

Written Testimony

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Regina	Valentino	<p>Hello board members I am asking you once again to please consider the many phone calls ,emails , petition and statements about myself over these past few months. I ask you to please listen to the hundreds of community members and parents in support of me and not just one that isn't. Termination based on this is a direct violation of my First Amendment rights, as it penalizes me for exercising my constitutional right to engage in civic duties. My comment regarding a question posed by another individual involved a public safety concern and was made in my capacity as a community member, not as a school nurse. The State Board of Nursing also agrees there was no violation, not to prosecute and has closed the case per Mr Garrett Rine. These actions are retaliatory, as civic participation and responsibility are not punishable here. As well as bias, Insufficient Evidence Gathering by Failing to collect all relevant facts and missteps in following due process. Please hear our Bridesburg community as this is not an action that they want by an admin that is not listening to them. Thank you</p>

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Regina	Valentino	<p>In light of the situation presented, the response from the school principal and this second level hearing I am compelled to provide a rebuttal to the misapplied facts and false allegations. I just want to be completely transparent. I am a licensed registered nurse and am employed by the School District of Philadelphia to provide said service. I am currently assigned to Bridesburg Elementary School where Don DiPaulo serves as the school principal. My contractual hours are from 7:30am - 2:09pm. To provide some context to the issue, I reside in the same community in which Bridesburg is located and my daughter is a seventh grader student at Bridesburg. I take pride in my community and in my role as a nurse. It is clear that there are two roles here: (1) school nurse and (2) a private community member. As an employee of the school district and licensed school nurse my duties are defined by the job description as outlined in the PFT contract with the school district and governed by district policies during working hours. These responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing health care services to students during school hours. • Reporting health or safety concerns observed on school property or during school-sanctioned activities. • Acting as a mandated reporter for suspected abuse, neglect, or harm involving students, as required by state law and district policy. As a private community member during non-working hours, I retain the autonomy as a private citizen. While my professional expertise as a nurse may inform my perspective, I am not bound by the same policies governing my actions as a school district employee. Instead, my actions are guided by broader societal duties and rights such as: • Reporting incidents to local authorities as any citizen would. • Activating in the best interests of community safety. • Engaging in civic responsibilities without direct oversight by the school administrator. • It is evident that the lens in which my roles are viewed by the school administrator is similar to a one-way mirror and my role as a community member has not been considered. I would like to take this opportunity to provide an analysis of the school district policy. • School District Policies for Employees: District policies typically outline the scope of an employee's authority and responsibilities while performing professional duties. Thus, I am: • Required to report any observed risks or harm to students during school hours or school-related events. • As a nurse I am expected to maintain the confidentiality of student's health information obtained within my professional capacity as a nurse. • My authority to act in an official capacity is limited to school premises, school-sponsored events, or other situations explicitly covered by district policy. • 2. Application to a concerned private citizen: As a private citizen my actions are not governed by school district policies. Key distinctions include: My statement in no way was connected to my employment but rather stemmed from my observations as a community member. Professional Expertise vs. Official Capacity: While my background as a nurse may have informed my decision to comment, this does not mean that my actions were taken on behalf of the school district. Additionally, my daughter is in the same class as the student in question. Thus, the association of my professional role is taken out of context and misplaced as not only am I a concerned citizen I am also a mother of a child who is in the same class as the perpetrator and it is reasonable for me to be familiar with the students in the class. Personal Accountability: My action in this case, falls under my rights and obligations as a resident of the community, not as an employee of the School District of Philadelphia specifically Bridesburg School. Therefore, it is unreasonable to believe that I am governed by the same policies as a district employee. Let's consider a policy analysis. In light of the information presented regarding the dual roles I play in context to the parameters and direct alignment with professional and personal actions I adamantly assert that the recommendation for my termination is not supported and malicious. In fact, such an action is in direct violation of my civil rights. Analysis of Termination of Employment as a Civil Rights Violation and Retaliation Terminating my employment for reporting an incident as a private citizen could potentially constitute a violation of my civil rights and an act of retaliation. This analysis focuses on the relevant legal protections for public employees and the circumstances under which termination may infringe upon these rights. • 1. First Amendment Protections: Public employees, including school district staff, have First Amendment rights to speak as private citizens on matters of public concern. Courts have established that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Speech: If an employee speaks outside the scope of their official duties, they retain full First Amendment protections. • Public Concern: Speech addressing safety, crime, or other issues affecting the community qualifies as a matter of public concern. In this case: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My comment regarding a question posed by another individual involved a public safety concern and was made in my capacity as a community member, not as a school nurse. • Termination based on this speech is a direct violation of my First Amendment rights, as it penalizes me for exercising my constitutional right to engage in civic duties. • Let us consider Pickering v. Board of Education (1968) which established that public employees have the right to speak on matters of public concern, provided it does not interfere with the effective operation of the public employer. Pickering v. Board of Ed. of Township High School District 205 Case Summary Law Case Explained My actions do not meet the standard for disruption, further strengthening my protections. • 2. Retaliation Under Civil Rights Laws Retaliation occurs when an employer takes adverse action against an employee for engaging in protected activity. For myself, protected activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Participation: Reporting an incident to law enforcement is a civic responsibility, not misconduct. Punishing me for this action could be viewed as retaliatory. • Statutory Protections: Federal and state laws protect whistleblowers and individuals reporting public safety concerns. If my termination were linked to this report, it could violate anti-retaliation statutes. Legal Precedent: Retaliation claims often succeed when an adverse action (e.g., termination) is linked to a protected activity. • 3. Equal Protection and Discrimination Termination could also raise equal protection concerns under the Fourteenth Amendment or employment discrimination laws: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Enforcement: If my termination is inconsistent with how other employees are treated for similar off-duty actions, it could indicate discriminatory intent or unequal application of policies. • Protected Classes: since I am a member of a protected class (e.g., based on race, gender, or age), and there is evidence suggesting that termination is influenced by bias, this could further strengthen a civil rights claim. • 4. Chilling Effect on Employees Punitive actions against me could create a chilling effect, discouraging employees from engaging in protected speech or reporting legitimate safety concerns. Courts have recognized that retaliatory terminations in public employment harm not only the individual but also the public interest in free and open communication. • The School Administrator's Inadequacy as an Impartial Investigator The involvement of the school principal as the lead investigator in this matter raises serious concerns regarding impartiality, fairness, and the integrity of the investigative process. The administrator's potential biases and lack of specialized training in conducting investigations could compromise the outcome and further erode trust in how the matter is being handled. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Inherent Bias and Conflict of Interest As the direct administrative supervisor, the school principal is not positioned to act as an impartial investigator. Specific issues include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preconceived Notions: The administrator may already hold assumptions about my actions based on incomplete information or external pressures. • Professional Stake: Their interest in protecting the school district's reputation could unduly influence the interpretation of evidence or decisions. • Personal Dynamics: Preexisting relationships between the administrator and myself or other staff could color their judgment and make their conclusions appear biased. • Impact: This conflict of interest undermines the credibility of the investigation and any findings that arise from it. • 2. Lack of Training in Investigative Methodology Effective investigations require specific skills and training to ensure accuracy and objectivity. The administrator's potential lack of expertise in handling such matters may result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient Evidence Gathering: Failing to collect all relevant facts or corroborate accounts from neutral sources. • Procedural Errors: Misssteps in following due process, such as not providing Mrs. Valentino with an opportunity to respond to allegations. • Confirmation Bias: Interpreting evidence to fit a predetermined narrative rather than objectively analyzing the facts. • Impact: An inadequately conducted investigation increases the likelihood of flawed or unjust conclusions, which could expose the district to legal challenges and reputational harm. • 3. Threat to the Lens Through Which the Matter Is Viewed When a potentially biased administrator leads the investigation, it skews how the situation is framed and assessed. Specific risks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disregarding Context: The administrator may fail to adequately distinguish between my role as a school employee and my actions as a private citizen. • Overemphasis on Policy Violations: By narrowly focusing on district policies, the administrator may ignore broader considerations, such as my First Amendment rights or the importance of community safety. • Perceived Retaliation: The administrator's actions could be viewed as punitive, particularly if there is evidence of bias or a predisposition to discipline Mrs. Valentino without sufficient cause. • Impact: These factors distort the lens through which my actions are evaluated, making it impossible to arrive at a fair and balanced resolution. • 4. Erosion of Trust and Perception of Retaliation The administrator's involvement as the lead investigator not only jeopardizes the outcome of the investigation but also damages the district's credibility. Concerns include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Morale: Staff may perceive the investigation as retaliatory or biased, leading to mistrust of leadership and fear of unfair treatment in similar situations. • Public Relations: The community may view the district's actions as overreaching or retaliatory, especially if Mrs. Valentino's civic duty as a private citizen is punished. • Legal Exposure: A biased investigation increases the risk of lawsuits for wrongful termination, retaliation, or violations of civil rights. • Impact: The administrator's role compromises the district's ability to manage the situation effectively and may exacerbate tensions within the school community. • Recommendations To address these concerns, the district should remove the school administrator from the investigative process and take the following steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage a Neutral Third Party: Appoint an independent investigator or legal expert to ensure a fair, unbiased, and thorough examination of the facts. 2. Establish a Review Panel: Form a committee of diverse stakeholders, including legal counsel and community representatives, to oversee the investigation and provide balanced input. 3. Commit to Transparency: Clearly communicate the steps and timeline for the investigation, ensuring all parties understand the process and have an opportunity to participate. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures a credible investigation that is free from bias. • Demonstrates the district's commitment to fairness and due process. • Reduces the risk of legal and reputational harm stemming from perceived retaliation or inadequate procedures. • Alternatives to Termination: Promoting Employment Retention and Fair Investigation Rather than pursuing termination, which is both extreme and potentially unlawful, the school district can adopt alternative approaches that prioritize fairness, employment retention, and a balanced understanding of the facts. These alternatives ensure compliance with employment laws, maintain workplace morale, and foster trust between the district and its employees. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an Unbiased Investigation Before making any disciplinary decisions, the district should conduct a thorough and impartial investigation to assess whether Mrs. Valentino's actions warrant any employment-related consequences. Key steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring a Neutral Third Party: Engaging an independent investigator ensures the findings are objective and credible. • Gathering Evidence: Collect details about my actions and motivations, as well as any related district policies. • Considering Context: Evaluate whether I was acting as a private citizen, the nature of the incident I reported, and whether any policies were violated. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids rushed decisions based on incomplete information. • Demonstrates a commitment to due process and fairness. • Reduces the risk of claims of retaliation or bias. 2. Clarify Policy Application The district should take steps to review and clarify the boundaries between an employee's professional duties and their personal actions. This approach could involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Review: Assessing whether existing policies clearly define the scope of employee responsibilities and the limits of district oversight during off-duty hours. • Training: Offering professional development for staff to help them understand their rights and obligations as school employees and private citizens. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps avoid future confusion over policy application. • Empowers employees to act confidently as private citizens without fear of reprisal. • Builds a stronger understanding of district policies among staff. 3. Provide a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) If the investigation identifies minor policy violations or misunderstandings, the district could implement a Performance Improvement Plan instead of termination. A PIP could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching or Counseling: Addressing any specific areas of concern with myself in a constructive manner. • Policy Education: Providing targeted training on relevant policies to ensure compliance moving forward. • Clear Expectations: Outlining steps for myself to demonstrate her understanding of the policies and my commitment to district standards. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains an experienced and valued employee while addressing concerns. • Avoids punitive measures that could harm employee morale. 4. Issue a Written Warning (if warranted) If the investigation finds that my actions may have slightly overstepped my professional boundaries but did not rise to the level of misconduct, the district could issue a formal warning. This warning could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge my intentions as a concerned community member. • Emphasize the importance of adhering to policies during professional hours. • Provide guidance for how similar situations should be handled in the future. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balances accountability with compassion and understanding. • Avoids damaging my reputation or career unnecessarily. • Reinforces district policies without resorting to harsh penalties. 5. Use the Incident as a Learning Opportunity The district could leverage this situation to foster collaboration and education rather than conflict. For instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Case Studies: Use this incident to guide staff discussions about navigating dual roles as school employees and private citizens. • Strengthen Community Relations: Highlight the district's commitment to working with employees who also serve as active members of the community. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns a potentially negative situation into a positive, growth-focused outcome. • Encourages constructive dialogue between staff and leadership. • Conclusion My termination for commenting as a private citizen would likely violate my civil rights under the First Amendment and could constitute unlawful retaliation. Such action undermines my rights to free speech, equal protection, and civic participation while sending a message that discourages other employees from engaging in similar lawful activities. The school district should instead focus on policies that support employee rights and clarify the boundaries between professional responsibilities and private actions. The school administrator's involvement as the lead investigator poses significant risks to the impartiality and integrity of the investigation. By removing the administrator from the process and adopting neutral, transparent alternatives, the district can safeguard the investigation's credibility, protect employee rights, and avoid unnecessary conflict or litigation. This approach will also reinforce the district's commitment to fair treatment and procedural justice for all employees. Additionally, termination of my employment would be disproportionate, premature, and harmful to both the district and the community it serves. By exploring alternatives such as conducting a fair investigation, clarifying policies, issuing a PIP, or using the incident as a learning opportunity, the district can address any concerns while retaining a dedicated employee. These approaches promote fairness, transparency, and the long-term success of both myself and the school district. It is very easy to identify issues and problems embedded in systems. However, when power dynamics, microaggressions and perceived retaliatory behavior become the source of malicious action, it needs to be addressed. Here, I identified issues using an integrative approach to finding a solution which further addresses identified problems. It is my belief that the resolve to this matter is education, knowledge and empathic understanding. Thank you for taking the time to read my rebuttal. Regina Valentino, M.Ed.RN,BSN,CSN

