in their own education, as well as their parents. If we get in touch with the children directly, and we ask them what they really think about their own education, probably our ears will be more open than they are right now. Probably, it will help the rest of the community to get together. Probably, we will get more united.

Because, to tell you the truth, just because you're here -- some concerns, because election comes or not-- That, to me, is not important. The point is that you're here. If it's election time or not, it is not important. The point is that you're here and that we are here.

And I think you did your best contacting people. It is in our power and our hands to be the links and get this network of communication-- It is hard to reach every single person, every single citizen, and parent of this city. It is a large city. And we try our best. It is in the hands of the leaders and the people who attend these meetings -- like here tonight -- and make these links work.

I appreciate your being here, again. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much. (applause)

I'd like to invite those of you who are here, and some of you who are leaders here, to go to the legislative Web page, because on that page it talks about all the different committee meetings that are taking place in the State of New Jersey. And it's good information just to know what's going on or what's being heard. And, sometimes, the notices won't get to you, but if you check that calendar, you'll know when the committee meeting is happening, when the Education Committee meeting is happening. And it's very important that as many people understand what's on the agenda at any given time. And that's just critical information that you want to pass on. And maybe you can pass it on to your students.

I know -- Margie, I think it was, just testified that's the kind of information that we really need to make sure that all of us have access to and know about.

Next, I want to try my hand at Dr. Hani Awadallah, maybe, from the American Civic Organization.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: I think he just left.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He's no longer here.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: All right, maybe he'll come back.

Next, we have Charles A. Ferrer Sr., Paterson Friends of the Fall.

**CHARLES A. FERRER SR.:** Good evening.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Good evening.

MR. FERRER: To Assemblyman Stanley and members on the board, we welcome that you're here.

I'd also like to thank you for bringing the Commissioner along, because the Commissioner has seemed to have lost his way to Paterson when the public asked him to come. He can come and meet with the board, and come and meet with this one and that one. But the public that he's responsible to answering to -- he seems to find a way not to make it here anymore. As he stated one time before, he feels he's a Patersonian.

Well, if you feel you're a Patersonian, then you should feel that you can always come here, whether it's for a good reason or a bad.

Now, I'm looking at this bill -- and I haven't really had a lot of time to go through it, so I will respond on that later. But some of the concerns that I see right off the bat are, this bill needs to put into place things that will regulate and monitor the Commissioner and the Department of Education. Because, you see, when we've asked the Commissioner and the Department of

Education to do certain things, like a thorough investigation audit into this district before any decisions were made to reappoint a superintendent, it was ignored. This came from the public. And then all this other mess came out.

When we asked that the person be removed-- Oh, they removed him, but they put him on special assignment down in Trenton. What does that tell the people here, and the children here, about the money that was mismanaged and the person that did it -- that he can be rewarded by going down there, instead of being dealt with properly. (applause)

The thing that also bothers me is, when that information came out, anyone that represents this district should have come to the community, or got a letter to the community, showing that you wrote to the U.S. Attorney General requesting a thorough investigation. Whether you believe the person was guilty or not, it needed to be done.

These things need to be in this bill -- that make sure that what happened can never happen again. It also needs to be in this bill -- because I keep hearing everybody saying that all are welcome at the table. But when they have different forums, the people that are most vocal, that have brought more than one thing to the attention of many, and have never been proven wrong, are never invited to sit down at that table. (applause)

Whether you like the person or not, and what they stand for, is immaterial. If you're really trying to do what's right for this community, or what's right for Newark, or Jersey City, and you leave out the people that have been most vocal and have been trying to fight the fight for things to be done right -- and they're not at the table -- then you're really not about doing what's

right for those children. (applause) That also came out at the meeting, Saturday.

And if your heart's really not in doing that, you need to dismiss yourself, because that's what's going on. We are tired of all laws that no longer protect the interest.

When the State came in here, they said they came to stop mismanagement and nepotism. And it's ran rampant in this city since the State has been here. And that needs to be in here, too, if it's not.

The other thing that bothers me is, when I read material that people who work for the State signed off on, that they probably should have scrutinized more -- and maybe some of the things would have been caught -- and then they end up working in this district-- That's another issue.

