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IN SEARCH OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL: A REVIEW OF ACADEMIC OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

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IN SEARCH OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL: A REVIEW OF ACADEMIC OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:30 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tom Davis (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Tom Davis, Shays, Souder, Ose, Lewis, Cannon, Blackburn, Waxman, Cummings, Kucinich, Tierney, Clay, Van Hollen, Ruppersberger and Norton.

Staff present: Peter Sirh, staff director; Melissa Wojciak, deputy staff director; Keith Ausbrook, chief counsel; Jim Moore, counsel; Robert Borden, counsel/parliamentarian; David Marin, director of communications; Scott Kopple, deputy director of communications; Teresa Austin, chief clerk; Joshua E. Gillespie, deputy clerk; Shalley Kim, legislative assistant; Phil Barnett, minority chief counsel; Rosiland Parker and Tony Haywood, minority counsels; Michael Yeager, minority deputy chief counsel; Earley Green, minority chief clerk; Jean Gosa, minority assistant clerk; and Cecelia Morton, minority office manager.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Good morning. A Quorum being present the Committee on Government Reform will come to order. Welcome to today's hearing on academic options for students and parents in the District of Columbia.

The condition of the District's public school system has concerned me since the first day I came to Congress as chairman of the District of Columbia Subcommittee. I represent a district just across the river. While we have made strides since then—the D.C. College Access Act, which I introduced, the establishment of charter schools—the quality of educational opportunities in the Nation's Capital should continue to worry all of us.

The ability of the city's schools to meet its core goals has been long challenged by financial mismanagement and an array of other issues. Poor academic achievement scores are just one indicator. Students in the District should expect access to the same quality education as students in my district in Fairfax and in Prince William counties and across the region and across the country. This is the Nation's Capital.

According to a U.S. Department of Education report, D.C. spends far more per pupil than Montgomery County, MD or Fairfax County, VA. Unfortunately, the District lags behind in school performance in comparison to other districts. Money is an important factor but in and of itself is not the only factor.

When a child can't expect to get her hands on an errorless study guide to prepare for the Stanford 9 exam, I am concerned; and parents ought to be concerned.

The District claims they need more money but are paying a consultant close to $300,000 for 6 months of work to figure out the budget and how many employees they have. I am concerned.

When I hear about deteriorating schools, test scores that have not improved and staggering high school dropout rates, I am concerned. We all ought to be concerned.

The question before us today is whether the District schools are providing what students need to succeed and, if not, what we might be able to do about it. We all want the District's education system to improve, every one of us, both sides of this. We have different ideas about how we can accomplish that.

I visited the schools in the city and have seen the conditions under which the students are asked to learn, and I think we can do better. I have come to the conclusion that parents and students stuck in failing schools need—no, deserve an opportunity to choose from a wider pool. I have received calls from parents who are frustrated, angry, even distraught by the condition of their child's school; and I think we need to do more than just sympathize. I think it is our moral imperative.

The school choice debate shouldn't be about politics. It should be about an honest appraisal of the state of affairs in our public schools, about offering alternatives for students and parents; and what is being proposed is not a mandate but a choice.

Now these are challenging fiscal times, to be sure, but education remains priority No. 1. In the President's fiscal year 2004 proposed budget, $756 million has been allocated for school choice programs and some of that targeted toward a scholarship program in the District of Columbia.

I have traditionally opposed Federal dollars going to private schools because I think Federal dollars ought to be targeted to public schools. But, for the District, I think we have to ask this question. Wouldn't more choices funded by Federal dollars provide a needed alternative for low-income children attending low-performing schools?

Enhancing educational quality in the District is a critical component of maintaining the positive momentum we have seen in recent years under the stewardship of Mayor Williams and the Council. It is our duty to provide resources so that these kids can have a bright future. The District school system must be equipped with strategic tools and resources to assure the safety and well-being of the city's most vulnerable children.

Congress saw the disparity and opportunity for District residents to attend college compared to other State residents. In 1999, Congress passed the D.C. College Access Act, legislation which I offered; and, I might add, we continue to fund. It has been a successful program. The act gave District students the right to attend any

public college in the United States at an in-State tuition rate or receive $2,500 to attend any private college in the city or region. This has helped defray the tuition expenses of higher education for District of Columbia high school graduates and has made that dream of achieving a college education more realistic to thousands of D.C. students. It has leveled the playing field and brightened the futures of thousands of young adults.

Now we need to reach out to more children. In order to provide greater educational options and innovations within the public school system, District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 established charter schools for the city. That was controversial at its beginning. D.C. charter schools are publicly funded but operate independently from the school system, offering more choices within the public school framework.

The goal of school choice in the District of Columbia is not subtraction but addition. Public charter schools are a key component of a comprehensive reform strategy; and today we are going to ask the question, are they enough? Expanded choices have benefits beyond the primary goal of educating District children better. They can also be an incredible economic development tool.

Families flock to areas where schools succeed. In Fairfax County, where I once headed the government, our No. 1 selling point was our education system. That brought companies to relocate there. It kept companies expanding there. It produced a pool and a resource for these companies for their missions and to expand it, and today Fairfax County is one of the greatest economic success stories of this Nation. While national unemployment has gone to 6 percent, in Fairfax County, it's half that.

Families flock to areas where schools succeed. They flee areas where schools underperform. Improving the education system will not only help the District but the entire Washington region as well. To have a healthy region, we need to have a healthy city, and nothing is more important to the health and vitality of that than its children and its future. All of us want the same thing, and hopefully we can have an honest debate how best to achieve that.

We have a very distinguished panel of witnesses before us today. Our witnesses are here because of their commitment to the children of the Nation's Capital. I look forward to hearing testimony from our witnesses, and I want to thank our witnesses for sharing their experiences and suggestions with us.

It is my hope that appropriate legislation involving school choice will be supported by District leaders, and the framework of that I think is something we need to have a discussion on, certainly the Chair is very open on. I look forward to strengthening communications between all of the key stakeholders in this.

Before I yield to Mr. Waxman for his opening remarks, Ms. Norton I understand you have some guests in here today, is that right?

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have just discovered that some young people from the Cesar Chavez public charter school were visiting the Congress today. They wanted to talk to me about preventing teenage pregnancy, and I thought that I might ask them to come to this hearing for a few minutes. They are one of the most successful of the 42 charter schools.

So I would just like the young women from Cesar Chavez to stand up so that everybody can see what a charter school youngster looks like.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much for being with us today.

Now the rules of the committee, as all of you are guests, we don't boo, we don't applaud, we sit here and listen and have an intellectual debate and have extensive discussions. Ms. Norton has some deep concerns about some of the proposals, and we are going to work together on this and try to fashion something that helps the city.

I now yield to my friend and ranking member, the gentleman from California, Mr. Waxman.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Tom Davis follows:]

Statement
Chairman Tom Davis
Committee on Government Reform
"In Search of Educational Excellence In The Nation's Capital: A Review of Academic Options for Students and Parents in the District of Columbia"

May 9, 2003

Good morning. A quorum being present, the Committee on Government Reform will come to order. Welcome to today's hearing on academic options for students and parents in the District of Columbia.

The condition of the District of Columbia Public Schools has concerned me since the first day I came to Congress as Chair of the D.C. Subcommittee. While we've made strides since then – the D.C. College Access Act, the establishment of charter schools – the quality of educational opportunities in the Nation's Capital should continue to worry us all.

The ability of D.C. schools to meet its core goals has been long challenged by financial mismanagement and an array of other issues. Poor academic achievement scores are one clear indicator. Students in the District should expect access to the same quality education as students across the Washington region and elsewhere. According to a U.S. Department of Education report, D.C. spends far more per pupil than Montgomery County, Maryland or Fairfax, Virginia. Unfortunately, the District lags behind in school performance in comparison to other districts. Money, in and of itself, is not the answer.

When a child cannot expect to get her hands on an errorless study guide to prepare for the Stanford 9 exam, I am concerned. When the District claims they need more money but are paying a consultant close to $300,000 for six months of work to figure out the budget and how many employees they have, I am concerned. When I hear about deteriorating schools, test scores that have not improved and staggering high school dropout rates, I am concerned.

The question before us today is whether District schools are providing what students need to succeed, and if not, what we might be able to do about it. We all want the District's education system to improve. I've visited the schools and seen the conditions under which students are asked to learn. We need to do better.

I've come to the conclusion that parents and students stuck in failing schools need – no, deserve -- an opportunity to choose from a wider pool. I have received calls from parents who are frustrated, angry, and even distraught by the condition of their child's school. It's time to do more than sympathize. This is a moral imperative.

The school choice debate should not be about politics. It should be about an honest appraisal of the state of affairs in our public schools, about offering an alternative for students and parents. What is being proposed is not a mandate but a choice.

These are challenging fiscal times to be sure, but education remains our top priority. In the President's FY 2004 proposed budget, $756 million has been allocated for school choice programs, with some of that targeted toward a scholarship program in the District. I think we need to ask the question: Wouldn't more choices, funded by new federal dollars, provide a needed alternative for low-income children attending low-performing schools?

Enhancing educational quality in the District is a critical component of maintaining the positive momentum we've seen in recent years under the stewardship of Mayor Williams and the Council. It is our duty to provide resources so that kids can have a bright future. The D.C. school system must be equipped with strategic tools and resources to assure the safety and well being of the city's most vulnerable children.

Congress saw the disparity in opportunity for District residents to attend college compared to other state residents. In 1999, Congress passed the D.C College Access Act, legislation I authored. The act gave District students the right to attend any public college in the United States at an in-state tuition rate, or receive $2,500 to attend any private college in the city or region. This has helped defray the tuition expenses of higher education for District of Columbia high school graduates. It has leveled the playing field and brightened the futures of thousands of young adults. Now we need to reach more children, and reach them earlier.

In order to provide greater educational options and innovation within the public school system, the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 established charter schools in the District.

D.C. Charter Schools are publicly funded but operate independently from the school system. The goal of school choice in the District of Columbia is not subtraction but addition. Public charter schools are a key component of a comprehensive reform strategy. But we need to ask: Are they enough?

Expanded choices would have benefits beyond the primary goal of educating District children better and. They can also be an incredible economic development tool. Families flock to areas where schools succeed. They flee areas where schools under-perform. Improving the education system will not only help the District but the entire Washington region as well. To have a healthy region we need to have a healthy city. And nothing is more important to the health and vitality of an area than education.

We have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us. Our witnesses are here because of their commitment to the children in the Nation's Capital. I look forward to hearing testimony from our witnesses. I want to thank the witnesses for sharing their experience and suggestions with us. It is my hope that District leaders will support appropriate legislation involving school choice. I look forward to strengthening communication between key stakeholders.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is only because of my institutional position as the ranking member of this committee that I am going to be the first Democrat to give an opening statement. But the one who really has been the leader for education in the District of Columbia is my colleague to the right of me, sitting to the right of me, Eleanor Holmes Norton. She has been a champion for education, and I want to commend her for her leadership in this area. She and Mr. Davis and I and others understand that education is the key to success.

I come from the State of California where, at one time, we had a superb public education system; and because of that, our economy was so very, very successful. When government started squeezing down on money for education, the public schools suffered, and our business community suffered as well and, therefore, everybody has suffered. So it is important that we have a strong educational system, and the key to success and social mobility has always been in our public schools.

There is no question that this city, Washington, DC, faces major challenges in improving its system of public education. Facilities are in poor shape, students don't always get the education they deserve, and management problems seem to occur too frequently. In a commendable effort to address these issues, the District has developed and is testing a broad array of alternatives to traditional public schools. The objective is to improve public education for all students without eroding the wall between church and State, without draining the resources from the public school system and without taking half measures that only benefit the wealthy few.

The District of Columbia now has 42 public charter schools and 15 public transformational schools. These schools are like the entire system, a work in progress, but they have already shown some promising results. This hearing will help examine what these programs are able to offer the District. In fact, we ought to have the students who are visiting today from the charter school come and tell us their views on charter school education. They and so many other people who aren't even going to appear today have a lot to contribute to this discussion.

While this is a formal hearing and the views of some will be represented, I know that others will want to submit their views to us. They are welcome to do so either for the record in writing or to those of us on the committee.

This hearing will also explore options for private school vouchers. As a general matter, I have long had concerns about the use of vouchers for private school tuition because such proposals usually permit the funding of religious education at public expense. In addition, such subsidies are usually not sufficient to pay the full cost of private school tuition. In effect, they subsidize families who are well off enough to pay for the rest of the cost of the private education without giving those with fewer resources a real opportunity to attend these schools.

Imposing them on the District raises a further concern because of the home rule issues involved. I have serious questions about whether the Federal Government should be imposing any kind of educational system, including a voucher system on the District of Columbia. I know my constituents in Los Angeles wouldn't want

people in Washington deciding how our schools ought to operate, nor I'm sure in Virginia would they want the Federal Congress telling them that they have to have a certain form of education for their students.

The District of Columbia is, of course, unique; and we always have to be sensitive to that uniqueness but also balance out the fact that residents of the District are quite capable of making decisions for themselves.

I hope we will be able to use this hearing to explore these issues as well as other public school reforms in the District of Columbia; and I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

I would like to recognize the vice-chairman of this committee, the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Shays.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I am willing to have Ms. Norton go ahead of me, if you would like; and then I have a statement.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Ms. Norton, my good friend from the District, and I know this is a great concern to you.

Ms. NORTON. Like the friend and gentleman he always is, thank you very much, Mr. Shays.

My thanks to Chairman Davis and his staff for working with us to assure that this hearing reflects a fair balance and is not focused entirely on the controversial subject of public money for private school vouchers or the Flake bill, H.R. 684.

Anyone in touch with the residents of our city would be struck by how deep their continuing opposition to vouchers has been. Beginning with the referendum in 1981, followed by numerous Council and school board resolutions, the District, like every State that has had a voucher referendum, has turned down vouchers on the merits.

A 2002 Council unanimous resolution said, in part: "Education advocates, teachers, parents and members of the Council of the District of Columbia decided, by act of the Council, that the best vehicle for public education reform in the District of Columbia is to offer charter schools and to improve the public schools of the District of Columbia."

A similar 2002 school board resolution said, in part, "the Board of Education finds it inappropriate for Congress to utilize existing federally and locally appropriated resources for a voucher program or to use any congressional add-on funds for this purpose; and any additional moneys should be added to the District budget to provide sorely needed resources key to educational reform in the District; and any voucher program will undermine the school systems' effort to support a system of high-quality neighborhood schools."

These views, which I am confident continue among the majority of D.C. residents and officials, are as remarkably broad as they are deep across the city's wards. I have been impressed by just how universal this view is among our parents, from our more fortunate middle-income residents to our families who are least well off.

School board member William Lockridge, who represents ward 7 and 8 where the majority of our low-income parents reside, has visited me personally to make a strong case that he and his constituents strongly oppose private school vouchers; and he has given me

a list of his ward 7 and 8 charter and transformation schools and asked me to do all I can to see that these schools are funded with any available Federal funds.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Williams, Council Member Chavous and School Board President Cafritz have bowed to the Bush administration on vouchers. Perhaps even they, however, would hesitate to support the Flake bill, even if the amount offered is raised and even given that vouchers—and even given their view that vouchers are acceptable in exchange for other funds.

The Flake bill is a carbon copy of former majority leader Dick Armey's annual D.C. voucher bill. This bill makes every decision not with District officials but for District officials and comes complete with a new bureaucracy, a seven-person corporation to administer the program.

With this corporation, the Flake bill strikes a new low in the long history of congressional imitations of colonialism. In the almost 30 years of home rule I have never seen a bill for the city, with or without Federal funds, that would leave the Mayor with but one appointee while allowing the President to appoint six. Most of my constituents would regard such token recognition as closer to insult than inclusion.

Quite apart from the merits of the Flake bill, however, the failure to get agreement from elected officials disqualifies the bill on basic democratic principles of consent of the governed. As the Mayor and Council Chair know well, a home rule decision requires an agreement by both branches of the D.C. government. Both know that in keeping with this principle I will not change any documented position of the city, no matter how minor, without consulting both the Mayor as well as the Council Chair so she can poll her members to see if the majority agrees. No individual can change a home rule position without getting the majority of his colleagues.

I regret that this path has not been followed by the three officials who now support vouchers. I particularly regret that the Mayor and I, who have worked closely and cordially together, did not have conversations all along. Despite our differences on vouchers, I am certain that he and I will want to resume our close collaboration on city issues and move on from here. Our mutual devotion to the city is too important for any other course.

As Council and school board resolutions clearly indicate, objections to funding for private schools in the District have always gone well beyond home rule resolutely rejecting vouchers. In opposing public money for private schools, the District fits the pattern of every State in the Union that has gone on record. Voucher referendums here and everywhere else in the United States have opposed vouchers because most parents know what D.C. residents know, that there is one Federal, always inadequate, education pot and that what would go to private schools would reduce that public pot, pure and simple.

However, the District's case against vouchers runs deeper and is more justified. I have always believed that it is wrong to leave parents without affordable alternatives to neighborhood schools. I admire the District's long-time policy, adopted many years before re-

cent Federal legislation, of allowing children to attend school outside their neighborhoods. The city has not stopped there, however. Today its 42 charter schools go well beyond the number per capita than anywhere in the country. These publicly accountable schools are so popular that they are seriously overcrowded, most often housed in inadequate facilities, have mile-long waiting lists and are crying for funds.

The enthusiasm for our charter schools is traceable to their responsiveness to their parent and child consumers, who have been attracted by their often small classes, their focused curriculums or their specialized offerings that are often available nowhere else—from year-round and foreign-language-centered schools, to technology, art and even boarding schools and a school for kids from the juvenile justice system.

I was able to get $17 million for our charters in this year's appropriation, an amount so small compared to the need that I hesitate to even mention it. For example, Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School, located in a ward 8 church that I visited last week, needs to move to the abandoned Congress Heights school down the street, but $10 million is necessary to make the school usable. That is a story over and over again in the District for public schools that are standing abandoned because the Council and the Mayor have not been able to come forward with funds to allow these schools to be usable so people can move out of overcrowded schools with long waiting lists.

Equally impressive are the city's transformation schools, where many of our most disadvantaged children attend school and where the greatest promise may lie. Transformation schools have been educationally rebuilt from the ground up not only with new staff but with so-called wraparound services from city agencies and special assistance not usually available in other schools, such as aggressive student remediation, class size reduction and programs for parents. The early results are extremely gratifying, including, according to D.C. public schools, increases in student performance in all 15 transformation schools.

This good news story of the charter and transformation schools is the most underreported in the city. However, the parents of our children have shown that they know this story, judging by the way they have bonded with these schools and demanded more of them. D.C. elected officials know or should know this story, too.

The Mayor and the City Council have just finished marking up their 2004 budget. They know all too well that they have had to cut our schools this very year.

Particularly in a year when they are cutting our schools, it is unconscionable to direct any available Federal money away from the schools for which they had direct responsibility and that have been embraced by our parents: charter schools that cannot add a grade and are turning children back to traditional public schools from which they came and transformation schools whose promise to families the city has already begun to break, not to mention the obligation of elected officials to expand the number of transformation schools because so many low-performing schools have not been included to be transformed. It can't be right to agree to send funds to private alternative schools when the city is leaving its own suc-

cessful parents-sanctioned alternatives cut and chronically underfunded.

The least efficient way to use Federal dollars is to hand it out to a few individuals when the same amount put together could move many more children out of crowded charter facilities and help charter schools expand so they don't send children back to their neighborhood schools because they lack the funds to add a grade and to guarantee that transformation schools do, in fact, transform.

We chastise the Congress for not recognizing that democratic principles should govern congressional dealings with the District. Democracy also applies within the District. Judged by this same standard, the evidence is that District residents, especially parents, want any and all available money to go to their own schools that may qualify for Federal funding, all of it, not whatever a few selected officials decide may be divided between private schools and our own alternative public schools that are publicly accountable to the residents and officials of the District of Columbia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton follows:]

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEES

AVIATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

SUBCOMMITTEES

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CIVIL SERVICE AND AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Opening Statement of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

Full Government Reform Committee Hearing

In Search of Educational Excellence in the Nation's Capital: A Review of Academic Options for Students and Parents in the District of Columbia

May 9, 2003

My thanks to Chairman Davis and his staff for working with us to assure that this hearing reflects a fair balance and is not focused entirely on the controversial subject of public money for private school vouchers or the Flake bill, H.R. 684. Anyone in touch with the residents of our city would be struck by how deep their continuing opposition to vouchers has been. Beginning with the referendum in 1981, followed by numerous Council and School Board resolutions, the District, like every state that has had a voucher referendum, has turned down vouchers on the merits. A 2002 Council unanimous resolution said in part: "Education advocates, parents, teachers, and members of the Council of the District of Columbia decided, by act of the Council, that the best vehicle for public education reform in the District of Columbia is to offer charter schools and to improve the public schools of the District of Columbia." A similar 2002 School Board Resolution said: "the Board of Education finds it inappropriate for Congress to utilize existing federally and locally appropriated resources for a voucher program or to use any Congressional add-on funds for this purpose and … any additional monies … should be added to the District budget to provide sorely needed resources key to educational reform in the District … and any voucher program will undermine the school system's effort to support a system of high quality neighborhood schools." These views, which I am confident continue among the majority of D.C. residents and officials, are as remarkably broad as they are deep across the city's wards. I have been impressed by just how universal this view is among our parents, from our more fortunate middle-income residents to our families who are least well off. School Board Member William Lockridge, who represents Wards 7 and 8, where the majority of our low-income parents reside, has visited me to personally make a strong case that he and his constituents strongly oppose private school vouchers, and he has given me a list of his Ward 7 and 8 charter and transformation schools and asked me to do all I can to see that these schools are funded with any available federal funds.

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Mayor Williams, Council member Chavous and School Board President Cafritz have bowed to the Bush Administration on vouchers. Perhaps even they, however, would hesitate to support the Flake Bill, even if the amount offered is raised and even given their view that vouchers are acceptable in exchange for other funds. The Flake Bill is a carbon copy of former Majority Leader Dick Armey's annual D.C. voucher bill. This bill makes every decision not with District officials and comes complete with a new bureaucracy, a seven-person corporation to administer the program. With this corporation, the Flake bill strikes a new low in the long history of congressional imitations of colonialism. In the almost 30 years of home rule, I have never seen a bill for the city, with or without federal funds, that would leave the Mayor with but one appointee while allowing the President to appoint six. Most of my constituents would regard such token recognition as closer the insult than to inclusion.

Quite apart from the merits or the Flake bill, however, the failure to get agreement from elected officials disqualifies the bill on basic democratic principles of consent of the governed. As the Mayor and Council Chair know well, a home rule decision requires agreement by both branches of the D.C. government. Both know that in keeping with this principle I will not change any documented position of the city no matter how minor without consulting both the Mayor as well as the Council Chair so she can poll her Members to see if the majority agrees. No individual can change a home rule position without getting the majority of his colleagues. I regret that this path has not been followed by the three officials who now support vouchers. I particularly regret that the Mayor and I who have worked closely and cordially together did not have conversations all along. Despite our differences on vouchers, I am certain that he and I will want to resume our close collaboration on city issues and more on from here. Our mutual devotion to the city is too important for any other coarse.

As Council and School Board resolutions clearly indicate, objections to funding for private schools in the District have always gone well beyond home rule, resolutely rejecting vouchers. In opposing public money for private schools, the District fits the pattern of every state in the union that has gone on the record. Voucher referendums here and everywhere else in the United States have opposed vouchers because most parents know what D.C. residents know -- that there is one federal, always inadequate, education pot and that what would go to private schools would reduce that public pot.

However, the District's case against vouchers runs deeper and is more justified. I have always believed that it is wrong to leave parents without affordable alternatives to neighborhood schools. I admire the District's longtime policy, adopted many years before recent federal legislation, of allowing children to attend school outside their neighborhoods. The city has not stopped there, however. Today its 42 charter schools go well beyond the number per capita anywhere in the country. These publicly accountable schools are so popular that they seriously crowded, are most often housed in inadequate facilities, have mile long waiting lists, and are crying for funds. The enthusiasm for our charter schools is traceable to their responsiveness to their parent and child consumers, who have been attracted by their often small classes, their focused curriculums, or their

specialized offerings that are often available nowhere else— from year-round and foreign language centered schools to technology, art, and even boarding schools and a school for kids from the juvenile justice system. I was able to get $17 million for our charters in this year's appropriation, an amount so small compared to the need that I hesitate to even mention it. For example Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School located in a Ward 8 church, that I visited last week, needs to move to the abandoned Congress Heights school down the street, but $10 million to make the school usable is required.

Equally impressive are the city's transformation schools, where many of our most disadvantaged children attend school and where the greatest promise may lie. Transformation schools have been educationally rebuilt from the ground up not only with new staff, but with "wrap around services" from city agencies and special assistance not usually available in other schools, such as aggressive student remediation, class size reduction and programs for parents. The early results are extremely gratifying including, according to D.C. Public Schools, increases of student performance in all 15 transformation schools.

The good news story of the charter and transformation schools is the most underreported in the city. However, the parents of our children have shown that this story, judging by the way they have bonded with these schools and demanded more of them. D.C. elected officials know or should know this story too.

The Mayor and City Council have just finished marking up the 04 budget. They know all too well that they have had to cut our schools. Particularly in a year when they are cutting schools, it is unconscionable to direct any available federal money away from the schools for which they have direct responsibility and that have been embraced by parents: charter schools that cannot add a grade and are turning children back to the traditional public schools from which they came, and transformation schools whose promise to families, the city has already begun to break, not to mention the obligation of elected officials to expand the number of transformation schools because so many low performing schools have not yet been included to be transformed. It can't be right to agree to send funds to private alternative schools when the city is leaving its own successful parents sanctioned alternatives cut and chronically underfunded. The least efficient way to use federal dollars is to hand it out to a few individuals when the same amount put together could move many more children out of crowded charter facilities and help charter schools expand so they don't send children back to their neighborhood schools because they lack the funds to add a grade, and guarantee that transformation schools in fact transform.

We chastise the Congress for not recognizing that democratic principles should govern congressional dealings with the District. Democracy also applies within the District too. Judged by this same standard the evidence is that D.C. residents, especially parents, want any and all available money to go to their own schools that may qualify for federal funding, all of it, not whatever a few selected officials decide may be divided between private schools and our own alternative schools.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Shays.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this very important hearing.

Thank you to my two colleagues, Mr. Flake and Mr. Cummings. Mr. Cummings, you might have gotten to speak sooner had you stayed up here rather than there, but it is very important that you share that table with Mr. Flake; and I appreciate you testifying.

Mr. Chairman, schools in many cities and communities across the country are failing; and despite years of increased funding for education, test scores continue to languish. We are here to try to determine if there are ways we can improve education in one of these failing school districts, our Nation's Capital.

I oppose directly spending Federal tax dollars in private schools, but just as I support providing Pell grants to college students for use at the university of their choice, public or private, including religious schools, I also support school choice programs that provide parents with similar choices for their elementary and secondary school children.

Opponents of school choice argue such a proposal could drain public schools of money and students. I think they are dead wrong, but there is a simple way for us to see. Why not establish a handful of demonstration projects that will help determine whether school choice improves our education system, and why not do it in our Nation's Capital? If a project is unsuccessful, we will terminate it. But if a program is successful, it can and should be expanded.

One pending bill in Congress is H.R. 684, the District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act. The scholarships this bill authorizes can be used for tuition, mandatory fees and transportation costs at public or private schools, including religious schools in D.C. and nearby counties in Virginia and Maryland. Unlike past proposals, under H.R. 684 funding for public schools will not be reduced if a child uses a scholarship to attend a different school; and because the scholarship board is a public-private partnership, private funds can be used to supplement the program.

While there is little doubt that D.C. public schools are in serious crisis, it is not a crisis caused by a lack of resources. D.C. public schools spend more per pupil than surrounding school districts in Virginia and Maryland. Clearly, alternatives to increasing funding should be tested. By promoting a competitive model, all schools will be forced to improve academically, provide better quality services and create an administrative structure that operates efficiently.

We are here to discuss opportunity scholarships for students in Washington, DC, but it is my hope that schools like our Bridgeport public schools in my district, if they so chose, will have the same pilot program come to their community. The goal of this program is simple: ensuring D.C. students get the best education possible.

We have excellent witnesses, Mr. Chairman, on all our panels; and I look forward to the dialog. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Christopher Shays follows:]

Statement of Congressman Christopher Shays
Committee on Government Reform
Oversight Hearing
"In Search of Educational Excellence in the Nation's Capital: A Review of Academic Options for Students and Parents in the District of Columbia"
May 9, 2003

I would like to thank Chairman Davis for holding this very important hearing.

Mr. Chairman, schools in many cities across the country are failing. And despite years of increased funding for education, test scores continue to languish. We're here today to try to determine if there are innovative ways we can improve education in one of these failing school districts: our nation's capital.

I oppose directly spending federal tax dollars on private schools. However, just as I support providing Pell Grants to college students for use at the university of their choice -- public or private, including religious schools -- I also support school choice programs that provide parents with similar choices for their elementary and secondary school children.

Opponents of school choice argue such a proposal could drain public schools of money and students. I think they're wrong, but there's a simple way for us to see. Why not establish a handful of demonstration projects that will help determine whether school choice improves our education system? If the projects are unsuccessful, we will terminate them. But if the programs are successful, they can be expanded.

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The goal of this program is simple: ensuring D.C. students get the best education possible.

We have excellent witnesses on all our panels today, and I look forward to the dialogue.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Lewis.

Mr. LEWIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know the inability of poor families to have the opportunity to have a choice where their children can attend school is really another form of segregation, segregation on the poor from various backgrounds; and it is being inflicted upon them by special interest groups that aren't willing to participate in the competitive arena for excellence in education. I mean, why should only those that can afford it be able to send their kids to schools that are achieving excellence in many ways? Public schools in many places do a very good job, but they should be willing to compete so that they can improve where they are having problems. That is what this is all about.

I think we need to end this blocking the way for children that are born in a situation where beyond their—it is not their fault that they don't have the means to afford a good education. We can start by seeing what can happen here in Washington, DC, by giving them a chance; and this is a real opportunity to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Clay.

Mr. CLAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding.

The issue of school choice is an issue that is not necessarily germane to Washington, DC, public school districts. School choice is an issue that all communities are currently grappling with. Regardless of the community we reside in, public school districts have always played an important role in the decisions of families and businesses. Do we stay or do we leave?

If a family has school-aged children and moves into a new neighborhood, the first two questions often asked are, where and how is the local school? Questions like those often reflect the parents' concern about where to send their children to school. Children have the same questions because they are the ones that will attend, and it may mean the difference of having to walk or having to bus.

In situations where there is no child in the home, the question will probably be the same but for different reasons. A family without children present may realize the importance of a community where substantial capital investments are made regularly and property values are stable. Businesses also may want to know about local school conditions so they can use the information to market the community to potential new employees.

The problems in D.C. public schools are not unique to D.C. They are similar to most urban school districts. I come from a background of 17 years in the State legislature where I authored the bill to create charter schools in Kansas City and St. Louis, MO, and also to settle a 30-year-old desegregation case.

And having an option to school choice should not mean school bankruptcy. Options can be good when they reflect real choices.

I believe that, in order to be victorious, a school district must have commitment to academic and financial investment, regardless of its location. Meaningful school choice should be about having real options. However, it should not be at the expense of taking needed resources from public schools to subsidize private ones.

Personally, I have not yet been convinced about the so-called success of charter schools and voucher programs. And I say that about

charters because they have been in existence for a little bit over 10 years, and the verdict is still out. Are academic levels increasing? The advocates of charters told me initially, OK, if charters fail on their own, they will go out of existence. I don't know many charter schools that have gone out of existence because they didn't raise academic achievement levels; and I would like to hear from witnesses today to point out those schools that have gone out of existence, that didn't raise the academic achievement level.

You know, receiving a quality public education is a part of this country's inheritance and reflects on a deeply rooted commitment to give everyone an equal opportunity to become successful. Education can truly be the great equalizer. With investment comes a better work force and a more prosperous and safer community.

The Washington, DC, public school system is simply a microcosm of our Nation's public school challenge. To date, the D.C. public school district's original nine transformation schools have shown real documental progress and improved standardized test scores and parents' surveys. For these reasons, I am inclined to urge my colleagues to make the investment in transformation and traditional schools and stop the social experiment that is draining this community economically and socially.

I look forward to hearing from today's panel, and I ask unanimous consent to submit my statement into the record. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Any other Members wish to make a statement? Mr. Tierney.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to start by commending the chairman for having this balanced presentation today because I think it is an important discussion to have, and I want to associate myself with the remarks of Ms. Norton who I think always does an incredibly able job of representing her constituency but also articulating the important matters and points for her constituents.

There has been, to my knowledge, no substantial, independently verifiable evidence of academic gains with any voucher program; and I think that is an important point to make. The fact of the matter, as we discuss taking public resources and applying them in a way that is going to decrease the amount of resources available for our public school system, we have to be looking at student achievement as the basis for that.

I know that there are some studies that have since been questioned where there was—small gains were argued but, in fact, in review, those studies were not only questioned but proven to be suspect. The fact of the matter is, in the D.C. schools, they have transformation schools; and the information that I have on the progress of those schools indicate that they are being successful by many measures.

It is interesting to say that Mr. Shays made a good point that there's a sizable amount of resources being invested in the D.C. schools, but in the transformation schools they are being invested in ways that experts have come repeatedly in front of us, and the Education and Workforce Committee which I also serve on, numerous times telling us that schools have to be high-performing, child-centered, and family and community focused learning centers in

full collaboration with students parents, communities and local administrators.

That, in fact, is what the transformation schools are. They have a wide range of unique services, health care services, mental health services, before and after care programs and adult education. These types of things are what we have needed in our public school system to make sure that students have an ability to succeed; and in those experiments that seem to be going on so far in the D.C. area, they are succeeding and there are measurable results from that.

So I think that you know before we go off on an area where we are draining public resources for a private area we realize our obligation is to the public school system and that we have some means here in D.C. that have been tried and is working. I would like to credit the community for that and hope that this committee at least can give support for that type of progress without experimenting—just because we have the apparent power to do so under the Constitution does not mean we should exercise that—and have some mind as to what the community itself has done and done successfully.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ruppersberger.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is a very important hearing to really review the academic options for students and parents in the District of Columbia.

Ms. Norton, you do represent your constituents well. Thank you for bringing us here today and really discussing the issues that are very important to your citizens.

As we continue to debate the best way to improve our system of public education, we must consider the options for students and parents. Home schooling, private scholarships, charter schools and vouchers are some of those options.

Now, all too often the politics about education focuses on vouchers. However, the District of Columbia residents have voted consistently against vouchers for the last 20 years because it would divert public funds from public schools. Is it fair to impose something on D.C. residents and their children that they have strongly opposed? Now I welcome the opportunity to discuss all the options available to improve the academic opportunities for students.

As the Cleveland case shows, there are not enough private schools to educate all of the children. Over 99 percent of the students remain in the public school system, and there are not enough slots in the private school systems to take them. So regardless of where you stand on the politics of vouchers, we still need to fix public schools, and that's why I appreciate the opportunity to consider all of the policy options to improve education.

Diverting money from public schools makes no sense because it's unfair to the overwhelming majority of the families relying on the public school system. We need to work the system. We need to make sure we give the resources and then hold those involved in the system accountable for performance.

I thank you for having this hearing today, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger follows:]

Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Committee on Government Reform
In Search of Educational Excellence in the Nation's Capital:
A Review of Academic Options for Students and Parents in the District of Columbia"
05.9.03

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing regarding a Review of Academic Options for Students and Parents in the District of Columbia.

As we continue to debate how best to improve our system of public education, we must consider the options available for students and parents. Home schooling, Private Scholarships, Charter Schools and Vouchers are some of those options.

All too often the politics about education focuses on vouchers. However, the District of Columbia residents have voted consistently against vouchers, for the last 20 years which would divert public funds to private schools. Is it fair to impose something on DC residents and their children that they have strongly opposed?

I welcome the opportunity to discuss all the options available to improve the academic performance of students. As the Cleveland case showed us, there weren't enough private schools to educate all of the children. Over 99% of the students remain in the public schools system – and there aren't anymore slots in the private school systems to take them.

So, regardless of where you stand on the politics of vouchers - we still need to fix the Public Schools. Diverting money from Public schools is unfair to overwhelming majority of families relying on the public school system.

I look forward to hearing the testimony presented today and look forward to asking questions of the witnesses.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

We now move to our first panel of witnesses. Thank you for bearing with us.

I want to welcome Congressman Jeff Flake from Arizona, who has an innovative approach and has introduced legislation on the issue; and a member of this committee, a very active member of our committee, Elijah Cummings from Maryland. We appreciate both of you being with us.

What I would like to do is I will start with Mr. Flake, because he has introduced legislation on this; and then I'll move to our committee member. Then if you could take a couple of questions, and we will move on to the next panel.

Elijah, thanks for bearing with us. You could have been up here, as Chris said, and made your statement earlier, but we prefer to keep you down there in the spotlight.

Jeff, thanks for being here and thanks for your interest in this issue.

STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF FLAKE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. FLAKE. I want to thank the chairman and ranking member and members of this committee for holding this important hearing and for considering this piece of legislation.

Let me just dispel something quickly. It's been raised several times, what this two-term Republican Congressman from Arizona, this Flake, why does he want to propose or impose vouchers on the District of Columbia? Not even a flake would seek to impose vouchers on anybody.

This bill does not impose vouchers on one child. It needs to be said again and again and again. All this bill does is allow children the opportunity to seek a different or better education if they so choose.

It has been said a number of times already that voters in the District of Columbia have voted again and again for the past 20 years to reject vouchers. District voters have never voted on a voucher program, never. In 1981, District voters voted on a tuition tax credit program which would have benefited only those who pay taxes. Those who are typically poor and did not pay taxes would not have benefited. That was rejected back in 1981. No referendum and no vote has been taken since that time. There has never been a vote on a voucher program.

When it has been said that the people in the District of Columbia simply don't support this program, I would ask you to look around the room, particularly in the back of the room at a number of parents who are here dressed in green who want a different education for their children.

I could refer to poll after poll after poll that shows a majority of individuals wish to have more opportunities, but I think the best poll is actually the fact that a few years ago in Washington, DC, when the Washington scholarship fund offered 1,000 scholarships to needy children to attend private schools, there were 7,573 applicants, of whom 6,500, obviously, did not receive a scholarship. They are still waiting, and many of them apply again and again every

year for an opportunity to send their children elsewhere. That's the best poll there is.

Let me just tell you a little of what we have in Arizona. My children—I have five of them, three of whom are school aged. We lived in a district in Phoenix and we felt a few years ago that the district didn't serve our kids' needs very well. We had the financial resources to move, and so we did. We moved to another school district across town that had a better system, and we were fortunate that we were able to do that.

My three children attend traditional public schools, but there are charter schools everywhere in Arizona. We have nearly 500 of them, more than any other State.

We also have a very innovative tuition tax credit program that is designed particularly for low-income kids. In fact, the only stipulation with it is that you cannot use it to benefit your own child. You have to use it for someone else's child, and now more than 20,000 children in Arizona are taking advantage of that program. The schools that my kids attend, the public schools that my kids attend are far better because those options are available; and I simply wish that parents across the country and in Washington, DC, would have the same opportunities that I have for my children. So that's what this legislation is about.

Let me just go into a couple of particulars in the time I have left. Under H.R. 684, District students whose families' incomes are below the poverty line may receive a scholarship of up to $5,000 or the cost of tuition, whichever is less. Students with family incomes that are above the poverty line but below 185 percent of the poverty line may receive assistance up to $3,750. And then students can also receive enhancement or achievement scholarships and be eligible for tuition awards up to $800 as long as they are under the 185 percent poverty line.

It has been said there aren't sufficient private schools to take all the kids that may apply. Well, we know there have been surveys done and about half of the private schools sent back to the survey and indicated that there were in those schools about 2,200 spots available. Now how can we say on one side nobody will take advantage of it and then on the other hand say there aren't enough private school slots to fill for these kids? I say, let the parents choose. If you look over here at these posters, there are wonderful statements by parents from right here in the District of Columbia, some of whom are in the room today, who simply want better education for their kids. Shouldn't they be listened to as well?

I have to say, before I wrap up, a lot has been mentioned about charter schools. Charter schools are wonderful, and they are doing a great thing here in the District of Columbia, but it should be noted that charter schools were not a District initiative, they were a congressional initiative, they were a Federal initiative. The District cooperated and has now embraced them and thank goodness they have.

I have a notion that years from now the District officials, those who haven't already, will stand and say thank goodness Congress had the foresight to allow—not impose, but allow children to attend schools of their choice.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you again; and I just want to wrap up with your own statement here. You said, I have come to the conclusion that parents and students stuck in failing schools need, no, deserve the opportunity to choose from a wider pool. It's time to do more than sympathize. This is a moral imperative. Mr. Chairman, you're exactly right. This is a moral imperative, and it is time for us to move ahead.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Jeff Flake follows:]

Statement of Congressman Jeff Flake
House Government Reform Committee Hearing
May 9, 2003
H.R. 684, the D.C. School Choice Act

Two score and ten years ago District of Columbia Public Schools were in trouble – and they still are today! Charter schools have been implemented (during the 1990's) and out-of-boundary programs exist, but parents are still crying out for education options and the entire system is crying out for competition.

I've introduced the D.C. School Choice bill along with Congressman Lipinski to provide that competition. The bill, the D.C. School Choice Act, provides $45 million worth of scholarship money for low-income District of Columbia families to send their children to a school of their choice. The scholarships may be used for tuition costs at a public or private school in D.C. and adjacent counties in Maryland and Virginia. Special Achievement Scholarships are also available for tutoring assistance to students who attend public schools in the District. It needs to be noted that the money in this legislation doesn't come from District of Columbia Public School funds. It doesn't take one dime away from the District of Columbia Public School funds because it is NEW money.

In a report by Casey Lartigue of the CATO Institute, we find that D.C. public schools have been suffering from poor graduation rates, poor test scores and poor performance on national tests when compared to national averages. One third of those educated in D.C. Public Schools are functionally illiterate, the city has a drop out rate of 40 percent for those students entering the 8th grade, 12 schools have been labeled 'failing' under the No Child Left Behind Act, the test scores are atrocious, and this isn't new.

It seems that a D.C. diploma means little. Eighty-five percent of D.C. public school graduates who enter the University of the District of Columbia need remedial education before beginning their course work toward degrees. On average, these students require two years of remedial education to get up-to-speed, up from one year during the late 1970s. Of course, not every school in the District is in such bad shape. In fact, there are schools that parents would choose to send their children to, but even with out-of-boundary programs, there just isn't enough room to accommodate everyone.

I believe competition is needed to help improve D.C. public schools. The current system has deteriorated to the point where the D.C. Control Board found "the longer students stay in the District's public schools, the less likely they are to succeed." The system is not working. One way to encourage reform is to make public schools directly accountable to parents by giving at least some parents the power to leave failing schools.

While some believe that the District doesn't want this, I have heard otherwise. DC Parents for Choice, 3,000 members strong, have come out in strong support of this effort. If you take a moment to look around the room, the majority of those guests

wearing green are here in support of DC School Choice. And, if you would please take a look at the visuals here to your (left or right), you will see the faces of parents and children who believe in school choice.

> Jo Anne Haitiwanger, parent of Crystal (Age 13)
> "I placed my daughter's name in a lottery for 3 DCPS out- of -boundary schools. There were 6,000 applicants. There were 27 slots available out of the 3 schools I chose. My daughter was not selected. We are still waiting."
>
> Virginia Thomas, parent of Gabrielle (Age 7) & Victor (Age 10)
>
> "My children have excelled in the school they attend thanks to the Washington Scholarship Fund. They are accomplishing great things and are both on the honor roll. Without this scholarship, I do not know where they would be. We hope that with a voucher program we will be able to continue to send our children to schools that best meet their needs."
>
> Barbara Mickens, parent of Sam (Age 5) & Ashley (Age 14)
>
> "My goal was to send my children to a good public school due to financial constraints. I was placed on an out-of-bounds waiting list and I'm still waiting. The most ironic thing to me is the same problems my mom had with me in a DC public school 30 years later those same issues are still present and unattended to."

But not only do we have parents asking for scholarships, we have parents actively pursuing and taking advantage of privately funded scholarships offered by various organizations. The largest of these organizations in D.C. is the Washington Scholarship Fund. In the past, 7,573 needy children applied for scholarships offered by the Washington Scholarship Fund. To that group, the Washington Scholarship Fund announced it would award 1,000 scholarships. That means the parents of 6,500 children who applied for scholarships learned that they wouldn't get one because there weren't enough to go around.

Parents have made their wishes clear by applying for scholarships. Many of those parents continue to apply for the scholarships offered yearly by the Washington Scholarship Fund. These are parents we can help by passing the D.C. School Choice bill. This bill attends to the real needs and desires of the children and parents in Washington, D.C. It is clear that the parents of Washington D.C. want their children to have an opportunity to leave failing schools and go to schools that work.

Some say the District has voted against vouchers in the past. District voters have never voted on a voucher or a scholarship referendum. In 1981, voters rejected a referendum that would have permitted tax credits for educational expenses. My proposal is not a tax credit. A tax credit would primarily help those who pay taxes and are

generally not poor. In contrast, this scholarship legislation is designed to give assistance to the neediest children, those from low-income families.

The fact is, the people of the District want choice. More than 2,000 people have signed a petition in support of this legislation. More than 100 D.C. ministers have circulated a resolution in support of this legislation. A recent poll shows that African Americans in the District support the idea of a scholarship program by a two-to-one margin. Finally, hundreds of D.C. parents have demonstrated their support for this concept by applying for a scholarship through the Washington Scholarship Fund.

D.C. parents want choice. D.C. children deserve a chance. Every child in America – and every child in Anacostia – deserves a safe, sound education and fair chance at the American Dream. Opportunity scholarships will give needy children the ability to attend a safe, quality school close to home.

Two score and ten years from now the competition provided by this legislation can have D.C. Schools back on track with an entire generation of well-educated families to be proud of. Let's give them this opportunity.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Cummings.

STATEMENT OF HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for holding this hearing; and I am impressed with the concern about the residents of the District of Columbia and their children and their schools.

As a neighbor of the District of Columbia, with children who in Baltimore still are reading from books when Jimmy Carter was still President, as a neighbor where there are schools where a child can actually graduate from high school without ever looking through a microscope, as a neighbor of the District in Baltimore where there is one school that I know of that just a year ago had 13 computers for 1,300 children, I am impressed with the concern.

I must tell you that, as I listen to this debate, for the life of me, I can't understand why we haven't fully funded No Child Left Behind. That might help many of these children so that they don't have to go to a different or alternative situation; and that, Mr. Chairman, is basically what the debate is all about.