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Anthony	Valentino	<p>This statement is on behalf of my wife. My wife is Regina Valentino and she has been a school nurse with the district for 9 years. As well as a mother to six wonderful children and a school nurse caring for approximately 500 more, the disproportionately action taken against someone within the nursing profession greatly concerns me. She is a proud graduate of Frankford High School, class of 1990, and a community member for two long and rewarding decades. She has been serving as a registered nurse, dedicating her life to this noble profession, for almost 27 years. Recently, some actions have been taken that strike a chord in my heart. It's painful to observe that a nurse, dutifully performing their role during work hours, who out of concern and dedication for the safety of each child, is met with grossly disproportionate consequences. This situation not only hampers the work of committed professionals, but it also jeopardizes the safety and well-being of our precious children. Her role should not be under threat for pursuing the very duty she swore to uphold. So, I am calling on you, the decision makers and parents. Help protect the nurses who are just trying to do their jobs. Allow them to care for our students, without the fear of disproportional reprisal. Stand with our community, our children, and the nurses who aim to keep them safe.</p>
Jennifer	Leith	<p>I am reaching out for your assistance in retaining the teacher librarian position at Shawmont Elementary, which is 1 of the 4 full-time teacher librarian positions in the School District of Philadelphia. This position is under dire threat of elimination in the Shawmont 2025-2026 budget. For context: the teacher librarian position at Shawmont was created for the 2024-2025 school year and long-time Shawmont teacher and certified teacher librarian, Ms. Loren White was hired to fill that role. Ms. White has spent this academic year organizing the Shawmont library while teaching between 28-20 classes each week in the library. Ms. White has refreshed the book collections, organized the physical space, brought in new furniture and shelving, cataloged 1,000's of books and has created a safe space for Shawmont students to learn, explore and dream. She is providing what every school in the School District of Philadelphia should have: a safe space for students to find the joy of books and reading and she is providing vital lessons on information technology and research skills (which only a teacher librarian can do). Elimination of the teacher librarian position at Shawmont is a move backwards - particularly at a time when the District is engaged in a planning process to restore teacher librarians. How can these 2 facts be true at the same time? The fact that Shawmont has a teacher librarian is a point of pride and it is a fact that the District should set as an example for other schools. I represent an organization that has worked to open and operate school libraries - through volunteer effort - in West Philadelphia for the past 20 years; and we do this work as we wait for teacher librarians return to the District. I can confidently state that what Ms. White has accomplished in the past year is extraordinary. More schools in the District should be committing to hiring and retaining teacher librarians; not eliminating them. Teacher librarians and school libraries are critically important and an investment in academic outcomes which is the whole purpose of a school district, right? For the students of Shawmont, please work with the Shawmont Principal to retain their teacher librarian position and provide the funding needed to keep this position.</p>
Debra	Kachel	<p>April is School Library Month but sadly most of our District's schools have no library or librarian to celebrate. Only 6 schools have a librarian and most are part-time. Yet all our surrounding suburban schools provide their students with libraries and certified school librarians. Don't Philadelphia city kids deserve the same? The Philadelphia Alliance to Restore School Librarians (PARSL), a grassroots group of over 1,400 supporters has been working with the District on a long-range plan to bring back librarians to all 218 schools. Although this work is now in jeopardy due to the loss of federal funds that initiated the grant project, one component has been completed. Interviews were conducted with leaders from 11 large urban school districts that are adding school librarians and library programs--Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC), Chicago, Dallas, District of Columbia, Eugene (OR), Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Oakland (CA), and San Francisco. These districts have similar issues as SDP-large numbers of students in poverty, in special education programs, speaking other languages, and overall low literacy rates. Yet key leaders in these districts believe school libraries and librarians are a solution. Despite many other needs, they have placed a high priority on adding trained, instructional school librarians. Philadelphia needs to join this group. These district leaders believe the research. "Having a certified teacher librarian correlates with higher reading and writing scores. *Reading and writing test scores improve for students who live in poverty, Black and Hispanic students, and students with disabilities when their schools have school librarians. *Reading scores drop when school librarian positions are eliminated, according to 4th grade NAEP data. *Librarians are a key resource for leveling the playing field for students living in poverty. *Higher graduation rates are associated with the presence of school librarians. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders and it is up to us to prepare them for a future we can now only imagine. The skills librarians teach--how to critically evaluate information whether in print, online, or in social media, how to stay safe in the digital world, and how to learn to read and read to learn. To do the best we can for Philly students, we need to make functional school libraries led by certified school librarians a priority. This vision begins with you! To read the full report "Restoring School Librarians: Challenges and Solutions" go to https://www.restorephillylibrarians.org/schoolreport</p>
Pam	Krop	<p>Recently I learned that the nurse at our school, Mrs. Valentino, is in jeopardy of losing her job. I feel her termination would be a huge loss to our school and children. I have had children and now grandchildren in this school over the past 35 years and she has been the best nurse to ever happen to Bridesburg Elementary. She has a kind and caring heart as well as an ability to make any illness or injury feel better in a visit. My granddaughter recently lost her dog, in January. When she came home she told me how Mrs. Valentino helped make her feel better with a simple hug and listening to her cry. I had another grandchild who graduated from there last year that Mrs. Valentino helped us get to the bottom of her health anxiety as well as her constant headaches. She has protected the kids from bullies as well as boo boos. I have never encountered a kinder, more caring, and pleasant school nurse in all of my years. I must add that I personally feel like the principal has a personal vendetta against the nurse and all medical professionals due to some things I had learned over the past year with his experience with his wife and a doctor. This principal seems to like to sweep things under the rug when it comes to bullies within the school and has been known to even go as far as buying one a gift of a Eagles jersey as well as other sports stuff. The child was suspended a few times, (2 in the past month alone) and returned to his same class while putting the child he bullied into a different class. I have a child in the class that has seen how distracting and violent this child is, yet he is permitted to continue with it. WHY?</p>
Monisha	Blair	<p>Monisha Blair Regarding the Impact of School Librarians April 24, 2025 I am a middle school librarian in Virginia, from a district similar in size to the School District of Philadelphia. I am testifying on the importance of funding school librarian positions and our invaluable impact on student learning and success. According to Virginia law (§ 22.1-253.13.2), school librarians are a state-mandated position. In my district, we are fortunate enough to have 242 certified school librarians. I'd like to share what is possible when students have access to adequately staffed school libraries. Personally, my learning community consists of roughly 760 students and 80 staff members. My days are routinely spent serving our students through circulation, collection development, and collection maintenance. However, this is only a small aspect of how I serve my learners. It's not about the people. Most days, I wear a combination of hats—teacher, information specialist, instructional partner, leader, and program administrator. I teach an average of more than 250 inquiry-based lessons each year covering information literacy topics such as citation, ethical use of information and dissemination, genre exploration, information creation, media literacy, paraphrasing, reading strategies, reference skills, search strategies, source evaluation, and using primary sources. These are skills that are not only helpful in students' academic lives, but are vital life skills in our current media and information landscape. I collaborate with every department in my building to support student literacy and routinely work as part of our school's leadership to improve teacher efficacy. This is the work school librarians do each day. Across my district and state, students and staff see that school libraries are vibrant places of learning. Librarians encourage students to ask questions, explore and evaluate information, and create new knowledge for themselves. Through research, a hands-on opportunity to create something, or the basis of a skill to apply in new situations, librarians provide unique, meaningful learning opportunities. No matter the level, as school librarians, we look to activate students' curiosity while helping them grow as critical thinkers, skillful researchers, and enthusiastic readers. The return on investment for school librarians is clear. Decades of research have proven time and again that access to an effective school library staffed by a certified librarian improves reading and writing scores as well as graduation rates, especially for minorities, students with disabilities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. According to data from SLIDE, a project by Antioch University Seattle funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the ratio for Philadelphia public schools is 39,302 students and 2,880 teachers per librarian. It is impossible for any individual to meaningfully know, serve, and teach that many students and staff. It has been over 30 years since Philadelphia cut school librarian positions from 176 certified librarians in 1991 to the current staffing level of three. Since that time, the value of school librarians may be less visible, but the impact of this loss can be felt. Two out of three children in Philadelphia are not reading on grade level by 4th grade, a key indicator in determining if students succeed in school and graduate. Philadelphia's young people deserve better. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) advocates that every learner in every school should have access to a full-time, certified school librarian. "The success of a school library, no matter how well designed, ultimately depends on the quality and number of personnel responsible for managing the instructional program and the school library's physical and virtual resources. A full-time certified school librarian, supported by dedicated technical and clerical staff, is crucial to an effective school library for a school's learning environment. Every learner, classroom educator, and administrator in every school building at every grade level should have access to a fully staffed school library throughout the school day." Philadelphia's students need more than three librarians. They do not have access to fully or even partially staffed school libraries. Our work is engaging, enriching, important, and necessary. Please consider how you can more adequately staff your district's libraries to support your learning community. Thank you for your time. I appreciate your consideration of the impact of school librarians and staffing solutions.</p>
Marlo	Kulb	<p>Hi, my name is Marlo Kulb my daughter attends Bridesburg Elementary school, I have already written 2 other letters testifying for Regina and not understanding how she has been released from her position as a nurse for our children, also she is a mother who had concerns for my child at the time she was a nurse at Bridesburg School she helped me and my family who were devastated over my daughter being beaten by a much bigger girl, the video was just horrible, I still can not bring myself to watch all of it. Now we are hear writing letters to save Regina's job because she was being a caring mother/person/human by identifying the truth of who did this to my daughter, tell me you would not do the same for someone, I sent the video watch it and tell me you wouldn't want to know or have someone help you and your family. This whole thing has been a nightmare for me and of course Regina and her family, how can this even be real, someone needs to step up and see how wrong this is, I am so upset with this ongoing what I want to call bullying at this point someone needs to shake Regina's hand and apologize and give her job back with back pay, you should be ashamed. You are acting like she beat my daughter up! Very upset! I wish I had the time to speak and see your faces, and let you see me and the real struggle this has brought upon our families. Very upset parent.</p>
Nicolas	Ledvon	<p>If I were at the same situation as the beaten girl I would hope that any citizen would identify the aggressor! This isn't right that a person can loose a job over doing something that a good citizen would do. It gives us a message when you do the right thing you get punished!</p>
Miroslav	Ledvon	<p>A person is being a good citizen, identifies the aggressor who needs to be stop. Instead a good citizen get punished by doing a right thing and being suspended!!!! This isn't right that person can loose a job over something like that!</p>
Lisa	Hayes	<p>Mrs. Virginia is an awesome mother and nurse. I don't understand how a school and its principal can treat someone that is needed in the school. You are disgrace</p>
Linda	Bugieda	<p>Why is the district involving themselves in a police matter? When the motto is "see something, say something", why would you discipline someone who did just that. The employee who is also a "mandatory reporter" who is required to say something to the district if they see something. What message are you modeling in this action? Shouldn't the district say "if said incident didn't occur on school property and police are already involved it's out of their hands? Employee should be praised for doing the right thing by her community!</p>
Agnes	Kline	<p>Ms. Valentino is, and for many years has been, a beloved member of the Bridesburg School and Bridesburg community.</p>

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Katrina	Panas	"I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation for the exceptional care and dedication provided by the school nurse at Bridesburg. From the moment my daughter started attending the school in 3rd grade, the nurse has been an invaluable resource and support system for our family. Her kindness, compassion, and professionalism have made a significant impact on our experience at the school. She has consistently gone above and beyond to ensure my daughter's needs are met, and has been an advocate for her well-being. The nurse's ability to connect with students and families is truly remarkable. She takes the time to listen, offer guidance, and provide reassurance when needed. Her dedication to her work is evident in everything she does. I feel grateful to have such a caring and competent nurse looking out for my daughter's health and well-being. I highly recommend her to any family seeking a supportive and nurturing environment for their child. Thank you to the school nurse for all that she does!"
Craig	Bakalian	I am recommending that you vote against principal Don DiPaulo's recommendation for the termination of Reginamarie Valentino. I am a music teacher with 34 years of teaching experience with 4 years in the School District of Philadelphia. My classroom at Bridesburg was across the hallway from Ms. Valentino's office for three years. I currently work at Patterson Elementary School. I actually love teaching music to young children. I have been blessed with a wonderful career. I do know that I may not discuss the incident which transformed into Ms. Valentino's termination. However, I may discuss her and the Bridesburg work environment that she and I navigated as staff members. Ms. Valentino is all things medical. She will not accept medical fallacies created by staff members which will distract from her duties as a medical professional. Triage is everything. She made sure that she was available for true medical needs, routines, and emergencies. I grew up in a medical family. As a child, I witnessed much of what Ms. Valentino dealt with at the Bridesburg School. To be as brief as possible, on my 2nd week of employment as a new hire at Bridesburg, I witnessed individuals clocking each other in and out. I began seeking a transfer to a new school at the end of my first year. Finally, all of the individuals got caught, our principal resigned or was fired. However, many of the individuals remained at Bridesburg. These individuals cultivated a very challenging work environment for anyone. Many parents in the community became aware of the clocking in and out. And, I feel for everyone involved. At this point in my career I have come to the realization that punishing children or staff is nothing but a heartless attempt at control. The only thing that works is reward. The school district's punitive measures will not change anything at our schools. Punishment does nothing. What frustrates me about Ms. Valentino's termination is that Ms. Valentino supports a large family with her income. She is a member of the Bridesburg community. Please do not send a Philadelphia family into poverty. The recommendation of termination is heartless. Please support the families of the Philadelphia community. Peace
Katrina	Burgess	Regina Valentino has been the school nurse for all 4 of my children going through Bridesburg Elementary. Over the years, she had made communications with my family in a quick and professional manner; we have never seen her act or speak out of line. My children and the community have a bond with Ms Valentino and trust her completely with the health of our children. I feel she has been falsely accused and been put on a witchhunt by head staff at the school. We have had never seen a moment in the 8+ years of my children's schooling where we doubted her professionalism and hard work as our school's school nurse. Please consider her re hire at our school as she is sorely missed.
Lindsay	Kubach	On behalf of Regina Valentino I would like to vocalize what an important part of bridesburg elementary she is. She goes above and beyond to make sure everyone is taken care of. My son has asthma and she always made him feel comfortable enough to know he could come to her when he needed help, it would be wrong to terminate her.
Sarah	Fike Nannery	I am writing to advocate for the Library position at Shawmont school, as well as librarians in Philly public schools more generally, which not only improve student academic success, but have also been empirically shown to improve school climate and discipline issues as trained librarians in schools offer an additional resource for both students and staff. I am the parent of two children at Shawmont, and my eldest, Sirius Nannery, age 9, only started finally reading this year thanks to the Herculean efforts of our new librarian Ms. Loren White, who brought resources, awareness, volunteers, and huge community support for the library both inside and outside the school. He never liked to read before and now he spends at least an hour every day reading advanced books in her library and has achieved an 8th Grade reading level in 3rd Grade. He volunteers during lunch times under Ms. White's tutelage to read to the 1st and 2nd Graders and it gives him such a sense of purpose and confidence and contribution to the school community. None of this would have been possible, and none of it was happening, before Ms. White. We were, and hope to still be, extremely proud to be one of the few Philly public schools with a fully trained Masters degree Librarian who clearly loves this school and this community, and who is able to use her considerable talent and passion to improve the literacy, citizenship, and knowledge of our children. In what has otherwise been an unusually turbulent year at Shawmont with new leadership in place, the incredible growth and flourishing of our library has been one of the few bright spots. My son used to think of Shawmont's library as the place where kids went to wait for other things to happen and where they played hide and seek. The people who were in charge of library time in the past would show the kids movies and play on their phones. Now, my son truly feels connected to the library and to Ms. White as a place to read, research, learn, and teach. As a student with multiple disabilities – Autism, ADHD, and Anxiety – and who used to struggle with behavioral issues in the classroom, my son has truly found his safe space this year in Ms. White's library, which you can see plainly in the way that he writes about his experience there in another written testimony I submitted on his behalf for this meeting. The argument may be made that a less-qualified individual could take up the mantle of what Ms. White has only just started building at Shawmont, but the reality is that Shawmont will lose not only the quality of Ms. White's work – but also the quality of the relationships she has built with our children, our teachers, and our families. Losing Ms. White and this full-time qualified Librarian position would be a terrible blow to our school community, and I fear the library will fall back into tragic disuse within a year. I am asking as one parent, and hopefully one of many you will hear from, that you please work with Shawmont's leadership and the leadership of all Philly public schools to reconsider the elimination of Ms. White's position at Shawmont, and to put a much greater emphasis on school libraries and librarian positions across the school district in general, for the betterment of our school communities and students' success both academically and as citizens of a multi-cultural environment. Thank you, Sarah Sarah E. Nannery Sarah.e.fike@gmail.com 989-576-1309 Author of What to Say Next www.sarahnannery.com Instagram & Twitter - @SarahNannery LinkedIn - www.linkedin.com/in/sarahfike
Sirius	Nannery	Word version of 3rd Grade Shawmont student Sirius Nannery's essay (a PDF of his hand-written version is available upon request): Love Your Library PARSL wants to know what you love most about your library. I love my library because... PAGE 1 Our Librarian Ms. White is definitely my favorite part of our Library. She is so kind but she always gives us choices: Fantasy, Harry Potter, or Percy Jackson, like the amount of choice is insane. But don't forget about the environment all of these amazing books are in. If you like reading quietly: tables. If you like laying down while reading: couches. What about sitting relaxed and... PAGE 2 ...comfortable? Then go to the beanbags. Our library is my happy place with the best librarian, so many books, genres, and places to read peacefully and happily. Sirius Shawmont School 3rd Grade
Molly	van den Heuvel	I am writing to strongly recommend Loren White's position as School Librarian at Shawmont be funded. I have had the privilege of knowing Ms. White since November of 2023 when I visited her classroom Shawmont School while conducting outreach to neighborhood schools. I remember being very impressed by her ability to remember the individual interests of her many students and highlight the different services of the Free Library of Philadelphia that she knew would appeal to them. From my years of working for the Andorra Library, I am familiar with the neglect the Shawmont School Library has suffered for many years. The library was in complete disarray, containing many out-of-date materials, and was woefully unmanaged. When I agreed to be Ms. White's internship Supervisor in spring of 2024, I knew she had no small feat ahead of her in making the school library a usable and functioning space. Over the course of the summer, I witnessed the library transform with Ms. White's vision. She partnered with district colleagues and community stakeholders to organize the physical space with new furniture and materials. Ms. White wrote grants and fundraised to supply the students with interesting and educational up-to-date items. She recruited and supervised many volunteers. As we progressed into fall and winter, I have witnessed the cataloguing and genrefication processes underway. In my partnership with Ms. White, we have collaborated in a mutually supportive relationship to advertise each other's programs and fundraising initiatives, share materials, and plan for library instruction. She continues to encourage her students (my patrons) to take advantage of both the school's and the public library's collection, special events, and after school programs. Not only have I seen Ms. White's library management skills growing because of partnering with myself and other community and district partnerships, her advice and knowledge of her students' interests was key in the successful expansion of my library's manga collection and programming. I am confident that Ms. White will continue to be an immense benefit to her students, colleagues, and district.
Toni-Anne	McDonald	To the Board of Education: This written testimony represents a group of Philadelphia School District and charter students from Norris Square Neighborhood Project. As you consider new school budgets and other priorities for next school year, we write to bring these concerns to your attention and ask you to address them. Concerns about school budgets and excessive fees and costs in public schools: "They have a really bad budget, to the point where they have to overprice things just to make money," "I want the school board to address the budget problem in my school...The students spend so much money on an event or item and the school banned stuff when other places are much more affordable but the school doesn't let us bring outside things," including "drinks, outerwear, things and if we don't follow we [are told] go home." "Schools should "give free or cheaper uniforms and spend less on pouches for a phone." Especially at arts schools like Kensington CAPA, "spend more money on art and music supplies." Schools should "spend more on seniors in general and the arts." The District should also spend "more money on the lunch[.] less on upgrading the tools but more on repair/space" because "a lot of the students I know are always hungry and asking for food that others buy, then depending on the lunch don't eat and starve all day. Some get headaches or feel sick." Concerns about harsh policies and treatment by school staff, including exclusion from the school environment due to lateness or uniform violations: While "there's not enough teachers to students," "some of them don't really do their job." "The staff at Mastery is making kids stay outside if they are late after 8:20. (Class starts at 8:10 and ends at 8:54.) Also locks the bathroom on other floors when grades start at lunch times, only has 2nd floor open. It isn't fair to the students that they have to wait in the cold during the winter, it can cause frostbite knowing how low the temps can get. If it gets to the summer, kids shouldn't have to wait in the heat, it can cause the students to possibly get disoriented." There are many problems but the main one is them telling people to leave Kensington CAPA due to uniform violations, and the fact that they are so comfortable with the students. Like they will cuss students out...And they lock all bathrooms and we can't use them. [They] are not running the schools like they are supposed to. And people are not having access to the education that they need." Concerns about inappropriate and racist comments: At KCAPA here is what some students have shared with the staff at NSNP one teacher in particular when "A Black girl didn't come to class and she said it's because "her weave glue isn't strong enough". This same teacher is "Making monkey noises to Black students" and has "Call[ed] a student "a gorilla"". In terms of inappropriate comments this same teacher has said "on the "First day of school "did you ever walk in on your parents having sex?". Another inappropriate comment was "Looking at another student's phone in their lap, "I hope you're not looking at his thingy". We have been told the "Principal talks about other teachers to the student(s)". To follow up with us about our concerns, please contact toni@myneighborhoodproject.org. Our youth deserve to have safe, equitable and equal access spaces while at school. These inappropriate comments, blatant racism, lack of access to healthy food and excessive punitive action bars them from their education. We'd really like support getting these issues resolved and addressed and feel that this should be of utmost importance to the city. Sincerely, Norris Square Neighborhood Project/Students
Rich	Torrance	As a former school librarian myself, I can testify to the positive impact that school librarians have on a school community! I also happen to be a Shawmont alumni and have had the pleasure of working with Loren White, she truly cares about Shawmont and wants to provide her school with an interactive library. Please keep her as the school librarian.
Patricia	Kress	I'd like to make you aware of how much the principal, Mr Dipaul, does not care about students with medical conditions. My then 7 year old daughter is a Type 1 diabetic. The last six months of school she did not have her own nurse but the school nurse always went above and beyond to help her. There was not much support at the school. There was one person that would help her. The nurse had to go back-and-forth between two buildings every day. When the other person was not in, the principal was supposed to be the one that would help. He never did. He was never available. He never returned any phone call.

