

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM
ROOM 140
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2009
5:18 P.M.

PRESENTATION ON SENATE BILL 850

PANEL 13 OF 15

BEFORE:

HONORABLE DWIGHT EVANS, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE MATTHEW D. BRADFORD
HONORABLE WILLIAM C. KORTZ III
HONORABLE DEBERAH KULA
HONORABLE BRYAN R. LENTZ
HONORABLE TIM MAHONEY
HONORABLE JOSH SHAPIRO
HONORABLE MATTHEW SMITH
HONORABLE MARIO J. CIVERA, JR., MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE GORDON DENLINGER
HONORABLE JOHN R. EVANS
HONORABLE MAUREE GINGRICH
HONORABLE DAVID R. MILLARD
HONORABLE RON MILLER
HONORABLE DOUGLAS G. REICHLEY
HONORABLE RICHARD R. STEVENSON

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

HONORABLE KEVIN P. MURPHY

JEAN DAVIS REPORTING

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ALSO PRESENT:
MIRIAM A. FOX
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
EDWARD J. NOLAN
MINORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEBRA B. MILLER
REPORTER

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I N D E X

TESTIFIERS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
GARY MATSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTHERN TIER INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (NTIEC).....	4, 38
NATAKI McNEAL BHATTI COMMUNITY ARTIST, PAINTER, AND EDUCATOR.....	4, 32
TRACY BECK PA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION (PATF).....	4, 28
FRED STRATHMEYER, JR. STRATHMEYER FORESTS, INC.....	4, 25
ROBIN STRATHMEYER PA CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS ASSOCIATION.....	4, 23
RUBY ALBLASY TEACHER, WARWICK CHILD CARE CENTER.....	4, 18
DR. MONITA G. HARA FORMER SUPERINTENDENT, SCRANTON STATE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF.....	4, 12
WENDY J. WHITESELL DIRECTOR, THE BENNETT FAMILY CENTER, UNIVERSITY PARK, PA.....	5
DAVID TROUTMAN AgrABILITY FOR PENNSYLVANIANS.....	42

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 * * *

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: What I would like
4 to do is have you just go around and introduce
5 yourself for the purpose of the stenographer, and
6 then we'll wind up starting.

7 Yes?

8 MR. MATSON: Gary Matson, from the Northern
9 Tier Industry and Education Consortium.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Okay.

11 MS. McNEAL BHATTI: My name is Natakhi McNeal
12 Bhatti. I'm a community artist and educator.

13 MS. BECK: Tracy Beck with the Pennsylvania
14 Assistive Technology Foundation.

15 MR. STRATHMEYER: Fred Strathmeyer, Jr.,
16 Strathmeyer Forest Company in York, Pennsylvania.

17 MS. STRATHMEYER: Robin Strathmeyer, and I'm
18 representing the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers
19 Association.

20 MS. ALBLASY: My name is Ruby Alblasy. I'm
21 a parent. I'm in consumer services, and I'm also a
22 toddler teacher at Warwick Child Care Center in
23 Lionville, Pennsylvania.

24 DR. HARA: Monita Hara. I was
25 Superintendent of the Scranton State School for the

1 Deaf.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Okay.

3 MS. WHITESELL: And I'm Wendy Whitesell from
4 the Bennett Family Center at University Park.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Wendy, why don't
6 we start with you, and take your time.

7 MS. WHITESELL: Good -- almost good evening,
8 I guess, and thanks for having me here today.

9 As I stated, my name is Wendy Whitesell, and
10 I have a direct interest in Senate Bill 850 on early
11 care and education programs.

12 When my children were young, I was a
13 Head Start parent, and I was trained in that program,
14 received my CDA and worked for 8 years as a home
15 visitor, a classroom teacher, and finally as their
16 social service advisor.

17 I helped to design and start and direct a
18 private child-care center for the next 3 years, and
19 then got my teaching certification in special
20 education and then a master's degree in early
21 education.

22 For the past 15 years, I have been the
23 Director at the Bennett Family Center at University
24 Park, Pennsylvania, where we have 135 children from
25 birth up through kindergarten.

1 And I thank you for the opportunity to share
2 these thoughts about Senate Bill 850.

3 The Bennett Family Center would directly,
4 of course, be impacted by this as we provide
5 Pre-K Counts for 3- and 4-year-olds. We collaborate
6 with the Head Start Partnership. We have children
7 being served by Early Intervention. We utilize
8 Child Care Works funding to help parents, and we
9 participate in the Keystone STARS to support the
10 program's level of quality.

11 All of these funds have allowed our program
12 to support families on a continuum of care for their
13 children, one of the most important predictors of
14 social and emotional stability for a child and
15 success for school entry.

16 There is substantial evidence that
17 Pre-K Counts is having a great impact on children who
18 are at risk of educational failure.

19 Research shows the potential for a
20 tremendous return on the investment in high-quality
21 pre-K of about \$16 for every \$1 invested, and I've
22 seen those benefits over the past 2 years.

23 And the results are being replicated
24 statewide, as nearly 70 percent of the children at
25 the end of the first academic year of Pre-K Counts

1 showed age-appropriate skills and behaviors. This
2 means that we are giving children the learning boost
3 that they need in order to be ready for school.

4 This isn't in my thing, but I just met with
5 some kindergarten teachers these past couple of
6 weeks, and they were thrilled that the children are
7 coming ready for school, but they are still concerned
8 about so many children that are not coming ready for
9 school still.

10 So this not only puts children in a better
11 position to achieve academically, but it can help
12 save school costs for things like special education
13 and remediation. And we all know that saving schools
14 money means that we are saving local taxpayers money
15 as well.

16 The evidence of quality early care and
17 education programs is not just supported by these
18 excellent results of Pre-K Counts in these first
19 2 years but on the foundation of research completed
20 on the Perry Preschool Project from 1962 to '67 and
21 the Abecedarian Project in 1972 to '77.

22 These programs set the bar for what is now
23 the quality system of Keystone STARS here in
24 Pennsylvania and the eventuality of the development
25 of Pre-K Counts.

1 The measures of their evidence show less
2 need for remediation in schools, more high school
3 graduates, completion of higher-level degrees, less
4 incarcerations, and more productive workers.

