



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
May 26, 2026

#1

Michelle Boyle

Community Member



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#2

Nicole Caparanis

Parent

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#3

Brian Maloney

Parent

5/26/26 Testimony

Good evening. My name is Brian Maloney and I'm the proud parent of three boys who attend PPS schools. My son Paul is a 5th grader, Evan is a 3rd grader and Adam is a Kinder – all at Pittsburgh Montessori.

I'm also the newly elected president of the Pittsburgh Montessori PTA. However, my comments are in my capacity as a PPS parent and not as a representative of the PTA.

Some who are opposed to the plan do so on the basis that the plan involves significant changes, yet includes no information regarding phasing the implementation of the changes to make them more achievable.

Although I agree, my personal feeling is that the worst part about the Future Ready plan is that it will shut down many successful magnet programs and also that the plan will shut down the gifted program, including the very successful and beloved Greenway program. The gifted program and the magnet programs, quite simply, are the best thing about Pittsburgh public schools. To me, it is simply shocking that anyone would even consider shutting down these magnet programs or shutting down Greenway. I share the PPS board's concerns regarding equity within the PPS system, but taking things away from people is never a way to achieve equity.

It is mind boggling to me that this is being proposed in an effort to "level the playing field by reallocating resources." As you probably know, the reason the magnet program was created in the first place was due to concerns about equity. The whole point of magnet programs is to ensure that disadvantaged kids wouldn't be stuck in under-performing local neighborhood schools. There's humility in that decision. There's a recognition that you can't fix all the schools all at once. So the program was created to give kids a chance to shift to better schools while staying within the PPS system.

Now somehow some people have gotten the idea that the magnet schools are the problem, which is deeply misguided. How anyone can believe that we're going to somehow magically transform neighborhood schools into high performing great places for every kid in the district is beyond my comprehension. I wish it were possible but it's simply not realistic to expect.

There is no doubt that the magnet system is not perfect. For a variety of reasons, African American kids are under represented in some magnet programs. The solution to that problem is not to get rid of the magnet programs or to simply default significant African American populations into newly created "neighborhood magnet" programs. One simple way to address the issue is to make the application process simpler, and to allocate some volunteer resources to assist students and families in completing the application. The Middle School Mentor Program is just one possible resource that could assist in this regard.

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I note that PPS has chosen to keep CAPA and keep Montessori due to the unique services that they provide, the unique qualifications necessary for teachers, and unique materials required in the classrooms. These same criteria apply to the Greenway gifted program, which should also be maintained. It is a specialized program that is not possible to replicate elsewhere. The students and teachers use special materials in the classrooms that cannot be replicated in each student's home school.

The administration has said that gifted services would be brought into the home school. However the resources that they have at Greenway are not of the nature that they can be spread throughout many

other schools. They're able to offer unique programming that is only possible because it's in one location. For instance one of my sons has taken a class where they learn how to use a flight simulator to travel to places all over the world. They learn the physics of flying, learn about other cultures and geographies all in one class. The spirit of the class doesn't make any sense when it's only one or two kids in a home school taking the class, not to mention that the physical resources of the computers and the controllers necessary for the class are not practical to have in multiple home schools.

They also do lab work and other projects at Greenway that are simply not possible to replicate in every school. There is also significant value in the community that is created by bringing gifted children and their families together in one place. The special programming that they do in the evenings several times every year that includes the students' families is unique and priceless. It's a unique and excellent experience that is something truly special that the Pittsburgh public schools has to offer. The Greenway gifted program, along with the existing magnet programs should be maintained. Therefore, I urge you to vote No on the Future Ready plan.



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Michael Cummins

Parent, Organization



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#5

Rachel Schlosser

Parent



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#6

Margo Hinton

Community Member



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#7

Andrey Radovski

Parent



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#8

Jala Rucker

Parent



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#9

Erika Gidley

Parent, Community Member



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#10

Martha Riecks

Parent



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#11

Neil Pegues

Community Member



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#12

Abby Foulds

Parent



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#13

Naomi Chambers

Student, Parent



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#14

Anne Farris

Parent



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#15

Kasey Brown

Parent, Organization



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#16

Sarah Zangle

Parent



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#17

Katy Rank Lev

Parent



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#18

Talia Newman

Organization, Community Member

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#19

Dr. Allyce Pinchback

Parent, Organization, Community Member

At this point, you have heard thousands of reasons why the Future-Ready Plan should or should not be passed. My stance is clear, as evidenced through my public testimony, multiple letters, and conversations with many of you.

Therefore, I will utilize my time to ask each board member a question that I hope you will spend some quiet time reflecting on before you vote next week.

Director Cook Purnell: As a highly-effective career educator and administrator, can you definitively say that this plan and its implementation reflects what you know to be good practice?

Director Taliaferro: As someone who has been opposed to the plan from the beginning, what are you doing to productively build support for your position amongst your board colleagues?

Director Grayson: You've said publicly that you would vote no on a plan that was the same as the plan that failed in November. Will you keep your word?

Director Silk: Your requests for additional information have been met with resistance and incomplete responses. Do you feel like that behavior is indicative of a district administration that can implement an initiative of this magnitude?

Director Reed: As an education scholar and practitioner who understands what good leadership, teaching, and learning looks like, are you willing to endorse a plan that has not met the mark in any of those areas?

Director Yourd: You've asked for a level of specificity and detail about the

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plan that you did not receive. Do you think it's appropriate to move forward  
with a yes vote without that information?

Director Diodati: As someone who works directly with our students, are  
you confident that this plan will provide the much-needed academic and  
non-academic support they deserve?

Director Barker: As a longtime parent and community advocate who has  
witnessed the district providing "lip service" to Black students and families  
for decades, how is this plan any different?

Director Walker: Are you willing to put aside ego to consider legitimate,  
fact-based criticisms to the plan and district administration?

Happy reflecting.



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#20

Lucy Thompson

Student



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#21

Kari Thompson

Parent



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#22

Jenna Burdette

Parent



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#23

Charlie Britanik

Student



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#24

Kara Britanik

Parent



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#25

Erin Childs

Parent



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#26

June Wearden

Community Member

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#27

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Substitute Teacher

Emily Sawyer, parent of 4 PPS students at Manchester, Schiller, and Perry  
and PPS substitute teacher

I cannot begin to communicate the hurt and anger in the Manchester community after the CBS report that used Manchester as a pawn in the administration's game to justify school closures. How dare you? You should be ashamed of yourself if you had anything to do with this story. I have never been more disappointed in people that I have tried to believe the best in. How dare you blame us and insist we deserve to bear the consequences for the conditions you have created? Someone I respect and consider a friend told me, "it's hard to hear the truth." But I'm not upset about the facts presented, I'm furious that you would find it acceptable to create a narrative that the students, staff, and community deserve this when they have made none of the decisions that got us here. Truly, HOW DARE YOU?

In the story, the reporter stated, "The Northside neighborhood once filled Pittsburgh Manchester with students..." and Dr. Walters called Manchester "a textbook example of an underutilized building."

But the story failed to mention anything about the conditions created – not by the staff and students at the school, not by the families or the members of the community – but by people in this room or those who have held your positions in the past. No one in the building or community made the decisions that have left us where we are. How dare you use us as propaganda to justify doing the least radical, least challenging, least imaginative thing a school district ever does when facing what we are facing? "The Future Ready Plan" is just a euphemism for balancing your budget on the backs of the people furthest from power yet closest to the real consequences of *your* decisions.

The story failed to mention how the District just moved multiple regional classrooms OUT of our building 2 years ago with insultingly short notice to families and staff – further eroding our enrollment

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while removing staff, students, and families who were part of our community and woven into fabric of our inclusive model.

The story failed to mention that principals have been rotating in and out of our building like they are on a conveyor belt. A conveyor belt the district controls, I might add. In our 4 years at the school, we've had 3 principals. If having the same principal for 17 years is a major factor in a school's success (as I hear so often about another PPS school), then a revolving cast of principals can be assumed to be a factor in a school's struggles. Why does the district support one principal to remain for 17 years, but create conditions and make direct decisions that lead to 3 principals in 4 years at another building?

The story failed to mention how Manchester has lacked support from the District for staff and families for decades. Our school has been systematically disinvested in, along with all the community disinvestment and everything that that entails. Which all adds up to what is essentially sabotage and children and dedicated teachers and staff pay the price.

