CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FY 15 Budget Proposal

PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, July 16, 2014

STENOGRAPHIC REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS had in the above-mentioned matter held at Kennedy King College, 740 West 63rd Street, Chicago, Illinois, commencing at 6:09 o'clock p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Ginger Ostro, Chief Financial Officer
Mary De Runtz, Deputy Chief Facility Officer
Jack Elsey, Chief Innovation and Incubation Officer
Felicia Sanders, Deputy Chief of Schools, Network 13
Kimberly Williams, Grants Management & Administration
Kourtney Freeman, Senior Reporting Financial Analyst

Reported by: Ailene Barkhoff, CSR, RPR
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MS. OSTRO: Thanks to everyone coming out to the 2015 Budget Hearing for Chicago Board of Education Public Schools.

I need to make one announcement. If there is anyone in the audience who needs sign language interpretation, would you please raise your hand.

Okay. So everyone picked up an agenda from outside at the table. I'm just going to go over a few of the logistics of the evening, so I'll turn it over to Ginger Ostro, who is the chief financial officer of Chicago Public Schools.

We're going to start a little bit after 6:00 p.m. and end promptly at 8:00 p.m. or when the last speaker has concluded, whichever is earlier. All who have signed up to speak will be given an opportunity to make a statement of up to two minutes until the meeting is adjourned.

All of those wishing to speak are asked to please sign in outside up until 6:30 on the speakers sign-in sheet at the entrance registration table. Please note that no one will be able to sign up to speak after 6:30.

Speakers will be limited to addressing topics related to the budget including the capital
1 plan. Speakers are also asked to limit their
2 comments to two minutes so that everyone that would
3 like to speak will have the opportunity to do so.
4 When multiple speakers from the same organization
5 or school are listed, only one member per
6 organization or school will be allowed to speak
7 regarding the same issue.
8 If the speaker has a follow-up question,
9 we ask that you please speak to CPS staff members
10 who will still be at the registration table or
11 throughout the audience who will be able to help
12 you fill out the follow-up card.
13 The full budget is on the CPS Web site.
14 You can provide feedback or leave questions on the
15 Web site as well. We will respond to all questions
16 on the Web site including any that we were unable
17 to respond to at this meeting.
18 Also, we have a panel and CPS
19 administration this is with us today. We have Jack
20 Elsey from the Office of Innovation and Incubation;
21 Kourtney Freeman will be our timekeeper; we have
22 Felicia Sanders, Deputy Chief of Schools, Network
23 13, Karen Saffold is our chief; and we have Mary
24 DeRuntz, Deputy Chief Facilities Officer.
MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. So now I'll turn it over to Ginger Ostro.

MS. OSTRO: We also do to have a Spanish language interpreter here. If anyone needs Spanish language interpretation services we do have someone available, and they can also translate questions.

We do also want to -- I do want to mention before we get started that we do have a court reporter who will be taking a transcript of the presentation and all of your questions and answers this evening so that it will be available and published on our Web site as well.

I'm Ginger Ostro. I'm the chief Financial Officer for Chicago Public Schools. We do have a short presentation for you, which is just an overview of our Fiscal Year '15 Proposed Budget that we would like to share with you before we take comments and questions from the members of the audience.

Just, again, a little bit of an overview here. Our budget that we will be presenting to you today speaks both about our operating budgets, our day-to-day expenses that pays for future salaries, textbooks, conservative services, Safe Passage
Programs. We refer to that as the operating budget. So we will spend time talking to you about that today.

We will also be focusing on our capital budget, which includes investments in our buildings such as repairing roofs, building new schools, providing air conditioning. So we will be taking comments on both parts of our budget. So the presentation will cover those very briefly as well.

As Kim mentioned, we ask you to limit your comments to two minutes so that we can hear from everybody.

The full budget detail is on our Web site, both the overview summary information, the detailed narratives, as well as interactive tools where you can look at the budget in detail. Let me just take you through some of the highlights and share these with you.

As you know, each year for the last several years, we have grappled with an ever-growing budget deficit given in large part by state funding, which has been declining over the last several years, as well as the lowest amount of education funding that any state provides for
schools in the country. Illinois is last.

Secondly, CPS has growing pension costs. CPS is the district in the State of Illinois that is required to make its own pension contributions. For every other school district, the state makes the pension contributions. That's what makes the pensions a particular challenge for CPS because we're the only ones that have to pay those costs.

We have done what we can to manage the budget and over the years each year we focus on areas that we can reduce in the central office, administration and operations in order to keep cuts away from the classrooms.

This year we will go through the details. We will be making an additional $55 million in cuts in those areas of operations, administration and the central office. That brings our total since 2011 to $740 million.

This year you might recall that we increased the amount of funding that we provide to our student-based budgeting or SBB. We added $70 million and increased the per pupil rate by $250.

Despite our deficit, we do invest in our
classrooms by increasing the student-based budgeting rate, as well as making other strategic investment in programs, and we'll go through some of those in just a moment.

The only way we have really been able to balance the budget is through a change in our accounting policy, which allows us to account for some one-time money in this fiscal year's budget.

It doesn't really help us address the underlying problems that we are facing with our revenues. The money that we've earned is declining and the spending is going up.

So this solution that we have is what we call changing our revenue recognition period, the timeframe in which we account for the money we receive is really a one-time solution to help us bridge to a more structurally sound budget.

What that includes obviously is a pension reform that we have spoken of, as well as additional revenues.

And then, finally, as we talk about the capital budget, it's important to recognize that we invested about $510 million in our buildings. When we invest in our buildings, we really are investing...
in our classrooms and our academic programs, and we will show you some of the details of that.

The next slide here focuses on where our staff are and how we support our schools. What you see here is a breakdown of the types of teachers and other staff that we have that support our schools, and most of staff are in the schools.

We have about 21,000 teachers, nearly about 17,000 other staff that we refer to as school support staff, and that includes your principals, your assistant principals, your clerks, your teaching assistants, your nurses, your custodians, sort of all of the other folks that make the schools work.

We have about 200 people in our network offices. We have some representatives from our network offices here. They work directly with the schools. And we have just over 1,100 people in the central office.

Now, when we look at where our dollars are in the budget, you will see that the vast majority of money in CPS's budget, which is almost $5.8 billion for the fiscal year starting July 1, that about 4.8 billion of it is directly in schools
and supports the very services that we were just
talking about; instruction, school support and
other services. You can see the small amount that
is in the networks, and the $262 million that is in
the central office.

What is significant here is the yellow
section, which is the amount that we have to pay in
pensions in the next fiscal year, $634 million of
our budget has to go to support the pension fund.
That's about $1,600 per student.

And when you put that in context of how
much we can provide in our student-based budgeting,
our core instruction, is about $4,350 per student,
you can see how significant that pension
contribution is and why we see why it's such a big
challenge to balancing our budget.

As I mentioned just a moment ago, we have
taken a number of steps over the last four years,
five years in order to make reductions in areas of
central office, operations and administration so
that we don't have to impact the classroom. You
can see it's about $740 million since 2011, and it
shows you the breakdown of the categories.

What I would like to highlight for you is
the amount and what we're doing in this budget because this is what we're proposing. So that is $55 million in reductions. So what you will see in this budget is elimination of about 20 central office positions in areas like information technology, finance, talent and central office support, as well as other savings from separate contracts and other areas that we can reduce in.

We're also reducing other outside training vendors and administrative positions to save another $15 million. Our new facilities management contract will save us about $17 million compared to prior costs of the contract. We're eliminating some vacant positions, and we have become a little more efficient in how we route our school buses and transportation services, again, to save money.

All of these are in an effort to reduce expenses wherever we can in way that doesn't impact the classroom, and that's what we are really focused on.

At the same time we make reductions in central office, administration and operations, we're continuing to invest our money because the budget is about priorities, invest our money in
areas that will improve student achievement.

You can see some of the key investments that are included in this budget: additional neighborhood IB schools for over 1,400 students, additional dual credit and dual enrollment high school students now to serve over 4,700 students, expansion of Safe Passage, new art and PE teachers, new options programs to help re-engage students and bring them back into our schools because they may have not been engaged in or have dropped out, safe schools, new parent universities to help families navigate CPS and support them in supporting their students with early childhood or college preparation.

And obviously our budget does include support for our teachers with a 2% salary increase and also a 2% salary increase for principals and assistant principals.

Let me take a moment to explain some of the challenges that we're facing. What this chart shows you is how much CPS has to contribute to the pension fund each year and it shows this beginning in 2005. You can see what has happened since 2013.