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Zenia	Bent	My name is Zenia Bent and my son is a 7 year old boy in the second grade that has ADHD combined type, autism spectrum disorder and Oppositional defiant disorder and his name is David. David is one of the many children at Bridesburg school that has been affected by this sudden change of losing Mrs Valentino, our school nurse. I say this for every child with special needs or any type of disability. It's not easy to build a rapport with just anyone when you don't understand the world around you. Mrs Valentino would consider each child's individual needs, understand the way they communicate, and develop strategies that cater to them. I can say without a doubt that in the years that I have known Mrs Valentino I have not encountered one single issue and my son is definitely a handful that trusts only a given few. For him to take medication from her is something that I still struggle with on a daily basis. Since her absence I have had quite a few issues arise at school where my son did not get his medication, his routine was changed without both of us being made aware and times he would refuse his medication altogether because he did not like his new way of doing things. In addition to that his cups were lost, his straws were misplaced and I left work to bring them up to school and they misplaced them as well. He also has stomach complications and had an accident at school a few weeks ago. His extra clothes were also misplaced. This may seem small to someone else but to my son these are things that make a huge difference in his daily life. I had complete and total trust that things like this didn't happen with Mrs. Valentino
Tu	Pyott	My name is Tu Pyott, a parent of three boys who have attended/graduated from Bridesburg Elementary School. I have known Regina for over twenty years and I am well acquainted with her character and the positive impact she has made on our family. I wholeheartedly support Regina's continued employment with Bridesburg Elementary School and believe she truly deserves this opportunity. I'm writing to ask the Philadelphia School Board to please make sure this happens. She has shown remarkable integrity and dedication to the students, not only in caring for them during time of illness but she also cares about her neighborhood and community. Her commitment is genuine and commendable. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Tu Pyott.
Kressent	Pottenger	Good afternoon Board Members, Thank you for your work, and for making time to read my concerns. I am the parent of a freshman at CAPA. During the course of her first year we have struggled with little to no communication from the school regarding serious challenges that both impact the quality of education students receive as well as the school's reputation. The daily operations of the school are compromised: there are vacant teaching positions with no explanation to students or parents, there is a lack of leadership as well as professionalism to remedy staff & teacher needs or challenges, and no communication about the basic functions of a high school including clubs, extracurriculars, school events, and guidance counselor hours. We were informed of an enrollment crisis at an HSA meeting on April 7th after being informed second hand by our student who – along with her classmates – was also confused, and concerned. The forced transfer of 5 teachers means many students will no longer be able to take expected AP classes they had already enrolled in. Half of the freshman class had no math instruction for the academic year, and in violation of school district policy were assigned a random grade of 80%. This will harm their competitiveness in higher education. No communication was provided to parents. Additionally, the lack of professionalism & quality leadership deters teacher & staff retention at CAPA which further depresses enrollment. We are asking for the Board's support in the following: entrusting CAPA to capable leadership that can effectively operate and lead one of the best special admit schools in the district. To please allow CAPA to maintain our current teachers so that we may work on increasing enrollment for the following school year. In gratitude, Kressent Pottenger
Kah'Siyah	Williams	April 23, 2025 Dear Board of Education Members, My name is Kah'Siyah Williams, and I am a 7th grade student at Shawmont Elementary School in Roxborough. I transferred to Shawmont this year from Alliance for Progress Charter School, and there was no library at my old school. My younger sister Lira and I were so happy that our new school had a library and a librarian since we both love to read. Library class is one of my favorite classes at Shawmont this year. I love reading the Gossip Girl series, and Realistic Fiction was my favorite genre that we studied this year. I like being able to talk about the topics and characters that I read about with my classmates during Library class. Lira's favorite series to read is Bad Guys since she loves the movie. She also loves graphic novels by Raina Telgemeier, especially Smile. She also loved the Scary Stories unit during Library class. My 7th grade classmates and I love to visit the library each week to see what new books are on display and on the shelves. Miss White, our librarian, has added ten or more bookshelves full of books just for teens. The kids who were here last year said that there used to be only one bookshelf for 7th and 8th graders. We love asking Miss White for books and graphic novels. She always tries to buy us the books that we put on our Shawmont Amazon wish list. Everyone in my grade loves coming to Library class each week to talk about books and life with Miss White. Teens go through a lot these days, and Miss White is always there to listen and help us when she can. When a classmate told me a couple of weeks ago that her mom was angry that Miss White's librarian job was getting cut at the end of the year, I was very upset. I wanted to do anything that I could to help keep Miss White at Shawmont next year. I am speaking today to ask for your help. Please help us students at Shawmont keep Miss White at Shawmont next year. She makes us love to read, lets us choose from manga, books, comics, and graphic novels, and is always there for us. I can't imagine coming back to Shawmont in the fall for my 8th grade year without Miss White being there to support and help us. Lira will be in 4th grade next year, and I want her to have Miss White to watch out for after I graduate and go to high school. There is so much negativity and cyberbullying that happens to me and the other middle schoolers at Shawmont and other schools. Having a quiet, peaceful library to read in and visit when we get upset and need a break from our busy classrooms is so important. Having a librarian who cares about us is even more important for our mental health, forming a community of supportive students, and for our Roxborough community. Thank you very much for your time and help. From Kah'Siyah Williams 7th Grade Student
Melissa	Whalen	My name is Melissa Whalen, and I am the proud parent of two Shawmont students, Marley Whalen and Matthew DiOrto. I was thrilled when Shawmont was finally able to welcome a librarian last year, giving our children the opportunity to visit the library as part of their school week. When I was in school, library class was one of my favorite experiences, and I wanted my kids to have that same joy—the chance to explore books, discover new interests, and develop a lifelong love of reading. For my daughter Marley, the library is more than just a place to check out books—it's a space where she can share her enthusiasm for reading with Ms. White, who takes the time to engage with students about their interests. Loren White has dedicated countless hours to organizing and preparing books for students to borrow, often working beyond school hours and even on weekends to ensure the library is a welcoming and well-stocked resource. Her commitment goes beyond the shelves—she fosters a love of reading and creates meaningful connections with students. As a parent volunteer for the annual School Book Fair, I've personally witnessed Ms. White's dedication. Last year's book fair was one of the most enjoyable and successful events I've been a part of, thanks in large part to her help. More importantly, I saw firsthand how deeply she connects with the students, making the library a place they truly love. Losing a dedicated librarian like Ms. White would be a great loss to Shawmont's students and their education. I urge you to do whatever is necessary to ensure she remains in this role so that our children continue to benefit from her passion, knowledge, and hard work. Thank you for your time and consideration. Melissa Whalen
Jessica	Lu	Dear School Board Members, My name is Jessica Lu, and I'm a student at the Academy at Palumbo. I'm writing to speak up about the lack of resources in our schools. A lot of us are trying our best to do well, but it's hard when we don't even have the basic things we need. An example is that our bathrooms are in terrible condition and seriously need to be fixed now. There's often no toilet paper, the stalls don't always lock, and it just feels gross and not taken care of. In gym class, we barely have enough equipment, and some of it is super old or broken. In some classes, there aren't enough books for everyone, and sometimes students have to buy their own. Our teachers are already doing so much with so little, and it's not okay that they have to spend their own money or work in buildings that are falling apart. It's not just Palumbo dealing with this; other schools in the district are going through the same thing. All students, no matter what school they go to, deserve clean bathrooms, working tech, enough supplies, and safe spaces to learn in. I hope the School Board takes this seriously and starts making real changes. We just want the same opportunities as students in better-funded schools. Sincerely, Jessica Lu
Biak	Thawng	Hello Carly Sitrin, My name is Biak Lian Thawng. I am a sophomore at The Academy at Palumbo. I've researched your work and expertise in school education and funding and am very interested in it. We have some problems in our school of Palumbo, where we are not only missing essential resources such as soap in the bathroom to supplies in classes, but the situation in our school is somewhat dangerous. In my personal experience, during my first year at this school, two emergencies happened. Firstly, there was an alert that a fire had been in our school which the cause of was unknown, and secondly, a pipe in our school was faulty and caused the school to flood and evacuate. These situations are not only out of funding but also carelessness in safety. These situations don't allow me to learn in school comfortably with my safety at risk.
Thierno	Barry	Hello My name is Barry, and I'm a senior at the Academy at Palumbo. My classmate and I are working on a group project regarding the school's lack of funding, and we decided to focus on the issues in our building, like the classroom and the hallways. While we do experience minor shortages in classrooms, like a lack of extra pencils and supplies, the biggest issues we've noticed are related to the bathroom and overall cleanliness of the building. Our school has five bathrooms, one for each floor, and most of the time, only one or two are functional. This is mainly because of how long it takes the school district to respond to maintenance issues. Also, our building condition needs to be changed. For four years now, this building has never ceased to disappoint. Last school year, we experienced a gas leak and flooding, which affected our learning ability because we were sent home during those days. The lack of functioning restrooms not only affects our health and comfort, but also our ability to focus in class. It's hard to learn when basic needs aren't being met.
Aung	Hlaing	Hello School District Of Philadelphia, I am here to write about the disgusting atmosphere inside the school bathrooms. Bathrooms are a necessity to ALL the students. This isn't a situation where it affects half the people and doesn't affect the other half. Bathrooms is something everyone needs to use, not want but need to use. Seeing stalls being broken all the time, sinks not even working properly, hot water not even being available, soap dispensers not being refilled, pipes being exposed with microplastic that can contain toxic chemicals or asbestos can be very dangerous to every student and harmful for the school in general.
Eliza	Vazquez	Good evening, My name is Eliza and I am a senior at the Academy At Palumbo. As a student that has been a part of the School District of Philadelphia all the way from elementary, and throughout that time there have been many issues with the district in terms of funding and maintenance that I, myself, and many other students have taken note of. My classmates and I have been doing a project for our Social Science Honors class where we have explored the aspects of our school (and the school district) that have been underfunded, in need of maintenance, and a lack of resources overall and how we can potentially improve this. During our research we discovered that the district is underfunded by a large margin and how the funds are split among the district. As a group, we collectively agreed that more money should be put towards the maintenance of school buildings for the sake of making them a better learning environment. We noticed that in our school specifically (which is an old building) that students have to buy materials for classes out of their own pockets, the sports team do not have an adequate amount of resources (for example, our track team has to use hallways as a way to practice), our bathrooms are in poor condition which is one of our main issues, staff sometimes has to go to other schools for toilet paper since it is a big school with a big student population, and the walls of the building are in poor condition with paint chipping and discoloration. Just last year we had to evacuate the building about three times due to gas leak, flooding, and poor pipes. I even had a friend who had pain from the school ceiling fall on her one time-this isn't okay. This is not just an issue in our school, but across many other schools in the district as we have reached out to other students and they have responded with similar sentiments and issues. We have interviewed with our school staff, such as the custodians, where we see that money is an important part of the school. So, we ask that you all consider to put more money towards the maintenance of school buildings and resources so students can be safe and comfortable in their learning environment where they spend the majority of their time. This can be through hiring more staff members (custodians), fixing the bathrooms due to their poor condition, but overall something should be done at least. I thank you for your time and consideration.