The story said that "many rooms sit empty"... really, how many? I can think of 1 room, maybe 2, that aren't used on a daily basis.

But of course the story failed to mention the issues caused by deferred maintenance and lack of investment by the District that has kept us from using some very important rooms, like the library for instance, which we haven't been able to use all year.

The story stated the passage of the FRP will result in "8 million dollar savings a year on staff salaries, utilities, and maintenance costs. Money that will provide more resources and better educational opportunities in these merged schools." (reporter)

"This plan will provide us some savings to really implement quality education." (Walters)

Yet we still have no idea how the District plans to pull this off. With what staff and what time? Not to mention that the proposed schedules in the plan are a mess and have not been discussed publicly. There are serious doubts about the transition of so many students at once, particularly when it comes to students with IEPs. And there is no indication that there will be increased staffing levels at any schools to be proactive about managing and supporting these transitions.

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And beyond still not knowing what is promised, we have had no indication of why this time will be any different than prior occasions when schools were closed in this district but no gains were realized? Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice... well you know the rest. And we're on how many rounds of closures in PPS over the last few decades, and you want support with no details? You probably have a bridge to sell us, too.

I wasn't going to come up here and lambast you. I had a whole comment written and timed about needing to focus on creating a system that doesn't require producing winners and losers, but then you insulted children, families, people who work harder than I have ever seen anyone work, people who have been dedicated to our school, some for decades and some for just a few years or months when most people would choose to go somewhere "easier." These are the people who motivate me to insist that our system cannot remain the way it is because our children and our staff and our families deserve better. But don't you dare blame this on them. Don't you dare spin a narrative that schools like Manchester "deserve" to be closed. Please, make no mistake, I am asking you to feel the shame you should be feeling about this, because it is deeply shameful.

.....  
**Emily Sawyer**

*(she/hers)*



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#28

Silas Sawyer

Student



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#29

Lauren Abt

Parent



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#30

Sylvia Wilson

Community Member



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#31

David Abt

Student

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#32

Camille Rankine

Parent

Pittsburgh Public School Board  
Public Hearing  
May 26, 2026  
Statement by Camille Rankine, Parent  
Vote No on the Future-Ready Plan

I'm the parent of a Kindergartener at Dilworth. When my family moved to Pittsburgh a few years ago, we were excited learn about this beloved public magnet school that had such high engagement from families, and also had a diverse, majority-black student body. We were disappointed to then learn about the plan to end the magnet program.

I find it shocking that the district would disrupt a school like Dilworth, which is widely considered one of the most successful schools in the district, while leaving Pittsburgh Montessori's magnet program in place, which is, according my to research, the only majority white K-5 magnet school, and one of the few majority white schools in the entire Pittsburgh Public School system.

I understand change is necessary, and I want to invest in changes and solutions that will help more than just my family. This plan is meant to create equity in our schools, but it's unclear exactly how that equity would be realized. The plan would not address economic and racial segregation in our schools. In fact, by ending magnet programs, this plan seems more likely to exacerbate those issues, restricting families to their neighborhood schools, and severely limiting their options within the public school system.

So much of this plan feels unsteady and uncertain. Many questions from parents—about implementation, staffing, bussing, curriculum, class size, benchmarks—have been met with vague responses. We've been told to "trust" in this plan. We've heard that we'll figure it out as we go along. We've been told that we, as parents, need to build the schools we want in our neighborhoods—but what resources will be available to parents and communities to do this work, especially those who are already *under* resourced? We have no answer to that, either.

I think we owe it to our students to arrive at answers to these questions *before* deciding on a plan of action. This plan feels rushed, reckless and chaotic, without any option for phasing changes in, disrupting our children's educational routines, shifting them inflexibly into new schools, which has been shown to have negative effects on educational outcomes and social development.

I fear that the continual threat of this plan's implementation, and the uncertainty around how it will affect our children's education, will cause, and has likely *already* caused

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engaged parents to leave the Pittsburgh Public School system altogether, further draining the district of the resources it needs to succeed.

I was relieved when the school board voted this plan down a year ago. I hoped that they would take into account the numerous concerns expressed by the community and go back to the drawing board, coming up with new ideas for addressing the school system's inequity. Instead, I am dismayed that we are discussing the same plan, unchanged, with the same questions and serious concerns lingering, unaddressed. I urge the board to vote no.



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#33

Sauntee Turner

Community Member



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#34

Allie Petonic

Community Member



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#35

Moira Kaleida

Parent, Organization, Community Member



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#36

Vanessa Dagavarian

Parent



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#37

Nina Louise Dagavairan

Student

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#38

Shirley Hill

Retired PPS Teacher

**PUBLIC HEARING – SHIRLEY ANN HILL**

**May 26, 2026**

I am **appalled** that the Student Achievement Center is on the chopping block. This school offers our kids so much that credit recovery can't come close to. While at Carrick, I can say credit recovery was dismal. The students log on and they are basically on their own. This also goes on at other schools.

I have followed the public hearings regarding the **unfair treatment** of former Montessori teacher Ms. Stephanie Lapine by principal Kellie Meyer. Throughout my 41-year career with PPS, I too was subjected to toxic principals like her. In December 2023, Ms. Stephanie Lapine was removed from her classroom by Kellie Meyer. She was cleared in February 2024 but was "conveniently transferred" to another school that does not have a Montessori program. Why is Kellie Meyer not being held accountable for her **unfair treatment** of Ms. Stephanie Lapine (the only lead black teacher)? Some Montessori teachers have filed grievances and still nothing has been done. Toxic principals like Kellie Meyer put fear in teachers who speak up by sabotaging their teacher evaluations. **Pretending** there are no problems at Montessori definitely creates an unsettling work environment. Teachers should not have to adapt to this leadership style to keep their jobs. Some principals are good for "conveniently cutting" positions when you speak up. I question how students are first when toxic principals are not held accountable.

Carrick High School has a **very small percentage of Black teachers**. Leon Smith was named 2026 National Teacher of the Year. He is a Black history teacher at Haverford High School in Havertown, Pennsylvania. "I think one thing that we can all agree on is that we want all of our students to be successful. Student achievement is driving all of our work in education. The research is clear, that educators of color not only benefit students of color, but they benefit all students. And that's what we want. We want all of our students to be successful." **BLACK STUDENTS AT CARRICK MATTER!!**



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#39

Jazlynn Worthy

Parent



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#40

David Haden

Student



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#41

Elijah Mitchell

Student

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#42

Andy Kubis

Parent

Dear School Board Members and District Leaders,

I'm a parent of a middle and high schooler, both of whom have been students in the district since they were preschoolers. I am asking you to vote NO to closing schools. and instead focus your attention, time and money into what we can do to increase enrollment.

What we are told is that the district has to close schools; that there is no choice. To me, that feels like a lack of imagination. Let's try to understand why families are leaving or not choosing public school from the start. At the town halls, people had a lot of thoughts about this but the consultants were not hired to gather that kind of feedback so their voices - and ideas - are not heard or taken seriously. Let's try some new tactics before we close more schools and lose more families.

1. Work in partnership with the City of Pittsburgh on a robust survey to find out why people chose charter, private, or online schools. You need this data to inform your decisions! To my knowledge, this has never been done. How do you know how to fix the problem without understanding what is causing it?

2. . Work with the city to make Pre-K easier for all families to access. There are 4 kids in the 4 year-old room at Arsenal. Let's start there and fill those rooms. Once families are in, they are less likely to leave.

3. Fight for more state funding. District leaders could work with PPS families on a campaign directed at state lawmakers to fully fund our schools. Show us you care about the futures of PPS students by demanding the money from the state that it will take to build and support the schools our students deserve.

4. Rethink Kindergarten. Word on the street is that PPS Kindergarten is too academic with little time for recess or lunch. Parents have

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heard that recess in PPS schools is 15 minutes max, lunch is rushed, Kindergarten is full of worksheets and standardized tests, and there's not enough play-based learning. Increasing recess and implementing more play-based learning would go a long way in attracting families of little ones to the district. And it's just better for kids.