I certainly do believe that Mr. Flake's intention is honorable and believe that he means well. It was Martin Luther King who said, you cannot lead where you do not go and you cannot teach what you do not know. So I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today as this committee examines the D.C. public school system, including the public charter transformational schools available to elementary and secondary students.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, I must begin by saying that the Congressional Black Caucus regrets that Congresswoman Norton—who does a phenomenal job, and I applaud her. When I look at what she did with regard to making it possible for young people graduating from high school to be able to get tuition covered in other jurisdictions, that is phenomenal, but we want to make sure that those children—all of us, I think, even get to a point where they have an opportunity to use those scholarships.

The thing that I guess upsets me so much is that none of us in this Congress would stand around and watch somebody impose something on our district without us even being consulted, none of us. Even my good friend Mr. Flake would raise hell.

Using the fact that the District is also the Nation's Capital, the House repeatedly tries to press its ideological agenda on hometown Washington against the will of the majority of the city's residents and elected officials. I dare say that Members of this Congress, if there was a local government in your jurisdiction that expressed its will, I bet you we would be up there yelling and supporting them 100 percent.

The city council has expressed its concerns. They represent the people. They are elected by the people just like we are. There is no better example of this unequal treatment than H.R. 5033 introduced by former majority leader Dick Armey in the last session and reintroduced this year, to some degree, by Congressman Jeff Flake of Arizona. This bill would impose private school vouchers on the District of Columbia. It relates exclusively to Ms. Norton's district

but was drawn without her collaboration or even the courtesy of a conversation. Something is wrong with that picture.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, the Caucus appreciates—that is, the Congressional Black Caucus appreciates that you have structured the hearing to hear all options, including those the District has consistently endorsed. While there is some debate fostered by some individuals in the District concerning vouchers, the record shows that the D.C. Council and the school board have repeatedly opposed vouchers.

I heard what Mr. Flake said—but I just want to add one thing, Mr. Flake—a lot of poor people pay taxes. If that position is to be changed, District officials and residents are full and equal citizens who no more require guidance from Congress than the rest of us do concerning our local schools and our children. The House has made sure that our own districts would not have mandated vouchers like those in H.R. 684 would impose on the District. We did so first in the No Child Left Behind bill passed here in the first session of the 107th Congress, and we did it last week again in the IDEA special education bill where two voucher amendments were defeated.

I might add that several Republican members of this committee, including Chairman Davis, voted with the majority against vouchers. If the House has refused to impose vouchers on our own districts, how then can we treat the District differently or unequally? Something is wrong with that picture.

Further on the merits, taking scarce public funds from publicly accountable schools is impossible to justify. The Bush administration and this Congress have imposed a mandate on D.C., the District of Columbia and Baltimore and every district in the United States with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Even if you support vouchers, it would be especially wrong to take Federal funds from public education today and fund private schools when Congress is cutting Federal funding for public schools.

Moreover, the District should be the last district required to use vouchers. Its network of charter and transformation school alternatives is the most extensive in the entire Nation. Congress should be proud of how far the District has gone beyond the rest of us by offering a broad and interesting array of alternative publicly accountable schools.

Members should be visiting D.C.'s charter and transformation schools to learn from the District so that we might do the same in our own districts. Congress should be authorizing funds to allow the District's charter schools to reduce their long waiting list of parents trying to gain admission for their children and move the charter schools from crowded and inadequate facilities. Congress should be especially helping the District to continue and indeed to expand its transformation schools which serve mostly low-income students. As a father of a Baltimore child who is in a charter school, I can tell you they work; and they are some of the best in our city.

The House has voted down vouchers for the Nation even though not one Member's district has nearly the number of alternatives and options per capita as the District offers. The city should be rewarded and encouraged to do more of exactly what it is doing,

without controversial vouchers that studies show do not improve students' test outcomes. The city's work provides nothing less than a model for the Nation and publicly accountable alternatives to its public schools.

The Congressional Black Caucus strongly opposes H.R. 684 and any congressional bill that interferes with local control of local schools in any district, including the District of Columbia. The Congressional Black Caucus also opposes the use of any Federal funds for private schools, especially now when Federal funds for public education are being severely restricted and cut.

I know this is a highly charged issue, but I would hope that we would listen to our colleague Eleanor Holmes Norton and the thousands of people she represents that do not want private school vouchers imposed upon them.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, I thank you and yield back.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Elijah E. Cummings follows:]

Statement of Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (MD -7th)
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus
before the Government Reform Committee

May 9, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Waxman, and all of my colleagues on this Committee. I am Elijah Cummings from Maryland's Seventh Congressional District and Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear today before you as this Committee examines the entire D.C. Public School system, including the public charter schools and transformational schools, available to elementary and secondary students. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, I must begin by saying that the Caucus regrets that Congresswoman Norton and her district are so often subjected to unequal treatment. Using the fact that the District is also the nation's capital, the House repeatedly tries to press its ideological agenda on hometown Washington against the will of the majority of the city's residents and elected officials.

There is no better example of this unequal treatment than H.R. 5033 introduced by former Majority Leader Dick Armey last session and reintroduced this year by Congressman Jeff Flake of Arizona as H.R. 684. This bill would impose private school vouchers on the District of Columbia. It relates exclusively to Ms. Norton's district but was drawn without her collaboration or even the courtesy of a conversation. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, the Caucus appreciates that you have structured this hearing to hear all the options, including those that the District has consistently endorsed.

While there is some debate fostered by some officials in the District concerning vouchers, the record shows that for years the D.C. Council and the School Board have repeatedly opposed vouchers. If that position is to be changed, District officials and residents are full and equal citizens who no more require guidance from Congress than the rest of us do concerning our local schools and our children.

The House has made sure that our own districts would not have mandated vouchers like those that H.R. 684 would impose on the District. We did so first in the No Child Left Behind bill passed here in the first session of the 107th Congress, and we did it again last week in the IDEA special education bill, where two voucher amendments were defeated. If the House has refused to impose vouchers on our own districts, how then can we treat the District differently and unequally?

Further, on the merits, taking scarce public funds from publicly accountable schools is impossible to justify. The Bush Administration and this Congress have imposed an unfunded

mandate on D.C., Baltimore, and every jurisdiction in the United States with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Even if you support vouchers, it would be especially wrong to take federal funds from public education today and fund private schools when Congress is cutting federal funding for public education.

Moreover, the District should be the last district required to use vouchers. Its network of charter and transformation school alternatives is the most extensive in the nation. Congress should be proud of how far the District has gone beyond the rest of us by offering a broad and interesting array of alternative publicly accountable schools. Members should be visiting D.C.'s charter and transformation schools to learn from the District so that we might do the same in our own districts. Congress should be authorizing funds to allow the District's charter schools to reduce their long waiting lists of parents trying to gain admission for their children and to move the charter schools from crowded and inadequate facilities. Congress should especially be helping the District to continue, and indeed, to expand its transformation schools which serve mostly low-income students.

The House has voted down vouchers for the nation even though not one Member's district has nearly the number of alternatives and options per capita the District offers. The city should be rewarded and encouraged to do more of exactly what it is doing without controversial vouchers that studies show do not improve student test outcomes. The city's work provides nothing less than a model for the nation in publicly accountable alternatives to its public schools.

The Caucus strongly opposes H.R. 684 and any congressional bill that interfere with local control of local schools in any district, including the District of Columbia. The Caucus also opposes the use of any federal funds for private schools, especially now when federal funds for public education are being severely restricted and cut.

I know that this is a highly charged issue but I would hope that we would listen to our colleague Eleanor Holmes Norton and the thousands of people she represents that do not want private school vouchers imposed upon them.

Again, thank you for convening today's hearing.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I thank you both for being here and giving divergent views on an issue we want to solve together.

Let me say to my friend and fellow Orioles fan, I have traditionally voted against vouchers at the national level, but I have also supported vouchers for the city in earlier Congresses.

I don't know how we are going to handle this at this point. That's why we want to have a discussion and get all opinions there and see if we are talking new money, how it works, and how we structure it; and that is the purpose of this hearing today. But nationally only 6 percent of the money that goes to primary and secondary education comes from the Federal Government, and it is my belief that at that level our money ought to go into public schools.

That small percent, I don't think it is helpful. If States want to do it, that is different. In the District, of course, we have a unique relationship and a unique responsibility; and we have, in fact, stepped up to some of the State responsibilities for the city that we would not ordinarily—the States would do. So I look at it a little bit differently, and it is close to home.

I have also wrestled with the problems with the city since my first term and see a great challenge to all of us. Ms. Norton and I have worked through a lot of issues where we have come at it from different directions, and I think the city is a better place for it.

We also uniquely have in this case the Mayor, some Council members and the city basically split on exactly what we want to do. But I appreciate your perspective and the perspective of the Black Caucus because it is important as we formulate these issues. But from my perspective and I think from most members, we are not looking at this from an ideological point of view. I look forward to continue to work with you.

Mr. Flake, let me just say to you again, you have come up with some innovative ideas. You picked up the ball to some extent where former Majority Leader Armey left off. From our perspective we welcome you into the debate, and you have clearly done some homework on this.

Instead of asking a lot of questions at this point, because we have other panels we want to get to, going to turn it over to Ms. Norton for a few questions because I know she wants to ask and clarify. It's my intention to get you off as quickly as we can, because we have two more panels ready to go.

But thank you both for being here. This is an important subject, and we are going to handle it in an appropriate fashion.

I yield to my friend to the District, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, when the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus points out the inconsistency of believing there should be vouchers in the District, but voting against it for the Nation, I don't think there is any way to wiggle out of that problem. It is a terrible, terrible problem. I just want to say for the record that we demand to be treated exactly as your district is treated. However you vote on vouchers for Fairfax, that ought to apply to us.

Now, you also have no unique responsibility. You may have a unique responsibility for the Nation's Capital, and I wish you would take more of it, but you certainly don't have any unique re-

sponsibility for the D.C. public schools, which are paid for exclusively by the residents of the District of Columbia. So the notion of using the fact that we are in Nation's capitol to demand control of any kind over our public schools is totally unacceptable to us.

Mr. Flake, you said that this bill does not impose vouchers on the District. Who did you consult in the District when writing this bill?

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the gentlewoman for the question. We consulted a number of parents in the District. Also, as you mentioned, this bill is largely the same bill that Congressman Armey has introduced.

Ms. NORTON. So you consulted Mr. Armey, and individual parents who have not been elected by the people of the District of Columbia?

Mr. FLAKE. I think the parents ought to have the choice as to where they send their kids.

Ms. NORTON. How do you know those parents represent the majority of the residents of the District of Columbia, sir? If I went into your district and picked out some parents to talk to, would you think that is the way to find out how public opinion has been registered in your district?

Mr. FLAKE. There are a number of ways to register public opinion. I think the fact that over 7,000 District parents applied for scholarships, it shows that there is some support for other alternatives. Whether or not that represents a majority, we don't know. But even if one parent——

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Flake, in the future, if you would like some sense of where the majority stands, I refer you back to democratic principles and advise that you might ask me. I have been elected by almost 90 percent of the people of the District of Columbia. You might, in fact, talk to the Mayor of the District of Columbia. You might talk to the chair of the City Council of the District of Columbia, rather than choosing parents you desire to talk to.

As for the tax credit, you are absolutely right, it was a tax credit. If we were only going on the fact that the District had passed a tax credit, you would be entirely right. It was not a voucher, a Federal voucher; it was a tax credit.

I don't know what you do with 20 years of Council resolutions, unanimous resolutions, sir, since the Council does represent the people of the District of Columbia and it has been voted on by them. I don't know what you do with 20 years' worth of school board resolutions, because those have been voted on by the people of the District of Columbia. We do have a representative form of government which allows people to vote.

You said that the charter schools were not a D.C. initiative. You are wrong, sir. The charter school bill, the first Federal charter school bill, was passed by the Congress of the United States at a time when our school board was virtually defunct. However, Newt Gingrich, who was then Speaker, set up a series of task forces and allowed those task forces to call in not only school board members, but council members, advisory neighborhood commissioners, school activists before the charter school bill was passed.

I would commend to you the way in which Speaker Gingrich went about passing that first charter bill. That was virtually a

home rule bill. We drew it together. You could have done the same thing that Speaker Gingrich did. You could have said, school activists come in. We had meeting after meeting. We had council members. It was almost impossible to find somebody who had not sat at the table in the countless meetings before the Federal charter school bill for the District of Columbia was passed.

I have a question for you: Are you in favor of the tax credit voucher bill in the State of Arizona?

Mr. FLAKE. Let me just say, before I answer that question, I have met with members of the city council and also the school board.

Ms. NORTON. What members of the city council and school board have you worked with, sir?

Mr. FLAKE. I met with Representative Chavous.

Ms. NORTON. What did he tell you?

Mr. FLAKE. He said——

Ms. NORTON. Before you wrote this bill you consulted with Mr. Chavous and he had some input into that bill?

Mr. FLAKE. No. I met with him. I also placed a call to you.

Ms. NORTON. I called you back and did not get a return call.

Mr. FLAKE. We did speak. You mentioned that you had written a letter to the Secretary of Education, and that I should read that, and I did.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The gentlewoman's time has expired.

Ms. NORTON. Could he answer the question I just asked, please?

Mr. FLAKE. Yes. The tuition tax credit I very much support.

Ms. NORTON. Do you know that on April 9th in your own State that a new version of that was defeated? According to many analysts, it was because it would have diverted $50 million in State tax revenues from the State of Arizona.

And you are then also aware of the criticisms of the existing tuition tax credit, which has found that although you are not supposed to write for your own child, you can do donations for other children? As a result, there are parents writing $500 checks for their friends' children to get the scholarship that was initially meant for low-income students.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The gentlewoman's time has expired.

I had hoped to move you on and off, but I think Ms. Norton's inquiry has occasioned that some of our other members want to say something.

Let me just make one comment for the record. The District of Columbia gets $116 million in Federal funds. I was saying that——

Ms. NORTON. That is due under its per pupil share, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. It is important to note, nationally 6 percent of the money for primary and secondary schools comes in from the Federal Government. It is about between 1 and 2 percent in my home county of Fairfax. If the schools in the District had results anything resembling Fairfax, we would not even be here today.

It is just my belief that children in the District ought to get those same opportunities. How we get there is a question that we are going to have, obviously, a lot of spirited discussion. But the city's school system, by almost any measure, is failing. Now you have city elected leaders saying they are concerned about it, too, and they

want to look at other options as well. We are going to hear from them today.

We will have a spirited discussion, and hopefully we can come up with something. But when only 5 percent of the city's eight graders are proficient in science, zero percent in advanced courses, that is a cause of concern.

The gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Shays, is recognized.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I had an intuitive sense that I wanted to be for vouchers years ago, and I spent 3 years longer to do too because I was afraid of the CEA and the NEA. I was afraid that the education lobby that I love and respect would no longer support me. As soon as I did, that is exactly what happened. There was a real disincentive for me to do what I felt was right. I believe vouchers are just a no-brainer.

I am just wondering, Mr. Flake, in your bill if, for instance, it costs $10,000 to educate a child in D.C. and the voucher is $3,000, do you take the remaining $7,000, or is D.C. allowed to get the balance and keep it, even though they have no student to educate?

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the gentleman for the question. This is new money. This does not come out of any per pupil share that is already supplied by the Congress or is in the D.C. budget, this is completely new money. It will be $7 million for fiscal year 2004, $8 million for 2005.

Mr. SHAYS. When they no longer have any child in school, would they lose any Federal dollars?

Mr. FLAKE. No.

Mr. SHAYS. They would basically have more money for the remaining children; is that correct?

Mr. FLAKE. That is correct.

Mr. SHAYS. How do you react when you hear this mantra that says we are taking away money from the D.C. system? Aren't you, in fact, adding resources by the mere fact that you are adding $7 million and you would be having a child they no longer would have to educate?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Would the gentleman yield for just a moment?

Mr. SHAYS. Yes.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. This city school spending per pupil is just about the highest in the country. It is not just a money problem; there is a structural issue, as well.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, that is not true. The per pupil spending for the people right now is the lowest in the region.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Chairman, there needs to be some regular order.

Ms. NORTON. The chairman knows how to get regular order without your intervention.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. I am quoting from the National Assessment of Educational Progress Report in terms of saying that. If you have some additional figures, Ms. Norton, we would be happy to hear them.

You can answer the question.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. I can understand the frustration of any Member if they don't like something that is happening in their district.

I am just wondering, Mr. Flake, if we provided these dollars but we gave the right to the D.C. school system to prevent them from being spent, in other words, they just want to throw away $7 million, what would your reaction be if we made this a voluntary issue and let the people in D.C. decide whether or not they are going to take advantage of these dollars that are going to be available?

Mr. FLAKE. As I mentioned, this is new money. You asked my reaction when people say it is taking money out of the system. I react the same way as when I am told that we are imposing it on the District, when no parent is forced to take a voucher.

But as far as this money—this money will be appropriated and it will sit in a fund that, if it is not taken advantage of, will remain in that fund and I suppose accumulate. Given the history of the private scholarship programs, however, with far more applicants than there was money to fund them, my guess is that it will be used.

Mr. SHAYS. So the bottom line is, this is a fund available to parents that want to draw on it. If they choose to draw on it, they don't attend the public school. Therefore, the D.C. system does not have to educate that child, but they still have not been deprived of any resources. Is that correct?

Mr. FLAKE. That is correct.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. This is a very interesting question. I sit on the board of my daughter's charter school. What happens is that we have seen, in Baltimore, at least, that even if kids come out of the school, we are still spending about the same amount of money overall, OK, in other words, for the school. Are you following me so far?

Mr. SHAYS. Yes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I am going to go to what you just asked him, because you have a little red herring in there.

The problem is this: that $7 million or whatever it is, that $7 million needs to be spent. It is interesting, in Ms. Norton's testimony she was very reasonable when she said that, OK, we have something, 42, I think, charter schools, transformation schools, that are working.

If there are already people lined up for those and there are people who really feel good about them, maybe those are some of the schools that don't have the kind of equipment that they need. Why not, if you want to spend some extra money, take that $7 million, and it might be better used.

Mr. SHAYS. You just said "red herring" and I have a red light, so Mr. Chairman, at least allow me to respond.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I ask unanimous consent to give you an additional minute.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. That $7 million, if you already have a structure there, and the D.C. public schools——

Mr. SHAYS. You want it spent somewhere else.

Mr. CUMMINGS. The problem is, if you have that money to do that with, why not put it in something like that?

Mr. SHAYS. That is a different issue. With all due respect, I think the issue is you would like more money and you would like the $7 million spent somewhere else. I think it is very disingenuous to suggest this is taking money away. This is new money. You would like that new money spent somewhere else. I think it makes more sense spent here.

I don't think we would have had a charter school movement if we had not had a school choice movement. I think the charter school movement is in response to the school choice movement. I think this is a great debate.

I would love to have your program in Bridgeport, CT. If Ms. Norton would like to guarantee it would go to Bridgeport, CT, I would gladly accept.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Waxman.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Chairman, I realize we have other panelists waiting, but we are in an awkward situation where we have everybody here talking about schools in Ms. Norton's district. I was curious to find Mr. Shays asking for an opportunity to respond to Mr. Cummings. The idea of a hearing is to hear what witnesses have to say. You do not always have to answer them. You may not agree with them.

I don't know how other colleagues would feel if we had a hearing on schools in their district or hospitals in their district, and everybody else has a view on it. But the one who has knowledge about it is Ms. Norton, so I yield my time to her, although I would hope that we could move quickly through this group so we can hear from the others who I think can tell us more about Washington from their own experience in the District itself.

Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Just to clarify, I think my good friend, Mr. Shays, absolutely confused the issue. The District—certainly Mr. Cummings was not claiming that there was anything coming out of the District of Columbia funds. But it is not true that there is any such thing as new money; this money comes out of the Federal education pot.

The reason that every referendum has failed is that every knowledgeable parent in the United States knows that it comes out of that pot, and what comes out of that pot is not available for their public schools.

That is the same for the District of Columbia. It is Federal money. Yes, it is new money for us. It comes out of the Federal pot at a time when the District has a huge unfunded mandate from the Leave No Child Behind bill that is going to result in huge dropouts in our schools.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Chairman, that was the point I was trying to make.

Mr. WAXMAN. That is an interesting point, because if we wanted to do something for the District of Columbia on a pilot project basis, maybe we should treat it unlike we treat other States: fund the mandates we place on the District of Columbia. When we tell them to do things, give them the money and let them make deci-

sions on how best to use that money, rather than mandate things for them to do that they can't afford to do without taking money away from other areas; and then giving them some more money and saying, here is some extra money for you, and then telling them how they have to use that money.

Is that the point you wanted to make?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Souder.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Chairman, I came to this hearing at the beginning, listened to complete opening statements on the other side, many of which went over the time limit. I have a meeting with the Speaker and will not be able to stay.

I would like to make a couple of comments and ask a couple of questions. I have a high level of frustration similar to what my colleague from Connecticut said. First, I would like to ask Mr. Flake a couple of questions.

Is this an appropriations bill or an authorizing bill?

Mr. FLAKE. This is an authorizing bill.

Mr. SOUDER. In an authorizing bill, is there a pot of money that goes to education or not?

Mr. FLAKE. No.

Mr. SOUDER. If it then was appropriated, does this say that it has to come from a fixed amount, or are you proposing in your bill, since it is raising the authorizing level, that thus, if it would pass in the appropriations, there should be more appropriations dollars?

Mr. FLAKE. The President has, in his budget request, allowed for programs of this type. This fits within that request. We have passed a budget resolution here which takes into account the President's budget figures, so the money is there.

Mr. SOUDER. Another thing we often hear in this type of legislation is that when we take a pupil out of the public school system and then the State match goes down, that therefore there is a reduction in the public school funding.

But in the case of the District of Columbia that would not be true, because their per pupil spending does not come from the State, it comes from us. It would not be reduced if someone used a voucher. Is that not true?

Mr. FLAKE. That is my understanding.

Mr. SOUDER. So there wouldn't be any reduction. We are dealing more in a debatable structure on an authorizing bill whether it would reduce education spending.

Do you know of any Member in the U.S. House of Representatives, if they were being offered $45 million additional in their district in authorizing, that would oppose that bill?

Mr. FLAKE. I can't think of any quickly.

Mr. SOUDER. My reaction to that is if the District of Columbia does not want $45 million additional dollars, I know my people in my State would like new money to that extent, and perhaps the funds should be designated in the Department of Education for districts that are interested in getting new money on top of the money they already have, and their Representatives are interested in such new money, that would be available to those districts.

I have schools in my district that right now in Fort Wayne are laying off teachers. They have all kinds of programs that are being cut back. Their schools are having to close down. My people in Indi-

ana would find it appalling if I moved money to an area that, quite frankly, says, we don't want any new money.

This is not just about this. If they don't want new money from Congress, the question is, we have plenty of needs in our own district. I find this an extremely frustrating debate. I understand the rationale if this money comes out of existing money, then we are back to more traditional debate. If people say, this is our Nation's Capital and we want to give people money on top of the money they have, if they don't want it, so be it; other areas of the country need the money, too.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Any other lines of inquiry here before we move to the next panel?

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Chairman, I would just comment on the one thing that seems to be going on here. There is, in my view, at least, no room for additional moneys for additional public education as long as this country continues to underfund the mandates in No Child Left Behind and IDEA's promises that have been made over decades.

We can have as much semantical exercise about this supposed authorization or appropriation; new funds, old things; or anything on that basis. But the Federal Government, by definition, has not stepped up to its obligations here. We have not met the 40 percent per pupil expenditure that everybody had hoped on the IDEA, and the bill that we just passed in the House recently does not do that at all. It does not mandate that it be done. It set that money aside. The President got everybody's agreement on a No Child Left Behind bill and very disingenuously broke his promise, which was to fund the new mandates.

So after agreeing that all of these public programs that were in that bill were essential to the educational achievement to our children, he, then, before the ink was even dry, put forth a budget that cut over 40 of those programs and over $5 billion short of the commitment.

If you want to talk about new experiments, after those commitments are met, you might want to talk about new money. I don't think there can be, by anybody's definition, new Federal sources of money until those commitments are met.

I would close out by saying if we are then going to spend Federal money, wouldn't we want to do it with those programs that are already working and shown to be working as opposed to those that have no credible evidence having been shown to be successful?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Ruppersberger.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Briefly, there are many issues being debated here. We need to keep our eyes on the ball: children and education. I would think some of the emotions have ten away.

I would think that this is more important, Mr. Flake, and Mr. Cummings, you are next door in Baltimore, that we sit at the table with Ms. Norton and understand her point of view. Maybe we could resolve some of the issues.

Second, Mr. Chairman, I yield my time back to Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I close off.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Let me thank the panel. It is not your typical congressional cameo before a committee. We have had some questions that obviously sparked a lot of debate.

We will take a 2-minute recess as we move our next panel here. Thank you both very much.

[Recess.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We have our second panel, Eugene Hickok, the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education; Mayor Anthony Williams, the District of Columbia; Council Member Linda Cropp; and Council Member Kevin Chavous, Chair of the Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation.

It is a policy of this committee to swear our witnesses, so if you would just stand with me and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you all.

Why don't we start with Secretary Hickok, and move to the Mayor, Ms. Cropp, and Mr. Chavous.

We have a lot in front of us. Your statements are the in the record. I will not strictly adhere to the 5-minute rule. We know this is an important issue for the city. There are a lot of emotions on this. We want to make sure you have your say, but the faster we get through this, I think we can get to the questions. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, thanks for being with us.

STATEMENTS OF EUGENE HICKOK, UNDER SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; MAYOR ANTHONY WILLIAMS, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA; LINDA CROPP, CHAIRMAN, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COUNCIL; AND KEVIN CHAVOUS, CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, LIBRARIES, AND RECREATION

Mr. HICKOK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the rest of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to represent Secretary Page and the administration as we discuss this very important issue. I want to say it is an honor to represent Secretary Paige. I must say it is an honor to share this table with these individuals from the District.

I think this is a historic conversation, the first of many. I think it has the potential to forge a new partnership between the Federal Government and the good people of the great city, and has the potential to create a new vision of American urban education where a new vision is both needed and where it would have a huge impact for the rest of America; so I look forward to these conversations and many more with our partners in the city and in the school district.

I will say more about that partnership later, perhaps, during questions and answers.

I would like permission to submit my testimony for the record.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Without objection, everyone's total testimony will be included in the record.

Mr. HICKOK. We need not go over in great detail the current status of performance of the school district. It is, by every indicator, not doing well, although there have been some recent improvements, and we should note those improvements and celebrate them.

In addition, we should not confuse a poor performing school district with a lack of effort on the part of individuals employed by that school district. That is an important distinction. The fact is, hardworking men and women are trying desperately to improve the schools.

But in the long run, we all recognize that improvement is not coming as quickly or as dramatically as it must be, and in the meantime, children are being lost. This is all about children. It is not about schools; it is about students.

It is not about home rule. Indeed, if you want to believe in a home rule, let the home rule by allowing parents to choose the school for their child.

And it is not about money. Indeed, we believe the President's budget includes more than enough support for D.C. public schools, including charter schools. Our request for the Department of Education elementary and secondary education formula programs will provide $92 million to the District in 2004, an increase of 15 percent.

That doesn't mean additional money shouldn't be discussed, and it doesn't mean that money doesn't matter; it means this is about more than money. It is about more than money: It is about ideas and individuals and opportunities.

It has been argued that any voucher program will cream students, the very best students, from existing public schools. The evidence nationwide is contrary to that, both in privately funded voucher programs and publicly funded voucher programs.

The most powerful argument in favor of school choice in its broadest sense is that while it leads to greater opportunities for families to attend schools that work, at the same time it drives improvements in existing public schools. The evidence from Milwaukee is overwhelming.

So for those who would drive this false dichotomy between public education and nonpublic choice, it is a false dichotomy. This is about transforming the nature of public education by putting the public first, the parents first, as they exercise options and choices.

It is for these reasons that the administration has put forward our proposal. The outlines of the proposal are very simple. The budget request from the President for fiscal year 2004 includes $75 for a National Choice Incentive Fund. Under this program, the Department would make grants to support projects that provide low-income parents, particularly those with children attending low-performing schools, with the opportunity, not the requirement—to transfer their children to higher-performing public and private schools, including charter schools. A portion of that $75 million will be reserved for students and parents in the District of Columbia school district.

We think accountability is important. This administration has been consistent about the need for accountability in education, and our proposal includes provisions to make sure there are ways to determine the educational impact of a choice program upon those students who exercise that choice.

We have heard that the administration is trying to impose this initiative upon the school district. It could not be farther from the truth. This is all about applying for the money. The District, an

LEA anywhere, or a nonprofit with a record of accomplishment applies for this money. These are competitive grants. Then, of course, parents choose to participate.

We have heard that the initiative might bleed money from the District's public schools. That is just not the case. This choice incentive fund proposed by the President represents new money.

Now, we have heard complaints that we are supporting a voucher program when we could be supporting the District's charter schools, instead. Again, I would argue that is a false dichotomy. We support the charter schools, both in terms of budget and in terms of policy. What is ironic is many who are now voicing this concern have become new advocates, it seems to us, for charter schools.

In the end, I want to go back to my first comment: this is about a new partnership. No one has all the answers, but we know the status quo is not working. Sitting at this table are individuals who are committed to changing the status quo and fixing these schools and helping these kids. I am honored to be able to share the table with them.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hickok follows:]

Statement of Eugene W. Hickok
Under Secretary
US Department of Education

On the DC School Choice Initiative

Before the House Committee on Government Reform
May 9, 2003

Chairman Davis and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Bush Administration's proposal to initiate a program to expand school choice in the District of Columbia in fiscal year 2004. This proposal has generated quite a lot of media and public attention since we announced it in February, and I welcome the opportunity to explain our reasons for putting it forward and describe how the program would operate.

Mr. Chairman, I know that officials in my Department, and Members of Congress, have been concerned about the quality of education in the District of Columbia for many years. DC public schools are only a short walk from our offices, we see District students going to and from school each day, and we read about the challenges of the DC public schools in the newspapers almost daily. We all want the capital of the greatest nation on earth to have some of the finest schools on earth. And at one time this city's schools were considered among the best in the entire nation. But for many years we have been disappointed by the performance of public schools in the District, and at the seeming inability of public school officials to manage schools and programs effectively.

In some respects, the situation in the District may be no different from that in other urban school districts that educate concentrations of children in poverty, but in other respects the District has sometimes seemed uniquely resistant to reform and

improvement. I say that with full respect for Superintendent Vance and with appreciation for what he is trying to accomplish and for some of the things he has achieved, but I think it's the truth.

Let's consider the performance of DC students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP as it's called, the assessment that measures the performance of students over time in reading, writing, math, and other core academic subjects. In the most recent mathematics assessment, administered in 2000, only 6 percent of DC fourth-graders tested at the proficient or advanced levels, the levels that show that students have demonstrated competency over challenging matter. A lower percentage of students in DC demonstrated proficiency than was the case for any State. At the other end of the scale, 76 percent of DC fourth-graders scored at the "below basic" level, which means that they could not demonstrate even partial mastery of the math skills and knowledge that are appropriate at the fourth-grade level. The 2000 8th-grade math results were very similar; only 6 percent of DC students tested at the proficient or advanced levels, and 77 percent were below basic.

The most recent NAEP reading assessment took place in 1998. The results for DC students were a little better than the 2000 math scores, but still were completely inadequate. Only 10 percent of DC fourth-graders could read proficiently, while 72 percent were below basic. At the 8th-grade level, 12 percent were proficient or advanced and 56 percent were below basic.

Looking at the quality of a school system requires more than just reviewing scores on achievement tests. But when we look at other indicators, they too show that DC public schools are not providing the education that children in the District need. The

most recent edition of *Quality Counts*, the annual review of education trends and data produced by the newspaper *Education Week*, gave the District only a grade of D+ for having an acceptable system of academic standards and accountability, a C in the area of success in recruiting new teachers, and a D+ for school climate. And the DC public school system has a long history of management problems in such important areas as facilities maintenance, personnel and payroll, food service, procurements, and even in accurately counting enrollments. In addition, the system has historically failed to comply with the requirements of Federal programs, such as Title I and Special Education, to a point where the Department has had to enter into compliance agreements with the District that call for implementation of major reforms within specific timelines. We insisted on these performance agreements not because some paperwork wasn't being filled out correctly, but because the District was, for instance, failing quite egregiously to provide its disabled students with the free appropriate public education required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

I would like to repeat what I said a few minutes ago: I support and respect the work that Paul Vance is doing in the District. I know that he has taken on the major management problems, and has shown some results, and I know that not all of the education outcomes are dismal. The Stanford-9 achievement test scores for 2002 showed minor improvements at most grade levels in reading and math. And the proliferation of charter schools in the District, including some that have achieved great initial success, has given new choices and new hopes to students and parents. But I believe the preponderance of information demonstrates that schools in the District are not achieving

what they should and that more needs to be done if children in the District are to achieve to the high levels called for under the *No Child Left Behind Act.*

The Bush Administration has responded to this problem by including, in our fiscal year 2004 budget request, a school choice initiative for DC. You might ask why choice is the answer, whether it is likely to work, whether giving students wider educational opportunities is likely to help the DC public school system improve, and whether we should, instead, request more money for DC public schools. We believe that we have strong answers to those questions.

We believe that the President's budget includes more than adequate support for DC public schools, including charter schools. Our request for Department of Education elementary and secondary education formula programs would provide some $92 million to the District in 2004, an increase of 15 percent over the level only two years ago (2002). And let's not forget that DC already spends, per student, more than all but a handful of urban districts across the country. If money were the solution, than we would have solved the problems of public schooling in the District a long time ago. We believe, instead, that tackling this problem will depend in large measure on giving DC students more educational choices.

In the communities across the country that have experimented with publicly and privately funded school choice programs that include private-school options, the results have been extremely positive, for the students directly served by the programs and for the school system as a whole. For example, research by Patrick Wolfe of Georgetown University, along with Paul Peterson and Martin West of Harvard, on the first two years of the scholarship program administered by the privately funded Washington Scholarship

Fund (WSF), showed that the math and reading achievement of African-American students who enrolled in private schools using support from the Fund was significantly higher than the achievement of a control group of students who remained in DC public schools. This research also found that parents who received support from the Fund gave their children's schools higher ratings than did parents of children in the control group, and that their children were doing more homework. Studies by these and equally eminent scholars in other cities, such as Milwaukee, San Antonio, Cleveland, and Dayton, offer very similar results.

What about the charge that voucher programs "cream" the best students from the public schools and thereby weaken public school systems? We find no evidence to buttress that claim. To the contrary, research by Caroline Hoxby of Harvard and others has found that students who take advantage of private school choice options are typically at least as educationally and economically disadvantaged as students who remain in the public schools. To some extent, this is because existing choice programs have explicitly targeted children from low-income families, as our initiative would do. But even without this targeting, public-private choice programs seem to attract students who are no more affluent, and have no better an educational profile, than other students. In addition, there is at least preliminary evidence that school districts in which public schools have been exposed to private-school competition, through the initiation of a choice program, have responded by improving educational services. In Milwaukee and in the Edgewood district in San Antonio, the presence of a choice program was associated with gains in achievement in the public schools.

In fact, that may be one of the most powerful reasons to support expanded choice: because it pushes the traditional public school system to improve. My boss, Secretary Rod Paige, understands this as well as anyone. He ran the nation's seventh largest public school system in Houston and he didn't shy away from choice. He embraced choice. He knew that competition would make his system stronger. And it did. He chartered the first KIPP academy in the nation in Houston, which takes under-achievers and turns them into scholars. He also launched a program that allowed students to attend private schools in their neighborhood instead of getting bused all over town to and from overcrowded public schools. And he knew that his public school system could compete with charter schools and private schools, and win. And it did. He strengthened the system in Houston and won a national award for closing the achievement gap. So we know choice can make a difference.

For these reasons, the Administration has put forward our proposal. The outlines of this proposal are very simple. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2004 includes $75 million for a national Choice Incentive Fund. Under this program, the Department would make grants to support projects that provide low-income parents, particularly those who have children attending low-performing public schools, with the opportunity to transfer their children to higher-performing public and private schools, including charter schools. A portion of the money would be reserved for the District of Columbia.

We would anticipate making a grant either to the DC public school system or to another, independent entity to operate the program in the District. The grantee would then develop and implement procedures for certifying schools to participate in the

program, informing DC families about the choices available to them, selecting students to participate, and then monitoring and reporting on the program as it goes forward. We have not yet decided on the maximum amount of assistance an individual student could receive, but we want it to be sufficient to allow students a good choice of educational options.

We also see accountability as a major feature of this initiative, because it will give parents in DC the ability to hold schools accountable for meeting the educational needs of students. And we will rigorously evaluate the project in DC (as well as the other projects funded by the national Choice Incentive Fund) by examining the academic achievement of students, parental satisfaction, and other results, so that the lessons can be applied to future programs and initiatives. We want to obtain solid evidence on the benefits of expanding educational options and making schools accountable to parents while respecting the flexibility and freedom of participating private schools.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned at the beginning, the Administration's announcement of this proposal has engendered a great deal of attention in the media and elsewhere, including some very vociferous criticisms. Before I end my statement, I would like to respond to some of the major criticisms, to set the record straight.

We've heard that the Administration is trying to impose this initiative on the District against the will of its citizens and with no input from its elected and appointed leadership. That is not the case. We have met with Mayor Anthony Williams, with Councilman Kevin Chavous, who is the Chairman of the Council's Education Committee, and with School Board President Peggy Cooper Cafritz to discuss our proposal, and we look forward to continuing our discussions with these and other local

officials. We want to implement a choice program that reflects the needs of the district and reflects the input of DC's leadership; we don't pretend to have all the answers. I would like to commend Mayor Williams and Board President Cafritz for the courage they have shown in publicly endorsing a DC school choice initiative and their willingness to work with us on the details.

I acknowledge that a choice initiative that includes private school options will probably not, in the end, be what some of the political leaders in the District want. It is, however, what I believe the parents want. The Washington Scholarship Fund has a waiting list of approximately 5,000 children. One DC parent, Virginia Walden-Ford, the leader of DC Parents for School Choice, testified before Councilman Chavous's committee and said the following:

> We have received hundreds of calls from parents who have not been lucky enough to get a scholarship through the many scholarship groups in town, WSF, Black Student Fund, etc., and parents who are camping out for charter schools that are not keeping up the pace of parents' need to get out of failing schools. They contact us looking for better options for their children. Parents here in the District are daily expressing their frustration in a school system that is taking too long to fix itself.

We in the Department have also heard that that this initiative will bleed money from the District's public schools. That is also not the case. The Choice Incentive Fund proposed by the President represents new money. It was not obtained by subtracting funds from the other Federal programs that support DC public schools. If the initiative does not go forward in the District, my guess is that the money will be used in other communities to expand educational choices and improve educational outcomes in those communities.

We've also heard complaints that we are supporting a voucher program when we could be supporting the District's charter schools instead. We find this complaint especially interesting since it has recently been voiced by some who were never strong charter school supporters before. But that's all right with us because we strongly support charter schools too. We will continue to fight to make sure the President's charter school funding priorities are fulfilled, especially on the facilities front, so that this vibrant movement can keep flourishing.

And, finally, we've heard that all the Administration cares about is launching a voucher program in the District, that we don't care about the children who will remain in the public school system. That couldn't be farther from the truth. Our Department has a record of reaching out to the DC Public Schools, to work with the system on overcoming its problems, of providing it with information, technical assistance, and other resources. We've adopted individual schools in the District and provided those schools with hands-on assistance. In our meetings with DC officials, we have said that we will continue these efforts, and I'm happy to state that in public today. The choice initiative should be just one element in an effort to improve education in the District and ensure that all children can achieve to high standards. We want to contribute to the larger effort as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to respond to any questions that the Committee may have.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We now hear from the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Honorable Tony Williams. Tony, you have been here many times. Thank you very much for joining us again.

Mayor WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you ranking member, Mr. Waxman. Congresswoman Norton, distinguished members, distinguished guests, all the parents. As the Under Secretary has and as have my colleagues, I have submitted my full testimony for the record. I will just simply share with you some of the highlights.

Highlight No. 1, Mr. Chairman, is that there is not a mayor in this country who doesn't have education as his or her top priority, because it is clear that to revive your city, to bring more people back to your city, to provide the kind of quality in a city that everyone would like, education has to be the cornerstone.

It is also true, in all humility—and this has nothing to do with me personally, it is just the office—that there is not a critique of my job that does not include performance of education. So whether I like it or not, authority and responsibility, however functionally they may be aligned, are aligned in practice.

Many things are happening. Point No. 2, many good things are happening in the schools. The Transformation Initiative has been cited a number of times. I think the Transformation Initiative does show signs of progress. Our administration has worked with the schools cooperatively.

There are two examples of this, one, the wrap-around services program to provide extra supports for low-income children in our schools. We work together with our agencies on that.

Another facet of that is working cooperatively with the Council, and specifically with the Council Chair Chavous on an initiative to save special education dollars. We were slated to save $30 million in special education dollars in 2005 and we are on target to do that. We are very proud of that.

A generous mention of our charter school program. We have provided, the leadership of this city, full funding for our charter schools. Yes, we have a facilities need, but that funding has been there.

Another final good thing: Money is not everything. But it is part of the solution. We have provided an over 40 percent increase in local funding for our schools.

The fact is, many good things are happening in our schools, but there is another fact. That is that tens of thousands of students are still waiting for more choices. I believe that while, we are confident in our public schools and their ability to get better, it does not mean that I, as the elected Mayor of our city, should ignore other educational assets that are currently at our disposal.

For that reason, I welcome the Federal Government's interest in our public schools and its interest in the success of our District's children so that we can further uplift our public schools.

I will say, the Federal Government ought to assume a three-pronged, a tripartite approach that includes our private parochial schools, our charter schools, and our regular public schools.

In that manner, the Federal Government ought to assume our State level costs for special education so our local school district is not saddled with costs that, in any other jurisdiction, would be

borne by the State. The Congress has been generous in support of our charter schools, most recently by providing $17 million in the 2003 budget for facilities support. This level of support ought to be repeated and expanded.

I support the desire to create a pilot scholarship program in the District. I believe if done effectively, this program would provide even more choices for primarily low-income families who currently do not have the same freedom of choice enjoyed by their more affluent counterparts.

Unmistakenly and tragically, there is a choice program for grammar schools and education in our society, and it basically is residential choice. People move out of an ideal area with bad schools. That leaves the worst schools for our lowest-income citizens. I don't think that is right.

Understandably, the issue of public support for private and parochial school tuitions faces fierce opposition on the other side. But I believe research has confirmed that school vouchers increase parental satisfaction, boost academic achievement of inner city African American students, and increase the likelihood that students will attend and complete college.

No research, to my estimation, has proven that voucher programs are detrimental to the students who participate in them.

Now, I believe that any voucher program for our city must recognize the reality and the needs of our city and must be crafted with full participation of all of our city's leadership. For that reason, H.R. 684, the District of Columbia Student Scholarship Act, does not do this. The bill does lay out precise criteria and principles for the program, but it was crafted and introduced without any consultation or input from the city's elected leaders. Moreover, it creates a separate core corporation staffed mostly by Federal appointees to administer the program. I think that is the wrong avenue to go.

I am pleased that Secretary Paige and the Under Secretary and other officials at the department have met with us and asked us to join with them in designing a program to expand availability.

What are some of the key principles in my mind? First, that there be in foundation of a three-pronged tripartite approach. Second, that it do a number of things: One, focus on low-income parents and develop a means-tested foundation; two, target students in the lowest-performing schools, especially those that are not currently slated for transformation; three, emphasize opportunities for students who are not currently in nonpublic schools; four, seek to have students attend schools in the District, and, where possible, in their neighborhoods; and finally, require schools to admit all eligible students. In cases where grades or schools were oversubscribed, admit students based on a lottery. The goal is not to cream the best and brightest students, but rather to give the neediest children opportunities they otherwise would not have.

Along with this, I believe there have to be these supports I mentioned, and along with that there must be a comprehensive accountability evaluation component. Many of the criticisms of scholarship programs around the country are that there was not enough evaluation. This program includes exactly the kind of evaluation we should have.

The long and short of it is, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, I think when you boil down all the arguments, all the ideology, all the steam and hot air and everything, when you get down to the bottom of it, I think you are talking about children and parents and their choices.

We have thousands of children who have asked for scholarship programs and are not getting them. We have thousands of children who are not getting the education they should be getting. I, as the Mayor of our city, can't say no to these thousands of young people and their parents and tell them that they ought to wait for more choices and opportunities but they are not available.

I don't know whether vouchers are the right thing for other cities and States, and I don't know whether they will be the right thing for our city in years to come; but right now, today, at this moment, I believe I have an obligation to represent all the children of our city. I humbly assert that this is leadership and I humbly assert that this is democracy.

I thank all the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify in a very certainly lively debate but an important debate for our city and its future.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

[The prepared statement of Mayor Williams follows:]

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives

Congressman Thomas M. Davis, III, Chairman
Congressman Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Member

"Alternative Schools and Educational Reform in the District of Columbia"

Statement of
Anthony A. Williams
Mayor
District of Columbia

Friday, May 9, 2003
2154 Rayburn House Office Building
11:00 a.m.

Good morning Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Waxman, Congresswoman Norton, Committee members, and other distinguished guests. I am Anthony A. Williams, Mayor of the District of Columbia. Chairman Davis, I greatly appreciate the leadership, support and encouragement you have provided our great city and look forward to your chairmanship as a time when we will accomplish even more great things – starting, I hope, with budget autonomy this year. I am pleased to come before you and this committee today to discuss alternative schools and educational reform in the District of Columbia.

As you know, education is a major priority for my administration. My vision for the children of the District of Columbia is that every child, regardless of the school they attend, will have access to a high quality education in a healthy and safe environment. I envision a city in which every young person will: 1) come to school ready to learn, and leave with the necessary skills to be successful in today's technologically advanced society; 2) be taught to be responsible citizens and to make valuable contributions to their local and global communities; and 3) have access to adequate social services to support their learning. While we have made major progress, we still have a long way to go before realizing this vision.

Let me first acknowledge that many good things are happening in the District's schools. The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), under the leadership of Superintendent Paul Vance and the Board of Education, has launched an initiative to transform our lowest performing schools, infusing them with new leadership, staff and additional resources. We now have identified 15 of these Transformation schools and early indications show us they are making a difference. My administration strongly supports DCPS in this initiative. In addition, last year DCPS underwent a massive central office transformation to streamline services and ensure that more resources flow directly to the classroom. Together with the District Council, we have provided record pay increases to our teachers, bringing entry level pay closer to parity with our suburban neighbors.