We have spoken about this in the prior
budget; but between 2013 and 2014, we had an enormous jump in the amount we had to contribute to the pension fund. Similarly, we have seen an increase between 2014 and 2015. It's offset a bit by the amount that the State gave us, about $50 million this year, but we still have to contribute $634 million in the pension system.

That's the same number as in the yellow part that I showed you just a little bit earlier.

What you can see how the pension costs continues to step up and continues to grow, and they're going to keep taking larger and larger chunks out of our budget unless we come up with some structural changes that help us address that.

So even with the steps that we have taken, because of the pension challenges and because our revenue from the State and Federal governments has been declining, we have had to use one-time resources in order to balance this budget, and the main source of those resources this year is a change, as I mentioned, in our accounting policy.

What that is doing is recognizing that we collect most of our local revenues, our property tax revenues, in July and August because that's
when property tax bills are due. That wasn't always the case. It didn't change until 2012. Prior to that property tax bills were due in November or December, which didn't make a significant difference for our budget, but when this was changed to August when the property tax bills were due, because our fiscal year ends on June 30, we count revenue through the end of July, a lot of money comes in during the month of July and August. It make sense when property tax bills are due at the beginning of August, and that's when people pay them. So that's when CPS gets money.

When our fiscal year ends right in the middle of that, it makes it very hard to predict how much money we're going to get. It's very hard to plan a budget, and it means that sometimes the money that we get shows up in the next year's budget. It's very difficult in order to plan. So this accounting change allows us to capture the money consistent with the plan that we have in the budget, but it also provides one-time resources. We're able to count that August money in the budget for this year for the one time.

So what you see is that has enabled us to
balance this budget; but it means we're using even more one-time resources than we have in the past years, which means we're getting further and further away from being able to balance our budget. Our revenues are spent -- our revenues are just not keeping up with our expenses in large part, again, due to those pension costs.

So what happens as we look forward? What you can see is that the deficit just continues to grow. As we look at what is happening out in the Fiscal '16, next year and the year after, you see that the deficit increases because of the one-time resources that we have used, additional declines in our State and Federal revenues and also additional costs -- again, the yellow showing the pension increase that is being added that we'll have to pay as we go forward.

So we're facing significant challenges, as we have said, for a number of years that we really need to focus on and try and address, and those are some of the challenges that we continue to work on; but, yet, while we present to you a budget that does make significant investments in the classroom this year and doesn't continue to make cuts in
areas of operations and central office.

Let me just shift for a moment and talk specifically about the investments that we're making in our buildings and in our capital infrastructures. We talk about the capital improvement plan and what we have budgeted for that.

It relates to the operating budget; but it isn't covering the same day-to-day expenses as the other numbers which I presented to you just you moment ago.

This chart shows you a summary of the capital plan that we have for Fiscal 12, 13 and 14, so those are prior years, and what our proposal is for this fiscal year.

It's a total of $510 million of projects that we are proposing -- we'll go into a little bit of detail in a moment -- and over five years we present a one-year plan and budget and then a five-year plan of $1.2 billion of total investments in our infrastructure. That's on top of about $500 million worth of projects that are going on right now.

As you can imagine, fixing our buildings
sometimes takes more than one year. So a project
might start in a particular budget year but takes
several years to complete. We have $500 million
worth of projects underway right now and we will be
adding another $510 million more.

Our capital budget is funded in part by
money we raise ourselves that we borrow and in part
by money that we get from outside funding sources
like the State. The State dedicates money to TIF
funds, also supports a number of schools. We also
have some other resources that help us build our
buildings.

So that is what the different colors of
the bar show you, how much CPS is funding through
our own borrowing, that $261 million; how much we
expect to get from outside sources where we have
commitments, that is $214 million; and then there
are some projects that sort of pay for themselves
over time because we don't really need to borrow
those costs. They will just pay back over time.

So we do have some new projects that were
added since the budget was released. The capital
budget was released May 1st. So there were a
couple of things that were added. We got new
funding from the State of Illinois, particularly to
be for construction, and we have some additional
money from the State as well that helps us with
other investments and infrastructures.

So where do those investments go? Into
two major areas; quality education programs,
overcrowding and modernization repairs, and we just
put up some examples here of what those would be:

Further investments in selective
enrollment, IB interactive schools, career-focused
education, college counseling suites for our
quality education programs, modernization and
repairs, those kinds of things that you would think
of typically as capital investments -- air
conditioning, learning technology, playgrounds,
labs, investing in our bricks and grooves and
chimneys, as well as accessibility and security,
and overcrowding where we've visited multiple
schools in combination of the investments.

So that's a very quick highlight of the
kinds of things that we're doing in the capital
budget.

We would like to turn it over to you to
take your comments and questions. Again, we'd ask
that you comment if you have comments on either the operating budget or the capital budget, and if you would like further details on any of the information that I presented here, they are available on our Web site and the Web site is listed there.

In addition, you can submit comments on our Web site and we will respond to all of the questions there. And, as I mentioned earlier, a transcript of this hearing will be posted on the Web site.

We do have a list of speakers who have signed up; but first I would like to ask Alderman Dowell who has a presentation if she would like to share her remarks with us, and then we will go to the other speakers who have signed up in the order in which you signed up.

Alderman Dowell.

ALDERMAN PAT DOWELL: Good evening. My name is Pat Dowell. I'm the Alderman of the Third Ward, and I'm a strong supporter in the schools in my ward.

It's part of my responsibility as an Alderman to do what I can to ensure that each of
our schools have the resources they need to best
serve their students. As such, I work very closely
with all of the principals in the Third Ward for
the sake of accountability and advocating on their
behalf when their schools need something to help
students succeed.

We have several schools in the Third Ward
that have recently undergone some major changes.
Last year, Mollison, Drake-Williams and Wells Prep
Academy were welcoming schools that took in a
significant number of students from shuttered
schools.

Although the budgets were tight, each of
these schools have done an outstanding job to
acclimate their students to their new environment.
In fact, all of them have made significant progress
on NWEA and other performance metrics.

The per pupil funding helps address the
influx of students, but the schools I am advocating
for tonight are facing unique and exceptional
circumstances.

Mollison and Wells Prep are both IB
schools. This means that in addition to the
physical education and art mandates all schools
face, they also have additional requirements associated with being an IB school.

Without the needed resources, students will likely fall behind in the more rigorous IB classes.

As it is now, now year Wells Prep will not have the funding it needs for three positions relative to both the regular mandates and the IB requirements, and they will have to cut funding for after-school and Saturday enrichment programs.

Mollison only has about $75,000 after paying out salaries, which does not leave them very much funding for needed programming.

Although not an IB school, Drake-Williams also faces unique challenges that requires additional funding. Drake-Williams has the highest -- one of the highest concentrations of special education students in the district with the percentage of students with IEPs being higher than that of the district.

These students need extra resources that go beyond per pupil and other budgetary formulas and are no doubt still adjusting to their new schools. This is especially true considering the
loss of their principal and assistant principal. They were trusted adults and new relationships will have to be built.

Next year the school will only have roughly $63,000 to spend on books and other supplies and after-school programs will have to be cut.

Although not a welcoming or IB school, I include Attucks Elementary School in this statement because they, too, face a very unique circumstance. Traditionally it has been the school with the highest number of homeless students in the district, currently over 50 percent.

These students often require additional social-emotional support as well as academic assistance. As you know, this school is being phased out and students have been relocated to Beethoven.

In order to minimize the disruption that these students will experience, we must make sure that both Beethoven and Attucks are adequately resourced to meet the unique needs of their students.

Among other things, the school currently
needs additional supports from math, science and reading, as well as a position for an art instructor. There are still 146 students at Attucks whose transition to Beethoven will be extremely difficult if they don't have what they need at Attucks.

Despite the mandates, requirements and other challenges that these schools have faced, all of them have made significant academic progress. Attucks has increased their ISAT composite score from 12 percentage points since last year. Mollison, Drake and Wells have all NWEA growth scores that far exceed the national average.

In fact, Mollison is in the 99th percentile for math, Wells is in the 96th percentile for math, and Drake is in the 99th percentile for both math and reading. You can't do much better than that.

After many years of being Level 3 schools, Mollison, Wells and Drake are now at Level 2 and climbing. I can tell you that this much progress in our schools is unprecedented.

The success that these schools have had is a result of dynamic leadership, which was no doubt
aided by the additional resources CPS allocated to these welcoming schools. Next year we will be asking these schools to maintain the same level of progress -- the same level of progress while facing additional challenges without all the resources they need.

Although there will still be great school leaders in place, the parents, teachers and myself are concerned that the tremendous progress they have made will at least be interrupted if not erased completely.

The schools in the Third Ward are on the right track and the students are truly benefiting from the education they are receiving. I am asking the Chicago CPS to reexamination the needs of each of these schools and make funding adjustments that will ensure continued progress.