You're part of the problem. You're signing off. Now you work here. How do I have the trust that you're going to do things that are right? When we deal, and look at the facilities part, and we're having meetings with the SCC -- and you know nothing about them, if you haven't been in the schools that they have worked on-- The SCC -- and I'm here to tell everyone on this board, our legislators, and the people that work for the Department of Education -- needs to be dismantled. (applause)

And when I find the CD -- because I'm in the process of moving -- of the pictures I've taken in my school, alone, and other schools of the shoddy work that they oversaw, and approved, and paid people on, you'll understand why. See, that's another form of corruption, when people are being paid for half-done jobs. They couldn't put my doghouse together, but they put the schools together that our children go into. And no one said nothing. And when

we brought that to the attention of the State, once again, it was like we didn't say anything.

So these things need to be in this law that you're putting together, so that we can hold people accountable, from the Commissioner on down. Because if he's not doing his job, and if he's ignoring the people that are bringing these concerns to his attention, then there needs to be an avenue that he is removed. He just can't sit there and ignore us. Because the funny thing is, we don't go away, at all. And I've listened to him. We don't go away. We're not going to stop the fight. We do it because we care, for no other reason.

I've heard things that he said today -- that the board agreed to be a pilot district. Well, I asked the board president. He knew nothing about it. Don't come into my town trying to impress us with some nonsense. Because, you see, I'm not one that's just going to listen to what he says, or to what anyone says. I'm going to do my homework.

So it was that easy. I went to the board president and said, "Well, do you know about this pilot that we agreed to?" He's like, "Absolutely not." So if the board didn't agree to it -- the board president -- that means that it wasn't brought to the attention of the board. If it was just brought to the attention of the State district superintendent -- the intern superintendent. He has no business and no right doing that. He's just supposed to be here to try to keep a lid on things until we can find someone.

These are the games that the people in Paterson are tired of. We're tired of fighting. I'm an educator in this district. All I want to do is go to school and teach and educate the children. But if I have to fight, it's not a problem, because my record is clean and it's clear. If I could beat the Pentagon

of this United States of America for my own brother, anybody else below them is nothing I worry about or fear. And for those who thought they had gotten away -- and you need to make sure it's clear in this law -- you haven't. We're not letting up. And we plan to do what's right by these people. And anyone that gets in the way, that's not on the side of the right, will be dealt with. Put it in here so all the checks and balances are here. Make it clear, and make sure that this is not just a piece of paper that has no weight and no value, because we have too many of those laws. And that's why everything that's gone on in this district has happened.

It's not like it wasn't brought to the Commissioner's attention, but he ignored it. And he has yet to come to this community and say why.

We thank you for bringing him here. But to the people who work for him, we are still waiting for him to return, and speak to us, and let us know what is being done about what has happened here. That's what we want.

Please make sure that that goes back to him.

And the other thing, we tried to attend State board meetings, but as teachers-- A lot of times those meetings are during the course of the day, and we're working. I have taken off. I have gone down there. Sometimes you miss the part where you have to sign in or let them know that you want to speak. You don't get it in by 12 -- I didn't know that. But we're going to try to do those things and be down there, also. Because we want you to know, first hand, because you're not hearing it from us. So you think everything is going-- State board members are thinking everything is going okay. Even when the superintendent was up for reappointment, I called Mr. Rarick's office. I called Mr. Gordon MacInnes's office and asked to be informed when that was going

to come up, put it in writing. Never got a call, because they didn't want me there, because they knew I wouldn't be coming down there saying, "Yes, let's keep them a few more years." That wouldn't happen.

That's what this bill's got to be about. Make sure it's strong and protects the rights of everyone. And if people aren't doing their job right, from the Commissioner and the Department of Education on down, they must be dealt with.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Ferrer.

And let me just say that, at the risk of being inundated or bombarded-- I, basically, have an open-door policy with respect to issues. Anyone has any issue at all, they can certainly contact our office. And I know the same goes for Assemblyman Steele and Assemblywoman Pou.

One of the things that I've tried to do is get a feel, as Chairman of the Education Committee -- and there are 600-and-some-odd school districts throughout the state -- is to certainly be willing to hear from people who have issues with respect to the school districts, or issues with respect to the State intervention, or any other issues. So I just invite you to do that. You can always get my number through either the legislative district book or-- My number is 973-399-1000, for those of you who just want to jot it down. But we're certainly open to hearing all those issues.