My administration has been working with the schools on an interagency collaboration to provide wrap-around support for our neediest children. We are beginning to provide these services in five of the Transformation Schools. By providing a host of family support services

from District of Columbia agencies at these schools, we hope to allow teachers to relinquish their de facto roles as part-time health and welfare counselors to children and their families, and allow them to focus completely on their role as educators. Finally, just last week I forwarded DCPS's State Accountability Plan to the US Department of Education which demonstrates great progress in how the District will comply with the *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

As you know, the District also has a very strong public charter school movement; we believe it is the strongest in the nation. We currently have 42 charter schools, which provide approximately 11,500 students with a range of educational programs including math and science, technology, arts, English as and Second Language (ESL) and dual language immersion, character development, public policy, and college preparatory study. These schools offer many approaches to learning, including individualized instruction, small academies, and schools within schools. .

Recognizing that significant progress has been made since 1995 when Congress passed the District of Columbia School Reform Act, the District public school system still faces an abundance of challenges. Many students enter school with developmental challenges that have not been effectively identified and addressed. Moreover, the District must do more to improve student achievement scores in kindergarten through 12th grade. In school year (SY) 2000 - 2001, some 25 percent of District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) students scored below basic on the Stanford-9 Reading test and 36 percent scored below basic in math. The more significant challenges include a large special education population, increasing demands for adequate facilities for both traditional and charter schools, and the need to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. Thus, despite the steady increases in local funding[1], and other efforts to support our public schools, I have heard firsthand from hundreds of parents who feel there are no practical and easy alternatives for their children within the current systems of public schools.

This gets to the crux of the matter. Our dynamic Transformation Schools Initiative, our liberal out-of-boundary enrollment programs, and our robust charter schools are providing real choices for some parents. But there are still countless students whose schools are not among

[1] The Mayor and the Council have increased funding to public education by approximately 40% since 1997.

those on the fast track to transformation and for whom there are no practical charter school alternatives. Even if we are successful in increasing the tempo on these brilliant initiatives, there will be tens of thousands of students still waiting for more choices. I cannot tell parents that they must continue to wait while there are other outlets in our midst.

In short, we need to reexamine the way we do business. It is time that we explore other solutions to ensure that every child has access to a quality education in the District. I have confidence that our public school system is getting better, but that does not mean that I, as the elected Mayor of this city, should ignore other educational assets currently at our disposal. To that end, I welcome the federal government's interest in our public schools and the success of the District's children. It is high time that the federal government address the inherent unfairness and illogical nature of the District's fulfillment of county, city, and state functions with a tax base severely constrained by the federal presence. So that we can further uplift our public schools, the federal government ought to assume our state level costs for special education so that our local school district is not saddled with costs that in any other jurisdiction would be borne by its state capital. The Congress has been generous in support of our charter schools, most recently by providing $17 million in the FY 2003 budget for facilities support. This support ought to be repeated and expanded.

I support the President's desire to create a pilot scholarship program in the District. I believe, if done effectively, such a program could provide even more choices to low-income families, who currently do not have the same freedom of choice enjoyed by more affluent families. Understandably the issue of public support for private and parochial school tuitions raises fierce emotions on both sides, but there is a large body of research that speaks to its merits.

Dozens of studies, including those conducted by voucher opponents, have confirmed that school vouchers increase parental satisfaction with their child's school. Milwaukee, Cleveland, Florida, Maine and Vermont all have some form of voucher program and, by and large, these programs have been successful in increasing options for families. In addition, eight rigorous studies of six cities by research teams including scholars from Harvard, Princeton, the University of Chicago, Indiana University, the Brookings Institution and the Manhattan Institute, have all

confirmed that school choice boosts the academic achievement of inner-city African-American students. A recent study prepared by a team led by William G. Howell and Patrick J. Wolf surveyed more than 1,000 African American students in the District who attend nonpublic schools through support from the Washington Scholarship Fund. These students gained almost 10 national percentile points (NPR) in math and reading achievement after the first year and an average of 6.3 NPR after two years of being in private school.[2] Finally, it has been proven that school choice increases educational attainment; inner-city minority students are more likely to obtain a college degree if they attend private or parochial school, when compared with their public high school counterparts.[3]

This data notwithstanding, I believe that any voucher program for the District must recognize the reality and needs of the city and must be crafted with full participation of the city's elected leadership. I cannot support any program that is crafted without the input of officials and educators in the District. H.R. 684, "*The District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 2003,*" lays out precise criteria and principles for a scholarship program in the District but was crafted and introduced without any consultation or input from the city's elected leaders. Moreover, the bill creates a separate corporation staffed mostly by federal appointees to administer the program, adding another layer of complexity to our already diffused education system.

In contrast, I am pleased that Secretary Paige and officials at the Department of Education have met with us and asked us to join them in designing a program that would expand the availability of quality educational options for the District's poorest families. I believe they are sincere in seeing that the duly elected leaders of our municipal government and others have a major role in designing a program that works for us and our children. An effective voucher program for the District would, at a minimum:

- focus on low-income parents and develop a means tested foundation;

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[2] Howell et al, "School Vouchers and Academic Performance…" op. cit.; see also William G. Howell and Paul E. Peterson, with Patrick J. Wolf and David E. Campbell, *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools* (Washington: Brookings, 2002), pp. 150-52.
[3] Derek Neal, "The Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling on Educational Achievement," *Journal of Labor Economics* 15:1, 1997.

- target students in the lowest performing schools, especially those that are not currently slated for transformation;
- emphasize opportunities for students who are not currently in nonpublic schools;
- seek to have students attend schools in the District and, where possible, in their neighborhoods;
- require schools to admit all eligible students and, in cases where grades or schools were oversubscribed, admit students based on lottery. The goal is not to "cream" the best and brightest students, but rather to give the neediest children opportunities they would otherwise not have;
- encompass a comprehensive accountability and evaluation component that would allow for solid longitudinal data collection and analysis so that years from now we can speak rather authoritatively about the impact on student achievement; and
- acknowledge the need for additional supports to help families assess information, and transition and adapt to private schools.

Such a program would allow us to make true comparisons over the next four years about the success and failures of each of our educational approaches. This endeavor may also provide an opportunity for us to strengthen our state-level oversight role with respect to the issue of private school accountability.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, since our city began to debate the issue of expanded school choice there has been speculation that the resolution will have impacts far beyond the District. Some say that what we do in the District will affect national education policy; the likelihood of pilots in other cities; the political standing of pro- and anti-voucher constituencies; and even the platforms of major political parties. For me, however, the issue of vouchers in the District has little to do with any of those factors.

I was elected by the people of my beloved city and took a solemn oath to act in what I think are their best interests, even in the face of conventional political wisdom. I have listened to children and parents and conclude that I have an obligation to do what I think is best for my city. I do not know whether vouchers are the right thing for other cities or states, or even if they will

have the same impact here 10 years from now. Today, however, I believe I have an obligation to represent all of the children of the District. I cannot say to thousands of our young people and their parents that they should not have more choices and opportunities to receive an education of which all of us can be proud. I humbly assert that this is called leadership and is in the finest traditions of democracy and Home Rule.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee on this very important issue. This concludes my statement. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Councilmember Cropp. Madam Chairman, welcome again.

Ms. CROPP. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, ranking member, Mr. Waxman, our delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and other members of the committee. I am Linda W. Cropp, chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia. I am pleased to appear before you today with my colleague, council member Kevin Chavous, to testify on alternative schools and educational reform from the District of Columbia.

I am prepared to make introductory remarks, with Mr. Chavous as chairman of the Council's Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation, providing additional testimony.

Let me first state that we appreciate the interest the President and his administration and Members of Congress have taken with respect to the District's educational system. There are opportunities to improve our schools, and we welcome collaborative efforts to help us reach our goals of providing an exemplary education to District students.

We in the District recognize the need to overhaul our schools, and we believe school choice is essential to public education reform. But each community must be permitted the freedom to decide the best vehicle for public education reform.

Education advocates, parents, teachers, members of the Council and the Board of Education of the District of Columbia have determined the best vehicle for reform is charter schools in the District, to improve our public schools. That decision was codified with the enactment of D.C. law 11–135, the Public Charter Schools Act of 1996. Our charter school law endeavors to increase learning opportunities for all students, encourage diverse approaches in learning, provide parents with expanded choices, provide public schools with a method to change, and offer community the options of independent public schools that are free of most statutes, rules, and regulations.

It appears to be working. This year, approximately 18 percent of public school children or some 11,450 students, attend public charter schools. This is among the highest percentage in the Nation, and it is projected to increase.

In addition, the District has more charter schools than any comparable jurisdiction in the country, 35 in number. Choice already exists in the District of Columbia. The Council believes that residents must be allowed to make their own educational choices; that the will of residents and local officials is to pursue educational reform and to provide alternatives for children; and that the residents of the District of Columbia should be allowed to resolve educational issues locally, as do other jurisdictions.

We are still in debate on a lot of issues, but we will do it as we do with most other issues. Thank you, and I would like to refer to the Chair of our education committee.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cropp follows:]

TESTIMONY OF LINDA W. CROPP, CHAIRMAN
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BEFORE THE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
ON
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM
IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MAY 9, 2003

GOOD MORNING. CHAIRMAN DAVIS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM, I AM LINDA W. CROPP, CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. I AM PLEASED TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU, WITH MY COLLEAGUE COUNCILMEMBER KEVIN CHAVOUS, TO TESTIFY ON ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

I AM PREPARED TO MAKE INTRODUCTORY REMARKS WITH MR. CHAVOUS, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, LIBRARIES, AND RECREATION, PROVIDING ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY.

LET ME FIRST STATE THAT WE APPRECIATE THE INTEREST THE PRESIDENT, HIS ADMINISTRATION, AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRICT'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE OUR SCHOOLS, AND WE WELCOME COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO HELP US REACH OUR GOAL OF PROVIDING AN EXEMPLARY EDUCATION TO DISTRICT STUDENTS.

WE, IN THE DISTRICT, RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO OVERHAUL OUR SCHOOLS, AND BELIEVE SCHOOL CHOICE IS ESSENTIAL TO PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM. BUT, EACH COMMUNITY MUST BE PERMITTED THE FREEDOM TO DECIDE THE BEST VEHICLES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM. EDUCATION ADVOCATES, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HAVE ALREADY DETERMINED THAT THE BEST VEHICLE FOR REFORM IS TO OFFER CHARTER SCHOOLS AND IMPROVE THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THAT DECISION WAS CODIFIED WITH THE ENACTMENT OF D.C. LAW 11-135, THE "PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ACT OF 1996," PASSED BY THE COUNCIL ON MARCH 5, 1996.

OUR CHARTER SCHOOL LAW ENDEAVORS TO:

- ✓ INCREASE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS;
- ✓ ENCOURAGE DIVERSE APPROACHES IN LEARNING AND EDUCATION,

INCLUDING APPROPRIATE AND INNOVATIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY;

- ✓ PROVIDE PARENTS AND STUDENTS WITH EXPANDED CHOICES IN THE TYPES OF PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN THE DISTRICT;
- ✓ HOLD CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR TEACHERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR ACHIEVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE LEVELS SPECIFIED BY THEIR SCHOOL CHARTER;
- ✓ PROVIDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH A METHOD TO CHANGE FROM TRADITIONAL RULE-BASED TO PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS; AND
- ✓ OFFER THE COMMUNITY THE OPTION OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT ARE FREE OF MOST STATUTES, RULES, AND REGULATIONS.

IT APPEARS TO BE WORKING. THIS YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 18% OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN, OR SOME 11,450 STUDENTS, ATTEND CHARTER SCHOOLS. THIS IS AMONG THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE IN THE NATION, AND IT IS PROJECTED TO INCREASE. IN ADDITION, THE DISTRICT HAS MORE CHARTER SCHOOLS THAN ANY COMPARABLE JURISDICTION IN THE COUNTRY, 35 IN NUMBER. CHOICE ALREADY EXISTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

THE COUNCIL BELIEVES THAT RESIDENTS MUST BE ALLOWED TO MAKE THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL CHOICES, THAT THE WILL OF RESIDENTS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS IS TO PURSUE EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES FOR CHILDREN, AND THAT THE RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO RESOLVE EDUCATIONAL ISSUES LOCALLY AS DO OTHER JURISDICTIONS.

THANK YOU.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Council member Chavous, you have been here before. Welcome back.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Thank you, Chairman Davis, Congresswoman Norton, and members of the committee. It is with great pleasure that I appear before you today to discuss educational reform here in our great city, the District of Columbia, and the availability of school choice. These two issues are of great importance to me, not only as chair of the Council in the District of Columbia's Committee on Education, the Libraries, and Recreation; but as the council member for ward 7 located east of the Anacostia River, which has the largest population of school-age children in the city.

Public education has long been viewed as the vehicle for social mobility and economic success here in this country. Many have used public education and moved themselves and their families from poverty to prosperity. As such, its value and purpose cannot be underestimated. But I think few would disagree that this vehicle has stalled. We know that across the country, most urban school districts are falling apart, and parents are frustrated and concerned about their children's academic performance and future.

The sad fact is that here in the District of Columbia, we are no different than many other jurisdictions. At present, there are over 77,000 school-aged children in public schools in the District. Of these children, over 66,000 attend the District of Columbia public schools and close to 12,000 attend public charter schools.

In an effort to educate these children, the government of the District of Columbia spent more than $2 billion over the last 4 years. Despite all of our best financial efforts, many of our children do not perform at or above grade level. Unfortunately, nearly half who enter high school do not graduate.

In addition, since 1994, we have experienced a 63 percent increase in special education. That amounts to nearly 17 percent of our school-aged children having been identified as having special needs, among the largest percentage in the country.

Fortunately, under Dr. Paul Vance's leadership, reform efforts are underway. DCPS has a renewed commitment to early childhood education, and local school principal and teacher development. In working with the Mayor, as Mayor Williams mentioned in his testimony, through the Council to create a Special Education Task Force, we have realized $20 million in savings.

Candidly, however, the main impetus for reform in this city has been the emergence of charter schools in the District of Columbia. The competition created by the existence of charter schools has worked in providing parents with a viable alternative to traditional public schools. Charter schools have opened the arena of choice, the centerpiece of true education reform.

I will say parenthetically that the Council did also pass legislation allowing for the board of education to be a charter school authorizer soon after the Federal legislation was passed. Frankly, from the Council's point of view and for me personally, no one bears more scars as it relates to the charter school promotion effort. Personally, I have been ridiculed, castigated, and criticized for my support of charter schools. I am so pleased that so many people now are supporting the charter schools here in this city.

After years of overseeing education reform efforts, I am absolutely convinced that no traditional school system can reform itself internally. Reform can only occur through pressure, and the best pressure comes by way of school choice. One size does not fit all. Different teaching methods, as well as different learning environments, affect student performance. Some students excel in a group setting while others succeed as a result of one-on-one instruction.

This is why I believe that we must explore every option available for helping our children succeed in the classroom. For those reasons, Mr. Chairman, I strongly support a three-sector approach to education reform that will provide new Federal dollars to DCPS to support their State level special education costs; or, as Ms. Cafritz has recommended, to help with some of the facilities needs, along with new Federal dollars to public charter schools and new Federal dollars for proposed voucher or scholarship programs.

Bear in mind that this three-sector strategy is not found in H.R. 684 proposed by Congressman Flake, who, when I found out he was going to introduce this, I did ask him not to do so; which also, unfortunately, would allow vouchers to be used for schools in Maryland and Virginia.

Therefore, I am opposed to H.R. 684, as I was opposed to Congressman Armey's bill, as well.

As it relates to the notion of vouchers as an education reform tool, I am more receptive and open to that notion, largely based on the success of our charter schools. Expanded school choice, I believe, leads to expanded educational opportunities for parents, which, more than anything, serves to strengthen our traditional public schools.

I close with an anecdotal reference to a parent who testified at a public hearing held by my committee on school choice in the District. The parent testified that when her first son entered the seventh grade at a DCPS middle school 6 years ago, there were promises and claims of reform. This was when the control board took over under General Becton. She believed those promises, she testified, and she kept her son in DCPS. As a result, her son graduated from an academically underperforming high school. She emphatically testified just recently that her second son, who was about to enter seventh grade, could not afford to wait 3 to 6 years for reform.

Because of her testimony and conversations with numerous parents who are frustrated, I have become convinced that something must be done in the interim to help assume parents' children succeed.

Mr. Chairman, this is the greatest city in the world, but our true greatness remains hidden behind the closed doors of inequitable educational opportunities for all of our children. As a public official, as our citizen, I must be and am willing to stand up and recommend what may at first glance appear to be an unorthodox solution, but these are unorthodox times.

Finally, I believe that a three-sector approach that would make additional Federal dollars available to the public schools and public charter schools, coupled with the parental option of applying for scholarships or vouchers, would serve the best interests of the resi-

dents of the District of Columbia, and, indeed, the Nation.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me here to testify. I am available to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chavous follows:]

TESTIMONY OF
COUNCILMEMBER KEVIN P. CHAVOUS
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT REFORM

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2003
11:00 A.M.
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 2154

Good morning, Chairman Davis, Congresswoman Norton and members of the Committee on Government Reform. It is with great pleasure that I appear before you today to discuss education reform and the availability of school choice in the District of Columbia. These two issues are of great importance to me, not only as Chair of the Council of the District of Columbia's Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation, but as the Councilmember for Ward 7, located east of the Anacostia River, which has the largest population of school age children in the District of Columbia.

Public education has long been viewed as the vehicle for social mobility and economic success in the United States. Many have used public education to move themselves and their families from poverty to prosperity. And as such, its value and purpose cannot be underestimated. But, I think few would disagree that this vehicle has stalled. We know that across the country most urban school districts are falling apart, and parents are frustrated and concerned about their children's

academic performance and future. And the sad fact is that the District of Columbia is no different than any other urban school district.

At present, there are over 77,000 school age children living in the District. Of these children, over 66,000 attend the District of Columbia Public Schools and close to 12,000 attend public charter schools. In an effort to educate these children, the government of the District of Columbia has spent more than two billion dollars over the last four years. And despite all of our best financial efforts, many of our children do not perform at or above grade level and nearly half who enter high school will not graduate.

In addition, since 1994 we have experienced a 63% increase in Special Education. That amounts to nearly 17% of our children has having been identified as having special needs, which is larger than most other urban school districts. Fortunately, under Dr. Paul Vance's leadership reform efforts are underway. DCPS has a renewed commitment to early

childhood education and local school principal and teacher development. And working with the Mayor, through the Council created Special Education Task Force, we have realized $20 million in savings.

Candidly, however, the main impetus for reform has been the emergence of charter schools in the District of Columbia. The competition created by the existence of charter schools has worked in providing parents with a viable alternative to traditional public schools. Charter schools have opened the arena of choice, the centerpiece of true education reform.

After years of overseeing education reform efforts in this city, I am absolutely convinced that no traditional school sytem can reform itself internally. Reform can only occur through pressure. And the best pressure comes by way of school choice. One size does not fit all. Different teaching methods, as well as different learning environments, affect student performance. Some students excel in a group setting while others succeed as a result of one on one instruction. This is

why I believe that we must explore every option available for helping our children succeed in the classroom.

For those reasons Mr. Chairman, I strongly support a three-sector approach to education reform that would provide new federal dollars to DCPS to support their state level special education costs along with new federal dollars to public charter schools and new federal dollars for a proposed scholarship program. Bear in mind that this three-sector strategy is not found in H.R. 684, which unfortunately also would allow vouchers to be used for schools in Maryland and Virginia. Therefore, I am opposed to H.R. 684.

As it relates to the notion of vouchers as an education reform tool, I am more receptive and open to the notion largely based on the success of our charter schools. Expanded school choice leads to expanded educational opportunities for parents-which more than anything serves to strengthen our traditional public schools.

I close with an anecdotal reference to a parent who testified at a public hearing held by my committee on school choice in the District. The parent testified that when her first son entered the 7th grade at a DCPS middle school there were promises and claims of reform. She believed those promises and kept her son in DCPS. As a result, her son graduated from an academically under-performing high school. She now has a second son in a DCPS junior high school. She emphatically testified that her second son could not afford to wait three to six years for reform. Because of her testimony and conversations with numerous parents who are frustrated, I have become convinced that something must be done in the interim to help their children succeed.

This is the greatest city in the world, but our true greatness remains hidden behind the closed doors of inequitable educational opportunities for our children. As a public official, as a citizen, I must be and am willing to stand up and recommend what may at first glance appear to be an

unorthodox solution, but these are unorthodox times. Finally, I believe that a three-sector approach that would make additional federal dollars available to the public schools and public charter schools, coupled with the parental option of applying for scholarships, would best serve the residents of the District of Columbia and the nation.

Once again, I thank you for inviting me here to testify and I am available to respond to any questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me start by thanking all of you for what I consider to be courageous and historic statements. I think there is a recognition here that you have a city school system in crisis, and you are willing to explore any and all methods to improve the choices and opportunities for young people in the city. That is what we are about.

Now we have to wrestle with how do we do that. If we have additional resources, it clearly helps in all of these areas, as you have outlined. That is where we want to be in the discussion. We are not going to do it this way or that way, but let us collaborate and see how we can use these additional resources so it is helping these kids.

For the kids who are stuck in the worst-performing schools, who are in third grade this year, this is their only shot. They will never see third grade again. If they fall behind this year, where do they pick it up? Not within this system today.

I think we have rightfully praised the fact that there is some progress being made, and people are working hard to do it, but let us face it, this city has tough demographics. I come from a single-parent home. My mother brought up five kids, but she was educated, and she understood that the way you got ahead in life was education.

We are dealing with, in some cases kids, who don't have parents home at night, whose parents don't have a college education, and we have to deal with that. It means new strategies, it means going outside the box. We are trying to work together to see if we can get you some additional resources. The willingness of this administration to step up to the plate on this offer, any elected leader would want to say, let us look at your resources and see how we can structure them.

Mr. Chavous, let me ask you, don't right now a lot of city students, particularly those that are in special education programs—city money is going to a lot of private schools right now to pay for these kids in special education, because a lot of them are in my district; isn't that correct?

Mr. CHAVOUS. That is correct. In fact, one of Ms. Cropp's and my colleagues, Mr. Katania, said we already have a voucher program in the District because we pay an exorbitant of private school tuition for special needs children.

On the positive side of that, though, based on some of the efforts with the Special Education Task Force that the Mayor and I co-chair, we are building in-house capacity to bring a lot of those children back. The beauty of the notion of having the Federal Government serve in the role of the State and assume some of our State level special education costs is that we would see greater support and greater resources then being able to be used for our nonspecial education children.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We used to call them the RKs, the regular kids. If you are gifted and talented you have some great programs, and if you have special needs we take care of you; but the regular kids are the ones, oftentimes there are no special programs for them.

Every kid is unique, as you know. I understand. I just wanted to get that on the record, because I think it is important to under-

stand, there are precedents for public schools paying money into private schools. It happens all the time, particularly in some of these special needs areas, where the school system just cannot crank up enough options because of economies of scale and everything else to go through that.

Ms. Cropp, are D.C. charter schools having a hard time getting available schools from the public schools right now? Are there buildings out there they would like to have that they somehow are not able to? Is that going well? Can we improve on that? Is there anything we can do?

Ms. CROPP. We need to improve on that. It is not moving as quickly as we would like for our charter schools to have accessibility to some of the traditional public schools.

The Council has been in favor of that, and we are working now to work out a better process. Even when there are some schools that may not be at full capacity, the charter schools and the traditional public schools should have the ability to share even those facilities so we can get the best use of space possible.

So we have a long way to go there. We are not where we want to be, but we are moving in the right direction.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. Let me ask this: Right now if you send a child with disabilities to a private school, it has to have some preclearance. You can't just send them anywhere, right? There is a check on where they can go. You are not going to send them to some fly by-night school; is that correct?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Mr. Chairman, that is correct.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me just followup. I ask that because if you were to allow any kind of voucher program, we would want to have a check on the schools that they could go to. I don't know who accredits the school they go to or whatever, but you would not want them to go to a system that would be worse than what we have. I would envision some kind of a check.

Let me just ask, Mr. Hickok, though my time is up, wouldn't you want to have some check on where they could go? It wouldn't just be freelance; is that correct?

Mr. HICKOK. I think the most immediate check is the choice of the parent. The goal here is to give options to parents so they can make informed choices for their kids. In most places, nonpublic schools have accreditation policies. They have all kinds of policies with regard to the curriculum they offer.

So the goal here is not to impose, at least in my opinion—to impose new restrictions on choices, but to open up more opportunities for choices.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. But wouldn't you agree, just to followup on this, that if we are going to be spending this money out to parents, we want to give them more choice. But you aren't saying they can pick a bad school and we are going to pay for it?

Mr. HICKOK. No.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. There would have to be some criteria. You would be open to that, wouldn't you?

Mr. HICKOK. Sure.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I think that would be a very critical component to me, that they would have additional choices. It would not

be unlimited choices, but there are some choices that frankly we would not feel comfortable with, in one part or another.

Mr. HICKOK. Certainly it would be part of the discussion.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mayor Williams, do you feel the same way?

Mayor WILLIAMS. Absolutely.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. This is a work in process. Ms. Norton and I have dialogd about this issue as well, and right now we are a long way apart. But with additional resources and some of the other facts that come to light, you hate to throw these resources out the window. I think any wide awake public official says how can I get these, not to the institution, not to the system, but to the people that need it. That is what we are trying to figure out, an appropriate way of doing that.

Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. You are certainly right, Mr. Chairman, that you and I have never had a problem we couldn't figure out. We are from opposite parties and opposite sides of the river.

If that is true, I should imagine that it is going to be true of Mr. Chavous and Ms. Cropp and Mayor Williams and even Under Secretary Hickok. I want to thank all these witnesses for being here, and thank you for taking the time to prepare your testimony.

Mayor Williams, a very high-level official, is the way I will describe him, some months ago came into the District of Columbia to speak to a group of Republicans in our city. Several of them came back to me and told me about a question that was asked.

This person, a White House official, a highly placed official, was asked about vouchers. He responded that the President did not believe that vouchers should be imposed, because it doesn't work terribly well if you impose things on people. I frankly relaxed after that. I was just very pleased to hear it.

I wonder whether, in light of that, you don't believe that had you made the case that our charter schools and transformation schools were cruelly underfunded, had to be cut, and that you wanted the money for these alternative schools, are you saying to me that you believe that the White House would have said no, you can only have it if you accept vouchers?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Would the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. NORTON. I have asked the question, and I want to hear the answer. I don't want you to answer for him, Mr. Chairman. I am the only one here on this side of the aisle. I just want to hear from him. I want to hear an answer.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I just wanted to amplify on your question. You can take your 5 minutes. I will hold you to that.

Mayor WILLIAMS. I'm looking at the fact that under this program—without getting into all the details, I'm looking at this as a proposal wherein the District leadership, public and private, can work with the Federal authorities to craft a program using new money; and using new money essentially leaves, I think, the regular public schools and the charter schools in a better position than they are now.

Ms. NORTON. How are you going to do that?

Mr. Hickok testified that there was $75 million available for a number of school districts. Do you have any assurance from the ad-

ministration that the District of Columbia will get more than some share of that $75 million that apparently was originally meant for eight school districts?

Mayor WILLIAMS. I don't have any exact assurance. But what I do know is that were this program to offer let us say we are talking about 2,000, 3,000 students, whatever the number is, these students would exercise a choice that I think parents have already demonstrated.

We would consider our regular funding to the public schools, notwithstanding the fact that they had lost those 2,000 or 3,000 students, so they would be in a better shape than they are now. Even in districts around the country where we actually have had dollars taken from the public schools, over a period of time of four or five times—Milwaukee, I will say—there is actually more money going into the public schools now.

Ms. NORTON. At the same time, if all of that money went to the charter schools and transformation schools, you would have to make less cuts of the kind you have made even this year? One would have to do the math, but one wonders whether or not you would win more the way you have just described or some other way.

In any case, you have parents knocking on the door of the charter schools. You have parents in your transformation schools. You have parents in those same areas that want transformation schools, and you are unable to meet that need.

Let me ask you, Mr. Chavous, I understand that you indicated that funds needed to allow public school teachers in the charter schools to get the same raises as public school teachers in the public schools should come somehow from the Congress of the United States.

One, do you fear a lawsuit? And, two, on what basis do you believe this is the responsibility of the Congress of the United States? And if it is, why hasn't the Congress been paying for the increases, the annual increases to charter school teachers all along?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, I have supported the $6 million pay raise that charter school teachers should get. And the reason why we put it in the Budget Request Act is we couldn't fund it at that time. But my ultimate plan is to not only find a way to get additional funding as we get into the fiscal year, once we get our revenues back and ask the Mayor for reprogramming and to do what we have always done. We have fully funded charter schools based on their projected revenues. That's why my committee has made sure that we have grown from zero dollars in 1998 to $138 million in 2004. And I have been the one advocating that the charter school teachers be treated on par with our teachers at traditional schools.

And, yes, I think that we may be open to a lawsuit. But, frankly, that may help jump-start more local commitment in dollars, which I've urged my colleagues and the Mayor to commit to.

Ms. NORTON. But you are committed to making sure that these public charter school teachers get the same raise as the public school teachers?

Mr. CHAVOUS. No question about it.

Ms. NORTON. That's very important. Thank you.

Mr. Chavous, while I have you, you have said—first of all, I'm glad that you clarified what the nature of the consultation was, sir. Your name was surely called out.

Mr. CHAVOUS. I'm not surprised.

Ms. NORTON. When I asked Mr. Flake, who insisted that he was imposing nothing on the District—when I asked him who had he consulted in the District, lo and behold, he outed your name and said nothing further. You indicated that you asked him not to file the bill. Did you ask him to file any other kind of bill?

Mr. CHAVOUS. No. In fact, you and I chatted about this once before. When I heard he was going to introduce the bill, and I knew it was similar to Armey's bill, I rushed down here and waited for him and I urged him not to do so. I said that there should not be any imposition on the District in this regard; that it should be a collaborative effort where Federal officials work with you, work with the Mayor, work with the Council, work with the school board, and craft something that makes sense for our residents. And I told him at the time he should wait and work with you and work with the city.

Ms. NORTON. That of course would take—collaboration would take an agreement of the majority of the colleagues on the Council.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, I think that, as Mrs. Cropp said, we have all been debating this issue about school choice just as we had a spirited debate over charters several years ago, and we are still going through that process.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. NORTON. Finally indicate, because he brought her testimony, that apparently at the moment there has been no change, because Ms. Cropp testifies members of the Council of the District of Columbia have already determined that the best vehicle for reform is to offer charter schools and improve the public schools. That's the testimony before us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me ask Ms. Cropp. That's the testimony before you today. But if we can work with you, Mr. Chavous, the Mayor, Ms. Norton, other members of the committee to try to resolve, get some more resources, you would be happy to look at that, wouldn't you?

Ms. CROPP. As stated in my testimony, that is the position of the Council. But we are always open for getting additional dollars into the District of Columbia. The manner in which we get them is what is debatable.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I think we have to be open on this issue. I think, let's take a look at the program, let's work together and collaborate. If either side takes an ideological point of view because trying to please some interest group or another interest group or something, we are never going to get anywhere, and this system is going to continue to go down, down, down. But if we will try to be innovative, if we can look at additional resources, which are clearly part of the answer, who knows what we can come up with.

Ms. CROPP. Our doors are open to look for collaborative efforts for us to get additional resources in this area and many other areas where the District of Columbia has structural imbalances.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. That's where we are. And it's not just structural imbalance, it's just a way. Because at the end of the day it isn't about a system, it's not about a government; it is about kids, and it is about a collaboration and cooperation between all of these different areas.

You know, we had a G.I. bill for colleges where we gave people who came back from the war vouchers where they could go to colleges of their choice. It had to be accredited. And it worked very, very well. Taking that down one level to the high school level, because the public education has always had more controversy. But we want to try to work through as many of the objections that are raised, some of them very legitimate, the concerns that are raised. But at the same time we see an opportunity, at least from my perspective, to get more help to kids down the street that right now, as Mr. Chavous testified, they have been there 1, 2, 3, 4 years saying improvement, just wait until next year. And they don't get a next year; and pretty soon they are out of the system, they are competing with kids coming out of my county where your SAT scores are high, where it's an acknowledged school system for the same slots in colleges and universities. It's not fair to them.

Now, what the right answer is at this point I am open on, and I think our committee members are open on, and I think the administration, from what I understand, Secretary Hickok, is open on. And that's why any self-respecting mayor is going to take a look at additional resources, looking at the people there and saying, sure, let's open up the dialog.

I gather, Mayor Williams, from your testimony and from Mr. Chavous' as well, that you are looking for additional resources in addition to what may go for private schools. Is that a fairly accurate assumption?

Mayor WILLIAMS. That's correct, because I think one of the great attributes of this program is it allows us for the first time to really measure outcomes. But I think to really be fully successful, we need to really relieve our regular publics of these really extraordinary state level costs.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me ask Dr. Hickok. What I have done, I've sent Mr. Shays over, he's voting; he's going to come back and we'll keep the hearing going. That will allow you, Ms. Norton, the opportunity for a longer time to question as well. We are having a vote now, and there will be 10 minutes of debate after that and then another series of votes. That will give us a few extra moments.

Yes, Mr. Waxman.

Mr. WAXMAN. I'm going to catch a flight, so I wonder if I can take some of my time.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I will stop my second round of questions now and allow the gentleman from California to ask a few questions.

Mr. WAXMAN. I was watching some of this on television, because we have it piped in, while I had another meeting going on. Is the issue whether you are going to get funds at all and this is the only way you will get the funds? Or is this the best way to get the funds? And I think that seems to me one of the key questions. Because if the administration is saying to the District of Columbia

that you have lots of problems but we are not going to help you unless you do what we want, then it becomes ideological, which the chairman said he wants to avoid. Sometimes the ideology that we're seeing in Washington today under this Republican administration is what they want, and they want vouchers whether it fits or not. So that's the concern I wanted to raise.

And, Mr. Mayor, give me an answer on that.

Mayor WILLIAMS. I mean, I reached a decision in the context of our schools needing modernization funds and relief of these costs; but fundamentally I reached the decision thinking about the scholarship program privately funded, where you've got 6,000, 7,000 kids waiting, parents, families waiting in line to use these funds. If there is some extra money coming down the pike of whatever amount and we can help satisfy that demand, I think that's an important thing to do.

Mr. WAXMAN. I certainly understand that. If the President said to you we want to help the people in the District of Columbia, we think education is an important issue and we know you need more funds, and he asked you, what would you want to do with those funds, what would your recommendation be to him? He is telling you how to use the funds. If he said, here are the funds, how do you want to use it, what would you do?

Mayor WILLIAMS. I've reached the conclusion that one of the first things I would do is address the demands of these families. One of the first things I would do is try to look at some new approaches and inject some good competition in the system. We are all talking about how great the charter schools are. They're great because they've injected element of choice and competition in the system. And I think on a pilot basis this would do that as well.

Mr. WAXMAN. Well, choice is good. But if you have choices between underfunded alternatives, you are not going to have a good choice. So what we need to is make sure that if you've got charter and transitional schools, they're funded; and if it's public schools, that they're funded. And so those are the choices that we often have. If the choice is then to go to a private school because that's where we are going to direct the dollars, the other schools are going to remain underfunded.

Let me give you another example. I'm very involved in health care issues. Do you know what this administration is telling the States? The States are dying. This recession is killing them. They don't have the revenues, and they are having to cut back as you are on health care. So this administration is saying to the Governors, well, under your Medicaid program we will give you a little bit more money short-term if you'll agree to transform your Medicaid program so we can just walk away from the problem and dump it all on you, which means inevitably poor people are going to be cut out of health care. That's the kind of hard bargaining they are doing there. I'm just worried they're doing that same kind on hard bargaining on education, which is not in the best interest of the people.

I'm going to yield to Ms. Norton if you have some points that you wanted to raise. But I know you'll get a second round.

Ms. NORTON. I'll get a second round. Let me—on this issue of funding. Apparently, the District in no small part because the na-

tional economy for 2 years now has been unable to raise funding for its schools. What programs are going to have to be cut in light of that? What school programs are going to have to be cut in light of the fact that you have not been able to raise with inflation and otherwise fund the programs before you?

Ms. CROPP. Well, let me answer that a bit differently, just to say, since 1999, actually, we have raised the school system's budget considerably, probably more. Their budget has grown more so than any other part of our government, probably about $340 million. However, right now I think one of our biggest problems, as I look at the school system—and Mr. Chavous may have a different answer—but as I look at it, we don't know about the No Child Left Behind and the funding for that.

Ms. NORTON. We do know about it, though.

Ms. CROPP. Well, we know that we have to do it. We aren't certain about how we are going to do it.

Ms. NORTON. Well, have you looked at the President's budget? The President's budget is pretty clear about the No Child Left Behind bill.

Ms. CROPP. Yeah. But we're trying to identify how much we will need and how we are going to get the dollars for it, and I think that's one of our biggest problems right now.

Ms. NORTON. It is going to have to come out of D.C. dollars then.

Ms. CROPP. Yes. And that's an area of concern right now. We have budgeted for the 2004 budget, but we aren't certain on the exact amount.

Mr. SHAYS [presiding]. You know, this is an issue that we will be able to go back and forth, so we are doing 5 minutes here, but Ms. Norton will get some more opportunity to ask some questions.

I just want to be somewhat clear. Mayor, I know you, and if I say nice things about you, I'm not sure that people would take it in the right context, but I will anyway. I think you are a great Mayor, and I think you have a very difficult task, and I don't think you are ever going to please anyone, and I think you knew that when you took this job and you are going to be criticized no matter what you do. And I think our two Council members know that as well. Don't we? So it becomes easy in one way: We just do what we think is right and live with the consequences.

What I'm interested in knowing is whether you all conceptually—Mayor, let me tell you what I think your position is. Your position is, you are running the city, you have public schools, you have private schools. Your first responsibility is to your public schools; but if you can get more money for any school system that's going to educate your kids, you are going to do it. I think that's kind of the way I condense your position. Is that a fair summation?

Mayor WILLIAMS. I would just go further and say my first responsibility is outcomes for children, regardless of what school they attend. And if I can do this coupled with additional dollars, certainly I want to do it.

Mr. SHAYS. Now——

Mayor WILLIAMS. If you can do a good thing in a good way, of course you want to do it.

Mr. SHAYS. I think I can answer the question that Ms. Norton asked you, and that is, you can be certain that if you are willing

to see a school system accept some choice school money, it's going to be new and additional money. You are not going to be depriving any student of anything, because, frankly, there is a strong desire on the part of the administration to provide this kind of funding. And where most logically would we do that in the start? And that's a system that we have some jurisdiction over, and that is a system that is our Nation's Capital.

And so I just want to commend you for the recognition that this is new money. And I would ask the good doctor if that in fact is true.

Mr. HICKOK. The proposal that the President put forth in his budget was new money, additional money. And just to clarify earlier comments, we also proposed additional money for public education in this country, which translates to additional money for public education as traditionally understood in Washington, DC. So, in essence, we are talking about $75 million for a choice incentive fund, a portion of which might go to Washington, DC, if Washington, DC, so chooses——

Ms. NORTON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. HICKOK [continuing]. Plus additional money under——

Ms. NORTON. Would you just——

Mr. HICKOK [continuing]. No Child Left Behind——

Ms. NORTON. Because you keep raising this.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, let me just—yeah, why not?

Ms. NORTON. Because the additional money that the Under Secretary claims comes in the context of a budget in which the President has vastly underfunded the Leave No Child Behind bill. And that's what we mean by one pot. He had made his choices, sir, and his choice is less money there, but I'm going to give some money to private schools.

Mr. HICKOK. If I may respond.

Mr. SHAYS. I'm going to let you respond, and then I'm going to jump in. Go on. You have the floor.

Mr. HICKOK. We feel very strongly that the President's budget for education, which again contains historic increases in education, not only adequately funds No Child Left Behind, but we would also point out that in almost every State in this country the States have not even finished spending the money they received in the past. And so the argument about more money will continue, we know that, but one of the arguments we have to confront is, is not how much, it's how well it's spent and who is spending it. And I think that debate needs to be the focus of our attention with regard to No Child Left Behind.

And Washington, DC, is a very separate set of circumstances, and that's not the discussion for today, but I do think that a school district such as Washington that spends upwards of $10,000, $11,000 per student, that's a lot of money. I don't know if it's enough, but that's a lot of money. And we have already heard testimony that says we are not getting the kind of results we should for that money.

Mr. SHAYS. I have a tremendous comfort level that Congresses in recent years have continued to add to the education budget in significant ways. And we compare them to earlier Congresses, we put earlier Congresses, frankly, to shame. But there is no question that

we could be putting more. But as a Republican on the majority side, I do know that whatever dollars we put into Choice program are going to be above and beyond whatever we were going to put. And if we didn't take that Choice money, it's going to go here. And so, Mayor, you're dead right. You are dead right. No one can argue with that fact. You are dead right.

I would love to just have the distinction between our two Council—I call you Council members. Is that—you both are, correct?

Mr. CHAVOUS. She is the chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. She is the chairman, I realize. And you're the chairman of the subcommittee. And, Madam Chairwoman, do you oppose choice, no matter what, even if it was new and additional money? Forget the issue of whether you think it's new money. I just want to know, if this is new money available to your citizens, are you still going to oppose it?

Ms. CROPP. At this point I must say my testimony must be where the Council is, and the Council has said that it supports choice. But it's already made a decision with regard to choice, and that is with regard to charter schools.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. So let me ask you a question that I would love you to put to your Council, and that would be, if this is new money—and I would love you to get back to the committee on this, because you can't speak for yourself on this. You could speak for yourself. How about yourself? Just you, not your Council—you won't get in trouble with anyone else, other than the people you represent—and that is: If this is new money, would you seek to have it and use it? Or would you just say, no, thank you, we don't want the money?

Ms. CROPP. I'm always seeking new money for the District of Columbia. And I would hope that the Federal Government would step up to the plate and help us with all of our structural imbalances, including education. We would like to see more money come to education for the District of Columbia. Our school buildings are more than 75 years old on an average. So we would like to have opportunities for us to get additional dollars in our school system.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Let me answer your question this way, because it suggests a practical as well as philosophical response. You know, yes, we would like to get more money. And if we're going to get money for vouchers, I would like to see money for D.C. charters. But from a philosophical point of view, let me tell you where I am as chair of the Education Committee. I am absolutely convinced that the only way our traditional school districts will reform themselves is through choice. All forms of choice. I have come to that after being, largely, the singular and most visible proponent for charters and being castigated by the teachers union and everyone else. And now seeing that charters has helped jump-start reform in our traditional school district, I believe that if parents have more options it makes a difference. And I frankly don't care if that's popular or unpopular, it's based on my years of experience in working with the school district in their reform efforts.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, I would just say before giving Ms. Norton 5 minutes, and then I will come back if I have time as well, to say that your position and mine are identical. And I have a feeling that you wrestled with it the same way I did. Your first instinct was to

say no. You may have gone through the process I did of saying how many of my friends am I going to offend in the community of education. And in the end, I just say I couldn't defend it any more intellectually and practically, my opposition to what to me makes eminent sense. So thank you for your response and all your responses.

Ms. Norton, if you would like another 5 minutes, I would be happy to have you have it.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Shays.

Yes, I have long applauded you, Mr. Chavous, for standing up for charter schools, remembering that it was the Federal Government's first charter school bill here and it was a charter school bill for the District of Columbia. It's interesting that in drawing that bill, when Speaker Gingrich agreed that we could have all these folks come up—and you probably came up, too—as we tried to figure out what should be in that bill, there seemed to be less—I did not sense, when everybody was doing it, that there was a lot of controversy, because people were all involved in saying what they wanted it to be. And look what you have brought. Yes, there are people. There are people in my own Congressional Black Caucus who are against charter schools. I have long differed with them. I do agree with you that schools need competition. I think that the kind of competition charters give in fact are likely to nudge the school system because these are publicly accountable schools and they look at folks going in the neighborhood charter school, kids—just the same kind of kids; whereas, kids going to the Catholic schools, where most of these kids are likely to go, as you know, are—may or may not be selected. A Catholic school doesn't have to select every school and it knows exactly what to do. It has limited resources, it's going to take the children that it can take.

So I don't understand, having created a system so diverse as the one you have been the leader on, where—my mind is really boggled as I read the different kinds of schools we have. I am at a loss to understand particularly when that kind of choice would not be available in the Catholic schools where most of these people would go, we wouldn't have a school for kids in the juvenile system, we wouldn't have arts schools, we wouldn't have technology schools, you wouldn't have border schools. You wouldn't have all—I mean, you wouldn't have all this focus equipment. You wouldn't have even classes as small, having given the country, the greatest per capita number of schools of diversity, I don't know why you wouldn't want to build on that and really prove your point. And I can't understand what you prove if the children go outside the system to schools that are pretty much the same and—well, let me just have you answer.

Mr. CHAVOUS. And let me respond. First of all, Congresswoman Norton, let me thank you for your support of charters, because you were very instrumental early on, and many times you and I and just a handful of others were standing alone. But I do harken back, quickly two points on that time, because after Congress did its thing with charters that helped us and we did our thing on the Council level, then we had to build it. And there was a lot of pain and hardship for those of us out in front in building it. And, you know, so even though, you know, many people may not recall the

angst associated with it, there was a lot of hostility with the growing of the charter school movement.

Now, the second point is, I am still one of the strongest advocates of charters. And a lot of people don't like to hear me say this, but we have 16 to 17 percent of our public school children in charter schools. I think we need to get it to 30 percent. I think you would have real traction, real competition.

The issue about vouchers, which I've always had some philosophical problems with, because I think that the illusion of vouchers as it's been promoted from a partisan perspective, it is the end all, be all. Frankly, it is not. Because even if we have a voucher program, we are only going to take care of a couple thousand kids. We still have to have fundamental reform in DCPS. The thing about vouchers that is most appealing, particularly if you have new dollars coming from DCPS and new dollars for charters, it grows the options and it expands on the competition. Because I have seen first-hand how DCPS has responded to the growth of charters, it has fostered reform that otherwise wouldn't happen. I think if you add to that external pressure, then you build on a better likelihood that you will have improvement for most of the children which will always be in public schools.

Ms. NORTON. Well, you lose me on why you wouldn't want to build on the kind of diversity, far more diversity than you have on the Catholic schools, for example, that these kids would be going to. But I will accept your answer.

Mayor Williams quotes a number of studies. Mayor Williams, you talk about eight rigorous studies that have confirmed that school choice improves the academic achievement of inner city African American children. Are you aware that the latest study that looks at not just those but at every study that's been done—14, I think—concludes—and this is important, since you're the one standing up for vouchers no matter what. A comprehensive review of 14 studies shows that most gains were statistically insignificant; and that any positive effects were either substantially or small or subject to question based on subsequent studies. And for Mr. Chavous, this study is by Helen Ladd, who has looked at all of the studies—goes on to say—and she doesn't say that charters can't be—that vouchers can't be helpful, but she says: Even if the evidence were to indicate—and it does not—that competition were a positive force for change, it is not clear why such competition would have to come from private schools rather than from within the school system. Competition can be generated by permitting students to choose among traditional public schools or to switch to other charter schools.