I have also given you a written copy of this statement. Thank you for your time. I will forward it to you.

MS. OSTRO: Thank you for your comments.

We will now turn to the speakers who have registered to speak. Kim will call some of you up to the microphone so we can keep the comments
flowing.

We would like to ask you one further time whether anyone is requiring hearing interpretation services. We do have hearing interpreter here, so if you need one, please raise your hand.

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. One more time, everyone has two minutes for each statement. We will also flash you how many seconds you have left so we can keep it actually flowing so that everyone can actually make their statement.

We're going to call Speakers 1, 2, 3 and 4 up; Gregory, Brenda, Carolina and Joy. We have two mikes in both aisles if you can come down.

MR. GREGORY CLEMENTS: My name is Gregory Clements, G-r-e-g-o-r-y, C-l-e-m-e-n-t-s. I'm with Gresham Parents Students at Community United for Change. Our school was a designated turnover school this past year, but that farce continues.

My comment is on the budget, on the capital end of it. The money that was allotted for the improvements and what have you, how much was actually done on -- what levels have been done for capital appointed projects, which is costing you additional millions, as opposed to the original
bids for certain projects that are listed on the public subcommittee page? Where can that be found?

Also, I have seven years of public transport budgets, eight years with Chicago Board of Trade, nine years with the City of Chicago, so I'm really reviewing your budgets for the last three years and I will make my comments on there and work for the communities that I represent.

MS. OSTRO: We may be able to provide a little more specific information to you addressing your question about how much we spend on capital projects. That is available on our Web site.

We do on September 30th of each year provide the cost of each project, how much has been spent in the prior year. It's on our Web site under the budget.

If you go to the capital link and look for expenditures, you will see that by project how much is budgeted, how much has been spent and what is the projected spending. So I think that provides the data that you asked for. It's available on our Web site. If you have further questions on that, we're happy to answer that.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 2, Brenda.
MS. BRENDA DELGADO: My name is Brenda Delgado, and I'm a mother of three CPS children, LSC member and board member of Illinois Raise your Hand. We're looking at another budget that causes great harm to neighborhood schools, especially neighborhood high schools. This is in great part due to the rapid and irresponsible proliferation of new schools that the district has opened since claiming they had an underutilization crisis in 2012.

Since the fall of 2012, CPS has opened 21,481 new seats, many in neighborhoods that are experiencing population decline. The fiscal year 2015 budget book lists an addition of 9,224 seats at charter contract, alternative high schools and district schools.

This takes away resources from existing schools. In 2012, CPS promised they would redirect substantial resources to existing schools. Of the 42 neighborhood high schools in Chicago after subcontracting the custodial line that is being shifted to central office, these high schools will receive 35 million in cuts. So-called welcoming schools lost 5% of their budget.
We ask that you greatly reduce the portfolio department, which still has 29 million in the budget and redirect funding to neighborhood schools.

CPS must stop irresponsible school expansion. The accountability and bank department could also be reduced. Both received increases this year. The 20 million new contracts should be cancelled.

Most importantly CPS should get to work on figuring out how to solve the structural deficits by fully engaging state voters across the City. Shifting funding from one type of school to another type of school does not address the need for fully funding high quality schools for all children.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you for your comments.

Speaker 3, Carolina.

MS. CAROLINA ALS: Hi, my name is Carolina, and I finished fourth grade at a Salazar Bilingual School. I want to ask you to give more money to schools that don't have PE teachers.

At Salazar we have too many classes full of books and paper we can't even throw a ball. That doesn't make sense. There was more PE --
every school needs more gym teachers and gym classes. I wish we had an auditorium as well. We have to use Walter Payton's. My sister goes to school at Skinner and my little brother will go to Pritzker. They have a nice auditorium for general assembly. It's not fair to our many other schools. Every school should have enough money to have these things. It's not fair to treat schools differently. You give less money to Salazar last year and they got rid of the two teachers that helps kids with extra math and extra reading. We don't have a library either, and we have to share computers. Our school is full of students, its classrooms are all full and we still don't have enough money for these basic things. That's not fair.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.

Speaker 4, Joy.

MS. JOY CLEN DENNING: Good evening. My name is Joy Clendenning. I live in Hyde Park, and I've been a CPS parent for 13 years. I have four children. The oldest just graduated from my neighborhood high school, Kenwood Academy, after attending a neighborhood elementary school, Ray.
Every child in every family deserves the choice of a well-resourced neighborhood public school.

I realize that's not necessarily all of you; but you can take this back, you have an obligation and a responsibility to prioritize resources for neighborhood schools. You have an obligation and a responsibility to listen to public school educators and the community who are at public schools when you're setting your budget priorities.

I really as a parent in this system for so long, I'm asking you can you please stop with the unfunded mandates. Please stop spending so much on high-stakes standardized testing and everything that comes with it. Finally, stop destabilizing our neighborhood schools while increasing the number of charters and while continuing to do turnarounds.

An example of this would be a neighborhood high school near me, Dyett High School. It's an example of the destabilization. With this destabilization closing, children as far south as 67th Street and as far north of the South Loop will be expected to attend high school at 39th Street.
This is really not acceptable. These children should be able to attend public high school in their own neighborhood.

Finally, I do want to say to you that you have an obligation and a responsibility to use our tax dollars to keep our public school buildings open as public institutions for our communities.

Please do not approve this budget until we have reworked it to address these public priorities. This is your obligation and your responsibility.

Thank you very much for your time.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Now we have Speakers 5, 6, 7 and 8, Megan, Kimberly, Maria and Marie.

MS. MEGAN CUSICK: Good evening. My name is Megan Cusick. I'm a teacher, librarian and a CPS parent. I'm also a member of the CTU Librarians Task Force, also known as high school librarians.

Just a few weeks ago, my husband and I spoke at the board meeting to raise awareness about the removal of librarians at CPS Schools. Since that time, the news has gotten even worse.

Last year and the year that we were
promised better resources for our students, after
the whole truth of closing the 50 schools, CPS
schools lost more than 140 librarians in one year.
Rather than reversing that tide, this year
will be even worse with the loss of 60 additional
librarians. That's more than 200 librarians in
just two years, leaving more than half of our
schools without professionally staffed librarians;
and, in fact, leaving many with no librarian at
all.

Why is this a problem worth solving?
Because research studies show that professionally
staffed librarian have a positive impact on student
performance. Moreover, students having access to a
well-managed collection of print and online
resources is critical to students building a
continuum of literacy in schools. In short,
libraries help students succeed in school and in
life.

The good news is that this is a problem
that can be solved, and CPS has the money to pay
for a solution. Some of these recommendations
you've heard before. In comparison to other
districts in Illinois, CPS spends a
disproportionate amount of money on testing, tens
of millions of dollars. Let's move some of this
money back into the classrooms. A portfolio office
at a cost of $29.5 million? We serve children, not
investors. Let's move that money back into the
classrooms.

Finally, let's take the more than
$105 million in increased funding for charter
contracts and alternative networks and return it to
our neighborhood public schools. Our students
deserve better.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Speaker 5.

MS. KIMBERLY WELLS: Hi, I'm Kimberly Wells.
I'm a CPS parent as well as a CPS middle school
science teacher.

I come to the budget hearings, I go to the
CPS board hearings; but, you know, today I'm
just -- I'm just tired, so I'm just going to send a
message instead of me going through the figures --
you know the figures, I know the figures, we know
you made up the budget, but this is really your
last -- so right now we don't want the lies. We
don't want your lies.
Right now we're going to let you know that you can package your Plan B, just like every other parent whose school closed had to have their Plan B, every teacher you laid off had to get their Plan B because we're (inaudible due to audience noise).

We want to take back our public schools. We want to stop expanding charter schools after you close our schools and you tell us to hell with us and then you come here and, you know, you -- I really think Black people be in the room who are on the panel just like nobody talk to them (inaudible due to audience noise). I don't care if I lose my job tomorrow because God is on my side. We're going to take back CPS and this office is (inaudible due to audience noise).

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 7.

(Whereupon, Spanish is being interpreted into English.)

MS. MARIA ORTEGA: Hello, my name is Maria Ortega. I'm from the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council. I have testimony and it's based on my children. They said they couldn't go to pre-K because there was lack of space at one of our
schools.
I went to the office and asked if I could
sign up my children. He said, ma'am, we can't sign
you up right now because all our spaces are taken,
but we can put you on the list. The list is 245
kids. I asked when will this happen. He answered,
we don't know. And that's why my children didn't
go to pre-K.

