

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 020368)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing the Law and Government Committee of the Council to conduct a full and comprehensive investigation into the performance of the School Reform Commission to determine whether the funds appropriated to the School District by City Council and expended by the SRC are being utilized in an effective and efficient manner, with full respect for the constitutional rights of parents, students and their supporters.

WHEREAS, On December 21, 2001, the Secretary of Education found the Philadelphia School District to be in distress, thereby suspending the powers of the Board of Education, and placing a "School Reform Commission" (hereinafter "SRC") in charge of the District; and

WHEREAS, At approximately the same time, Governor Schweiker appointed James Nevels Chair of the SRC; and

WHEREAS, On January 14, 2002, the Governor and Mayor appointed the remaining members of the SRC; and

WHEREAS, On April 17, 2002, the SRC identified seventy schools that would be subject to a revised management structure, either as privatized, independent, reconstituted, or charter schools; and

WHEREAS, Forty-two of these schools are to be managed by seven different private entities, all of which have either little or no experience managing urban schools, or have achievement records that are questionable, at best; and

WHEREAS, The governance structures to be utilized in the four categories of schools selected has yet to be determined; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the private managers, and other governing structures yet to be identified, partnership community groups to be selected for each school with additional duties that are not yet defined; and

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 020368 continued

WHEREAS, The SRC has determined that the private managers will be subjected to a variety of guidelines for achievement, and accountability measures; and

WHEREAS, The SRC is currently in the process of identifying 325 central office workers to fire, and has yet to hire a Chief Executive Officer; and

WHEREAS, The SRC has identified still another set of private entities to replace the functions of the fired workers, or to perform other vaguely defined "consulting" functions; and

WHEREAS, The SRC, by threatening to reconstitute school teaching staffs at nineteen schools, is risking a confrontation with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers; and

WHEREAS, The SRC is also creating a citywide advisory council of citizens selected the SRC to provide "community input" to the Commission; and

WHEREAS, This process of creating official community advisers selected by the Commission itself is part and parcel of the Commission's efforts to silence or drown out independent voices critical of the SRC; and

WHEREAS, By filing suit on April 17, 2002 against unnamed student protestors and their adult "conspirators" for both injunctive relief and damages based on vague and overbroad allegations of harmful conduct, the SRC has cast a pall over the First Amendment Rights of all Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, No mechanism has been established to hold the SRC accountable for the implementation of hugely complex agenda for September, 2002, which includes, among other things:

- a) defining the new governing structures for at least seventy schools;
- b) determining duties for scores of new individual and corporate contributors to school district management;
- c) negotiating large numbers of new contracts for services yet to be defined;
- d) managing the search process for a CEO, hiring this individual and incorporating his or her input regarding District governance;
- e) hiring large numbers of new teachers and principals at a time when many existing ones will be voluntarily and involuntarily leaving the District;
- f) dealing with student transfer issues;

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 020368 continued

- g) negotiating with PFT over school reconstitution issues; and
- h) adopting reporting guidelines and monitoring protocols and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, City Council through imposition of taxes and through grants provides the School District with hundreds of millions of dollars annually; and

WHEREAS, It is Council's duty and obligation to monitor the efficient and effective expenditure of the funds it appropriates; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Law and Government Committee of the Council be authorized to conduct a complete and comprehensive investigation of the performance of the School Reform Commission to determine whether the funds appropriated to the School District and expended by the SRC are being utilized in an effective and efficient manner, with full respect for the constitutional rights of parents, students and their supporters; and authorizing the Chairperson of the Committee in furtherance of such investigation to issue such subpoenas as may be necessary or appropriate to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of the Home Rule Charter.

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 020368 continued

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the sixteenth of May, 2002.

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Marie B. Hauser
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Ortiz, Cohen and Mariano

Sponsored by: Council President Verna, Councilmembers Ortiz, Cohen, Mariano, DiCicco, Reynolds Brown, Tasco, Rizzo, Miller, Nutter, Blackwell, Krajewski, Clarke, Longstreth and O'Neill