I haven't heard from any of you why, in order to have competition, in order to have choice, particularly with people knocking on your doors—and particularly, Mr. Chavous and Mayor Williams, if I may say to you, what I hear from the charter schools is that, you know, we are now at grade 5 and we can't add grade 6. And it seems to me that is a tragedy for which you have to take responsibility. If you can't add grade 6, then the children are going to be back in those schools from whence they came. And I want to know how you can justify that. I mean, why that isn't your priority. Those schools—those children are already out. They are going to be

dumped back in the schools from which they came. They obviously don't want to go, but they are going to be dumped back for one reason, and one reason only, and that is that you've not provided the money that allows them to add a grade.

Mayor WILLIAMS. Under this program, presumably students would leave the regular public schools, we are going to continue the funding that we have already earmarked for the schools. The schools would then have those funds—the nonprivate parochial schools would then have those funds to do additional modernization, additional improvement. And, No. 2, again I would add I believe an important complement of this is getting help on modernization for all three branches of the system: The regular public schools, the charter schools, and the private schools.

I respect Professor Ladd, but to me it doesn't make any sense to say we want to have more competition but the only way to have more competition is to limit it. That doesn't make any sense to me.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Can I speak to the charter school facilities issue quickly? Because that's what you're addressing.

I think you're right that the city as a whole has not stepped up to the plate to help charters on facilities. That's why many of us have been pushing. Frankly, the board of education has excess schools as well as the Mayor's inventory has excess old schools. And, indeed, with the budget we passed earlier this week, we changed the law. We did say that charter schools have a preference for all surplus schools. But because there was some playing around as to what a preference meant, we changed the law with the budget that says charter schools have the first preference. Because we want to make it clear that if there are vacant school buildings there to be had, that they are not used and bundled up for some mega economic development project, but they're used for charter schools.

Ms. NORTON. But Mr. Chavous, if you don't have the money that allows these charter schools to renovate the schools, what good is it to have the goals available?

Mr. CHAVOUS. The reason why the three-sector approach works is because if we have additional dollars that can be used for additional bonding authority for modernization, then the charters can take those schools that have first preference to and have the capital to build.

Ms. NORTON. Yeah. But there's been no testimony even from the Federal Government that there are extra dollars.

Chairman TOM DAVIS [presiding]. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. Hickok, you wanted to answer Ms. Norton's question as well?

Mr. HICKOK. I just wanted to put some facts on the table with regard to something you said earlier about schools, Catholic schools, and admitting students and so forth. Our data tells us that there are about 3,400 vacancies in Catholic schools in the city and about 1,160 vacancies in Catholic schools. So there is an incentive I think to open those seats to students who would want to exercise choice. But the more telling thing that we know, and this is the bottom line——

Ms. NORTON. You think that those seats are not open now?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. He is on my time now.

Mr. HICKOK. The telling thing is the average black eighth grader in a D.C. Catholic school performs better than 72 percent of his or her public school peers in math.

Ms. NORTON. And they've been.

Mr. HICKOK. The bottom line——

Ms. NORTON. You can't get into those Catholic schools unless they choose you and believe that you can do the work there.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Ms. Norton, I am just going to have to move ahead with my time. We are doing a vote.

So there are vacancies open in this city right now?

Mr. HICKOK. Yes, sir.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And there is no reason to believe that if you open this up, the market could respond with more?

Mr. HICKOK. Exactly.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. But there are immediate vacancies of several thousand?

Mr. HICKOK. Yes, sir.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. What's the average cost?

Mr. HICKOK. I can get you the average cost. We know that most are below $10,000. Far below $10,000.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. One of the difficulties is you give $3,000 for a $10,000 school, I don't know if you have done any favors. I would like to get that. If we could get that between everybody and get a number we can agree to at least on that, we could come to maybe some kind of closure.

One of the difficulties you have is you could put a ton of money, it seems to me, right now into the public school system and it's still not ready to fix it for next year or the year after. And vouchers are an immediate short-term solution—I don't think they are the long-term solution—to help. It gives kind of a competitive jolt to the public school system, as charters have. Charters are still in their infancy in the city as well.

Public policy is very complex. If this were easy, if throwing money and compassion could solve this, we would have solved this a long time ago. But we have kids that we know are going to be starting school next September, and there are 234 school systems that are failing, that are sometimes not as safe as they ought to be, and we are basically telling the parents you don't have a lot of other options, and we are trying to put other options on the table.

I don't see anything wrong with that. But I think we want to be careful how we craft it, and we want to make sure that the options we are putting on are better options than they are having to choose from, or we are not doing ourselves any good.

Mr. HICKOK. Certainly the administration agrees with the Mayor's comment earlier and Mr. Chavous's comment that there is no single silver bullet. Vouchers, if you will, are not by themselves the answer. Public education is a complex thing and it requires a complex response.

To get to your earlier question about the average cost for a nonpublic school in D.C., our data tells us it's about $7,500. If that is the average cost to attend a nonpublic school in the District and the District is currently spending close to $11,000 per student, it is a bargain. It is a bargain to be able to use school choice. Because most of your kids will get a good education for less money than you

are spending now. If the average cost is $7,500 for nonpublic schools in the District, and the District is spending close to $11,000 now, to me, talk about smart investing, choice is a smart investment.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, let me ask this. And unlike a lot of other choices, as I understand it, they don't lose your base underlying dollars coming into the city, so the city loses $11,000 and you get a $7,000 education. So basically that's $11,000 you have to spend on another kid that's not there. That's a great deal.

Mr. HICKOK. Another thing we hear about in this business all the time is the importance of small class size. Since you have a capacity problem in your public schools, when you open the door to school choice, you will also have smaller classes in your existing public schools. In many ways this benefits students in the District.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, I think that's right. And I think these are the things that we need to discuss as we move forward and keep an open mind on, because I think we can craft something that works for the city over the short term, helps to rebuild the public school system over the long term, which is something that has to be done. School choice and vouchers are not a long-term solution. You don't want to put these, you know, put this in the hands of the private sector purely. We need a strong public school infrastructure. People are working at it. The fact that we could get lower pupil-teacher ratios for the public school system out of here to me is encouraging, because that makes it easier to correct, because we are dealing with some of the toughest demographic cases that you can imagine. And so it has some utility, in my judgment, in that way. And I will just tell you this chairman is not going to be ideological right or left. And I just have to take exception to what my ranking member said about how ideological this administration has been, etc. We worked through the initial education bills in a bipartisan manner, we are continuing to do that. And the idea that you would put this money into the public school system and expect that kid starting in September to get any kind of reasonable return on that or their parents is ludicrous, it's ridiculous. It's something that you can't argue with a straight face. And so from my perspective this offers some utility if it is constructed correctly, and we need all hands at the table to do that. I want to hear from—certainly from Ms. Norton and Mrs. Cropp on this as well as the Mayor and Mr. Chavous and others.

I have to go over, we have one series of votes going. Ms. Norton has about 5, 6 minutes left of questions. I'm going to take the unprecedented—this is very, very important to her—of handing her the gavel and she is going to finish her questions, at which point she will recess the meeting until we can return and go with the next panel. So we will take—after you leave, I would say we won't be back for probably a half an hour. So the next panel, you have a half an hour before we call you back.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Mayor, to thank you. Again, I think on so many issues in the city you are taking leadership, you are exercising it, you're taking heat. You are concerned about these kids. This is not only courageous, it's historic.

Councilman Chavous, let me say the same for you. And Linda, it's always good to have you here and your experience, your wis-

dom. Work with us on this. We can make this a winner for the kids. And if it works for the kids, it works for the city, helping become more of an economic force, bringing people back in. This has so many ramifications. If we get ideologically driven, we are missing an opportunity. The education has been the toughest part. Financially, we have ten the city back on. We have to watch it every year, but you are out from under the Control Board. We are about to give you budget autonomy. We may be able to bring a baseball team back here. A lot of things are looking good. This is the toughest nut to crack. The progress is slow at this point. This is just another opportunity. Maybe it doesn't solve the problem, I don't know that it does, but it will help a few thousand kids. It will give them an opportunity. And, as I said, who wouldn't want to choose between sending kids to college instead of to Lorton, which is what has happened to a generation of kids in this city.

So let's work together and try to do something.

And Ms. Norton, I appreciate your comments as well. I don't agree with all of them, as you don't with mine. But we've worked together on so many issues. You want to get some other issues on the record. I am going to hand you the gavel. Please don't abuse it. I'm going to be out of the room. I trust her. We are great friends and oftentimes allies. And on this one we still may come to closure on this one.

Ms. NORTON [presiding]. We will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Ms. NORTON. And I assure you that I believe in democracy, and I will not seize power while you are gone.

Mr. Chavous perhaps can help me on this. I don't know how you stood sitting here and these people talking down the District schools the way they have. I guess I'll wait for Ms. Cafritz to defend the District public schools; I thought they were improving. But that frankly has never been where I was. I've always been, look, the child ought to go to some other school if you are dissatisfied with that school. That's why this long history of allowing children to go out of District long before the Federal Government ever thought of it has been so important, and now the charter schools and transformation schools.

I'm real confused about this figure that Mr. Hickok throws around about $11,000, because I'm looking at some of your budget material. And maybe it just doesn't include everything, but your uniform per student funding was set at $6,418.51 per student. Is there something left out of that formula that could get it up to $11,000, the number that's been bandied about here? Or is that what you spend per student?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, Congresswoman Norton, I think that there is a certain baseline that we use with our per people funding formula that is over $6,000. But when you add in various State level costs, it could take it up depending on how many children, for instance, on a subsidized lunch program, what have you, or special needs. There are certain levels that can add to it, so it varies. I think different jurisdictions—and I know Ms. Cafritz has talked about this ad nauseam. Different jurisdictions take different things into account when they come up with that per pupil funding amount. And our calculations are complicated by the fact that we

are not a State. So when you talk about the State level cost, and then that leads to disparity that, depending on which side you are on, you can use it for or against the school system in terms of how things are run.

I will say finally though on your point, I don't want to be the prophet of doom and suggest that's why we are where we are. I think there has been tremendous strides under Dr. Paul Vance. I think his leadership has been critical. As one principal said to me—and I visit schools all the time—the best thing about Dr. Vance's leadership, unlike some of the previous superintendents that seem to come in like a revolving door, is stability. There is more stability with his presence. But even he would say, when you have the alarming reality of nearly half of our kids who enter the ninth grade still not graduating, and when you have parents like that parent who testified before my committee saying she feels she sacrificed one kid 6 years ago with the promise of help and reform in 3 to 5 years, and she's got another kid going into seventh grade this year, she doesn't want to wait 3 to 5 years. Then I do think there has to be an approach that is both short term and also long term. And that's how I feel about that.

Ms. NORTON. Mayor, perhaps—and perhaps you, Mr. Chavous, too, somebody mentioned the Washington Scholarship Fund. I've been a strong supporter of the Washington Scholarship Fund. And when they did not succeed in getting voucher funding before, they went ahead and did what they could still do. They in fact raised money to send our children. I've gone to their events, I have spoken at graduations where they have children in order to encourage them. Anything I can do to people who are willing to put their own money where their mouth is it seems to me we ought to encourage. But I do want to take issue with what the Mayor has in his testimony, because he must be talking about these children—he talked about a study of these children, a thousand of these children. These students gained almost 10 national percentile points in math and reading after the first year, and an average of 6.3 NPR after 2 years of being in private school. Well, I wonder if you are aware that after the first year almost a third were gone, returned to the D.C. public schools, and by year 3 almost half were gone. So your statistics are based on the kids who were left who were obviously the best prepared kids, whereas almost half of them by the third year weren't even there anymore. And I don't know why they were gone, but they were gone. If I were you, I would be—if you want vouchers, fine. But I would be very leery of these studies. That's why I quoted from the study of the 14—of every study that's been done, and there is—there are none—and this is way out of line. And, you know, based on the children who are left in the schools—and remember, these children had to add to the scholarship in order to get to the school. Fair enough if you have limited money. I was on a program recently, a call-in. A lady said to me, I make $28,000 year. How in the world am I going to take advantage of that and have to come up with $1,000?

Indeed, I want to ask both of you. If in fact you are for these vouchers for low-income parents, don't you also have to be for paying the full freight in order for them to go to these schools? I mean,

do you really think a low-income parent in the District of Columbia can come up with $1,000 or more to add to this scholarship?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, if we are going to do this—that's why I like the three-sector approach—that we will add money for charter sales facilities, we will help for DCPS. And if you are going to do scholarship programs or vouchers, it has to be meaningful; it can't be partial. And so it can't be $2,000 or $3,000. It should be on par with what a good neighborhood private school would have to offer. And that's probably $5,000, $6,000, $7,000. So I agree with that caller. If we are going to do it, we need to do it all the way. And it can't be piecemeal, because we can't realistically expect low-income parents to be able to contribute.

Ms. NORTON. In fact, if you have a reason why somebody should wait for the scholarship, if—you know, if in fact it weren't confined to low-income parents.

Mr. CHAVOUS. But Ms. Norton, let me say one thing real quick. The reason why I haven't addressed so many of the details, the proposed details of a "voucher program," I really want to make sure we have a commitment from the Federal Government to aid with charters and DCPS. I think, looking at facilities, as Ms. Cafritz has said, look at the State level cost for special education. I mean, that's where I believe the three-sector approach has its legs. We would lift all boats, in effect, and all children benefit. Because no matter what we do with choice in this city, the lion's share of our children, the vast majority of our children will still be in our traditional school system. And if we can translate real dollars at least to resources, at least modernization with facilities to help Dr. Vance in his reform efforts, then I think we can better say we have helped all kids. So I haven't really focused on the details of the voucher program, because my commitment is to make sure that we get additional resources for all sectors of our public education institution.

Ms. NORTON. I understand, Mr. Chavous, that you wanted a very large amount of money for this one. Again, I'm still—you know, the silence is deafening from the Federal Government on this.

I do want to correct the record for the Mayor's benefit. Only one-third of the Washington scholarship kids were left in year 3. Two-thirds had returned to the D.C. public schools.

Mayor WILLIAMS. I think there are a couple of things here. I think we need to have a—this is a pilot. That's an important thing in my mind. We are not talking about this for the next hundred years; we are talking about a pilot. We want to see how this works. And in order to see how it works, No. 1, I think we have to see that we are following what we are calling a three-prong, three-sector, whatever it is, approach; in other words, for all three delivery systems. And we need to make sure most assuredly that for the kids who are going to the private/parochial schools they have enough funding to attend those schools, whether it's $5,000, $6,000, $7,000.

No. 2, where it relates to the study here, the school vouchers and academic performance, I would say the first thought I would have is every study is always going to have to account for the fact that you are going to have some changes in the study group.

Ms. NORTON. This is because most of the kids are gone.

Mayor WILLIAMS. If I could say, and I think for me the question is, what would—even if you want to assume that two-thirds of the kids are left, what would the outcome have been for those kids who perform well in those scholarships? Where would the outcome have been if they stayed in the regular public schools? I would submit it would not have been as well, not have been as good.

Ms. NORTON. Well, but you submit that on the basis of what evidence? The fact is that the 14 studies that I referred to——

Mayor WILLIAMS. I'm submitting that on the basis of evidence I've seen around the country. And that brings up my point.

Ms. NORTON. How about evidence of studies?

Mayor WILLIAMS. That's why it is so important and I think a critical component of this pilot, is that we are going to be able to for the first time longitudinally compare outcomes for students in the three different branches. And we haven't had that before. And we ought to take the opportunity to use it.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Mayor, I can understand, and that I can't quarrel with that issue of you. All I was trying to do was to get on the record that you were studying what amounts to the cream that's still left. Those are not studies that are credible.

I only have a couple of more questions. One, I want to just put in the record, in light of your testimony, Mr. Mayor, that these low income—one, they should be low income students, and they should attend schools in their neighborhoods. I'm quoting—paraphrasing with—those are the operative words in your testimony. I'm not sure you are aware that of the private and parochial schools 15 are located in Northwest, 3 in Northeast, 1 in Southeast, and zero in Southwest. So these kids are not going to be going to schools in their neighborhoods.

My final question is about the transformation schools. I understand, I'm very impressed frankly with these first results from the transformation schools, the early results. We know those children aren't going anywhere. We know they haven't gone back to any other school system. I'm just very impressed with the concept. And I understand that there are parents who want transformation schools as well.

So I've got two questions. One, are you going to be able to continue to fund these transition schools with the extras that have brought these results? And two, when are you going to expand the transformation schools?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, I would say that, from what I understand with Dr. Vance—and he testified to this at our committee budget hearing—that the plan is that they will bring on more transformation schools. I think that in addition to funding and other financial resources that are needed, they also need bodies. They need to have different teachers and this big recruitment drive for more teachers. Because the beauty of the transformation process is that they almost take a SWAT team approach, where they bring all these resources, including wrap-around services and the like, and aid the schools' immediate needs. So my commitment is to fund that. But I also think that it is something that they just can't do in mass because they have to bring those different resources together.

Ms. NORTON. But money is the problem today?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Money is part of it, as I understand it. But also there's a problem in terms of getting the right personnel to put in these schools as well. That's why, as I understand, they're working with Teachers for America and they're bringing new teachers online.

Ms. NORTON. Are there any plans to expand the number of 15 beyond that at this point?

Mr. CHAVOUS. I think Ms. Cafritz can speak to that. My understanding is that there is; I don't know when. But I would support that.

Ms. NORTON. Did you have something you would like to say on that, Mr. Mayor?

I know I speak for the chairman when I thank all of you for having remained so long and having clarified many issues. And let me just say for the record, I look forward to working with all of you, and hope that we can begin that working together in that consultation that the chairman talked about very soon.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Thank you, Congresswoman Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you.

[Recess.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We are ready to start and we will get the other witnesses as they come in. It is the policy of the committee that we swear you in before you testify, and if you will just rise with me and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We have the lights in the front. When the yellow light goes on, you have a minute to sum up. We appreciate you summing up as quickly as possible.

[Witness sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Go ahead and try to keep it to 5 minutes and then your whole statement is in the record so you are not getting short-changed. Everything is in the public record for historical archives, Ph.D. candidates, anyone else who wants to look at this in the annals of history, the total statement is there. We got most of our questions formulated based on that. So the briefer you are, the faster we can get to the questions. And I appreciate each and every one of you waiting through this. I hope it was worthwhile to see the Eleanor and Tony Show. I am a minor player in this, but we are trying to get at some basic facts as we formulate policy.

Ms. Cafritz, we will start with you.

STATEMENTS OF PEGGY COOPER CAFRITZ, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF EDUCATION; JOSEPHINE BAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD; CASEY J. LARTIGUE, JR., EDUCATION POLICY ANALYST, THE CATO INSTITUTE; HELEN F. LADD, RESEARCHER, DUKE UNIVERSITY; JACKIE PINCKNEY-HACKETT, PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT, JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL; AND IRIS TOYER, TRANSFORMATION SCHOOL PARENT, STANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ms. CAFRITZ. I was not given a 5-minute time line before so I will try as best I can to highlight. Chairman Davis and Congresswoman Norton, I am Peggy Cooper Cafritz, president of the Board of Education, and it is a pleasure to appear before you this afternoon on

the issue of vouchers. The views contained in my testimony are my own and do not represent the views of the D.C. Board of Education.

On July 17, 2002, the Board adopted a resolution opposing in response to Dick Armey's bill congressional imposition of vouchers on the District of Columbia. Some of my colleagues continue to oppose a federally imposed voucher program and are waiting first to be convinced that Congress will increase its commitment to public schools. The Board of Education will revisit this issue later this month.

We all want home rule, but the education of our children cannot wait for that Constitutional achievement. I do consider my presence here an expression of home rule. I was elected by over 100,000 votes. I cannot abdicate my responsibility to our children and tell Congress in its beneficence to bestow home rule on D.C.

We need your massive support, all of which need not be financial, to fix all of our schools now. There is agreement and unanimity on the goal of equitably educating every child in our city. Another belief that we share is that the District of Columbia public schools need greater resources to overcome the legacy of this investment. The chairman of the City Council mentioned that funding for DCPS had increased considerably. Since 1996, that's true, but the level was so low then as to put us on a list of underdeveloped countries. For those—for the same reasons that it costs comparatively more to run the District government, so it stand to reason that it would cost more to run the D.C. public schools. Even before you deduct for State costs we must bear, we spend considerably less than our contiguous jurisdictions like Arlington, VA.

Ever since my colleagues and I assumed office, we have been engaged in reforming a broken school system that has never received sufficient resources necessary for sustaining reform. We found an educational system with deteriorating school buildings, underachieving schools with too many students who lacked the academic skills to prepare them for the future and poor personnel and budgetary systems. We found a system that had been built on a legacy of too many broken promises and failed experiments and too few resources to overcome the many years of neglect.

Simply put, Congressmen, we have had to keep the trains running in this broken system every day, while on a parallel track we are hard and fast at work at building a real school system, the kind that has not existed in D.C. since desegregation. With the help of many committed teachers, principals, parents and leaders in the community, we are beginning to address this legacy of disinvestment. We are beginning to experience a modicum of success and we are laying the foundation for sustainable reform.

We have embraced reform and all that encompasses. We have embraced competition with the hope that every child realizes its full potential. The Board oversees a successful charter school program that serves 16 charter schools with 2,880 students. We are tackling the bureaucratic inertia that can impede reform. We have developed with counsel from the McKinsey Co. and are implementing a business plan for strategic reform that serves as our road map. Because of these efforts, many of the deficiencies cited in the legislative narrative in H.R. 684 and in other Cato Institute documents are untrue.

Our students are improving academically. We have raised test scores in approximately 60 percent of DCPS schools and increased reading performance at nearly every grade level. We are transforming the 15 schools that have been talked about so much today. We are developing innovative programs in our schools and we have attracted a team of administrators that I would put up against any in the Nation. We are implementing all new systems. We have prepared a performance based budget that would have linked expenditures to programs and assisted decisionmakers in helping our parents assess our academic and management performance until most of those items were cut by this last round at the City Council.

We are in danger of regressing and halting our reform efforts. We do not fear choice, but we do fear the lack of financial investment in our efforts to reform the public school system. If one goal of choice is competition, it is dishonest to not give DCPS the tools it needs to compete. Our budget is being cut continually and we are now forced to cut programs in our classrooms. We will not be able to add any more transformation schools and we will not be able to continue the level of support that we have at our current transformation schools. We may not even be able to fund the new teachers' raises. The City Council did set it aside as an enhancement, but our first responsibility is to the students in the classrooms.

The Board requested a 6-year capital budget of $2 billion to implement a modernization program. The Board and the Council have recommended only $511 million over 4 years. Now I would like to address that for a minute.

Charter schools, Catholic schools and public schools need facilities and facilities is money. The city has excess schools in their inventory which could be given to charter schools, and I would be willing to take any of you Congress people on a tour of charter schools and public schools in the District so that you can actually see what the situation is and work with us, but it is really this area in which we need Congress to get involved. It is very easy to say we should collocate with charters. In collocating with charters we have to make sure we can equally fix up the buildings. You can't have two children going to school, one in a messed up building and one in a fine building. That is not going to work.

The city's recommended operating and capital budget does not in any way meet our needs. They will not fund legally required asbestos abatement, structural maintenance improvement, startup funds for instructional equipment to bring our art and music programs up to minimal national standards or to serve the children we need to serve in summer school or to foster innovative teacher and teacher induction programs.

The level of poverty of our students is over 50 percent, and this is important for everyone to hear. The level of student poverty in Catholic schools is just about the same. The level of poverty in charter schools is a little more. We are dealing with a population, as you mentioned before, Congressman Davis, that is very, very difficult. To give our children vouchers, to allow our children to go to charter schools, to keep them in public schools, whatever it is that we may try, and I think we should try everything, is not helpful unless we are also able to provide the social safety net that our children need. No matter how good a teacher is, a hungry child and

a cold child and an emotionally traumatized child cannot learn. And it will be to our peril to start new programs and to continue with old programs without addressing these very serious issues.

I have met with Cardinal McCarrick and I have talked to our charter people and we all agree it is something that is very important. I believe that a voucher program can be a viable alternative of, one, to low performing schools. I believe there is much room under the tent for any ideas or approaches that help our students.

It is proposed under H.R. 684 that a private nonprofit corporation known as the District of Columbia Scholarship Corp. will administer a voucher program and will determine student and school eligibility for participation for the program. The corporation, according to Congressman Flake, would have a board of directors, comprised of seven members, six appointed by the President and one appointed by the Mayor. That does not make a home grown voucher program. And I would, in turn, recommend that as you craft new legislation that you have the President—because we consider the Federal Government worthy neighbors, that you have the President appoint two, the House and Senate appoint two, the Mayor appoint two, the Council one and the elected state education agency, the Board of Education, appoint three. We also believe among that number must be representation from the Washington Scholarship Fund, which is a philanthropic scholarship fund that was started by a real estate tycoon Teddy Forsman and John Walton, who needs no identification, and the Black Student Fund, which is 30—over 30 years old, which was started by some of Washington's most august citizens and has sent hundreds of poor children to our finest private schools, and the Latin Fund, which is sending a number of our Latino children to parochial and some private schools. Because these people have experience in administering voucher type programs, it is very important that they be brought under the tent and the leadership and governance of any new program we should set up.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel. The legislation does include eligibility requirements for students and private school participants and parochial school participants. I believe that eligibility requirements should ensure that the schools that participate in the voucher program should be open and accessible to all students, students with disabilities, English language learners, etc. I agree with the income limits that have been placed in H.R. 684 because they are closely tied to the requirements to participate in the free lunch program. However, in all probability, there will not be enough vouchers to satisfy the demand. And based on that, these limited resources should, therefore by a weighted lottery, be directed to those with the greatest need.

I further believe that if the program is then to be successful, it must provide administrative support to help parents negotiate the admissions process in the parochial and private schools. That can be a daunting experience for any parent and the barriers should be removed. Catholic schools—parochial schools in our city accept children basically on a first come first served basis. That is not true of other private schools, but it is true of Catholic schools.

I also believe that it's very important that this be limited to students and schools in the District of Columbia and that any partici-

pating schools have been in existence for 5 years so that we can avoid a problem that we have had with charters where there were very few standards and we had some fly by night schools.

I just have one last thing to say. We owe every child a good education, and we must have a way of communicating the right information to parents. 54 percent, 54 percent of our charter schools are placed in the failing school category based on the No Child Left Behind Act. We are required to notify those parents that those children in those failing charter schools can select another school that is not failing come next September. Public schools, even our best schools, Banneker, have children that are reading below level. Catholic schools have the same problem that we have. We need to give the cost per head that we give to every child in the public schools and charter schools to children receiving vouchers, because they, too, are going to need those networks of support to matriculate successfully regardless of the school system they are in.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cafritz follows:]

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STATEMENT OF PEGGY COOPER CAFRITZ

PRESIDENT OF THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OVESIGHT HEARING ON ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MAY 9, 2003

CHAIRMAN DAVIS AND MEMBERS ON THE COMMITTEE, I AM PEGGY COOPER CAFRITZ, PRESIDENT OF THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION. IT IS MY PLEASURE TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TO DISCUSS H.R. 684 AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

THE VIEWS CONTAINED IN THIS TESTIMONY ARE MY OWN AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION. ON JULY 17, 2002, THE BOARD ADOPTED A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE CONGRESSIONAL IMPOSITION OF VOUCHERS ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. SOME OF MY COLLEAGUES CONTINUE TO OPPOSE A FEDERALLY IMPOSED VOUCHER PROGRAM AND ARE WAITING FIRST TO BE CONVINCED THAT CONGRESS WILL INCREASE ITS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WILL REVISIT THIS ISSUE AT OUR MAY 2003 BOARD MEETING. WE ALL WANT HOMERULE BUT THE

EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN CANNOT WAIT FOR THAT CONSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT.

THERE IS AGREEMENT AND UNANIMITY ON THE GOAL OF EQUITABLY EDUCATING EVERY CHILD IN OUR CITY. ANOTHER BELIEF THAT WE SHARE IS THAT THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED GREATER RESOURCES TO OVERCOME THE LEGACY OF DISINVESTMENT. FOR ALL THE SAME REASONS THAT IT COSTS COMPARATIVELY MORE TO RUN THE D.C. GOVERNMENT THAN THE SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS, IT STANDS TO REASON THAT IT WOULD COST MORE TO RUN THE D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS. EVEN BEFORE YOU DEDUCT FOR THE STATE COSTS WE MUST BEAR, WE SPEND CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN CONTIGUOUS JURISDICTIONS.

LEGACY OF LACK OF INVESTMENT

EVER SINCE MY COLLEAGUES AND I ASSUMED OFFICE, WE HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN REFORMING A BROKEN SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT HAS NEVER RECEIVED SUFFICIENT RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR SUSTAINING REFORM. WE FOUND AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM WITH DETERIORATING SCHOOL BUILDINGS, UNDERACHIEVING SCHOOLS WITH TOO MANY STUDENTS WHO LACKED THE ACADMEMIC SKILLS TO PREPARE THEM FOR THE FUTURE, AND POOR PERSONNEL AND BUDGETARY SYSTEMS. WE FOUND A SYSTEM THAT HAD BEEN BUILT ON A LEGACY OF TOO MANY BROKEN PROMISES, TOO MANY FAILED EXPERIMENTS, AND TOO FEW RESOURCES TO OVERCOME THE MANY YEARS OF NEGLECT. SIMPLY PUT, CONGRESSMEN, WE HAVE TO KEEP THE TRAINS RUNNING IN THIS BROKEN SYSTEM EVERY DAY WHILE WE WORK HARD AND FAST AT BUILDING A REAL SCHOOL SYSTEM – THE KIND THAT HAS NOT EXISTED IN D.C. FOR DECADES.

WITH THE HELP OF MANY COMMITTED TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, PARENTS, AND LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY, WE ARE BEGINNING TO ADDRESS THIS LEGACY OF DISINVESTMENT. WE ARE BEGINNING TO EXPERIENCE A MODICUM OF SUCCESS THAT WILL LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE REFORM. WE HAVE EMBRACED REFORM AND ALL THAT IT EMCOMPASSES. WE HAVE EMBRACED COMPETITION WITH THE HOPE THAT EVERY CHILD REALIZES HIS FULL POTENTIAL. THE BOARD OVERSEES A SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM THAT SERVES 16 CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH 2,880 STUDENTS. WE ARE TACKLING THE BUREACRATIC INERTIA THAT CAN IMPEDE REFORM. WE HAVE DEVELOPED, WITH COUNSEL FROM MCKINSEY COMPANY, AND ARE IMPLEMENTING A BUSINESS PLAN FOR STRATEGIC REFORM THAT SERVES AS OUR ROADMAP FOR EDUCATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT CHANGE. BECAUSE OF THESE EFFORTS, MANY OF THE DEFICIENCIES CITED IN THE LEGISLATIVE NARRATIVE USED TO JUSTIFY H.R. 684 ARE NOW UNTRUE.

OUR STUDENTS ARE IMPROVING ACADEMICALLY. WE HAVE RAISED TEST SCORES IN APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF DCPS SCHOOLS AND INCREASED READING PERFORMANCE AT NEARLY EVERY GRADE LEVEL. WE ARE TRANSFORMING 15 HISTORICALLY LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS. WE HAVE WITNESSED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE GAINS IN ALMOST ALL OF OUR ORIGNIAL TRANSFORMATION SCHOOLS, INCLUDING DRAMATIC GAINS OF 15 TO 20 PERCENT IN TEST SCORES AT A NUMBER OF THEM. WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS WITHIN OUR SCHOOLS. WE HAVE RECRUITED AN OUTSTANDING TEAM OF MANAGERS AND EDUCATORS. WE ARE IMPLEMENTING NEW ACCOUNTING, PERSONNEL AND PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS THAT WILL ASSIST US IN BETTER MANAGING AND CONTROLLING RESOURCES. WE HAVE PREPARED A PERFORMANCE-BASED BUDGET THAT WILL LINK EXPENDITURES TO PROGRAMS AND ASSIST DECISION-MAKERS AND OUR

PARENTS IN ASSESSING OUR ACADEMIC AND MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE.

LACK OF RESOURCES IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE

BUT WE ARE IN DANGER OF REGRESSING AND HALTING OUR REFORM EFFORTS. WE DO NOT FEAR CHOICE, BUT WE DO FEAR THE LACK OF FINANCIAL INVESTMENT IN OUR EFFORTS TO REFORM THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. IF ONE GOAL OF CHOICE IS COMPETITION, IT IS DISHONEST TO NOT GIVE DCPS THE TOOLS IT NEEDS TO COMPETE. OUR BUDGET IS BEING CUT CONTINUALLY AND WE ARE NOW FORCED TO CUT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN OUR CLASSROOMS. THIS FISCAL YEAR WE BEGAN WITH A BUDGET OF $743.7 MILLION AND IT HAS BEEN REDUCED TO $713.5 MILLION. RATHER THAN SPENDING MOST OUR TIME IN IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, MY COLLEAGUES AND I SPEND A DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF TIME WIELDING THE BUDGETARY AXE. ONE WAY CONGRESS CAN HELP IS BY PROHIBITING THE CUTTING OF THE SCHOOLS' BUDGET AFTER THE BEGINNING OF THE FISCAL YEAR. THIS WILL REQUIRE YOUR DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT. THE MANAGEMENT OF A CHILD CENTERED AGENCY DIFFERS FROM THE MANAGEMENT OF OTHER AGENCIES.

THE BOARD PROPOSED A FISCAL YEAR 2004 LOCAL OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF $847.8 MILLION, WHICH FUNDED OUR BASE LEVEL BUDGET OF $740.5 MILLION, $64.6 MILLION OF MANDATED COSTS, AND $44.6 IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM INVESTMENTS. THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL ARE RECOMMENDING AN OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF $742.6 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF ONLY $29.1 MILLION ABOVE OUR REVISED FY 2003 BUDGET OF $713.5 MILLION.

THE BOARD REQUESTED A SIX-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET OF $2.0 BILLION TO IMPLEMENT OUR MODERNATION PROGRAM. THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL HAVE RECOMMENDED ONLY $511 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS, INCLUDING FISCAL YEAR 2004. AS A CONSEQUENCE, WE WILL BE FORCED TO SEVERELY REDUCE OUR MODERNIZATION EFFORTS. THE LEGISLATIVE NARRATIVE OF H.R. 684 FOUND THAT "MANY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA'S 146 SCHOOLS ARE IN A STATE OF TERRIBLE DISREPAIR, INCLUDING LEAKING ROOFS, BITTERLY COLD CLASSROOMS, AND NUMBEROUS FIRE CODE VIOLATIONS." OUR SITUATION IS SO BAD THAT WE ARE THE ONLY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM I CAN FIND THAT DOES NOT HAVE A CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BUILT ALMOST ALL OF THESE SCHOOLS, WHICH AVERAGE 63 YEARS OF AGE. THE DISTRICT MANAGED THESE BUILDINGS UNTIL 1991 WHEN IT RETURNED THEM TO DCPS IN A HEINOUS STATE OF DISREPAIR. THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS DID AN ASSESSMENT IN 1996 CONCLUDING THAT 90 PERCENT OF THEM NEEDED TO BE REPLACED OR GUTTED AND REBUILT! THE BOARD HAS MADE SOME PROGRESS IN MODERNIZING ITS FACILITIES, BUT IN MANY RESPECTS WE HAVE JUST BEGUN. FOUR NEW SCHOOLS HAVE OPENED. SIX MORE ARE IN CONSTRUCTION FOR 2003 AND 2004 OPENINGS. TEN SCHOOLS ARE IN DESIGN, SLATED FOR GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONIES THIS YEAR. CONGRESS CAN GREATLY HELP BY FUNDING OUR CAPITAL COSTS OR PAYING THE FINANCING EXPENSE OF ACQUIRING BONDS TO PAY FOR OUR MODERNIZATION EFFORTS AND FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS.

THE CITY'S RECOMMENDED OPERARING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS DO NOT MEET OUR NEEDS. THOSE BUDGETS WILL NOT FUND ASBESTOS ABATEMENT, STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS, START-UP FUNDS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT TO BRING OUR ART, MUSIC, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS UP TO MINIMUM NATIONAL STANDARDS, OR A TEN-WEEK SUMMER PROGRAM FOR MATH AND

READING TO BETTER ASSIST OUR ACADEMICALLY LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS. A SYSTEM-WIDE TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM TO RETAIN NEW TEACHERS CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED.

THE LEVEL OF POVERTY OF OUR STUDENTS IS OVER 50 PERCENT. THE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT UNLESS THEY ARE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY READY, THEY WILL NOT LEARN. THEREFORE, WE NEED A SUPPORT SERVICE NETWORK AVAILABLE IN EACH SCHOOL. WE HAVE STATED A PROGRAM WITH THE MAYOR THAT WORKS VERY WELL. EACH CHARTER SCHOOL AND 16 PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH WORKER. BUT THE NEED IS FAR GREATER. CONGRESS CAN HELP BY FUNDING THESE SUPPORT SERVICES.

WITHOUT THESE INVESTMENTS, THE JOB OF REFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL WILL BE RENDERED UNDOABLE.

VOUCHER PROGRAM CAN BE A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

I BELIEVE THAT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM ENVISIONED UNDER H.R.684 IS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS. I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS MUCH ROOM UNDER THE TENT FOR ANY IDEAS OR APPROACHES THAT HELP OUR STUDENTS. UNDER H.R. 684 A PRIVATE, A NONPROFIT CORPORATION, KNOWN AS THE 'DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION', WILL ADMINISTER A VOUCHER PROGRAM AND WILL DETERMINE STUDENT AND SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM. THE CORPORATION WILL HAVE A BOARD OF DIRECTORS, COMPRISED OF SEVEN MEMBERS, SIX APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND ONE APPOINTED BY THE MAYOR. THE LEGISLATION AUTHORIZES FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT OF $7 MILLION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004; $8

MILLION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005, $10 MILLION FOR EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 2006 THROUGH 2008.

THE VOUCHER PROGRAM CAN BE GREATLY ENHANCED BY HAVING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION AND THE BLACK STUDENT FUND. SEVERAL YEARS OLD AND ESTABLISHED BY PHILANTHROPISTS, THE WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION PROVIDES SMALL SCHOLARSHIPS TO DISTRICT STUDENTS TO ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. THE BLACK STUDENT FUND, LAUNCHED BY SOME OF THE DISTRICT'S MOST AUGUST CITIZENS OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO, HAS SENT HUNDREDS OF LOW-INCOME D.C. STUDENTS TO THE FINEST PRIVATE SCHOOLS. FORTUNATELY, WE DO NOT HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH. WE HAVE ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS COMMUNITY THAT HAVE A SUCCESSFUL TRACK RECORD ADMINISTERING VOUCHER-TYPE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS. THEY SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW ENTITY. I DO NOT SUPPORT GIVING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS PROGRAM OVER TO A CURRENT PRIVATE PROGRAM BECAUSE WE STILL NEED THE PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITY GENERATD BY SUCH PROGRAMS.

CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO HAVING GREATER PARTICIPATION OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT ELECTED AND APPOINTED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IN THE SELECTION OF THE BOARD MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION. BECAUSE WE CONSIDER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT A WORTHY NEIGHBOR, THE PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE TWO APPOINTEES AND EACH HOUSE SHOULD HAVE ONE APPOINTEE. THE MAYOR AND THE COUNCIL SHOULD APPOINT ONE MEMBER. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN CONSULTATION WITH THE SUPERINENDENT, IN ITS ROLE AS THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY, SHOULD APPOINT THREE MEMBERS. OF THESE THREE, ONE SHOULD BE ONE OF THE MAYOR'S APPOINTEES TO THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION.

BOTH THE BLACK STUDENT FUND AND THE WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION SHOULD HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD.

THE LEGISLATION DOES INCLUDE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND PRIVATE SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS. I BELIEVE THAT H.R. 684 ELIGIBLITY REQUIREMENTS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATE IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM SHOULD BE OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENTS – STUDENT WITH DISABLITIES, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, AND HOMELESS STUDENTS. I AGREE WITH THE INCOME LIMITS THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN H.R. 684 BECAUSE THEY ARE CLOSELY TIED TO THE REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FREE LUNCH PROGRAM. IN ALL PROBABILITY, THERE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH FUNDS TO SATISFY DEMAND FOR THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE VOUCHERS. THESE LIMITED RESOURCES SHOULD THEREFORE, BY WEIGHTED LOTTERY, BE DIRECTED TO THOSE WITH THE GREATEST NEED.

I FURTHER BELIEVE THAT IF THE PROGRAM IS TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THEN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM MUST PROVIDE SOME ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO HELP PARENTS NEGOTIATE THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS OF THE PAROCHIAL AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. THE ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION PROCESS CAN BE A DAUNTING EXPERIENCE FOR WELL TO DO PARENTS. THOSE BARRIERS SHOULD BE REMOVED FOR ALL PARENTS WHO WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM.

THE LEGISLATION DOES REQUIRE THAT THE CORPORATION SHOULD EXERCISE ITS AUTHORITY IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF EDUCATION OR ENTITY EXERCISING ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION OVER THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND OTHER SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. CONSULTATION SHOULD INCLUDE THE

REQUIRED PARTICIPATION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE PROGRAM COMPLEMENTS THE EFFORTS OF PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF ALL STUDENTS.

I BELIEVE THAT PRIVATE SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM RATHER THAN THE THREE YEARS RECOMMENDED IN H.R. 684. IF THE PROGRAM IS TO WORK, THEN THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS MUST HAVE A RECORD OF SUCCESS. OVER HALF OF OUR CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE FAILING ACCORDING TO NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND STANDARDS BECAUSE ANYBODY WAS ALLOWED TO APPLY, WHICH PRODUCED A LOT OF FLY BY NIGHT FAILURES. WE MUST PROTECT THIS NEW PROGRAM FROM SUCH MISTAKES. WHAT GOOD IS THE VOUCHER PROGRAM IF STUDENTS LEAVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR LOW PERFORMING PRIVATE SCHOOLS? TO ASSIST PARENTS IN SELECTING AND EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF PARTICIPATING PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND FACILITATING CHOICE, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNUALLY SHOULD PUBLISH PROFILES INCLUDING TEST SCORES FOR PUBLIC, CHARTER, AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND ASSIGNING VALUES TO THOSE SCORES TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PARENTS TO COMPARE THEIR RELATIVE PERFORMANCE. THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHOULD ASSUME THE EXPENSE FOR MAILING A COPY OF THIS MANUAL TO EACH HOUSEHOLD IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

I BELIEVE THAT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM SHOULD BE LIMITED TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. ALLOWING STUDENTS TO ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA DIMINISHES OUR CIVIC CULTURE AND DENUDES OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. WE SHOULD BE DOING ALL WE CAN TO STRENGHTHEN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY SPIRIT. PROMOTING PROGRAMS THAT ARE NOT

LOCATED HERE IS DETRIMENTAL TO OUR GOAL OF REINVESTING HUMAN AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL APSECTS OF COMMUNITY LIFE AND THAT INCLUDES GOING TO SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND LEARNING ABOUT THEIR ROLE AS CITIZENS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

I BELIEVE THAT CONGRESS CAN ENSURE THAT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM DOES NOT ADVERSELY IMPACT THE PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS. AS YOU MAY KNOW, CONGRESS ENACTED A PER PUPIL STUDENT FUNDING FORMULA THAT FUNDS STUDENTS EQUITABLY. THE BUDGET FOR DCPS AND THE CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE DEPENDENT UPON THE NUMBER OF THE STUDENTS THAT ATTEND THEIR SCHOOLS. WHEN A STUDENT OBTAINS A VOUCHER AND LEAVES THE PUBLIC OR CHARTER SCHOOL, THEN THE MONEY WILL VANISH. CONGRESS CAN HELP BY INCLUDING LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE ALLOWING DCPS TO COUNT THE CHLDREN WHO ARE IN DCPS NOW AS PERMANENT BASELINE.

IN ADDITION, EACH CHILD SHOULD RECEIVE A SCHOOL I.D. NUMBER AND THE MONEY SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD. IF A CHILD LEAVES A CHARTER OR PRIVATE SCHOOL TO RETURN TO DCPS, THEN THE MONEY MUST ACCOMPANY THE CHILD. IN THE FUTURE, VOUCHERS SHOULD BE FEDERALLY FUNDED BY THE ESTABLISHED PER PUPIL FUNDING FORMULA. IF THEY ARE DOING THE JOB OF FULLY EDUCATING THE CHILD, IT DOES NOT COST THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ANY LESS. WE ARE BEYOND THE ERA OF NUNS ON POVERTY VOWS STAFFING THOSE SCHOOLS.

IMPLEMENTING THESE SUGGESTIONS WILL FACILITATE PARTICIPATION IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM AND ELIMINATE FINANCIAL HARM TO THE PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS.

CONCLUSION

WE ARE ALL FUSTRATED BY THE SLOW PACE OF PROGRESS IN IMPROVING PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION. BUT THAT PROGRESS IS IN DANGER IN BEING THWARTED BY THE REDUCTION IN BUDGETS AND THE CONTINUED LACK OF ADEQUATE INVESTMENT. IF SUFFICIENT RESOURCES ARE NOT PROVIDED, WE ARE AGAIN MAKING EMPTY PROMISES TO OUR CHILDREN. VOUCHERS SHOULD NOT REPLACE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS. THE REALITY IS THAT THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN WILL CONTINUE TO RELY UPON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WE MUST BE CLEAR THAT NOT ALL OF THESE SYSTEMS ARE PANACEAS. OVER 50 PERCENT OF OUR CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE NOW FAILING. WHILE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS HAVE MADE DRAMATIC GAINS WITH THE CHANGES THAT CARDINAL MCCARRACK HAS MADE THROUGH THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL CORSORTIUM, THEIR STRUGGLE IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF MANY SCHOOLS IN DCPS. IF YOU DO NOT GIVE DCPS THE TOOLS TO COMPETE WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS AND VOUCHERS, THE CRIMINAL NEGLECT WILL CONTINUE TO BE VISITED ON A MAJORITY OF OUR STUDENTS.

WE OWE TO EVERY CHILD THE COMMITMENT AND EFFORT TO TRY ANY PROGRAM THAT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED TO IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF OUR CHILDREN. I AM COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH YOU TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Ms. Baker.