5. Transportation. When Lincoln lost its buses, school enrollment dropped by 25%. That same thing is going to happen if you go forward with these plans. And why are there no efforts to fight the state law that forces the district to pay for - and prioritize - bussing for private, parochial and charter school students. There has to be some political will there. Wouldn't changing that law save the district millions?

6. Sports and after-school opportunities. Are families leaving the district because of limited sports and after-school opportunities? How about starting there as a place to show families you can improve a system.

I understand the district is in financial straits. But I am not convinced that closing schools is the way forward OR will ultimately save money. The school closure plan feels like giving up. I know you frame it as all things for all students but more broadly, it feels like giving up on public education. Let's figure out what the real problem is by working with the city on a comprehensive survey of families. In the meantime, please vote no on the plan as it currently stands.

Thank you for your time.

Andrea Kubis



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#43

Heather Page

Parent

Good evening. Both of my children attend Woolslair PreK-5. My daughter has attended since pre-K. My son has an IEP and receives care from his teachers that I never imagined possible. Woolslair, like all of our community schools, is worth saving, so I came to tell you to reject the “Future Ready” closure plan. A truly future ready plan would prioritize small, hands-on classes that support students’ success - as Woolslair does. Nothing in this closure plan reflects what studies show a data-driven, student-centered school district should do. It does not demonstrate financial savings, a better bus plan, community focus, or continued employment for our amazing teachers. Frankly, I am stunned that anyone who considers themselves a professional educator could support this plan.

I am here not only as a parent who loves their children’s school, but also as an employee at one of the campuses Penn State will close in 2027. Their board of trustees voted yes to another plan that did not demonstrate substantive financial savings and barreled ahead with no plan for how it would be carried out – or how it would impact students or staff. I am living that impact every day. I cannot begin to fully describe what it feels like to go in to work every day and be directed to dismantle what decades of love and devotion built in my community. Penn State’s campuses were given two years to close. This plan only offers one year to fully revamp Pittsburgh Public School’s entire system on top of closing schools. That is not feasible.

You have the opportunity today to vote against the “Future Ready” plan and spare Pittsburgh families and teachers from that same horrific outcome. Reject this plan and demand something better: a truly future-ready vision that puts our children first.



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#44

Alexis Stephenson

Parent



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#45

Barabas Vaughn

Community Member



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#46

Harvey Holtz

Community Member

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#47

Kevin Reid

Community Member

To the Pittsburgh Public School Board of Directors, good evening.

Tonight, you have undoubtedly heard—or will hear—numerous appeals regarding whether the Board should move forward with voting on school closures. Parents, students, former Board members, and community organizations have all voiced their perspectives on why schools should or should not close. Some remarks have been deeply passionate and emotional, while others have repeatedly emphasized the concern for community schools, despite the District already having a comprehensive plan to partner with organizations in support of all schools. Are they even listening?

There have also been campaigns arguing that closing schools with fewer than 100 students isn't necessary. Former Board members have even gone so far as to suggest that Dr. Walters' contract should not be renewed when his term concludes—a troubling and recurring narrative that has too often surrounded African American superintendents within this district.

Additionally, some community members have claimed there was insufficient public engagement, despite the district hosting more than 20 community meetings and consistently communicating with families throughout this process. Others have expressed frustration that Dr. Walters did not adopt their proposed plans, attending public hearings to repeatedly present misinformation while criticizing promotional efforts that show our district in a positive light. While portions of the community continue to challenge a plan that many have not fully reviewed—or, in some cases, allow personal grievances against the Superintendent to shape their opposition—there are several facts that must be acknowledged.

Here are some facts that should not be overlooked. Dr. Walters, a former teacher, principal, assistant superintendent overseeing professional development, interim superintendent, and now superintendent, brings more than 30 years of experience making decisions in the best interests of students. Dr. Nina Sacco, Assistant Superintendent, has more than 20 years of experience serving Pittsburgh Public Schools. Dr. Shawn McNeil, Chief Academic Officer, has more than 20 years of experience in PPS. Dr. Melissa Pearlman has devoted more than 20 years to educational leadership within PPS. Dr. Monica Lamar likewise brings more than 20 years of experience, and Dr. Kymberly Cruz contributes more than 20 years in the field of education.

This is not simply emotion or opinion from members of the community; this is an executive leadership team with well over 100 years of combined educational experience. And that does not even account for the full breadth of expertise represented within the administration. Unlike many of the claims circulating publicly, these are verifiable facts.

What this Board must decide is whether Pittsburgh Public Schools will continue to remain in transition, or whether we are finally prepared to move forward with purpose and clarity. Meaningful leadership often requires difficult decisions, and progress is rarely achieved without discomfort.

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For years, this district has studied, discussed, revisited, and delayed many of the very issues before you tonight. Meanwhile, our students cannot afford for us to remain stagnant. They deserve action, stability, opportunity, and a district positioned to meet the demands of the future.

This moment is bigger than individual disagreements or competing emotions. It is about having the courage to make decisions rooted in long-term success for children, even when those decisions are not universally popular.

At some point, we must stop protecting buildings and start protecting outcomes. Tonight is that moment.

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#48

Greg Lockley

Community Member

Good evening members of the Board.

I rise tonight in support of Superintendent Walters and the Future-Ready Plan and in opposition to the open letter circulating against it.

Let me begin by saying this plainly: school closures are emotional. Communities become attached to buildings, traditions, and memories. That pain is real. But this Board was not elected to operate based on emotion or public pressure. You were elected to make difficult decisions that are in the best interest of students and the long-term survival of this district.

What concerns me about this letter is that much of it reads less like an educational strategy and more like political frustration disguised as advocacy. Clearly a member of this group may very well be personally upset after losing her employment with the previous administration, but personal disappointment should not shape district policy for thousands of children.

The reality is this: Pittsburgh Public Schools cannot continue operating inefficiently while enrollment declines, buildings age, and resources are stretched thin. At some point leadership requires courage, not popularity.

The letter repeatedly questions educational professionals while offering broad criticism without operational solutions. And I have to ask: when someone goes into surgery, do we stand over doctors telling them how to conduct procedures? No. We trust trained professionals to make hard decisions using expertise and data. So why are we suddenly so inclined to micromanage Dr. Walters, educators, administrators, and planners who are tasked with saving this district from financial and academic decline?

Not every difficult decision is an attack on the community. Sometimes it is simply responsible governance.

I also find it interesting that organizations like PIIN continue presenting themselves as faith-centered moral authorities, while many of the individuals and organizations now joining these coalitions self-admittedly do not even believe in a deity. At that point, let's be honest: this is no longer truly an interfaith or religious movement. It is a political coalition using moral language to resist change.

And while community voices matter, the loudest voices are not always the most informed voices.

Our children deserve functioning schools, strong staffing, sustainable finances, and academic opportunity—not endless delay, endless committees, and endless opposition.

A “no” vote may feel emotionally satisfying to some activists, but it does not solve overcrowding in some places, underutilized buildings in others, transportation inefficiencies, or fiscal instability.

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Leadership means making decisions that may be unpopular today so students can succeed tomorrow.

I urge the Board to stay focused, stay courageous, and vote based on what is best for students—not based on fear of criticism, organized pressure campaigns, or public emotion.

Thank you.

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#49

Holly Williams

Community Member

Good evening members of the board and Dr. Walters,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

I am here in support of the district's facilities plan and in support of Superintendent Walters as he works through one of the most difficult challenges facing Pittsburgh Public Schools.

These are not easy decisions. Schools represent memories, traditions, and community pride. But leadership is not about avoiding difficult conversations. Leadership is about making decisions based on what is best for students and the future of the district.

The reality is simple: Pittsburgh Public Schools has fewer students than it did years ago, yet we continue operating too many buildings, including schools that are significantly underutilized. Maintaining half-empty facilities costs millions of dollars that could instead support academics, staffing, student services, and opportunities for children across the district.

That reality cannot continue to be ignored.

What is also troubling is how quickly this conversation has turned personal. Instead of focusing on solutions, too much of the discussion has been driven by misinformation, fear, and attacks on leadership.

And now there are conversations about Superintendent Walters' contract while he is actively doing the difficult work many others avoided.

We should remember this district's history.

Former Superintendent Mark Roosevelt, who is white, closed more than twenty schools, including Schenley High School. Yet the level of hostility and outrage we see today did not exist at this level.