And that's why we're asking for more
resources per child for education. That's why
we're asking for more resources for the children of
the southwest side of the City so there will be
more spaces for early education and early education
centers. In the Zip code of 60632, it's one of the
highest need areas in the State of Illinois.

We understand that there is a lot of cuts
in the City of Chicago, but we don't want them to
affect our children. We understand that these cuts
historically always affected mostly Black and Brown
or Latino kids. As a parent I want to ask you
please send more resources to our schools and our
communities in the City of Chicago.

Thank you, and I expect -- I hope my
testimony will be taken seriously.
MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 8, Marie.

MS. MARIE SZYMAN: Good evening. My name is Marie Szymon, and I'm a teacher/librarian at Nathanael Greene Elementary. I'm here today to tell you about the disappearance of our school libraries.

As of this date less than half of the CPS schools now have school libraries, and I fear that more school libraries are disappearing every week. With the budget constraints we are dealing with at present, it seems that libraries have been chosen to take the hit. This is unacceptable.

Most parents and the public are not aware of what is happening to their school libraries. By the time they notice, it may be too late. I am here to ask you to save the school libraries.

At this last school board meeting in June it was stated that CPS is not closing down the libraries but that there was a lack of qualified librarians. This is, in fact, absolutely not true. As the president of the Chicago Teacher-Librarian Association this past year, I can attest that there are -- well, I was going to say scores, but now I should say about 200 -- librarians who have had
their libraries closed. There are scores -- no, I should say almost 200 experienced, qualified, certified, licensed librarians available right now. Put them back into the libraries.

With the common emphasis on literacy, I'm mystified that the libraries are closing. How can our students become college ready without adequate instruction and research and exposure to the literature that libraries provide?

I've done a lot of research on this topic, and it confirms that students attending schools with libraries and librarian score higher on standardized tests. I know that there is no line item in the budget for libraries. Maybe there should be.

But you are the ones with the power. You control the budget. I stand before you here today to ask you to please prevent principals from having to make that dreaded decision do I hire -- do I close the library so I can hire another PE teacher? The children of Chicago deserve more. Save the libraries.

thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speakers 9, 10, 11 and 12,
CARL FERGUSON: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Carl Ferguson. I graduated from my neighborhood school, and I'm speaking on behalf of the concept situation.

I believe we should not open any more concept schools. The reason is (inaudible due to audience noise). One is already too many. Opening another school would not be safe for the students. Neighborhood schools are losing money while concept schools are taking money. We don't trust the school that the government doesn't trust. We are asking to open up the concept schools on 39th and Western. This money should not be -- this money should be used for two neighborhood schools, not two schools under investigation.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 10.

MS. REYNA CASTALAN: Good evening. My name is Reyna Castelan. I have children. I am a volunteer in my children's school. In 2009 I started working as a volunteer at my children's school.

Since then, I have been witness of the performance of the students and the part that the
school administration has done to obtain these
results, as well as other schools in our community
has the same to support of our students even though
don't have enough resources. The Chicago
public schools are essential in our children's
lives.

This is the reason why I'm here today. As
a mother I want you to stop the construction of
concept schools because it's currently under
investigation by the FBI. You are choosing
institutions that we, the community, do not trust.

And our schools that have been successful
you continue to cut. That's not right. As a
homeowner, I demand that the property taxes that I
pay are being invested in our community public
school, and I ask you to reconsider your decision
in support and invest in our community schools.

Why is CPS investing in schools that is
under investigation?

MR. ELSEY: My name is Jack Elsey. I can say
that we're following that situation very closely.
I, unfortunately, don't have more details to
provide for you at this time on that; but when we
do, we will be providing those details.
MS. REYNA CASTALAN: So I'm just saying that
our money should not be invested in institutions
that are under investigation.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 11, Asean Johnson.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: My name is Asean Johnson.
I'm from Marcus Garvey School going into fifth
grade.

And now we have experienced due to budget
cuts from last year, we have lost our computer
teacher, our library teacher, our seventh grade
teacher and including my fourth grade math teacher.

And now what happened this year in fourth grade, I
had -- we had to use a parent as a library teacher.
We have to use a counselor as a computer teacher.

And what hurts the most is that it seems
that you don't really care. I can see by all your
faces that you just don't care. As that nice lady
asked a question, nobody didn't answer until
everybody stood up and told you that it was a
question.

And now you're cutting budgets from high
schools like Simeon, their electrician program.
How are you going to say you want students to be career ready and college ready if you taking away their programs? An electrician is a career and you can go to college for that.

So you're basically thinking backwards by saying, oh, we want them to be college career ready, but we're going to take away that program from the kids. There's people in high school who want to go to college -- and I can see you in the light green shirt rolled her eyes. I see that.

And then I want to talk about -- and I'm going to talk about how this affects schools. I know I have ten seconds left. All right.

So now, this affects schools by you saying that -- this affects schools mainly because we don't have a lot of students --

MS. WILLIAMS: Can you please wrap up, please.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: I have time. Take it.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: Let's talk about how this affects our schools. This affects our schools because you're cutting teachers that knew their students and who have been in that community. If
you cut them off, what job are they going to have?
If they love that and they went to college for that and that was their job and you cut it away from them, that's disrespectful and not right.
And you laid off 1,000 teachers this year -- 1,000 teachers because of budget cuts this year. I guess that mayor is going for money again.
They give money -- why do you give money to charter schools?

MS. OSTRO: We provide funding for whichever schools the students and the families choose to attend.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: I understand that, but I'm saying if you say that you don't have enough money and then you give budget cuts to the public schools and then you turn around and give it to a charter school, that doesn't make no type of sense when you could have just kept that money in there and instead of investing it in a charter school, invest it to that public school that is already there.
And then on top of that, it's messing up our schools and communities. If we need programs to get college and career ready, can't you give it to us and invest in it? Like we had a charter
school -- no, not a charter school -- a Wal-Mart 
built into our neighbor, isn't that right, and --

MS. WILLIAMS: Can you wrap up, please.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: And I want to talk about
social-emotional learning --

MS. WILLIAMS: Your time is over. If you have
any other comments, you can write your questions
down and we will respond to.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He can have my turn.

MS. WILLIAMS: Ma'am, the one that you're
giving, what number are you?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 21.

MS. WILLIAMS: So he can come back at 21.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: You can take my key notes
and learn.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much for your
comments.

Speakers 13, 14 and 15, please.

MS. SHONEICE REYNOLDS: I'm Speaker 12.

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. Go ahead.

MS. SHONEICE REYNOLDS: So as we look at this
budget dog and pony show that you gave us, you said
several times that it was the pensions, the
pensions, the pensions are the reason why CPS does
not have any money.

Well, CPS has been on a pension holiday for ten years. You cannot continue to blame that this affects our schools and our community and give us some corporate -- some corporation off the backs of working people. This is money that is owed to people retired and current retirees, people who are going to retire.

Our schools are not invested in equally. Over half of our schools do not have librarians and computer teachers. We have a school on the west side that has skipped the first for air conditioning -- all the schools should have air conditioning. Every year we hear that at that budget hearing. They still don't have air conditioning.

We still -- they don't have the resources that are needed; but you want to give millions and millions of dollars to concept charter who has been raised by the F.B.I. across three states -- 19 schools and their offices; but, yet, there's no money for neighborhood public schools.

You closed the last electrician program in the City at Simeon High School as well as the
automotives. That's a career. Those children want
to be career ready. Children were in those classes
and they were learning. We had a beautiful meeting
with those children last night. CPA was invited,
but no one was there.

So does CPS really care about our
children? The answer is no. We know they don't.
We know that you are all here to take notes.
Nothing is going to happen. We are going to
continue testifying. We're going to continue to
give you the message to pass on to them, to pass on
to the mayor to invest in our neighborhood public
schools.

Stop dumping money into charters that are
being investigated by the F.B.I.. Stop blaming
working class people for the deficits of your
budget when you give corporations like Wal-Mart
$8 million, you give tax breaks to Office Max.
Whole Foods is coming to the City. It doesn't look
like we need a Whole Foods.

We had an alderman here talking about
receiving schools, but how many schools within her
ward closed last year? We had 50 schools closed,
and, yet, you're still turning around schools,
firing teachers, firing school clerks like myself.

Our children deserve a chance.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 13.

MS. LATISA KINDRED: Good evening. My name is Latisa Kindred. I was the teacher of the electrician program that the last two speakers spoke of.

As they said, the program was the last electricity program in the City -- in the Chicago school system. The program was performed -- my layoff was not based on performance. I exceeded every expectation of CPS.

92 percent of my seniors were certified in OSHA-10 construction. My EOY and BOY testing -- the performance tests showed 60-plus percent growth. I attended every professional development required of me. I did everything that I was asked to do.