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Kayla	Ao	My name is Kayla Ao, and I'm a student at the Academy at Palumbo. Our bathrooms don't work the way they should. Oftentimes, we lack soap, paper towels, and tissue paper. There are a handful of stalls that have been out of order for all four years of my high school career. Many of the stall doors are unable to close, and I recall a friend teaching me how to push the side of the stall just right in order to wedge the door shut. That should not be something I have to learn just to use the bathroom. Bathrooms are basic, but they reflect something bigger. When we can't even rely on clean, private restrooms, what does that say about how much we're valued as students? It doesn't stop there. Paint from the walls is peeling all throughout the school building. Windows in many classrooms cannot stay open, and teachers need to prop them up with brooms. Radiators continue to stay burning hot throughout the school year, making it unbearable to learn in the warmer seasons and a safety concern when they are open and exposed. And the issues go beyond the classrooms. Our sports and extracurricular programs are constantly overlooked. Our track team doesn't even have a designated space to train, they're forced to find space wherever they can, often practicing in the hallways of the school. That's not just inconvenient. It's unfair to these students. We're doing the best we can with what we have, but creativity and talent shouldn't be limited by old equipment or a lack of space. Palumbo isn't the only school in this situation. Schools across Philadelphia are dealing with the same issues: broken facilities, outdated systems, and forgotten spaces. This is a district-wide problem, and it demands a district-wide response. We are calling on the school board to fully fund and prioritize school building repairs and upgrades, especially for bathrooms and student spaces. That's why I'm asking the school board to commit to an improvement plan that includes fully renovating bathroom conditions in every school and completing urgent repairs concerning infrastructure. We are not asking for luxury. We are asking to learn in buildings that are safe and fully usable. Please hear us, and please act. Thank you for your time.
Emma	Kurtz	To the esteemed Members of the School Board, My name is Emma Kurtz, and I am currently a high school senior at the Academy at Palumbo. I am writing as a concerned student and proud member of the Philadelphia school community. I believe deeply in the power of education to shape lives, open doors, and build a better future. But that belief is being tested every day by the conditions we are forced to learn in. At the Academy at Palumbo, last year experienced something that should never happen in a school: part of the roof collapsed and pipes burst. No one should ever fear being harmed just by walking through the hallways of their school, yet that's exactly what this incident triggered. It was not only frightening, but it also disrupted our learning, brought uncertainty, and left many of us questioning how safe our environment really is. It's hard to concentrate on studying when you're worried about the building around you literally falling apart. This isn't just about one moment or one school. All across Philadelphia, students are dealing with broken heating and cooling systems, overcrowded classrooms, damaged facilities, and outdated buildings. It sends a message that students in this city are not a priority. We should not have to work twice as hard just to reach the same starting line as students in neighboring counties who are in better-funded districts. These are not small problems. They impact our health, our peace of mind, and our ability to focus and succeed. When a student walks into a building that is clean, safe, and properly maintained, they feel valued. When we are expected to learn in conditions that would never be acceptable in other settings, it sends the opposite message: that we are expected to simply endure, rather than thrive. I urge you to treat this issue with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves. Our schools should reflect the value we place on education and the respect we have for our students and teachers. We need real, bold, meaningful changes that make our schools safe and supportive spaces for every student in Philadelphia. Thank you for your time, your attention, and your commitment to making things better. Sincerely, Emma Kurtz Student, The Academy at Palumbo
Joanna	Lin	Dear School Board Members, My name is Joanna Lin, and I am a student at the Academy at Palumbo. I want to mention about serious issue that is affecting not just my school, but many others across our district: the critical lack of resources and funding. One of the basic things we deal with at my school is the bathrooms. A lot of the time, there's no toilet paper when I try to use the bathroom. This isn't just annoying; it's about being clean and feeling okay. It's also surprising that our whole school district only has eight plumbers to fix things. That's not enough people to take care of all the schools. Not having enough money also affects how we learn. When I took AP Psychology, we had to buy our books because the school didn't have them. This costs families money, and it can stop some students from getting what they need to learn. Also, in my math classes, there aren't enough calculators for everyone. I had to spend almost \$100 to buy my own so I could do my work. Not everyone can afford that, and it's not fair if some students don't have the tools they need. I've talked to students at other schools, and they're having the same kinds of problems. They don't have enough of what they need either, like things for their classrooms or buildings that are falling apart. We had problems like a gas leak and a water leak that stopped our class. Students had to stay outside in the cold for 2-3 hours, and the class our teacher had planned for us got messed up. So the next day we get back, they go through the materials quickly, but not everyone understands it good. We really need the money and resources to make sure that our schools are taken care of, and investing in all of us students and our future. If you help us get the things we need, it will make our schools better and fairer for everyone. I really hope you will think about these problems seriously and do something to help us. Sincerely, Joanna Lin
Kayla	Howard	My name is Kayla Howard, and I'm a student at Academy At Palumbo. I'm going to be talking about the lack of resources in my school and why it's important to solve these problems. Almost everyday students and teachers face challenges that go beyond learning. Many of the bathroom sinks are broken, some of our stall doors don't fully close in the bathrooms, and sometimes there's little to no toilet paper in our school. Then to make circumstances worse with the small number of plumbers in our district (8) it takes up to weeks for some bathrooms to open back up due to maintenance. On lower floors in the building heating is either ineffective or barely can keep a room warm in cold weather. We also suffer from lack of resources for art supplies and our music program. Which isn't a safety or learning issue but it blocks students from being able to fully explore their passions and pay out of pocket for lessons and instruments for school events and performances. On top of all of those things we also suffer from a mouse/rat problem where sometimes in the middle of a lesson or even when you walk into a class you could run into a dead or alive mouse. Which is becoming more common as the years progress. All of these issues are things that students shouldn't have to deal with or even have to complain about. These are bare minimum things that shouldn't be a stressor for students and staff to endure.
Emily	alava	when i was in middle school, the conditions were much worse that the high school i go to know, which is Academy at Palumbo. I went to John H Taggart school, the building was obviously very old, when I started attending there, which was in 2016 we had no air conditioning in any part of the school, just very big fans that would be on for the entirety of the class. Recently I went back there for an internship in 2023 and they recently put up air conditioning on the 4th floor only, the lunchroom in both my high school and elementary school have very thick air because of all the moisture and heat. I have a friend in South Philly High who also has told me that their gym is made from a metal ceiling and parts of the walls, it traps in more heat and it feels like an oven in there. The most important problem that I wanted to address was the bathrooms. There have been very few times where the bathrooms had fully stocked toilet paper, soap, and fully functional sinks and bathrooms simultaneously for more than maybe 2 days. its always at least one of those factors that's present for majority of the school year. especially with only 8 plumbers in the school district i can see why half the bathrooms in my school have been closed since the beginning of the year. The only thing I would ask to change, is to make sure our bathrooms are at good conditions and they are kept up. thank you for listening
Samyah	Feagins	Dear School Board Members, My name is Samyah Feagins, and I'm a student at the Academy at Palumbo. I'm here today because I care deeply about the lack of physical resources in our district, and I believe that student voices need to be heard when decisions are being made—especially those that directly affect us. Lately, there have been a lot of conversations about building maintenance shortages. From a student's perspective, these issues don't just show up in board meetings—they affect us every day in the classroom. Examples being our broken toilets in almost every bathroom, soap dispensers being off the wall, large cracks in the ceiling etc. And it goes without saying We notice. And we care. One thing I want to emphasize is that students are not just recipients of decisions—we are part of this school community. We want to be part of the solution. That starts with being listened to and respected, not just as learners, but as people who have firsthand experience with what works and what doesn't. I hope the board—and those with the district—will continue to make space for student voices, not just today, but regularly. When students are empowered, schools thrive. Thank you for your time and for listening. Sincerely, Samyah Feagins
Ameena	Rogers	Dear City Council, My name is Ameena, and I am a senior at the Academy at Palumbo. I've been attending Palumbo since my freshman year, and throughout my four years here, I've witnessed the same unacceptable conditions in our school bathrooms. On a regular basis, students like myself have had to deal with stalls that have no toilet paper, sinks that are out of order, and even water leaking from the walls. These issues are more than just inconvenient—they are unsanitary and create an environment that feels neglected and unsafe. Every student deserves access to clean, functional restroom facilities. We come to school to learn, grow, and prepare for our futures—not to worry about basic needs being unmet. I'm asking you to recognize this ongoing issue and support real, lasting improvements to the infrastructure in our schools. We deserve better. Sincerely, Ameena
Edgar	Moreno Cabrera	Testimony On the first of May 2022, I got the most anticipated email ever. I was accepted into my dream high school. The Academy At Palumbo opened their arms for me and accepted me into their school as one of the fellow students of the class of 2026. I have heard a lot about the school. It's advanced academics and high graduation rates, it's high ranking sports teams and State recognition, it's amazing community and building. These are all of the experiences that were told from graduated students of the Academy At Palumbo. I was so informed about the school that it was if not one of the best in the city and I really trusted people's word with that. Coming in as a freshman my first year, it didn't disappoint. All of the things that were told about the school were true. The community was so diverse that it allowed me to know people from different cultures and backgrounds. The sports that they were offering for students were in various amounts and also the high academic achievements that I have seen from students in the school were beyond what I was imagining. It seemed like the perfect high school that any kid could go to. Throughout time however, the school really started to show its true colors. There is nothing wrong with the staff or the students or any of the classes and extracurriculars, it was the building itself actually. Considering how old the school building is, it makes sense that it won't look as new as other schools in Philadelphia; however I don't really think the school should be left neglected with being provided resources. It's pretty obvious that there is a huge underfunding within the school and I just want to ask, why is that? Considering that the School District of Philadelphia accumulates millions if not billions of dollars each year, I don't really see the money going to this school as much as it's supposed to. I'm a junior this year, meaning that I have been in this school for the past three years of my highschool years. Now, the school building has more issues than what it looks like from the surface. Throughout my Sophomore and Junior year, there were countless leakages, burst pipes, gas leaks that have taken away the time that students need in order to learn. Bathrooms are extremely faulty with stalls being closed for maintenance and leakages on the ceiling dripping down to the floor leaving massive puddles. There has also been an obvious lack of resources that are necessary for the school and it's bathrooms such as paper towels, soap, textbooks, desks, chairs, gym equipment, etc. There is no possible way to blame anyone in my school for this but there isn't a reason for this to be happening to a student's school environment. Thinking that students come to school in order to learn and pursue their education in order to get into college, there shouldn't be a thought behind their minds that makes them worry about their safety inside the building. However, these past years have done otherwise and actually made students consider their safety inside this faulty building. There's also an issue with rodents roaming around the school and this isn't the safest environment that a student wishes to be in. Solution? Personally, there is one obvious solution. Better funding. It is as simple as that. Don't add more money to the budget, be rational with it. I see that some schools get an excessive amount of funding just because of the area that they are in. Realize that my school isn't the only one that is being affected by this underfunding but also middle schools and other high schools. Spring Garden School is the elementary school that I went to throughout my middle school years and there were almost the exact same experiences as Palumbo. There were leakage issues as well as pipe burst and even sometimes flooding issues. This was throughout four to eight years ago but now I see that the funding that the school has accumulated has built a stronger and more safe school building which is great. If only that could be told about the other schools in Philadelphia however. There are still countless schools that need some sort of 'renovation' because some of the buildings are just overall really, really sad. I hope that my testimony finds you well and I'll be glad if I receive something back from you, the School Board. Thank you. -Edgar Moreno-Cabrera April 23rd 2025 Social Science Honors Academy At Palumbo

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Kian	Lieu	<p>Dear School Board Members, Hello my name is Kian Lieu. I am a high school student currently attending Academy at Palumbo. I am writing this letter to address the multiple issues regarding the lack of funding for Philadelphia School District schools. Although my perspective consists of Academy of Palumbo, I am speaking for all schools that have similar issues within the district. The major issue with schools is the lack of resources and funding, specifically for our bathrooms. The conditions of our bathrooms are unacceptable, door locks broken, toilets unable to flush, no toilet paper, towels, and soap to cater for all the students in the school of Palumbo. This is deeply concerning as I have witnessed the lack of resources surrounding the bathrooms for four years. I have struggled with using the bathroom multiple times in the past, being uncomfortable and losing a sense of security with the poor conditions of the bathrooms. "Bathrooms are essentials for us." Council Member Nikil Saval stated. This shows the seriousness of school bathrooms in the Philadelphia School District. These are the bare minimum, there are many more facilities issues many schools need to overcome. Survey we have conducted for other schools reveals that students in the district have struggled with basic necessities for years. I believe that there is always room for improvement and in order to allow students to feel comfortable and safe in schools, we need to invest more in our schools for our students to be successful leaders for the future.</p>
Ivan	You	<p>Picture this, you're in class and then suddenly you gotta use the bathroom. You raise your hand and ask the teacher to go, they agree and you head to the bathroom on that floor. You got there but when you tried to open the door, you then noticed that it was suddenly locked so you go one floor down which is down a floor and also across on the other side. Luckily it wasn't LOCKED so you went in to do your business and you started to wash your hands. You reached for the soap but to your surprise there was no soap dispenser left on the wall. Furiously you tried to reach for some paper towels but you noticed the trash bin filled to the brim with already used paper towels. Yeah this is what I would usually experience during school. I would have to either run up a floor or down a floor just to use the restroom. Now hearing this compared to the girls bathrooms is a whole different thing. Their sinks aren't available most of the time and they only have a few stalls they could use with toilet paper. Not just our school bathrooms that need to be fixed but there are several other things that need to be fully funded for. Some classes are short on books they need for AP Psychology and some students have to spend their own money just to buy the book to use for the class but wouldn't need to use after they finish that class. Not only that but our athletic sports teams also don't have the funding and how they have to use the minimal things they are provided. These issues aren't just at Palumbo, but also other schools in the district, like our bathroom problems which Central also has and they also have a type of liquid leaking down from the ceiling in their girls bathrooms. It's not just my school that needs more funding, we are only requesting the action to fix our bathrooms that are currently a major problem to the students at Palumbo. Thank you for listening to this Testimony from Ivan from Academy At Palumbo.</p>
Meagan	Macklin	<p>My daughter is a sophomore at CAPA and we have encountered a myriad of issues this year. Most importantly she has not had an actual Math class for pretty much the entirety of the year. There was a long term substitute (Mr. Creamer) for the first quarter, the second quarter was described as a "free period" by my daughter and the other students I talked with, where a teacher would tell them to look at math videos but no one followed up, gave homework nor was tested yet she received a 'C' grade inexplicably. We complained/inquired about how this grade was calculated and were simply told that this second quarter's grade would be left out of the average for the year. For the majority of the third quarter there was also no long term sub or math teacher and although there was hardly any gradable work submitted (there is one test listed in the online classroom) my daughter received an 80 as a grade for this quarter. She and her classmated claim that everyone in the class was "just given an 80". Shouldn't this be listed as an incomplete grade rather than throwing these unsubstantiated grades out? There is a Math teacher now but my daughter claims he seems confused as to where to start and when I went for parent teacher conference he spent the entire time talking about how hard it was to start in the middle of the year with the expectation that he teach from the beginning. On top of this math teacher debacle there was no transparency from CAPA admin about the enrollment shortfalls that led to 5 beloved teachers being let go - one of which is this new Math teacher (not a beloved one by the way). If I was personally made aware, as an active parent in the HSA & community, that there was an enrollment shortage I would have made it my mission to personally advertise the school/help with audition responsibilities etc. Mr. Rauscher & Ms. Kane are two of the teachers that students look forward to seeing during the day and make the school experience better for every kid and to see teachers being forced out when there has already been a dearth in education at the school is disheartening for everyone. I am aware that the school district changed how students select schools based on a ranking system and this has been what P. Fulton has pointed to as the scapegoat for the massive drop in enrollment but I believe (and have heard from some internal sources) that there was a lack of administration guidance during the audition and enrollment process that added to the problem. Last, but definitely not least is the issue of Principal Fulton/the school administration's handling of these issues. I have already mentioned the lack of information going out to families during these administration errors. Making matters worse, during the last town hall that completely took over what was supposed to be a regular HSA meeting, the principal seemed unprepared for poignant questions from families and at one point displayed a screen with incoming students emails, names, phone numbers etc during an explanation about enrollment issues and seemed completely unaware that this was a violation of these students privacy. It was not until several parents and teachers in the group asked numerous times to take down his screen did he comply with no recognition that what he did was an egregious error. It also came out in this townhall that there was no Title 1 meeting to get input for the budget before it was enacted, another egregious error. This complete lack of preparedness & non-chalant, cavalier attitude towards taking responsibility for some of these problems in order to move forward is a further insult to the families & students. Handing out grades flippantly with no substance behind them, approving the budget without following protocol and then not being aware that showing a screen of private information is a no-no are all bad but put together we have a serious issue of incompetence. CAPA was a great institution and I am so sad that my daughter was so excited to get in only to be met with ignorance at the administrative level.</p>
Barbara	Dowdall	<p>We are at a critical moment. The board and superintendent's commendable prioritizing the restoration of our libraries with librarians seems thwarted by Washington's brutal cutting off of promised funds. We must stay determined. Make libraries our budget priority. Implement the excellent the work already done by our Director of Library Services. Enlist school district staff, families and students to secure the support of our mayor, city council, state legislators and governor is providing this essential resource.</p>
Anna	Winter	<p>Board of Education. There is compelling and well-documented research demonstrating the positive impact early college schools have on student achievement and postsecondary outcomes. We, the Philadelphia Middle College Foundation team, would like to share a few studies with the Board of Education that highlight these outcomes. The first is a 14-year study examining the impact of North Carolina's Early College Model. Key findings of this study indicate that students attending early colleges achieve postsecondary credentials at a higher rate than their peers who do not attend early college high schools. Six years after 12th grade, 44.3% of early college students earned a postsecondary credential, compared to 33.0% of their peers. This study also found that early college students were three times more likely to earn associate degrees than their peers who did not attend an early college. Furthermore, economically disadvantaged students were 4.5 percentage points more likely to earn their bachelor's degree than their peers. Lastly, the early college model helped students finish their degrees faster - by two years for associate degrees and by six months for bachelor degrees - saving both time and money (Source 1). The second is an experimental study published in 2025 examining the impact of early college high schools (ECHS) on students' college readiness in mathematics. The findings indicate that students attending early college high schools have increased achievement in mathematics. Notably, both academically prepared and underprepared students benefited from early colleges, with a greater impact observed among underprepared students (Source 2). We also want to highlight a collection of studies by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) that provide compelling evidence of early/middle college programs' success. AIR's first study in 2009 found that early college participants did well academically at both the high school and college levels, though there were differences depending on schools and student subgroups. This study also found that early college students learned and applied skills related to independence and responsibility (Source 3). AIR's initial impact study in 2013 revealed that early college students were more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to enroll in college after high school, more likely to earn a college degree and more likely to have positive high school experiences overall than comparison students (Source 4). Lastly, AIR's first follow-up study in 2020 shows: "1) participants had significantly higher rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college degree attainment (than comparison students)... 2) the positive impacts of Early Colleges on college enrollment and degree attainment continued for at least 6 years... (and) 3) per-student lifetime benefits of Early Colleges substantially exceeded the per-student cost" (Source 5). Philadelphia Middle College Foundation Team Source 1: Edmunds, J. A. (2020). What Happens When You Combine High School and College? UNCG SERVE Center. https://serve.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SER20001_PolicyBrief_FINAL.pdf Source 2: Arshavsky, Nina, et al. (2025). Improving College Readiness in Mathematics in the Context of a Comprehensive High School Reform. (EdWorkingPaper: 25-1131). Annenberg Institute at Brown University. https://doi.org/10.26300/bd45-mf87 Source 3: American Institutes for Research®. (2009, August). Six Years and Counting: The ECHSI Matures. Retrieved July 1, 2024, from https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/ECHSI_Eval_Report_2009_081309_0.pdf Source 4: American Institutes for Research®. (2014, March). Early College Means Early Success for Students. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Early%20College%20Report%20Summary%20031914.pdf Source 5: American Institutes for Research®. (2020, January). The Lasting Benefits of Early College High Schools. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Lasting-Benefits-Early-College-High-Schools-Brief-Feb-2020.pdf. AIR is currently conducting a second follow-up study on workforce and life outcomes from 2021-24.</p>
Jessica	Lowenthal	<p>I am unable to attend this meeting in person, so I am submitting testimony, as a concerned parent at CAPA school, about a reduction in teaching staff proposed for next year. We have only just learned that for the coming school year, CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts High School) faces a reduction in teaching staff, including a math teacher. I write to urge you to adjust budgets so that CAPA can retain its existing math staff. The current math staff seems necessary, from my perspective, for CAPA to meet its instructional needs, including advanced math options and expected course sequencing. Reducing the staff will have great negative impact on the school community, future enrollment, test scores, and equity. I have four points: (1) CAPA has already experienced a math teacher shortage the last two years; students have lost valuable math instruction. Reducing math staff now will only compound this problem. CAPA students are, in general, behind their peers in math. (2) Currently enrolled CAPA students selected CAPA based on expectations about course sequencing and options, including AP classes and calculus; the reduction in course offerings is like a bait and switch. This is not what these students expected or signed up for. (3) A change like this will likely further erode CAPA's enrollment numbers (for any student interested in advanced math as well as art. CAPA will remain second or third or fourth choice to Central, Masterman and Palumbo). (4) Eliminating advanced math options at CAPA, and allowing the existing math achievement gap to fester, will deepen existing inequities. Thank you for reading my concerns.</p>