Later, African American superintendents Dr. John Thompson and Dr. Anthony Hamlet also faced intense criticism during conversations about restructuring and school closures.

Now Superintendent Walters is facing the same.

So we should honestly ask ourselves why these reactions become louder, more personal, and more aggressive during the leadership of African American superintendents trying to make difficult district decisions.

That is a conversation this city should be willing to have honestly.

Dr. Walters is not an outsider unfamiliar with Pittsburgh Public Schools. He has dedicated more than thirty years to this district as a teacher, principal, administrator, and now superintendent. He continues showing up, answering questions, and doing difficult work despite constant criticism.

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That deserves respect.

Supporting this plan does not mean people cannot disagree or ask questions. But we cannot claim to support equity and opportunity for all students while refusing to face the financial and structural realities affecting this district.

At some point, we must choose progress over comfort and honesty over politics.

Thank you.

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#50

Stacy Turner

Community Member

Good evening Board Members and Dr. Walters,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

The conversation around school consolidation has become emotional, and that is understandable. Schools represent memories, neighborhoods, and community identity. But emotion alone cannot determine decisions that affect the future of this district.

We have fewer students than we did years ago, yet we continue operating more buildings than our enrollment can support. That reality has financial consequences. Money spent maintaining underused facilities is money that cannot go directly toward academics, student support services, or opportunities for students.

That is the reality we cannot ignore.

I have listened to discussions at meetings and online. Some concerns are thoughtful and important. Others repeat claims that are incomplete or inaccurate, even though information and updated answers are publicly available through the district.

Fear spreads quickly when facts are ignored.

We also need to be honest about something difficult: many people support change until that change affects them personally. It is easy to talk about equity in theory. It becomes harder when equity requires restructuring and difficult choices.

If we truly believe every student deserves access to quality opportunities, then the conversation cannot only be about protecting specific buildings or preserving things exactly as they are.

This district has gone through major changes before, yet the response now feels especially personal and intense. We should honestly ask ourselves why.

Dr. Walters is not new to this district. He has spent years serving Pittsburgh Public Schools and understands its challenges. So it is fair to ask whether every criticism being directed at him is truly about the plan itself, or whether other frustrations are shaping this debate.

Questions and accountability are important. But facts matter too.

We cannot say we are acting in the best interest of students while refusing to face realities that have existed for years simply because the solutions are difficult.

This moment is not about what feels comfortable. It is about whether we are willing to make decisions based on the long-term needs of students and the future of the district.

Thank you for your time.

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#51

Damien Manley

Community Member

Good evening Board members and members of the community.

Tonight, I want to speak about something larger than one plan, one vote, or one moment. I want to speak about a pattern that many people in this city are unwilling to acknowledge honestly: the consistent lack of support given to Black superintendents in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

We say we want equity. We say we want transformational leadership. We say we want change for Black children. But history shows that when Black leadership arrives with difficult decisions, expectations suddenly become different.

Black superintendents are often expected to fix decades of systemic problems immediately, while receiving half the grace, half the patience, and twice the scrutiny.

When schools are underperforming, when enrollment declines, when budgets collapse, everyone demands bold leadership. But the moment bold decisions are actually proposed, the backlash begins. Not just disagreement—personal attacks, organized resistance, public undermining, and constant questioning of competence.

That pattern matters.

No superintendent—Black or otherwise—should be above criticism. Accountability is necessary. But accountability should be consistent. What we cannot continue doing is creating impossible standards for Black leaders while denying them the institutional trust needed to succeed.

Pittsburgh Public Schools did not become financially strained overnight. Buildings did not deteriorate overnight. Enrollment did not decline overnight. These are generational challenges. Yet somehow, when Black leadership steps into the role, the expectation becomes immediate perfection.

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And when they attempt restructuring, consolidation, or modernization, people suddenly act as though every difficult decision is cruelty instead of governance.

Leadership is not about maintaining comfort. Leadership is about sustainability.

We cannot keep demanding innovation while punishing the people willing to make hard choices.

I also believe some in this conversation have confused disagreement with obstruction. Every proposal will not make everyone happy. School closures are emotional. Reconfiguration is painful. Communities feel loss deeply. But leadership cannot function solely through public emotion or political pressure.

At some point, we must ask ourselves: do we truly support Black leadership, or do we only support Black leadership when it avoids difficult decisions?

Because support is not tested during easy moments. Support is tested when controversy comes.

If this district truly believes in equity, then equity must extend beyond students. It must include how we treat Black administrators, Black executives, and Black superintendents entrusted with leading complex institutions through crisis.

We cannot continue setting Black leaders up to carry the burden of systemic problems alone, only to abandon them the moment resistance grows louder.

Our students deserve stability. Our district deserves courage. And our leadership deserves fairness.

Thank you.



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#52

Diamond Kyte

Parent



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#53

Holly Munson

Parent

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#54

Kenneth Kaleida

Grandparent

Testimony by Ken Kaleida

May 26, 2026

Are we not here tonight to speak on a plan that has been rejected by our communities and the previous board on two different occasions? Is this the local version of the top down “we know better than you” emanating from Washington. Is this a plan “like you’ve never seen before” ? Why would you injure the communities that you serve by subjecting them to this unnecessary stressor again?

If you are considering enrolling your student in PPS, can you really trust a system that doesn’t trust your judgment? How would you know that this isn’t just Step 1 with another hammer awaiting?

Why are black students over-represented by the impact of these proposed changes?  
Does that seem right to you?

Why hasn’t the PPS aggressively campaigned and organized to take back the earned income tax held hostage by the city? Who are you afraid of?

Most people familiar with PPS know that there are fiscal measures such as in purchasing where huge savings await if some of the sweetheart deals are done away with.

Are you not concerned with the additional walkers created by this plan without any consideration of their safety.

I don’t get this. You have so many students, parents, grandparents.. who care deeply about Pittsburgh schools, why won’t you respect their input? Please vote NO on this plan so we can stop the loss of trust in PPS.



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#55

Precious Clark

Community Member

This is what this fight is really about.

When former superintendents John Thompson and Anthony Hamlet proposed closing schools, Pittsburgh erupted. Auditoriums overflowed. Emotions boiled over. People said they were fighting for children and defending communities. Today, we are back in that same moment again—only now the outrage is aimed at Superintendent Walters.

But let's stop pretending this conversation is only about buildings.

What we are hearing in many of these meetings is not always truth. It is fear. It is politics. It is selective outrage. And in some cases, it is outright misinformation designed to inflame communities instead of informing them.

Because the reality is simple: Pittsburgh Public Schools cannot continue operating like the district is the same size it was 30 years ago.

The city's population has declined. Enrollment has declined. Yet we continue maintaining buildings built for hundreds of students that now serve fewer than two hundred. We are spending millions to operate half-empty schools while students across this district still lack the resources they deserve.

That is not sustainable. And pretending otherwise is not advocacy—it is denial.

Too often, beneath those speeches, the real message becomes clear:

Leave our programs alone.

Leave our Montessori schools alone.

Leave STEM alone.

Do not touch Science and Technology Academy.

That is not equity. That is protecting opportunity for some communities while expecting others to settle for less. That is not integration. That is separation.

And now we need to confront a truth that makes people uncomfortable.

When Mark Roosevelt came into this district and closed 22 schools in five years—including Schenley High School, once nationally recognized as a model of integration and achievement—where was this level of outrage? Where were the packed rooms? Where was the nonstop public condemnation?

It did not exist at this level.

So we should ask ourselves honestly: what changed?

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Because when Dr. Thompson, Dr. Hamlet, and now Dr. Walters propose restructuring plans, the response suddenly becomes louder, more hostile, and far more personal. And whether people want to admit it or not, race and politics cannot be ignored in that conversation.

That should disturb every person in this city who claims to care about fairness.

And let's remember exactly who Superintendent Walters is. This is not an outsider with no investment in Pittsburgh Public Schools. This is someone who has spent more than 30 years serving this district—as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, and now superintendent.

So when exactly did his leadership stop mattering? Was it when difficult decisions had to be made? Or when certain communities realized they might no longer be protected from change?

That is not confusion.

That is not misunderstanding.

That is intentional deception.

And we cannot build public trust—or make decisions for children—on lies.