5 I know that there are more children in our
6 area who could benefit from Pre-K Counts. The
7 partnership that I coordinate consists of
8 4 child-care programs serving over 50 Pennsylvania
9 Pre-K Counts children, and together we have
10 85 children on a waiting list at our centers.

11 The other two grantees in our county, the
12 Cen-Clear Child Services and the Child Development
13 and Family Council, have 70 and 25 additional
14 children on their waiting lists respectively.

15 I receive an inquiry almost every day on
16 average about Pre-K Counts. At the start of this
17 school year, the statewide waiting list has numbered
18 more than 3,500 children.

19 Cutting the program as suggested under
20 Senate Bill 850 would mean that about 6,500 slots for
21 children, half of those currently funded, would be
22 eliminated from the program, and the waiting list of
23 children at risk of educational failure would
24 balloon.

25 I ask you, please, do not accept this cut in

1 pre-K funding and support the proposal to increase
2 the State's investment in the program to add at least
3 1,000 more children.

4 Another program that suffers a huge cut
5 under this bill is the State Head Start Supplemental
6 Assistance Program. It provides vital education and
7 other services, including health, nutrition, parent
8 involvement, and family support services to
9 Pennsylvania's lowest-income and highest-risk
10 children and their families.

11 By providing comprehensive services along
12 with a high-quality, individualized educational
13 experience for each child, Head Start programs are
14 able to help prepare our most at-risk children and
15 their families for success.

16 Head Start is a smart investment that shows
17 a positive return, not only in terms of academic
18 achievement but better lifetime outcomes as well.

19 I know of Head Start families struggling
20 with poverty in my own center now, even as they
21 strive to make a better life for themselves and their
22 children. Our partnership provides a home visitor to
23 help connect the family more closely with our
24 teachers and their classroom.

25 I personally know of a mother with three

1 children under 3 years of age, going to school
2 full time, a single mom, and trying to work. She
3 relies heavily on the relationships with the home
4 visitor and the classroom teachers as she navigates
5 child-development issues, household budgets,
6 relationships at home, and many systems of services
7 within our county.

8 This bill could cut the State's investment
9 in Head Start in half, and this comes at a time when
10 economic insecurity is peaking in the midst of the
11 most challenging economic times this generation has
12 ever witnessed.

13 Experts predict that the current recession
14 is creating more poverty, which could result in a
15 30-percent increase in the number of eligible
16 children in the next 2 years.

17 Most Head Start programs already maintain
18 waiting lists of eligible children. Ninety-six
19 percent of Pennsylvania's Head Start programs are
20 already 100-percent enrolled.

21 And finally, I would like to briefly address
22 Child Care Works.

23 The program has kept working families
24 working by providing subsidies for child care to
25 employed parents, and keeping them working is a good

1 public policy during a recession.

2 Finding safe, affordable child care is a
3 priority for working families, especially low-income
4 families. At Bennett where I work, we have a
5 sliding-fee scale, so families are able to, all
6 families of different incomes are able to access our
7 program, and we still have some families on
8 Child Care Works.

9 I appreciate the opportunity to be here
10 today, and I hope that in your deliberations you will
11 consider the effects of Senate Bill 850 on the
12 Commonwealth's children and families and reject its
13 cuts to Pre-K Counts, Head Start, Keystone STARS,
14 Early Intervention, and Child Care Works.

15 And I sincerely hope that at a time of need,
16 you can put the needs of children first in the State
17 budget and make it a priority to invest in these
18 programs.

19 Thank you.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you.

21 MS. WHITESELL: I'm going to ask if I can
22 leave. I have a mother who just had a problem and I
23 need to travel. Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Do we have copies
25 of your testimony?

1 MS. WHITESELL: Yes, you do have copies of
2 it. Thank you.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: David Troutman,
4 you can grab that seat right there. Thank you.

5 The next person? Doctor?

6 DR. HARA: Okay.

7 My name is Monita Hara, and I appreciate,
8 Chairman Evans, you inviting me to be here today and
9 the other Committee Members. I appreciate this
10 opportunity.

11 I would like to begin my testimony with a
12 quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. He says, "Our
13 lives begin to end the day we become silent about
14 things that matter."

15 I come to you today as an advocate that
16 hopes that you will listen to my testimony with an
17 open mind, open ears, and open heart, for it is
18 ultimately in your hands what happens to the Scranton
19 State School for the Deaf.

20 In March 2008, I was contacted by the
21 Pennsylvania Department of Education and told that I
22 was to be at a meeting to discuss an audit.

23 At this meeting, an audit was never
24 discussed. Information was shared with me that the
25 purpose of this meeting was for a transition plan to

1 be put in plan for the Scranton State School for the
2 Deaf. This was in March of '08.

3 I explained to the people at this meeting,
4 who had no expertise or no knowledge in educating
5 deaf persons nor deaf students, why it was important
6 that the Scranton State School for the Deaf remain
7 there.

8 It has been in Scranton for 129 years. The
9 land was donated by the Pennsylvania Coal Company,
10 and the buildings are all in excellent condition. It
11 sits in the beautiful area of Green Ridge.

12 I stated that the dormitory residence
13 program at SSSD provides students with a well-rounded
14 and comprehensive education due to the ability for
15 the students to learn independent living skills and
16 to be exposed to deaf role models.

17 SSSD has highly-qualified teachers that are
18 capable of moving between two languages, which are
19 American Sign Language and English.

20 SSSD students are not a good fit for the
21 intermediate units and the typical mainstream program
22 for many reasons. Probably one of the most is that
23 there is a lack of certified interpreters in the
24 State of Pennsylvania.

25 Students who live in northeast Pennsylvania

1 will not be allowed the option of choosing a school
2 that is closer to their home. Parents will not have
3 the advantage of contacting and visiting the school
4 as often, nor participating in extracurricular
5 activities.

6 I discussed how deaf children are educated
7 and why they should be educated in this manner.

8 I discussed the affection and fond memories
9 that students that graduate from schools for the deaf
10 have and why this is so, and why deaf people who are
11 old and gray will do everything in their power to get
12 back to their School for the Deaf should an activity
13 be occurring.

14 I discussed how cochlear implantation has
15 evolved through the years, and we are now considered
16 in the third generation of cochlear implants. The
17 assumption was, with this group, that a cochlear
18 implant would solve the problem of deafness.

19 I explained that even though a child may
20 have an implant, it in no way takes away deafness.
21 It is part of their existence.