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Regina	Valentino	<p>Hello board members I am asking you once again to please consider the many phone calls ,emails , petition and statements about myself over these past few months. I ask you to please listen to the hundreds of community members and parents in support of me and not just one that isn't. Termination based on this is a direct violation of my First Amendment rights, as it penalizes me for exercising my constitutional right to engage in civic duties. My comment regarding a question posed by another individual involved a public safety concern and was made in my capacity as a community member, not as a school nurse. The State Board of Nursing also agrees there was no violation, not to prosecute and has closed the case per Mr Garrett Rine. These actions are retaliatory, as civic participation and responsibility are not punishable here. As well as bias, Insufficient Evidence Gathering by Failing to collect all relevant facts and missteps in following due process. Please hear our Bridesburg community as this is not an action that they want by an admin that is not listening to them. Thank you</p>

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Regina	Valentino	<p>In light of the situation presented, the response from the school principal and this second level hearing I am compelled to provide a rebuttal to the misapplied facts and false allegations. I just want to be completely transparent. I am a licensed registered nurse and am employed by the School District of Philadelphia to provide said service. I am currently assigned to Bridesburg Elementary School where Don DiPaulo serves as the school principal. My contractual hours are from 7:30am - 2:09pm. To provide some context to the issue, I reside in the same community in which Bridesburg is located and my daughter is a seventh grader student at Bridesburg. I take pride in my community and in my role as a nurse. It is clear that there are two roles here: (1) school nurse and (2) a private community member. As an employee of the school district and licensed school nurse my duties are defined by the job description as outlined in the PFT contract with the school district and governed by district policies during working hours. These responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing health care services to students during school hours. • Reporting health or safety concerns observed on school property or during school-sanctioned activities. • Acting as a mandated reporter for suspected abuse, neglect, or harm involving students, as required by state law and district policy. As a private community member during non-working hours, I retain the autonomy as a private citizen. While my professional expertise as a nurse may inform my perspective, I am not bound by the same policies governing my actions as a school district employee. Instead, my actions are guided by broader societal duties and rights such as: • Reporting incidents to local authorities as any citizen would. • Activating in the best interests of community safety. • Engaging in civic responsibilities without direct oversight by the school administrator. • It is evident that the lens in which my roles are viewed by the school administrator is similar to a one-way mirror and my role as a community member has not been considered. I would like to take this opportunity to provide an analysis of the school district policy. • School District Policies for Employees: District policies typically outline the scope of an employee's authority and responsibilities while performing professional duties. Thus, I am: • Required to report any observed risks or harm to students during school hours or school-related events. • As a nurse I am expected to maintain the confidentiality of student's health information obtained within my professional capacity as a nurse. • My authority to act in an official capacity is limited to school premises, school-sponsored events, or other situations explicitly covered by district policy. • 2. Application to a concerned private citizen: As a private citizen my actions are not governed by school district policies. Key distinctions include: My statement in no way was connected to my employment but rather stemmed from my observations as a community member. Professional Expertise vs. Official Capacity: While my background as a nurse may have informed my decision to comment, this does not mean that my actions were taken on behalf of the school district. Additionally, my daughter is in the same class as the student in question. Thus, the association of my professional role is taken out of context and misplaced as not only am I a concerned citizen I am also a mother of a child who is in the same class as the perpetrator and it is reasonable for me to be familiar with the students in the class. Personal Accountability: My action in this case, falls under my rights and obligations as a resident of the community, not as an employee of the School District of Philadelphia specifically Bridesburg School. Therefore, it is unreasonable to believe that I am governed by the same policies as a district employee. Let's consider a policy analysis. In light of the information presented regarding the dual roles I play in context to the parameters and direct alignment with professional and personal actions I adamantly assert that the recommendation for my termination is not supported and malicious. In fact, such an action is in direct violation of my civil rights. Analysis of Termination of Employment as a Civil Rights Violation and Retaliation Terminating my employment for reporting an incident as a private citizen could potentially constitute a violation of my civil rights and an act of retaliation. This analysis focuses on the relevant legal protections for public employees and the circumstances under which termination may infringe upon these rights. • 1. First Amendment Protections: Public employees, including school district staff, have First Amendment rights to speak as private citizens on matters of public concern. Courts have established that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Speech: If an employee speaks outside the scope of their official duties, they retain full First Amendment protections. • Public Concern: Speech addressing safety, crime, or other issues affecting the community qualifies as a matter of public concern. In this case: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My comment regarding a question posed by another individual involved a public safety concern and was made in my capacity as a community member, not as a school nurse. • Termination based on this speech is a direct violation of my First Amendment rights, as it penalizes me for exercising my constitutional right to engage in civic duties. • Let us consider Pickering v. Board of Education (1968) which established that public employees have the right to speak on matters of public concern, provided it does not interfere with the effective operation of the public employer. Pickering v. Board of Ed. of Township High School District 205 Case Summary Law Case Explained My actions do not meet the standard for disruption, further strengthening my protections. • 2. Retaliation Under Civil Rights Laws Retaliation occurs when an employer takes adverse action against an employee for engaging in protected activity. For myself, protected activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Participation: Reporting an incident to law enforcement is a civic responsibility, not misconduct. Punishing me for this action could be viewed as retaliatory. • Statutory Protections: Federal and state laws protect whistleblowers and individuals reporting public safety concerns. If my termination were linked to this report, it could violate anti-retaliation statutes. Legal Precedent: Retaliation claims often succeed when an adverse action (e.g., termination) is linked to a protected activity. • 3. Equal Protection and Discrimination Termination could also raise equal protection concerns under the Fourteenth Amendment or employment discrimination laws: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Enforcement: If my termination is inconsistent with how other employees are treated for similar off-duty actions, it could indicate discriminatory intent or unequal application of policies. • Protected Classes: since I am a member of a protected class (e.g., based on race, gender, or age), and there is evidence suggesting that termination is influenced by bias, this could further strengthen a civil rights claim. • 4. Chilling Effect on Employees Punitive actions against me could create a chilling effect, discouraging employees from engaging in protected speech or reporting legitimate safety concerns. Courts have recognized that retaliatory terminations in public employment harm not only the individual but also the public interest in free and open communication. • The School Administrator's Inadequacy as an Impartial Investigator The involvement of the school principal as the lead investigator in this matter raises serious concerns regarding impartiality, fairness, and the integrity of the investigative process. The administrator's potential biases and lack of specialized training in conducting investigations could compromise the outcome and further erode trust in how the matter is being handled. • 1. Inherent Bias and Conflict of Interest As the direct administrative supervisor, the school principal is not positioned to act as an impartial investigator. Specific issues include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preconceived Notions: The administrator may already hold assumptions about my actions based on incomplete information or external pressures. • Professional Stake: Their interest in protecting the school district's reputation could unduly influence the interpretation of evidence or decisions. • Personal Dynamics: Preexisting relationships between the administrator and myself or other staff could color their judgment and make their conclusions appear biased. • Impact: This conflict of interest undermines the credibility of the investigation and any findings that arise from it. • 2. Lack of Training in Investigative Methodology Effective investigations require specific skills and training to ensure accuracy and objectivity. The administrator's potential lack of expertise in handling such matters may result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient Evidence Gathering: Failing to collect all relevant facts or corroborate accounts from neutral sources. • Procedural Errors: Misssteps in following due process, such as not providing Mrs. Valentino with an opportunity to respond to allegations. • Confirmation Bias: Interpreting evidence to fit a predetermined narrative rather than objectively analyzing the facts. • Impact: An inadequately conducted investigation increases the likelihood of flawed or unjust conclusions, which could expose the district to legal challenges and reputational harm. • 3. Threat to the Lens Through Which the Matter Is Viewed When a potentially biased administrator leads the investigation, it skews how the situation is framed and assessed. Specific risks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disregarding Context: The administrator may fail to adequately distinguish between my role as a school employee and my actions as a private citizen. • Overemphasis on Policy Violations: By narrowly focusing on district policies, the administrator may ignore broader considerations, such as my First Amendment rights or the importance of community safety. • Perceived Retaliation: The administrator's actions could be viewed as punitive, particularly if there is evidence of bias or a predisposition to discipline Mrs. Valentino without sufficient cause. • Impact: These factors distort the lens through which my actions are evaluated, making it impossible to arrive at a fair and balanced resolution. • 4. Erosion of Trust and Perception of Retaliation The administrator's involvement as the lead investigator not only jeopardizes the outcome of the investigation but also damages the district's credibility. Concerns include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Morale: Staff may perceive the investigation as retaliatory or biased, leading to mistrust of leadership and fear of unfair treatment in similar situations. • Public Relations: The community may view the district's actions as overreaching or retaliatory, especially if Mrs. Valentino's civic duty as a private citizen is punished. • Legal Exposure: A biased investigation increases the risk of lawsuits for wrongful termination, retaliation, or violations of civil rights. • Impact: The administrator's role compromises the district's ability to manage the situation effectively and may exacerbate tensions within the school community. • Recommendations To address these concerns, the district should remove the school administrator from the investigative process and take the following steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage a Neutral Third Party: Appoint an independent investigator or legal expert to ensure a fair, unbiased, and thorough examination of the facts. 2. Establish a Review Panel: Form a committee of diverse stakeholders, including legal counsel and community representatives, to oversee the investigation and provide balanced input. 3. Commit to Transparency: Clearly communicate the steps and timeline for the investigation, ensuring all parties understand the process and have an opportunity to participate. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures a credible investigation that is free from bias. • Demonstrates the district's commitment to fairness and due process. • Reduces the risk of legal and reputational harm stemming from perceived retaliation or inadequate procedures. • Alternatives to Termination: Promoting Employment Retention and Fair Investigation Rather than pursuing termination, which is both extreme and potentially unlawful, the school district can adopt alternative approaches that prioritize fairness, employment retention, and a balanced understanding of the facts. These alternatives ensure compliance with employment laws, maintain workplace morale, and foster trust between the district and its employees. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an Unbiased Investigation Before making any disciplinary decisions, the district should conduct a thorough and impartial investigation to assess whether Mrs. Valentino's actions warrant any employment-related consequences. Key steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring a Neutral Third Party: Engaging an independent investigator ensures the findings are objective and credible. • Gathering Evidence: Collect details about my actions and motivations, as well as any related district policies. • Considering Context: Evaluate whether I was acting as a private citizen, the nature of the incident I reported, and whether any policies were violated. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids rushed decisions based on incomplete information. • Demonstrates a commitment to due process and fairness. • Reduces the risk of claims of retaliation or bias. 2. Clarify Policy Application The district should take steps to review and clarify the boundaries between an employee's professional duties and their personal actions. This approach could involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Review: Assessing whether existing policies clearly define the scope of employee responsibilities and the limits of district oversight during off-duty hours. • Training: Offering professional development for staff to help them understand their rights and obligations as school employees and private citizens. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps avoid future confusion over policy application. • Empowers employees to act confidently as private citizens without fear of reprisal. • Builds a stronger understanding of district policies among staff. 3. Provide a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) If the investigation identifies minor policy violations or misunderstandings, the district could implement a Performance Improvement Plan instead of termination. A PIP could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching or Counseling: Addressing any specific areas of concern with myself in a constructive manner. • Policy Education: Providing targeted training on relevant policies to ensure compliance moving forward. • Clear Expectations: Outlining steps for myself to demonstrate her understanding of the policies and my commitment to district standards. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains an experienced and valued employee while addressing concerns. • Avoids punitive measures that could harm employee morale. 4. Issue a Written Warning (if warranted) If the investigation finds that my actions may have slightly overstepped my professional boundaries but did not rise to the level of misconduct, the district could issue a formal warning. This warning could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge my intentions as a concerned community member. • Emphasize the importance of adhering to policies during professional hours. • Provide guidance for how similar situations should be handled in the future. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balances accountability with compassion and understanding. • Avoids damaging my reputation or career unnecessarily. • Reinforces district policies without resorting to harsh penalties. 5. Use the Incident as a Learning Opportunity The district could leverage this situation to foster collaboration and education rather than conflict. For instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Case Studies: Use this incident to guide staff discussions about navigating dual roles as school employees and private citizens. • Strengthen Community Relations: Highlight the district's commitment to working with employees who also serve as active members of the community. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns a potentially negative situation into a positive, growth-focused outcome. • Encourages constructive dialogue between staff and leadership. • Conclusion My termination for commenting as a private citizen would likely violate my civil rights under the First Amendment and could constitute unlawful retaliation. Such action undermines my rights to free speech, equal protection, and civic participation while sending a message that discourages other employees from engaging in similar lawful activities. The school district should instead focus on policies that support employee rights and clarify the boundaries between professional responsibilities and private actions. The school administrator's involvement as the lead investigator poses significant risks to the impartiality and integrity of the investigation. By removing the administrator from the process and adopting neutral, transparent alternatives, the district can safeguard the investigation's credibility, protect employee rights, and avoid unnecessary conflict or litigation. This approach will also reinforce the district's commitment to fair treatment and procedural justice for all employees. Additionally, termination of my employment would be disproportionate, premature, and harmful to both the district and the community it serves. By exploring alternatives such as conducting a fair investigation, clarifying policies, issuing a PIP, or using the incident as a learning opportunity, the district can address any concerns while retaining a dedicated employee. These approaches promote fairness, transparency, and the long-term success of both myself and the school district. It is very easy to identify issues and problems embedded in systems. However, when power dynamics, microaggressions and perceived retaliatory behavior become the source of malicious action, it needs to be addressed. Here, I identified issues using an integrative approach to finding a solution which further addresses identified problems. It is my belief that the resolve to this matter is education, knowledge and empathic understanding. Thank you for taking the time to read my rebuttal. Regina Valentino, M.Ed.RN,BSN,CSN