So this here in the face of violence here in the City, students are given hope when they're working with their hands. They're learning skills that can't be taken from them.

The last two years -- I have been with 134
since 1995 -- reopened their apprenticeship. Last
year two former Simeon electricity students got
into the apprenticeship. This year two more are
members of Local 134. So performance was not an
issue.

I saw on slide No. 14 that career-focused
education is part of the fiscal year 15 budget. I
would like to ask you what is career-focused
education in your eyes?

MS. OSTRO: That does refer to the investments
we are making in new career-type labs. I can get
you the specifics. I don't have them with me right
now.

MS. LATISA KINDRED: And my next question is
the reasoning for my layoff was that it was a
budgetary decision decided on by the principal and
the network to meet the goals of the school.

Simeon houses 13 career tech -- well, it
housed because, as I said, the auto mechanics shop
closed as well -- 13 career technical education
programs. What focus could the school possibly
have had but on career technical education
programs. It's the biggest vocational career
technical school in the City. I can't even think
of all the programs they have.

But my question is how are budget
decisions regarding CTE made? Because, as I said,
my layoff was not based on the performance of the
program. It was not based on the postsecondary
performance of my students.

What the guidelines are principals given
when they make these autonomous decisions regarding
career technical educational programs?

MS. OSTRO: I don't know if we have anyone on
the panel that we can answer that right now, but we
will get back to you with an answer to your
question.

MS. LATISA KINDRED: I'm in the electrical
industry. I bought my home at the age of 23. I
have a pension. My whole purpose of saying all
this is that it's a gateway to middle class, and we
have children being murdered in the streets on a
daily basis -- 82 people in one weekend shot in the
City of Chicago.

My students have been given hope. They
have careers now. They are able to provide for
their families because of what they learned in the
classroom. This issue must be addressed.
Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 14, please.

MR. HERB SINGLETON: Good evening everyone. My name is Herb Singleton. I'm an organizer for the Chicago Teachers Union.

I'm very happy to see Ms. Kindred's students last night -- there were ten of them, and I would say at least eight of them have graduated from college. So I take my hat off to you, Ms. Kindred. Back in the day students said over and over again that she was very tough on us, and Ms. Kindred said, the tough ones always come back to say thank you.

I would like to speak on the violence that is going on in our community. I've heard the word cut, cut, cut, and now I'm hearing eliminate. What we've eliminated is what is called wraparound programs. I don't know if you remember them, but wraparound programs identified children with anger management issues.

They provided social, economical and clinical programs for those children in addition to mentoring programs for those children. Well, let's see. If that child was 12 years old four years ago
when you would have eliminated that program, guess what? He's 16 now. And if you look at the violence in the streets, who is doing it? 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds.

The wraparound programs also included clinical, social, emotional programs for families. I would like to know, first of all, I heard two years ago that Washington donated $40 million for mentoring. Where is the money?

Secondly, when you -- the only way you can identify children with anger management issues is probably in a school. We spend a lot of money on IEPs to identify children that are have learning issues that also identify children with anger management issues in our schools.

I've spent 30 years working with chronic juvenile delinquents, 12-year-old boys with 32 arrests or murder, and I tell you that when they do not -- are not identified at an early age and services provided, we can cut, cut, cut, cut, eliminate, but we will pay later.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker, 15, please.
MS. MARIA MORENO: My name is Maria Moreno.

Approximately two years ago the Board of Ed announced massive school closures. Meetings were set up throughout the community financed by the Walton family, which is Wal-Mart.

They had parent input as to ways to resolve this issue without closing schools, yet the board had a policy targeting the south and west sides of the city to close schools. For years the board disinvested in those schools, targeting those schools, laying off hundreds African-American teachers, the backbone of the middle class in the City.

At those same meetings two years ago, parents came out in like communities where schools were overcrowded where the Board failed to keep up with the growth of those populations at those schools.

Not one parent asked, oh, build me a charter school. That's how we want our communities to deal with this overcrowding. But what did the Board do? Last year said, oh, guess what, you know how we're going to resolve underutilization? They did it by building more charter schools because of
overutilization.

Now we're going to -- we didn't ask for those charter schools. The past two years the Board has cut the budget two years in a row at neighborhood public schools. What did the Board do? Increase funding for charters.

And charters are under SEC investigation, Securities Exchange Commission, and the F.B.I. are the charters. We don't need our taxpayer money going to facilities under corruption. All right.

I live in the Chicago community. Now the Board is announcing over two and a half million dollar cuts in my community. There is violence. Our kids are traumatized by violence, and we don't have the counselors and social workers. This is outrageous. That's it.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speakers 16, 17, 18.

MS. SUSAN ZUPAN: My name is Susan Zupan. I'm a CPS teacher, a CTU member and a reporter for Substance. I just have a few general comments.

When a City and its nation continually present nothing but austerity budgets for its children, that City and its nation are in serious trouble.
When a City and a nation continually presents austerity budgets or pretend austerity budgets because we know there is money for other things for public education, not charter schools because those are their single most goal is to make a profit off of the education of children, that City and its nation are in serious trouble.

Shame on everyone and especially politicians who are in these positions to do exactly something greater and different than what you just continually and abysmally continue to do.

When our City and our nation do not demonstrate the interest, creativity, stomach, backbone or intelligence needed to come up with something other than austerity budgets for our own children and our own system of public education, this City and nation are in trouble.

To stop this public education Armageddon, if anybody has seen the movie, I've got five words for you A.J., we need Karen Lewis for mayor.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 17.

MS. REYNE POWERS: I'm Reyne Powers, and I'm a teacher assistant, and I have a question for each
and every one of you up there. Each and every one of you has applied for your job and to apply for your job you have to be highly educated and prepared. On your first day of work, to show up with no pencil, no paper, no iPad, no computer, you could not perform.

Now, I'm looking at the children with no materials for the first day of school and the rest of the year, how are they going to be prepared for the future?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Question.

MS. OSTRO: When you talk about the children not having materials, can you explain more of what you mean.

MS. REYNE POWERS: As a teacher assistant, I have to go in my pocket to provide materials for the children. Okay? I don't make a lot of money, but I care for the children. So when you think about cutting the budget, the budget requires pencils, papers, things that are important for the students.

You have to prepare for this meeting because if you weren't prepared, you wouldn't be up there.
MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 18.

MS. SHARON WEST: I would like to address -- my name is Sharon West. I'm a teacher at Hurley Elementary School. Our library position was cut this year and it bothers me because the library is where the children learn their foundation for research in high school and college and everyone does not have a computer.

Our library teachers are very important in our school. I found that in the past when they have cut programs in African-American communities, and replaced it without -- without replacing it with anything else, crime goes up.

I'm from a predominantly low class -- I mean, low income population of Hispanic students. They're starting to cut the library programs and other programs. What do I see coming down the line? And I've been working that the school for over 29 years? Crime has started increasing in the neighborhood.

Another thing that I would like to address also is the vocational schools. I took in a kid whose mother died. He was at that time at Chicago
Vocational School, CVS. He was in the diesel program -- the last diesel program. He was able to go on and he is now a diesel mechanic.

We need these hands-on programs in the community for our children who are not ready to go to college and need hands-on skills to maintain and to provide for their families. This young man right now is able to provide for his family because he had experience of working at a vocational school.

So all I'm asking the Board to do is to think about our children, think about the parents, think about the community, and think about all of us working together because teachers who work together -- and we spend our weekends grading papers and sometimes not spending time with our families working hard for CPS.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speakers 20, 21, 22 and 23.

MS. KAREN BYNUM: Good evening. My name is Karen Bynum. I am a product of Walter Dyett School. I owned my business at the age of 12 because Walter Dyett programs taught us how to sew, taught us how to cook, wood shop, speak Spanish and
typing.

You want to take those programs away from our neighborhoods and put $76 million into a charter concept charter for what? So our children can be destroyed on the streets of Chicago because they have no ability to learn anything with hands-on except to shoot a gun, and when they make the news every night -- murder, death, kill, it's like this racist system that is destroying our children, destroying all the Black and Brown children of Chicago.

You bring in this kind of stuff, these people that are even not qualified to teach our children. If you want to teach our children of Chicago you have to almost be part of Chicago, not from Turkey. I do not want anybody teaching my grandchild from Turkey. They don't even know English in Chicago.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you explain that?

MS. KAREN BYNUM: Why? What is the -- what does Turkey have, the people over there, that makes you put in $76 million and take way from our children? I guess I can get that answer on-line, too. What is the answer?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you explain it?

MS. KAREN BYNUM: Right.