22 Many activities have occurred since that
23 meeting in March '08. As you know, in October,
24 Chairman Evans, our budget was cut by 7.5 percent to
25 \$6.5 million.

1 I attended the budget hearing forum at
2 Marywood University and had the opportunity to speak
3 on behalf of our school and our students.

4 On February 3, in the evening, I received a
5 call from Dr. Zahorchak to inform me that the next
6 morning, on February 4, his senior staff would be
7 deployed to our school to announce that the school
8 would be closing July 1, 2009.

9 Indeed, on February 4, Governor Rendell
10 announced his budget. SSSD has been a line item in
11 the Governor's budget for decades.

12 Very quickly, parents, students, staff, and
13 the community began working on behalf of saving SSSD.
14 To think that another school could come in and take
15 over SSSD after 129 years is not only unacceptable,
16 it is denying the parents and students of northeast
17 Pennsylvania a place to be proud of and a place to
18 call home.

19 Fifty-one thousand signatures were delivered
20 to the Governor at a rally here in the Capitol on
21 April 29 in support of SSSD.

22 There are other legislative acts in order
23 for SSSD to be handed over to any other entity, as
24 you all know, whether it be for leasing purposes,
25 funding purposes, or for a transfer of entities to

1 occur.

2 We have been presented a transition plan.
3 We have had no participation in this transition plan.
4 We have been left out of this entire process.

5 The thing that is the most disturbing is
6 that the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the
7 Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf out of
8 Pittsburgh began their takeover in February of '09.

9 They are so confident that WPSD will be on
10 the property at SSSD that they are setting up
11 meetings with parents as we speak via an office in
12 Scranton.

13 This has been a detrimental and calculated
14 attack on parents, students, staff, and the
15 community.

16 Through the entire process, parents' and
17 employees' rights have been violated, and students
18 and parents have been emotionally fraught with fear,
19 anger, and disappointment that these adults have
20 shown.

21 In closing, I would like for you to think
22 about why we are opposed to the \$5 million that has
23 been put in the Senate Bill 850 for transition
24 purposes for someone to take over SSSD.

25 I would like to ask that you think about

1 what I have shared with you today. I ask that you
2 open your minds and your hearts and your ears, for no
3 one is so deaf but those that will not listen.

4 Take with you from this presentation a
5 willingness to care about what happens to these
6 families and these children of northeast Pennsylvania
7 and how they will be receiving a free, appropriate
8 public education in the future, as WPSD is not a
9 public school, it is not a State school: it is a
10 private school.

11 I ask you to think about how you will be
12 perceived as a Legislator that has been chosen to
13 help those that are in the most need.

14 I ask that you support Representative
15 Kevin Murphy's House Bill 1318, who proposes a
16 moratorium on this whole act.

17 I ask that you fund SSSD and investigate
18 before you legislate.

19 In closing, I would say again what
20 Martin Luther King has said: "Our lives begin to end
21 the day we become silent about things that matter."

22 Thank you.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you very
24 much.

25 Yes?

1 MS. ALBLASY: Hi.

2 Again, my name is Ruby Alblasy. I am the
3 mother of two children -- Amber, who is 11, and
4 Logan, who is 7 -- and I am also a teacher at Warwick
5 Child Care Center.

6 I am here today to share with you my unique
7 perspective and to relay to you the crucial role that
8 specific programs, past, present, and future, play in
9 my personal success and my children's success in
10 school, work, and in life.

11 I have lived on my own and provided for
12 myself since I was 14 years old. My parents weren't
13 able to support me by any means.

14 I became pregnant when I was 16 years old,
15 and it was then that I enrolled in the CAT-Pickering
16 vocational school to pursue their child-care program.
17 I wanted to learn how to take care of my child with
18 the hopes of attaining a real job skill.

19 It was there that I was introduced to the
20 Young Parents Program through the CCIU. This program
21 became a major support system for me.

22 I felt as though I had my own personal
23 advocates. They encouraged me to stay in school.
24 They educated me and gave me an awareness and
25 practical expectations as a mother-to-be and beyond.

1 It was there that I was able to develop parenting and
2 life skills that are still intact today.

3 Through my education, I also volunteered for
4 2 years in their preschool program and their
5 Head Start program.

6 After I had my daughter in January of my
7 junior year in high school, in 1998, I was able to
8 receive funding from Child Care Works. This program
9 allowed me to continue school, work, and adequately
10 provide for my family.

11 I got out of school half of the day to work
12 at a day-care center that my child attended. It was
13 crucial to me that my child had the chance to attend
14 a quality program that I trusted.

15 With this peace of mind, I was able to
16 finish high school, graduating in the top of my
17 class. I even started attending Delaware County
18 Community College during my senior year of high
19 school.

20 Unfortunately, after I graduated, my parents
21 passed away, and while I was pregnant with our second
22 child, their father was incarcerated for 3 years.

23 During this time, Child Care Works was my
24 and my children's only resource. This program gave
25 me the chance to work and to go back to school while

1 giving my children the care, the education, and the
2 consistency that they desperately needed.

3 After 10 years, I was finally able to finish
4 my associate's degree at Delaware County Community
5 College with a 3.66 GPA, and I started at Kaplan
6 University last summer in pursuit of my bachelor's.
7 I am also hoping to be able to get a T.E.A.C.H.
8 scholarship to pursue my early childhood education
9 degree.

10 My children have been very fortunate to have
11 had funding until last summer. I took them out of
12 care for the school year, and I tried to reapply for
13 funding in February for summer care, but I was put on
14 a waiting list. You can only imagine how devastated
15 I was to hear this.

16 Children learn through play, through
17 structured, safe play. I have come home to my
18 7-year-old dumpster-diving, continually playing in
19 the parking lot, and being influenced by the older
20 children in the neighborhood. He doesn't have a
21 proper place to play.

22 He has also been having behavioral issues in
23 school and recently starting counseling.

24 On the other hand, my 11-year-old daughter,
25 she continues to excel on here PSSAs, scoring

1 advanced in every level. She just took her first
2 babysitting course, including CPR and first aid. And
3 they both need care in a program that will engage
4 them, although for two very different reasons.

5 Because I have two children and the cost of
6 care has become so high, I have also debated whether
7 or not it would benefit me to work during the summer.