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Anthony	Valentino	This statement is on behalf of my wife. My wife is Regina Valentino and she has been a school nurse with the district for 9 years. As well as a mother to six wonderful children and a school nurse caring for approximately 500 more, the disproportionately action taken against someone within the nursing profession greatly concerns me. She is a proud graduate of Frankford High School, class of 1990, and a community member for two long and rewarding decades. She has been serving as a registered nurse, dedicating her life to this noble profession, for almost 27 years. Recently, some actions have been taken that strike a chord in my heart. It's painful to observe that a nurse, dutifully performing their role during work hours, who out of concern and dedication for the safety of each child, is met with grossly disproportionate consequences. This situation not only hampers the work of committed professionals, but it also jeopardizes the safety and well-being of our precious children. Her role should not be under threat for pursuing the very duty she swore to uphold. So, I am calling on you, the decision makers and parents. Help protect the nurses who are just trying to do their jobs. Allow them to care for our students, without the fear of disproportional reprisal. Stand with our community, our children, and the nurses who aim to keep them safe.
Jennifer	Leith	I am reaching out for your assistance in retaining the teacher librarian position at Shawmont Elementary, which is 1 of the 4 full-time teacher librarian positions in the School District of Philadelphia. This position is under dire threat of elimination in the Shawmont 2025-2026 budget. For context: the teacher librarian position at Shawmont was created for the 2024-2025 school year and long-time Shawmont teacher and certified teacher librarian, Ms. Loren White was hired to fill that role. Ms. White has spent this academic year organizing the Shawmont library while teaching between 28-20 classes each week in the library. Ms. White has refreshed the book collections, organized the physical space, brought in new furniture and shelving, cataloged 1,000's of books and has created a safe space for Shawmont students to learn, explore and dream. She is providing what every school in the School District of Philadelphia should have: a safe space for students to find the joy of books and reading and she is providing vital lessons on information technology and research skills (which only a teacher librarian can do). Elimination of the teacher librarian position at Shawmont is a move backwards - particularly at a time when the District is engaged in a planning process to restore teacher librarians. How can these 2 facts be true at the same time? The fact that Shawmont has a teacher librarian is a point of pride and it is a fact that the District should set as an example for other schools. I represent an organization that has worked to open and operate school libraries - through volunteer effort - in West Philadelphia for the past 20 years; and we do this work as we wait for teacher librarians return to the District. I can confidently state that what Ms. White has accomplished in the past year is extraordinary. More schools in the District should be committing to hiring and retaining teacher librarians; not eliminating them. Teacher librarians and school libraries are critically important and an investment in academic outcomes which is the whole purpose of a school district, right? For the students of Shawmont, please work with the Shawmont Principal to retain their teacher librarian position and provide the funding needed to keep this position.
Debra	Kachel	April is School Library Month but sadly most of our District's schools have no library or librarian to celebrate. Only 6 schools have a librarian and most are part-time. Yet all our surrounding suburban schools provide their students with libraries and certified school librarians. Don't Philadelphia city kids deserve the same? The Philadelphia Alliance to Restore School Librarians (PARSL), a grassroots group of over 1,400 supporters has been working with the District on a long-range plan to bring back librarians to all 218 schools. Although this work is now in jeopardy due to the loss of federal funds that initiated the grant project, one component has been completed. Interviews were conducted with leaders from 11 large urban school districts that are adding school librarians and library programs--Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC), Chicago, Dallas, District of Columbia, Eugene (OR), Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Oakland (CA), and San Francisco. These districts have similar issues as SDP-large numbers of students in poverty, in special education programs, speaking other languages, and overall low literacy rates. Yet key leaders in these districts believe school libraries and librarians are a solution. Despite many other needs, they have placed a high priority on adding trained, instructional school librarians. Philadelphia needs to join this group. These district leaders believe the research. "Having a certified teacher librarian correlates with higher reading and writing scores. *Reading and writing test scores improve for students who live in poverty, Black and Hispanic students, and students with disabilities when their schools have school librarians. *Reading scores drop when school librarian positions are eliminated, according to 4th grade NAEP data. *Librarians are a key resource for leveling the playing field for students living in poverty. *Higher graduation rates are associated with the presence of school librarians. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders and it is up to us to prepare them for a future we can now only imagine. The skills librarians teach--how to critically evaluate information whether in print, online, or in social media, how to stay safe in the digital world, and how to learn to read and read to learn. To do the best we can for Philly students, we need to make functional school libraries led by certified school librarians a priority. This vision begins with you! To read the full report "Restoring School Librarians: Challenges and Solutions" go to https://www.restorephillylibrarians.org/schoolreport
Pam	Krop	Recently I learned that the nurse at our school, Mrs. Valentino, is in jeopardy of losing her job. I feel her termination would be a huge loss to our school and children. I have had children and now grandchildren in this school over the past 35 years and she has been the best nurse to ever happen to Bridesburg Elementary. She has a kind and caring heart as well as an ability to make any illness or injury feel better in a visit. My granddaughter recently lost her dog, in January. When she came home she told me how Mrs. Valentino helped make her feel better with a simple hug and listening to her cry. I had another grandchild who graduated from there last year that Mrs. Valentino helped us get to the bottom of her health anxiety as well as her constant headaches. She has protected the kids from bullies as well as boo boos. I have never encountered a kinder, more caring, and pleasant school nurse in all of my years. I must add that I personally feel like the principal has a personal vendetta against the nurse and all medical professionals due to some things I had learned over the past year with his experience with his wife and a doctor. This principal seems to like to sweep things under the rug when it comes to bullies within the school and has been known to even go as far as buying one a gift of a Eagles jersey as well as other sports stuff. The child was suspended a few times, (2 in the past month alone) and returned to his same class while putting the child he bullied into a different class. I have a child in the class that has seen how distracting and violent this child is, yet he is permitted to continue with it. WHY?
Monisha	Blair	Monisha Blair Regarding the Impact of School Librarians April 24, 2025 I am a middle school librarian in Virginia, from a district similar in size to the School District of Philadelphia. I am testifying on the importance of funding school librarian positions and our invaluable impact on student learning and success. According to Virginia law (§ 22.1-253.13.2), school librarians are a state-mandated position. In my district, we are fortunate enough to have 242 certified school librarians. I'd like to share what is possible when students have access to adequately staffed school libraries. Personally, my learning community consists of roughly 760 students and 80 staff members. My days are routinely spent serving our students through circulation, collection development, and collection maintenance. However, this is only a small aspect of how I serve my learners. It's not about the people. Most days, I wear a combination of hats—teacher, information specialist, instructional partner, leader, and program administrator. I teach an average of more than 250 inquiry-based lessons each year covering information literacy topics such as citation, ethical use of information and dissemination, genre exploration, information creation, media literacy, paraphrasing, reading strategies, reference skills, search strategies, source evaluation, and using primary sources. These are skills that are not only helpful in students' academic lives, but are vital life skills in our current media and information landscape. I collaborate with every department in my building to support student literacy and routinely work as part of our school's leadership to improve teacher efficacy. This is the work school librarians do each day. Across my district and state, students and staff see that school libraries are vibrant places of learning. Librarians encourage students to ask questions, explore and evaluate information, and create new knowledge for themselves. Through research, a hands-on opportunity to create something, or the basis of a skill to apply in new situations, librarians provide unique, meaningful learning opportunities. No matter the level, as school librarians, we look to activate students' curiosity while helping them grow as critical thinkers, skillful researchers, and enthusiastic readers. The return on investment for school librarians is clear. Decades of research have proven time and again that access to an effective school library staffed by a certified librarian improves reading and writing scores as well as graduation rates, especially for minorities, students with disabilities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. According to data from SLIDE, a project by Antioch University Seattle funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the ratio for Philadelphia public schools is 39,302 students and 2,880 teachers per librarian. It is impossible for any individual to meaningfully know, serve, and teach that many students and staff. It has been over 30 years since Philadelphia cut school librarian positions from 176 certified librarians in 1991 to the current staffing level of three. Since that time, the value of school librarians may be less visible, but the impact of this loss can be felt. Two out of three children in Philadelphia are not reading on grade level by 4th grade, a key indicator in determining if students succeed in school and graduate. Philadelphia's young people deserve better. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) advocates that every learner in every school should have access to a full-time, certified school librarian. "The success of a school library, no matter how well designed, ultimately depends on the quality and number of personnel responsible for managing the instructional program and the school library's physical and virtual resources. A full-time certified school librarian, supported by dedicated technical and clerical staff, is crucial to an effective school library for a school's learning environment. Every learner, classroom educator, and administrator in every school building at every grade level should have access to a fully staffed school library throughout the school day." Philadelphia's students need more than three librarians. They do not have access to fully or even partially staffed school libraries. Our work is engaging, enriching, important, and necessary. Please consider how you can more adequately staff your district's libraries to support your learning community. Thank you for your time. I appreciate your consideration of the impact of school librarians and staffing solutions.
Marlo	Kulb	Hi, my name is Marlo Kulb my daughter attends Bridesburg Elementary school, I have already written 2 other letters testifying for Regina and not understanding how she has been released from her position as a nurse for our children, also she is a mother who had concerns for my child at the time she was a nurse at Bridesburg School she helped me and my family who were devastated over my daughter being beaten by a much bigger girl, the video was just horrible, I still can not bring myself to watch all of it. Now we are hear writing letters to save Regina's job because she was being a caring mother/person/human by identifying the truth of who did this to my daughter, tell me you would not do the same for someone, I sent the video watch it and tell me you wouldn't want to know or have someone help you and your family. This whole thing has been a nightmare for me and of course Regina and her family, how can this even be real, someone needs to step up and see how wrong this is, I am so upset with this ongoing what I want to call bullying at this point someone needs to shake Regina's hand and apologize and give her job back with back pay, you should be ashamed. You are acting like she beat my daughter up! Very upset! I wish I had the time to speak and see your faces, and let you see me and the real struggle this has brought upon our families. Very upset parent.
Nicolas	Ledvon	If I were at the same situation as the beaten girl I would hope that any citizen would identify the aggressor! This isn't right that a person can loose a job over doing something that a good citizen would do. It gives us a message when you do the right thing you get punished!
Miroslav	Ledvon	A person is being a good citizen, identifies the aggressor who needs to be stop. Instead a good citizen get punished by doing a right thing and being suspended!!!! This isn't right that person can loose a job over something like that!
Lisa	Hayes	Mrs. Virginia is an awesome mother and nurse. I don't understand how a school and its principal can treat someone that is needed in the school. You are disgrace
Linda	Bugieda	Why is the district involving themselves in a police matter? When the motto is "see something, say something", why would you discipline someone who did just that. The employee who is also a "mandatory reporter" who is required to say something to the district if they see something. What message are you modeling in this action? Shouldn't the district say "if said incident didn't occur on school property and police are already involved it's out of their hands? Employee should be praised for doing the right thing by her community!
Agnes	Kline	Ms. Valentino is, and for many years has been, a beloved member of the Bridesburg School and Bridesburg community.

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Katrina	Panas	"I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation for the exceptional care and dedication provided by the school nurse at Bridesburg. From the moment my daughter started attending the school in 3rd grade, the nurse has been an invaluable resource and support system for our family. Her kindness, compassion, and professionalism have made a significant impact on our experience at the school. She has consistently gone above and beyond to ensure my daughter's needs are met, and has been an advocate for her well-being. The nurse's ability to connect with students and families is truly remarkable. She takes the time to listen, offer guidance, and provide reassurance when needed. Her dedication to her work is evident in everything she does. I feel grateful to have such a caring and competent nurse looking out for my daughter's health and well-being. I highly recommend her to any family seeking a supportive and nurturing environment for their child. Thank you to the school nurse for all that she does!"
Craig	Bakalian	I am recommending that you vote against principal Don DiPaulo's recommendation for the termination of Reginamarie Valentino. I am a music teacher with 34 years of teaching experience with 4 years in the School District of Philadelphia. My classroom at Bridesburg was across the hallway from Ms. Valentino's office for three years. I currently work at Patterson Elementary School. I actually love teaching music to young children. I have been blessed with a wonderful career. I do know that I may not discuss the incident which transformed into Ms. Valentino's termination. However, I may discuss her and the Bridesburg work environment that she and I navigated as staff members. Ms. Valentino is all things medical. She will not accept medical fallacies created by staff members which will distract from her duties as a medical professional. Triage is everything. She made sure that she was available for true medical needs, routines, and emergencies. I grew up in a medical family. As a child, I witnessed much of what Ms. Valentino dealt with at the Bridesburg School. To be as brief as possible, on my 2nd week of employment as a new hire at Bridesburg, I witnessed individuals clocking each other in and out. I began seeking a transfer to a new school at the end of my first year. Finally, all of the individuals got caught, our principal resigned or was fired. However, many of the individuals remained at Bridesburg. These individuals cultivated a very challenging work environment for anyone. Many parents in the community became aware of the clocking in and out. And, I feel for everyone involved. At this point in my career I have come to the realization that punishing children or staff is nothing but a heartless attempt at control. The only thing that works is reward. The school district's punitive measures will not change anything at our schools. Punishment does nothing. What frustrates me about Ms. Valentino's termination is that Ms. Valentino supports a large family with her income. She is a member of the Bridesburg community. Please do not send a Philadelphia family into poverty. The recommendation of termination is heartless. Please support the families of the Philadelphia community. Peace
Katrina	Burgess	Regina Valentino has been the school nurse for all 4 of my children going through Bridesburg Elementary. Over the years, she had made communications with my family in a quick and professional manner; we have never seen her act or speak out of line. My children and the community have a bond with Ms. Valentino and trust her completely with the health of our children. I feel she has been falsely accused and been put on a witchhunt by head staff at the school. We have had never seen a moment in the 8+ years of my children's schooling where we doubted her professionalism and hard work as our school's school nurse. Please consider her re-hire at our school as she is sorely missed.
Lindsay	Kubach	On behalf of Regina Valentino I would like to vocalize what an important part of bridesburg elementary she is. She goes above and beyond to make sure everyone is taken care of. My son has asthma and she always made him feel comfortable enough to know he could come to her when he needed help, it would be wrong to terminate her.
Sarah	Fike Nannery	I am writing to advocate for the Library position at Shawmont school, as well as librarians in Philly public schools more generally, which not only improve student academic success, but have also been empirically shown to improve school climate and discipline issues as trained librarians in schools offer an additional resource for both students and staff. I am the parent of two children at Shawmont, and my eldest, Sirius Nannery, age 9, only started finally reading this year thanks to the Herculean efforts of our new librarian Ms. Loren White, who brought resources, awareness, volunteers, and huge community support for the library both inside and outside the school. He never liked to read before and now he spends at least an hour every day reading advanced books in her library and has achieved an 8th Grade reading level in 3rd Grade. He volunteers during lunch times under Ms. White's tutelage to read to the 1st and 2nd Graders and it gives him such a sense of purpose and confidence and contribution to the school community. None of this would have been possible, and none of it was happening, before Ms. White. We were, and hope to still be, extremely proud to be one of the few Philly public schools with a fully trained Masters degree Librarian who clearly loves this school and this community, and who is able to use her considerable talent and passion to improve the literacy, citizenship, and knowledge of our children. In what has otherwise been an unusually turbulent year at Shawmont with new leadership in place, the incredible growth and flourishing of our library has been one of the few bright spots. My son used to think of Shawmont's library as the place where kids went to wait for other things to happen and where they played hide and seek. The people who were in charge of library time in the past would show the kids movies and play on their phones. Now, my son truly feels connected to the library and to Ms. White as a place to read, research, learn, and teach. As a student with multiple disabilities – Autism, ADHD, and Anxiety – and who used to struggle with behavioral issues in the classroom, my son has truly found his safe space this year in Ms. White's library, which you can see plainly in the way that he writes about his experience there in another written testimony I submitted on his behalf for this meeting. The argument may be made that a less-qualified individual could take up the mantle of what Ms. White has only just started building at Shawmont, but the reality is that Shawmont will lose not only the quality of Ms. White's work – but also the quality of the relationships she has built with our children, our teachers, and our families. Losing Ms. White and this full-time qualified Librarian position would be a terrible blow to our school community, and I fear the library will fall back into tragic disuse within a year. I am asking as one parent, and hopefully one of many you will hear from, that you please work with Shawmont's leadership and the leadership of all Philly public schools to reconsider the elimination of Ms. White's position at Shawmont, and to put a much greater emphasis on school libraries and librarian positions across the school district in general, for the betterment of our school communities and students' success both academically and as citizens of a multi-cultural environment. Thank you, Sarah Sarah E. Nannery Sarah.e.fike@gmail.com 989-576-1309 Author of What to Say Next www.sarahnannery.com Instagram & Twitter - @SarahNannery LinkedIn - www.linkedin.com/in/sarahfike
Sirius	Nannery	Word version of 3rd Grade Shawmont student Sirius Nannery's essay (a PDF of his hand-written version is available upon request): Love Your Library PARSL wants to know what you love most about your library. I love my library because... PAGE 1 Our Librarian Ms. White is definitely my favorite part of our Library. She is so kind but she always gives us choices: Fantasy, Harry Potter, or Percy Jackson, like the amount of choice is insane. But don't forget about the environment all of these amazing books are in. If you like reading quietly: tables. If you like laying down while reading: couches. What about sitting relaxed and... PAGE 2 ...comfortable? Then go to the beanbags. Our library is my happy place with the best librarian, so many books, genres, and places to read peacefully and happily. Sirius Shawmont School 3rd Grade
Molly	van den Heuvel	I am writing to strongly recommend Loren White's position as School Librarian at Shawmont be funded. I have had the privilege of knowing Ms. White since November of 2023 when I visited her classroom Shawmont School while conducting outreach to neighborhood schools. I remember being very impressed by her ability to remember the individual interests of her many students and highlight the different services of the Free Library of Philadelphia that she knew would appeal to them. From my years of working for the Andorra Library, I am familiar with the neglect the Shawmont School Library has suffered for many years. The library was in complete disarray, containing many out-of-date materials, and was woefully unmanaged. When I agreed to be Ms. White's internship Supervisor in spring of 2024, I knew she had no small feat ahead of her in making the school library a usable and functioning space. Over the course of the summer, I witnessed the library transform with Ms. White's vision. She partnered with district colleagues and community stakeholders to organize the physical space with new furniture and materials. Ms. White wrote grants and fundraised to supply the students with interesting and educational up-to-date items. She recruited and supervised many volunteers. As we progressed into fall and winter, I have witnessed the cataloguing and genrefication processes underway. In my partnership with Ms. White, we have collaborated in a mutually supportive relationship to advertise each other's programs and fundraising initiatives, share materials, and plan for library instruction. She continues to encourage her students (my patrons) to take advantage of both the school's and the public library's collection, special events, and after school programs. Not only have I seen Ms. White's library management skills growing because of partnering with myself and other community and district partnerships, her advice and knowledge of her students' interests was key in the successful expansion of my library's manga collection and programming. I am confident that Ms. White will continue to be an immense benefit to her students, colleagues, and district.
Toni-Anne	McDonald	To the Board of Education: This written testimony represents a group of Philadelphia School District and charter students from Norris Square Neighborhood Project. As you consider new school budgets and other priorities for next school year, we write to bring these concerns to your attention and ask you to address them. Concerns about school budgets and excessive fees and costs in public schools: "They have a really bad budget, to the point where they have to overprice things just to make money," "I want the school board to address the budget problem in my school...The students spend so much money on an event or item and the school banned stuff when other places are much more affordable but the school doesn't let us bring outside things," including "drinks, outerwear, things and if we don't follow we [are told] go home." "Schools should "give free or cheaper uniforms and spend less on pouches for a phone." Especially at arts schools like Kensington CAPA, "spend more money on art and music supplies." Schools should "spend more on seniors in general and the arts." The District should also spend "more money on the lunch[.] less on upgrading the tools but more on repair/space" because "a lot of the students I know are always hungry and asking for food that others buy, then depending on the lunch don't eat and starve all day. Some get headaches or feel sick." Concerns about harsh policies and treatment by school staff, including exclusion from the school environment due to lateness or uniform violations: While "there's not enough teachers to students," "some of them don't really do their job." "The staff at Mastery is making kids stay outside if they are late after 8:20. (Class starts at 8:10 and ends at 8:54.) Also locks the bathroom on other floors when grades start at lunch times, only has 2nd floor open. It isn't fair to the students that they have to wait in the cold during the winter, it can cause frostbite knowing how low the temps can get. If it gets to the summer, kids shouldn't have to wait in the heat, it can cause the students to possibly get disoriented." There are many problems but the main one is them telling people to leave Kensington CAPA due to uniform violations, and the fact that they are so comfortable with the students. Like they will cuss students out...And they lock all bathrooms and we can't use them. [They] are not running the schools like they are supposed to. And people are not having access to the education that they need." Concerns about inappropriate and racist comments: At KCAPA here is what some students have shared with the staff at NSNP one teacher in particular when "A Black girl didn't come to class and she said it's because "her weave glue isn't strong enough". This same teacher is "Making monkey noises to Black students" and has "Call[ed] a student "a gorilla"". In terms of inappropriate comments this same teacher has said "on the "First day of school "did you ever walk in on your parents having sex?". Another inappropriate comment was "Looking at another student's phone in their lap, "I hope you're not looking at his thingy". We have been told the "Principal talks about other teachers to the student(s)". To follow up with us about our concerns, please contact toni@myneighborhoodproject.org. Our youth deserve to have safe, equitable and equal access spaces while at school. These inappropriate comments, blatant racism, lack of access to healthy food and excessive punitive action bars them from their education. We'd really like support getting these issues resolved and addressed and feel that this should be of utmost importance to the city. Sincerely, Norris Square Neighborhood Project/Students
Rich	Torrance	As a former school librarian myself, I can testify to the positive impact that school librarians have on a school community! I also happen to be a Shawmont alumni and have had the pleasure of working with Loren White, she truly cares about Shawmont and wants to provide her school with an interactive library. Please keep her as the school librarian.
Patricia	Kress	I'd like to make you aware of how much the principal, Mr Dipaul, does not care about students with medical conditions. My then 7 year old daughter is a Type 1 diabetic. The last six months of school she did not have her own nurse but the school nurse always went above and beyond to help her. There was not much support at the school. There was one person that would help her. The nurse had to go back-and-forth between two buildings every day. When the other person was not in, the principal was supposed to be the one that would help. He never did. He was never available. He never returned any phone call.