Because this debate was never just about school closures.

It is about truth.

It is about accountability.

And it is about whether Pittsburgh is finally willing to confront inequality honestly—or whether we will continue protecting systems that benefit some children while failing others.

That is the real issue before us tonight.



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#56

Damien Manley

Community Member

**(DUPLICATED REGISTRATION)**

**#51**



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#57

Ms. Paulette Foster

Community Member

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#58

Holly Cox

Parent, Organization

I'm Holly Cox, a PPS parent and a member of PIIN. PIIN's position on the Facilities Plan is that it doesn't adequately address the future role of Community Schools in the district.

From the November 2025 Facilities Plan update:

For too long, some schools have had fewer resources and greater facility needs. Maintaining the status quo, including keeping students in under-resourced and under-enrolled schools, has a real and measurable racial impact. Inaction is not neutral. It preserves inequities that generations of families have experienced and spoken out against.

And also:

Every child deserves excellent instruction, caring adults, and well-resourced schools because they are entitled to strong learning conditions on their own. Quality must not be defined by neighborhood or by proximity to diversity or affluence.

These are both great statements that I completely agree with. Which is why there is concern for the 1300 students who are being moved from their current community schools to schools who do not have full community school services. The Facilities Plan doesn't address whether or not these students and their families will continue to get these services. Is there a plan to add these services to the students' new schools? If there isn't, then how will needs for health, well being, and family engagement be met?

It isn't enough to say that all of our schools have counselors and social workers. When my son was at Obama, we came to the board to ask for more counseling staff. That was in February 2020. At that time, not only was our counseling staff overburdened, but the school had a

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partnership with Family Links and that counselor had a full caseload as well. There were students on a waiting list, and that was before the pandemic. We all know that mental health needs have only risen since then.

In the past year in Pittsburgh, for a variety of reasons, there has been a rise in the demand from families for food assistance and homelessness services. The Department of Human Services has seen a large increase in requests for help with basic goods, in-home support, and behavioral health programs for youth.

These are gaps that Community Schools help to fill. Services that the 1300 students and their families have come to rely on that will not be available at the new schools, without a ready plan.

As a member of PIIN and as a parent in PPS, I'm asking the board to make sure a plan is in place to continue these services for the students and their families who have come to rely on them. Please ensure that these students don't fall through the cracks, and vote no on a plan that doesn't include a plan for Community Schools and the students and families they serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Holly Cox



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#59

Lucas Anorak-Neill

Parent, Community Member



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#60

Jesse Gordon

Parent



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#61

Ashley Rooths

Parent

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#62

Kristyn Felman

Parent

My testimony is that the current plan has not sufficiently changed from last year and that it should again be voted down. Yes, the district needs to be reorganized and likely some buildings closed, but to move forward with this plan is to reject community input. To close magnets will lead to more families moving to the suburbs and to charter schools, further draining district resources. I am a huge believer in high quality public education and, tragically, watching this board repeatedly reject public input has damaged my belief that PPS is capable of providing it. We deserve better. Our kids deserve better.

#63

James Fogarty

Parent, Organization



Every Kid. Every School. Every Day.

4165 Blair Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15207  
[Tel] 412-697-1298

### Board Testimony — Charting a New Path in a New Way

*James Fogarty, Executive Director, A+ Schools*

Good evening. Last month I spoke to you about the challenges of the current status quo that create an urgent need for change. This month, I'd like to speak to where I think we're going and how we can get there together.

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with the ground underneath you." I like this translation of the famous Lao Tze quotation because it reminds us that we can only begin where we are – not where we wish we could be, and not with resources or tools we don't have.

#### **So where should we be at the end of this journey?**

Your vote will create a **generational realignment** – a real chance for communities to invest in the elementary school nearby and to build pathways that better serve every student. In some places that will mean schools that are more socioeconomically diverse, in others it will look like additional investment in staffing and resources in schools that reflect their neighborhoods.

Voting for the plan is a vote to create the conditions that are needed for our kids to succeed. Air conditioning in every building. Community school supports. Literacy coaching aligned with the science of reading. More staff under one roof, and ongoing teacher academies. This is the same recipe that has Steubenville, Ohio getting 99% of third graders proficient in ELA, and Mississippi outperforming states twice its size. And your vote signals to funders, businesses, and taxpayers across this city that you are ready to work with partners to solve problems like chronic absenteeism and workforce readiness that belong to all of us.

#### **Why should we take this leap of faith?**

Last year, 745 of our 1,333 third graders did not meet state standards on the ELA PSSA. Of the students who started with PPS in 2015, 1,275 had not completed college or trade school by 2025. And 66% of our students attend a school of choice rather than their neighborhood school. If we want a Pittsburgh that thrives, we need neighborhood schools that can succeed by our kids.

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We already have proof this works. When we invest in our neighborhood schools (their leaders, teachers, families, and students) enrollment grows – like we’ve seen at Perry and Arlington. Opportunities expand – like JSI at Perry. And community pride grows

alongside them. At Arlington this year, fights are down over 90% and DIBELS scores are up. The Future Ready Plan takes what’s working in pockets of this district and makes it the standard for every neighborhood.

One of your colleagues on the board gave me this sound advice when I came into this role, “The best time to plant a tree was thirty years ago, but the second best time is right now.” Change will not come in perfect conditions, but we are not powerless to change the conditions to lead to a more perfect outcome.

We know that where schools work for communities, communities can work with the schools. By voting to begin this journey of transformation, you can start the process of getting this entire city and those who care about its children to show up for them in ways big and small – at a scale that can make a real difference for all students. We have everything we need to succeed by our children. Let’s get to work.

### APPENDIX

#### Additional points the Future Ready Plan delivers (cut for time)

For communities where assigned schools are changing, the plan creates the opportunity to replicate what they love most about their current schools while providing kind and compassionate communications and supports through the transition.

Your vote will move investments into fewer buildings so that **every school has air conditioning** and can be climate resilient. It will allow for redesign of current spaces to meet the needs of our children with more lab spaces and better infrastructure. And it will create opportunities to find efficiencies in programs and practice that can save the taxpayer and families money in the long run.

Your vote will create larger middle and high schools where all children will have access to opportunities like Algebra, World Languages, and STEAM experiences in middle school, college, AP, and IB courses in high school, and the opportunity to dream in big and different ways about how to best serve English language learners with additional language supports.

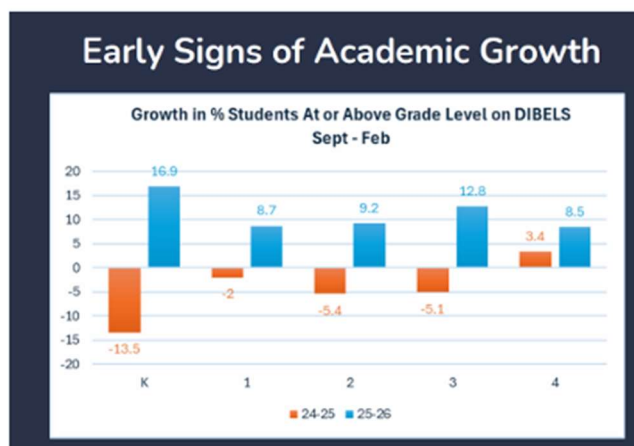
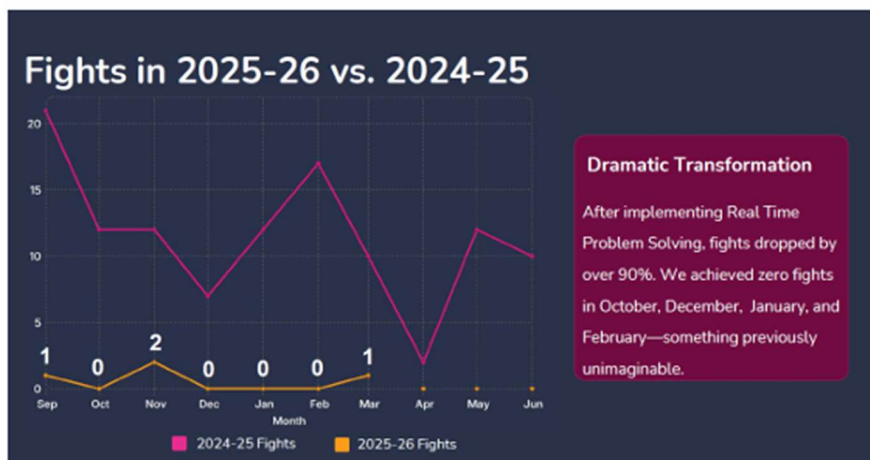
Your vote will help solve the staffing problems at our schools, especially those with high populations of vulnerable and disabled students, providing for more staffing resources under one roof so that students have a higher likelihood of being taught by a teacher of record who’s not having to sacrifice a planning or prep period to teach them.