8 They attended a small center most of their
9 lives until last year when it went out of business.
10 I believe they were a two-star facility in which I
11 worked at for 5 years.

12 Last summer, my children were able to attend
13 a summer camp, but they did not participate in the
14 Keystone STARS program, which was directly reflected
15 within my children.

16 This year, I am hoping for funding in hopes
17 to send my children to Warwick where I currently work
18 and can attest to their Star 4 quality of care that
19 each child receives.

20 As a child-care center, Warwick accepts
21 Child Care Works, takes pride as a Star 4 center, has
22 a great Pre-K Counts classroom, and participates in
23 the T.E.A.C.H. program. They even provide snacks and
24 meals, and they consider the whole child.

25 Everyone benefits from this. You can not

1 only see the direct benefits in the attending
2 children and their families but in their valued
3 employees, surrounding communities, and outreach
4 efforts.

5 When you cut funding, you not only
6 jeopardize the future of successful mothers but
7 caregivers, children, businesses, and the community
8 as a whole.

9 I am a product of these programs, and I
10 could never have done it without all the support. I
11 share all this with you in hopes that you can see
12 firsthand the tremendous benefits of available
13 funding.

14 I have been faced with many obstacles along
15 the way, many of which I've had no control over, but
16 with these programs, my children and I have been able
17 to not only survive but thrive. And it is my hope
18 that my children and all the other children on the
19 waiting lists have the opportunity to experience such
20 care that will enrich their lives forever.

21 My life could have taken many turns, and I
22 thank you for all your support, and it has been truly
23 amazing that I have been able to be provided with all
24 of these opportunities.

25 Thank you very much.

1 MS. STRATHMEYER: Hello. I'm Robin
2 Strathmeyer, and I will be representing the
3 Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association, so
4 we're switching gears a little bit.

5 And I'm talking on behalf of ag research,
6 and we will be sharing with you some examples of what
7 can happen when ag research is not available.

8 Ag research is crucial to the sustainability
9 of our industry. It provides new opportunities to
10 growers, but most importantly, it provides knowledge.

11 Specifically pertaining to the Christmas
12 tree commodity, we are challenged with insects that
13 can be damaging to an entire crop. If research is
14 not available to the growers, we will not know how to
15 combat problems nor will they even be aware of what
16 is happening.

17 For instance, our State tree, the Hemlock,
18 has been invested by the Woolly Adelgid, which is a
19 fluid-feeding insect that feeds on Hemlock trees.

20 The entire eastern North America, including
21 Pennsylvania, has been attacked by these egg sacks.
22 Needle drop and branch die-back takes over, and
23 eventually the tree dies.

24 Without the research, how would any of us
25 understand the pest or problem, or most importantly,

1 none of us would know how to dispose of the insect.

2 Hemlocks would become void in any landscape,
3 whether in our yards or near a trout stream.

4 Ag research is the support and the backbone
5 for all agriculture. Whether we are talking about
6 fruit orchards, mushrooms, strawberries, corn, wheat,
7 vegetables, deciduous or conifer trees, the list goes
8 on.

9 Research opens doors; one area is genetics.
10 This pertains to all agricultural products. For
11 conifer growers, this involves grafting two different
12 trees to grow one as a superior product.

13 Just to put our commodity, the Christmas
14 tree, in perspective, growers in our industry invest
15 6 to 15 years in that one tree before the product is
16 harvested. It is a long-term and a lifelong
17 investment.

18 In one infestation or devastating situation,
19 an entire field of trees could be wiped out. The
20 consequence is huge. This means loss of sales, which
21 promotes loss of jobs.

22 Our company has been in existence for over
23 75 years. We are the fourth generation to continue
24 growing Christmas trees. Without the partnering of
25 those at Penn State and other universities, we would

1 not have been able to provide a quality product,
2 knowledge, or experience to our customers.

3 Isn't the thrust currently all about our
4 environment and going green? Why then would we
5 threaten one of the most precious segments of our
6 lives.

7 Agriculture is an ingredient of the
8 environment, and research is the support. We are
9 asking you to consider placing the moneys back into
10 the budget so that we may continue with ag research
11 for Christmas trees and all other agriculture
12 products.

13 And we also have a map showing the
14 devastation that we have had with the Hemlock in our
15 State.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to
17 you.

18 MR. STRATHMEYER: Chairman Evans and
19 Committee Members, my name is Fred Strathmeyer, Jr.
20 I'm Robin's brother.

21 I'm going to speak a little bit more from
22 the small business that we are in York County.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: What county is
24 that?

25 MR. STRATHMEYER: York County. We are in

1 York, Adams, Cumberland, and Schuylkill County
2 actually.

3 We are not only in the Christmas tree
4 business; we are in the landscape business, we are an
5 ag-applicator business, and we also raise some
6 pheasants.

7 The reason I'm bringing this to all of your
8 attention is, if you notice, it's all about
9 agricultural products here in the State of
10 Pennsylvania, our number-one commodity.

11 Ag research is vital to every segment that I
12 do every day I wake up. It is extremely critical
13 that the moneys be reinstated into the budget for the
14 ag research at PDA.

15 Just some examples as far as how it affects
16 us as a business. The Hemlock that you are passing
17 around, the one that had the green on the end that
18 looked viable? That's the good piece. The other one
19 that is kind of looking nasty and dead, that's the
20 one that has the Woolly Adelgid.

21 Currently, the State of Pennsylvania is
22 restricted from shipping to the States of
23 New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont.

24 We are also required by the States of Ohio,
25 Michigan, and Wisconsin to have a Phytosanitary

1 certificate accompanying our product.

2 If this Woolly Adelgid is not dealt with,
3 our States will follow suit, and we will be
4 restricted to shipment around the rest of the
5 country.

6 The other thing that I think needs to be
7 brought up about the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is the
8 Balsam Woolly Adelgid, and I bring that up simply
9 because I'm sure that some of you have been down to
10 the Smokey Mountains down through North Carolina and
11 Tennessee.

12 In the tips of those mountains is the
13 Frazier Fir and the Natural Stands. Those Natural
14 Stands today do not exist. It has been devastated
15 and destroyed by the Balsam Woolly Adelgid.