But I would like to ask you to please limit your testimony to, maybe, what we are dealing with right now. And I know that allows a certain amount of latitude. But for those of you who have other issues that you want

to discuss, I'd be more than happy to listen to those after the meeting. If you have some concrete ideas, with respect to the legislation, we're certainly interested. And that's the main reason for this meeting here.

André Sayegh, a member of the Paterson Board of Education.

**ANDRÉ SAYEGH:** Good evening.

My name is André Sayegh. As Assemblyman Stanley just stated, I'm a member of the Paterson Board of Education. And for the record, I'd like to state that, although I'm encouraged that we're holding this hearing, I'm somewhat dismayed by the fact that the notice regarding this particular meeting was woefully inadequate. In fact, we should have had this planned by June, and should have known about this meeting so that, over the summer, board members would have gone out and encouraged others to attend this meeting. We're a city that's about 150,000 strong, and we don't even have 150 people here. And I think that's unfortunate and unfair to many of the people in Paterson.

I've served on the school board in two different capacities: as a State-appointed liaison and now as an elected member. And one of the reasons why I decided to run was because this school district was not being run properly. In fact, the State has been here for over 13 years. August 7, 1991, marked the anniversary. And the question I've always asked -- since this is a presidential election year -- and to paraphrase a former president -- are we better off now than we were 13 years ago?

I'd like to say, here and now, that this board has improved it's image. There was a vicious rumor that we had a behavior problem on our Board of Education. Well, we've improved our image, and under the leadership

of our board President, Dr. Jonathan Hodges; and our Vice President, Mr. Bill Kline, we believe that we are ready for local control, and we believe that this community is ready for local control. (applause)

Unfortunately, we've had officials in this district that have put consultants above children. We've had officials that have put contracts above children. We must put children above everything. And what's at stake here is the integrity of our school board. We are elected by the people of Paterson -- you see Willa Mae Taylor, Mr. Kline, Dr. Atallo, Dr. Hodges, and myself -- we are elected by thousands of residents of this city. We should serve as their spokespeople, because they put their trust in us.

So when we regain local control -- it's not a question of if, it's a matter of when -- when we do regain local control, we should have a say in everything -- as to where the contracts are going and what the children are learning. Because, ultimately, it's about the integrity of the Paterson Board of Education and the integrity of the Paterson Public Schools. (applause)

And as for the State, the State can make the laws, and we respect that from our leaders in the Legislature, but the State must also obey the laws that it makes, as well. And heretofore, that has not happened.

So when that day does arrive -- and hopefully we won't have to wait another year or so for a more serious discussion revolving around this issue -- is brought to the fore -- when that date does arrive, we want to make sure that when we are, indeed, given back local control, that we not only regain it, but we retain it. Because as the Board is compromised today, we are ready to take over. We want what belongs to us. So, with all due respect, give us control of our schools back.

Thank you very much. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yes, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Commissioner, I just wanted to make -- I just wanted to share with you -- not that our Chairman, Assemblyman Stanley, needs any defense, because he certainly can do and handle that really well on his own-- But conversation -- in fact, several conversations did, in fact, take place with the chairman of -- Dr. Hodges back in June, letting him know that the June hearing would not take place, that it would, indeed, take place in the month of September, so as to ensure that proper notification, involvement, community information, communication was indeed made available to everyone. It was early -- I think it was the first week in September when that information, once again, was shared with Dr. Hodges.

So I just want to make sure that everyone knows that it was not taken -- it did not take place in June, for that very same reason. It was, indeed, put through in September so as to ensure that that information was sent out to everyone.

That I'm only sharing with you for your information. It's not something that we need to debate. I just wanted to make you aware that that was, indeed, the case.

MR. SAYEGH: And with all due respect, Assemblywoman, we never received a specific date, which I think is very important. And, also, part of the problem is the fact that we receive stacks of information on a weekly basis. We have never received anything in writing. And I can vouch for that, and I'll state that for the public record. You have to give it to us in writing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Sure.

MR. SAYEGH: Therefore we can mark it on our calendars.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: But that information did go to Dr. Hodges. I just wanted to make sure--

MR. SAYEGH: We didn't receive anything in writing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Okay.

MR. SAYEGH: And I know Dr. Hodges can speak for himself.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: I just wanted to make you aware of that. That was why.

Thank you.

MR. SAYEGH: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Board Member.

Thank you, Assemblywoman, for clarifying that. I don't want anybody to think we didn't want to notify anybody. We actually-- The whole idea was to try to encourage as much participation as possible.