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Zenia	Bent	My name is Zenia Bent and my son is a 7 year old boy in the second grade that has ADHD combined type, autism spectrum disorder and Oppositional defiant disorder and his name is David. David is one of the many children at Bridesburg school that has been affected by this sudden change of losing Mrs Valentino, our school nurse. I say this for every child with special needs or any type of disability. It's not easy to build a rapport with just anyone when you don't understand the world around you. Mrs Valentino would consider each child's individual needs, understand the way they communicate, and develop strategies that cater to them. I can say without a doubt that in the years that I have known Mrs Valentino I have not encountered one single issue and my son is definitely a handful that trusts only a given few. For him to take medication from her is something that I still struggle with on a daily basis. Since her absence I have had quite a few issues arise at school where my son did not get his medication, his routine was changed without both of us being made aware and times he would refuse his medication altogether because he did not like his new way of doing things. In addition to that his cups were lost, his straws were misplaced and I left work to bring them up to school and they misplaced them as well. He also has stomach complications and had an accident at school a few weeks ago. His extra clothes were also misplaced. This may seem small to someone else but to my son these are things that make a huge difference in his daily life. I had complete and total trust that things like this didn't happen with Mrs. Valentino
Tu	Pyott	My name is Tu Pyott, a parent of three boys who have attended/graduated from Bridesburg Elementary School. I have known Regina for over twenty years and I am well acquainted with her character and the positive impact she has made on our family. I wholeheartedly support Regina's continued employment with Bridesburg Elementary School and believe she truly deserves this opportunity. I'm writing to ask the Philadelphia School Board to please make sure this happens. She has shown remarkable integrity and dedication to the students, not only in caring for them during time of illness but she also cares about her neighborhood and community. Her commitment is genuine and commendable. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Tu Pyott.
Kressent	Pottenger	Good afternoon Board Members, Thank you for your work, and for making time to read my concerns. I am the parent of a freshman at CAPA. During the course of her first year we have struggled with little to no communication from the school regarding serious challenges that both impact the quality of education students receive as well as the school's reputation. The daily operations of the school are compromised: there are vacant teaching positions with no explanation to students or parents, there is a lack of leadership as well as professionalism to remedy staff & teacher needs or challenges, and no communication about the basic functions of a high school including clubs, extracurriculars, school events, and guidance counselor hours. We were informed of an enrollment crisis at an HSA meeting on April 7th after being informed second hand by our student who – along with her classmates – was also confused, and concerned. The forced transfer of 5 teachers means many students will no longer be able to take expected AP classes they had already enrolled in. Half of the freshman class had no math instruction for the academic year, and in violation of school district policy were assigned a random grade of 80%. This will harm their competitiveness in higher education. No communication was provided to parents. Additionally, the lack of professionalism & quality leadership deters teacher & staff retention at CAPA which further depresses enrollment. We are asking for the Board's support in the following: entrusting CAPA to capable leadership that can effectively operate and lead one of the best special admit schools in the district. To please allow CAPA to maintain our current teachers so that we may work on increasing enrollment for the following school year. In gratitude, Kressent Pottenger
Kah'Siyah	Williams	April 23, 2025 Dear Board of Education Members, My name is Kah'Siyah Williams, and I am a 7th grade student at Shawmont Elementary School in Roxborough. I transferred to Shawmont this year from Alliance for Progress Charter School, and there was no library at my old school. My younger sister Lira and I were so happy that our new school had a library and a librarian since we both love to read. Library class is one of my favorite classes at Shawmont this year. I love reading the Gossip Girl series, and Realistic Fiction was my favorite genre that we studied this year. I like being able to talk about the topics and characters that I read about with my classmates during Library class. Lira's favorite series to read is Bad Guys since she loves the movie. She also loves graphic novels by Raina Telgemeier, especially Smile. She also loved the Scary Stories unit during Library class. My 7th grade classmates and I love to visit the library each week to see what new books are on display and on the shelves. Miss White, our librarian, has added ten or more bookshelves full of books just for teens. The kids who were here last year said that there used to be only one bookshelf for 7th and 8th graders. We love asking Miss White for books and graphic novels. She always tries to buy us the books that we put on our Shawmont Amazon wish list. Everyone in my grade loves coming to Library class each week to talk about books and life with Miss White. Teens go through a lot these days, and Miss White is always there to listen and help us when we can. When a classmate told me a couple of weeks ago that her mom was angry that Miss White's librarian job was getting cut at the end of the year, I was very upset. I wanted to do anything that I could to help keep Miss White at Shawmont next year. I am speaking today to ask for your help. Please help us students at Shawmont keep Miss White at Shawmont next year. She makes us love to read, lets us choose from manga, books, comics, and graphic novels, and is always there for us. I can't imagine coming back to Shawmont in the fall for my 8th grade year without Miss White being there to support and help us. Lira will be in 4th grade next year, and I want her to have Miss White to watch out for after I graduate and go to high school. There is so much negativity and cyberbullying that happens to me and the other middle schoolers at Shawmont and other schools. Having a quiet, peaceful library to read in and visit when we get upset and need a break from our busy classrooms is so important. Having a librarian who cares about us is even more important for our mental health, forming a community of supportive students, and for our Roxborough community. Thank you very much for your time and help. From Kah'Siyah Williams 7th Grade Student
Melissa	Whalen	My name is Melissa Whalen, and I am the proud parent of two Shawmont students, Marley Whalen and Matthew DiOrto. I was thrilled when Shawmont was finally able to welcome a librarian last year, giving our children the opportunity to visit the library as part of their school week. When I was in school, library class was one of my favorite experiences, and I wanted my kids to have that same joy—the chance to explore books, discover new interests, and develop a lifelong love of reading. For my daughter Marley, the library is more than just a place to check out books—it's a space where she can share her enthusiasm for reading with Ms. White, who takes the time to engage with students about their interests. Loren White has dedicated countless hours to organizing and preparing books for students to borrow, often working beyond school hours and even on weekends to ensure the library is a welcoming and well-stocked resource. Her commitment goes beyond the shelves—she fosters a love of reading and creates meaningful connections with students. As a parent volunteer for the annual School Book Fair, I've personally witnessed Ms. White's dedication. Last year's book fair was one of the most enjoyable and successful events I've been a part of, thanks in large part to her help. More importantly, I saw firsthand how deeply she connects with the students, making the library a place they truly love. Losing a dedicated librarian like Ms. White would be a great loss to Shawmont's students and their education. I urge you to do whatever is necessary to ensure she remains in this role so that our children continue to benefit from her passion, knowledge, and hard work. Thank you for your time and consideration. Melissa Whalen
Jessica	Lu	Dear School Board Members, My name is Jessica Lu, and I'm a student at the Academy at Palumbo. I'm writing to speak up about the lack of resources in our schools. A lot of us are trying our best to do well, but it's hard when we don't even have the basic things we need. An example is that our bathrooms are in terrible condition and seriously need to be fixed now. There's often no toilet paper, the stalls don't always lock, and it just feels gross and not taken care of. In gym class, we barely have enough equipment, and some of it is super old or broken. In some classes, there aren't enough books for everyone, and sometimes students have to buy their own. Our teachers are already doing so much with so little, and it's not okay that they have to spend their own money or work in buildings that are falling apart. It's not just Palumbo dealing with this; other schools in the district are going through the same thing. All students, no matter what school they go to, deserve clean bathrooms, working tech, enough supplies, and safe spaces to learn in. I hope the School Board takes this seriously and starts making real changes. We just want the same opportunities as students in better-funded schools. Sincerely, Jessica Lu
Biak	Thawng	Hello Carly Sitrin, My name is Biak Lian Thawng. I am a sophomore at The Academy at Palumbo. I've researched your work and expertise in school education and funding and am very interested in it. We have some problems in our school of Palumbo, where we are not only missing essential resources such as soap in the bathroom to supplies in classes, but the situation in our school is somewhat dangerous. In my personal experience, during my first year at this school, two emergencies happened. Firstly, there was an alert that a fire had been in our school which the cause of was unknown, and secondly, a pipe in our school was faulty and caused the school to flood and evacuate. These situations are not only out of funding but also carelessness in safety. These situations don't allow me to learn in school comfortably with my safety at risk.
Thierno	Barry	Hello My name is Barry, and I'm a senior at the Academy at Palumbo. My classmate and I are working on a group project regarding the school's lack of funding, and we decided to focus on the issues in our building, like the classroom and the hallways. While we do experience minor shortages in classrooms, like a lack of extra pencils and supplies, the biggest issues we've noticed are related to the bathroom and overall cleanliness of the building. Our school has five bathrooms, one for each floor, and most of the time, only one or two are functional. This is mainly because of how long it takes the school district to respond to maintenance issues. Also, our building condition needs to be changed. For four years now, this building has never ceased to disappoint. Last school year, we experienced a gas leak and flooding, which affected our learning ability because we were sent home during those days. The lack of functioning restrooms not only affects our health and comfort, but also our ability to focus in class. It's hard to learn when basic needs aren't being met.
Aung	Hlaing	Hello School District Of Philadelphia, I am here to write about the disgusting atmosphere inside the school bathrooms. Bathrooms are a necessity to ALL the students. This isn't a situation where it affects half the people and doesn't affect the other half. Bathrooms is something everyone needs to use, not want but need to use. Seeing stalls being broken all the time, sinks not even working properly, hot water not even being available, soap dispensers not being refilled, pipes being exposed with microplastic that can contain toxic chemicals or asbestos can be very dangerous to every student and harmful for the school in general.
Eliza	Vazquez	Good evening, My name is Eliza and I am a senior at the Academy At Palumbo. As a student that has been a part of the School District of Philadelphia all the way from elementary, and throughout that time there have been many issues with the district in terms of funding and maintenance that I, myself, and many other students have taken note of. My classmates and I have been doing a project for our Social Science Honors class where we have explored the aspects of our school (and the school district) that have been underfunded, in need of maintenance, and a lack of resources overall and how we can potentially improve this. During our research we discovered that the district is underfunded by a large margin and how the funds are split among the district. As a group, we collectively agreed that more money should be put towards the maintenance of school buildings for the sake of making them a better learning environment. We noticed that in our school specifically (which is an old building) that students have to buy materials for classes out of their own pockets, the sports team do not have an adequate amount of resources (for example, our track team has to use hallways as a way to practice), our bathrooms are in poor condition which is one of our main issues, staff sometimes has to go to other schools for toilet paper since it is a big school with a big student population, and the walls of the building are in poor condition with paint chipping and discoloration. Just last year we had to evacuate the building about three times due to gas leak, flooding, and poor pipes. I even had a friend who had pain from the school ceiling fall on her one time-this isn't okay. This is not just an issue in our school, but across many other schools in the district as we have reached out to other students and they have responded with similar sentiments and issues. We have interviewed with our school staff, such as the custodians, where we see that money is an important part of the school. So, we ask that you all consider to put more money towards the maintenance of school buildings and resources so students can be safe and comfortable in their learning environment where they spend the majority of their time. This can be through hiring more staff members (custodians), fixing the bathrooms due to their poor condition, but overall something should be done at least. I thank you for your time and consideration.