Ms. BAKER. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and members of the committee. I am Josephine Baker, executive director of the D.C. Public Charter School Board. I thank you for this opportunity to share the Board's perspective on charter schools and the important contributions they are making to public education in the District of Columbia.

My involvement and support of public education in D.C. has been lifelong. I am a product of the D.C. public school system as are my three children. Having contributed 25 years of service as a DCPS elementary school teacher, I feel I have firsthand knowledge of the importance and value of public education, particularly in this city.

The District of Columbia public schools are now presenting evidence that long sought solutions are working, the reconstituted and transformation schools are showing great promise. Student achievement is improving, faculty morale is at a new high and parents and community members are encouraged to see the tremendous resources and energy that has been infused in the schools that were in the greatest need of transformation. While there is still more work to be done, the evidence suggests that continued support will move transformation schools and the public school system up to new heights.

Over the past 6 years, charter schools have been a significant catalyst for change in our city. They independently operate public schools that are open to all District residents regardless of their neighborhood, ability, socioeconomic status or academic achievement. There is no exclusivity, no discriminatory admission test or other requirements. There are no tuition fees. Parents and students choose to attend a particular charter school because its unique focus, curriculum, structure, size and other features meet the needs of those families. Charter schools are often created through the collaboration of innovative teachers, parents and community nonprofits. They attract energetic, creative teachers and administrators who are passionate about education and who want to offer an alternative to traditional school formats.

As we move into a new kind of economy, charter schools represent the progressive approach to education; that is, preparing the next generation to succeed in an information based society. In exchange for a greater degree of autonomy, charter schools must accept greater accountability. Each school must establish a board-approved accountability plan as a part of its charter, which is then used to monitor and measure progress.

The D.C. charter law gives charter schools 5 years to demonstrate progress toward their accountability plan or risk charter revocation. The Public Charter School Board will continue this approach incorporating our NCLB and its guidelines.

There are 42 charter schools serving more than 12,000 students in the city. That amounts to one in every seven students in D.C. public schools. The majority of student populations in the charter schools are from low income families.

Despite the obstacles of inadequate facilities and funding, community demand continues to grow because of the innovative offerings and the remarkable progress we have seen in student and

school achievement. I will share with you a few of the many examples of success stories.

Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy graduated its first class in 2002. 100 percent of its graduates were accepted to college, receiving over $1 million in college scholarships.

Maya Angelou Public Charter School targets adjudicated and drop-out youth and places great emphasis on building their skills to succeed in college. While they haven't shown particularly impressive SAT–9 scores, students have made significant improvements in SAT scores. This has resulted in a very high percentage of their students graduating and attending college on scholarship. Also, an interesting statistic is that so far 70 percent of those students have remained in college.

The Arts and Technology Academy is an elementary public school that inspires their students to excel in academic subjects using arts and technology. Attendance is consistently very high and SAT–9 math and reading scores have improved each year, most significantly in its third year; 98 percent of the students are low income.

SEED is the only public boarding school in the Nation. It provides a nurturing environment for students in grades 7 through 12 and prepares them for college and future careers. SEED seeks out students whose home and neighborhood environments have proven to be barriers to their academic achievement.

Of the 21 charter schools, 19 have an average of attendance of approximately 90 percent or higher. They have earned many honors from organizations such as the National Academy of Math and Science, the Washington Post Educational Foundation and one particular of interest is that they have competed and been successful in the D.C. Scholastic Chess Competition. On SAT–9 tests there is a positive gain in both reading and math across all grades because statistically we look at how students go from 1 year to the next and we measure that gain. The elementary schools showed the most impressive gains from the previous year. We have adduced that the earlier and longer children have been in charter schools, the greater the gains have been on the SAT–9. High school students have the least gain, and this is one of the real challenges that our schools face.

There are many individual stories about students and schools succeeding against tremendous odds that I haven't shared with you today. Charter school leaders and parents are pushing through and working around tremendous barriers. They are finding creative solutions in order to meet increasing community demand. Many have been forced to spend a large proportion of their funding on expensive building leases in an extremely competitive real estate market. Others are enabled to add grades if they cannot find affordable additional space. Often money to fully invest in creative programs to offer competitive salaries and benefits to teachers and to provide other needed services is compromised to pay the expensive rental rates. Some schools have been successful in finding private donations, but even that has waned with the recent economic downturn.

It is exciting to imagine the impact the charter schools would make if not constrained by limited funding. Schools could purchase appropriate facilities and add or update technology and science labs and the like. Their innovative curricula could be fully implemented

with continuous staff and faculty development. Additional services needed by students and their families could be provided and more schools might be opened. Thousands more students might be enrolled. It is our contention that any additional Federal funding that is available to provide alternatives to public school students would be well spent on charters and transformation schools.

Local leaders have invested in and supported these alternatives in recent years and we are beginning to see positive returns. Now is the time to leverage that investment to benefit a large number of additional students rather than divert desperately needed funding toward unproved experiments.

Federal legislation is not needed to address the educational concerns of this city. What is needed is Federal support of local publicly accountable alternatives that are already working. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective and invite your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Baker follows:]

Testimony of Josephine Baker

Executive Director

DC Public Charter School Board

Before the Congressional Committee on Government Reform

May 9, 2003

Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

I am Josephine Baker, Executive Director of the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB). I thank you for this opportunity to share the Board's perspective on charter schools and the important contributions they are making to public education in the District of Columbia. My involvement in and support of public education in D.C. has been life-long. I am a product of the DC Public School System, as are my three children. Having contributed twenty-five years of service as a DCPS elementary school teacher, I feel I have first-hand knowledge of the importance and value of public education, particularly in this city.

The District of Columbia Public Schools are now presenting evidence that long-sought solutions are working. The reconstituted and transformation schools are showing great promise. Student achievement is improving, faculty morale is at a new high, and parents and community members are encouraged to see the tremendous resources and energy that have been infused into schools that were in the greatest need of transformation. While there is still much work to be done, the evidence suggests that continued support will move the transformation schools, and the public school system, upward to a new heights.

Over the past six years, charter schools have been a significant catalyst for change in our city. They are independently-operated public schools that are open to all District residents, regardless of their neighborhood, ability, socioeconomic status, or academic achievement. There is no exclusivity - no discriminatory admissions tests or other requirements. There are no tuition fees. Parents and students choose to attend a particular charter school because its unique focus, curriculum, structure, size, and other features meet the needs of those families. Charter schools are often created through a collaboration of innovative teachers, parents, and community non-profits. They attract energetic, creative teachers and administrators who are passionate about education and who want to offer an alternative to the traditional school formats. As we move into a new kind of economy, charter schools represent a progressive approach to education that is preparing the next generation to succeed in an information-based society.

In exchange for the greater degree of autonomy charter schools must accept greater accountability. Each school must establish a Board-approved accountability plan as a part of its charter, which is then used to monitor and measure progress. The DC Charter Law gives charter schools 5 years to demonstrate progress toward their accountability plan targets, or risk charter revocation. The PCSB will continue this approach, incorporating NCLB guidelines.

There are 42 charter schools serving more than 12,000 students in the city. That amounts to one in every 7 students in D.C. public schools. The majority of the student populations in the charter schools are from low-income families. Despite the obstacles of inadequate facilities and funding, community demand continues to grow, because of the innovative offerings and the remarkable progress we have seen in student and school achievement. I'll share with you a few of the many examples of success stories:

- Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy, graduated its first class in 2002. 100% of its graduates were accepted to college, receiving over $1 million dollars in college scholarships, as well as numerous academic honors and awards.
- Maya Angelou Public Charter High School targets adjudicated and drop-out youth, and places great emphasis on building their skills to succeed in college. While they haven't shown particularly impressive SAT-9 scores, students have made significant improvement in SAT scores. This has resulted in a very high % of their students graduating, and attending college on scholarship. So far 70% of those students have remained in college. A small number of students who have extreme need are provided residential accommodations on a space available basis. The school's unique success has earned it a Gates Foundation grant to replicate the concept at other sites in the city.
- The Arts and Technology Academy is an elementary public charter school that inspires their students to excel in academic subjects using the Arts and Technology. Attendance is consistently very high and SAT-9 Math and Reading scores have improved each year – most significantly in its third year (in 2002). 98% of the students are low-income.
- SEED, the only public charter boarding school, provides a nurturing environment for students in grades 7 through 12, and prepares them for college and future careers. SEED seeks out students whose home and neighborhood environments have proven to be barriers to their academic achievement.
- Several of our charter schools offer Saturday, after-school and summer programs that include academic enrichment, community service, music and sports activities and parent training.
- Seven of the nine schools that are now in their fifth year of operation have consistently met their accountability targets since opening. The remaining two schools have submitted improvement plans.
- Nineteen of the twenty-one schools have had an average attendance of approximately 90% or higher.
- Students have earned awards and honors from organizations such as the National Academy of Math and Science, the Washington Post Educational Foundation, Model UN, DC Scholastic Chess Championships, DC Public Defenders, and many others.
- On SAT-9 tests, there was a positive gain in both reading and math across all grades. The elementary schools showed the most impressive gains from the previous year. We have deduced that the earlier and longer children have been in charter schools, the greater their gains have been on the SAT-9. High school

students had the least gains in scores, which can be attributed to the fact they have come to the schools with many more years of academic deficits.

There are many other individual stories about students and schools succeeding against tremendous odds that I haven't shared with you today. Charter school leaders and parents are pushing through and working around tremendous barriers, such as sharing buildings and classrooms with other schools; using church basements, and/or facilities without playgrounds, gymnasiums, kitchens or labs. They are finding creative solutions. In order to meet increasing community demand, many have been forced to spend a large proportion of their funding on expensive building leases in an extremely competitive real estate market. Others are unable to add grades if they cannot find affordable additional space. Often money to fully invest in creative programming, to offer competitive salaries and benefits to teachers, and to provide other needed services is compromised to pay the expensive rental rates. Some schools have been successful in finding private donations, but even that has waned in the recent economic downturns. Despite the many obstacles, many of the charter schools have long waiting lists.

It is exciting to imagine the impact that charter schools would make if not constrained by limited funding. Schools could purchase appropriate facilities and add or update technology and science labs, kitchens, playgrounds, gymnasiums and libraries. Their innovative curricula could be fully implemented with continuous staff and faculty development. Additional services needed by students and their families could be provided. More new schools might be opened. Thousands more students could be enrolled.

It is our contention that any additional federal funding that is available to provide alternatives to public school students would be well spent on charter and transformation schools. Local leaders have invested in and supported these alternatives in recent years, and we are beginning to see positive returns. Now is the time to leverage that investment to benefit a large number of additional students, rather than divert desperately needed funding towards unproven experiments. Federal legislation is not needed to address the educational concerns of this city. What is needed is Federal support of local, publicly accountable alternatives that are already working. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective and invite your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Casey.

Mr. LARTIGUE. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and Ms. Norton. My name is Casey Lartigue. I'm an Education Policy Analyst at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC. It is unfortunate that we must have this hearing on increasing educational choices for D.C. parents. The discussion should be not over whether there should be more—not over another educational choice but rather on how to bring as many educational choices as possible to parents.

Most of us are familiar with the recent stories about textbooks being delivered late to D.C. public school students, about non-employees being on the payroll, numerous errors in study guides and low test scores, but I ask is this failure new?

Next year will mark the 200 anniversary of the founding of public education in the Nation's Capital. I am not sure we want to hold a party. A comprehensive report released shortly after the founding read, "In these schools poor children shall be taught reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic and such branches of the mathematics as may qualify for the professions they are intending to follow." Had the District been successful in fulfilling its mission to educate local residents, with 37 percent reading at the third grade level or below and with SAT scores more than 200 points below the national average, I would say the answer is no.

During previous congressional hearings, a U.S. Senator concluded, "A crisis has been reached in the school system of Washington. The education of more than 60,000 children is involved." Now that would accurately describe the situation today, but those words were spoken by Senator Pat Harrison in the select committee report in 1920.

Seventy-six years later the Financial Control Board concluded that the leadership of D.C.'s public school system was, "dysfunctional," and famously pointed out that, "for each additional year that students stay in DCPS the less likely they are to succeed, not because they are unable to succeed but because the system does not prepare them to succeed."

We've had many warnings between those two statements that the system has been, to quote the Washington Post, "a well-funded failure."

In 1947, the superintendent of schools declared D.C. had, "one of the sorriest school systems in the country."

The 980-page Strayer report published in 1949 found that D.C. students were achieving below the national average in all academic areas.

An analysis of standardized test scores in the 1950's revealed that one-third of the students in the District were white, public school students in the District were trailing the national average on all subjects tested.

In 1967 a comprehensive 15-month study of public schools in D.C. found, "a low level of scholastic achievement as measured by performance on standardized tests." A few months earlier in an editorial with the headline, The Silent Disaster, the Washington Post started off, "The collapse of public education in Washington is now evident." That was in 1967.

Now, the point of all that is that the failure of DCPS is not new. We wouldn't be rocking a smoothly sailing boat by trying some-

thing different. As Ms. Cafritz said earlier, change only comes through pressure. Now I don't doubt that the leaders, including Ms. Cafritz, are trying to make efforts and that they really are putting a lot of effort into it, but as she has said, children can't wait for change and that is why she now supports having vouchers as an alternative.

The opponents of choice express many concerns, and I would like to address three of them. First one is that D.C. already has choice. This is said to be an objection to vouchers, but I welcome it as good news. That means the argument over choice has been fought and won. We are no longer debating whether choice is good. I would like to remind you all that charters were not popular when the District of Columbia's Reform Act of 1995 passed. They were untried. They were an experiment. The first charter school law had passed only 4 years earlier and only 12 States had them by the time D.C. decided to try them. Charters were opposed by the D.C. Board of Education, they were opposed by the local teachers union. One Council member was quoted as saying, "We don't need nobody to come in here and run our schools." The President of the Board of Education at that time said that charters, "are taking away from the basic premise of education to allow public funds to go to private schools."

We now see that charters have been a positive addition to the D.C. education system and that many of the criticisms at that time are being made about vouchers.

A second complaint is that there is not enough space. Now the same thing was said of charters in 1995 and 8 years later we know that the critics are wrong. There are more than 40 charter schools with clearly more than 10,000 students being educated in them. And it is possible that a decade from now there could be more diversity with charter schools, public schools, private schools accepting vouchers, home schools, virtual schools. You could have 30 percent of the kids in charter schools and I could add maybe 20 percent in private schools.

Last point, D.C. residents have already voted against vouchers or D.C. residents are opposed to vouchers. Now as Representative Flake pointed out, D.C. residents voted against tuition tax credits in 1981, but we know that a lot has changed, including with the introduction of charters. The students in the schools today were not even alive when that vote was taken. I believe that parents would embrace vouchers much as they have embraced charter schools today if given the chance. Historical records suggest that the public school system cannot reform itself. It is time to put power in the hands of parents by greatly increasing the range of choices. If they don't want the voucher, they can tear it up when it comes in the mail to them.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lartigue follows:]

STATEMENT

of

Casey Lartigue,
Policy Analyst
Cato Institute Center for Educational Freedom
Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.

for the

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform

Full committee hearing on "In Search of Educational Excellence in the Nation's Capital: A Review of Academic Options for Students and Parents in the District of Columbia."

May 9, 2003

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Casey Lartigue. I'm an education policy analyst at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. It is unfortunate that we must have this hearing on increasing educational choice for D.C. parents. The discussion should not be over whether there should be another educational choice, but rather, on how to bring as many educational choices as possible to parents.

Most of us are familiar with recent stories about textbooks being delivered late to D.C. public school students; about non-employees being on the school payroll; about numerous errors in study guides; about low test scores; even about the expectations of public school leadership to receive praise for starting the school year on time. But I ask—is this failure new?

Next year will mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of public education in the nation's capital. I would suggest that we not hold a party. A comprehensive report released in 1805 read: "In these schools poor children shall be taught reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and such branches of the mathematics as may qualify them for the professions they are intended to follow."

Has the District been successful in fulfilling its mission to educate local residents? With 37 percent of district residents reading at the 3rd grade level or below, with SAT scores more than 200 points below the national average, with D.C. public school students performing well below the national average on just about every known academic achievement measure, I would say the answer is no.

During previous congressional hearings, a U.S. Senator concluded: "A crisis has been reached in the school system of Washington. The education of more than 60,000 children is involved." Although that would accurately describe the situation in the nation's capital today, those words were spoken by Sen. Pat Harrison (D-Miss.) in a select committee report. In 1920.

Seventy-six years later, the Financial Control Board concluded that the leadership of D.C.'s public school system was "dysfunctional" and famously pointed out that "for each additional year that students stay in DCPS, the less likely they are to succeed, not because they are unable to succeed, but because the system does not prepare them to succeed."

We've had warnings along the way that the system has been a well-funded failure.

In 1947, the superintendent of schools declared that D.C. had "one of the sorriest school systems in the country. "The 980-page Strayer report, published in 1949, found that D.C. students were achieving below the national average in all academic areas. An analysis of standardized test scores in the 1950s reveals that when one-third of the students in the District were white, public school students in the District were trailing the national average on all subjects tested. In 1967, a comprehensive 15-month study of public schools in D.C. found a "low level of scholastic achievement as measured by performance on standardized tests." A few months earlier in an editorial, with the

headline "The Silent Disaster," the *Washington Post* said, "The collapse of public education in Washington is now evident." That was in 1967.

The main point of this is to point out that the failure of DCPS is not new. We wouldn't be rocking a smoothly sailing boat by trying something different.

The opponents of choice have expressed numerous concerns. I'd like to briefly address three of them:

1) *"D.C. already has choice."*
This is said to be an objection to vouchers, but I welcome it as good news. That means that the argument over choice has been fought—and won. We are no longer debating whether choice is good. I would like to remind the committee that charters were not popular when the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 passed. They were "untried." The first charter school law passed only four years earlier, in Minnesota. Only 12 states had them by the time D.C. decided to try them, over the objections of many local constituents and leaders.

Charters were opposed by the D.C. Board of Education and also opposed by the local teachers union. One council member said: "We don't need nobody to come in and run our schools." The president of the board of education said that charters "are taking away from the basic premise of education to allow public funds to go to private schools." We now see that charter schools have been a positive addition to the D.C. education system. These points are now made today about vouchers.

2) *"Not enough available space."*
The same was said of charters in 1995. Eight years later, we know that the critics were wrong. Now there are more than 40 charter schools, educating more than 14,000 students. A decade from now, there could be more diversity with charter schools, public schools, private schools accepting vouchers, homeschools, and virtual schools all competing for students.

3) *"D.C. residents have already voted against vouchers"/"D.C. residents are opposed to vouchers"*
D.C. residents voted against tuition tax credits in 1981. A lot has changed since then, even in D.C. with the introduction of charters. The students in the schools today were not even alive then. I believe that parents would embrace vouchers as much as they embrace charter schools today, if given a chance. The historical record suggests that the public school system cannot reform itself. It is time to put power in the hands of parents by greatly increasing the range of educational choices.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Dr. Ladd.

Ms. LADD. Thank you. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk with you, Chairman Davis and Congresswoman Norton. I would like to make four points in my remarks today.

First, providing low income families more choice over where their children go to school is generally desirable. Students have different educational needs and one size school clearly does not fit all students. But choice for families is not the only or even the most important value in designing an education system. Choice needs to be balanced against other goals, such as improving overall student achievement and maintaining equity throughout the system.

My research in the United States and elsewhere leads me to conclude that these other values are best preserved when school choice for parents is limited to the public school system, including charter schools. Given the use of public funds, the public needs to be assured that the schools are publicly accountable, and that is not the case with private schools.

School, the counter argument by voucher supporters that private schools are better than public schools and that therefore it would be unfair to deny low income families access to such schools is not consistent with the evidence. The best studies on this question are those headed by Professor Paul Peterson from Harvard University and are based on privately funded voucher programs in New York City, Washington, DC, and Dayton, OH. These are terrific studies, because they are based on an experimental research design, the kind that we commonly use in medical research and that is now being pushed hard by the U.S. Department of Education. The key aspect of the research design is that families who apply for vouchers are randomly assigned either to get a voucher or not to get a voucher and to remain in the traditional public schools. The main results from these studies by Paul Peterson and his colleagues are clear and unambiguous. Students who use vouchers to switch to private schools achieve at no higher levels on average than those who remain in the traditional public schools. So much for the view that the autonomy of private schools automatically makes them superior to public schools.

It is true that Peterson and his colleagues do report positive gains for African American students, so that's the subgroup of vouchers students who are African American. There are no positive findings for other subgroups such as Hispanics and Whites. But the positive results that they report have been subject to additional scrutiny and are suspect in their own right in that they are inconsistent across cities and across grades within cities. The new study that's important here is the study by Professor Alan Krueger from Princeton University, who has taken the New York data where the results for African Americans appear to be strongest and has reanalyzed that data and found that with the larger sample that he uses in his study that the positive effects on achievement for African American students disappear.

The fact that there are no significant gains on average for students who use the vouchers to go to private schools doesn't surprise me one bit and it shouldn't surprise you. Some private schools are very good. The best ones tend to be the very expensive schools that low income students who have vouchers are not likely to have

much access to. But even among the ones to which the students have access to, some are likely to be good and some are likely to be quite poor or certainly below average. So what the results are saying is that the typical low income student bearing a voucher is likely to attend a private school that is no better than the public school.

Third point. There is no compelling evidence that a large scale voucher program would improve the public schools by forcing them to compete more aggressively with private schools. There are multiple studies and these are the studies that Congresswoman Norton was referring to earlier of the U.S. experience with private schools, which indicate at most a very small positive impact of private school competition on the academic achievement of students in the public schools. And in addition, though some researchers, particularly from the Manhattan Institute, have claimed large positive competitive effects from programs such as the Florida voucher program, their interpretation of the results has been shown by me and various other researchers to be highly flawed.

The best evidence of the effects of competition on public schools comes from outside the United States. It comes from Chile, which has had more than 20 years of experience with vouchers. The evidence from that country shows no clear positive effect of private schools on the country's traditional public schools.

Finally, and this point was made earlier by Congresswoman Norton, if competition among schools is desirable, it is not at all clear why such competition would have to come from private schools rather than from within the public school system in the form of choice among public schools and access to charter schools.

Fourth and finally, any federally funded voucher program that is implemented in the District or in any other U.S. city must be fully and carefully evaluated. The evaluation called for in the current version of H.R. 684 is to be applauded but falls far short, in my view, of the standards of evaluation that would be necessary and that are currently being promoted by the U.S. Department of Education for other policy interventions. Such policy evaluations need to be based on random assignment.

Given the significant educational challenges currently faced by Washington, DC, and also my own evidence-based skepticism about the benefits of voucher programs, I urge the committee not to impose a voucher program on the District of Columbia at this time. Washington should not have to serve as the guinea pig for a program whose benefits are so unclear. If the Federal Government is committed to experimenting with voucher programs, I urge it to do so in another city, one in which residents are more amenable to vouchers, and to delay recommending implementing such a program for Washington until the benefits of such a program are shown to be more positive than the evidence from the United States and other countries currently shows to be the case.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ladd follows:]

Testimony on Alternative Schools and Educational Reform in the District of Columbia Committee on Government Reform House of Representatives Congress of the United States

May 9, 2003

Helen F. Ladd
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am a professor of public policy studies and economics at Duke University. I have done extensive research on public school choice in the urban areas of New Zealand and have closely followed the literature on school choice in general, and on vouchers in particular, in the U.S. and in other countries, including Chile and Sweden. I am the author of a recent article entitled "School Vouchers: a Critical View "(*Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall, 2002) which I have submitted for the record, and also of a monograph, *Market Based Reforms in Urban Education* (Economic Policy Institute, 2002).

Like public school systems in many other large U.S. cities, the Washington, D.C. school system faces serious challenges, many of which are related to its high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. Because one size school does not fit all and because students from low-income families tend to have far fewer schooling options than do students from higher income families, I support efforts to give low-income families more choice. The argument for greater choice is far more compelling, however, when it is cautiously applied to schools within the public sector than when it is extended to private schools, as would be the case under HR 684. This conclusion follows because policy makers are in a better position to assure fair access to public than to private schools and to hold schools that are publicly operated or publicly chartered and funded accountable to the public.

The counter argument would be that by expanding choice to private schools poor children will gain access to a set of schools that are superior to the public schools and as a result will achieve at higher levels. My first and most important message this afternoon is that expanding choice to private schools through a publicly funded scholarship program is *not* likely to lead to higher student achievement.

No achievement gains for students who use vouchers

The best evidence on achievement gains emerges from a series of extremely high quality studies by Professor Paul Peterson and his colleagues of privately funded voucher programs in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Dayton, Ohio.(See reference 1.) I refer to the studies in these glowing terms because they are all based on experimental research designs of the type that are common in medical research, namely experiments in which families who apply for vouchers are randomly assigned to receive a voucher for a private school or not. Gains in achievement can then be inferred by comparing the achievement of those who use the voucher to move to a private school with those who remained in the public school (with appropriate attention to some statistical issues along the way).

Based on three years of data from New York and Washington, D.C., and two years from Dayton, the authors find no evidence of an overall achievement difference between the public and the private schools either in the aggregate or for any of the individual cities. This finding that the private schools are no better at raising the performance of low-income students than are the public schools flies in the face of well-known claims made by pro-voucher researchers such as John Chubb and Terry Moe that the autonomy of private schools will make them more productive than the more bureaucratic private schools.

Only when the authors looked separately at the results for specific racial or ethnic groups did they find any positive differences between students who switched to private schools and those who remained in public schools. In particular, they report positive effects for African Americans, but even these effects are suspect because they are consistent neither across cities nor across grades. Consider, for example, the findings for Washington, D.C. Highly touted gains of over 9 percentile points in test scores for African Americans in the second year of the D.C. program completely disappeared by the third year of the program, by which time declines in test scores emerged for voucher users in some grades. Moreover, a reanalysis of the New York City data by Professor Alan Krueger and Pei Zhu of Princeton has subjected to question even the apparently stronger and more consistent findings for New York City. Krueger and Pei found that when the definition of a black student was broadened to be more consistent with OMB guidelines on racial identity and when the sample was expanded to include students who started in kindergarten the statistically significant findings for African Americans reported by Professor Peterson and his colleagues disappeared. (See reference 2.)

These findings are not surprising. Undoubtedly, private schools come in many different forms, with some of them being very good and others being quite poor at raising achievement. The findings simply suggest that on average the sorts of private schools that are available to low-income students bearing vouchers are no better than the public schools. Importantly, however, it is worth worrying about the quality of any new schools that would emerge in response to an expanded scholarship program. Evidence from Chile's 20-year experience with a voucher program, for example, shows that student achievement in the long-established, and generously resourced, Roman Catholic schools

exceeded that in the traditional public schools, but student achievement fell short in the new secular for-profit schools that emerged in response to the voucher program. (See reference 3)

No compelling evidence of positive effects through competition

In the absence of achievement gains for the users of vouchers, it is reasonable to ask whether the introduction of a large scale voucher program would improve the education system by inducing public schools to compete for students with private schools. The evidence suggests that the jury is still out on this issue.

First, studies of the U.S. experience with private schools indicates at most a small positive impact of private schools' competition on academic achievement in the public schools. A comprehensive review of 94 estimates in 14 studies shows that most were statistically insignificant and that any positive effects were either substantively small or subject to question based on subsequent studies. (See reference 4).

Second, the small size of most of the existing publicly and privately funded U.S. voucher programs means that competitive effects are likely to be small. Though some researchers have claimed large competitive effects from the 1998 expansion of the Milwaukee voucher program and from the Florida voucher program, the conclusions are suspect since it is not possible to separate the effects of the vouchers from those of other policy changes. For example, achievement gains in schools subject to a threat of a voucher in Florida are more likely to be attributable to the state's accountability program than to the voucher program. (See reference 5.)

Third, potentially more reliable evidence emerges from Chile. Careful statistical analysis of the effects of vouchers on the traditional public schools in that country provided no evidence of they exerted a clear positive effect on the country's traditional public schools. (See reference 6.)

Even if the evidence were to indicate that competition were a positive force for change, it is not clear why such competition would have to come from private schools rather than from within the public school system. Competition can be generated by permitting students to choose among traditional public schools or to switch to charter schools. Indeed one of the main arguments for charter schools is that their presence will improve the traditional public schools.

Defining the federal role with respect to voucher programs

Whether the federal government should be promoting a school voucher program in Washington D.C. raises a number of complex issues that are specific to that city and that are beyond the scope of my testimony. However, I would like to end my remarks with a final observation about the federal role in education policy innovations of this type.

If federal policy makers believe that a school voucher program similar to the one described in HR 684 has the potential to generate positive educational outcomes, and on that basis, decide to implement it in one or more cities throughout the country, it is incumbent on the federal government to make sure the program is fully evaluated. Careful evaluation would require designing the program from the beginning with evaluation in mind. Following the lead of Professor Peterson and his colleagues, such an evaluation would require that baseline data be collected on all applicants, that applicants be randomly assigned to receive a voucher or to be in the control group, and that all participants be followed over time. The current version of HR 684 falls far short of this standard for evaluation.

Since the benefits of experimentation and evaluation extend beyond any one district or state, a strong case can be made that the federal government is the most logical entity to engage in policy experiments and evaluations of this form. Personally I would prefer to have the federal government promote policy experiments that are more likely than vouchers to be promising for improving the achievement of disadvantaged students in urban areas. Such programs might include, for example, efforts to give high quality teachers stronger incentives to teach in urban schools serving large concentrations of disadvantaged students. Nonetheless if the chosen policy intervention is a school voucher program, taxpayer dollars will be well spent only if the program is subject to a formal evaluation so that it can generate useful information for other urban areas about the outcomes, both intended and unintended, of such programs.

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6. Patrick J. McEwan, "The Potential Impact of Large Scale Voucher Programs." *Review of Educational Research,* Vol. 70, no. 2. Summer 2000.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Ms. Hackett, thank you for being with us.

Ms. PINCKNEY-HACKETT. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and Congresswoman Norton. My name is Jackie Pinckney-Hackett, and I am a parent of two sons who attend D.C. public schools, Jefferson Junior High School and School Without Walls, and I am also a PTA president. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on school choice.

I would like to begin by sharing a brief article I wrote on the liberal out-of-boundary process in the District. It is titled, "A Day to Remember."

Wednesday, March 19, 2003 will be a day to remember for all Americans. It is the day we began war to disarm Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom. And for many district parents, it was the day that the lottery was held by DCPS for out-of-boundary replacements, Operation School Choice. Both operations contain a shock and awe component. For Iraq the shock and awe was delayed a day or two. However, for the parents of the District it had an immediate impact. You see, the D.C. public school system reported receiving more than 6,000 applications for out-of-boundary replacements and having about 5,254 slots available across the city.

That's phase one of the shock and awe campaign which leads parents to believe they have school choice. The military refers to this as psychological warfare.

Phase two: Lottery results. They drop the bomb and your school choice is decapitated. Shocked. Awed.

Take a look at the middle and junior high school chart below. The schools with available seats, such as Kramer, Sousa, Eliot and Shaw, are not necessarily the schools of choice. Together those schools have 445 available seats, received 81 applications and accepted 80 applications. And the schools that are believed to be the premier cream of the crop, schools such as Hardy, Stuart-Hobson, Deal, Hine, Francis and Jefferson, had a total of 270 available seats, received a total of 2,224 applications and only accepted 239 applications.

And it gets worse at the high school level. In fact the premier schools, Banneker, School Without Walls, Ellington and M.M. Washington, are exempt from the out-of-boundary process. Many of those schools have an entrance exam and only accept the best. And most of the schools with available seats, Anacostia, Ballou, Coolidge, Eastern and Woodson, just happen to be identified as low performing schools under the No Child Left Behind Act. Spingarn had 24 seats available and accepted all 9 applications. Dunbar had 140 seats available, received 191 applications and accepted 96 applicants. I guess you are wondering why they did not accept 140 applications. Well, there were a limited number of seats for certain grade levels.

Well, I guess parents can apply for public charter schools or at least add their names to the waiting list. Wouldn't it be nice to offer parents another option, perhaps a voucher, a certificate or scholarship to allow parents to place their children in a school that provides a quality education.

I support public schools, public charter schools and private schools. Most importantly, I support children receiving the quality

education. Either you have school choice or you don't. District parents do not have a choice. A lottery is not a choice. It is a fat chance. It appears that Operation School Choice was not a success and decapitated thousands of educations. Mission failed.

I hope and pray that Operation Iraqi Freedom has better luck and fewer casualties. We know they have better funding.

There are over 6,000 parents in the District who want and need school choice programs. The condition of the D.C. public schools is no secret. Our children should not be left to suffer while we wait to improve academic performance in D.C. public schools. This school choice program must be a true and equal choice opportunity not to mention fully funded. Each choice should offer the student an excellent academic opportunity. Therefore, it may be necessary to enhance all school choices at the same performance level. It may also mean providing scholarships in the amount of $10,000 per student. To just give money for scholarships is not enough. Keep in mind there are not a sufficient number of slots in private schools to accommodate 6,000-plus students. Money is also needed to improve public and public charter schools.

In closing, I encourage Federal legislation to address educational issues in the District with a school choice program that the Nation can be proud of.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pinckney-Hackett follows:]

Testimony of Jackie Pinckney-Hackett
Committee on Government Reform
May 9, 2003

Good afternoon Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee on Government Reform.

My name is Jackie Pinckney-Hackett and I am the PTA President at Jefferson JHS in Washington, DC. I am also a parent of two sons who attend DC Public Schools--Jefferson JHS and School Without Walls SHS. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on school choice. I would like to begin by sharing a very brief article I wrote on the liberal Out-of-Boundary process in the District.

Read Article--A Day to Remember

There are over 6,000 parents in the District who want and need a school choice program. The condition of D.C. Public Schools is not secret. Our children should not be left to suffer while we attempt to improve academic performance in DC Public Schools.

This School Choice Program must be a true and equal choice opportunity not to mention fully funded. Each choice should offer the student an excellent academic opportunity. Therefore, it may be necessary to enhance all school choices to the same performance level. It may also mean providing scholarships in the amount of $10, 000 per student. To just give money for scholarships is not enough. Keep in mind there are not a sufficient number of slots in private schools to accommodate 6,000 plus students. Money is also needed to improve public and public charter schools.

In closing, I encourage federal legislation to address educational issues in the District with a School Choice Program that the nation can be proud of.

Thank you.

A Day to Remember

Wednesday, March 19, 2003 will be a day to remember for all Americans. It is the day we began war to disarm Iraq--"Operation Iraqi Freedom". And for many District parents it was the day the lottery was held by DCPS for out-of-boundary placements--"Operation School Choice". Both operations contained a "shock and awe" component. For Iraq the "shock and awe" was delayed a day or two, however, for the District parents it had an immediate impact. You see, the DCPS school system reported receiving more than 6,000 applications for out-of-boundary placements and having about 5,254 slots available across the city. That's phase one of the "shock and awe" campaign, which leads parents to believe they have a school choice. The military refers to this as psychological warfare. Phase two: lottery results--they drop the bomb and your school choice is decapitated. Shocked??? Awe!!! Take a look at the Middle/Junior High School chart below. The schools with the available seats such as Kramer, Sousa, Eliot and Shaw are not necessarily the schools of choice. Together those

schools have 445 available seats, received 81 applications and accepted 80 applications. And the schools that are believed to be the premier/cream of the crop schools such as Hardy, Stuart-Hobson, Deal, Hine, Francis and Jefferson had a total of 270 available seats, received a total of 2,224 applications and only accepted 239 applications.

Middle/Junior High School

School	Available Seats	# of Applicants Rec'd	# of Applicants Accepted
Hardy MS	25	367	25
Kramer MS	120	4	3
Sousa MS	60	15	15
Stuart-Hobson MS	10	283	10
Deal JHS	10	532	10
Eliot JHS	120	45	45
Francis JHS	90	170	74
Hine JHS	60	330	55
Jefferson JHS	75	542	75
Shaw JHS	145	17	17

And it gets worse at the Senior High School level. In fact, the premier schools--Banneker, School Without Walls, Ellington, and M.M. Washington are exempt from the Out-of-Boundary process. Those schools have an entrance exam and only accept the best. And most of the schools with the available seats--Anacostia,

Ballou, Coolidge, Eastern and Woodson just happen to be identified as "low performing" schools under the No Child Left Behind Act. Spingarn had 24 seats available and accepted all 9 of the applications submitted. Dunbar had 140 available seats, received 191 applications and accepted 96 applications. I guess you are wondering why they did not accept 140 applications. Well, there were a limited number of seats for certain grade levels.

Senior High Schools

School	Available Seats	# of Applicants Rec'd	# of Applicants Accepted
Anacostia SHS	80	7	7
Ballou SHS	220	3	3
Cardoza	0	16	0
Dunbar SHS	140	191	96
Eastern SHS	275	152	148
Roosevelt SHS	35	29	23
Spingarn SHS	24	9	9
Wilson SHS	0	520	0
Woodson SHS	125	59	57

Well, I guess parents can apply for public charter schools. Or at least add their names to the waiting list. Wouldn't it be nice to offer parents another option? Perhaps a voucher, a certificate or

scholarship to allow parents to place their children in a school that provides a quality education. I support public schools, public charter schools and private schools. Most importantly I support children receiving a quality education.

Parents should not have to gamble with their children's education. Either you have school choice or you don't. District parents do not have a choice. A lottery is not a choice! It's a fat chance. It appears that "Operation School Choice" was not a success and decapitated thousands of educations. Mission failed! I hope and pray that "Operation Iraqi Freedom" has better luck and fewer causalities. We know they have better funding.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Ms. Toyer, thank you for being here.

Ms. TOYER. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and to my Representative Congresswoman Norton. I am Iris Toyer, and I am going to try to summarize as much as I can since you have my statement.

I am a graduate of D.C. public schools, as are my three adult children. Currently I have a child in fifth grade at Stanton Elementary School. That is a transformation school. I am the PTA president at Stanton and I must say that my position on vouchers reflects that of the national PTA as well as D.C. PTA.

I say these things. I also am co-chair of Parents United. I just lay that out there because I want you to know that I come to this discussion as an informed parent, and not based on my own child's narrow experience.

The debate over vouchers has caused me to look at my school, which is a Title I school with over 636 children, 90 percent of whom are title eligible for free and reduced lunch. The impact of H.R. 684 I guess—under that they would be eligible for it.

What could possibly be wrong with giving at least a few children an opportunity to escape a public school system that often fails to educate students adequately? While perhaps well-meaning, I think the proposal is misguided.

First, there are options in the District of Columbia. I think that the school system has taken a major step in turning schools around by using the transformation process. I think that you have heard about them and in Ms. Cafritz' description—so I won't belabor it, but as a parent in a transformation school, I know the difference that it has made. It has been immediate, and it has been what I perceive to be a useful way to track how one spends Federal and local dollars.

I, frankly, believe that is a far better investment for the country. I would wonder if I was sitting out in California, why would I be putting money in the D.C. schools to go to private schools? That would just not make sense to me.

Many of the parents with whom I speak fear that public education is fast becoming a nuisance to some of our elected leaders. We feel like our schools are being abandoned, and relegated to the category of just another human service. Recent statements of voucher supporters encouraging residents to pull their children out of the city's public schools to place them in private or parochial schools in and outside of the District sends the signal that they have just given up.

The suggestion has even been made that vouchers will engender competition. Well, if our public schools were as well-funded as some of the city's private schools, I might agree. However, the very folk who tell us this have never fully funded a budget for the D.C. public schools. Just like doctors take an oath, I believe it is also the duty of elected leadership, local and national, to first do no harm.

I would suggest that vouchers do not address, much less meet, the most urgent needs born by District school students. Our facilities are falling apart. We are trying to address emergency repairs for, among other things, leaking roofs, archaic plumbing, and electrical systems. The list goes on. Vouchers will not fix broken

schools. They will at best provide an additional opportunity for a handful of students by abandoning and neglecting the children remaining in the public schools.

Public schools are the means by which we fulfill our responsibility to educate our children, and thereby prepare them to be responsible citizens and enable them to compete for jobs and other economic opportunities. Public schools, charter and traditional, must admit all children, while vouchers use public tax dollars to permit private schools to choose whatever students they want.

I assure you that as much good things as have been said about the parochial schools, you can bet that our limited-English proficiency children, children with behavior problems, low levels of academic achievement, and special education requirements will not move to the front of the list.

Finally, I would only touch on the issues that people have tried to make this ideological. For me as a District resident, I have never been fully engaged in the political debate over ideology or not—you know, my focus has always been educational.

But I will tell you, as a lifelong resident of this city, there are a few reasons—and I am just going to put this out there—why people in the neighborhood call this the "last plantation." I say this not disrespectfully, but as our "overseers in Congress," the people in my neighborhood really resent when the Congress disregards what the people in this community want for its children. The overwhelming majority of the people in this community are against vouchers—there will always be disagreements, but I would hope that public policy is based on most often what a community wants and not what outside people want.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Toyer follows:]

Statement of Iris J. Toyer
Before the Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
Friday, May 9, 2003

Good morning, Chairman Davis and members of the Committee. My name is Iris J. Toyer. I am a District of Columbia resident and D.C. Public School parent. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of tens of thousands of parents in the District of Columbia who strongly believe in public education and want a system of public schools that is capable of delivering a quality education for their children.

My association with the D.C. Public schools (DCPS) goes back to 1956 when I first entered kindergarten at Stanton Elementary School. I am a DCPS graduate and the mother of four, three of whom are DC Public School graduates. My eleven-year-old son is a fifth grader at Stanton Elementary School in S.E. Washington. I am the PTA president at my child's school.

At the citywide level working on public school funding and reform issues, I am the co-chair of Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools. We are a volunteer citywide parent organization established in 1980 to support quality public education in the District of Columbia. We issue reports on a range of school finance and school reform issues. The mission of Parents United is to empower parents and the community with information and advocacy skills to transform D.C. Public Schools to ensure educational success for all our children. I say these things so that you know I come to this discussion as an informed parent and not solely on the basis of my own children's experience with the city's public schools. That said, I am here today as the parent of a child in a No Child Left Behind School that is also a Transformation School.

The current debate over vouchers in the District of Columbia has caused me to wonder how a voucher program would impact my school and its students. Stanton is a Title I school with over 630 students. Over 90% of our students are eligible for free and reduced lunch and presumably would be eligible for a voucher under H.R. 684.

The proposal has superficial appeal: What could possibly be wrong with giving at least a few children an opportunity to escape a public school system that often fails to educate its

students adequately? While perhaps well meaning, I think the proposal is misguided for a number of reasons.

First, there are better options that will serve an entire school community. I mentioned that Stanton is a Transformation School. This means that after careful review by a team sent in to assess our school, the Superintendent designated Stanton for transformation—or reconstitution. We are one of fifteen such schools in the system.

In short, our school was shut down and reopened with a new administrative team. Our new principal was able to select a new staff – the only limitation being that no more than 50% of the former teaching staff could return. During our first year of transformation additional resources programmatic and human, facility enhancements, staff training and development and more have been put in place. The best part is that no Stanton student had to leave the community to receive better educational opportunities and so we call ourselves the New Stanton School. Immediately after Stanton being named a Transformation School we were also placed on the list as a No Child Left Behind school. I can tell you that last school year our population was approximately 640. Currently we have 636 students most of whom live in-boundary and walk to school. None of our parents execercised the option to leave for greener pastures at a "higher performing" school.

Our school system gets the rap for a lot of missteps—and many of them deservedly so—Transformation Schools has not been one of them. Turning schools around is a costly proposition and it takes patience and planning. There are many other public schools that are ripe for transformation. My greatest concern is that because of the city's failure to fully fund public education, this initiative will be stalled and/or terminated. I believe that the Transformation Schools initiative is a far better investment for federal dollars and parallels the tenets of No Child Left Behind than handing out individual tuition vouchers where there is not opportunity to track student performance. Transformation as well as other public schools must report yearly progress or lack thereof and there are accountability mechanisms in place to help parents and the public make decisions.

Many of the parents with whom I speak fear that public education in DC is fast becoming a nuisance to some of our elected officials. We feel like our schools are being abandoned and

relegated to the category of just another human service. Recent statements of voucher support encouraging residents to pull their children out of the city's public schools to place them in private or parochial schools in and outside of the District of Columbia sends the signal that they have just given up. The suggestion has even been made that vouchers will engender competition and make the public schools better. Well, if our public schools were as well funded as some of the city's private schools I might agree. However, the very folk who tell us this have never fully funded a budget for the D.C. public schools. Just like doctors take an oath, I believe it is also the duty of elected leadership--local and national—"to first do no harm."

D.C. Public Schools like all urban school systems across this country is struggling to meet the demands of its students. As a parent I have been disappointed that the pace has not been faster in making significant in educational outcomes for children. However, I do know that there are several promising initiatives underway that should and have yield positive results. For example, the Teaching Fellows program that brings in career changers as new teachers; Teach For America that provides recent college graduates who were not education majors but have an interest in teaching—we have several at our school; New Leaders for New Schools, an exciting and rigorous new program that will train and provide hands on experience over a 15 month period to a group of individuals to prepare them to become school principals; and the implementation of the Masters Facility Plan that will rebuild or renovate every school in the city. It of course needs to be funded so that it does not wither and die. There are numerous other initiatives underway that the School Board President and administration should be able to speak to.

In my estimation legislation to address education issues in the District already exists—the No Child Left Behind Act. Whether one fully agrees with the Act or not, it has been a mechanism to help school systems organize around a set of principals in terms of educating children. It unfortunately did not come with the necessary funding to make its implementation fully possible.

At the local school level the mandates have wreaked havoc on school plans. One of the requirements to offer students the opportunity to move from school to school if the performance of the current school is underperforming, at some point gets to be ridiculous. At some point it is merely a shell game that does nothing to improve the student's chance to succeed. We want

every school to be a high performing one; I think that approaching the problem as this school system has done with its Transformation Schools achieves the goal of NCLB without destroying the fabric of the community.

Finally, I would suggest that vouchers do not address, much less meet, and the most urgent needs borne by District public school students. The school system is facing a financial crisis that will stall its current reform efforts, its initiatives to transform low performing schools, its plans for improving teacher quality and operating efficiency. One of the greatest needs is for renovation of the city's crumbling school facilities. Today, about 2/3 of the District's public schools are in need of emergency repairs for, among other things, leaking roofs, archaic plumbing and electrical systems, asbestos abatement, broken doors, rotted windows, broken toilets and sinks, and dysfunctional heating and cooling systems. These broken facilities impair our children's education and, at times, threaten their health and safety.

This dire situation arises after many years of neglect during which the District has deferred school maintenance in order to pay for what were then considered to be more immediate classroom needs. Critical maintenance is still being delayed; the District's 2004 budget proposal calls for slashing about 40% of the funds DCPS requested for maintenance. Helping a few families pay private school tuition bills is no answer to the DCPS high school students' petitions pleading for help with unsanitary bathrooms. Under these circumstances, the first priority of any party seeking to improve educational opportunities in the District is to fix the buildings attended by the vast majority of our children.