16 The proposal is that there are researchers
17 at Penn State and other universities that are
18 currently looking to combat and find resistant
19 strains in the species of Hemlock to combat this
20 Woolly Adelgid in the Hemlock. That is just one
21 segment or one piece of research that goes on.

22 Again, I bring up the fact that I'm speaking
23 not just for the evergreens that we grow for
24 Christmas trees but for the rest of the ag industry
25 that we also represent.

1 And so again I would simply beg your
2 assistance in reinstating the dollars that are
3 required for ag research at PDA.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. BECK: My name is Tracy Beck, and I'm
6 here to talk about assistive technology. However, I
7 forgot my own assistive technology, my reading
8 glasses, so, Chairman Evans, I might have to ask you
9 to hold this.

10 (A pair of glasses was given to Ms. Beck.)

11 MS. BECK: Thank you very much.

12 MR. STRATHMEYER: Ag research.

13 MS. BECK: Yes.

14 Again, my name is Tracy Beck, and I'm
15 representing the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology
16 Foundation.

17 Regarding Senate Bill 850, we are asking
18 that funding be reinstated back into the assistive
19 technology line item under the Department of Labor
20 and Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

21 This includes all funding for the
22 Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation as well
23 as the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Lending
24 Library.

25 In the Governor's fiscal year 2010 budget,

1 level funding was retained at \$1.3 million, split
2 between the Assistive Technology Foundation at
3 \$500,000 and the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology
4 Lending Library at \$800,000.

5 In fiscal year 2009, the Pennsylvania
6 General Assembly appropriated \$500,000 for the
7 Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation for its
8 low-interest loan program.

9 With these dollars, the Foundation leveraged
10 an additional \$3.5 million for loans to help people
11 who have disabilities purchase the devices they need
12 to stay in their own homes, be able to work, and be
13 able to be members of their communities.

14 The Pennsylvania Assistive Technology
15 Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides
16 low-interest loans to people with disabilities and
17 older Pennsylvanians so that they can purchase
18 assistive technology devices.

19 The Foundation also provides information to
20 consumers about other potential funding sources.
21 Many of the Foundation's borrowers would either not
22 qualify for loans from traditional banks or could not
23 afford the interest rates they charge.

24 The Foundation has the ability to guarantee
25 loans so that the lender will extend the credit.

1 Since 1998, we have extended approximately
2 \$19.1 million in loans.

3 (Removed glasses.)

4 Actually, these are worse. But thank you
5 anyway.

6 The Foundation serves Pennsylvania residents
7 of all ages, disability, diagnosis, and health
8 conditions. We serve people of all income levels.

9 Borrowers are purchasing items not typically
10 covered by insurance or other funding sources. The
11 Foundation has helped more than 1,500 Pennsylvanians
12 purchase items, such as adaptive vehicles, home
13 modifications, ramps, rolling showers, accessible
14 kitchens, hearing aids, computers, wheelchairs,
15 scooters, and low-vision aids.

16 The Foundation has not seen a significant
17 decline in the number of our loan applications.
18 However, in today's economic climate, the credit
19 crunch is making financing more difficult for
20 everyone, including our borrowers.

21 Banks have changed their underwriting
22 criteria, and the requirements for a traditional loan
23 are much more stringent. The Foundation is being
24 required to guarantee a much greater proportion,
25 almost 50 percent, of all loans that we extend.

1 When a loan is guaranteed, we are required
2 to set aside the amount of money equal to the amount
3 of the loan that we are giving out. The guaranteed
4 amounts are freed up when the loans are repaid and we
5 are able to recycle that money back into the
6 community for more loans.

7 If the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology
8 Foundation does not receive funding, that would mean
9 more than 300 consumers who could have received a
10 loan for the year will go without the assistive
11 technology device that they need.

12 In addition, approximately 900 people will
13 not be provided with the information about potential
14 funding resources.

15 The Foundation will have no other option but
16 to proceed with a thoughtful 12- to 18-month shutdown
17 of operations. We have about 15 months' worth of
18 funding in reserve right now.

19 On behalf of all of our borrowers, I ask you
20 to reinstate funding in the budget for assistive
21 technology at the level it was originally funded --
22 \$1.3 million.

23 Thank you very much.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you.

25 Yes?

1 MS. McNEAL BHATTI: Good afternoon.

2 First, I just want to say thank you so much
3 for giving me the opportunity to be here today.

4 My name is Nataki McNeal Bhatti. I come
5 today as a citizen who votes, as well as a community
6 artist, painter, and educator.

7 I'm here today to offer my personal
8 testimony and opinion on the vital importance of arts
9 and cultural programming within the grassroots
10 community, in opposition to Senate Bill 850's
11 zero-line budget for arts and culture.

12 If I could paint you a picture of what arts
13 and culture symbolize to me, it would depict a
14 beautiful indigenous woman buried in an unmarked
15 grave.

16 My mother, Diane McNeal, was an artist. She
17 had galleries and studios in Philadelphia as well as
18 Atlanta, Georgia. She was a very intelligent,
19 beautiful woman, educated in the seventies, but also
20 a single parent and struggled with two, to raise my
21 brother and I, as well as to maintain her own
22 business in which she offered her artistic services.

23 My grandfather, although he would not admit
24 it, was a folk artist. He was one to go
25 garbage-picking and collect things that other people

1 considered junk and make art out of it. That was his
2 hobby.

3 So I tell you about that because that is the
4 legacy in which I come from. I come from a long line
5 of artists. My father is also a classical musician
6 and painter out of Philadelphia.

7 This is a heritage that I seek to honor
8 through my life's work, which is community art and
9 heritage art.

10 For the past 10 years, I have worked
11 extensively in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, conceiving,
12 implementing, and instructing grassroots
13 community-based art projects and programming for
14 youth, women, and families.

15 And this is where art is used as a verb,
16 which means it's used to educate, to motivate, and to
17 heal the community.

18 One of the workshop series I have done was
19 exploring pregnancy through art, where pregnant women
20 were educated about alternative birth practices as
21 well as help to prepare for their labor and birth.

22 The Nataki Home Workshop Series reintroduces
23 communal art forms like tapestry and weaving, but
24 also combines that with the principles of social
25 entrepreneurship.

1 As an instructor, I have been contracted by
2 many organizations here in Harrisburg to lead
3 community-based art instruction for youth as well as
4 adults, and I have also acted as a liaison for arts
5 and cultural nonprofits to have special outreach to
6 underserved populations.