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### The Future Ready Plan in context

When you take a look at the Future Ready Plan as a whole, it provides a roadmap for solving many of the challenges that are leading to the inequities that we see. And there's already evidence at schools like Pittsburgh Arlington – where fights are down over 90% and DIBELS scores are up – that the elements laid out in the plan will work to improve culture AND student outcomes in real and lasting ways – if we work together to make it happen.

*Arlington data from 2025-26 school year*



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## Enrollment Bright Spot



Perry HS enrollment has grown from a low of 361 in 2020 to 431 in 2025.

\*Report to the Community

## Bright Spot: Pitt College in HS through JSI at Perry

### Justice Scholars Institute (college in high school)

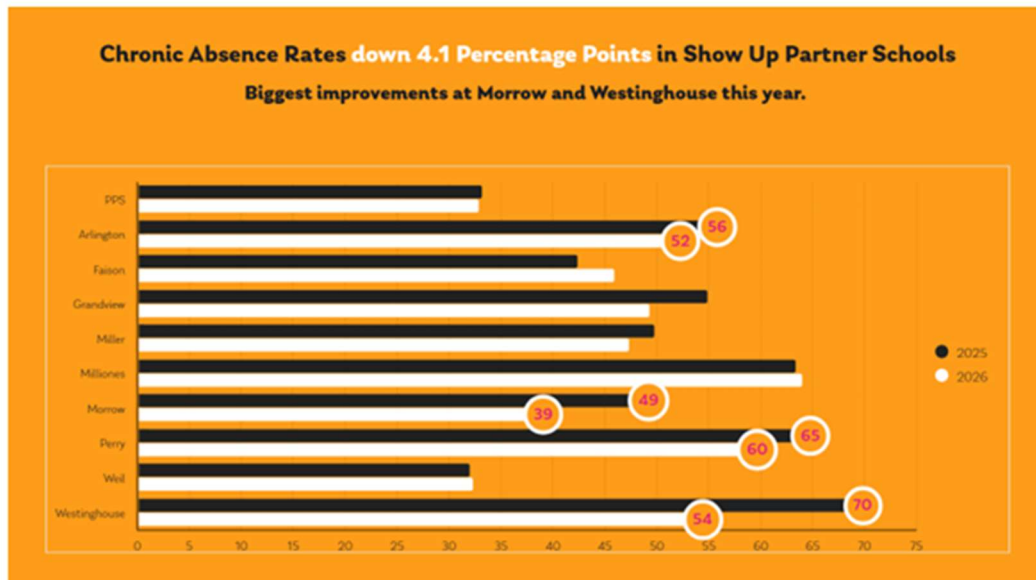
Number of  
courses

4

Total students enrolled **70 out of 194**

Course pass rate **84%**

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Every kid. Every school. Every Day. It's a vision of excellence not just for a few, but for all students.



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#64

Shannon Striner

Parent



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#65

Elizabeth Cummins

Parent

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#66

Trey Cummins

Student

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#67

Amber Cummins

Student

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#68

Renee Wilson

Parent

### A Better Way Forward

The current facilities plan focuses heavily on building closures. While cost savings are important, closures alone do not improve academic outcomes, strengthen family trust, or stabilize enrollment. In fact, closures often accelerate the very problems they aim to solve.

There is a path that protects students, preserves funding, and strengthens neighborhoods: PPS Online Academy as the school of record, and community-run hubs as the in-person support system.

This model allows PPS to maintain academic control while empowering communities to provide safe, structured, culturally grounded learning environments.

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### Why This Model Works

- Students remain PPS students, enrolled in PPS Online Academy.
- PPS retains state funding and avoids enrollment loss.
- PPS saves approximately \$21,000 per student, totaling \$42 million for 2,000 students.
- Community organizations operate the hubs, reducing costs and increasing flexibility.
- Teachers may participate through displacement, retirement, secondary employment, or PPS-approved partnerships.
- Closed buildings remain in educational use, supporting neighborhood stability.

This is not a replacement for PPS. It is a partnership model that strengthens PPS while honoring community voice.

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### A Responsible, Sustainable Alternative

Philadelphia successfully operated more than 100 community learning hubs during 2020–2023. Their results were clear:

- Higher attendance
- Increased engagement
- Stronger support for vulnerable students
- Safe, stable learning environments
- Continued operation even after schools reopened

Pittsburgh can replicate — and improve — this model.

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### A Call to the Board

We ask the Board to consider A Better Way for Change:

1. Pause school closures until community-run hub proposals are fully evaluated.
2. Establish a PPS–Community Working Group to explore hub partnerships.
3. Authorize the use of closed or underutilized buildings for pilot hubs.
4. Support PPS Online Academy as a district-aligned anchor for this model.
5. Engage families directly in shaping the future of their neighborhood learning spaces.

This is not a request for conflict. It is a request for collaboration — a chance to build something that protects children, respects families, and strengthens PPS.

### Conclusion

Pittsburgh deserves solutions that honor both fiscal responsibility and human dignity.  
Our children deserve stability, safety, and opportunity.  
Our neighborhoods deserve investment, not abandonment.  
And PPS deserves a model that strengthens enrollment, reduces costs, and rebuilds trust.

There is a better way for change — one that is Powered by Community.

We look forward to working with you to build it.

Respectfully,  
Renee Wilson  
On behalf of families, educators, and community partners  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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#69

Jason Boll

Teacher/Staff, Parent, Community Member

Good evening, and thank you for the time this evening.

There is so much to say—and so much that has already been said, over and over again.

I am a teacher at Perry, a North Side resident, and the parent of two daughters in North Side schools.

I'm here tonight to voice my support for moving forward with the Future Ready plan. I know this is difficult, and I know no plan is perfect, but we have to move our district out of the inequity and lack of opportunity that so many of our students are currently experiencing. Many of our communities have been living with these inequities for decades.

There are people I love and respect who see this differently. But a “no” vote tonight asks our students to continue accepting schools that are far less than they deserve. I understand it's more complicated than that, but when I've worked through this, again and again over the past decade with friends, students, and family, I keep coming to the same conclusion: we know what we have now, and it is simply not good enough.

A “no” vote feels like a continuation of what we already know—budget challenges, unfilled positions, declining teacher morale, and communities growing more discouraged. We have lived that reality. A “yes” vote, on the other hand, requires faith—faith that we can collaborate, work, and build something better.

As someone who has spent my career teaching in neighborhood schools, I'll say this honestly: the work ahead of us is much harder than the conversations, debates, and votes we've had so far. Tonight, in many ways, feels like the culmination of the easier part.

Looking ahead, I feel nervous, scared, and intimidated—and at my best, excited.

Because there is real possibility here.

From my perspective on the North Side, that includes the potential consolidation of five middle schools—Schiller, Allegheny, King, Manchester, and Morrow. And while I'm focusing on our community, this kind of work will need to happen across the entire city.

If we move forward with this plan but fail to act meaningfully over the next 15 months, it will not succeed. We will lose students, staff will become frustrated, and most importantly, our students still will not get the schools they deserve.

But there is another path.

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A path that calls on all of us to approach education differently.

It calls on parents to invest—not just by enrolling their children, but by staying hopeful, supporting the work, and engaging in honest conversations about how to make it successful.

It calls on our community organizations—our museums, nonprofits, universities, and after-school programs, to surround our students with meaningful experiences, both in and out of school.

It calls on local foundations to reinvest, to improve our physical learning spaces and help fill gaps in staffing and services during this transition.

It calls on teachers and our union to think creatively about how to ensure our most talented educators are in these schools, and to explore new ways, like partnerships with community professionals, to expand opportunities for students.