I'm an owner of my own business due to
sewing at Walter Dyett. I came out of Walter Dyett
college career ready, but you want to take it away.
Nothing that we had coming out of this school
system then we have now.

You never heard of this back in 1974 and
'75; but you get to the mayor -- whatever his name
is -- you get him to come here and he's going to --
his child is going to be in Hyde Park at this big
lab school, why doesn't he put in his children in
the school that he wants to shut? Why don't he go
into school without security and stand up in the
school and then he can see what they need in the
schools.

But you all can never answer any questions
that anybody asks you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They got it online.

MS. KAREN BYNUM: It's sickening. But you got
all the answers when you are closing the schools.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 21.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: Again, I want to talk about
SCL and how we need it in every school so we can
have peace centers and peace classes so children
can learn how to control their anger and use it in
a different way that is not violent. If we can
invest and do that into all those schools, we can
make that happen and make a more peaceful place in
Chicago instead of us hearing -- as this nice lady
said, instead of hearing somebody getting shot
every day in the news.

Now, it's all up to CPS -- it's all up to
you. You guys make the decision. It's all up to
you to do this, and if you don't, well, we're sure
enough going to have somebody else who will do it.

Now, I want to say to everybody think
about this when you go home, should -- do we want
to be on the right side of history or on the wrong
side of history? Now, we need --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Question.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: And now -- wait. Yes, that
is a question. Question right there. That is a
question. All I hear is crickets.

MS. OSTRO: You asked us to reflect on it and
we're reflecting on it.

MR. ASEAN JOHNSON: I know. You can think
today. You don't have to answer out loud. Just
keep thinking about it.

And here is some more information that I
would like to bring to you -- and while I still
have some more minutes or seconds or whatever, I
would like to say that we need more money in our
schools and our communities because if we don't,
this City will fall apart.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

speaker 22.

MS. DARLENE O'BANNE: Good evening. My name
is Darlene O'Banen. I'm the local school
counselor at Earl Elementary. I spoke to Christina
at the front, and I'm asking to talk to someone at
CPS tonight. I was here last year at the budget
meeting and I wrote down some questions, and no one
never contacted me, nobody never called me. That's
why I'm asking to talk to someone tonight.

I'm also asking you all to please -- I
need some help with school closings. My grandson
has been put on a radar that he got to choose what
gang he's riding. This would never happened if the
school hadn't closed and you put the two schools
together.

If it hadn't been for Mr. Steven Long from
Network 11, he came to the school to give a plan -- a safe plan for him. Now I'm asking you all to help me get him in the right school because he can't live with me anymore because you put the two schools together and if he don't choose who he wants to be with, they're going to kill him.

So that's why I'm asking can I talk to someone from CPS on that, and why did we lose this $482,000. So can I see someone today, please?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Question.

MR. ELSEY: If you want to wait, we can follow up with you after the meeting or if you don't want to wait until the conclusion of the hearing, you can give your contact information to the man sitting back there and we will follow up with you.

MS. DARLENE O'BANNE: Okay. I need a card because I said I attended the meeting --

MR. ELSEY: I will give you one of my cards and we can follow up with you. Okay?

MS. DARLENE O'BANNE: Okay.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 23.

MR. TOMMY DAVIDSON: Good evening. I'm Tommy Davidson. I ask the Board one question -- I ask you honestly and humbly, what are the plans for
career technical education? That's the CTE
program. At one time I got my Ph.D. at the City of
Chicago -- my Ph.D. is a public high school
diploma. I got it at Simeon High School in 1975.
Simeon was the only school in the City, again, with
this program career and technical education, and
it's been wiped out.

I was fortunate enough then that we had
resource training in school where you did what we
call discovery every ten weeks. Instead of picking
your major you had to go to exploratory shop for
ten weeks. This was in 1975. This has changed.

Again, I'm a certified welder who can do
it independently or for another company. What I'm
saying is you must get back into school the CTE
program. You have a program that, again, makes
money, and imagine you have -- how many of you see
truck drivers that you see are women? How many
women do you see driving a truck? How many women
electricians do you see that are doing this? It's
about the talent that you have.

How many of you went to a Chicago Public
School and got their Ph.D.? Only one person raised
their hand. That's not right for us in the City.
I say that humbly because we are killing our exploratory programs. I mean, right now how many of you all can go into your own house and fix an outlet or put up a ceiling fan? How many of you women -- we have women mechanics. How many of you can change the oil? I ask you that.

How many of you all took that program?

Again, I am very happy that I got my Ph.D. from Simeon Career Academy Vocational where everybody cares. Okay. So I really appreciate that. I respect that. You are the only one that raised your hand. That getting a Ph.D. from Chicago Public Schools means a lot.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 24.

MS. ANDREA PARKER: Good evening. My name is Andrea Parker, and I stand here as a proud parent of a Chicago Public School student. Raise your hand, Eric.

just here to say that I am tired -- I'm tired of coming to these meetings every single year begging you to do something you know you're supposed to do that you know you're not going to do. So I'm tired, and you should be tired sitting
there knowing that you're not going to do anything.

Okay.

So I'm just standing here as an advocate
for the public schools. I'm also a graduate of
Dewey Elementary, Hyde Park, I went to SIU, and I'm
working on my Ph.D. right now. So I'm a product of
Chicago Public Schools. It has deteriorated.
We're 21st century without any money.

I'm just confused as to why every year we
don't have any money. I'm really confused that CPS
is not in the business of educating our kids,
they're in the business of contracts. That's what
you're all in the business of, giving your friends
contracts. So tell me that.

And, again, I'm confused about how you're
still crying broke. You closed 50 schools, you cut
teachers, raised 4 percent to 12 percent, you fired
teachers and staff every single year. I don't
know -- I believe you do have a surplus, but I
believe it's hidden somewhere under someone else's
contract.

My suggestion to get the budget intact is
I suggest that you stop all these tests that you
continue to give somebody a contract to make. I'm
a elementary teacher and one of my students did poorly on one of the tests and had to go to summer school, but she had to take another test to get out, which was confusing to me. It doesn't make sense.

Also I need to suggest you don't give -- they have CPS giving somebody a $20 million contract to distribute condoms to several high schools in poor neighborhoods. I want to be on the back of what that company is getting.

And stop doing charter schools. You all say they're quality schools, and there is a wait list. They're on a wait list for charter schools, and you're trying to take away the neighborhood schools and make it quality? How can you have a quality charter school --

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 25.

MR. LEE EDWARDS: Good evening. I'm Lee Edwards with the Chicago Citizen Newspaper. The only question I have is how is CPS's budget prioritizing individual school needs throughout the years including the budget, including the loss of the teachers?
An example of this would be Coles Elementary had a leak in the ceiling and a representative from Coles said they put in a petition to have it fixed, but no such thing has happened.

So is there a need for CPS to be more accountable for those sorts of things or is there a task force in charge of that action?

Again, the question is how is CPS prioritizing the individual school needs throughout the year including the loss of teachers, people and manpower?

MS. OSTRO: I'm sorry? The example you gave related to a facilities issue of a leak, and so how do we address those issues?

MR. LEE EDWARDS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. OSTRO: Mary, could you speak to that one when an emergency happens.

MR. LEE EDWARDS: Before you begin, could you identify who you are and the rest of you, can you do that as well.

MS. DE RUNTZ: I'm Mary De Runtz. I'm the deputy chief facilities officer. The first step would be that the principal should contact their
FM, who is manages the building for them, and if it's an emergency, then some action should be taken.

We have a central number at facilities, (773) 553-2900. If you have an issue with your school in terms of facilities, you can call that number (773) 553-2900 and they will respond.

MR. LEE EDWARDS: Does that also incorporate the loss of teachers as well as the other faculty members?

MS. MARY DE RUNTZ: I deal with buildings. I don't have that answer.

MS. OSTRO: So that's how we address a facilities emergency that happens in a building.

Other funding is provided at the beginning of the year and the budget is done at the beginning of the year, the principals make the decisions on how those funds should be allocated and then that's a budget the school will work with during the year.

MR. LEE EDWARDS: Also, can you identify yourself.

MS. OSTRO: My name is Ginger Ostro. I'm the chief financial officer of Chicago Public Schools.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speakers 26, 27, 28 and 29.
MS. DONNA PAYNE: Good evening. My name is Donna Payne. I have five children that is in CPS schools ranging from ages -- well, first grade, third grade, fifth grade, sophomore and a senior. My question is how can you actually say that you guys did this budget and you didn't have any parent input and community input and teacher input? How is this a true budget? How is it? How do you answer that.