Next, we have Thomas Silva, Inclusive Democracy Project.

**THOMAS SILVA:** Good evening, everyone.

Thomas Silva, Paterson, New Jersey.

I want to thank the Paterson Board -- local board for all the hard work they have done to maintain what they have here, because under any other circumstance, in any other community, this school system could have collapsed. And I hope you all realize this.

Our school system is in a very fragile state of falling apart. And not only falling apart, but destroying my child's education, and our other children's education -- the children that go to school with my child.

I go to my child's classroom. I participate. I'm always here. Everyone knows who I am. I'm a small business owner. I'm a single parent. And I'm here. And I tell my child's teacher, "If something doesn't seem right, please call me." And that's what happened recently. There was a decision made, without contacting me, going against my child's IEP. And his personal aide called me, because I told him to call me. When there's a problem, I need to know, because I want full transparency. And they changed my child back to where he was supposed to be, because I'm a connected person.

Now, this is for the voice of the voiceless, the other parents who aren't involved. What would happen to their child? And the most disheartening message I heard tonight was in the beginning, when they said, when they took over the local school board they had no experience or any other information how it worked before.

We're not guinea pigs. We're human beings. We're not here to run tests on people to see if something's going to work or not. This is insanity, and it has to stop. And the only way it's going to stop is if we take local control, the people take control -- whether it be on the City Council, whether it be on the Board of Education, no matter where -- any aspect that destroys our communities. And if we don't take total control over, our children are going to wind up in Passaic County Jail, and I'm sure Reverend Steele can attest to that.

When we walk down our city streets, there are broken down, shattered, burnt down buildings. After years and years of State control-- Our

kids don't have any alternative views. I don't see my niece or my nephew coming home with any literature or books from Angela Davis or W.E.B. DuBois. I don't see this stuff. They need to know real information, real history. And if you cannot supply it to us, then we need to supply it for them.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Mr. Silva--

MR. SILVA: And that's all I have to say tonight. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

James Parker.

**JAMES PARKER:** Good evening.

I'm just curious about-- Is this where I can ask a question and get answers?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: No, basically we're here to hear your testimony with respect to the legislation that's before our Committee. I guess, later on, if you want, we can talk about any issues that you might have outstanding. But, actually, the purpose of this is to get your input. If you'd like to send it to us later, or if you'd like to discuss the bill, we can do that later. But we can't do that right now.

MR. PARKER: All right, I'll see you on the side.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

Joseph Atallo, Paterson Board of Education.

We need to put down *please print* on these requests here. (laughter)

**J O S E P H A T A L L O:** I gave you my business card, Assemblyman. I don't know who wrote it down. I passed it on to your very capable staff.

Good afternoon.

My name is Dr. Joseph Atallo. I'm an elected member of the Board of Education.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Oh, I did pretty good, then, for winging it.

Thank you.

DR. ATALLO: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Not to engage in a debate, but before we start, I just want to make a quick point. I thank you for taking the time in coming to Paterson. I thank our two Assembly members for taking the time. This is long, long overdue. We should have had this exchange a long time ago. It's been over 13 years since the takeover occurred.

But just to make clarification, this is an issue of concern to me. We got the notice last week. When we're told it's going to be in September, it's really up to the Assembly offices to get the message out to the community and to the board of ed, not to say it's going to be in September. We need to plan it very clearly. I was at a meeting this afternoon; I could not leave. I was with one of your former colleagues for over two hours -- Senator Doria -- down in Hudson County, the 31st District. And we were working on some other legislative matters. I could not be here until late this afternoon.

But I don't think it's fair to working folks to have to come between 4:00 and 7:00. Most people don't get home until after 5:00 -- get dinner for their children -- to get here. So, in the future, if we could have these-- I know

your time is tight, but if we could do it in the evening or, perhaps, on a Saturday, it would be more convenient to the public. And, after all, we're all public officials and public servants.

My concern about change in the law is very clear. And it's very important that we do meet today, because as I say, Dr. Hodges talks to all the board members on a daily basis. And we were never notified of this. But now that we are -- on a short notice-- My concern is this: you want to change the law of New Jersey QSAC, change the way you identify various elements. You dissect departments. For example, curriculum and instruction, facilities.