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Kayla	Ao	My name is Kayla Ao, and I'm a student at the Academy at Palumbo. Our bathrooms don't work the way they should. Oftentimes, we lack soap, paper towels, and tissue paper. There are a handful of stalls that have been out of order for all four years of my high school career. Many of the stall doors are unable to close, and I recall a friend teaching me how to push the side of the stall just right in order to wedge the door shut. That should not be something I have to learn just to use the bathroom. Bathrooms are basic, but they reflect something bigger. When we can't even rely on clean, private restrooms, what does that say about how much we're valued as students? It doesn't stop there. Paint from the walls is peeling all throughout the school building. Windows in many classrooms cannot stay open, and teachers need to prop them up with brooms. Radiators continue to stay burning hot throughout the school year, making it unbearable to learn in the warmer seasons and a safety concern when they are open and exposed. And the issues go beyond the classrooms. Our sports and extracurricular programs are constantly overlooked. Our track team doesn't even have a designated space to train, they're forced to find space wherever they can, often practicing in the hallways of the school. That's not just inconvenient. It's unfair to these students. We're doing the best we can with what we have, but creativity and talent shouldn't be limited by old equipment or a lack of space. Palumbo isn't the only school in this situation. Schools across Philadelphia are dealing with the same issues: broken facilities, outdated systems, and forgotten spaces. This is a district-wide problem, and it demands a district-wide response. We are calling on the school board to fully fund and prioritize school building repairs and upgrades, especially for bathrooms and student spaces. That's why I'm asking the school board to commit to an improvement plan that includes fully renovating bathroom conditions in every school and completing urgent repairs concerning infrastructure. We are not asking for luxury. We are asking to learn in buildings that are safe and fully usable. Please hear us, and please act. Thank you for your time.
Emma	Kurtz	To the esteemed Members of the School Board, My name is Emma Kurtz, and I am currently a high school senior at the Academy at Palumbo. I am writing as a concerned student and proud member of the Philadelphia school community. I believe deeply in the power of education to shape lives, open doors, and build a better future. But that belief is being tested every day by the conditions we are forced to learn in. At the Academy at Palumbo, last year experienced something that should never happen in a school: part of the roof collapsed and pipes burst. No one should ever fear being harmed just by walking through the hallways of their school, yet that's exactly what this incident triggered. It was not only frightening, but it also disrupted our learning, brought uncertainty, and left many of us questioning how safe our environment really is. It's hard to concentrate on studying when you're worried about the building around you literally falling apart. This isn't just about one moment or one school. All across Philadelphia, students are dealing with broken heating and cooling systems, overcrowded classrooms, damaged facilities, and outdated buildings. It sends a message that students in this city are not a priority. We should not have to work twice as hard just to reach the same starting line as students in neighboring counties who are in better-funded districts. These are not small problems. They impact our health, our peace of mind, and our ability to focus and succeed. When a student walks into a building that is clean, safe, and properly maintained, they feel valued. When we are expected to learn in conditions that would never be acceptable in other settings, it sends the opposite message: that we are expected to simply endure, rather than thrive. I urge you to treat this issue with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves. Our schools should reflect the value we place on education and the respect we have for our students and teachers. We need real, bold, meaningful changes that make our schools safe and supportive spaces for every student in Philadelphia. Thank you for your time, your attention, and your commitment to making things better. Sincerely, Emma Kurtz Student, The Academy at Palumbo
Joanna	Lin	Dear School Board Members, My name is Joanna Lin, and I am a student at the Academy at Palumbo. I want to mention about serious issue that is affecting not just my school, but many others across our district: the critical lack of resources and funding. One of the basic things we deal with at my school is the bathrooms. A lot of the time, there's no toilet paper when I try to use the bathroom. This isn't just annoying; it's about being clean and feeling okay. It's also surprising that our whole school district only has eight plumbers to fix things. That's not enough people to take care of all the schools. Not having enough money also affects how we learn. When I took AP Psychology, we had to buy our books because the school didn't have them. This costs families money, and it can stop some students from getting what they need to learn. Also, in my math classes, there aren't enough calculators for everyone. I had to spend almost \$100 to buy my own so I could do my work. Not everyone can afford that, and it's not fair if some students don't have the tools they need. I've talked to students at other schools, and they're having the same kinds of problems. They don't have enough of what they need either, like things for their classrooms or buildings that are falling apart. We had problems like a gas leak and a water leak that stopped our class. Students had to stay outside in the cold for 2-3 hours, and the class our teacher had planned for us got messed up. So the next day we get back, they go through the materials quickly, but not everyone understands it good. We really need the money and resources to make sure that our schools are taken care of, and investing in all of us students and our future. If you help us get the things we need, it will make our schools better and fairer for everyone. I really hope you will think about these problems seriously and do something to help us. Sincerely, Joanna Lin
Kayla	Howard	My name is Kayla Howard, and I'm a student at Academy At Palumbo. I'm going to be talking about the lack of resources in my school and why it's important to solve these problems. Almost everyday students and teachers face challenges that go beyond learning. Many of the bathroom sinks are broken, some of our stall doors don't fully close in the bathrooms, and sometimes there's little to no toilet paper in our school. Then to make circumstances worse with the small number of plumbers in our district (8) it takes up to weeks for some bathrooms to open back up due to maintenance. On lower floors in the building heating is either ineffective or barely can keep a room warm in cold weather. We also suffer from lack of resources for art supplies and our music program. Which isn't a safety or learning issue but it blocks students from being able to fully explore their passions and pay out of pocket for lessons and instruments for school events and performances. On top of all of those things we also suffer from a mouse/rat problem where sometimes in the middle of a lesson or even when you walk into a class you could run into a dead or alive mouse. Which is becoming more common as the years progress. All of these issues are things that students shouldn't have to deal with or even have to complain about. These are bare minimum things that shouldn't be a stressor for students and staff to endure.
Emily	alava	when i was in middle school, the conditions were much worse that the high school i go to know, which is Academy at Palumbo. I went to John H Taggart school, the building was obviously very old, when I started attending there, which was in 2016 we had no air conditioning in any part of the school, just very big fans that would be on for the entirety of the class. Recently I went back there for an internship in 2023 and they recently put up air conditioning on the 4th floor only, the lunchroom in both my high school and elementary school have very thick air because of all the moisture and heat. I have a friend in South Philly High who also has told me that their gym is made from a metal ceiling and parts of the walls, it traps in more heat and it feels like an oven in there. The most important problem that I wanted to address was the bathrooms. There have been very few times where the bathrooms had fully stocked toilet paper, soap, and fully functional sinks and bathrooms simultaneously for more than maybe 2 days. its always at least one of those factors that's present for majority of the school year. especially with only 8 plumbers in the school district i can see why half the bathrooms in my school have been closed since the beginning of the year. The only thing I would ask to change, is to make sure our bathrooms are at good conditions and they are kept up. thank you for listening
Samyah	Feagins	Dear School Board Members, My name is Samyah Feagins, and I'm a student at the Academy at Palumbo. I'm here today because I care deeply about the lack of physical resources in our district, and I believe that student voices need to be heard when decisions are being made—especially those that directly affect us. Lately, there have been a lot of conversations about building maintenance shortages. From a student's perspective, these issues don't just show up in board meetings—they affect us every day in the classroom. Examples being our broken toilets in almost every bathroom, soap dispensers being off the wall, large cracks in the ceiling etc. And it goes without saying We notice. And we care. One thing I want to emphasize is that students are not just recipients of decisions—we are part of this school community. We want to be part of the solution. That starts with being listened to and respected, not just as learners, but as people who have firsthand experience with what works and what doesn't. I hope the board—and those with the district—will continue to make space for student voices, not just today, but regularly. When students are empowered, schools thrive. Thank you for your time and for listening. Sincerely, Samyah Feagins
Ameena	Rogers	Dear City Council, My name is Ameena, and I am a senior at the Academy at Palumbo. I've been attending Palumbo since my freshman year, and throughout my four years here, I've witnessed the same unacceptable conditions in our school bathrooms. On a regular basis, students like myself have had to deal with stalls that have no toilet paper, sinks that are out of order, and even water leaking from the walls. These issues are more than just inconvenient—they are unsanitary and create an environment that feels neglected and unsafe. Every student deserves access to clean, functional restroom facilities. We come to school to learn, grow, and prepare for our futures—not to worry about basic needs being unmet. I'm asking you to recognize this ongoing issue and support real, lasting improvements to the infrastructure in our schools. We deserve better. Sincerely, Ameena
Edgar	Moreno Cabrera	Testimony On the first of May 2022, I got the most anticipated email ever. I was accepted into my dream high school. The Academy At Palumbo opened their arms for me and accepted me into their school as one of the fellow students of the class of 2026. I have heard a lot about the school. It's advanced academics and high graduation rates, it's high ranking sports teams and State recognition, it's amazing community and building. These are all of the experiences that were told from graduated students of the Academy At Palumbo. I was so informed about the school that it was if not one of the best in the city and I really trusted people's word with that. Coming in as a freshman my first year, it didn't disappoint. All of the things that were told about the school were true. The community was so diverse that it allowed me to know people from different cultures and backgrounds. The sports that they were offering for students were in various amounts and also the high academic achievements that I have seen from students in the school were beyond what I was imagining. It seemed like the perfect high school that any kid could go to. Throughout time however, the school really started to show its true colors. There is nothing wrong with the staff or the students or any of the classes and extracurriculars, it was the building itself actually. Considering how old the school building is, it makes sense that it won't look as new as other schools in Philadelphia; however I don't really think the school should be left neglected with being provided resources. It's pretty obvious that there is a huge underfunding within the school and I just want to ask, why is that? Considering that the School District of Philadelphia accumulates millions if not billions of dollars each year, I don't really see the money going to this school as much as it's supposed to. I'm a junior this year, meaning that I have been in this school for the past three years of my highschool years. Now, the school building has more issues than what it looks like from the surface. Throughout my Sophomore and Junior year, there were countless leakages, burst pipes, gas leaks that have taken away the time that students need in order to learn. Bathrooms are extremely faulty with stalls being closed for maintenance and leakages on the ceiling dripping down to the floor leaving massive puddles. There has also been an obvious lack of resources that are necessary for the school and it's bathrooms such as paper towels, soap, textbooks, desks, chairs, gym equipment, etc. There is no possible way to blame anyone in my school for this but there isn't a reason for this to be happening to a student's school environment. Thinking that students come to school in order to learn and pursue their education in order to get into college, there shouldn't be a thought behind their minds that makes them worry about their safety inside the building. However, these past years have done otherwise and actually made students consider their safety inside this faulty building. There's also an issue with rodents roaming around the school and this isn't the safest environment that a student wishes to be in. Solution? Personally, there is one obvious solution. Better funding. It is as simple as that. Don't add more money to the budget, be rational with it. I see that some schools get an excessive amount of funding just because of the area that they are in. Realize that my school isn't the only one that is being affected by this underfunding but also middle schools and other high schools. Spring Garden School is the elementary school that I went to throughout my middle school years and there were almost the exact same experiences as Palumbo. There were leakage issues as well as pipe burst and even sometimes flooding issues. This was throughout four to eight years ago but now I see that the funding that the school has accumulated has built a stronger and more safe school building which is great. If only that could be told about the other schools in Philadelphia however. There are still countless schools that need some sort of 'renovation' because some of the buildings are just overall really, really sad. I hope that my testimony finds you well and I'll be glad if I receive something back from you, the School Board. Thank you. -Edgar Moreno-Cabrera April 23rd 2025 Social Science Honors Academy At Palumbo

First Name	Last Name	Testimony
Kian	Lieu	<p>Dear School Board Members, Hello my name is Kian Lieu. I am a high school student currently attending Academy at Palumbo. I am writing this letter to address the multiple issues regarding the lack of funding for Philadelphia School District schools. Although my perspective consists of Academy of Palumbo, I am speaking for all schools that have similar issues within the district. The major issue with schools is the lack of resources and funding, specifically for our bathrooms. The conditions of our bathrooms are unacceptable, door locks broken, toilets unable to flush, no toilet paper, towels, and soap to cater for all the students in the school of Palumbo. This is deeply concerning as I have witnessed the lack of resources surrounding the bathrooms for four years. I have struggled with using the bathroom multiple times in the past, being uncomfortable and losing a sense of security with the poor conditions of the bathrooms. "Bathrooms are essentials for us." Council Member Nikil Saval stated. This shows the seriousness of school bathrooms in the Philadelphia School District. These are the bare minimum, there are many more facilities issues many schools need to overcome. Survey we have conducted for other schools reveals that students in the district have struggled with basic necessities for years. I believe that there is always room for improvement and in order to allow students to feel comfortable and safe in schools, we need to invest more in our schools for our students to be successful leaders for the future.</p>
Ivan	You	<p>Picture this, you're in class and then suddenly you gotta use the bathroom. You raise your hand and ask the teacher to go, they agree and you head to the bathroom on that floor. You got there but when you tried to open the door, you then noticed that it was suddenly locked so you go one floor down which is down a floor and also across on the other side. Luckily it wasn't LOCKED so you went in to do your business and you started to wash your hands. You reached for the soap but to your surprise there was no soap dispenser left on the wall. Furiously you tried to reach for some paper towels but you noticed the trash bin filled to the brim with already used paper towels. Yeah this is what I would usually experience during school. I would have to either run up a floor or down a floor just to use the restroom. Now hearing this compared to the girls bathrooms is a whole different thing. Their sinks aren't available most of the time and they only have a few stalls they could use with toilet paper. Not just our school bathrooms that need to be fixed but there are several other things that need to be fully funded for. Some classes are short on books they need for AP Psychology and some students have to spend their own money just to buy the book to use for the class but wouldn't need to use after they finish that class. Not only that but our athletic sports teams also don't have the funding and how they have to use the minimal things they are provided. These issues aren't just at Palumbo, but also other schools in the district, like our bathroom problems which Central also has and they also have a type of liquid leaking down from the ceiling in their girls bathrooms. It's not just my school that needs more funding, we are only requesting the action to fix our bathrooms that are currently a major problem to the students at Palumbo. Thank you for listening to this Testimony from Ivan from Academy At Palumbo.</p>
Meagan	Macklin	<p>My daughter is a sophomore at CAPA and we have encountered a myriad of issues this year. Most importantly she has not had an actual Math class for pretty much the entirety of the year. There was a long term substitute (Mr. Creamer) for the first quarter, the second quarter was described as a "free period" by my daughter and the other students I talked with, where a teacher would tell them to look at math videos but no one followed up, gave homework nor was tested yet she received a 'C' grade inexplicably. We complained/inquired about how this grade was calculated and were simply told that this second quarter's grade would be left out of the average for the year. For the majority of the third quarter there was also no long term sub or math teacher and although there was hardly any gradable work submitted (there is one test listed in the online classroom) my daughter received an 80 as a grade for this quarter. She and her classmated claim that everyone in the class was "just given an 80". Shouldn't this be listed as an incomplete grade rather than throwing these unsubstantiated grades out? There is a Math teacher now but my daughter claims he seems confused as to where to start and when I went for parent teacher conference he spent the entire time talking about how hard it was to start in the middle of the year with the expectation that he teach from the beginning. On top of this math teacher debacle there was no transparency from CAPA admin about the enrollment shortfalls that led to 5 beloved teachers being let go - one of which is this new Math teacher (not a beloved one by the way). If I was personally made aware, as an active parent in the HSA & community, that there was an enrollment shortage I would have made it my mission to personally advertise the school/help with audition responsibilities etc. Mr. Rauscher & Ms. Kane are two of the teachers that students look forward to seeing during the day and make the school experience better for every kid and to see teachers being forced out when there has already been a dearth in education at the school is disheartening for everyone. I am aware that the school district changed how students select schools based on a ranking system and this has been what P. Fulton has pointed to as the scapegoat for the massive drop in enrollment but I believe (and have heard from some internal sources) that there was a lack of administration guidance during the audition and enrollment process that added to the problem. Last, but definitely not least is the issue of Principal Fulton/the school administration's handling of these issues. I have already mentioned the lack of information going out to families during these administration errors. Making matters worse, during the last town hall that completely took over what was supposed to be a regular HSA meeting, the principal seemed unprepared for poignant questions from families and at one point displayed a screen with incoming students emails, names, phone numbers etc during an explanation about enrollment issues and seemed completely unaware that this was a violation of these students privacy. It was not until several parents and teachers in the group asked numerous times to take down his screen did he comply with no recognition that what he did was an egregious error. It also came out in this townhall that there was no Title 1 meeting to get input for the budget before it was enacted, another egregious error. This complete lack of preparedness & non-chalant, cavalier attitude towards taking responsibility for some of these problems in order to move forward is a further insult to the families & students. Handing out grades flippantly with no substance behind them, approving the budget without following protocol and then not being aware that showing a screen of private information is a no-no are all bad but put together we have a serious issue of incompetence. CAPA was a great institution and I am so sad that my daughter was so excited to get in only to be met with ignorance at the administrative level.</p>
Barbara	Dowdall	<p>We are at a critical moment. The board and superintendent's commendable prioritizing the restoration of our libraries with librarians seems thwarted by Washington's brutal cutting off of promised funds. We must stay determined. Make libraries our budget priority. Implement the excellent the work already done by our Director of Library Services. Enlist school district staff, families and students to secure the support of our mayor, city council, state legislators and governor is providing this essential resource.</p>
Anna	Winter	<p>Board of Education. There is compelling and well-documented research demonstrating the positive impact early college schools have on student achievement and postsecondary outcomes. We, the Philadelphia Middle College Foundation team, would like to share a few studies with the Board of Education that highlight these outcomes. The first is a 14-year study examining the impact of North Carolina's Early College Model. Key findings of this study indicate that students attending early colleges achieve postsecondary credentials at a higher rate than their peers who do not attend early college high schools. Six years after 12th grade, 44.3% of early college students earned a postsecondary credential, compared to 33.0% of their peers. This study also found that early college students were three times more likely to earn associate degrees than their peers who did not attend an early college. Furthermore, economically disadvantaged students were 4.5 percentage points more likely to earn their bachelor's degree than their peers. Lastly, the early college model helped students finish their degrees faster - by two years for associate degrees and by six months for bachelor degrees - saving both time and money (Source 1). The second is an experimental study published in 2025 examining the impact of early college high schools (ECHS) on students' college readiness in mathematics. The findings indicate that students attending early college high schools have increased achievement in mathematics. Notably, both academically prepared and underprepared students benefited from early colleges, with a greater impact observed among underprepared students (Source 2). We also want to highlight a collection of studies by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) that provide compelling evidence of early/middle college programs' success. AIR's first study in 2009 found that early college participants did well academically at both the high school and college levels, though there were differences depending on schools and student subgroups. This study also found that early college students learned and applied skills related to independence and responsibility (Source 3). AIR's initial impact study in 2013 revealed that early college students were more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to enroll in college after high school, more likely to earn a college degree and more likely to have positive high school experiences overall than comparison students (Source 4). Lastly, AIR's first follow-up study in 2020 shows: "1) participants had significantly higher rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college degree attainment (than comparison students)... 2) the positive impacts of Early Colleges on college enrollment and degree attainment continued for at least 6 years... (and) 3) per-student lifetime benefits of Early Colleges substantially exceeded the per-student cost" (Source 5). Philadelphia Middle College Foundation Team Source 1: Edmunds, J. A. (2020). What Happens When You Combine High School and College? UNCG SERVE Center. https://serve.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SER20001_PolicyBrief_FINAL.pdf Source 2: Arshavsky, Nina, et al. (2025). Improving College Readiness in Mathematics in the Context of a Comprehensive High School Reform. (EdWorkingPaper: 25-1131). Annenberg Institute at Brown University. https://doi.org/10.26300/bd45-mf87 Source 3: American Institutes for Research®. (2009, August). Six Years and Counting: The ECHSI Matures. Retrieved July 1, 2024, from https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/ECHSI_Eval_Report_2009_081309_0.pdf Source 4: American Institutes for Research®. (2014, March). Early College Means Early Success for Students. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Early%20College%20Report%20Summary%20031914.pdf Source 5: American Institutes for Research®. (2020, January). The Lasting Benefits of Early College High Schools. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Lasting-Benefits-Early-College-High-Schools-Brief-Feb-2020.pdf. AIR is currently conducting a second follow-up study on workforce and life outcomes from 2021-24.</p>
Jessica	Lowenthal	<p>I am unable to attend this meeting in person, so I am submitting testimony, as a concerned parent at CAPA school, about a reduction in teaching staff proposed for next year. We have only just learned that for the coming school year, CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts High School) faces a reduction in teaching staff, including a math teacher. I write to urge you to adjust budgets so that CAPA can retain its existing math staff. The current math staff seems necessary, from my perspective, for CAPA to meet its instructional needs, including advanced math options and expected course sequencing. Reducing the staff will have great negative impact on the school community, future enrollment, test scores, and equity. I have four points: (1) CAPA has already experienced a math teacher shortage the last two years; students have lost valuable math instruction. Reducing math staff now will only compound this problem. CAPA students are, in general, behind their peers in math. (2) Currently enrolled CAPA students selected CAPA based on expectations about course sequencing and options, including AP classes and calculus; the reduction in course offerings is like a bait and switch. This is not what these students expected or signed up for. (3) A change like this will likely further erode CAPA's enrollment numbers (for any student interested in advanced math as well as art. CAPA will remain second or third or fourth choice to Central, Masterman and Palumbo). (4) Eliminating advanced math options at CAPA, and allowing the existing math achievement gap to fester, will deepen existing inequities. Thank you for reading my concerns.</p>