7 So through these State-funded programs and
8 projects -- and I just have to add that mainly these
9 projects are funded from the Pennsylvania Council on
10 the Arts, which is the only statewide agency that
11 offers or places emphasis on diverse cultures and
12 minorities and is also the only one of the major
13 sources of funding for arts programming and
14 organizations here in Harrisburg.

15 But through these funded programs, this is
16 how -- I know firsthand how arts and cultural
17 programming impacts our community and is a
18 demonstrated tool for effective change and
19 transformation.

20 As adults, former students often approach me
21 with praises and testimony, "Oh, Miss Nataki, you
22 don't know how much you impacted my life"; "That play
23 that we put on just really gave me the confidence
24 that I needed to go to school."

25 Not only does art programming constructively

1 engage our youth; it gives them a measure of
2 achievement that contributes to their success. So
3 picture the resonating smile of a child who just
4 completed a self-portrait painting, who says "I did
5 it"; "I did it."

6 "I did it" plants the confirmation that they
7 can succeed. Once success is achieved, it can be
8 achieved again. And arts-based programming offers an
9 alternative for youth to express themselves, and it
10 gives them the strength of character to continue and
11 to succeed despite the violence in our community, the
12 lack of after-school programming, and so forth.

13 So being a community artist is not a choice;
14 it is a call to duty. We sacrifice our health, our
15 families, and our financial stability.

16 And I would like to talk about my mother,
17 because she was the one who helped prepare me for
18 this type of work.

19 In Harrisburg, with a competitive and
20 limited resource pool, as is, we have too little
21 funding to fully implement programming and projects
22 without the dedication of volunteers, family members,
23 and private members of the community. Yet, without
24 State funding, arts programming would not at all be
25 possible in Harrisburg.

1 This summer, I'm going to begin a graduate
2 program in community arts at the Maryland Institute
3 College of Art in Baltimore, and my goal is to
4 learn how to develop more programs and to become a
5 more effective tool and advocate for arts
6 transformation.

7 My fear is when I return, with a zero-line
8 budget for arts and culture, there will be no
9 organizations to employ me. There will be no sources
10 of State grants to build programming. And most
11 importantly, the miraculous infrastructure that arts
12 organizations, artists, and community have worked so
13 hard to build will be dismantled and lost.

14 And the reason why I say that, because it's
15 often on a grassroots level. You may have a grant
16 for \$3,000, and that \$3,000, I have done an entire
17 summer program with \$3,000 and taught youth about
18 HIV/AIDS education and awareness.

19 So that point is to demonstrate how, even
20 with such little funding, that people within the
21 community -- artists, educators, the organizations
22 alike -- we are working together to provide the best
23 service for our community.

24 So arts and cultural funding is the backbone
25 of our sacrifice, and we need your support.

1 Ironically, even with this economic crisis,
2 this is when we need the arts the most. Arts and
3 cultural programming have the potential to completely
4 revitalize our neighborhoods, as it has been said,
5 and instill the creative and innovative values in our
6 youth so that they can help change themselves.

7 It is in a crisis that the transformative
8 power of arts-based programming can best serve our
9 community -- art as a process that nurtures the
10 spirit of a people.

11 So I just hope that I have given you a
12 perspective -- an artist's perspective, a mother's
13 perspective, a perspective of someone who works
14 within the trenches with the youth of this community
15 -- and that you will consider what I have said. And
16 that despite our present economic crisis, consider
17 how arts programming is serving our youth and is
18 creating jobs for artists and educators.

19 I thank you for allowing me to speak here
20 today, and I again urge you to continue to invest in
21 our youth and the arts and culture sector and honor
22 the sacrifice so that I may honor the sacrifice of
23 those who came before us.

24 Thank you.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you.

1 MR. MATSON: I think I will change this to
2 good evening, and thank you for giving me this
3 opportunity to offer testimony.

4 My name is Gary Matson, and I'm the
5 Executive Director of the Northern Tier Industry and
6 Education Consortium.

7 We are a nonprofit organization serving
8 Tioga, Bradford, Susquehanna, Sullivan, and Wyoming
9 Counties, or as we call it, The Woods.

10 Our mission is to provide career awareness
11 for students in the 22 school districts in our area
12 so these students will be prepared to pursue their
13 chosen career and enter the workforce after
14 graduation from high school or college.

15 Many students would like to live and work in
16 the northern tier when they become adults. Our goal
17 is to help this happen by being an intermediary
18 working to connect the education community to the
19 business community.

20 I have received information indicating that
21 Senate Bill 850 has provisions that would reduce the
22 DCED budget for Educational Improvement Tax Credits.

23 These tax credits are currently divided in
24 three ways -- to educational improvement
25 organizations, to scholarship organizations, and to

1 prekindergarten scholarship organizations.

2 Supposedly, the Senate Bill would eliminate
3 the educational improvement organization portion.
4 Strangely enough, this is the most sought after tax
5 credit.

6 The yearly budget amount for educational
7 improvement organizations, which I believe is in the
8 \$35 million range, is committed the first day of
9 business in the budget year -- the first day -- while
10 the other two types, scholarship organizations and
11 prekindergarten scholarship organizations, have funds
12 remaining late in the budget year, and I think in an
13 e-mail I got a couple of weeks ago, there was still
14 money.

15 My organization, in NTIEC, is an approved
16 educational improvement organization. Let me try to
17 explain how all this works.

18 One of NTIEC's programs is called the Youth
19 Apprentice Program. Under this program, we work with
20 high school guidance departments to identify students
21 who would benefit from a work-based learning
22 experience.

23 Some students need such an experience just
24 to keep them in school and graduate. Others need
25 this experience to assure that they have chosen the

1 right college major and career path.

2 To complete the Youth Apprentice Program,
3 NTIEC solicits local businesses to give these
4 students a work experience, either a minimum of
5 8 hours per week during the school year or full time
6 during the summer. We would like the employer to pay
7 them, normally minimum wage, and expect anything of
8 them that they would a regular employee.

9 Yes, the student may start at the bottom of
10 the organization doing menial tasks, but we ensure
11 the student gets a look at how the business runs and
12 the careers available in the business while the
13 student develops basic work skills they will need in
14 the future.