Our concern is this: we are not in control of curriculum. We are not in control of facilities and finance. So when there are major mistakes being made -- and mistakes have been made in the last couple of years that we have pointed out in this community. Millions of dollars were made in mistakes with time and material bids, with facilities -- the very shoddy, shoddy work done by the SCC. And I agree with my colleague who spoke before, the SCC should be dismantled. It's not done the proper role.

Our hands are tied, as board members. We can only point things out and complain. But we don't have direct control. When we look at those facilities-- And I'll say this to the members of the Legislature and to my colleagues. Five years, ten years from now, who knows who will be sitting in our positions. But the legacy we leave behind is: We build quality schools for our children in Paterson. And, right now, that's not happening. That's clearly not happening. If you took the time and inspected those buildings, you would see the money that's going out -- millions of dollars -- is not being spent in a

prudent and proper way. The jobs are half done and work quality is very, very poor.

Again, if we're going to look at different elements -- instruction or facilities -- you can't say-- For example, this past year, "Oh, Paterson did so badly in facilities, that you're still behind to move to local control. Your curriculum standards haven't been changed since before the last superintendent came in, seven or eight years ago." You can't hold us accountable for things that we don't have a charge of. And that needs to be directed at -- and that needs to be corrected and amended in this law. Because we could be in takeover *ad nauseam*, if we don't have control over those areas.

We also need to look at personnel issues, legal counsel. Contracts have been given out. I served as the acting school business administrator for 18 months prior to the takeover. By the way, let me correct that statement. It's not a takeover. The board voted, by resolution, to give the district to the State. It was never a takeover. The board voted, by resolution, on June 17, 1991, to give the district to the State. Let me say this: The patronage, the nepotism that's gone on in the last few years has been absolutely disgusting. People have been put in positions that don't have credentials. And that goes right to the SCC. I see some of the people who work at the SCC. We don't have confidence in those people. They don't have professional backgrounds in those areas. The people that are put in positions in this district -- employment for political purposes and nepotism. And that violates the whole concept of the State takeover. And that should be addressed and dealt with in a more prudent manner.

Legal counsel was a disgrace the last two years -- what was going on in building, what was happening. And we had no control of that. No one represents the board. We don't have a legal counsel. The district has legal counsel, but board members are not protected with legal counsel, and that's a flaw in the law.

One final point is, that it needs -- in these contracts that are given out, they need to be monitored very carefully. Because, again, we have millions of dollars that are spent -- should be spent on the children of Paterson. That money should be spent on books, on teachers, on computers, on microscopes -- not on the political patronage, not on nepotism, and not on contracts that would not be signed anywhere else -- contracts and leases where we pay the taxes, and the rent, and the maintenance on buildings. That would never happen. Those who were to vote for them-- And this board -- the quality of the people that I serve with -- you can't get any better, in terms of professionalism and integrity. The State should give the district back to this board that works very hard. And I want the public to remember which board members are here, which board members are always here representing the public.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

And we'll certainly take those issues into consideration when we begin to look at the legislation, and amendments, and that type of thing.

The last person I have-- And let me just say, we took all of these names in the order in which they were given to us. We didn't shuffle the deck or anything like that. I just want to make that clear.

So I don't want to get hit from the next person who comes up, who's the last person, Jeffrey Jones. It's just the luck of the draw. That's how it came in.

Thanks a lot. I appreciate your patience. Please come forward.

**JEFFREY JONES:** Good evening.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Good evening.

MR. JONES: It's very good to see you here this evening. Hopefully, this won't be the last exchange.

The legislation, as read -- somewhat enlightening that the legislators recognize the value of keeping an eye on the process of learning as it moves through its steps, rather than wait for a disaster to strike and then respond.

I guess, of the legislation, my biggest and most immediate concern would be -- and I haven't been able to wrap my arms around it specifically -- is this notion that, in seven years, we will, through all of the many assessments and all the many teams' reviews, be able to determine-- And I understand that the percentages -- that's one of the indicators. So if a district is starting to show some signs of improvement, then perhaps one might assume it might be a small little setback along the continuum of the seven years. My concern is that seven years allows a lot of chaos to occur. Seven years allows all kinds of issues to come about. And I'm assuming that the seven-year time line is presented so that districts can, in fact, develop themselves; can, in fact, use their resources; can, in fact, readdress issues by assessment and other things. But I just think that we should probably be a little more cautious and careful about the seven-year-- In seven years, many things can go wrong.

