

Legislation Text

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Urging the School Reform Commission, Superintendent William Hite, and the School District of Philadelphia to actively negotiate a mutually agreeable new contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers that provides adequate staffing of our schools, acknowledges the contributions and sacrifices of teachers and other staff, and respects both seniority and traditional payment structures, like step pay.

WHEREAS, There has been no collective bargaining agreement between the School District of Philadelphia (“SDP”) and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (“PFT”) since the end of the mutually agreed upon one-year extension of the most recent contract, which had been set to expire in August 2012; and

WHEREAS, SDP rejected PFT’s offer in August 2013 to save millions of dollars through health care benefit reductions and a one-year wage freeze; and

WHEREAS, On October 6, 2014, the School Reform Commission (“SRC”) announced its intention to unilaterally vitiate the continuing contract terms, a decision that has been rejected by every court to consider it to date, save the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which is expected to rule this June; and

WHEREAS, SDP has engaged in an costly legal strategy, spending \$16 million defending its course of action at every court level, as well as pouring money into universally appealing arbitration losses over teacher firings and demotions that ignored seniority, with back pay owed now running into the millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, Dozens of schools have been operating without a full-time counselor and more than half of schools lack a full-time certified school nurse, 17 of which have such a nurse one day a week or less; and

WHEREAS, Faculty have not had a cost of living adjustment or experiential increases since August 2012, ultimately having lost at least \$100 million in wages and frozen step increases and exacerbating the preexisting disparity with suburban teachers; and

WHEREAS, Teachers also have not obtained lane increases to compensate or encourage ongoing professional betterment like tertiary education, stifling skills acquisition; and

WHEREAS, In spite of these deprivations, the average teacher might annually spend \$800 on their classroom, with many spending into thousands of their own dollars; and

WHEREAS, SDP has insisted on privatization of necessary service, abandoning the functional, effective system of using PFT members as substitute teachers in favor of a \$34 million contract with for-profit Source4Teachers, which consistently failed to provide the needed substitutes - starting the year at a paltry 11% and never providing more than half - underpaid those it did, stranded thousands of students without an assigned teacher, and forced at least 1500 students who would otherwise graduate into having to take summer school; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of that outrageously unacceptable failure, SDP entered into a no-bid contract for even more money with another for-profit company, Kelly Services, threatening PFT teachers with the prospect of

again being forced to manage multiple rooms without additional compensation; and

WHEREAS, Despite the continual unwillingness of the SRC, Superintendent Hite, or SDP to work with them, PFT has remained willing to return to the bargaining table; and

WHEREAS, The effort to craft a fair deal between adults in light of the inadequate funding provided by the Commonwealth is most important to the children who deserve a respected teacher in each classroom, available nurses and counselors, and more certainty than has been available since contract cancellation, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does urge the School Reform Commission, Superintendent William Hite, and the School District of Philadelphia to actively negotiate a mutually agreeable new contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers that provides adequate staffing of our schools, acknowledges the contributions and sacrifices of teachers and other staff, and respects both seniority and traditional payment structures, like step pay.