15 Now, most companies want to support the
16 local young people and will work with us, but
17 especially in these economic times, the cost of
18 providing this valuable opportunity to students can
19 add up. These costs include student wages, the cost
20 of lost wages of the student's mentor, and other
21 costs associated with providing this position.

22 With layoffs and other cutbacks, the
23 businesses can't justify supporting our program, and
24 that is where the Educational Improvement Tax Credits
25 have been very helpful.

1 We work with the businesses to apply for an
2 EITC tax credit to partially reimburse their costs,
3 and then we supply the student if the business is
4 selected for the credit.

5 Occasionally in the past, businesses have
6 taken students with or without the tax credit, but
7 not today.

8 My purpose here is to give you a glimpse of
9 how this funding is put to good use and to ask you
10 not to reduce Educational Improvement Tax Credit
11 funding in your new State budget proposals.

12 I understand that the EITC program came into
13 existence as a tax cut for businesses to encourage
14 them to fund excellence in education.

15 I know from firsthand experience that this
16 has been achieved in my area of Pennsylvania and that
17 more businesses would help our future taxpayers make
18 good decisions about careers if the program remained
19 at its current funding level. And I was so crazy as
20 to say "or even got larger," since it was gone on the
21 first day just after noon, as I understand it.

22 Please support this valuable program in your
23 budget proposals. Thank you.

24 Do you have any questions?

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Let me get David.

1 MR. TROUTMAN: Thank you.

2 I apologize for not hearing my last name
3 whenever you were calling up here.

4 But I'm David Troutman. I'm from Lycoming
5 County, and I work with farmers across the
6 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who have a disability or
7 a health condition.

8 And I'm here before you today to address the
9 need for retaining the ICAN funding line item of the
10 Pennsylvania State budget under the Department of
11 Labor and Industry that has been zeroed out in
12 Senate Bill 850.

13 ICAN stands for "Independence Capital Access
14 Network."

15 ICAN grants are awarded to OVR customers to
16 provide for disability-related workplace
17 accommodations, including work site, building, and/or
18 vehicle modifications, specialized or adaptive
19 machinery and/or equipment.

20 ICAN grants currently can be written for up
21 to \$40,000 of grant funding with the applicant
22 providing a 20-percent cost share for purchased items
23 leading to their independence.

24 It is required of the grant applicant that
25 their business venture is currently functioning at a

1 level of commerce, production, revenue, et cetera,
2 sufficient to provide that individual with
3 substantial gainful employment in the business
4 identified as his or her primary vocational goal.

5 The resulting ICAN accommodation removes or
6 substantially reduces a disability-related
7 environmental barrier that impedes the person's
8 ability to be self-employed.

9 AgrAbility has been working with farmers
10 across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 1996 to
11 aide them in remaining independent by providing
12 information on how the individual can accommodate
13 equipment or the farmstead in relation to a
14 disability or health condition.

15 Because our program is run through USDA
16 grant funding, we have no resource dollars to provide
17 to the farmers for accommodations, and therefore,
18 we refer our clients to the Office of Vocational
19 Rehabilitation for their services and resources
20 in providing adaptations to equipment or the
21 farmstead.

22 ICAN funding allows OVR district offices the
23 ability to meet a farmer's need of retaining
24 independence while remaining a gainfully employed and
25 contributing member of their community.

1 Oftentimes, items needed by a farmer to
2 remain independent in their arduous task of cropping,
3 milking cows, or caring for animals each and every
4 day can be a significant cost as compared to an
5 office employee that could benefit by a desk that has
6 an adjustable height or a chair that could possibly
7 be suited with arm supports.

8 Without ICAN funding, OVR district offices
9 may be faced with providing farmers with Band-Aid
10 style supportive therapy as compared to meaningful
11 adaptations that can truly provide long-term
12 independence throughout the daily farm operation.

13 ICAN grants have made independence possible
14 in all of the lives of those that have utilized the
15 grant funding.

16 In several examples, Colby and Tim Lehman
17 from Franklin County are a set of brothers that have
18 a genetic dwarfism gene that will prevent them from
19 reaching a height of 4 feet. They have a desire to
20 milk cows with their father on their dairy farm in a
21 pit-style parlor.

22 An ICAN grant was used to purchase a
23 custom-built trolley system along each side of the
24 milking parlor to give them independence in their
25 task of milking cows while riding on the movable

1 trolley without causing secondary injuries to their
2 hips.

3 Robert Guidice and Carol Davis are a brother
4 and sister dairy farm partnership in Beaver County.
5 Carol has muscular dystrophy, and Robert had his foot
6 dismembered as the result of a silo-unloader
7 incident.

8 Both have mobility and weight-bearing
9 impairments. ICAN grant funding provided the
10 Track Milking system to allow Robert and Carol to
11 milk their 70-plus head of high-quality registered
12 dairy cows without needing to lift and carry the
13 20-some-pound milking units throughout the barn.

14 Robert also replaced his former method of
15 feeding cows with a manual wheelbarrow and pitchfork
16 with the addition of a mechanical feed cart.

17 Tim Fuller of Carlisle has an established
18 business of hoof-trimming dairy cows and heifers in a
19 very large area of Pennsylvania. A back impairment
20 had all but rendered him unable to work and sustain
21 himself with the arduous task of being on his feet
22 and bending over to trim hooves.

23 And ICAN grant purchased a specialized
24 trailer that allows Tim to control the climate while
25 trimming inside the trailer as opposed to outside in

1 the open environment, and it has an area for
2 accommodating Tim to take a needed rest or nap in the
3 afternoon to allow his spinal fluids to redistribute
4 along his disc in his back to provide shock
5 absorption for a longer period of work time
6 throughout the day.

7 Lastly, I share with you David Walrath of
8 Bradford County. David is a dairy farmer with his
9 wife and son and has had four hip replacements due to
10 the sockets being worn out with his physical
11 activities on the farm.

12 An ICAN grant purchased a mobility vehicle,
13 automatic hitches for his forage wagons, and a
14 hand-controlled skid-steer loader to improve and
15 provide independence in his tasks on the farm.

16 Due to his greater independence, these
17 accommodations have also allowed his son and wife to
18 take on other tasks in the farm operation. The
19 accommodations provided by the ICAN grant actually
20 allowed David to delay an additional hip replacement
21 for 2 years.