It calls on district leadership and this board to lead with clarity, urgency, and vision, to build true partnerships with industry, local government, and the community, not for appearances, but to meaningfully improve student experiences. It will require aligning our best people, our strongest principals, our most effective teachers, and our most capable planners, to build these schools well from the ground up.

And finally, it calls on every one of us to believe something simple but essential: if a school is not good enough for our own children, then it is not good enough for any child.

This is a public school system. It must be a public good, one that is truly accessible and equitable for all students.

Thank you.

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#70

Marimba Milliones

Community Member

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Superintendent Wayne Walters, Ed.D.; Board President Gene Walker

**Cc:** PPS Senior Participating Staff and School Board Members

**From:** Hill District Education Stakeholders

**Date:** November 24, 2025

**Subject:** Community Response to Vote on Proposed Hill District School Closures and Reconfiguration

Thank you again for meeting with Hill District Education Stakeholders to discuss the Future Ready Facilities Plan and the District's vision for improving academic performance. We appreciated the opportunity to engage directly and collaboratively with PPS leadership. We know the decisions before you are complex and the responsibility is considerable. We value the District's focus on improving outcomes for Pittsburgh's children as these changes take shape. Our efforts reflect our commitment to work with you toward the best possible path for the Hill District, a community with historic roots, growing families, and an urgent need for strong and stable schools.

We remain resolute is our goal to improve the outcomes needed within our community, and what is required to achieve them. Our priority is, and has always been, ensuring that decisions affecting our children are aligned with accurate data, realistic timelines, population trends, cultural relevance, and the lived experiences of families and community members. The District's decisions must strengthen, not destabilize, our schools and community during a period of significant neighborhood transformation and reinvestment.

**We understand that the Board intends to vote on Tuesday.** However, based on the discussion during our meeting and the evidence shared, we do not believe that closing Miller Elementary at this time meets the standard of informed, student-centered decision making. The data on projected population growth, the district's acknowledgment of programmatic limitations at Weil, the importance of maintaining culturally relevant education, and the need for stronger safety and transition planning all point to the same conclusion: a closure vote is premature and risks undermining academic and economic interests and community trust.

Our goal is to support the District in making the right decision by our children and our community; and to strengthen the plan through collaboration, transparency, and shared problem solving. We ask that PPS delay the vote and work with us to address the questions and conditions outlined below so that we can collectively build a path forward that supports academic excellence and long-term student outcomes and neighborhood stability. The following outlines key questions and open issues:

### **Key Questions and Open Issues**

#### **Elementary Schools Plan**

- The plan is based on stagnant population growth for the Hill District. However, the Choice Bedford Project is based on not only retaining the current 400 families that live in Bedford, but in bringing in 400 additional families by 2027-2028. How will these new families be served if Miller is closed?
- The Choice Bedford Project has funding to support community needs – i.e. increasing school capacity, has PPS had a conversation with the Choice team to understand the opportunities? What was the outcome of the conversations? Bedford Choice is a \$400 million revitalization plan for the Hill District that is currently being implemented.
- The Hill District has one of the largest concentrations of tax delinquent and publicly owned parcels in the city. The new intergovernmental agreement with the Pittsburgh Land Bank is expected to accelerate the reuse of Hill District properties, which will likely increase neighborhood stability and attract additional families. The Future Ready Facilities Plan does not appear to reflect this anticipated change or its long-term implications for school enrollment and community growth.
- Miller Elementary at McKelvy is the only school in the PPS portfolio that is an African Centered Academy, teaching and promoting the history and culture of people of African descent and the principles of Nguzo Saba. There are a significant number of national studies and research that show that culturally grounded instruction and positive messages about cultural identity are linked to higher academic performance, stronger engagement, improved psychological safety, and reduced dropout rates for Black students. Will there be an African Centered Academy in the new plan? If yes, where? If no, why not?
- Miller Elementary at McKelvy is a historical site with deep significance to the Hill District community. How does PPS plan to keep this site alive if Miller closes?
- A six-month transition seems too fast for elementary students, particularly the students with IEP plans. Needed supports have not existed to plan for the past decade. How will they become available in six months?
- Transportation assistance by the Center that Cares has been a key factor in reducing absenteeism in the Elementary Schools. The plan does not seem to show an investment in transportation assistance. Why?
- There are crossing guards missing in several spots in the community. The void has been filled by volunteer parents and retirees. If there is a cost saving

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through this plan, where are the savings being invested to better support the safety of our kids walking to schools?

- The capacity estimates at Weil seem high. Is it based on spaces that are inaccessible now being updated this summer to increase capacity?

## **Middle and High Schools Plan**

- The addition of a Science and Technology magnet in the Hill District ties well with the investments already existing in the community. How will the District leverage these assets to increase impact?
- The curriculums at Uprep Millions and SciTech are very different. What steps are happening now to prepare current students at Millions for this transition? How are we preparing the students for a successful transition?
- The school cultures at Millions and SciTech are very different. What steps are happening now to prepare the educators to work with the students next year? The community is deeply concerned about internal school segregation and marginalization of Hill District children, and attempts by new parents to "colonize" vs collaborate in the school in an unhealthy manner, and therefore create cultural and psychological issues for the students, families and broader community.
- Lack of transportation assistance was a key driver in absenteeism for high schoolers at Millions who need to work after school. The plan does not seem to show an investment in transportation assistance. How does this plan better address these barriers and others that our students face that limit their engagement in schools?
- The community is also concerned about the passage of our kids in the Oakland corridor which has not consistently been a welcoming space for our kids as they transition through four different police forces – PRT, PGH, PPS and Pitt. (We imagine Sci-Tech parents may have questions or concerns regarding their kids coming to the Hill District versus Oakland.) How will these concerns be addressed?
- After School partners have been a key partner at Millions in providing curriculum enrichment in the areas of robotics, coding, biomimicry, biology, ecology, etc. How will their participation continue in this new plan? We lost our community-in-schools liaison due to the lack of clarity to this question?

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## **Key Community Asks for Upcoming Vote:**

1. **Vote no on closing Miller. Delay the vote to close Miller unless or until the core and urgent issues outlined here are resolved.** Last week, PPS entered an intergovernmental cooperation agreement with the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to accelerate the transfer and reuse of vacant land for development. The Hill District is one of the neighborhoods most impacted by this agreement due to its high concentration of vacant and tax delinquent parcels. When combined with the Choice redevelopment project, this agreement is expected to increase neighborhood density and school aged population over the next several years. Closing Miller at this moment would be inconsistent with these projected land use and population changes and risks creating a future capacity shortfall.
2. Work with Hill District Education Stakeholders to develop a mutually acceptable capacity, equity, student retention, and transition analysis
3. Adopt a strategy to attract and retain Hill District students to Hill District schools
4. Ensure preservation of African-centered education and invest more deeply
5. Ensure retention of Margaret Milliones name in the reconfiguration of Sci-Tech Middle School now and in the future. Honor her legacy in the school building by teaching her story and values. Fulfill her vision to ensure a school and "District that is par excellence for every student without regard to color, sex, or race".
6. Provide a tangible transportation and safety plan for elementary, middle, and high school students
7. Provide a staffing and cultural competency training plan for Milliones and SciTech and ensure psychological safety for all students
8. Protect and invest in after-school, STEM, and enrichment partnerships
9. Establish a mutual planning and implementation table with Hill District Education Stakeholders.

We understand the magnitude of the work before you and respect the leadership required to navigate difficult reconfiguration decisions. We also acknowledge the District's stated commitment to raising achievement for all students. The Hill District Education Stakeholders aim to contribute constructively to that goal by ensuring that the needs of the Hill District, one of Pittsburgh's largest communities that also presents significant educational challenges and opportunities, are thoughtfully handled in these matters. Thank you.

## **Attachments:**

- Bedford CHOICE Housing Plan Implementation/Site Timeline
- Hill District Vacant Land and Intergovernmental Agreement Articles
- Community Presentation on Data and Hill District Schools



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#71

Lori Lowman

Parent



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#72

Emily Provonsha

Parent



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#73

Joti Kang

Parent

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#74

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent

Closing these 9 schools cuts too deep. Community groups, legislators, PFT, families and more all agree that cutting these 9 schools first is a bad idea. We all agree that we need to look at our footprint, make major changes to the district, and to build trust. But, starting with cutting these 9 schools and then forcing the plan to fit into the remaining footprint, without even addressing the fundamental financial or student outcomes issues, is the wrong way to do it. Two years of work of trying to force a plan into a footprint created without fundamental data has left us with this low-quality plan. Frankly, I'm sick of arguing about standards I can stub my toes on. It's time to tell the superintendent to stop dragging his feet and do better.