Second, not only will vouchers not fix DC's broken public schools, they will, at best, provide additional educational opportunity for a handful of students only by abandoning and neglecting the children remaining in the public schools. Public schools are the means by which we fulfill our responsibility to educate our children and thereby prepare them to be responsible citizens and enable them to compete for jobs and other economic opportunities as adults. DC Public Schools (and Charter Schools) must admit *all* children; while vouchers use public tax dollars to permit *private schools to choose* whatever students they want. One can be certain that private schools will tend not to choose students with special education requirements, limited or no

English proficiency, behavior problems or with low levels of academic achievement. Those students will be left to the public schools whose funding, in the meantime, has been diminished by the loss of students whose needs are not so costly.

Furthermore, in 2004 the funding allocated to vouchers might be able to afford between 1400 and 1867 scholarships in awards ranging from $3750-$5000, if not a penny is used to administer the program. However, a survey by the 21st Century School Fund, a local advocacy organization, reveals that only 32 private and parochial schools in DC charge tuition below $5,000, and those serve only 4181 students in grades K-12. If 10% of the current slots in those schools were to be devoted to vouchers, only 418 students would be able to use the vouchers in the District without having to afford the balance of tuition costs and other mandatory fees at a higher priced school.

How could a family living at the poverty level afford the balance of tuition at other private schools? The voucher becomes nothing more than a tease for such families. And what about those families who don't find a slot in a private school in DC? With so few spaces, other voucher recipients may find themselves bussing their children all the way to Fairfax or Falls Church city to find an available slot at that price. In those circumstances, vouchers will succeed in disrupting fragile family lives, leaving children in the region's notorious traffic jams for hours, and reviving the forced bussing programs that our nation has finally managed to end.

Third, the schools that receive public tax dollars for private purposes will not have to comply with the same standards of accountability and reporting that our public schools do. It is quite surprising that Congress, after so proudly accomplishing the No Child Left Behind legislation, would allow, or especially encourage, public money to be used without the same level of accountability that it now mandates to the nation's public schools. A voucher school can be eligible to participate in the program if it serves 25 students for three years. Such a school could not begin to compare its educational offerings to those of public schools. Such low standards of eligibility are an affront to the U.S. taxpayer who envisions much more comprehensive programs being delivered with his or her education dollars.

I believe that any experiment with children's education must be researched based and have some possibility of improving a situation before it is implemented wholesale on a school community. Time and again we read that the voucher programs in New York, Cleveland and Milwaukee have not provided the type of success its proponents promised.

Finally, as a lifelong residents of the District of Columbia the Congressional imposition of a voucher experiment in the District is a direct attack on Home Rule. It is not even remotely conceivable that Congress would impose a voucher program in Houston or Miami if the Texas or Florida congressional delegations opposed the program. While the District, of course, lacks voting representation in Congress, our only delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, has spoken out forcefully against the voucher proposal. Moreover, Ms. Norton's view mirrors that of her constituents – a recent poll by the National School Board Association found that 76 percent of District voters do not support the establishment of vouchers in the District.

In short, I am grateful that the President and members of Congress are interested in improving education in the District. Simply put, however, if they want to help, the first priority should be to keep public dollars in publicly accountable schools where they can be used to serve all children, not a small, select minority.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you all very much.

Ms. Toyer, I will respond to that. We heard the Mayor up here, the elected leader of the city, saying he wants it. I don't know what else we can do sitting here.

Ms. TOYER. Mr. Mayor has not listened to his residents. He could not put out a list of groups that he has talked to. He has just not done that.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. He is the elected leader of the city. Nobody is trying to impose anything. We are trying to give the city additional resources. If you don't want them, fine. We will go somewhere else. Are you satisfied with the city school system as it stands today?

Ms. TOYER. I wouldn't say I was satisfied, and I would hope that the parents of students in Fairfax County aren't satisfied either, because I believe that gives everybody a free pass to do whatever they want with your children.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The difference between Fairfax and this city in terms of its test scores is a long way away. I think you will find approval ratings in Fairfax of its school system actually pretty high. It doesn't mean it is perfect, but they are improving. There are a lot of differences.

Ms. TOYER. Absolutely, and I was going to bring that up. I don't think we can compare them in that regard.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. You are the one that brought up the comparison, not me.

Ms. TOYER. What I said was, I didn't think they were satisfied. I would think that the PTA president and the teacher—I raised Fairfax because no parent that is interested in their child's education is willing to sit back and say, "Oh, you are doing everything." It can't be that way.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. You are not satisfied. I am not satisfied, and we are trying to explore ways to help the children of the city. That is what this is all about. It is not trying to be a testy exchange or anything else; we are just trying to look for ways.

We have heard the Mayor come forward, we've heard council member Chavous, an elected leader, we have heard Ms. Cooper Cafritz, an elected leader, give a different perspective than you, in all fairness. Ms. Norton gives a different perspective, and she is an elected leader. We try to sort it out.

This is hardly an assault on home rule, as the Washington Post said. These are ideas in public play at this point, and we are trying in this committee, which is the Congress—the Constitution has given us some authority on this issue to look at it and sort it out. We are going to try to look at it together.

Mr. Lartigue, let me ask you, what kind of regulations would you like to see in a school choice program?

Mr. LARTIGUE. You have to remember what the goal is. If the goal is to handicap the schools, then obviously you put as many regulations as you want. If the goal is to offer as many possible choices, then the regulations should be limited.

Now, something that I think would be reasonable, what I believe—it is what I believe is going on in Colorado, where only the students who receive the vouchers are tested. Some private schools

have said they would be willing to accept that and some others would not, but I think that would be a reasonable regulation.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Do you think there ought to be an accreditation requirement for schools that vouchers could go to.

Mr. LARTIGUE. My understanding is that private schools already have an accreditation process. If you want to add something on top of that——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I am not trying to handicap, but I am trying to make sure, if we are spending this money in an area, that there are certain levels. I'm just asking for your opinion.

Mr. LARTIGUE. Sure. That is a good minimum requirement.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We are trying to wrestle with an issue here and see how it might work. That is what I am trying to do.

Dr. Ladd, let me ask you, one thing that surprises me is that a lot of times there is a difference, to some extent, between public school kids and private school in the sense that parents who send their kids to private school have put money out of their own pocket.

My experience has been, and I don't know what it globally is, that you have a higher level of parental involvement at the private school level than you do at the public school level.

Is that not your observation, or do you disagree with that, on average? My kids are in public school. All three of them have gone through the Fairfax Public School. We have a high degree of involvement in our kids' education. But on balance, we find out that it may be a little higher.

Ms. LADD. That is fully consistent with a lot of the evidence, and part of that parental involvement is coming because you have students from higher-income families in general in those private schools, and kids are motivated to go to college.

I don't blame other families for wanting to put their children in such schools. We all want to do that. There is a question of how many of those higher-income families there are around to spread among the thousands and thousands of lower-income children.

The schools you are familiar with are probably not the typical ones that voucher-bearing students from Washington would go——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Actually, I am familiar with a pretty broad array of them. You would be surprised, I get around.

My question is, if you have a high degree of parental involvement in private schools, you are still telling me there is no difference, test-scorewise?

Ms. LADD. I am telling you what the evidence suggests. Given those students who were given vouchers and could select private schools in New York City, Dayton, Washington, DC——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. So that is on the voucher level?

Ms. LADD. Definitely it's on the voucher level. Yes. It is important those studies are voucher studies, because that is what you are talking about now.

There is no doubt that achievement in many private schools is higher. The issue is, is that the result of the sorts of people who have been able to afford to go to those private schools, or is it the result of those private schools being more effective than the public schools?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I take it your solution for D.C. on a quick basis would be just put up more charters and more choice, as op-

posed to trying to put money into a public school system that by all intents and appearances can't correct itself overnight?

Ms. LADD. No, I am not for just putting more money into charters. I have not studied the D.C. system. In fact, most of my research right now deals with teacher quality. I was interested in the comments that were made about the transformation schools, and the reason that you can't go forward too fast with that model is because of personnel issues. Getting high quality teachers into urban school districts is extremely important.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. My question is, for the kid that is going to be a third-grader next year and will never get another crack at being in third grade in their life, to try to improve their options right now in the city. I think we can agree that, by and large, we would like to do that.

What would be your solution? Vouchers you don't think work under that circumstance? Clearly, public schools in the city, some of them by every objective criteria are a failure. So what's the solution?

Ms. LADD. That's right. It is not clear that vouchers would solve the problem, and certainly not for the third-grader who is in school now. By the time you got a voucher system up and running, and if it really is going to be a federally funded pilot program, getting all the evaluation program set in place before the program goes in, plus you are talking——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We are talking about 4,000 open spots, for example, in private schools in the city. I have not looked at it, and I don't know what the relative teaching quality is in these schools. We didn't ask you to look at that before you came here.

If the parents wanted to choose to send to one of those schools, as opposed to the school they are at—I don't know the difference—that would be a solution? But even that, you are not comfortable with that solution?

Ms. LADD. Even that, if you throw that out as a solution. What's going to happen——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. For the next year, or the following year. We will agree vouchers are not a long-term solution.

Ms. LADD. What is going to happen is many of those families who start looking into those schools are going to find out that, even with the voucher, they are not going to be accepted by those schools, they are not going to be able to afford the transportation to go to those schools, or they are not going to be able to afford the additional tuition and additional expense.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. What if we cover all that? What if we make the voucher $6,500, which is above the median——

Ms. LADD. That is the financial part. What about the fact that those schools, in many cases, have incentives not to accept disadvantaged students? Their reputation depends in part on having a disciplined student body, having motivated parents. I don't mean to imply——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Legitimate concerns. You are not saying the parents aren't motivated. I'm just trying to take this to the nth degree. What if we could solve that?

Ms. LADD. How do you solve that problem?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. What if schools say, we want these kids. We have vacancies. We want these kids. What is your objection then? Those are legitimate concerns you raise, but——

Ms. LADD. So—and what is the goal here? Is choice the goal or is raising the achievement of students the goal?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Giving that kid a good third grade education where they can learn to move ahead.

Ms. LADD. That is the goal, giving the kid a good third grade? So it is not just choice?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Absolutely not.

Ms. LADD. What the studies from New York, Washington, DC, and Dayton say is that a lot of those children—on average, the children going to private schools, the ones that can afford to do so with vouchers, are not going to be——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. What I am asking is if we can solve these other problems you are talking about, I was just asking theoretically—or are you so rigid about not wanting vouchers—you solve those problems at that point and they get a better third year, is there anything wrong with that?

Ms. LADD. Just so you know my position, I am not adamantly opposed to vouchers. If the starting point were a whole program designed to improve education, and vouchers were a safety valve for a very small percentage, but a part of a program that might be OK. But vouchers as the solution to any problem, that is what is crazy.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I agree with that. I'm just trying to find out—it can be part of a larger-scale program. That is all I am trying to get from you is to look at that.

It may not work in Cleveland, and I don't know if it works in these other areas or not. That doesn't mean we can't construct something that may work.

You have raised some things that I think are very legitimate concerns.

Ms. LADD. One final comment, Chairman Davis, if I may. Consider some of the constraints you may need to put on private schools for that to work—forget the student mix issues. You would want those private schools to accept people through a lottery. You would want them not to be able to charge any additional tuition.

Those are the sorts of requirements that you already have on charter schools. So why go the private school route? You already have those sorts of schools with charters, plus you have the public charter, which in principle provides some public accountability. In fact, I think accountability may not be strong enough for the charter schools.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I am going to yield to Ms. Norton.

My response to that very briefly would be that because some charters work and some don't. That is the reality, any time you do something experimentally. If you have a private school system that seems to be working, that has been documented as working, why not?

Ms. LADD. Can I respond?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Sure.

Ms. LADD. The part of the private school system that is working, to the extent it has been documented independently of vouchers, is the parochial system, the long-established parochial system. What

is interesting is when we look at countries like Chile, that have had vouchers for a long period of time—which is not what you are recommending right now, but once you start down this track that is where you are headed—what happens is the new schools that are set up in response to the voucher payments, the sorts of schools that some of my colleagues at this table would like to be established, are, in general, quite poor schools.

The evidence from Chile suggests that the Catholic schools that have been around for a while do a pretty good job in terms of student achievement, but the new schools that were set up in response were very poor.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I think you have described legitimate parameters and concerns. That is what we are trying to wrestle with.

I am not an ideologue. I have traditionally voted against using Federal dollars for vouchers. I have great concern about that. But in this case, we have a responsibility to look at it. We have parents who are interested in it, we have a Mayor whose interested in it; so we are going to give that a very healthy look, at this point, and see what we might be able to construct. I think your testimony has been very instructive and helpful. Thank you.

Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What we have to find out is if we have District residents who are interested in looking at it. In that regard, I must say, Ms. Cafritz, you are not the manifestation of home rule.

Ms. CAFRITZ. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Home rule is when you have the two branches of government, of which you are not even one, to agree on a policy issue.

I am not the manifestation of home rule. The Mayor is not the manifestation of home rule. Even the Council, unanimously, is not the manifestation of home rule. It takes both branches of government to manifest home rule. This is not like a French king who says, the State, that is me.

Ms. CAFRITZ. They were here today saying the same thing, that is why I said that.

Ms. NORTON. They were not here saying it, on behalf of the majority of the Council. The chair of the Council was very clear that the latest resolution from the Council because against vouchers. So was, if I may say so, the latest resolution of the school board.

Ms. CAFRITZ. I recited that in my remarks.

Ms. NORTON. You are here, then, in your private capacity.

Ms. CAFRITZ. I said that in my opening remarks.

Ms. NORTON. You used, however, the letterhead of the school board. The school board, I take it, is where it was always as of that resolution: it still opposes vouchers. Is that true or not?

Ms. CAFRITZ. We are readdressing the issue, as I said in my testimony, at our May meeting. So the answer to that is, I do not know.

Ms. NORTON. The answer to that is, it has not changed yet, Ms. Cafritz.

Ms. CAFRITZ. No.

Ms. NORTON. It seems to me a hedging of that answer.

Ms. CAFRITZ. I guess you are the president of the school board, too.

Ms. NORTON. Particularly after you wrote a piece in the Washington Post without even indicating that you were speaking for yourself. You ought to be very careful from here on in as to how you speak for your board, when so far you are out there by yourself, and there is a written resolution on the record.

It is very important for a public official to be real clear.

Ms. CAFRITZ. I have spoken at length with my board members individually.

Ms. NORTON. They have not spoken at length yet. You are not home rule and you are not even the school board.

Ms. Cafritz, you must have shared my concern to hear all the people—nobody at the table defended the D.C. public schools. I thought the D.C. public schools were doing better. Yet we hear, these awful public schools. The chairman has said it, the Under Secretary said it, "Terrible schools, everybody ought to get out of them." Even the school board said it.

Isn't there any defense to be made of the D.C. public schools? Have you done nothing to improve the D.C. public schools? If there is a defense, I think you ought to make it on the record now, because I don't like the way the record has been left, and I hope it is better than how it appeared.

Ms. CAFRITZ. Thank you for the opportunity.

The chairman will definitely receive all of the correct information on public schools. However, that will not stop the local bashing of public schools because there are elections to be won.

To start with, Mr. Lartigue, 99 percent of our books were delivered on time.

Ms. NORTON. If I may say in your defense on these books, if you did have them delivered on time, you have my congratulations; because one of the main reasons you can't get your books done on time is that you are forced to have—our budget process makes it almost impossible for you to run the schools.

Schools end in June; they start in September. Our budget year ends September 30. Sometimes you have had your budget over here until October—I'm sorry, December and January, this last year was expected. Yet, you are expected to order books and get them done on time. That is the last time you should be held accountable for.

Ms. CAFRITZ. You are absolutely correct. The same thing happens with our grant funds, they go to Gandhi, they go to the City Council, we get them at least no earlier than 5 months after the program starts.

Additionally, we developed a schedule A. On the dais, Kevin Chavous said it was the first one they have seen in 20 years, and we are taking care of getting rid of those employees, none of whom were ghost, by the way.

Ms. NORTON. That was obviously at a time when they had to make budget cuts. That was very troublesome to hear. How far along are you in getting rid of the excess employees?

Ms. CAFRITZ. We have so many we have to get rid of, that I would say, we are about halfway there. Our budget that the City Council is sending up there is going to require that more hundreds

be released. So with the cutting—we got cut last September, and it has been all through the year.

Ms. NORTON. You would be less cut if you didn't have those excess employees.

Ms. CAFRITZ. It is hard to say. Well, the excess employees, as they are referred to—there are only about 100 people who are over the number of slots we had. Those 100 people came from transformation schools, because in order to do transformation schools right, you have to get new employees. But there is no mechanism for getting rid of the old ones because they are in the union and they have to be placed—they have seniority, most of them, and they have to be placed in other jobs somewhere.

If you want to talk about the root of the problem and some things that we can do to solve it, that is the root of that problem, in all truth.

Ms. NORTON. Obviously, I know you are cleaning it up.

Ms. CAFRITZ. You said I would have a chance to give a defense of——

Ms. NORTON. I thought you said you were going to send it up here.

Ms. CAFRITZ. No. I think some of it definitely needs to be on the record, OK?

Ms. NORTON. I would love to have it on the record, if you can do it briefly.

Ms. CAFRITZ. As far as charter schools are concerned, we have cooperative relationships with a number of charter schools. In fact, we are working with David Domenici's schools——

Ms. NORTON. Ms. Cafritz, my question was that it seemed to me that there was even unfair criticism of the progress of the D.C. public schools. That would include charters and public schools. We were told they were the worst in the country.

Ms. CAFRITZ. That is exactly right. That is what I am attempting to address. If you would rather not hear it, that is all right, I will submit it.

Ms. NORTON. I want to hear about the D.C. public schools. They didn't pick out charters or the others, they just said you got $11,000 per student, the worst in the country.

Ms. CAFRITZ. That is inaccurate in and of itself.

Ms. NORTON. They said no improvement in the D.C. public schools. Why don't you put some of that on the record.

Ms. CAFRITZ. As I said in my testimony, we have had increased test scores in most of our grades, 11 of them. We have improved more than charter schools in our increases.

We have fewer failing schools proportionately, as I said in my testimony; 54 percent of charter schools are in a failing category based on the No Child Left Behind Act information. OK? We are improving faster than any other kind of choice. Anyone who is interested in kids, and knows what they are doing, doesn't need competition. You are not motivated by competition, you are motivated by what children need.

We are so far behind in the District of Columbia in every way with regard to our children, allowing them to live in poverty or whatever, that we should be willing to take any help that we can get to educate them faster, period, pure and simple.

The school system is educating kids faster than any other system. Our programs are working. The City Council has cut out support for transformation schools. They sat here and told you they had supported it. That doesn't exist anymore. Our teacher induction money has been cut, professional development money has been cut.

So, yes, we are fixing things; but let us get serious. Let us get to serious work, and let us see how we can fix the entire thing as fast as we can for these kids.

Ms. NORTON. I will move on to Dr. Ladd, now.

Of course, to the extent that our public officials demand money for private schools, that money is not going to go to transformation schools, that money is not going to go to charter schools.

Ms. CAFRITZ. It is not going, anyway. That is my point.

Ms. NORTON. If we stood up and said that's where the money should go——

Ms. CAFRITZ. I have stood up for 2½ years, but it still hasn't gone.

Ms. NORTON. In fact, I heard you say since they going to put it on us anyway, why don't we just collapse?

Ms. CAFRITZ. You never heard me say that.

Ms. NORTON. The District would be colonized already.

Dr. Ladd, you heard me ask the Mayor about his rendition of a study that showed stellar improvement in the Washington, DC, schools for these children, 10 percentage points increases. I then told him that the study, the 14 studies, of which this was one, did not show that.

Would you clarify whether Washington, DC, was included and whether Washington, DC, had these 10-point improvements in the parochial schools?

Ms. LADD. Yes, I will try to do that.

The 14 studies you were referring to were studies related to the effects of competition from the private schools on the public school system, so that is a slightly different issue.

But referring specifically to that 10 percent increase, and I think he probably meant to say a 9 percent increase, I think what he is probably referring to there is the second-year findings from the Peterson studies out of Harvard by Professor Peterson for Washington, DC.

The interesting thing about the Washington, DC——

Ms. NORTON. He says it was Howell and Wolf.

Ms. LADD. Part of the Peterson group. Those are students of Peterson's. It is Peterson and his colleagues.

By the way, the latest summary of those studies are in a book that was published by Brookings just last year by Howell and Peterson. That is the latest results to turn to.

The reason I mention that is that the reference he made is to the second-year results in Washington, DC, for Black students.

The first-year results showed no benefits, negative effects in the higher grades, the seventh and eighth grades. The second-year results for some strange reason, it is probably just a statistical fluke, showed large gains, a little over 9 percentile points in Washington, DC.

The important fact is, though, when you look at the third-year results, the ones that are in that book that I just mentioned and which are part of this same studies, the results are zero for African American students, sort of over the 3 years of being in the program. Those are the most recent and best findings from the Peterson, Wolf, Howell and other studies.

Ms. NORTON. I just want to correct Mr. Lartigue, who said the teachers union had not been involved in the Federal Charter School Bill that was passed here for the District of Columbia on a home-rule basis.

Al Shanker himself, who was then the late President of the teachers union——

Mr. LARTIGUE. The Washington Teachers Union, that is what I meant to say.

Ms. NORTON. If I can finish, the American Federation of Teachers and the Washington Teachers Union—Al Shanker would not be involved if his own local was not involved. Both Al Shanker and the local Washington Teachers Union were one of the groups that sat with us on charter schools.

Mr. LARTIGUE. That has nothing to do with what I just said, though. I said the Washington Teachers Union was opposed.

Ms. NORTON. I am just correcting what you said earlier. The teachers union helped design our open Charter School Statute. I just want you to know that, since that was in your testimony.

I am almost through, Mr. Chairman. I was very amused by your testimony, Ms. Pinkney-Hackett, and very pleased that you have two sons in the D.C. public schools. But I want to tell you—and I'm sure all the shock and awe that you spoke about is recognizably true. But you haven't seen any shock and awe yet until you see the shock and awe that is going to be there for the people trying to win the lottery by getting one of those scholarships. That puts students in precisely the same position you are. It is an ever-expanding expectation, and all vouchers do is add one more level of shock and awe to the mix.

Finally, may I ask, Mr. Chairman, that a set of documents be put in the record, including the council and school board resolutions opposing vouchers. I know of no local organizations that represent anybody in the District who favor vouchers. There is a local PTA opposed, local Parents United, and a number of others.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Without objection, the resolutions will be put into the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEES

AVIATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

SUBCOMMITTEES

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CIVIL SERVICE AND AGENCY ORGANIZATION

A Model to Avoid: Arizona's Tuition Tax Credit Law

Arizona's Private Tuition Tax Credit

The first type of tax credit available under the Arizona law allows taxpayers to claim a credit against state income taxes for contributions up to $500 ($625 if filing jointly) to eligible "School Tuition Organizations" (STO).[6] These STOs, in turn, provide scholarships to students, paying for all or part of their tuition at religious and other private schools. The legislation stipulates that taxpayers claiming this credit cannot earmark their donations to benefit their own dependents. It also states that STOs are to spend at least 90 percent of their revenue on scholarships, and to provide scholarships to students in more than one school.[7]

To help enact the law, tax credit supporters argued that it would expand educational opportunities for those who could not otherwise afford private school.[8] However, the law does not require STOs to provide any scholarships to students based on financial need or previous inability to attend a private school. Furthermore, although parents are precluded from designating their own dependents as beneficiaries of their "donation," they are able to designate other specific individuals. As a result, as the *Arizona Republic* reported, some parents are writing $500 checks for their friends' children, who, in turn, are reciprocating. Under this loophole, 96 percent of the more than $361,000 donated to the Arizona Scholarship Fund—the seventh-largest STO in 1999—was earmarked for students who were *already* enrolled in private schools.[9] Trent Franks, a former state legislator who conceived of Arizona's tax credit approach, openly admits that this is how many parents are using the law.[10]

Other evidence confirms that the tax credit program primarily benefits those who can already afford to send their children to religious and other private schools. As of the year 2000, at least 25 of the 35 STOs that reported data provided tuition payments primarily to religious schools, usually specific schools that reflect the religious views or affiliations of these STOs.[11] A telephone survey conducted by PFAWF recently found that many STOs give priority to students already enrolled in religious schools that reflect the organization's religious mission or goals. In the survey, 19 of the 21 STOs responding indicated that their practice was to serve students already enrolled in private or religious schools; public school students are considered for scholarships only if money is left over after these existing private school students have been provided for.[12] As a result, those who gain from this tax law provision are generally those who have already had their children in private schools.[1]

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[1] People for the American Way, April 9, 2003

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CIVIL SERVICE AND
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Vouchers & Tuition Tax Credits: The State Battlegrounds

Arizona

On April 9, the state House of Representatives voted 31-27 to defeat a tax-credit voucher bill. Gov. Janet Napolitano had threatened to veto the bill, which would have granted corporations tax credits to pay private or parochial school tuition for students. The tax-credit voucher plan, Senate Bill 1263, could have diverted up to $50 million in state tax revenues by the year 2008.[1]

Although supporters claimed the bill was targeted to low-income families, opponents said that the tuition vouchers were not enough to cover the full cost of most private schools. According to the Arizona Republic, House Minority Leader John Loredo asked supporters: "Exactly what makes anybody believe that any poor family will be able to pay the rest of the cost?"

Another bill introduced early in the session to provide a $1,500 tax credit for home-school parents was withdrawn in January.

While Arizona legislators rejected a tax-credit voucher plan, the state does have a tuition tax credit law. Serious concerns about this law were raised by a PFAW Foundation report, "A Model to Avoid," and were echoed by researchers at Arizona State University.

[1] People for the American Way, April 9, 2003

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CIVIL SERVICE AND
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Wards 7 & 8 Charter and Transformation Schools –
William Lockridge School Board Member

6 Charter Schools
Arts and Technology Academy Public Charter School
Friendship Edison Public Charter School – Woodridge Campus
Howard Road Academy Public Charter School
Seed Public Charter School
Southeast Academy of Scholastic Excellence Public Charter School
Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School

7 Transformation Schools
Choice Academy at Douglas SHS
Evans Middle School
Stanton Elementary
Wilkinson Elementary
Turner Elementary
Simon Elementary
Davis Elementary

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Submitted By Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton for the record

Chairman Linda W. Cropp

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Councilmember Jack Evans

Councilmember Harold Brazil

Councilmember Carol Schwartz

Councilmember Kathy Patterson

Councilmember Sandra (Sandy) Allen

Councilmember Sharon Ambrose

Councilmember David Catania

Councilmember Phil Mendelson

Councilmember Vincent B. Orange

Councilmember Jim Graham

Councilmember Adrian Fenty

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To declare, on an emergency basis, the sense of the Council's opposition to Congress legislatively imposing school vouchers on the residents of the District of Columbia.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this resolution may be cited as the "***Sense of the Council*** Opposition to Congressionally Imposed School Vouchers ***Emergency Resolution*** of 2002".

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) School choice is essential to public education reform.

(2) Each community must be permitted the freedom to decide the

best vehicles for public education reform.

(3) Education advocates, parents, teachers, and members of the Council of the District of Columbia decided, by act of the Council, that the best vehicle for public education reform in the District of Columbia is to offer charter schools and to improve the public schools of the District of Columbia.

(4) 18% of public school children attend charter schools in the District of Columbia which is the highest percentage of school age children attending public charter schools in the nation, and the District has more charter schools than any comparable jurisdiction in the country.

(5) The decision on local education matters should be decided by the local residents and local officials of the District of Columbia and not legislatively by Congress.

(6) The Council finds it inappropriate for Congress to utilize existing federally and locally budgeted resources for a voucher program.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that residents must be allowed to make their own educational choices, that the will of the residents and local officials is to pursue educational reform in the District of Columbia, and to provide alternatives for children to attend charter schools, and that Congress should allow the residents of the District of Columbia to decide educational issues locally as do other jurisdictions.

Sec. 4. The Secretary of the Council of the District of Columbia shall transmit copies of this resolution upon its adoption to the President of the United States, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Delegate to the United States Congress, the chairperson of the committees of the United States Congress with oversight and budgetary jurisdiction over the District of Columbia, and the majority and ranking minority leaders of the United States House of Representatives and the Senate.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

The District of Columbia Board of Education
Resolution
The Members of The Board of Education Approve The Following Resolution:

Opposing the Congressional Imposition of Vouchers on the District of Columbia

WHEREAS, each community must be permitted the freedom to decide the best vehicles for achieving education reform within its borders; and

WHEREAS, in a referendum held in the early 1980's, Washingtonians rejected a voucher-type proposal by a margin of 9 to 1; and

WHEREAS, decisions on local education matters should be decided by local residents and officials of the District of Columbia, not legislatively by Congress; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education finds it inappropriate for Congress to utilize existing federally and locally appropriated resources for a voucher program or to use any Congressional add-on funds for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, it would be hypocritical for Congress to impose vouchers on the District, as it rejected a proposal to impose vouchers on other jurisdictions and on the country as a whole during the recent debate on the President's education bill, with the House defeating the voucher provision 273-155;

WHEREAS, the democratic choices of District residents and their representative in Congress should command respect; and

WHEREAS, any additional monies that have been identified by Congressman Armey and his colleagues should be added to the District budget to provide sorely needed resources key to educational reform in the District; and

WHEREAS, as reported in the Washington Times, "D.C. schools are making headway" and "preliminary test data show that D.C. teachers appear to be teaching and students appear to be learning"; and

WHEREAS, more specifically, new statistics show that DCPS students in nine of eleven grade levels improved their academic performance on standardized testing this school year, with students in 57 % of DCPS elementary schools, 50% of DCPS middle/junior highs, and 63% of DCPS high schools showing such improvement; and

WHEREAS, the cost of any voucher program will undermine the school system's effort to support a system of high-quality neighborhood schools.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: *The District of Columbia Board of Education opposes the Congressional imposition of vouchers on the District of Columbia.*

This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

I hereby certify that this Resolution is true and adapted as stated.

Executive Director, Board of Education

Board Meeting Date: 7/17/02

Please note: Please see the published version in the JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES, Fall 2002, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 3-24.

School Vouchers: A Critical View

Helen F. Ladd

Helen F. Ladd is Professor of Public Policy Studies and Economics, Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Her e-mail address is <Hladd@pps.duke.edu>.

Among the many reforms proposed for K-12 education are changes in governance that would increase the power of parents to choose schools and thereby make the education system function more like a market. Within this set of reforms, which also includes offering greater choice among public schools and the opportunity to establish public "charter" schools, school voucher programs are particularly controversial because they would permit parents to use public funds to secure education not only at public schools but also at private schools. Proponents and opponents disagree about the effects of voucher programs on student achievement, on the social and racial segregation of students, and on disadvantaged students. In addition, they differ on the importance of maintaining the separation between religious private schools and the state.

School voucher programs currently exist only on a small scale in the United States. The main publicly funded voucher programs are in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Florida. In addition, small privately funded programs provide vouchers for low and moderate income students in cities such as New York City, Dayton, Ohio, and

Washington, D.C. Another privately funded program, the Children's Scholarship Fund, operates at the national level.

Recent studies based primarily on the U.S. evidence typically conclude that the data are insufficient to draw clear conclusions about the net effects of vouchers on academic achievement, access to schools, racial integration and civic education (for example, Hansen and Ladd, 1999; Levin, 2001; Campbell and Peterson, 2001, Rand Corporation (2001). In light of the limited U.S. experience, some authors support investments in large scale voucher experiments as a way to generate more definitive information on their effects. However, before making such investments, it would behoove U.S. researchers and policy makers to pay more attention to the evidence from large-scale programs in other countries such as Chile and New Zealand. Chile, for example, has had a universal school voucher program since the early 1980s that has been subject to careful evaluation (Hsieh and Urquiola, 2001; McEwan and Carnoy, 2000; McEwan, 2000; Gauri, 1998). In addition, New Zealand introduced in the early 1990s what some observers have referred to as a universal quasi-voucher system. Parents can choose any school within the public sector, which has included religious schools since the 1970s, and school funding is based largely on student enrollment (Fiske and Ladd, 2000).

In this paper, I marshall the available evidence, including the international evidence, to show that, contrary to the claims of its proponents, a large scale universal voucher program would not generate substantial gains in overall student achievement, and that it could well be detrimental to many disadvantaged students. The case for a more narrowly targeted means-tested voucher program is stronger, but even with careful attention to its design, such a program should at most serve as one element of a broader

strategy designed to provide more options and better education for disadvantaged students.

Relevant Characteristics of the U.S. Education System [HEADING LEVEL]

Four characteristics of the U.S. education system are especially relevant to the voucher debate. First, the existing system biases parental choices toward the public sector. Second, many middle and upper income families currently have much more choice among schools than do low-income families. Third, K-12 education is compulsory. Fourth, parents judge the quality of schools in part by the characteristics of the students in the school.

An Educational System with a Strong Bias Toward Public Production

Because all families have access to free tax-financed schools at the K-12 level, they face strong financial incentives to choose public over private schools. Nationally, 12 percent of students are enrolled in private schools, the bulk of which have a religious affiliation. A generous universal voucher program could potentially eliminate this bias toward the public schools.

In many other countries, privately owned and operated schools receive large amounts of direct financial assistance from the state (Plank and Sykes, forthcoming). In contrast, this country's commitment to the separation of church and state, as embodied in the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution, has historically kept public funding from being used to support private schools. That situation could change now that the U.S.

Supreme Court has eliminated the constitutional barrier to the use of indirect funding for religious schools through school vouchers in Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, a July 2002 decree relating to Cleveland's voucher program. However, widespread extension of voucher programs to religious schools must still overcome the hurdles of establishment clauses in many state constitutions and strong political opposition in many state legislatures. If one believes that the separation of church and state in connection with elementary and secondary education has provided substantial gains to the United States in the form of a more pluralistic and open society, then weakening this separation through the extension of voucher funding to religious schools could potentially generate large social costs. However, this tradeoff is one to which economists – or at least this economist -- do not have much to contribute.

There's another trade-off as well, this one for the private schools themselves. The international experience indicates that widespread public funding of private schools typically brings with it greater regulation (Plank and Sykes, forthcoming). Such regulation is a natural way for the government to assure that taxpayers' dollars are being used to promote the ends that justify public funding. To the extent that a universal voucher program in the U.S. context were accompanied by additional state control over areas such as curriculum, assessment, and school admissions policies, many existing private schools could choose not to participate.

Choice Among Schools is Available, But Limited

Within each school district, a child typically attends the school assigned to children in that neighborhood. Hence, a family's decision of where to live plays a large

role in where a child attends school. To the extent that middle and high income families congregate in well-to-do suburbs, their children tend to be grouped in suburban schools, financed in part by taxes from large local property tax bases. Conversely, students whose families are restricted by their low income or by their race to economically or racially isolated areas of central cities will also end up grouped in particular schools, often those with high concentrations of disadvantaged students, insufficient resources, low average achievement, and high dropout rates.

Thus, families with sufficient income can move among suburban school districts to increase the quality of the education their children receive (Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin, 2001), or else consider private schools. Moreover, the capitalization of differential school quality into housing prices, so that homes in school districts with higher quality schools cost more, exacerbates the effects of income differentials (Black, 1999; Figlio and Lucas 2000). While children from low-income families in big cities do switch schools quite frequently within districts, those moves are largely driven by the vagaries of the low-income housing market and typically do not result in higher quality schools and better educational outcomes (Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin, 2001). Hence, a carefully designed school voucher program targeted to low income families could potentially provide low income families with some of the freedom of school choice now available only to higher income families.

Recent theoretical work has highlighted another potential benefit of a school voucher program, namely the reduction in residential segregation by income (Nechyba, 1999, 2001). The notion is that if families had greater access to private schools, they would be less likely to separate their residences by income. Based on a theoretical model

calibrated to New Jersey data (a state with many small school districts and over 20 percent of its children in private schools), Nechyba's (2001) simulations indicate that access to private schools reduces the variation in incomes across his three stylized districts by more than half and substantially increases the variation in income within districts, particularly within the poorest district. Unfortunately, the model does not incorporate racial preferences that could influence both school and residential choices. Moveover, school voucher programs would be a rather indirect policy tool for reducing residential segregation. Other options would include zoning and housing policies, as well as the expansion of parental choices among public schools so as to break the link between where families live and where their children go to school. In addition, any benefits of lower residential segregation achieved through a school voucher program would need to be weighed against less desirable outcomes that emerge from Nechyba's stylized model. These include greater economic homogeneity within schools and lower quality public schools in the poorest district.

Compulsory Schooling

School attendance through age 16 in the United States is compulsory. This public commitment to schooling, which reflects perceptions of large social benefits above and beyond the private benefits to the students themselves, need not require public ownership of the schools and thus is not inconsistent with a voucher program. Nonetheless, it does imply a much higher level of public interest in and responsibility than is the case in other sectors to which K-12 education might be compared, such as higher education.

The contrast with higher education is important given the apparent success of the U.S. higher education system with its mix of public and private universities and colleges competing for students. The elite – and expensive – public and private institutions serve many students of high ability very well. At the same time, the system is highly stratified, with large differences in the academic ability of students across institutions and significant homogeneity along various dimensions, such as religion, within institutions. Moreover, the sector falls far short of serving all college age students. In 1998, less than 40 percent of all 18-21 year-olds were enrolled in post secondary education institutions and as of 1999, only 25 percent of the population aged 25 and over had completed 4 year of college (NCES, 2000, Tables 8 and 39). At best, the U.S. system of higher education can serve as a model for the top of the ability and wealth distribution of K-12 students.

The compulsory aspect of K-12 education also distinguishes it from the private sector of the economy. Competition works in that sector in part by the expansion or replication of successful firms and the shutting down on unsuccessful firms. In K-12 education, successful schools have few incentives to expand, especially when expansion entails admitting more costly-to-educate students. Moreover, the establishment of new schools takes time and, as has become clear from the U.S. experience with charter schools, requires upfront funding for planning and capital facilities. At the same time, in a country with compulsory education, failing schools can be shut down only if there are adequate places for their students in other schools.

Role of Peer Groups in Family Choices

Parents behave as if the peers of their children matter. Evidence from studies around the world indicates that parents exercising choice seek to move their children to schools in which the average socioeconomic characteristics level or nonminority share of the students is higher than it would be in their original or assigned school. This phenomenon has been documented in systems as diverse as New Zealand (Fiske and Ladd, 2000; Ladd and Fiske 2001), Chile (McEwan and Carnoy, 2000), Scotland (Willms and Echols, 1993) and Chicago (Cullen, Jacob, and Levitt, 2000).

This behavior is consistent with many parental motivations, including the quest for better schools. For example, parents might use the socioeconomic level of the parents of other children in the school as a proxy for school quality, based on the well-documented observation that the average achievement of students within a school is highly correlated with the socioeconomic and racial composition of the student body. Not only are levels of achievement higher in such schools, so are educational gains in each grade. Data from North Carolina and other states show, for example, that the schools with larger gains in test scores are those with higher proportions of white and higher proportions of non-poor students (Ladd and Walsh, 2002; Clotfelter and Ladd, 1996).

The positive correlation between the socieoeconomic composition of a school and the performance of its students largely reflects what happens at home rather than at school. However, school-related factors may also help to explain why schools serving more affluent and nonminority students tend to exhibit larger gains in test scores than those serving more disadvantaged students. Schools serving more affluent students may benefit from positive peer or spillover effects from one student to another; they can more easily maintain educational processes such as assigning homework; they are more able to

attract high quality teachers; and they typically have access to more resources in the form of both budgetary resources and those provided by parents in the form of contributions and volunteer activities (Fiske and Ladd, 2000).

This observation that the "customer mix" matters to parents has enormous implications for all educational systems, including systems financed by vouchers. First, it generates a hierarchy of schools. In the context of an abstract model in which parents judge school quality in part by the average ability of the students in the school and in which private schools charge tuition, Epple and Romano (1999) show that students with the lowest ability and lowest family income end up concentrated in public schools at the bottom of the hierarchy. Other students are distributed among a set of private schools that differ from each other by the ability and income of their students with the private schools at the top attracting the most able and most affluent students. Empirical work based on U.S. data generally supports the model's predictions (Epple, Figlio and Romano, 2000).

Second, when the characteristics of the school's student body are an important determinant of the school's quality, no simple programs or educational strategy can make a school with a large proportion of disadvantaged or low-performing students look effective. In many instances, the best strategy for such schools is to try to raise the quality of their student intakes, a strategy than cannot work in the aggregate.

Third, successful schools will be reluctant to expand if doing so requires lowering the average socioeconomic or ability level of their students. In New Zealand's experience with full parental choice and self- governing schools, successful schools in urban areas had no desire to expand their enrollment. To the contrary, they did everything they could

to maintain the mix of students that made them attractive to parents and students in the first place (Fiske and Ladd, 2000).

Finally, schools with large concentrations of disadvantaged students have difficulty competing for students (Ladd and Fiske, 2001). This observation does not, by itself, rule out vouchers as a policy tool. For policymakers concerned about equity, however, it raises some warning flags. As discussed further below, it casts serious doubt on the proposition that competition will improve the schools serving students who attend schools at the bottom of the distribution.

Effects of a Voucher system on Achievement and Productivity [HEADING LEVEL 1]

Improving student achievement is typically the single most important goal of current education reform efforts. A large-scale voucher program could potentially affect student achievement through three interrelated mechanisms (Hsieh and Urquiola, 2001). First it would shift students from the public sector to the private sector. Provided the private sector were more productive than the public sector in generating student achievement, this sectoral shift would increase the productivity of the education system. Second, such a program is likely to generate greater socioeconomic and racial polarization of students among schools as students seek to improve the quality of their peers. This greater polarization may increase overall achievement, decrease it or have no effect depending on how one's peers affect the achievement of different groups of students. Third, the introduction of a voucher system would increase competition for students. Such competition, proponents argue, would increase achievement by forcing the

public schools to become more effective. The following section looks at the issues and evidence related to these mechanisms.

The Sector Effect: A Shift to a More Productive Private Sector

The relative productivity of public and private sector schools is the most well studied component of the three mechanisms. The two major strands of the research, however, have relatively little to say directly about a large-scale voucher program.

One strand of the research was initiated by James Coleman and others in the early 1980s, using national data sets such as the High School and Beyond or the National Educational Longitudinal Survey. In their seminal study, Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1982) concluded that students in private high schools, most of which were Roman Catholic, outperformed their public school counterparts. However, that study did not fully account for differences in who enrolls in Catholic schools, and so many subsequent researchers have reexamined the issue paying close attention to the problem of self-selection.

To that end, researchers have had to grapple with the statistical challenge of finding an appropriate instrument, that is, a variable that is correlated with a family's decision to choose a Catholic school but is not a direct determinant of educational outcomes. Many authors have used some function of whether a student is Catholic or the proportion of the county that is Catholic for this purpose. Such studies tend to show that Catholic schools appear to have at most small effects on student achievement as measured by test scores, but somewhat larger positive effects on the probability that students will graduate from high school and will attend college (Evans and Schwab,

1995; Neal, 1997; Grogger and Neal, 2000). In general, the benefits seem to be largest for urban minorities.

Other researchers have criticized this statistical approach on the ground that Catholicism may be a direct determinant of educational outcomes, and have proposed alternative measures. In their study of the relative productivity of all private schools, for example, Figlio and Stone (1999) use a set of instruments related to state labor laws, maintaining that such policies affect residents' perceptions of the differences in performance between the public and private sectors and hence their inclination to use the private schools.[1] Although Figlio and Stone report somewhat smaller positive overall effects on educational attainment than than those that emerge from the studies of Roman Catholic schools, they do find higher test scores in math from attending religious schools for the subgroup of African Americans in big cities.

A second strand of the research uses the recent voucher experiments to investigate the productivity of private elementary schools compared to that of public schools. Most of the knowledge about the effects of private schools at the elementary level emerges from evaluations of the publicly funded Milwaukee Parental Choice program and of the privately funded programs in Dayton, Ohio, Washington, D.C. and New York City.[2] All of these voucher programs serve only a small fraction of the eligible students. Until the late 1990s, the Milwaukee program served no more than 1.5 percent of the district's 90,000 students, and during the time covered by the studies, the New York City program

[1] The instruments are state "duty to bargain" or "right to work" laws, and various interactions of these variables with median income in the country and the socioeconomic status of the student's family. Subsets of the instrumental variables meet the criteria of being highly correlated with a student's selection of public or private school, and yet are likely to have no direct affect on a student's achievement

[2] Evaluations of other programs in San Antonio, Indianapolis, and Cleveland, with a less useful study design, can be found in Peterson and Hassel (1998).

offered scholarships to only 1,300 students, the Dayton program to 515 public school students (and to another 250 already enrolled in private schools) and the Washington D.C. program to 460 students (Peterson et al., 2000).

Results from the publicly funded Milwaukee program have been the most controversial, in large part because that program was not set up as a true randomized experiment and so researchers had to exercise judgement in choosing the appropriate control group to which the voucher students would be compared. Witte, Stern and Thorn (1995) compared the performance of voucher students to that of a random sample of other students in the Milwaukee public schools, and concluded there were no significant achievement gains for voucher students. Greene, Peterson and Du (1997) compared voucher students to potential users of vouchers who were not admitted to their preferred schools and concluded that by the third and fourth years of the program, voucher students exhibited significant gains in both math and reading (of the order of 0.1 to 0.5 standard deviations). Looking at the same data a third time, Rouse (1998) was able to build on and improve upon the research methodologies of the two previous studies; for example, she took into account the fact that many students who were given vouchers did not exercise their right to use them, and also paid attention to non-random attrition of students from the sample over time. Rouse's sensitivity to the statistical problems provides some confidence in her finding that the program generated small gains for students in math but none in reading.

Recent studies of privately funded voucher programs in Dayton, Ohio, Washington, D.C. and New York City provide additional information on how voucher programs – and hence private schools -- affect the achievement of elementary and middle

school students. In contrast to the Milwaukee program, each of these programs was set up as an experiment with random assignment of children. Participating families filled out baseline surveys of background information and, in principle, all children in both the treatment and control groups were tested annually.[3] In contrast to Milwaukee, the private funding of these programs made it possible for students to use their vouchers in religious as well as secular schools. The programs limited eligibility to families with low income (New York City) or low and moderate income (Washington and Dayton). Voucher amounts were generally below $2000 per child (Howell and Peterson, 2002, pp. 31-35).

Based on three years of the voucher programs in New York and Washington, D.C. and two years in Dayton, researchers William Howell and Paul Peterson (2002) find no evidence of a general achievement difference between the public and the private schools. In noyear and in no individual city (other than the second year in Washington) was there evidence that students who shifted to private schools achieved at higher average levels than students who remained in the public school system. Further, when the analysis was disaggregated by the race of the students, no differences emerged for either white or Hispanic students.