22 Prior to OVR and AgrAbility involvement and
23 help from ICAN funding, the Walraths were considering
24 the dark possibility of needing to sell out from the
25 dairy business.

1 On behalf of the farmers and small business
2 owners in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that have
3 a disability, I urge you to commit funding in the
4 budget for the ICAN grants at the level it was
5 originally funded at -- \$1 million.

6 The ICAN grants are dollars spent wholly on
7 the program objective with no funding being used for
8 oversight or administrative fees.

9 The ICAN grant funding is vital in keeping
10 individuals with disabilities vocationally employed.

11 I thank you for your attention.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Representative
13 Kortz.

14 REPRESENTATIVE KORTZ: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman.

16 And thank you all for testifying today.

17 Dr. Hara, I have one question for you.

18 Were there any discussions between the
19 Department of Education and the Administration in
20 Scranton as to reducing the operating costs of the
21 school and possibly keeping it open?

22 DR. HARA: I have a date of a meeting that
23 we had back in -- well, what happened after the March
24 meeting that I had mentioned in '08, our Board of
25 Trustees, which are appointed by the Governor,

1 requested a meeting with Dr. Zahorchak and the
2 Department of Education.

3 The meeting was held on July 28, after the
4 March '08 meeting, and he put to us that we should
5 have four mandates in place, and he gave us 45 days
6 to submit a plan to the Department of Education,
7 which we did.

8 The four mandates that he asked us for is to
9 reduce the budget by \$3 million; to improve our PSSA
10 testing scores, as all schools in Pennsylvania, you
11 know, are required to do; we were asked to reduce our
12 capital improvement projects, which had been on the
13 table for the Department of General Services for
14 many, many years under Governor Tom Ridge; and we
15 were asked to reduce the cost per student for
16 expenditures.

17 And with our 45 days that we submitted the
18 plan, we addressed every single one of those issues,
19 and we did not get any response back from the
20 Department of Education as to whether or not our plan
21 had been approved or not approved.

22 So that is where we were in the process.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KORTZ: So you had no
24 follow-up. They never got back to you at all after
25 you submitted the plan.

1 DR. HARA: No. None.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KORTZ: Okay. Thank you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Representative
5 Bradford.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BRADFORD: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 And obviously I want to thank all the
9 witnesses this evening for sticking around.

10 I also had a question regarding the Scranton
11 School.

12 Dr. Hara in particular, my question is, what
13 about the transition plan or what is being proposed
14 on July 1 that will, in the State's opinion, save
15 funds?

16 I understand that there is some confusion as
17 to what exactly happens on July 1. Is there a
18 transition? A new entity? Who is in charge on
19 July 1? How does this move forward?

20 DR. HARA: Well, as I stated, when we got
21 the word from the Governor's Office that our budget,
22 our line item budget would be eliminated, quickly the
23 Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf was the one
24 that the Department of Education designated as the
25 school that would be taking over.

1 And we were not involved in the process at
2 all of any sort of transition, which made everyone,
3 you know, very distraught as to what was going on.

4 Parents would call to contact me, what is
5 going to happen to the school? Where are my children
6 going to go to school? What about my Federal rights
7 as parents of special needs children? I had no
8 answers, because I had no communication with the
9 Department of Education.

10 And basically what is supposed to happen in
11 this transition plan is that year one, the Western
12 Pennsylvania School for the Deaf out of Pittsburgh
13 will take over the Scranton State School for the Deaf
14 on July 1 of '09.

15 They will operate a day and a residential
16 program. We have both. We operate on a \$6.5 million
17 budget, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a
18 year or 12 months a year. It is not a typical
19 school, you know, in that we come in at 8 and leave
20 at 3. We have three shifts of employees.

21 Their first year is to operate a day and a
22 residential program. Their second year, as it states
23 in the plan, there is no guarantee of location.

24 That is very disturbing in that the first
25 year, they are going to come in and provide a program

1 of day and residential, but the second year, there is
2 no guaranteed residential program.

3 The third year, there is, again, no
4 guarantee of location. It states that the Western
5 Pennsylvania School for the Deaf will only operate a
6 kindergarten through eighth grade program.

7 Understand, too, that under House Bill 1416,
8 the chartered schools for the deaf and blind in
9 Pennsylvania are to receive \$1.4 million in the
10 budget under House Bill 1416.

11 And I understand the transition money of
12 \$5 million that is now proposed under Senate Bill 850
13 will not only be for this year but will continue for
14 as many as 5 years.

15 The costs to the school district will double
16 and triple. Because we are a State school, we do not
17 charge the school districts as much to send the
18 children there.

19 To send, you know, a child, a residential
20 child, to a school such as we have and provide all of
21 the related services that are mandated by Federal law
22 for special needs children, we are a bargain in the
23 State of Pennsylvania in that we charge the school
24 districts \$24,000 for a residential student for a
25 complete 12 months of the year, should they need,

1 with every single related service, and \$9,000 for a
2 day student.

3 That would double or triple with this
4 program coming in.

5 REPRESENTATIVE BRADFORD: Okay. And just to
6 follow up on one thing.

7 You said after the first year, the
8 residential guarantee will expire. What is -- I
9 assume most of these children, students, are not
10 necessarily local.

11 What is being proposed in terms of what
12 school they'll go to? Even if the Scranton School is
13 operated by somebody else, I assume some of these
14 children won't be able to return.

15 DR. HARA: In the transition plan it states
16 -- and it is on the Pennsylvania Department of
17 Education's Website -- the residential program will
18 be phased out and the students will go to Pittsburgh,
19 which is as much as a 5- and 6-hour drive for
20 students from northeast Pennsylvania, which
21 eliminates parent contact and participation of family
22 members in their child's education.

23 And you will hear from a parent today who is
24 very distraught about that.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BRADFORD: Thank you.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: One, I want to
2 thank all of you sincerely with your comments and the
3 testimony that you have presented to us.

4 Thank you for what you do every single day
5 for the people of this State. Again, I would like to
6 thank you very much.

7 What I would like to do next is get the
8 other panel up and give the stenographer a 5-minute
9 break.

10

11 (The hearing concluded at 6:15 p.m.)

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1 I hereby certify that the proceedings and
2 evidence are contained fully and accurately in the
3 notes taken by me on the within proceedings and that
4 this is a correct transcript of the same.

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Debra B. Miller, Reporter

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