MS. OSTRO: For each of the budgets that we do, we do a proposal which we make available to the public through this process and --

MS. DONNA PAYNE: That's the -- I didn't say that. I didn't ask you that. What I'm asking is why wasn't it offered to like several schools and seeing what parents wanted to come in and sit down with the budget table with you guys and community? Why wasn't it offered out from the beginning?

MS. OSTRO: We do provide the budgets to the schools and the principals. We do that early in April --

MS. DONNA PAYNE: I understand that you provide it to the schools. I'm saying sitting at a table line by line actually saying what is going to be
cut, where are you going to put money at, why
wasn't that's offered out?

MS. OSTRO: The opportunity that we provide is
through the school budget process with local school
councils and communities to help prepare their
budget --

MS. DONNA PAYNE: What are you talking about?

MS. OSTRO: I'm talking about the school
budget, we provide the student-based budget where
the people funding the other money going into the
schools are provided to the principals. After
viewing, the local school council will submit it
back. We provide that information publicly and
summarize it, provide the opportunities for
comments through the public hearings that we're
having tonight as well as on the Web site, and that
information is provided to the Board.

MS. DONNA PAYNE: Okay. Well, I would like for
you to go back to the mayor and ask him that you
have a parent here tonight that actually wants to
be at the table when you're cutting schools, when
you're giving charter schools money, giving concept
schools money. We need to be at the table. I'm a
big stakeholder in CPS. I have one daughter that
came through CPS school and she's at DePaul on a full ride.

I quit my job to stay at home so I can see them through their education. So I would like to be at that table line by line seeing where the money is going to and what schools gets what.

Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 27.

MS. PATRICIA BOUGHTON: Good evening. My name is Patricia Boughton. I'm the vice president for Chicago Teachers Union. The frustrating thing I think for most of us here is that we know that you all are not in a position do anything about this budget, that you just present it.

The people that we really need to be talking to are not here. They're out trying to get us to vote for them, and I certainly hope that we reconsider some of these people asking for our votes.

I wanted to speak about a couple of things. One of the sisters touched upon the union issue, and I'm glad -- I mean the pension issue, and I'm glad she did.
She mentioned the pension holiday. What a lot of people do not understand is that the Board of Education in lieu of granting teachers a pay raise about 15 years ago said that, we'll pay part of your pension. Up to that point teachers were paying 9 percent of their pension. The Board said, we'll pick up part of that. The agreement was they would pick up 7 percent of the pension and teachers were paying the other 2 percent -- remaining 2 percent.

Well, shortly after they came to this agreement, Mayor Daley, with the connivance of the state legislature was able to get a pension holiday, and they took these pension holidays for ten years even when times were good because we know during the Clinton years we were in a boom period, and when they could have easily afforded to pay our pensions, they did other things with the money.

And I was likening that to somebody, you know, being a gambler, spending all the money at the Horseshoe and then telling the landlord, I ain't got your rent right now, you know, something came up. That's what the Board of Education has done.
So we believe it's not the teachers or pensioners who are responsible for the messes they're in, it's politicians and those people sitting up there that are on the Board who agree to this stuff, and that is why we want to run the school board.

MS. OSTRO: I have one clarification for you. CPS does continue to pay the 7 percent of the teachers' shares. The teachers are still paying 2 percent -- all employees are. The numbers that I presented in the presentation today don't relate to that.

It's an addition to the chart. So that's the share that is the amount that CPS has to pay directly to the pension fund. In addition to that, there is about 135 million which we pay which reflects the amount that you're talking about, the teachers' share.

So we actually pay both. I wasn't referring to the portion that we pay on behalf of the teachers. This is on top of that. I just want to clarify that.

MS. PATRICIA BOUGHTON: I just wanted to clarify for people who may not be aware of the
history of how this came about.

Teachers are not greedy, grasping shilots (sic) trying to grab all the money and stuff for themselves. This was an agreement that the Board came up with, and if it was a bad agreement just like the law says, you are responsible for whatever you sign your name to. They signed their name to it.

And they didn't want to pay the pension to pay Social Security because teachers do not earn Social Security. So you throw out our pension, you're throwing us in the poor house and the chicken coop.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 29.

MR. MATTHEW LUSKIN: Hi my name is Matthew Luskin. I'm a parent of three sons in the Chicago Public Schools.

You mentioned three ways that you're attempting to balance this budget that I heard, one is a change in how you calculate the budget. You call it changing our revenue recognition period. I think the rest of us would call it lying to make the mayor look good. You told us this is a
one-time offer, and we (inaudible due to audience
noise).

You talked about slashing retirement. We
should be clear in cutting pensions, in the City of
Chicago when you cut municipal pensions and cut
public employee pensions, it disproportionately
impacts African-American neighborhoods. You're
talking about balancing the budget by cutting
retirement pay to exactly the same communities in
this City with the highest unemployment rates and
most savaged by the Mayor's choice to close 50
schools in the City.

And then, thirdly, you say you're going to
balance the budget by cutting from our schools.
You told us that you did everything you could to
keep cuts from the classrooms, and apparently the
Chicago Public Schools are a little less failing
than you all thought because none of us are stupid
enough to believe that.

I mean, when you sit here, a budget is not
just a set of statistics. It's not an automatic on
what outcomes come out of it. It's a set of
political decisions. The budget is students, the
budget is the people in this room, and it's the
plans we have been telling you.

Your job and the Mayor's job is to educate our children. It's not to pay the bills, it's not to protect the bank, it's not to protect the charter companies or those that have invested in real estate. Your job is to educate our children.

My job as a father is to raise my children.

If I didn't have the money for dinner tonight, I couldn't do what the Board does and say, I'm going to choose which son to feed based on the (inaudible due to audience noise) I couldn't choose to feed my children that way.

My job is to fight for the resources for my kids. My job is to organize a union to give my damn boss -- (inaudible due to audience noise). My job would be to put foot on the table. Where do we see a leadership for the public schools that is fighting for our kids.

You mentioned the TIF money. You said we're getting money from the TIF funds for the schools. That's in the tens of millions, but there is hundreds of millions of dollars that could be coming to the schools instead of going to the TIF funds. And we're supposed to say thank you when
you -- we're not going to talk to you, we're here
to talk to us in this room. We're going to
organize and we're going to fight for the money
because clearly we have a leadership that isn't
fighting for the children, but it's fighting for
the bankers downtown.

   MS. WILLIAMS: We are down to our last four
   speakers.

   MS. RHONDA McLEOD: I'm Rhonda McLeod. I'm a
   nationally board certified teacher, which means I
   have gone through some very vigorous training to
   prove that I am highly qualified.

   That is said -- the president of our
   United States has said he wants highly qualified
   teachers in front of our students. We can't do
   that if we keep turning around and closing the
   schools with seriously experience qualified
   teachers, of which I am one.

   I'm wearing a shirt from Gresham School.
   I was a national board certified teacher at that
   school. Now, I serve low income, highly challenged
   children in special education. I will define for
   those that don't understand. They don't speak,
   they rarely -- they have high cognitive issues,
they have autism, they may be deaf or hard of hearing issues, they have families who struggle to provide for them. One of the things you're doing in the budget is to change how the bus aides are organized. I'll directly speak to that.

Parents trust me to take care of their children. They put their children on a bus, they have an aide on the bus who they know by name who hopefully they have known for a number of years who they trust to take care of their children. Should there be a snowstorm, they know their children are safe. Should there be a flood, they know their children are safe.

If you're going to cut those positions, are you going to pack the buses? Where are these children going to be? We have a history of children being, oops, we forgot about you, can you join school about 10 to 12, 14 days when downtown gets their here stuff together? Can we deal with the fact that we don't know where this child is. You didn't send him to school. Yes, I did. He gets left on the bus for three hours.

There is a child I had who was transferred to another school while you consolidated the
children to save money on buses. Can you answer
the question, how is this budget change going to
address the relationship the children have with
their caregivers and their teachers if you
eliminate it and you're handling it downtown, which
has a history of poorly managing and dealing with
the children's needs.

MS. OSTRO: We will have to get back to you on
the specifics. We're managing the bus aides
because we're trying to improve the service.

MS. RHONDA McLEOD: How are you going to
improve the service when there is no relationship
between the parents, the children and the school
because it's downtown and they have not been -- it
takes two weeks to get a child processed for the
bus.

MS. OSTRO: We'll follow up on that.

MS. RHONDA McLEOD: We can call the bus company
to do the change; but, no, it has to go through
central office, they have to do the paperwork, the
computer falls apart, and the children are sitting
at home, the parents are struggling to get them to
school to a location where they're going because
it's not their neighborhood school, and they're not
being addressed.

And I've had a parent whose child was left on the bus called us because she got no answer. The grandmother called us because the child had been moved less than a month earlier. I'm pulling this poor woman off the ceiling. She was in panic because her grandchild was missing. I grabbed my keys looking for him. We found him on the bus. They locked the bus.