Only for the subgroup of African American students did positive differences in achievement emerge. Even for this group, however, the differences were consistent across neither cities nor grades. For example, African-American students in Washington D.C. who shifted to private schools achieved at far higher levels in the second year of the program, but their gains were negligible in years one and three. Although the New York

[3] In practice, there was a significant drop off over time in the students who returned for testing. In Dayton and Washington, D.C., return rates ranged from 40 to 60 percent. In New York City, 82 percent of the students returned for testing the first year and about 66 percent in years two and three (Howell and

study generated a more consistent average pattern of achievement over time, the positive differential emerged clearly and consistently only for students in the fifth grade (Howell and Peterson, 2002, Table 6.2 and Table D.1).

Based on Howell and Peterson's preferred estimates, which disproportionately weight the relatively stable New York results, African Americans who switched to private schools scored about 3.9, 6.3 and 6.5 percentile points higher than comparable students in the control group in the first three years of the program. These effects are based on the national distribution of percentile rankings on the Iowa Test of Basic skills and are about two-thirds the size of the differences that emerged in another intervention that helped African Americans – the Tennessee experiment that reduced class sizes.[4]

These effects for African Americans represent estimates not of the offer of a voucher *per se* but rather of the shift to a private school. This distinction is important given that only 53 percent of the students offered vouchers in New York City and less than 29 percent in Washington D.C. were still in private schools three years into the program[5] and that the students who used the voucher to attend private schools were not a random sample of those offered a voucher. In New York City, for example, having a mother on welfare reduced the probability that a student would accept a voucher by 8 percentage points and the probability of remaining in a private school for two years by

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Peterson, 2002, Table 2.4). The authors weighted their regressions to adjust for observed differences in the characteristics of respondents and non-respondents.

[4] The Tennessee class size experiment generated gains in comparable percentile rankings of 9-10 points black students shifting to small classes within public schools (Personal correspondence with Alan Kreuger). This comparison of effects on percentile rankings is preferred to comparisons based on the more common measure of "effect sizes" defined in terms of standard deviations in that the latter comparisons require that the relevant standard deviations come from similar distributions of test scores.

[5] The New York take-up rate is based on information provided in Howell and Peterson, footnote 19 on p. 235 and is well below the 70 percent figure they report in Table 2.3. The latter figure is the percentage of the voucher recipients *who attended the third year follow up testing session* who used a voucher to attend

another 7 points, and having a learning disability reduced the probabilities by 14 and 13 percentage points. Working in the other direction, being religiously observant significantly increased the probabilities (Howell and Peterson, 2002, Table 3.12). Thus, the positive differential effect for African Americans attending private schools applies not to a random sample of low-income African Americans but rather to a particular subset of them.

Furthermore, it is not at all clear that this positive effect of private schools can be extrapolated to an expanded voucher program, even one targeted at a similar group of African American students. The issue turns on the explanation for the observed achievement gains. If the apparent success of the private schools for African Americans reflected their autonomy and the absence of bureaucracy, then, following the logic of Chubb and Moe (1991), an expanded private school sector could, in principle, generate comparable gains (Chubb and Moe, 1991). However, the observation that the differential achievement gains emerged only for African Americans argues against this explanation. Alternatively, if the success of the private schools reflected a better match between the needs of African American students and the offerings of particular schools, then expanding the private sector would once again continue to generate comparable positive benefits, but only if the factors that parents were looking for could be replicated in newly established private schools. The problem is that the measured success of the African American students who shifted to private schools likely reflects in part the more disciplined student bodies in the private schools, especially in the Catholic schools, or the more advantaged and motivated group of students whose parents were willing to pay the

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a private school during the three years. Similarly the 29 percent figure reported in Table 2.3 for Washington D.C. also exceeds the true take up rate in the third year, but the true rate is not provided.

private school tuition. These are school characteristics that cannot easily be replicated in new private schools. This explanation for the positive findings in the Howell and Peterson research cannot be ruled out since the authors had no data on the mix of students in the receiving private schools.

More explicit evidence about the sector effect for a large scale voucher program emerges from Chile where the universal voucher program generated a large number of new for-profit secular private schools that operated along side the more established and somewhat better resourced Catholic schools. Careful analysis of fourth grade achievement data in Chile indicates that, compared to the traditional public schools, Catholic schools generated higher achievement in Spanish and math while the new secular schools produced marginally lower achievement in Santiago, and even lower achievement outside the capital city (McEwan and Carnoy, 2000, p. 227.). This observation is important to the U.S. debate where advocates of vouchers tend to use evidence from some types of private schools, namely Catholic high schools, or a combination of existing Catholic and other schools in the voucher experiments, to generalize to an expanded private sector that would inevitably include many types of private schools, not all of which would be able to attract the same mix of students as in the existing private schools. .

Even if private schools do not generate positive differences in student achievement, lower costs could still make them more productive than public schools. Unfortunately, it is difficult to compare the true economic costs of education at private and public schools. One complicating factor is that public schools typically serve a greater proportion of students who need costly services such as special education or

vocational education. Another is that tuition payments, or even total expenditures by private schools, do not represent their true costs (Levin, 1998). Private schools, especially religious private schools, receive resources in many forms: special fees, church subsidies, teachers working at below-market wages, and donations of money, time, land and buildings. If private schools could operate more cheaply than public schools, one would expect for-profit education firms like Edison or Tesseract to make a profit from taking advantage of those cost efficiencies. The fact that such firms have not been making profits suggests that any cost efficiencies from private production are illusory. Further suggestive evidence comes from the voucher experiments. For example, the private schools in New York City serving the African American voucher students offered significantly smaller class sizes than the public schools (Howell and Peterson, 2002, p. 100) Given the large share of education costs attributable to teachers and classrooms, this observation suggests that the true resource costs of educating students in private schools could well exceed those of the public schools serving comparable students.

Thus, one should expect neither higher overall achievement nor lower resource costs as a result of a shift of students from public to private schools. At most there are likely to be small achievement gains for a selected group of African Americans. Furthermore, a universal voucher program could possibly require the government to spend more public funds on education because some of the voucher funds would undoubtedly go to families who would otherwise have paid all of the cost of putting their children in private schools.

The Peer Effect

Because many parents use the social and ethnic composition of a school's students to judge a school's quality, a large scale voucher program – or, more generally, any unrestricted educational choice program – is likely to increase the racial and socioeconomic stratification of schools. Other aspects of voucher programs would also contribute to stratification to the extent that they placed low income families in a less favorable position to exercise choice than higher income families. For example, low-income families would be disproportionately affected if the government did not pay for transportation to the chosen schools, if voucher schools were allowed to charge fees and tuition in addition to the amount of the voucher, if schools were allowed to select their students or if low income families have less access to information than high income families. While a voucher program could be designed to mitigate these effects, the more basic pressure for stratification would remain as long as the voucher program were not restricted to low-income households.

The question here is how increased stratification is likely to affect the overall productivity of the education system. A variety of studies in which the authors have carefully addressed various thorny statistical problems have found evidence of pure peer effects in the sense of spillovers within the class room from one student to another (Hoxby 2002 and Hanushek, Kain, Markman, Rivkin 2001). Positive peer effects also emerge from other studies but not always consistently as in Henderson, Miezkowski, and Sauvageau (1978), Willms (1986), Zimmer and Toma (2000) Bryk and Driscoll (1988).

If peer effects were positive and linear, the gains in achievement for the students who move out of the public schools in search of higher quality peers would be exactly offset by the losses to other students, either those in the schools left behind or those in the

destination schools. However, if the magnitude of the peer effects were greater for students with low socioeconomic (SES) status, then the movement of low SES students into schools with more affluent peers could potentially increase overall achievement. Alternatively, however, if the students who left the public schools were the more able and more motivated students, their gains in achievement could be more than offset by the loss in achievement of the students in the schools left behind, thereby reducing overall achievement.

Such asymmetry in peer effects is quite plausible. Students whose internal motivation to learn is reinforced by an educationally rich home environment, as is true for many students with high socioeconomic status, are likely to do relatively well in most academic settings. In contrast, the performance of students from more educationally impoverished backgrounds could depend more heavily on the school. The presence of unmotivated fellow students and other associated features such as low expectations in the classroom, poor teachers, and limited resources may well take its toll in significantly lower learning for such students relative to how they would perform in a school with stronger peers and higher levels of expectations, teacher quality and resources.

Evidence on whether peer effects are asymmetric in this way is limited and inconclusive. Focusing on the spillovers from having high-ability peers, Hanushek et al. (2001) find that peer effects are positive throughout the range of student test scores, and find no evidence of nonlinear effects. Using gender and race to define peer groups, Hoxby (2001) finds at most only limited evidence of non-linearities. Evidence related to a more general form of peer effects that include neighborhood effects emerges from recent analysis of an experimental program of the Department of Housing and Urban

Development in which families were moved out of a high-poverty areas into more economically mixed neighborhoods. That analysis provides evidence that children in elementary schools who had access to schools with higher average test scores and more affluent neighborhoods achieved at higher levels than children in the control group. It provides no support, however, for the presence of a non-linear relationship (Ludwig, Ladd and Duncan, 2001).

On the other side, consistent with an asymmetric effect are findings that school-level measures of socioeconomic status have stronger effects on the performance of black than on white students (Coleman, 1966; cited in McEwan, p. 40) and that racial isolation had negative impacts on student performance in North Carolina schools (Mickelson, 2001). This lack of clarity about how peer effects differ among groups rules out any clear predictions about whether a voucher program would be likely to increase or decrease the overall productivity of the education system through the mechanism of peer effects.

The Competition Effect on School Productivity

Even with a large, unrestricted voucher program, the majority of students are likely to remain in traditional public schools. In Chile's universal voucher program, for example, the percentage of students in private schools was still below 50 percent more than 10 years into the program. Hence, crucial to the argument that a universal voucher program would increase overall student achievement is that voucher-induced competition from private schools would pressure traditional public schools to become more productive and force the weaker schools to close.

However, there are reasons to question these predictions. One possibility emphasized by McMillan (2000) is that the greater availability of private schools may reduce parental involvement in the public schools, and thereby reduce one important positive contributor to student achievement in those schools. Moreover, in contrast to the private schools which typically have significant leeway to select their students and, therefore, to offer focused, coherent programs designed to meet the needs of those students, competition may force the public schools to offer a diverse and unfocused education program as they struggle to be attractive to all comers (Fiske and Ladd, 2000). Finally, the notion that the unproductive public schools will go out of business, and be replaced by new and more effective public schools is far easier imaged than done.

The strongest claims that voucher programs have succeeded in making public schools more productive are based on two empirical studies: Jay Greene's study of the Florida voucher program and Caroline Hoxby's analysis of fourth grade achievement in the Milwaukee voucher experiment. However, in both cases there are good reasons to question whether the point has been proven.

In a highly publicized study for the Manhattan Institute, Greene (2001) studied the effects of Florida's voucher program on achievement in the public schools. Under the Florida system, schools are given grades of A,B,C, D, or F. If a school receives two Fs within four years, its students are eligible for vouchers to attend private schools. Greene reports that after the first year of the program the schools that had one F, and hence were subject to the threat of a voucher, raised their achievement significantly more than comparable schools not subject to such a threat, and that their greater gains remained even after he adjusted for the statistical problem of regression to the mean.

However, with Florida data alone Greene is unable rule out an alternative and, in my view, more convincing explanation for his findings, namely that the improvement in the state's low performing schools was a response to the state's grading of schools, rather than to the small voucher component of that program. Support for this alternative interpretation emerges from other states such as North Carolina which, like Florida, rank schools but, unlike Florida, do not have voucher programs. The patterns of gains in student performance in the low ranked schools in North Carolina after the first year of that state's program, for example, were almost identical to those found in Florida (Ladd and Glennie, 2001). The comparison between Florida and other states such as North Carolina strongly suggests that the increased scrutiny, shame, and additional assistance associated with being labeled a low-performing or "failing" school is a more likely explanation for the improvement of the bottom schools in Florida than the threat of a voucher.

Hoxby (2001) carried out an analysis of fourth grade achievement in Milwaukee public schools before and after the expansion of that city's voucher program in 1998. She reports that the annual increase in student achievement was higher in the Milwaukee public schools most subject to competition from private schools (those with 75 percent or more of their students eligible for vouchers) than in other Milwaukee schools and even higher than in a control group of 12 other Wisconsin elementary schools. In math, for example, the annual increase in test scores of 7.1 percentile points in the schools subject to competition exceeded the increases of 5.3, and 3.7 percentile points in the other two groups and similar patterns emerged for science and language.

However, Hoxby's interpretation overstates the potential gains from a voucher program because she was unable to control for the changing mix of students in her treatment and control groups. The Milwaukee program was limited to low-income families. Detailed analysis of an earlier version of the Milwaukee's means-tested voucher program indicated that the average test scores of the voucher applicants were well below those of other students in the Milwaukee system (Witte, 2000, ch. 4).[6] Provided that pattern continued with the 1998 expansion of the Milwaukee program, we would expect to see a movement of relatively low-performing students out of the treatment group of schools and a potentially large corresponding increase in the average achievement of students remaining within those schools even with no change in the productivity of the public schools.

In addition, it appears that the mix of students in Hoxby's 12 control schools from the rest of the state may have been changing as well. My own crude analysis based on NCES data at the district level show that the percentages of low-income students increased on average during the 1997-2000 period in the four districts in which most of the 12 control schools were apparently located at the same time that the percentage declined by 4.7 percent in Milwaukee.[7] Those increases in the proportions of challenging-

[6] In 1994, for example, compared to all Milwaukee public school students, the median national percentile ranking of the voucher applicants was 35 percent lower in reading and 42 percent lower in math and the mean normal curve equivalent was 8 percent lower in reading and 22 percent lower in math. Compared to a random sample of low income students in Milwaukee, the median National percentile ranking of the applicants was 18 percent lower in reading and 29 percent lower in math and the mean normal curve equivalent was 4 percent lower in reading and 14 percent lower in math (Witte, 2000, Table 4.6).

[7] I do not know the precise set of schools that Hoxby included in her analysis. However, by identifying all Wisconsin primary schools in which more than 25 percent of the students were black, I was able to narrow the relevant set of districts. I relied on district level averages of students receiving free and reduced price lunches since that information was not available at the school level. Between 1997 and 2000, the percent of students on free and reduced price lunch rose in Racine by 0.3 percent, rose in Kenosha by 1.5 percent, rose in Beloit by 3 percent and declined by 0.8 percent in Madison at the same time that it fell by 4.7 percent in Milwaukee. These district-wide average could well translate into even larger increases in the

to-educate children thus provide an alternative explanation for the sluggish growth in average achievement in Hoxby's control schools relative to the schools subject to competition in Milwaukee.

Thus it would be premature to conclude, based on the Greene (2001)and Hoxby (2001) studies, that voucher programs have unleashed strong positive impacts on the public schools. In the absence of longitudinal data for individual students that would allow the researcher to isolate impacts on achievement of the same group of students over time, any conclusions about competitive impacts are highly suspect.

Other potentially relevant sources of evidence on this question are studies of how competition from private schools and charters have affected the traditional public schools in the United States and studies of how the voucher induced private schools have affected public schools in Chile.

The U.S. evidence from private schools provides evidence of at most small positive impacts of private schools competition on academic achievement in the public schools. In a comprehensive review, Belfield and Levin (2001) report that well over half of the 94 estimates in 14 studies were statistically insignificant and that any positive impacts were either substantively small or subject to question based on subsequent studies. A handful of estimates, including those by McMillan (1999) who incorporated parental involvement, suggest that competition from private schools may have a negative impact on public schools.

With respect to the effects of competition from charter schools, evidence is only now beginning to emerge in states such as California, Arizona, and Michigan where

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schools within each district that Hoxby included in her sample because of their relatively high proportions of minority and low income students..

charter schools are now common. Anecdotal and interview data suggest that some school districts or schools have been responding to the establishment of charter schools in positive ways (Rofes, 1998; Gresham, Hess, Maranto, and Milliman, 2000; Hess, Maranto and Milliman, 2000). For example, some school districts have set up after-school or all-day kindergarten programs, established new magnet schools, changed curriculum, empowered teachers or changed principals. In addition, some principals appear to have promoted experimentation in teaching or pursued other forms of behavior that could be viewed as positive. However, many school districts have not responded at all to the new charter schools.

Only a few studies examine impacts of charter schools on outcome measures such as achievement. Hoxby (2001) finds small positive impacts, but her estimates in this study are subject to the same sorting bias that emerges in her study of vouchers in Milwaukee. I find more methodologically persuasive a study by Bettinger (1999) of Michigan schools, because of the attention it pays to various statistical problems -- including the possibility that the location of charter schools may be influenced by the performance of the public schools. To deal with this simultaneity problem, the author took advantage of the role of public universities in chartering charter schools to develop an exogenous instrumental variable. The study relies on data only through 1996, but it finds no impact of charter schools on public school performance.

Potentially more reliable information emerges from Chile, which has 20 years of experience with a large-scale voucher program. If competition increases achievement, one would expect the public schools in Chilean municipalities with large increases in private enrollment shares to exhibit greater gains in achievement than those subject to

less competition from the private schools. McEwan's (2000) study of Chilean schools uses panel data and a "differences-in-differences" methodology to sort out the effects. This statistical strategy involves comparing changes in test scores in one period to changes in test scores in the previous period. The advantage of this approach is that it controls both for unobserved determinants of achievement that are constant over time for individual schools and for unobserved time trends in each school's achievement. McEwan's conclusions are mixed. His preferred estimates suggest that 15 years of competition led to modest gains in achievement of about 0.16 to 0.2 standard deviations among some public schools in Santiago, Chile's capital, but small negative effects in the rest of the country, which is home to three-quarters of the country's population. He concludes that the results "neither refute nor provide strong support for the view that competition will lead to improvements in the quality of public schools" (p. 152).

Net Impact of the Three Mechanisms on Student Achievement.

The evidence suggests that the overall effect of vouchers on student achievement is likely to be small at best. Studies from the U.S. and other countries provide no compelling evidence in support of the view that the private sector is generally more productive than the public sector, except possibly for a subset of African-Americans, or that there are significant gains to be had from competition. Nor is there clear evidence of the asymmetric peer effects that could affect overall productivity. Empirical support for at most a small overall effect emerges from Chile, where Hseigh and Urquiola (2001) estimated the net effect of the three mechanisms based on that country's 20-year

experience with vouchers, but found only small and statistically insignificant effects of the voucher program on student achievement.

The observation that the productivity argument for a universal voucher program is weak does not rule out other types of benefits, such as those that would accrue to families who used school vouchers to achieve a better match between their values, including their religious values, and the values of the schools their children attend. It does imply, however, that the debate about voucher programs should revolve around the desirability of benefits of that type rather than around their alleged contribution to student achievement.

Impacts of a Voucher Program on Disadvantaged Students [HEADING LEVEL 1]

Many supporters of vouchers believe they will improve the welfare of educationally disadvantaged students. The question of whether a voucher program will help or harm such students turns in part on whether the program is a large scale universal program or a smaller program targeted specifically toward disadvantaged students.

A Large-scale Universal Voucher Program

Several theoretical models of vouchers predict that the students at the bottom of the distribution in the public school sector will end up worse off under a universal voucher program (Epple and Romano, 1998; Nechyba, 1999, 2001). The main reason the students at the bottom are harmed is peer effects. With the introduction of vouchers, the more able or motivated students leave public schools for private schools. Their departure

reduces the quality of public schools and renders students remaining in those schools worse off than they would have been without the voucher program. Note that this outcome requires only that peer effects be positive, not that they have differential effects on different groups of students. Moreover, in the Epple and Romano (1998) model, even some students who switch to private schools may end up worse off. That outcome can occur when private schools are allowed to charge more than the voucher. In that case, some students will switch to private schools primarily to avoid the decline in the quality of the public schools. Even if their achievement is higher in the private school, they could be worse off because they now must pay tuition.

Some might discount the predictions of these models because the authors explicitly assume that a voucher system would have no positive impact on the productivity of the education system. However, the review of the empirical evidence in the previous section suggests that assumption is reasonable.

The data on educational outcomes from Chile's universal voucher program generally supports the predictions of the theoretical models. Chile's voucher program did induce the higher income and more able students out of the public sector schools. Cross-sectional quantile regressions for that country, which allow one to look at the performance of different parts of the student distribution, show that voucher-induced expansions of private schools widened the variation in educational outcomes across students (Hsieh and Urquiola, 2001). New Zealand's experience with universal public school choice was similar, although conclusions about achievement are harder to confirm because of the limited achievement data in that country. However, there is little doubt that the expansion of choice in that country exacerbated the problems of the schools at

the bottom of the distribution and reduced the ability of those schools to provide an adequate education (Ladd and Fiske, 2000).

Of course, some disadvantaged students in both countries were made better off because vouchers in Chile and public school choice in New Zealand gave those students access to some schools that previously were outside their financial reach. This observation is important and complicates any discussion of voucher programs. From an ethical perspective, it is hard to justify denying schooling options to such children simply because their families are poor or because their departure may reduce the quality of education of those who remain behind. Providing additional choices to such families is a desirable goal.

The adverse effects of large-scale voucher programs on the students left behind highlights the need to shape voucher policies in ways that could minimize those effects. One starting point might be to adjust the voucher amount both to the characteristics of the students (with costly-to-educate students getting significantly larger vouchers) and possibly to the characteristics of the schools (for example, students attending economically integrated schools would receive larger vouchers that those in homogeneous schools). Such schemes, however, are likely to be politically contentious and difficult to implement. A second approach is to place restrictions on the use of vouchers, such as prohibiting the participating private schools from charging additional tuition or fees above the voucher amount (a prohibition that is part of Chile's program) and requiring that oversubscribed private schools select students randomly (as is the case in Milwaukee and Cleveland). With such constraints, public funds would support education only in schools that were available to all students, and all students would

continue to be guaranteed an education at no out-of-pocket expense, whether it be in a public or private school. These constraints would make voucher-financed private schools similar to charter schools. Indeed, one prominent supporter of charter schools argues that these two characteristics of charter schools – equal access and no fees – are what make charter schools preferable to voucher-financed private schools (Hassel, 1998).

However, even if a universal voucher program were modified in these ways, the fundamental problem facing the U.S. education system with respect to disadvantaged students would remain. That problem is the significant concentrations of difficult-to-educate students in some schools. The challenge is to find a way to expand the educational choices available to families, while at the same time reducing those concentrations. That challenge can best be met with some form of controlled or managed choice among public schools, as forcefully advocated in a recent Task Force Report from the Century Foundation (2002). Under such a system, families would specify their preferred schools. Students would then be assigned to schools based on those preferences, but with attention to the mix of students in each school, either the racial mix (as was long the case in the managed choice program in Cambridge, Massachusetts) or the economic mix as advocated by the Task Force (and recently introduced in Cambridge). Any such system of controlled choice would require that the public authorities ultimately have the power to assign students to schools. In addition, it would require targeted investments focused on teaching and learning in the schools that were not successful in attracting students so as to promote healthy competition among all schools. Since private schools are likely to be reluctant to participate in a program of that type, vouchers would not be a logical component of such a strategy.

A Means-Tested Voucher Program Limited to Low Income Families

If the goal were to use a voucher program specifically to assist low income families, at a minimum the program would have to be means tested. Evidence from Milwaukee suggests that a means-tested voucher program can be successfully designed to serve low income families, especially those whose children are unsuccessful in the public schools (Witte, 2000, p. 196). The main advantage of such programs is that parents tend to be more satisfied with their new schools than with their assigned public schools. In the fifth year of the Milwaukee voucher program, for example, more than three-quarters of choice parents gave their child's school a "grade" of A or B. Similarly, in the three urban privately funded voucher programs, 40 percent of the private school parents gave their schools an A compared with 14 percent of the control group. (Howell and Peterson, 2002 p. 174). Moreover, satisfaction levels among private schools parents were higher with respect to all the major components of the school: the academic program, school safety, parental involvement, and class size (Howell and Peterson, 2002, Table 7.1, p. 173).

Of course, some of this increased satisfaction may reflect not the specific policies of the schools but rather a different, more congenial, or more motivated, set of peers in the new schools. To the extent that families opt for schools in which their children will have peers with higher socioeconomic status, their behavior complicates the policy discussion because not all families can achieve that end. Nonetheless, it is hard to argue that low-income families should be denied opportunities to benefit from such choices simply because they are poor.

Even for means-tested programs, however, design matters. For example, the Milwaukee program required that schools accept the voucher in lieu of all tuition and fees and that oversubscribed schools select students randomly – a design that helps reduce the negative impact of vouchers on disadvantaged students. In contrast, consider the design of the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF), a privately funded national school voucher program that provides scholarships for children from low to moderate income families (up to 270 percent of the poverty level) to attend private schools, with the scholarships scaled to the income of the family. Although the program reached large numbers of African-American low-income and minority households, only 30 percent of all families offered vouchers ended up using them. Forty-five percent of the decliners said that they could not afford their preferred school, 10 percent said no space was available and 8 percent cited transportation problems (Campbell, West and Peterson, 2001). Thus, when tuitions are not limited to the amount of the voucher and transportation is not provided, many families will not be able to benefit from the voucher program.

Additional concerns arise from the high rates of attrition from voucher programs over time. In the early years of the Milwaukee program, dropout rates were very high: 54 percent of the voucher recipients did not return to their private school after the first year of the program (Witte, 2000). The high attrition rate in that program might be explained in part by the poor quality of some of the participating private schools, given that religious schools were not permitted to participate and the fact that one major private school closed. However, high dropout rates also emerged in the privately funded New York City voucher program. By the end of the third year of that program, 38 percent of the voucher recipients had dropped out of their voucher-subsidized private school

(Howell, 2002). Multivariate analyses of those who were offered vouchers, use them, and then drop out indicate that while African Americans were more likely than other racial groups to accept an offer of a voucher, they were also more likely to drop out of the private schools in subsequent years (Howell, 2001, p. 14). This finding raises additional questions about the ability of even a means-tested voucher program to meet the needs of low-income African American students.

Given the serious educational challenges facing disadvantaged students, particularly those living in areas of concentrated poverty, it is hard to argue against any policy, including means-tested vouchers, that might improve the educational experiences of some students. In some situations, means-tested vouchers could play a useful role in providing additional options to students whose schooling choices would otherwise be severely constrained. Even such voucher programs, however, would need to be embedded in a larger strategy of education reform that focused on teaching and learning in the public schools and one that provided greater choice within the public school system.

Conclusion [HEADING LEVEL 1]

Contrary to the claims of many voucher advocates, widespread use of school vouchers is not likely to generate substantial gains in the productivity of the U.S. K-12 education system. Any gains in overall student achievement are likely to be small at best. Moreover, given the tendency of parents to judge schools in part by the characteristics of the students in the school, a universal voucher system would undoubtedly harm large numbers of disadvantaged students. Although small means- tested voucher programs might provide a helpful safety valve for some children, policy makers should be under no

illusion that such programs will address the fundamental challenge of providing an adequate education to the large numbers of disadvantaged students in many of our large cities. At the same time, there are good arguments for giving families, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, more power to choose the schools their children attend. The challenge for policy makers is to find ways to expand parental choices without excessively privileging the interests of individual families over the social interests that justify the public funding of K-12 education.

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NEWS RELEASE

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2003

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AAUW Opposes School Vouchers for the District of Columbia
Statement of Jacqueline E. Woods, Executive Director

On behalf of the over 100,000 bipartisan members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), we applaud the creation of the Coalition of Accountable Public Schools. However, we are also disturbed that increased threats to the public schools in the District of Columbia have made this coalition necessary. AAUW opposes the creation and use of school vouchers in all forms, including the imposition of school vouchers for private and parochial schools on the DC public schools.

AAUW believes the appropriate strategy for improving our nation's public schools is to direct resources needed for teacher training, smaller class sizes, expanded support services, ensuring safe schools, and improved facilities to public schools, rather than diverting public funds into private institutions. Public funds should be used only to improve public education and we believe a strong, free public education system is the foundation of a democratic society.

Yesterday, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly defeated two voucher amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Last year, two House voucher proposals, during consideration of the No Child Left Behind Act, met the same fate. AAUW stands with its coalition partners in asking Congress to continue to oppose school vouchers in all forms—whether it is for disabled students or public school students across the country and in the nation's capital. AAUW applauds the creation of this coalition, which will give the people of the District of Columbia an important voice in their opposition to school vouchers for their children. AAUW supports this effort and will fight the involuntary and undemocratic imposition of school vouchers on the people of our nation's capital.

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The American Association of University Women, with its nationwide network of more than 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 chapters, has long been a strong and vocal advocate for equal opportunity for women and girls. Please visit our website at www.aauw.org for more information.

District of Columbia Charter Schools and Charter School Teachers Have Millions of Dollars of Huge Pressing Needs That Can Be Addressed Only By Federal Funding. Some Examples:

Several schools are at capacity. They either can't add grades, or must limit the overall number of students in all grades and cram everyone in.

Tree of Life- was approved recently to expand its enrollment but cannot add grades or increase enrollment due to space constraints. It is looking for affordable space. Waiting list grows each year. Located on Capitol Hill.

Sasha Bruce- currently at capacity, with 88 students. Desperately need affordable larger space to meet the community demand. Cannot fully implement the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound program due to lack of space. Also located on Capitol Hill.

Tri-Community- delayed opening last year due to inadequate space. Moved into a church basement this year with a capacity for only 40 students this year, in order to avoid losing their charter.

WMST- has an expanded science and technology curriculum that they cannot fully implement because they don't have enough money for the appropriate labs. Paying expensive lease that uses a high percentage of their funding.

Marriott- Facilities cannot accommodate kitchens or other labs. In a downtown commercial building requires the school to use it's funding to pay for expensive building maintenance and real estate taxes, which compromises program expenditures. Students must travel to other locations to get hospitality training, and use kitchens.

Cesar Chavez High School, Booker T. Washington High School, Meridian Elementary- are sharing extremely cramped building and classrooms. Chavez's public policy program is in high demand, but they cannot accommodate that demand. Waiting list grows every year.

Staff, faculty and Board members of all schools spend inordinate amounts of time searching for private money to help defray facilities costs, so that program expenditures will not be as compromised. Attention to program development and faculty training is constantly compromised to focus on finance issues.

KIPP/DC Key Academy- a school that has received national recognition, has a population that is almost 100% low-income had very impressive performance on SAT-9 scores (the highest of all charter schools), has a beautiful facility, musical instruments for all of the students, and has a very effective and successful program due to substantial sponsorship. If all charter schools had those financial resources, they would likely be at least as successful.

Teacher Retirement is under funded. Many teachers and principals' retirements are in jeopardy, because charter schools have not been given adequate guidance from DCPS or funding from the city.

DCPS teachers have been granted $31 million in raises as a result of negotiations with teachers' union. Charter schools have been told they will not get the equivalent to give their teachers a raise, and therefore will be at a disadvantage when recruiting and retaining teachers.

also Lockridge

TALKING POINTS ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TRANSFORMATION SCHOOLS

Purpose of the Transformation Schools

The unique purpose of the Transformation Schools in the District of Columbia is to rapidly and effectively identify schools that can be changed from low-performing to high-performing, child-centered, and community-focused places of learning.

This change takes place as a result of full collaboration between students, parents/guardians, extended families, local and central school administrators, city agencies, and community-based organizations.

In addition, these schools ensure that students have multiple opportunities to learn and succeed by taking advantage of a wide range of services wrapped around them by agencies of the District of Columbia and community-based organizations. These services may include health care services, mental health services, before and aftercare programs, and adult education.

The essential idea upon which the Transformation effort is built in the District of Columbia Public Schools is a simple one: chronically ineffective schools require a systemic change of structure and culture in order to create the conditions for students and staff to succeed.

Key Services Delivered by the Transformation Schools

In redefining these schools, care was taken to adopt a *comprehensive* reform project, not a piecemeal approach to change. This meant harnessing all the resources of the school system and other agencies and organizations to create the new ecology of learning in these schools. The success of service delivery in these schools is the result of the collaboration between the schools and their primary constituent groups or stake-holders.

Some of the key services delivered by the Transformation schools are: student assessments, character education programs, academic support services, wrap-around services management, parent center programs, interagency partnerships, professional development efforts, aggressive programs for student remediation, counseling and social services, and special education and ESL programs.

These services, along with many others, bring focused energy to bear on the school from a number of service providers as well as instructional, administrative, and support staff.

Signs of Concrete Progress

Early indicators of progress in the Transformation effort suggest that it *is* working. The following are some specific achievements:

- Improved Stanford 9 scores and increases in individual and grade level performance in all Transformation Schools
- Between 1997 and 2002 the percentage of DCPS students scoring at or above the Basic level on the SAT-9 Reading Test increased from 66 to 76 percent
- During the same period, the percentage of students scoring at or above the Basic level on the SAT-9 Mathematics Test increased from 43 to 64 percent
- Local school governance programs established in all T9-schools
- Classroom libraries established in all T9-schools
- On-site teacher mentoring offered in all T9-schools
- Seventeen T9 kindergarten classes received computers, software, and training in reading programs
- Instructional facilitators provided in all T9-schools
- A parent coordinator was provided in all T9-schools
- Research-based reform models were implemented in all T9-schools
- The number of partnerships between T9-schools and community and business organizations increased
- Parent centers were established in all T9-schools
- Class size reduction was achieved in all T9-schools
- Reading specialists assigned for fours hours per day to assist teachers in reading instruction
- Professional development was offered for principals, facilitators, and the Instructional Leadership Teams that was sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Education Laboratory

The Fundamental Value of Transformation Schools

In a time when there is a widespread cry for educational reform across America, simple answers come easily. But those answers are not solutions at all. The constant hemorrhaging of public funds away from education has reduced the ability of school systems to effectively and systemically change the way education is done.

The Transformation schools in the District of Columbia are proof positive that a public school system can be serious about education reform and make the decisions that are necessary to implement that change. The total overhaul of these schools – from new principals and teachers to new support staff -- has resulted in higher student performance, greater staff accountability, and increased parent and community involvement. That is a formula for real success.

POSITION STATEMENT

OPPOSING VOUCHERS, TUITION TAX CREDITS AND DEDUCTIONS AS SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AID

The National PTA opposes education voucher proposals for public and nonpublic preschool, elementary and secondary school students.

The National PTA opposes tax credits and deductions for elementary and secondary school tuition and other education-related expenses for public and nonpublic school students.

The National PTA believes that these funding methods would have a detrimental effect on our public school system. Such funding would promote division without diversity, create division and separation within the community and negate the long struggle to desegregate our schools and our society. It is the opinion of the National PTA that vouchers and similar systems would violate the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state.

The National PTA recognizes that changes must be made within the public schools to provide an equitable and excellent educational opportunity for every child. Vouchers, tax credits, deductions and other such funding sources do not provide the means for bringing about improvements in our public schools.

The National PTA supports our system of public education as the major vehicle for perpetuating the basic values of a democratic system of government. This system must be strengthened and continue to be governed by public officials accountable to the public and supported by adequate funding.

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Adopted: by the 1979 Board of Directors
Revised: by the 1991 Board of Directors
Reviewed: by the 1993, 1996 and 2001 Convention Resolutions Committee

MAY. 8.2003 3:38PM NO.348 P.2/2

Unpublished

Op Ed on Choice in Schools
By Anthony A. Williams and Linda Cropp

Imagine our surprise to learn in the July 10 *Washington Post* that a Senator from New Hampshire and a Congressman from Texas had introduced legislation in Congress that would dramatically alter the public education system in the District of Columbia. Had either of these legislators discussed their concern about our children's education with the Mayor or Council Chair? No.

The authors of this legislation – the District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 2002 -- believe they know better than our parents, educators and elected officials how to fix District schools. They want to define choice in education for members of our community. Had they bothered to check in with us, or our school leaders, they would have learned that choice in education is available and flourishing in the District.

With 40 existing charter schools and more in the pipeline, we have one of the strongest charter school movements in the country. Parents can decide to send their teenagers to Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy, whose programs prepare young people to for leadership responsibility in their community, or to SEED, the nation's first inner city boarding school. In fact, our vibrant charter school system has helped to attract more than 2,000 new students into our public education system over the past several years.

Instead of supporting educational choice -- or reform in our city -- this legislation will undermine the hard-won progress that our public education system is making. This legislation will not invest additional dollars in our efforts to transform our lowest performing schools, nor will it help continue the trend towards increased student achievement that we have recently witnessed in some of our schools.

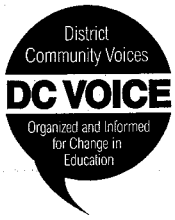
School reform cannot be imposed on a community, it must be developed in response to parental concerns, rooted in the will of the community and guided by locally elected officials. The voucher programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland are working because they are mandated and driven by the community – not members of Congress.

School reform as defined by our parents and community leaders means radically restructuring 14 schools responsible for teaching our neediest children; it means forcing more than 1000 school employees to reapply for their jobs; it means modernizing more than 80 deteriorating school buildings within 15 years.

As elected leaders in the District of Columbia with a responsibility to speak on behalf of the people we represent, and we must strongly oppose this bill. If Senator Gregg and Representative Armey want to help the children of the District, we invite them to support Eleanor Holmes Norton's Fair Compensation Act of 2002 -- which would increase funding to allow the District to renovate and repair both traditional and charter schools –

or to provide additional funding to accelerate the transformation of our lowest performing schools.

We encourage Congress to work with us to support – not crush – school reform in our nation's capital.



VOUCHERS and WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT QUALITY TEACHING ISSUES
May 2003

Since its founding in 1998, DC VOICE has promoted the importance of basing parent education and school reform decisions on accurate information. Studies of voucher experiments in various parts of the country continue to produce evidence that the use of vouchers in private and parochial schools does not improve student achievement: voucher students do not outperform their public school counterparts. On this basis alone, vouchers would not provide a viable alternative for students presently attending DC public schools.

However, our emphasis here is on the connection of vouchers to quality teaching issues. Parents want high quality schools for their children. High quality schools require high quality teachers. Voucher schools don't necessarily provide high quality teachers, particularly if they lack the special resources required to provide the supports needed.

DC VOICE has developed a comprehensive framework of the supports needed for quality teaching and learning, from efficient recruitment and hiring to providing the special supports new teachers need, from ensuring high quality and collaborative professional development to the administrative support all teachers need, and from continual community involvement to the public monitoring needed to ensure that all schools and their teachers and students have the resources they need and are accountable for results. While the percentage of public schools with effective support systems is far lower than we would like at present, we think that percentage would plummet in voucher schools with fewer resources available, and with no public accountability mechanisms in place.

Here are some of the findings of our preliminary research:

- More public school teachers hold advanced degrees than teachers in voucher schools (private and parochial schools)
- On average, more public school teachers are certified with a major or minor in the field they are teaching in than in private and parochial schools
- Teachers at public schools (including charter schools) have more experience than teachers at private schools

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PARENTS UNITED OPPOSES THE FEDERAL IMPOSITION OF VOUCHERS ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Several members of Congress have again proposed that the District be the site of an educational experiment – use federal public tax dollars to fund vouchers for private schools. The proposal has superficial appeal: What could possibly be wrong with giving at least a few children an opportunity to escape a public school system that often fails to educate its students adequately? The proposal, however (like its predecessors), is misguided for at least four fundamental reasons.

First, vouchers do not address, much less meet, the most urgent needs borne by District public school students. The school system is facing a financial crisis that will stall its current reform efforts, its initiatives to transform low performing schools, its plans for improving teacher quality and operating efficiency. One of the greatest needs is for renovation of the city's crumbling school facilities. Today, about 2/3 of the District's public schools are in need of emergency repairs for, among other things, leaking roofs, archaic plumbing and electrical systems, asbestos abatement, broken doors, rotted windows, broken toilets and sinks, and dysfunctional heating and cooling systems. These broken facilities impair our children's education and, at times, threaten their health and safety.

This dire situation arises after many years of neglect during which the District has deferred school maintenance in order to pay for what were then considered to be more immediate classroom needs. Critical maintenance is still being delayed; the District's 2004 budget proposal calls for slashing about 40% of the funds DCPS requested for maintenance. Helping a few families pay private school tuition bills is no answer to the DCPS high school students' petitions pleading for help with unsanitary bathrooms. Under these circumstances, the first priority of any party seeking to improve educational opportunities in the District is to fix the buildings attended by the vast majority of our children.

Second, not only will vouchers not fix DC's broken public schools, they will, at best, provide additional educational opportunity for a handful of students only by abandoning and neglecting the children remaining in the public schools. Public schools are the means by which we fulfill our responsibility to educate our children and thereby prepare them to be responsible citizens and enable them to compete for jobs and other economic opportunities as adults. DC Public Schools (and Charter Schools) must admit *all* children, while vouchers use public tax dollars to permit *private schools to choose* whatever students they want. One can be certain that private schools will tend not to choose students with special education requirements, limited or no English proficiency, behavior problems or with low levels of academic achievement. Those students will be left to the public schools whose funding, in the meantime, has been diminished by the loss of students whose needs are not so costly.

Furthermore, in 2004 the funding allocated to vouchers might be able to afford between 1400 and 1867 scholarships in awards ranging from $3750-$5000, if not a penny is used to administer the program. A survey by the 21st Century School Fund, however, reveals that only 32 private and parochial schools in DC charge tuition below $5,000, and those serve only 4181 students in grades K-12. If 10% of the current slots in those schools were to be devoted to vouchers, only 418 students would be able to use the vouchers in the District without having to afford the balance of tuition costs and other mandatory fees at a higher priced school. How could a family living at the poverty level afford the balance of tuition at other private schools?

In 2001, a family of three living at the poverty line had roughly $7,000 in disposal income for the year. It is inconceivable that a family in that situation would spend it all on one child to attend private school. The voucher becomes nothing more than a tease for such families. And what about those families who don't find a slot in a private school in DC? With so few spaces, other voucher recipients may find themselves bussing their children all the way to Fairfax or Falls Church city to find an available slot at that price. In those circumstances, vouchers will succeed in disrupting fragile family lives, leaving children in the region's notorious traffic jams for hours, and reviving the forced bussing programs that our nation has finally managed to end.

Third, the schools that receive public tax dollars for private purposes will not have to comply with the same standards of accountability and reporting that our public schools do. It is quite surprising that Congress, after so proudly accomplishing the No Child Left Behind legislation, would allow, or especially encourage, public money to be used without the same level of accountability that it now mandates to the nation's public schools. A voucher school can be eligible to participate in the program if it serves 25 students for three years. Such a school could not begin to compare its educational offerings to those of public schools. Such low standards of eligibility are an affront to the U.S. taxpayer who envisions much more comprehensive programs being delivered with his or her education dollars.

Fourth, Congressional imposition of a voucher experiment in the District is a direct attack on Home Rule. It is not even remotely conceivable that Congress would impose a voucher program in Houston or Miami if the Texas or Florida congressional delegations opposed the program. While the District, of course, lacks voting representation in Congress, our only delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, has spoken out forcefully against the voucher proposal. Moreover, Ms. Norton's view mirrors that of her constituents – a recent poll by the National School Board Association found that 76 percent of District voters do not support the establishment of vouchers in the District.

In short, we are grateful that the President and members of Congress are interested in improving education in the District. Simply put, however, if they want to help, the first priority should be to keep public dollars in publicly accountable schools where they can be used to serve all children, not a small, select minority.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The Arts and Technology Academy Public Charter School, Charter 1997

A combination of parental involvement and performance measurement enables the academy to provide an academically challenging, technologically rich, student-centered learning environment. The academy is managed by Mosaica Education, Inc. and imparts a clear sense of responsibility to parents and students. *Donovan Stevenson, a 5th grader at ATA, received the 2002 Outstanding Elementary Student of the Year MAC Award.*

Capital City Public Charter School, Charter 1999

Founded by the leaders of the Phoebe Hearst Elementary School PTA, Capital City opened last September. Capital City integrates the *Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound©* model, which promotes curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking; the Responsive Classroom, which integrates the academic and social skills; and the arts. The school plans to add one grade each year through grade 8. *Karen Dresden received the 2001 MAC Award for Principal of the Year.*

Children's Studio School Public Charter School of the Arts and Humanities, Charter 1996

Founded in 1977 as a DC community-based arts organization and full-day school, the Studio uses its own trans-cultural Arts As Education approach "to develop multidimensional thinking in children." Architects, visual and performing artists, and writers engage children in the artist's processes of inquiry, experimentation and critiquing as a rigorous, all-encompassing means of education.

Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School, Charter 1997

Teachers, administrators, and community members provide a bi-lingual academic experience for Stokes students. Students learn to speak, read, write and think in *two* languages, either English and French, or English and Spanish. *In 2000, EWS was awarded the Highest Student Satisfaction MAC Award, Parent of the Year for grandmother Alma Bullock, and Jerel Pleasan received the MAC Hope Award. In 2001, 2nd grader Cristian Salazar was chosen Elementary Student of the Year.*

Friendship Edison Public Charter Schools –Chamberlain Campus & Woodridge Campus, Charter 1997

In partnership with the Edison Project, the Friendship schools are organized around small academies, wherein teachers stay with the same children for several years. Technology plays an important role in the educational program, and families of students in the third grade and higher receive a home computer. *In 2000, the Chamberlain campus earned the MAC Award for Highest Student Attendance. In 2002, James Mwombela received the Special Talent MAC Award for his skills as an orator.*

Howard Road Academy Public Charter School, Charter 1999

This school was conceived by a group of professionals committed to improving the quality of education available to residents of Ward 8. Managed by Mosaica Education, Inc., the education program features the research-based Direct Instruction curriculum. Chartered for 1,270 students in grades K-12, the school will begin operations by serving 500 K-6 students.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Hyde Leadership Public Charter School of Washington, D.C., Charter 2001

Like its middle and high schools, the Hyde's elementary school emphasizes "Education, Character, and Family." Its highly structured curriculum focuses on reading fluency through phonetics and teaching textual analysis. Beginning with 165 children in 2001, the school will add one grade per year until it offers grades K-6. *For three consecutive years, Hyde has earned the annual MAC Award for Highest Parent Satisfaction in a D.C. public charter school.*

Meridian Public Charter School, Charter 1997

The school's concept-based, classic curriculum helps students build self-respect and self-confidence through academic achievement. Structured classrooms are augmented with ongoing evaluation, individual student portfolios emphasizing self-expression through writing, a tutoring/mentoring system, and individualized language studies. Meridian's elementary program uses the curriculum developed by The Calvert School, an independent school in Baltimore, MD.