Declining population isn't the reason we need to close schools. Pittsburgh's population has remained fairly stable since the last round of closures in 2012. The reason why PPS has lost nearly 28% of its enrollment since then is because of closure processes developed without community buy-in, the district hasn't found ways to build and/or retain trust with families, and PPS hasn't been an attractive option. Instead of finding solutions to those issues, this administration continues to propose so-called solutions on managing decline. We have over 13,000 school aged children in Pittsburgh that don't attend PPS. That is nearly 40% of the kids in Pittsburgh.

Over the last decade, charter school enrollment has increased nearly 50%. There will be more if this plan is passed without community trust. You CANNOT build trust during implementation when you have already proven you are willing to ignore concerns, break laws and policy to force people into a plan they believe will only do harm. This plan relies heavily on families leaving the district so that you can close 9 buildings. However, this plan still leaves us without the funding to even implement it properly. It doesn't account for the lawsuits that the district will face. It doesn't budget for the increased transportation and tuition costs for the families that will turn to charter and private school options. It doesn't even have the funding to re-open Northview or do all the renovations that are necessary at the remaining schools.

If you pass this plan, you are dooming us to repeat what happened over the last 25 years. We won't be able to open more schools, we will have to return to school closures to save money in a few years and more trust will be eroded. We have watched this play out before and the outcomes have always been the same. Do something different! We aren't asking you to kick the can down the road. We are begging you to have the backbone to do something innovative, to build something with the community to ensure that PPS is the most attractive option in our district, and to make sure that whatever plan we put in place is centered on putting students first, not the ego of a few, not the money or the footprint, the students. This plan doesn't do that so don't cave for a plan that only hurts everyone.

Also, parents want to be partners with the district, not patsies for the district. So many of us will be advocates for public education all day, every day, but we aren't willing to sell out families for a plan that smells like bad fish. PPS ambassadors shouldn't be forced to try and sell a two-bit plan that ends up costing children the most.

#75



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Lily Allman

Student



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#76

Annette Hall

Parent



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#77

Kathleen Michelotti

Teacher/Staff



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#78

Pam Harbin

Community Member



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#79

Amy Williams

Parent



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#80

Angel Gober

Organization



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#81

Isabella Kang

Parent, Community Member



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#82

Rachel Canning

Parent, Organization, Community Member



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#83

Bryan Rooths

Parent, Community Member

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#84

Lauren Stuparitz

Parent, Community Member, Early Intervention LICC, Early Childhood Policy Council, IU2 Local Task Force

Protect and Cultivate our Early Childhood and School Age Students and Educators

Dear Respected Board of Directors:

It is my understanding that the PPS Early Childhood program will be reducing its program size by eliminating classrooms at Crescent Early Childhood, Arsenal Early Childhood, and Chartiers Early Childhood. As a proud parent of a Chartiers EC and Early Intervention graduate who has made a successful transition to Kindergarten in PPS this year, and a proud Chartiers family with a young learner in his first year of preschool in Chartiers Classroom 1, I would like to speak in support of my son's fantastic teaching team, Ms Kim Felix and Ms Adrienne Jones. My son Asa began his new preschool journey at Chartiers EC last fall, as an excited 3 year old. We had some concerns for his development and behavior over this year, and with the expertise and developmentally appropriate environment and classroom routines created by Ms Kim and Ms Adrienne, my son is currently doing very well exploring new things, interacting with his class friends, and learning how to learn from two caring and responsive teachers who lead and support him as well as all the class. Chartiers 1 is developmentally inclusive, culturally responsive, and a genuinely supportive learning environment for my child and his classmates. I understand there are a variety of factors that led to the decision to reduce the Head Start grant at PPS EC; I understand there are no easy ways out of the responsibility to make hard decisions. This institution of PPS Chartiers is recognized and trusted by the West Side community in Pittsburgh. I hope we continue to see this Early Childhood Center and all its staff thrive with support and continued resources to continue making it a wonderful place to nurture and educate our children.

In addition, on West Side of Pittsburgh, when children move on to kindergarten after a preschool experience, where will they go? Will it be Langley or Westwood Elementaries? Where will they go for middle school? Is this an oversight of the Plan, to neglect Langley which is also a Community School? I feel disappointed that West Side families and community continue to be overlooked in the planning and practical elements of this proposed plan. Please engage Chartiers EC, Langley, Westwood, and PCA families and our community. We have ideas, questions, and concerns. We are waiting to connect with you. Please come and visit our schools and EC centers. We welcome your presence.

Best regards,  
Lauren Stuparitz

PPS EC Policy Council parliamentarian  
LICC cochair



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LTF cochair



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#85

Marisa F

Parent

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
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#86

April Clisura

Parent, School Bus Driver

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#87

Kathleen O'Brien

Parent

Hello,

First I want to state that I know PPS is in desperate need of change, and that the boards decisions is difficult and will face push back regardless of what they vote for, but I am urging the board to vote no on the currant future ready plan.

For 2 years Pittsburgh parents have been opposed to this plan because the plan doesn't tell us what we need to know. Parents have asked for transparency, numbers, check points that show growth and progress towards an equitable education. We haven't gotten that, instead we have been told to trust the experts. And that we should trust, just blindly trust DR. Walters, and Trust Gene... when we ask to be shown why we should trust, we are told variations of the exacts same thing, because DR. Walters is an expert.

When we raise concerns about IEP students, "community schools", transportation, empty building, impact of segregating underserved students and families by placing them in a neighborhood school we are met with trust us we won't let that happen, but never told how that won't happen. And then a new ad comes out about how wonderful the future ready plan is and what a great leader DR. Walters is. These ads on top of the "just trust" are eroding the communities trust in this plan.

The plan rally's on sales pitches and key words, that don't actually say anything meaningful, which doesn't instill trust the district can carry out the plan as they want us to believe they can. Additionally, if the plan goes wrong, we are stuck with segregated, isolated schools composed of students with the most needs, who have no access to the world out side of their neighborhood, no opportunity to make friends with a kid from across town who lives a completely different life from them. We risk loosing the community schools that provide resources to students and their families who are in need. We risk loosing the things that PPS has that are working well.

I also want to address the greater impact to the community as a whole, regarding the future ready plan. Right now every one is at a breaking point. Our neighbors are at risk of being detained, we can't afford electricity or other utilities, the majority of Pittsburgh is facing great moral injury watching every thing being torn down in our country and split up like it was a business that can be taken apart for profit. Parents are scared for their families safety, and teens have been deemed a problem by the city, and instead of provide places to be, have been segregated from tourists. The Department of Education is broken, We are literally at war,

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In all funding for services has been cut across the board. Choosing to go through with this plan that relies on feelings, more than facts is completely tone deaf to what student's and families in Pittsburgh are facing and what they need. We need to be confidently certain and know that PPS and our elected board members have our students backs ,while the world is in total chaos.

Kathleen O'Brien

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#88

LeShayia Anthony

Parent



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
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#89

Ashley Zupon

Parent



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#90

Jackie Mathews

Parent, Community Member

#91

Rita Porterfield

Parent, Community Member, Alum

Dear School Board Members,

To keep it brief, please vote no on the facilities utilization plan. We're making poor decisions slowly by repeating the same slash and burn habits of 20 years. We absolutely need to address long-term financial considerations, and we need to address it in innovative ways. Closing schools, where charters seem to blossom, continuing to pay charters, and using the little that's left to "make it work" with the families that are steeled in their resolve to stay.

I will reiterate that I share the concerns expressed by 412Justice, Pittsburgh's branch of the

Lastly, I ask that you consider a model that expands Montessori methods as a way to expand both access and appeal to our students across.

And, because I heard that my Italian (as poor as a heritage speaker I may be) I'll leave you with this:

*Avanti insieme. L'unione fa la forza.*

Move forward together. Unity makes us strong.



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