I can't trust downtown and the bus companies to do it. I have to have some input on this t because ethically I'm responsible for these children. Ask this parent. She knows. It's not her grandchild, but she knows.

MR. ELSEY: We appreciate what you're sharing. If you want to share your contact information, we don't have representation from the office right now, but I am happy to share your contact information to folks that can talk to you.

MS. RHONDA McLEOD: I know Ethel and the other people. I can call them, but transportation is a problem. I hope you recognize that.

MS. WILLIAMS: Speaker 31, please.

MR. MAHIRI ANDERSON: Good evening. Mahiri
Anderson, teacher and parent. I have a quick question that speaks to the budget.

What is the philosophy of why CPS is investing in charter schools and contract schools?

MR. ELSEY: Charter schools are one of many of the strategies that we use to bring high-quality education to students.

MR. MAHIRI ANDERSON: And the expectation of that high-quality -- the expectation of that high-quality education is what?

MR. ELSEY: I'm sorry? I don't understand the question.

MR. MAHIRI ANDERSON: What is the expectation of those charter schools to produce as a result of that investment from CPS budget department?

MR. ELSEY: Charter schools are held to the same performance standards as other -- any other school of any other government type. The school policy adopted by the Board in August, you will see that the charter schools are held to the same standards as all schools of CSR under that CSR policy.

MR. MAHIRI ANDERSON: So that leads me to my statement, since 1995 since the institution of
Renaissance -- I'm sorry. Since the institution of Renaissance 2010 we have seen contract charter schools perform at the same level as traditional public schools. So that means that there has not been any return on the investment of our children. What I'm getting at is coming from corporate America I learned that if there was no return on investments, that's when we begin to have a cutting budget and we begin to restructure the administration and we begin a new philosophy.

So at this point in time we have not seen any changes or any return on investments as a taxpayer, as a teacher, as parent. I'm asking for a return on my money with interest paid because you have disinvested from the Brown community, we're seeing the disappearance of the middle class, we're seeing a philosophy that has not shown a return on investments in terms of taking away career and technology education programs.

The schools that have been closed, these new charter schools that are coming up, we want a return on our investment simply stated. And let me tell you how we can get that. Those schools that you have invested in, those private corporations,
it's time go back and ask for our money back, and
that will give you a surplus of -- and I don't want
you all to have to give us the bad news anymore
saying you don't have the money. Go back to the
charter schools, go back to the contract schools
and get our money.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Speaker 31.

MS. MELODY FARMER: Hi. My name is Melody
Farmer, and I'm the teacher, I'm a community
person, I own a home. My concern is that looking
at the faces of teachers that you laid off, the art
teachers, the music teachers, the fine arts
teachers, the libraries that is not funded -- do we
have any laid off teachers here?

These are the faces that stabilize
communities, that stabilize homes, our children.
These are the people that in the fall don't have
jobs. These are the people that students reach out
to them over the summer and look forward to seeing
in September.

So when you go home tonight understand
that these faces you see that touches children and
understand that their jobs are more important than
what you're doing. Okay. So understand these are the faces.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

We have time for one more speaker.

Raymond Lopez.

MR. RAYMOND LOPEZ: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Raymond Lopez, Democratic Community member of the 15th ward. I represent the community of Gage Park, Brighton Park, Back of the Yards and West Englewood. I'm honored to be here for my residents to my west, to my north and to my south.

As an elected official in the room, I just want to say this, I've been here from the beginning, I've been here to the end, I have heard and I have listened. What is going on in our neighborhood schools is a travesty. We must work together.

To the budget committee, I want to start by addressing numerous issues that are both capital and fiscal budget-related. They will be intertwined, so I apologize.

First and foremost, I have to start with this, when dealing with our pensions, we must remember that pensions are a promise, and I ask you
not to view that as just some budgetary gimmick in
order to balance the items on the sheet. They are
a promise. As an elected official, if you need
help raising revenue or addressing other revenue
strings to help support the overall budget to pay
for all items on there, you have my support in
doing that. I look forward to working with the
Board of Education to ensure that all of our
funding needs are met unilaterally.

As I stated, I represent numerous
neighborhoods. Unfortunately, their needs are
completely different. In Brighton Park and Back of
the Yards we are facing issues of nearing or
overcapacity by your own CPS standards. In
Brighton Park Gonzales and Shields are nearing
overcrowding. In Back of the Yards Seward and
Hedges are nearing overcrowding. Even the new Back
of the Yards high school, which is an IB school,
was built almost intentionally to be overcrowded
with the capacity of 900 but an annual enrollment
population of 1300.

In West Englewood we had a far different
situation, as Ms. O'Bannel stated earlier, almost
all of our schools in West Englewood were slated
for closure along with most of them in Great
Englewood. I am very thankful to the Board of
Education after having attended five hearings on
their behalf that we were able to keep Henderson
open.

However, Earl remains a vacant building in
West Englewood, one of now 300 abandoned buildings
in the neighborhood. I would like to know from the
members here are there any specific plans for the
Earl vacant building at this time?

MS. OSTRO: We can only speak generally to it,
but there is a task force that is looking at all
the closed buildings, looking at the community
recommendations on what to do with the buildings.

MR. RAYMOND LOPEZ: Okay. It is my hope and it
is the hope of my residents and my constituents
that that remains a publically accessible building
used for the betterment of our community and not
sold to any type of private entity for anything
that is education-related.

It would be a slap in the face to the
community that lost its schools and now has a young
mother whose child is faced with gang affiliation
warfare to see that turn into something else other
than what it was originally. So I ask you to take
that back with you with your budget hearings.

Additionally, the other school we were
able to remain open in West Englewood is Henderson
Academy. Henderson is the only school in West
Englewood between Garfield Boulevard and 71st Street
between Damen and Ashland. It serves 4,000
households.

Now, not all of our households attend
Henderson. Some go to Miles Davis and some go to
the charter schools surrounding this. But
Henderson is our premier neighborhood school. I
have supported it. I am proud of what principal
Marvis Jackson has done in that school, but I'm
asking for additional funds and consideration of
everything that that school does and could do in
the community.

I've worked tirelessly to connect them
with not-for-profits in the surrounding community
in the hopes of augmenting the programs that are
there, but I need your help and the Board's help in
providing funds and resources to the students.

They need funds for uniforms, they need
funds for programs and now with the change in the
demographics, they need changes in the bilingual program as well because we do have a growing Latino population in West Englewood. So we now have a school that has a bilingual need with no available resources.

Lastly, I want to touch on a topic that I wasn't planning on talking about, but that gentleman over there and my good friend Maria behind me reminded me of the importance of a topic that affects all schools in my ward, the wraparound services.

Wraparound services are a critical component of what is needed in the community, especially communities plagued with violence and crime.

I could think back when I was sitting here looking at my ward now, last night 2 blocks away from Shields Elementary School, a shooting on the porch; last month 65th and Damen, 3 blocks away from O'Toole Elementary, a shooting in the middle of the street; last summer 57th and Wolcott across the street from Henderson Elementary, a shooting at the playground.

And when the 15th ward extended to Chicago
Lawn we had Marquette School where I first met
Ms. Moreno, and we had a young man who was shot on
his way to school. His body was left on the street
for three hours during when students were going to
class. Students had to walk past the body of their
classmate on the floor.

If there is one thing that I implore you
not to cut, not to reduce and to fully fund is the
wraparound services because while we cannot account
for the crime with just education, we can
definitely mitigate the impact it has once they get
into that building and how they're able to cope
with what is going on in the world around them
because the last time I went to Henderson's career
day and asked what everyone wanted to be when they
grow up, half of them said alive. Thank you for
your time.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

So this concludes the public hearing for
the 2015 budget proposal.

MS. OSTRO: Thank you very much for all of your
comments.
STATE OF ILLINOIS )
) SS:
COUNTY OF COOK )

Ailene Barkhoff, as an Officer of the Court, say that she is a shorthand reporter doing business in the State of Illinois; and that she reported in shorthand the proceedings of said budget hearing, and that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of her shorthand notes so taken as aforesaid, and contains the proceedings given at said budget hearing.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF: I have hereunto set my verified digital signature this 18th day of July 2014.

AILENE BARKHOFF, CSR, RPR
| Time   | 12:50 | 13:00 | 13:15 | 13:30 | 13:45 | 14:00 | 14:15 | 14:30 | 14:45 | 15:00 | 15:15 | 15:30 | 15:45 | 16:00 | 16:15 | 16:30 | 16:45 | 17:00 | 17:15 | 17:30 | 17:45 | 18:00 |
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