The School for Arts in Learning (SAIL) Public Charter School, Charter 1997

This community educational center offers an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum that is tailored to each child's needs. SAIL emphasizes the development of the whole child: intellectual, emotional, physical, and social, assessing progress using portfolio collections of children's work and culminating projects at the end of each thematic unit. The school's thorough accountability plan details quantifiable goals measuring student's, teacher's, and administrative success levels in the school's first five years of operation.

The Tree of Life Community Public Charter School, Charter 1999

The school's curriculum emphasizes reading and literacy through flexible, individualized instruction targeted to meet the needs of students with below-grade-level performance. The Tree of Life strongly encourages parental involvement and offers family-literacy services to students and their families.

Tri-Community Public Charter School, Charter 2001

Founded by Ward 4 community members, education administrators, and business people, Tri-Community's program provides a rigorous, standards-driven curriculum. A focus on literacy development and a small student-to-teacher ratio allow students to maximize their choices upon graduation: college, career, and/or post-secondary education. An additional grade level will be added each year until the school offers grades Pre-K through 12.

The Village Learning Center Public Charter School, Charter 1997

The school emphasizes a strict moral and discipline standard while providing for the academic, economic and cultural development of its students. Emphasis is on improving student achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling and speech.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOLS

The Community Academy Public Charter School (CAPCS), Charter 1997

Founded by the Urban Family Institute, CAPCS offers a standards-based curriculum designed to foster the pursuit of lifelong learning. The academy also provides *Kids' House*, an after-school program with tutoring services running between the hours of 4:00 and 7:30 pm. *Barbara Nophlin won the Principal of the Year MAC Award in 2002.*

Ideal Academy Public Charter School, Charter 1998

The academy promotes strong academics by emphasizing mathematics, science, and technology. Special attention is placed on developing reading skills at an early age through the use of an intensive phonics program. The school also offers before and after school programs from 7 am to 6 pm.

Roots Public Charter School, Charter 1998

The school offers a strong learning environment infused with African heritage and culture. Roots stresses academic excellence, exemplary character, and social responsibility to prepare students for a traditional or alternative high school education.

SouthEast Academy of Scholastic Excellence Public Charter School, Charter 1998

The academy provides a rigorous academic program tailored for individualized instruction. Students study a core curriculum and choose from college preparatory or skilled career development programs to pursue their goals. In addition to an adult GED program, evening and weekend tutoring is offered.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Barbara Jordan Public Charter School, Charter 2002

The school offers a rigorous academic program designed to foster academic achievement, high self-esteem, and inspiration for life long learning. Students, who attend classes with a 15:1 student-teacher ratio, are expected to demonstrate independent and innovative thinking, character, leadership, political acuity, oration skills, and a pioneering spirit. An additional grade level will be added each year until the school serves grades 5 through 8.

Friendship Edison Junior Academy Public Charter School, Charter 1997 Blow-Pierce Campus

The academy organizes its students into smaller groups to provide more attention to each student's needs. Technology plays an important role in the educational program, and each student receives a home computer. *The Junior Academy earned the 2001 MAC Award for Highest Student Attendance Rating.*

CHARTER SCHOOLS

KIPP DC/ KEY Academy, Charter 2001

An accelerated curriculum that includes Saturday and summer study prepares students for college-preparatory study in high school. In addition, teachers are available for academic guidance on a 24-hour basis. The academy will add one grade level each year until it serves 320 students in grades 5 through 8. *In 2002, Tom Brown was honored with the Parent of the Year MAC Award and Khala Johnson with the Teacher of the Year MAC Award. In addition, KIPP also won the Best Student Attendance Rating.*

Options Public Charter School, Charter 1996

The District's first public charter school, Options operates under sponsorship of the Capital Children's Museum. The school provides an alternative learning environment for underachieving students through the New American Schools' Expeditionary Learning whole school reform model, which fosters students' curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking skills. *Seventh-grade playwright Patrice Cooper earned the 2001 MAC Special Talent Award. In 2000, the MAC Hope Award went to Timothy Hinton, now a 10th grader at Cesar Chavez PCS for Public Policy.*

Paul Junior High Public Charter School, Charter 1999

Offering a strong academic course-of-study to prepare students for admission to the nation's top high schools, the school maintains high academic expectations for all students. In addition, the school partners with the Kennedy Center to integrate an extensive arts curriculum into its programs. Currently, 525 students are enrolled. *In 2002, Samuel Collins Jr. won the Secondary School Student of the Year MAC Award.*

Sasha Bruce Public Charter Middle School, Charter 2000

The school uses the *Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound©* curriculum to emphasize critical thinking, essential skills, habits, and character development. The school opened in Fall 2001 with a 14:1 student ratio and plans to add a grade every year until the school serves 150 students in grades 6-12.

MIDDLE / HIGH SCHOOLS

Hyde Leadership Public Charter School of Washington, D.C., Charter 1998

Hyde offers a rigorous academic curriculum that emphasizes "Education, Character, and Family" and prepares students for competitive postsecondary education. All students participate in co-curricular activities, community service, the performing arts, and athletics. The school will add one grade per year through grade 12. *For three consecutive years, Hyde has earned the annual MAC Award for Highest Parent Satisfaction in a D.C. public charter school.*

The School for Educational Evolution and Development (SEED) PCS, Charter 1997

The nation's first inner-city public charter boarding school, SEED provides its urban student body with a nurturing environment, strong role models, and a rigorous academic program designed to prepare them for their future careers and admission to the nations' top colleges and universities. Chartered to serve grades 7 to 12, the school offers a 14:1 teacher-student ratio. The SEED will increase one grade level per year to serve 180 students. *The 2001 MAC Awards Teacher of the Year, Felix Brandon Lloyd, and Secondary Student of the Year, Eboni-Rose Thompson, hail from SEED*

CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Village Learning Center Public Charter School, Charter 1997

While emphasizing achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling, and speech, the school provides for the academic, economic, and cultural development of students. In addition, the school emphasizes a strict moral and discipline standard to help children develop as morally conscious human beings.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Associates for Renewal in Education Public Charter School (ARE), Charter 1998

ARE offers a year-round program focused on the needs of students who have not succeeded in traditional schools, particularly youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. The school strives to help students improve self-esteem, behave appropriately, strengthen reasoning skills, obtain a high school degree, and lead productive, successful lives. In partnership with its parent organization, the charter school offers services to students and parents daily from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Booker T. Washington Public Charter School for Technical Arts, Charter 1998

Similar to successful cooperative education programs, the school works with local contractors, unions, and government placement programs to provide "hands-on" experiences in the construction and building trades. In addition, the teens and adults attend classes on business management, bookkeeping, applied mathematics, computer training, personnel management, and marketing. *A Booker T. Washington instructor received the 1st MAC Award for Teacher of the Year in May 2000.*

Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School, Charter 1997

Committed to the city's immigrant community, the school assists at-risk students and adults with literacy and English language skills, English as a Second Language (ESL) proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and GED preparation skills. *Rosario earned MAC Award for the DC public charter school with the Highest Student Satisfaction Rating in 2001 and 2002. The 2000 MAC Award for Outstanding Student of the Year was awarded to Gerardo Hernandez.*

Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy, Charter 1997

The school provides students with direct experience in organizations working in the public interest while challenging them with a curriculum that fosters academic excellence, citizenship, and an understanding of public policy. After-school activities and Saturday classes emphasize PSAT/SAT preparation, computer skills, music, and art. *Principal Irasema Salcido received the MAC Award for Principal of the Year in May 2000.*

Friendship Edison Collegiate Academy Public Charter School, Charter 1997 Carter G. Woodson Campus

The fourth campus in the Friendship-Edison PCS partnership, the academy organizes students into "Houses" of four classrooms each. Each classroom is equipped with PCs, and students are given laptops to use at home. The school supports a strong commitment to parents and families. Grade 12 was added in August 2002.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Integrated Design & Electronics Academy (IDEA) Public Charter School, Charter 1997

A spin-off of the Phelps Career Academy, IDEA is a career-focused school that integrates academic and occupational curricula, increases student career options, and provides a meaningful learning context for both potential dropouts and college-bound youth. IDEA offers tutoring, and after school and weekend activities.

JOS-ARZ Academy Public Charter School, Charter 1999

This day and residential treatment school is designed to meet the educational, clinical, behavioral, and vocational needs of adolescents who have been identified as emotionally disturbed or behaviorally disordered. A combination of the individually tailored psycho-educational programs and the residential facilities are available to level 5 special-needs students. *In May 2001, Brenett Johnson earned the MAC Hope Award for the charter school student who demonstrated great strides in scholastic attitude and achievement.*

The Kamit Institute for Magnificent Achievers Public Charter School (KIMA), Charter 1999

KIMA provides an academically challenging environment through a holistic and family focused approach. Offering classes with a 15:1 teacher student ratio, the school places heavy emphasis the literary arts, social research, outdoor education, and cultural exploration. In addition, tutorial sessions are offered during and after school.

Marriott Hospitality Public Charter High School Charter, Charter 1998

Students explore the District of Columbia's growing hospitality industry and entering college after graduation. The program features paid internships, industry related technology systems training, project-based learning, and mentoring. The year-round program includes both summer school and summer employment opportunities. *In May 2000, student Daveren Anthony accepted the Special Talent MAC Award for his culinary achievements.*

Maya Angelou Public Charter School, Charter 1997

Sponsored by the See Forever Foundation, the school specializes in integrating the world of work into the traditional academic setting while providing a challenging curriculum. Open year-round, the school offers comprehensive support for students through a 5:1 student-teacher ratio, individual tutoring sessions, team-building activities, field trips, and access to quality mental and physical health care. Second-year students choose to train in either the catering or technology field.

New School for Enterprise and Development Public Charter School, Charter 1999

Founded by a group of business and economic development professionals, the New School opened in September 2000. Academies promote entrepreneurship, business, technology, humanities, and media arts. A combination of cooperative group learning, work study, and academic enrichment programs further prepares the students for class work, college, and life-long learning. Currently the school serves 9th grade; as students are promoted annually, the school will add new grades through grade 12.

The Next Step Public Charter School, Charter 1996

Sponsored by the Latin-American Youth Center, Next Step provides a sound academic program tailored for teen parents and students who have dropped out of school. Students are empowered to continue their education, earn a GED certificate, and successfully enter the workforce.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School, Charter 2001

Founded by the Street Law program at Georgetown University Law Center, the academy offers an intensive academic curriculum designed to prepare students for a postsecondary education. Using the standards-based *America's Choice©*, the school integrates activities and content related to justice, equality, law, and policy. While starting with grade 9, the school intends to add a grade each year until its students graduate from grade 12.

Washington Mathematics, Science, and Technology Public Charter High School, Charter 1997

Utilizing the *Modern Red Schoolhouse©* academic standards, the school provides college-bound students with a rigorous education that integrates math and science instruction with technology.

SCHOOLS OPENING SEPTEMBER 2003

Latin American Montessori Bilingual (LAMB) Public Charter School, Charter 2002

LAMB offers Montessori-styled classes for pre-school through third-grade children. Sequenced activities will promote self-motivated bi-lingual learners capable of integrating the language arts, mathematics, science, and technology. An additional grade level will be added each year until the school serves children ages 3-8, while maintaining a 20:2 student-teacher ratio.

D.C. Preparatory Academy PCS, Charter 2002

Balanced curriculums, research-based programs, and exciting enrichment activities, as well as weekend and summer programs, prepare students to enroll in top public and private high schools. Emphasizing academics, character, and leadership development, the junior academy will offer classes for grades 4 and 5, and the senior academy will offer classes for grades 6-8. Breakfast and after school programs are offered in conjunction with Beacon House, a neighborhood nonprofit.

PRESS STATEMENT

Council of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chairman, Linda W. Cropp
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CROPP REITERATES VOUCHER OPPOSITION

WASHINGTON, DC...DC Council Chairman Linda W. Cropp released the following statement this afternoon in response to a measure announced today by Cong. Jeff Flake (R-Az). Congressman Flake today introduced a bill to provide federally funded school vouchers to District parents:

> **Students and parents in the District already have a choice of schools. The District has more charter schools than any jurisdiction in the nation. Other jurisdictions are given a choice as to whether to offer school vouchers. The District deserves no less than to make its own decisions. District residents pay almost three billion dollars in taxes each year. We contribute more revenue than many states to the Federal coffers. The District should decide how best to provide an education to its youth.**

-30-

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Just couple of clean-up questions.

Ms. Baker, is the D.C. Charter School Board now applying for grants? Have you been successful at getting any Federal grants?

Ms. BAKER. We have not seen our role as applying for grants, per say. I think with the demise of the Charter Resource Center and with some information that has come to us recently, we may very well move in that direction in order to give technical assistance and support.

We walk sort of a thin line, in terms of——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. This is something we want to look at, because we want to make sure, at a minimum, the school system for the public schools and the charters are getting a maximum amount of grants.

Ms. BAKER. We assisted with some of the professional support for the public schools so they could apply for grants, because each one is an LEA.

In the first part of the day, there was a question asked here as to whether any charter schools had ever been closed because of academic achievement. So I made a phone call, and I did get some information about a number—not of those percentages, but 9 percent of the school closures in the Nation have been attributed to poor academic achievement. So academic achievement is one of the reasons that schools are being closed, and it is very much a part of what we do in terms of looking at academic achievement on an annual basis.

With the law that you have written, academic achievement can only be used in the 5th year. So we monitor annually, and we can make those decisions at year 5 on academic achievement.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Ms. Pinkney-Hackett, let me thank you again for coming. I hope your kids are proud of you standing up for them. Do you think there are a lot of other parents who feel like you?

Ms. PINKNEY-HACKETT. Yes, there are, sir. Ms. Norton said that no parent organization has come forth, because PTA has a different stance. The national PTA and D.C. PTA are against vouchers.

But, unfortunately for them, they don't represent what parents in the D.C. school system truly want. D.C. PTA only has about 2,000 parents enrolled.

Ms. NORTON. Who does represent what parents truly want?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I yield to Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. You are right that it is hard for any organization to speak for everybody, but who does represent what parents want better than Parents United or the PTA?

Ms. PINKNEY-HACKETT. Let me say, it is the parents themselves. Even with PTA, my PTA at Jefferson, we support school choice. We are part of D.C. PTA. Most of them, when they make a choice like that——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Are they teachers?

Ms. PINKNEY-HACKETT. No. Most do not even have children school age. Some of them who are D.C. PTA board members have already exercised their right for school choice because they have children in private schools. The treasurer has a child in DeMatha High School. One of the vice presidents last year had two children, one child in private school and two children in public school.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. They don't want you to have the same choice they have because maybe economically they are better off than you.

Ms. PINKNEY-HACKETT. You would be surprised at how much support I'm getting from people who are on the board of D.C. PTA. They may have that stance, so may be there is no organization to speak for all of the parents, but there are parents who want school choice. Perhaps we need to go to the parents.

Ms. NORTON. Are you willingly still in the D.C. public schools or would you like to be outside of the D.C. public schools in a voucher now?

Ms. PINKNEY-HACKETT. Let me say this, I am willingly in D.C. public schools because I grew up in D.C. public schools. I like to have faith that they are doing a great job to educate our children.

But for those parents who are not able to get out of boundary—Jefferson is are not my neighborhood schools. It is just fortunate I am one of the parents who are able to place their children out of boundary. But for the parents who are not as fortunate, yes, I would like them to see them have another choice.

No, that voucher will not take care of all the problems, but it is one more option. If we can help 1,000 or 2,000 more parents, I suggest we do it.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let thank you very much for that. Ms. Toyer, thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Even if the money might go to transformation schools and to charter schools? This is a zero sum game, Ms. Pinkney-Hackett. The notion you heard here about, this is new money, your children are in the D.C. public schools and the only word for what has happened to the No Child Left Behind Bill, which applies directly to you, is defunded.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me say I am not sure I agree that it is a zero sum game. That is part of the argument. But we are going to try to work together. Ms. Norton and I have worked through a lot of battles. We usually don't start off on the same page, but we are practical. We see some resources out there. The system clearly needs it.

I think you all have been very helpful. Ms. Cooper Cafritz, thank you for your courage in speaking up here today. There is a big diversity of opinion in the city, we understand that. We understand where the city has been traditionally and officially. We are looking to get some kind of solution for the kids. All of you have been very helpful as we try to shape it.

I don't know if we will do a bill, if we will have direct grants to the Federal Government. The decision will work out independently of what we do. We just don't know yet how we are going to wrestle with it, but we are going to put your comments together and, from my perspective, try to figure out something. We will be sitting down with some of the key stakeholders. Just to let you know, you all played a very important part with this.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, let us just hope it is more than the $75 million that the administration has on the table now. I want to note on the record, for all the talk about extra resources, the Federal Government was at the table and no more than $75 million

divided eight ways among school districts ever came out of everybody's mouth. I do not yet see good faith on resources.

Thank you very much, all of you, for coming.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Maybe that is what it takes to bring you on board on this. But thank you. You have played a very key role, all of you. I appreciate the testimony and for you being here and staying with us.

Ms. CAFRITZ. Congressman, can I just say one more thing I think you need to have on the record? You talked about this being a temporary program. I think—because it is not a permanent solution. I agree. But I think with every child you give a voucher to, you have to make a commitment that the money is going to be there to carry that child through his or her completion.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Right. We need a strong public school system with a lot of choices and a lot of diversity within the system. Vouchers are—when we have a school system in distress, it is certainly a short-term solution to allow that kid who will only be in third grade one time, to give him a year that is worthwhile. That is kind of my point. I thank all of you again.

Ms. TOYER. Can I just add, Mr. Davis, and it has not been raised, that when these 2,000 children, 1,000 or whatever, are serviced, that it does impact on individual local schools, because they are not going to all come from one school. Because of the way the school system is funded on a formula basis, and then how much the superintendents give us is based on the number of children you have——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. That would not be the way it works.

Ms. TOYER. It has to be, because that is how the city legislation works. All I am saying is when we lose children, local schools will suffer. They will have to make the decision as to whether or not they are going to have a science teacher, a math teacher, or whatever.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me get a word in here, OK? I am the Chair. One of the things we talked about today was that this would not count against the allocation. If we solve that, maybe that would solve some of your concern. I appreciate your bringing that up. It is obviously something we are concerned about as we move ahead.

Thank you all very much. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[Additional information submitted for the hearing record follows:]

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
CHAIRMAN

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BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

June 2, 2003

The Honorable Anthony A. Williams
Mayor of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Williams:

Thank you for your testimony at the Committee on Government Reform's May 9, 2003, hearing regarding academic options in the District of Columbia. Below are a number of followup questions for the record:

(1) Do you believe that funding could be secured through grants from the Bush Administration without the necessity for legislation, inasmuch as the Administration budget language appears to envision grant funding from the Department of Education?

(2) What amount of funding from the Bush Administration do you believe would be required to finance a viable split among public schools, charter schools, and a pilot voucher program? How much funding have you requested? Has a formal request been made? What response have you received?

(3) By far most of the children who participated in the private DC voucher program dropped out by the end of the third year. In light of cuts to charter schools and transformation schools and the need for more transformation schools, would you consider a smaller voucher program with the bulk of the funds going initially to charter schools and transformation schools?

(4) Under the voucher program, do you envision voucher funds going to a private organization for distribution?

(5) Because low-income students would be least able to supplement voucher assistance, how can a DC program be limited only to low-income students?

I would appreciate your responding to these questions by June 16, 2003. Again, thank you for your contribution to the Committee's hearing on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member

cc: Mr. Gregory McCarthy

July 7, 2003

The Honorable Thomas M. Davis, III
Chairman
Committee on Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Davis:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the House Committee on Government Reform on alternative and educational reform in the District of Columbia. Enclosed are responses to the questions that you and members of the Committee submitted for the record for the May 9, 2003 hearing on "Alternative Schools and Educational Reform in the District of Columbia."

1. **Do you believe that funding could be secured through grants from the Bush Administration without the necessity for legislation, inasmuch as the Administration budget language appears to envision grant funding from the Department of Education?**

   I believe that the scholarship portion of the District's proposed three-sector approach will require authorizing legislation in order to be implemented. It is possible that funding for the other two sectors, DCPS and charters could be facilitated through grants; however we would need to ensure that the appropriate budget authority exists within the Department of Education and that the purposes for which the funds are intended are allowable costs under such existing grants.

2. **What amount of funding from the Bush Administration do you believe would be required to finance a viable split among public schools, charter schools and a pilot voucher program? How much funding have you requested? Has a formal request been made? What response have you received?**

   I believe that funding for the three sector approach should reflect the specific needs of each of the sectors. Surely, because DCPS currently serves the overwhelming majority of our students, this sector would require more funding than the other two. This funding would not only need to be significant but would also need to be ongoing. Charter schools have an acute and immediate need – facilities. A smaller one-time infusion of resources, which could be leveraged by private sector donations, would be most useful for this sector. Finally, a sustained investment that would expand opportunities for at least 2,000 students initially would be most effective for scholarship this sector.

While I have not made a formal request for funding, I continue to dialogue with the Executive branch and members of Congress on the necessary level of funding for this reform effort. I am grateful for their commitment to the three-sector educational reform effort and am confident that sufficient funding will be appropriated for this endeavor.

3. **By far most of the children who participated in the private DC voucher program dropped out by the end of the third year. In light of cuts to charter schools and transformation schools and the need for more transformation schools would you consider a smaller voucher program with the bulk of funds going initially to charter schools and transformation schools?**

Indeed a significant number of the students who participated in the private Washington Scholarship Fund dropped out in the third year, largely due to the fact that many families could no longer supplement the cost of their children's education. This is testimony more to the need for a scholarship program that provides significant grant awards, than to the failure of this approach altogether. Evidence indicates that if provided with additional financial resources and assistance many of these students would have been able to remain in the program in the third year.

4. **Under a voucher program, do you envision voucher funds going to a private organization for distribution?**

I have advocated for a competitive bidding process that would select the most qualified entity, public or private, to administer a scholarship program in the District. If a private entity is selected, the city would work to ensure that the leadership of the organization includes District elected officials and educational leaders or otherwise ensure that the city has input as to how the program is administered.

5. **Because low-income students would be least able to supplement voucher assistance, how can a DC program be limited to low-income students?**

The scholarship program is targeted at low-income students precisely because they are the students with the least opportunity. Moreover, the city has worked to secure a significant scholarship award amount as well as other funding for expense that parents might otherwise be unable to afford. As the proposal is currently designed students can receive a scholarship for up to $7,500 and parents can also get other types assistance to support transition to a new educational environment. This amount will ensure that the maximum slots below the ceiling are available to low-income families.

I hope these responses answer the questions you have posed. Please feel free to contact me if you should require additional information.

Sincerely yours,

Anthony A. Williams
Mayor

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
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INDEPENDENT

June 2, 2003

Ms. Linda Cropp
Chair
District of Columbia City Council
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Ms. Cropp:

Thank you for your testimony at the Committee on Government Reform's May 9, 2003, hearing regarding academic options in the District of Columbia. Below are a number of followup questions for the record:

(1) For the No Child Left Behind requirements, the Council included in its budget only $9.8 million of the $11 million requested by the School Board. This money was not placed in the DCPS budget but has been budgeted in a separate holding account with no established criteria for DCPS's use of these funds. Why were no criteria established so DCPS could make specific plans to qualify for release of the funds? Why was the amount held back? The Council's action appears to mean that DCPS will be compelled to go to current DCPS funding, though DCPS is currently underfunded across the board, before being able to access the additional funds needed to comply with this federal mandate. Please explain.

(2) What steps have you taken to ensure that teachers and/or other personnel in the D.C. charter schools get a pay raise comparable to the raise you voted for DCPS personnel? Did any member or members indicate they expected the Congress to contribute to or to pay for this raise? And if so, which members? Why were charter school personnel not included with DCPS personnel for regular increases? Is this the first time that a decision has been made to fund DCPS personnel while not giving comparable funding to charter school personnel?

(3) How much money is spent per pupil in the District compared to the amounts spent in the surrounding region for public schools? For comparison purposes, please break your answer down per county in Maryland and Virginia and compare similar functions.

Ms. Linda Cropp
June 2, 2003
Page 2

I would appreciate your responding to these questions by June 16, 2003. Again, thank you for your contribution to the Committee's hearing on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member

cc: Mr. Christopher Murray

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20004

LINDA W. CROPP
Chairman

June 13, 2003

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Waxman:

I am writing in response to your letter of June 2, 2003, seeking information in follow-up to the hearing on Alternative Schools and Educational Reform. The answers to your questions are provided below.

1. **For the No Child Left Behind requirements, the Council included in its budget only $9.8 million of the $11 million requested by the School Board. This money was not placed in the DCPS budget but has been budgeted in a separate holding account with no established criteria for DCPS's use of these funds. Why were no criteria established so DCPS could make specific plans to qualify for release of the funds? Why was the amount held back? The Council's action appears to mean that DCPS will be compelled to go the current DCPS funding, though DCPS is currently underfunded across the board, before being able to access the additional funds needed to comply with this federal mandate. Please explain.**

   The Council's Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation recommended approval of, and the Council ultimately approved, the Mayor's proposed budget. The FY 2004 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan submitted by the Mayor included a contingency budget of $9.5 million for DCPS for costs associated with implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. (An additional $1.9 million is allocated to the Public Charter Schools, for a total of $11.4 million.) There are no specific criteria for the use of the funds because DCPS could not provide a spending plan. Therefore, the funds were placed in the Non-departmental line of the budget, as advised by the District's Chief Financial Officer, to ensure their availability for the intended purpose, solely to facilitate compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. These funds will be made available upon request and verification of the cost of the federal legislation.

2. **What steps have you taken to ensure that teachers and/or other personnel in the D.C. charter schools get a pay raise comparable to the raise you voted for DCPS personnel? Did any member or members indicate they expected the Congress to contribute to or to pay for this raise? And if so, which members? Why were charter school personnel not included with DCPS personnel for regular increases? Is this the first time that a decision has been made to fund DCPS personnel while not giving comparable funding to charter school personnel?**

The Council's Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation recommended, and the Council approved, the Mayor's proposed budget for charter schools with the addition of $500,000. The Mayor's budget did not include funding for a pay raise for charter school teachers. However, the Committee noted the need to address what was estimated to be a $5 million deficit with respect to a pay raise for charter school teachers. The amount of $500,000 was transferred from the agencies under the purview of the Committee on Government Operations for the purpose of assisting with funding the teachers' pay raise. Additional funding could not be identified within the confines of the District's limited budget. Therefore, upon consideration of the budget by the full Council, an amendment was offered by Councilmember Chavous, Chairman of the Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation, to request $6 million in federal funds for charter schools to fund their teachers' pay raises. That amendment was accepted as a friendly amendment.

The Mayor's budget proposal funded the teachers' pay raise as an enhancement to the DCPS budget. It is our understanding that charter school teachers may not be under the same union as DCPS teachers and therefore would not be covered by the negotiated salary increase. This is an example of the difference in salary for union versus non-union employees that exists in the District.

3. **How much money is spent per pupil in the District compared to the amounts spent in the surrounding region for public schools? For comparison purposes, please break your answer down per county in Maryland and Virginia and compare similar functions.**

Below is a comparison of the average funding per pupil in DC and surrounding jurisdictions based on "locally" funded budget and enrollment calculated by our budget office. The data used are from the Metropolitan Area Boards of Education (MABE) and the District's budget. It must be noted that the average per pupil funding for DCPS has nearly doubled since FY '97 despite a decrease in the number of students enrolled.

Average Per Pupil Funding						
Jurisdiction	**FY '97**	**FY '98**	**FY '00**	**FY '01**	**FY '02**	**FY '03**
Alexandria City	8,770	9,694	9,834	10,751	10,925	12,188
Arlington County	8,859	9,488	10,112	10,740	11,305	12,016
DC Public Schools	5,851	7,068	8,492	9,119	9,622	11,170
Fairfax County	6,878	7,152	7,643	8,249	8,690	8,831
Montgomery County	7,663	8,103	8,489	9,016	9,524	9,407
Prince George's County	n/a	5,685	6,298	6,642	6,914	7,397

Enrollment							
Jurisdiction	**FY '97**	**FY '98**	**FY '99**	**FY '00**	**FY '01**	**FY '02**	**FY '03**
Alexandria City	10,484	10,294	11,001	11,225	11,214	10,895	11,334
Arlington County	17,839	17,895	18,564	18,723	18,882	19,097	19,372
DC Public Schools	78,648	77,111	71,889	70,762	68,925	68,449	68,181
Fairfax County	147,543	148,036	151,418	154,523	158,331	161,385	166,072
Montgomery County	123,969	122,505	127,852	130,689	134,308	136,832	138,794
Prince George's County	n/a	130,355	130,140	131,510	133,667	135,821	137,802

In addition, the MABE has calculated the FY 2003 cost per pupil for suburban jurisdictions. The MABE uses a standardized methodology that excludes summer school, special education tuition and other expenses of the kind in DCPS' state-level budget, but includes most federal grants. Comparable data are provided for DCPS. The MABE finds:

Cost Per Pupil	
Alexandria City	11,914
Arlington County	12,716
DC Public Schools	10,031
Fairfax County	9,338

Montgomery County	9,641
Prince George's County	6,554

A more detailed study was conducted by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and volunteers at the firm of Sidley, Austin, Brown and Wood LLP. It is included in a report entitled "D.C. Public School Funding: Myth & Reality" prepared for Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools and a special advisory committee of civic leaders. The study benchmarks state/local spending per pupil (excluding federal funds), by function. The findings compare the District to 4 high-performing neighboring jurisdictions.

State/Local Spending Per Pupil	
Alexandria City	11,454
Arlington County	11,769
DC Public Schools	8,536
Fairfax County	8,768
Montgomery County	8,638

More detailed findings from the report show:

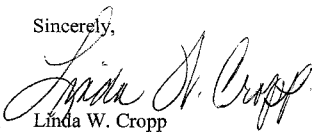
Comparison of Spending by Function		
Jurisdiction	**Central Office**	**Direct Services to Students**
Alexandria City	1,275	10,179
Arlington County	1,518	10,251
DC Public Schools	884	7,652
Fairfax County	894	7,874
Montgomery County	891	7,747

DCPS was noted as spending less per pupil in the following areas: (1) improving the quality of teaching; (2) general instruction program per student; (3) special education services for students enrolled within the system; (4) technology, both instructional and management, when compared to Arlington and Fairfax; and (5) student services and

athletics. Per pupil spending was comparable in the areas of: (1) central offices and services generally; (2) English as a Second Language and other language minority services; and (3) facilities maintenance and custodians. DCPS exhibited a higher level of spending per pupil on security and utilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information. If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



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BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

June 2, 2003

Ms. Peggy Cooper Cafritz
President
District of Columbia Board of Education
825 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Ms. Cafritz:

Thank you for your testimony at the Committee on Government Reform's May 9, 2003, hearing regarding academic options in the District of Columbia. Below are a number of followup questions for the record:

(1) In light of the fact that the School Board proposed to the Mayor a local operating budget of $847.8 million, and that only $742.6 million was approved, what DCPS programs and services that were otherwise planned will be cut or eliminated in FY '04? Please be specific.

(2) What DCPS capital improvements were included in the budget as submitted by the School Board? What specific capital improvements will be delayed because of cuts in the submitted budget? Please break your answer down and respond separately concerning traditional DC public schools, charter schools, and transformation schools.

(3) Name all 15 transformation schools. Using criteria similar to those used to designate the first 15, how many other schools today qualify to be transformation schools? Name all the low-performing schools that meet the criteria you used to name the first 15 transformation schools.

(4) What specific services are envisioned for transformation schools when fully implemented? What services are now available? What service level is required for these schools to meet DCPS goals for transformation? Name the specific goals for improvements in transformation schools. What specific evidence do you have of parents' responses to conversion of their children's schools to transformation schools?

I would appreciate your responding to these questions by June 16, 2003. Again, thank you for your contribution to the Committee's hearing on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member

cc: Ms. Elena Temple

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

PEGGY COOPER CAFRITZ
PRESIDENT
825 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002
PHONE: (202) 442-4289
FAX: (202) 442-5198

June 17, 2003

Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6143

Dear Congressman Waxman:

Please find attached the answers to the follow-up questions to the Committee on Government Reforms, May 9, 2033 hearing regarding academic options in the District of Columbia.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not fail to contact me at 202-442-5192.

Sincerely,

Peggy Cooper Cafritz
President

ATTACHMENT

Question (1)

In light of the fact that the School board proposed to the mayor a local operating budget of $847.8 million, and that only $742.6 million was approved, what DCPS programs and services that were otherwise planned will be cut or eliminated in FY '04? Please be specific.

Anwser

The D.C. Board of Education (Board) has not decided which programs will be cut or eliminated in FY '04 as a result of the actions of the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia. The Board is currently evaluating a number of options to ensure that we will live within the appropriated budget.

In building our budget request, the Board stated with our originally Mayor and Council approved baseline budget of $740.5 million. We then added $64.6 million of mandated costs to produce a new baseline budget of $803.2 million, that included $44.2 million for union contracts, $2 million for legal settlements and judgments, $7.8 million of inflationary increases to fixed rent, electricity, and water and sewer costs and other required expenses. The approved budget will require that District of Columbia Public Schools absorb these mandatory costs by cutting teachers, cease maintaining our schools, and drastically cutting back on the programs that we provide to our children.

On top of the $803.2 million, the Board then added $44.6 in educational reform investments, which includes $15.3 million for structural maintenance improvements, $8.3 for asbestos abatement, and $15.8 for accelerating academic achievement and other items. The approved budget stops our efforts to transform our school system into a world-class school system. The approved budget does not fund replicating the successful oyster school bi-lingual education model in other schools. The approved budget neither funds the McKinley project nor the nationally renowned new leaders, new schools program, which was ushered to the District of Columbia to develop a world-class principal corps for our schools. The approved budget eliminated start-up funds for instructional material and academic supplies to implement art, music and physical education programs in all schools. The approved budget does not provide the million dollars necessary to fund a ten-week assessment strategy for math and reading, so that we can better assist our academically low-performing students.

The Board included funds to make our schools safe and worthy for children. The approved budget does not include funds to deal with urgent and emergency maintenance; and it does not contain the funds we requested to perform federally required asbestos abatement. Further, the Board can make few, if any, strides toward achieving real athletic parity and equity in our schools with the proposed budget. Our FY 2004 proposal

includes just under $1 million to hire certified trainers, hire and retain coaches, purchase safety equipment, and purchase medical supplies and new athletic equipment. The approved budget includes no money for these purposes.

The Board requested funds to implement our accountability initiatives. The approved budget does not include funds to institute a system-wide professional development program, to mentor new teachers, and to institute a performance management system—a system built upon baseline data and specific targets—that will add quality control measures to hold all managers accountable for program delivery. An efficient and effective school system depends upon reliable information systems. The school system can save millions in unnecessary telecommunications and technology emergency repairs by making necessary investments in yearly maintenance.

Question (2)

What DCPS capital improvements were included in the budget as submitted by the School board? What specific capitol improvements will be delayed because of cuts in submitted budget? Please break your answer down and respond separately concerning traditional DC public schools, charter schools and transformation schools.

Answer

The Board requested a six-year Capital Improvements Program Budget of $2.0 billion to implement the modernization program. The Mayor and Council have recommended a capital budget of only $511 million capital budget over 4 years. The DCPS Capital Improvements Program Budget approved by the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia delays the construction awards for modernizations at four schools: H.D. Woodson HS, Hardy MS, Sousa MS and H.D. Cooke ES. Overall, it reduces the number of fully funded (design and construction) schools for modernizations from 33 to 22.

Although the construction funds were canceled for these schools, the design funds remain for R.H. Terrell JHS, Turner ES, Kramer MS, Smothers ES, Slowe ES, Ross ES, Deal JHS, MacFarland MS, Cardozo HS. and Anacostia HS. The design and construction phases were canceled for Stanton ES. In addition, the design funds were canceled for 21 schools: Stanton ES, C.W. Harris ES, Bowen ES, Browne LHS, Shaw JHS, Hearst ES, Raymond ES, Roosevelt HS, Schools W/O Walls, Hart MS, Ketcham ES, Aiton ES, Eliot ES, Brookland ES, Bancroft ES, Mann ES, Rudolph ES, M.M. Washington HS, Wilson HS, Banneker HS and Coolidge HS. The feasibility studies for Spingarn HS and Ellington HS were canceled.

The DCPS capital budget does not provide funds for charter schools. Of the above schools, H.D. Cooke ES, Terrell JHS, Kramer MS, and Stanton ES are Transformation Schools.

Question (3)

Name all transformation schools. Using criteria similar to those used to designate the first 15, how many other schools today qualify to be transformation schools? Name all the low-performing schools that meet the criteria you used to name the first 15 transformation schools.

Answer

Transformation Schools in SY 2001-2002

1. H. D. Cooke Elementary School
2. Davis Elementary School
3. LaSalle Elementary School
4. Noyes Elementary School (relocated to Hamilton Building in SY 2001-2002)
5. Simon Elementary School
6. Turner Elementary School
7. Kramer Middle School
8. R. H. Terrell Junior High School
9. Phelps Career Senior High School (closed in SY 2002-2003 for renovation)

Transformation Schools in SY 2002-2003

1. CHOICE Academy at Taft (Middle School Campus Grades 6-8)
2. CHOICE Academy at Douglass (Senior High School Campus Grades 9-12)
3. Evans Middle School
4. Stanton Elementary School
5. Walker-Jones Elementary School
6. Wilkinson Elementary School (Grades PK-3)

Using criteria similar to those used to designate the first 15, how many other schools today qualify to be transformation schools? There are three schools that would fit the criteria to become Transformation Schools.

Name all the low-performing schools that meet the criteria you used to name the first 15 transformation schools. These schools have not been identified. We are currently awaiting the newest Spring Stanford Nine 2003 testing data results and evaluating our financial picture before deciding which schools would be candidates to become transformation.

Question (4)

What specific services are envisioned for transformation schools when fully implemented? What services are now available? What service level is required for these

schools to meet DCPS goals for transformation? Name the specific goals for improvements in transformation schools. What specific evidence do you have of parents' responses to conversion of their children's schools to transformation schools?

Answer

Nine schools were transformed in SY 2001-2002 for the following reasons:

- The number of low-performing schools was unacceptably high;
- In some schools, climate inhibited student potential and parental involvement;
- A more comprehensive and sustained plan for school change and improvement was needed; and
- *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

Criteria for School Selection

Schools selected for transformation were chosen because:

- Academic performance showed a continuous decline, had been inconsistent, or remained flat for three years;
- There was a need to produce a more dynamic and productive learning environment; or
- There was a need for greater responsiveness to the needs of students and parents, and to engage the community in constructive partnership.

The Transformation Schools hinged on Ten Building Blocks for school success. When Transformation schools are fully implemented and financially supported, the following will be readily observed:

1. Highly competent leaders and staff;
2. A prescribed, research-proven instructional program that meets the needs of all students;
3. An enhanced physical environment;
4. Extended day and year academic support and student enrichment programs;
5. Expanded technology for instruction, management, and data-based decision making;
6. A full and complete array of instructional materials, equipment, supplies, and textbooks in all classrooms;
7. Required, compensated, ongoing professional development for all staff;
8. A safe and secure learning environment;
9. Strong outreach programs that encourage parent involvement; and
10. Focused support and technical assistance from DCPS' central administration.

The following services are presently available in the Transformation Schools:

Central Office Support

An Assistant Superintendent and Executive Assistant were hired to have direct oversight of the Transformation Schools as a divisional unit and to provide technical support to each of the schools and their leadership teams. With the collaboration of the Superintendent, the Chief of Staff, the Associate Superintendent, and other representatives from a number of Central Offices, direct support has been provided to the Transformation Schools to support the full implementation of transformation in areas of Academic Services, Professional Development, Special Education, Educational Accountability, Early Childhood Initiative, Reading Excellence Act Grant Initiative, Communications and Public Information, Student Support Services, Interagency Partnerships and Community Involvement, Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, Facilities, Safety and Security, Emergency Preparedness, and Student Intervention Services.

Academic Program Development

- Research-based Reform Models adopted in all T-9 Transformation Schools
  Six elementary Transformation Schools - America's Choice Reform Model
  Two middle/junior high schools - Modern Red Schoolhouse Reform Model
  Phelps Career Senior High School - High School That Work Reform Model
- Instructional Facilitators to support implementation of the Reform Model and support to classroom teachers;
- Reading Excellence Grant Initiative
  Family Literacy Coordinators
  Parent Workshops
- Voyagers Universal Literacy Program (Kindergarten and First Grades in new elementary schools)
- Autoskills Reading Academy
- Newly-adopted elementary science kits, Harcourt science textbooks, Music
- Data Works conducted review of Teaching and Learning activities in T Schools
- Reduced class size
- After-school For All programs
- Thirty-Book Campaign
- Principal's Book of the Month
- Stanford-9 Testing
- Inter-Classroom Visitations
- Collaboration with DC Youth Orchestra (Simon, Turner)
- Howard University Professional Development Schools project (R. H. Terrell JHS and Walker-Jones ES)

Professional Development and Preparation

- Instructional Leadership Academy
- Training for Instructional Coaches
- New Mathematics Textbook Adoption Training

- Monthly session for First-Year Principals
- Support for School-Based Standards Specialists
- America's Choice Training for Elementary Schools
- Reading Excellence Grant sponsored courses in Phonological Awareness and Research in Early Reading Instruction for teachers in Grades K-3
- Waterford Early Reading Program training (for Kindergarten teachers)
- Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory for Student Success sponsored workshops on Roles and Responsibilities of Instructional Leadership Teams, Alignment of Data to School Goals, Communities of Instructional Practice, and Local School Plan Development
- Seminar for Transformation School Principals
- Peaceable Schools Initiative
- Creating Inviting Schools – Surveys of Teachers, Principals, Parents, and Students
- Values First

Wraparound Services

The transformation of service delivery for students and parents began with an October 17, 2001 conference sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families. The meeting was held in Baltimore, Maryland, and began the dialogue of sharing ideas and suggested services based on the needs of students and families in T-9 schools. Nine agencies were represented and provided information on demographics, health issues, and neighborhood initiatives related to T-9 schools. Subsequent to this meeting, all principals identified a list of needs and services that would enhance their school operations and student performance. Other important meetings have been held, some of which have involved the participation of community and business partners that are interested in supporting the wraparound services concept.

Services presently provided are:

Full-time Nurse
Social Workers
Two Site School Coordinators Hired (Ward 7 – Evans MS and Davis ES)
Interagency Director Hired
Grant from Casey Foundation
Collaboration with the Mayor's Office
Collaboration with Neighborhood Services
Collaboration with Deputy Mayor's Office for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders
Established partnerships with private and city agencies

Parent and Community Involvement

Parent Coordinators in T Schools

Governance Teams established in schools
Parent Organizations
Family Literacy Workshops

School Facility Improvements

Interior and exterior painting
Window replacements
Bathroom renovations (fixtures, ceilings and partitions)
Water fountains replaced
Floors sanded
Ceiling and floor tiles replaced
Comprehensive cleaning
Security lights installed
Security surveillance system
Security gates installed over designated windows
Interior and exterior door replacements
Upgraded hall and stairwell lighting in some schools
Landscaping improvements
Removal of graffiti
Fire coded violations abated
All buildings were power-washed
Replacement of fencing at some sites
External concrete steps and sidewalks repaired or installed

The Superintendent meets periodically with parents to discuss the progress of the Transformation Schools, to gauge whether parents are witnessing improvements in the learning environment and the academic progress of their children, and to solicit ideas for improving the programs at those schools.

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Grover G. Norquist President

Grover Norquist, President of American For Tax Reform.
Written Testimony before the House Government Reform Committee

Chairman Davis and other members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you regarding H.R. 684, the District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act.

My name is Grover Norquist and I am president Americans For Tax Reform (ATR), a non-partisan, not-for-profit non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all federal and state tax increases. I submit my comments to you today to express ATR's support for H.R. 684, and to cite the significant gains made in offering school choice to needy parents and students nationwide.

The legislation before the Government Reform Committee expands on the positive movement towards providing educational choice to parents and students and continues to focus attention on the problems plaguing public education today. H.R. 684, the District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act, introduced by Jeff Flake (R-AZ), provides opportunity scholarships for grades K - 12 District of Columbia residents whose family incomes are below 185 percent of the poverty level. The scholarships may be used for tuition costs at a public or private school in D.C. and adjacent counties in Maryland and Virginia. Special enhanced Achievement Scholarships are also available for tutoring assistance for students who attend public schools in the District.

Scholarships will be awarded on a priority basis to ensure that students with the greatest need have the best chance to receive a scholarship. They will first be awarded to those who received them in the previous year, then to applicants who are victims of documented acts of school violence, and finally to all other D.C. school students in grades K-12.

Private schools accepting tuition scholarship students are required to abide by anti-discrimination and other civil rights laws, including current laws related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) where applicable. Religious schools, however, will be allowed to continue offering single-sex education programs as consistent with the religious tenets upon which the school was founded.

While ATR strongly supports Representatives Flake's legislation and his continued efforts to provide school choice, enactment of H.R. 684 would not be possible without the significant progress that has been made in providing educational choice to parents. As this legislation clearly indicates, the school choice movement to enable more parents, particularly low-income parents, to choose the schools their children attend continues to gain ground. According to research provided by the Heritage Foundation more and more states have jumped on the school choice bandwagon. For example:

- At least 21 states considered legislation in 2000 to create charter schools or voucher programs to enable low-income parents to choose the best schools for their children. On May 2, 2001, Indiana became the 37th state (with the District of Columbia) to enact a charter school law.

- At least 18 states considered tax credits or deductions for educational expenses or contributions to scholarship programs for low-income students. Currently, four states already have enacted such legislation.

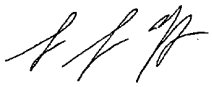
- The number of scholarships available for low-income children to attend a school of choice increased, with more than 50,000 students benefiting from 79 privately funded scholarship programs and another 12,000 from five publicly funded programs. The 80th private program was initiated in January 2001.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court ruling in Zelman v. Simmons-Harris that voucher programs do not violate the Constitution, even when participating schools are overwhelmingly religious, continues the trend towards liberating low-income school children from poor under performing schools and points the country toward a future in which all parents and students are free to make choices about their education.

In addition, recent opponents of education reform and school choice have begun to change their stance and openly advocate for school choice and vouchers. **The Mayor of Washington, D.C., Anthony Williams publicly embraced vouchers on May 1, 2003 during an appearance with Education Secretary Rod Paige commemorating National Charter Schools Week.** This announcement followed a similar proclamation given by Peggy Cooper Cafritz the President of the Washington D.C. local Board of Education.

For almost four decades, America has tried to solve its education problems with more and more federal spending, yet America's children continue to fall further behind many of their international peers. Congress must now focus on improving education without increasing spending. As history has shown throwing more federal dollars at the problem simply does not increase either learning or test scores.

Sincerely,



Grover Norquist
President

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