The other thing in here that I noticed-- The legislation is clear to state *parents, students, and legislators*. But one of the things that it's absent of -- and I'm certain that you probably could introduce that -- is the fact that one of the walls in this process has been some of the union pieces -- not 100 percent, but they've been an impasse in some degrees. Some of the responsibilities that educators have is to educate. And if they're, in some cases, uncertain -- if they're faced with the dilemma of standing on the principle and ensuring that education occurs, versus going against their brotherhood, I'm certain education is going to take a backseat in some cases. And so I'm certain that there's a reason why *all interested parties* -- as I'm presenting all interested parties, rather than the specifics that were listed -- may need to be reconsidered as an entry.

Other than that-- Again, as many said earlier, this is long since coming, for a number of reasons -- not just because of the legislation, but because as a town, third largest city in the state, having State legislators come here and understand that our pain is true -- and a lot of it-- It's outside of the lines of education, as well. So to know that you're open, and willing, and ready to receive some of our input, it's greatly appreciated.

And to our Assembly persons, we thank you for -- at least I thank you for having the wherewithal and the resources to bring folks forward.

Lastly, I guess I'd ask if a coalition or collective of Patersonians -- I'm not trying to create a chasm in this process. But if there was a need for additional dialogue, what is the process or the protocol?

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Well, we're actually going to have a Committee meeting before the bill is actually passed. So, certainly, public -- everyone's invited to testify before the Committee. That would not be here, of

course, that would be in Trenton. But everybody would be invited to testify then. We don't have a date for that; it hasn't been scheduled yet. We thought that it might move September 30, but it's not going to be ready by then. So we're not going to do it at that Committee meeting. But probably the following Committee meeting, we could try to make some accommodations to notify some of the persons here about that Committee meeting. Certainly, your Assemblywoman Pou will know about it as soon as it's posted.

And I just wanted to mention to you that seven years is -- it's a seven-year certification, but evaluations are done every year.

MR. JONES: Understood.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: So it's not -- it won't be like you'd be allowed to go too far astray in that period.

MR. JONES: Got it.

The other thing is, in terms of the language-- I understand that this is -- it's not legalese. This is actually written in the form of legislative code. The question is, having read and seen this -- I guess it's a PowerPoint presentation that might have been presented by the DOE -- there are many folks who are not going to be able to -- and this will be circulated, I'm certain -- are not going to be able to extrapolate from this its meaning. Is there a way, through your office, your staff, that this could be written in the form and/or fashion that folks could-

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ASSEMBLYMAN STEELE: In layman's terms?

MR. JONES: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Assemblyman, if--

MR. JONES: Or some aspect of.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: We do have something that's called the bill statement. It's at the beginning of the bill-- Oh, I'm sorry, it's at the end of the bill. And what it does is, it explains what the bill does. It's called the statement. And it's not in legalese. The beginning of the bill is the actual technical changes to the statute, but then, in the statement, it explains exactly what those changes do.

MR. JONES: Yes, Assemblyman, your honor, I understand that. The underscores, meaning that that's the newest pieces, or component, and/or changes. I'm just saying that there's a lot of folks who just won't get this. And even with the bill statement at the back, it's going to be very difficult for folks to understand its impact of what is purported.

I don't know if that's going to put a burden on anyone. But if, somehow--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Mr. Chairman, if I may--

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Sure, Assemblywoman Pou.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Thank you.

It's good to see you, Jeffrey.

MR. JONES: You, too.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Yes, I think what-- Certainly, some of the people -- some of the folks that, upon receipt of the letter that contacted my office -- I made available a copy of that statement, which is an extrapolated smaller version, as the Chairman has indicated. I made that -- a copy of that statement -- available to them.

I certainly agree and understand what you're saying with that. I would be most happy -- we would be most happy to make available some additional information in a more--

MR. JONES: Friendly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Absolutely. Laymen's term, in a friendly -- in a more friendly manner so as to get that information out to you and anyone else that would like to get a copy of that. We will certainly make that information available.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: You're very welcome. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

Thank you, Jeffrey. Good to see you. (applause)

I think that-- We don't have anyone else who has indicated a desire to testify.

Thank you, all. We certainly appreciate your testimony. As I said, people are welcome to provide us with written testimony.

At this point, we'd like to adjourn the meeting.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**